

STATE OF HATE 2020

FAR RIGHT TERROR GOES GLOBAL



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EDITORIAL: AN EVOLVING THREAT

BY NICK LOWLES

WELCOME TO our new 2020 *State of Hate* report, our annual review on the state and nature of Britain's far right, analysing the threat it presents to our nation.

The report – one of our most extensive to date – reveals that there are reasons to be hopeful, but sadly many reasons to be fearful, too.

Our report headlines with two, seemingly contradictory propositions. The traditional far right is at the weakest it has been for possibly 50 years or more – but at the same time hatred is becoming increasingly mainstreamed.

The other key focus of *State of Hate* this year is the continuing rise of the far-right terror threat, which continues to be a threat both at home – with thwarted plots and numerous arrests – but more significantly is taking on a more global nature and identity, following high-profile attacks in places like New Zealand, the USA and Germany.

We should be vigilant against further terrorism attempts from the extreme right, which currently remain a significant threat.

Our report also explains the current weaknesses of the traditional far right. There are fewer organisations than ever before and those that do exist have been less active and smaller over the past year. There is actually only one far-right group that can be considered to be growing: all the others are in decline or have disappeared altogether.

MAINSTREAMING HATE

Language and messaging that was once the preserve of the far right is now increasingly adopted by the political mainstream.

Anti-Muslim prejudice, demeaning rhetoric on migrants and refugees, and notions of a 'cultural war' against social liberalism are increasingly being adopted by political and media figures from an increasingly confident political right.

This is partly the consequence of the far right engaging in wider cultural and identity issues, but also because centre-right politicians have tried to embrace far-right narratives to win support. Who really needs far-right propagandists when you have more mainstream commentators like Rod Liddle, Richard Littlejohn, Toby Young and James Delingpole all weighing into the fray?

The 'cordon sanitaire' which once kept far-right groups and thought out of mainstream discourse has collapsed, both here and on the Continent.

Belgium's King Philippe has held an official meeting at the Royal Palace with the head of the far-right Vlaams Belang party. It is the first time a Belgian monarch has met a far-right leader since 1936. In Germany, a significant group of Christian Democrat politicians have called for a deal with the far-right Alternative for Germany party.

The decline of the traditional far right has been happening for some time. As far back as 1999 the British National Party recognised that its strong racist and anti-immigrant message had decreasing traction in a multicultural society where some non-whites were already second or third generation British.

However, this decline has been quickened by the emergence of the internet and the rapidly evolving digital landscape, plus the loosening ties between political parties and people, which has given us all a far wider choice to move between causes and campaigns.

The far right has also been constrained by police action and social media deplatforming. Leaders of many of the more violent far-right groups have been imprisoned, while the action of some social media companies to limit hate speech has massively curtailed the ability of far-right figures to reach audiences and raise money.

When Facebook closed down Stephen Yaxley-Lennon's [Tommy Robinson's] page, he lost his ability to reach over one million followers. When far-right party Britain First was taken off Facebook, it lost access to an audience of over two million. While both moved onto the encrypted messaging app Telegram, they can now reach only a fraction of their previous audiences, hampering their visibility and – just as importantly – their ability to raise funds.

But it has been Brexit that has really quickened the far right decline. Brexit has dominated the political discourse over the past three years and the traditional far-right organisations have struggled to get their issues heard amid the Brexit roar. Figures such as Yaxley-Lennon tried to jump aboard the Brexit bandwagon, but after admitting that he hadn't actually voted in the EU Referendum, he struggled to have any meaningful impact beyond complaining about Muslims and his own sense of persecution.

Last summer, Nigel Farage's Brexit Party was formed and topped the poll in the European elections all within two months. Along the way it claimed to have recruited 150,000 supporters and millions in donations. However, almost as quickly as it emerged it sunk, as Boris Johnson promised to deliver what Farage could only dream about.

A CALL TO BAN

There is a heavy emphasis in this report on the continuing threat of far-right terrorism. Twelve far-right activists were convicted of terrorism-related charges last year, and 10 more are already facing trial this year.

The material being circulated by groups such as the Sonnenkrieg Division and the Feuerkrieg Division is truly horrific and far worse than anything we would have seen in previous far-right groups. More worryingly, these groups are deliberately targeting and attracting young people.

In this report we set out the case for the Home Secretary to proscribe a terror-fomenting group, the Nazi-Satanist organisation the Order of Nine Angles



(O9A). While we applaud the decision to ban National Action splinter groups, such as Sonnenkrieg Division, we are mystified why a group that has so consistently advocated terrorism, inspired far-right and Islamist terrorists in the past, and been linked to four people convicted of terrorism last year, is still allowed to operate.

One of the most disturbing features of the violent wing of the far right has been its increasing adoption of sexual violence as a political tool. Domestic abuse, rape and even incest has been openly encouraged. Much of this originates with the O9A, which, as we expose in this report, runs horrendous groups such as 'RapeWaffen'.

CULTURAL WAR

The far right are enthusiastic and extreme participants in the culture war and have successfully sought to portray themselves as victims of political correctness, the liberal establishment and gender equality. And in this they successfully tap into an anxiety and lack of control over their lives that many feel, especially those who feel most pessimistic about the future and those who have been top of the social hierarchies but now feel they are losing out to others.

The report explores how the 'manosphere' has snowballed into an ideology that has taken on a life beyond an online niche. Though its organised elements and online communities are still a fringe issue, it taps into broader reactionary attitudes towards women, feminism and progressive politics.

TERROR GOES GLOBAL

While much of *State of Hate's* focus is on the British far right, we recognise that overseas events and trends have an impact here.

One significant development of 2019 was how the terrorist wing of the far right now increasingly identifies as a 'community'. It has now become commonplace for far-right terrorists to integrate a form of social media 'strategy' into their attacks.

Far-right terror attacks in New Zealand, the US and Germany all followed a similar theme. Manifestos were written and uploaded ahead of time, sometimes announcements of impending attacks were made and most of the terrorists tried to livestream their atrocities..

With a far-right terrorist MO emerging, we are unfortunately likely to see more of these types of attacks in the future.

NO ROOM FOR COMPLACENCY

The mainstreaming of the far right poses serious challenges for both ourselves, the authorities, minorities, educators and wider society.

It is far easier to challenge the hate of a small group, especially when its views are considered unacceptable by the mainstream, than is the case now – when Islamophobia is on the rise (including inside the governing party), antisemitism is reappearing and other forms of hate crimes are also on the increase.

We are facing challenges on more fronts and in different ways than ever before. We need to challenge hate in mainstream parties, while at the same time tackling the young nazi terrorists operating on the margins. We have to tackle online hate and growing division in our communities.

And just as the traditional and populist far right has crashed in recent times, so it could easily rebound.

Disillusionment with the Boris Johnson government, a frustration over Brexit not delivering as expected, or even other issues becoming more important as Brexit wanes, could all have a galvanising effect on the British far right. And when – or if – this happens, especially if driven by a charismatic leader, this will be tapping into a far bigger pool of support than would have been the case in the past.

The face of hate has changed, and will no doubt change again in the future. We must face that evolving threat with courage and a willingness to adapt to the challenges it presents.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

KEY HEADLINES

- The traditional far right is organisationally at its weakest for decades, but its rhetoric and ideas are now increasingly found in the political mainstream.
- Both main political parties are struggling to deal with racism and prejudice within their own ranks.
- Traditional far-right parties have struggled to maintain a clear identity and purpose at a time when Brexit and notions of British sovereignty have consumed our political and cultural discourse.
- The Brexit Party is increasingly irrelevant since Boris Johnson became Prime Minister.
- We continue to face a far-right terrorism threat, involving younger and more dangerous individuals.
- Sexual violence and misogyny is becoming more prevalent on the far right, especially among younger extremists.
- Far-right activists are enthusiastic and extreme participants in the culture war.
- There are now more ideological routes into the far right than ever before.
- The far right is increasingly being driven by personalities and peer-to-peer online engagement, rather than organisations and ideology.
- The Government's counter-extremism strategy is outdated and needs an urgent overhaul.
- HOPE not hate is calling for the Nazi-Satanist group, the Order of Nine Angles, to be proscribed as a terrorist organisation.

DWINDLING TRADITIONAL FAR RIGHT

- The traditional British far right is at its weakest since the late 1960s: in part because of the long-term diminishing importance of race and immigration amongst Britons, and the changing relationship between people and organisations in the digital world, but also because it has found it difficult to be heard at a time when Brexit has dominated the political and cultural discourse.
- The far right has moved from being built around organisations to being built around people, and this has been amplified by our digital age. Tommy Robinson and Nigel Farage are examples of a new generation of far-right personalities.
- Despite being on the decline, traditional groups and parties can emerge as quickly as they decline. The success of the Brexit Party demonstrates that in the right circumstances, and with a charismatic leader, people will join organisations.

THE MAINSTREAMING OF HATE

- The boundaries between the far right and the mainstream right have become increasingly blurred, with mainstream politicians and commentators using language and rhetoric which was once found only on the far right. This is partly the consequence of the far right engaging in wider cultural and identity issues, but also because centre right politicians have tried to embrace far right narratives to win support.
- Far-right ideas and concepts increasingly intertwine with mainstream debate, while notions of equality have become increasingly used by the far right to foment anti-Muslim sentiment.
- The far right now encompasses a much wider group of political currents (such as the alt-right, incels and conspiracy theorists) than previously, which means the paths into it are more numerous and less obvious than before.
- The new fronts for the far right are a culture war and arguments over identity, rather than a more explicit and overtly fascist worldview. As a result, we are now fighting the far right on many more fronts than in the past.
- The social cost of far-right activism has disappeared or is avoidable.

THE IMPACT OF BREXIT

- Brexit has both marginalised the far right but also contributed to the mainstreaming of some far-right notions around immigration and identity. With Brexit dominating the political and cultural debate, the traditional far right (obsessed with race and immigration) has found it hard to find space in which to operate. Meanwhile, Boris Johnson's ability to deliver Brexit made the populist-right Brexit Party irrelevant.
- Many of those who would have gravitated to the far right in the past supported Boris Johnson's Conservative Party in the 2019 General Election. Past and present far-right leaders even attended Brexit Day celebrations in Parliament Square.
- Many BAME citizens believe Brexit has increased division and racism in society. A poll of 1,000 BAME Britons conducted by HOPE not hate in August 2019 found 70% of those of Pakistani heritage (the vast majority identifying as Muslim) think that the state of race relations in Britain has deteriorated over the last five years, with three-quarters saying they had witnessed or experienced racism on social media. A third (34%) say they have witnessed or experienced violence or threats of violence.

FAR RIGHT TERRORISM

- We continue to face a growing threat from far-right terrorism, with those involved becoming younger and more dangerous. During 2019, 12 Britons were convicted of terrorist offences and the police say that seven of the 22 plots they have foiled since March 2017 have been inspired by the far right. A further 10 far-right activists are currently awaiting trial on terror-related offences.
- The latest Home Office figures show the number of white people arrested for terrorist activity was 118, compared with 92 for those with an Asian ethnic appearance. For the first time, the number of people referred to a counter-radicalisation programme over suspected far-right extremism in the year to December is at the same level as Islamist extremists.
- Internationally, the terrorist wing of the far right now increasingly identifies as a community and it has become commonplace for far-right terrorists to integrate a form of social media ‘strategy’ into their attacks.
- While police action has disrupted and closed many of the most violent far-right organisations, there remain dozens of activists under 25-years-old who are operating as independent actors online.
- Far-right activists are increasingly adept at using online platforms to promote terrorism and extreme sexual violence. They are also adept at moving between platforms to avoid detection and disruption.

ONLINE HATE

- Britain continues to be home to many of the world’s most high-profile, far-right activists online, but action by social media companies has significantly reduced their audiences and ability to earn money from their actions.
- The rise of the internet and proliferation of social media platforms has changed how individuals interact with politics and political parties. Behaviour is much more transactional and fluid, but also less loyal.
- While deplatforming has been highly effective in inhibiting the power and growth of the far right, there has to remain a balance with freedom of speech to prevent a negative reaction from the British public.
- Antisemitism has been increasingly adopted by supposedly non-political YouTube stars, like Pewdiepie, for ‘shock value’.

THE CULTURAL WAR

- The far right are enthusiastic and extreme participants in the culture war and have successfully sought to portray themselves as victims of political correctness, the liberal establishment and gender equality.
- The so-called ‘manosphere’ has snowballed into an ideology that has taken on a life beyond an online niche. Though its organised elements and online communities are still a fringe issue, they tap into broader reactionary attitudes towards women, feminism and progressive politics.

CONSPIRACY THEORIES

- Once considered the preserve of eccentric cranks and misfits, conspiracy theorists and the ideas they peddle are an increasingly important method of indoctrination and extremist radicalisation. Conspiracy theories provide a framework that can easily be exploited by people with an extreme agenda. The use of conspiracy theories is increasingly a tool to attack minority groups.
- British conspiracy theorists like David Icke, Paul Joseph Watson and Richie Allen engage with hundreds of thousands of people. They also become gateways to extremism and more extremist views.
- The Keep Talking group brings together far-left activists with Holocaust deniers and antisemites.

COUNTER-EXTREMISM

- The Government’s counter-extremism strategy is now outdated and needs an urgent overhaul. The far right is very different from the one identified in the 2015 counter-extremism strategy.
- The authorities are not equipped to engage with the far right as an ideological battle, nor to connect offline far-right crimes with the online networks and propaganda influencing them.
- The authorities have also been too slow to understand how anti-Muslim rhetoric has replaced race and immigration as one of the key drivers of the far right, and the inter-relationship between mainstream anti-Muslim prejudice and incidents of hate.
- While the police have successfully disrupted several far-right terrorist networks, they have consistently appeared to be slow at understanding the threats. More specifically, the authorities have been slow to appreciate the threat from groups like the Order of Nine Angles, which has actively encouraged terrorism for years.

CONCLUSION

- While the organised far right is very weak, many of its ideas are now in the political mainstream. At the same time, the threat we are facing – from far-right ideas, ideology and influence – has never been more diverse.
- But just as the far right has declined over the last year, so too it could just as easily re-emerge.
- Disillusionment with the Boris Johnson government, a frustration over Brexit not delivering as expected, or even other issues becoming more important as Brexit wanes, could all have a galvanising effect on the British far right.
- We also expect a continuing growth in far-right terrorism.

SECTION 2 – ESSAYS

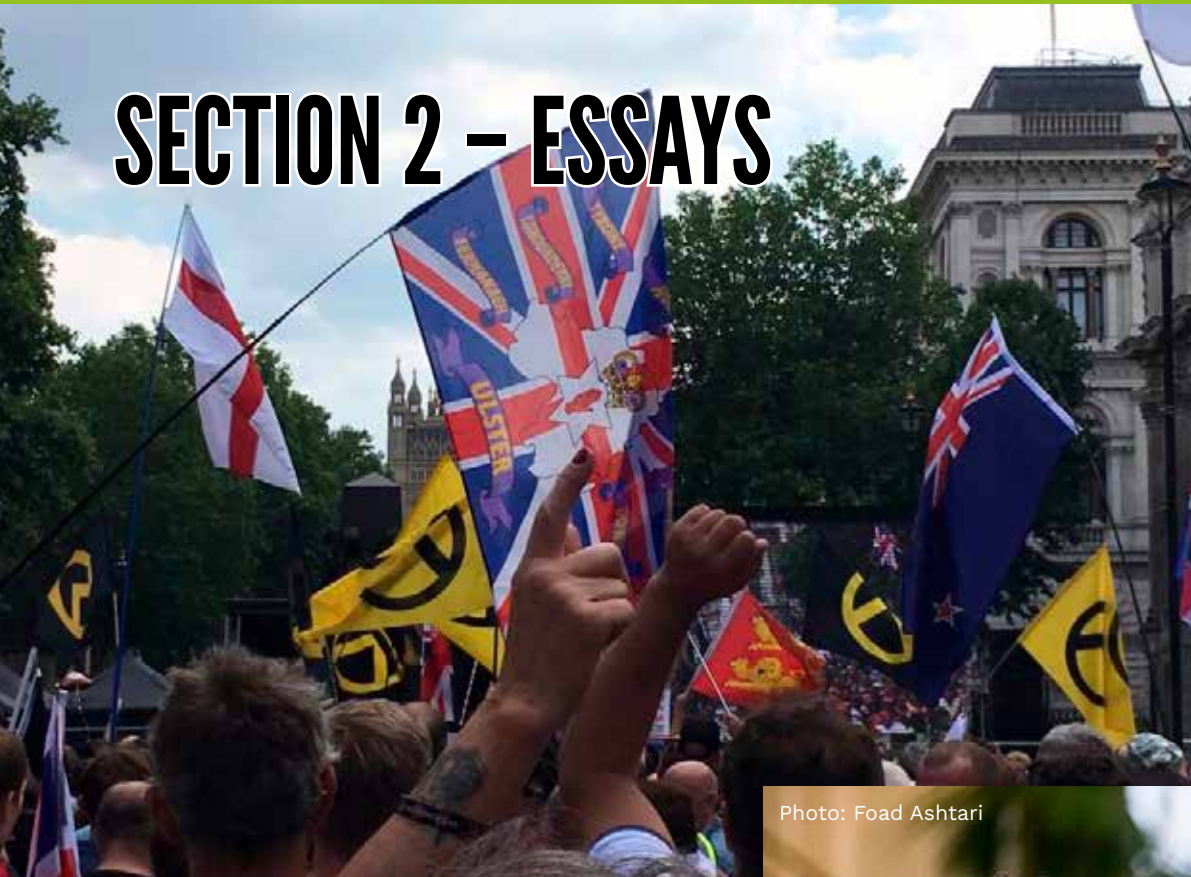


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WORLDWIDE OVERVIEW OF HATE

SIMON MURDOCH TAKES A LOOK BACK ON THE FORTUNES OF THE FAR RIGHT AROUND THE WORLD

2019 was a depressing year for those of us researching the international far right. Whether it was the spate of terror attacks or the further mainstreaming of hateful conspiracies, it has felt like we have been on the back foot, defending ground rather than progressing. Yet, when we take a closer look we also find small, important victories and many lessons we can learn.

UPS AND DOWNS

Entering 2019, many of the dregs of the 'Alternative Right' fell further into disarray: Milo Yiannopoulos' debts mounted, the Proud Boys' leader Gavin McInnes stepped down, and conspiracy theorist Alex Jones lost his platforms. Though solidarity within the international and particularly transatlantic far right did appear to start the year intact and research indicated considerable US/UK activity, a major split soon deepened between two key alt-right institutions and further efforts were made to form new alliances between the US and Europe.

More broadly, international networking continued, with conferences and gatherings across the globe, and new efforts from both marginal and mainstream figures trying to forge closer international connections. Some of these, like the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) grew (and grew), while others like Turning Point UK, for all their "super-powered brain control system[s]", fostered nothing but endless, deserved ridicule.

Some of this networking also saw greater ideological cross-pollination, with activists meeting to share bigotry best practice. In many cases this saw a more explicit embrace of extremes, from British identitarians getting chummy with a bunch of neo-Nazis to American white nationalists hanging out with antifeminist men's right's activists. Meanwhile, libertarians from across the globe met in Turkey to continue to be at odds with liberty by whitewashing the far right.

Making friends in new extremes, of course, is also a good indication of desperation and there certainly are some desperate circumstances out there for the international far right. One area which has seen a dramatic fall is the international 'identitarian' movement. American identitarians had to rebrand following leaks, while their British counterparts were cut adrift from their European network after they fraternised with the extreme far right, and the rest of the network were increasingly under pressure due to ties to the terrorist massacre in Christchurch. As one of its previous key supporters in Germany declared in November, the identitarians were "contaminated to the point of untouchability".

Perhaps most significantly for the Anglophone far right, British anti-Muslim activist Stephen Yaxley-Lennon (AKA Tommy Robinson), who in 2018 was a focal point

of international far-right support and momentum, fell into dire circumstances in 2019. This year saw him suffer devastating deplatforming blows, a humiliating defeat as a European election candidate and multiple legal woes.

LEADERLESS HATE IN A DIGITAL AGE

These developments, however encouraging, have come alongside a growth in a more hostile far right and wider political climate. Journalists and others tracking the far right experienced continued harassment across 2019. For example, Vox's Carlos Maza detailed a multi-year online homophobic and racist harassment campaign carried out against him by US vlogger Steven Crowder.

In the UK, criminal abuse and harassment of MPs increased to "unprecedented" levels according to Met Police Commissioner Cressida Dick, while in January last year the pro-refugee mayor of the Polish city of Gdansk, Paweł Adamowicz, was stabbed on stage and later died. Then in May pro-refugee German MP Walter Luebcke was murdered by a far-right extremist who confessed to killing the MP to take "revenge" on his pro-refugee politics.

Last year also saw a spate of horrific far-right terrorist attacks. While the 2019 Global Terrorism Index published by the Institute of Economics & Peace in November highlighted the "total number of deaths from terrorism declined for the fourth consecutive year", it also noted that "incidents of far-right terrorism have been increasing in the West", with the total number increasing by "320 per cent over the past five years". From January to September 2019 alone, "77 deaths [had] been attributed to far-right groups".

We predicted in 2018 that the following year would see further far-right terrorist attacks, but what we failed to anticipate was their convergence with a broader trend across the far right. In our last *State of Hate* report, my colleague Joe Mulhall wrote about how we appeared to be shifting into an increasingly 'post-organisational' far-right landscape, where a "decentralised collective of anonymous people" were working in "broadly the same direction and towards similar goals", making it more difficult to monitor and undermine their activities. This has been the case for some time online, but it was a succession of far-right demonstrations in London in 2018 (the same year that birthed the Yellow Vests demonstrations elsewhere) by activists who eschewed traditional parties and street movements, that brought the phenomenon truly into the offline world.

The most high-profile far-right terror attacks in 2019, such as Christchurch and El Paso, underlined this. Each had a distinct online dimension, which encouraged terrorism (albeit without strict direction from a leadership) and by perpetrators whose familiarity with these online spaces was clear. From the publication of documents online to specific sites outlining the details and motivations ahead of their attacks, and the use of livestreamed video as



A “Free Tommy” protest in London, 2018, that exemplified the post-organisational phenomenon

well as the peppering of both with vocabulary common to these spaces, the intention in many cases appeared to be to further cultivate online pro-terror cultures and encourage others to carry out such acts.

These subcultures can be found in the nascent ‘Terrorwave’ subculture which exists across multiple platforms. This glorifies images of war and violence, in loose pro-terror Telegram communities, on extreme far-right forums such as Fascist Forge and image boards 8kun (formerly 8chan) and 4chan, and within international far-right networks such as ‘The Base’.

Like users of the defunct Iron March before them, many within these online worlds explicitly endorse the concept of ‘leaderless resistance’: a term popularised by prominent Ku Klux Klan member Louis Beam in the United States, built on the premise of small cells acting without direct hierarchical command. As my colleague Patrik Hermansson wrote in April, a core threat of this post-organisational terror trend is its internationalisation, since “the application of the leaderless resistance tactic is by its nature difficult to counter, especially if applied across borders.”

More broadly, this convergence of an online anonymous mass with offline direct action reflects the ever greater blurring of the two in far right direct action, and the refining of this as a propagandising tool. In August I wrote about such developments, including – but also beyond – terrorism, from on-the-ground internet-style trolling to making sure an action could ‘game’ an algorithm and gain traction online. I also noted that a uniting feature was that far right operators “perhaps more than ever are operating in a political arena in which their direct actions are concerned with their (news and social) media reception.”

BREAKING THROUGH?

Even if spectacle-inducing terror is the demand of the extreme far right, we should not inflate their influence nor assume that their message has in fact broken through and been a significant influence on others.

Nonetheless, this year saw cases which left little doubt that hatred, whatever its catalysts, had been further accelerated into the mainstream. A clear example came during Donald Trump’s racist targeting of four Democratic congresswomen of colour, including tweets in August telling the four – who are all US citizens – to “go back” and “help fix the totally broken and crime infested” nations “from which they came”. That there was an audience to support this was reiterated a month prior at a North Carolina rally, when Trump’s supporters chanted “send her back!” after the President attacked one of the congresswomen directly in his speech.

Elsewhere particular far-right tropes, especially those with a conspiratorial angle, have received attention from mainstream politicians. These include ‘The Great Replacement’ and other identitarian ideas influencing far-right European Parliamentary election campaigns, to Britain’s Nigel Farage using the antisemitic ‘globalist’ dogwhistle and Conservative MP Suella Braverman using another, ‘Cultural Marxism’. On some topics mainstreaming has gone even further. HOPE not hate polling released in June highlighted the worrying extent of British Conservative party supporters’ Islamophobic beliefs, including in once-fringe Islamophobic tropes such as ‘no-go zones’.

When it comes to resisting the spread of far-right ideas, the culture war over deplatforming those who spread hate continued in 2019, with doing so

continuing to be framed, often cynically by the far right, in terms of a danger to freedom of speech. Likewise, moral equivocating of the far right and anti-fascists continued, not least from Trump who in April reiterated a form of his ‘both sides’ response (that he gave when reacting to news of the murder of anti-racist demonstrator Heather Heyer in Charlottesville in 2017). Through our American newsletter, CARD, edited by Melissa Ryan, we also drew attention to some of the narratives and conspiracies which have begun to gain more of a footing, including the anti-LGBTQ+ and misogynist ‘Gender Ideology’ conspiracy which was central, for example, to the Polish far right’s parliamentary election campaigns.

AROUND THE WORLD

We find ourselves with a fragmented fringe far right in many places, with activists and groups marginalised, and some turning towards further violence. Elsewhere, in some cases despite this, we also have a mainstream right becoming more susceptible to conspiratorial and previously little-known far-right tropes. When it comes to responding adequately to this we should take note of some positive developments, while recognising that more must be done. Major social media platforms are

taking continued steps to battle hate, but it’s a mixed bag. Twitter’s recent changes to political advertising, for example, were seen as too little too late by many. Where extensive social media deplatforming has occurred it has been an undeniable success in undermining previously significant far-right activists, from the British anti-Muslim activist Stephen Yaxley-Lennon, to far-right conspiracy theorist Alex Jones and all-round troll and bigot, Milo Yiannopoulos.

As the online world becomes ever more entangled in our political lives, new challenges are going to arise, from increased questioning of politicians’ rights to a social media platform if they abuse it, to a changing political disinformation landscape. Here too there are lessons to learn from recent years about how to fight back, but we must continue to try and understand what we are fighting. Furthermore, while some governments are not giving due attention to the threat of the far right (or, indeed, are even in their thrall), others are setting a shining example. Following the Christchurch terror attack, New Zealand’s Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern showed how a government can respond to far-right terror without ceding ground to its perpetrator’s aims, and still ensuring respect is shown to the communities targeted and the lives lost or affected.

Among these developments are some small, important advances, perhaps predictable that they should be occurring now. Following the rupture on both sides of the Atlantic with Brexit and Trump, and amid a wider global surge of the populist radical right, many progressive movements were left in a state of confusion, wondering how they had got to such a state of affairs and also how to respond. Given the immensity of the political rupture and the emergence of novel or rebranded forces, from ‘computational propaganda’ to ‘national populism’, it would take some time for the role and significance of these tools and ideas to be understood.

That we are in a better position to understand these developments is worth reminding ourselves when the situation seems to be worsening in many parts of the world. In the US, following the Mueller Report and mid-Trump’s impeachment process, his senior policy advisor Stephen Miller had a trove of emails leaked which showed his explicit support for the white nationalist far right. In the UK, alongside the continued upheavals of Brexit and the recent general election, the Conservative party is yet to solve its systemic Islamophobia, and Labour has only begun to make headway on its antisemitism problem.

The past year also saw a new far-right bloc form within the European Parliament which, despite sighs of relief at its small gains, should really be met with a sobering realisation that such a result would have been inconceivable just a few years ago. In Eastern Europe, there are fewer illusions following far-right parliamentary wins in Estonia and a worrying development in Poland’s far-right representation.

There have been concerning developments outside Europe, too. In China, the brutal persecution of the Muslim Uighurs continues, whilst Myanmar’s State Counsellor continues to deny that the 2016 Rohingya massacres were genocidal. In India, Narendra Modi’s government retained power following the largest election in history, allowing his Hindu nationalist policies to be pushed further ahead, including a recently passed citizenship law which discriminates against Muslims. In Australia experts have warned that May’s low federal election results for the far right



New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern visiting members of the Muslim community at the Phillipstown Community Centre, Christchurch, after the Christchurch attack.
Photo Kirk Hargreaves



Ni Una Menos demonstrators in Buenos Aires. Photo: Ana Clara Nicola

were more explicable by far-right parties' leadership problems than "a lack of demand for extremist politics".

South Africa's *Plaasmoorde* or "Farm Murders" have been seized on by the international far right as evidence of the prevailing far-right conspiracy of 'white genocide' (a narrative that was echoed by Trump in 2018). This has been partly pushed by South Africa's domestic far right, which has reached out to forge closer ties to international sympathisers. In Japan, activists are attempting to act as bridge for the US right's networking in continental Asia. Foreign political interference campaigns continue to spread hate globally from Russia, and persecution of LGBTQ+ people continues in Chechnya. In Brazil, far-right President Jair Bolsonaro has continued to push politics to the extremes, attacking the environment, indigenous people, and threatening the rule of law.

NEW CHALLENGES, NEW HOPE

Beyond these challenges many of us are also entering new political terrain in the fight back against hate. Climate change has rocketed up the agenda globally, and the far right is taking note to begin co-opting this seismic topic to its ends. Likewise, the fight for transgender rights is becoming more mainstream and as reporting practices improve in many countries, spikes or the longer-term reality of anti-trans hate crime are being recorded. On 20 November, the International Trans Day of Remembrance, the Trans Murder Monitoring project reported 331 cases globally of reported killings of "trans and gender-diverse people between 1 October 2018 and 30 September 2019".

We must also be looking again at whether and how

the ruptures from a few years ago have changed. Is the ire that fuelled the rise of Trump, Brexit and the international populist right still aimed at the same things? What will come of the far right's spread of conspiracy theories to the edges of the mainstream? How can we counteract the extreme, pro-terror far right that has grown in the darkest niches of the web? And if we are to find solutions together, how can we move past the back-and-forth over free speech?

Finding answers also requires finding hope.

To understand how to respond to this multitude of challenges and changes we must first feel that we can find that hope. Looking back at 2019 there have been stories of success from which to find inspiration. Be it Puerto Rico and its citizenry's mass protests against its governor's homophobia, misogyny and alleged corruption following leaks; or in Hong Kong where protestors have faced down China's efforts to impose an extradition bill which many feared could endanger activists. In New Zealand anti-fascists have gathered together to help fight back after the shock of Christchurch.

Across the world young people have shown that they will fight for their planet and, while not without some criticism it should heed, Extinction Rebellion has brought a huge number of people into activism. The Argentine feminist movement, #NiUnaMenos, started in 2015 in response to the murder of Chiara Paez by her boyfriend, has spread across the world. Just recently in Italy the 'Sardines' movement has begun standing up against Salvini and his Lega Party and drew 40,000 people onto the streets in Florence. In August my comrade and former colleague Melissa Ryan titled an edition of our newsletter 'Despair is Not a Strategy'. Perhaps we should also add that hope is.

EUROPEAN OVERVIEW

IN THE aftermath of the European Parliamentary elections in May 2019, many commentators let out a collective sigh of relief.

“Far-right ‘surge’ ends in a ripple” declared *The Guardian*; “Populists fall short of expectations” said *The Economist*; “Europe’s Populist Storm Rattles the Windows of the E.U. But Fails to Move the Foundations”, according to *Time*. “They” didn’t win. “They” hadn’t completely taken over.

The problem is that many commentators were judging these results against short-term, often-apocalyptic, headline-grabbing predictions.

However, the fact that the far right grew less than some expected does not hide the fact that it still grew, albeit unevenly, and when placed in a historical context these results remain extremely worrying.

The newest session of the European Parliament has seen a number of the leading European far-right parties form a new parliamentary bloc, ‘Identity and Democracy’. Here is an outline of how the key far-right parties fared in the election:

NETHERLANDS – FORUM FOR DEMOCRACY (FVD)

Thierry Baudet’s new FvD party received three seats, overtaking Geert Wilders’ Freedom Party, which lost four seats and received a dismal 3.5% of the vote. The party is a member of the European Conservatives and Reformists parliamentary group. The party also won 12 seats in the Dutch parliamentary election with 15.78% of the vote.

AUSTRIA – FREEDOM PARTY (FPÖ)

Despite an enormous corruption scandal that caused the collapse of the coalition government between the FPÖ and the Austrian People’s Party (ÖVP), it seemed the FPÖ emerged relatively unscathed following the European elections. It dropped just a fraction from 19.72% in 2014 to 17.2%, losing no seats. The party is a member of Identity and Democracy. It took 31 seats with 16.2% of the vote, down from 20 seats, in the Austrian parliamentary elections in September.

SPAIN – VOX

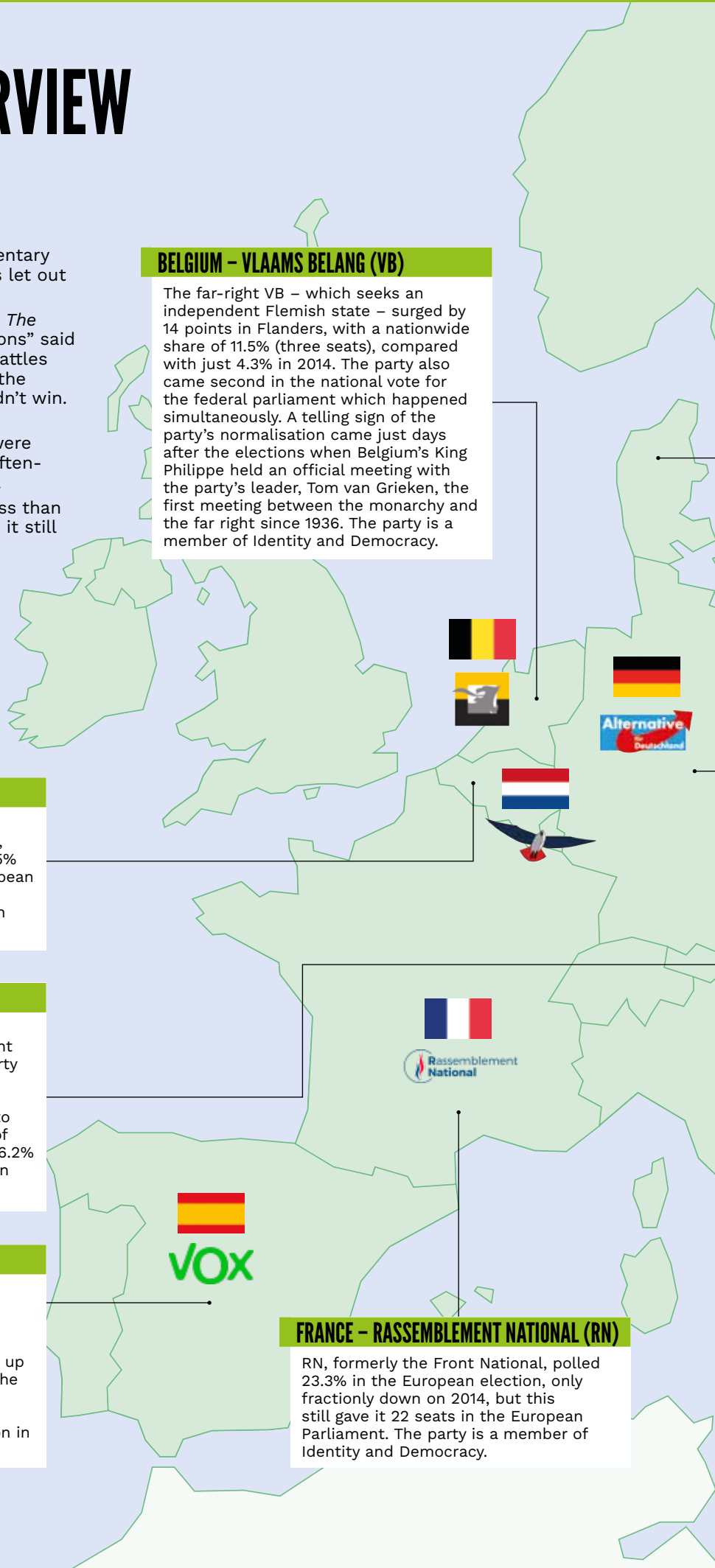
Vox contested its second European elections in the wake of an impressive showing in the general election, where its 10.3% vote resulted in 24 seats in the Congress of Deputies. At the European elections Vox fared less well, picking up just 6.2%, though this was significantly up on the 1.6% it received in 2014. The party is a member of the European Conservatives and Reformists parliamentary group. In another general election in November, Vox came third, taking 52 seats.

BELGIUM – VLAAMS BELANG (VB)

The far-right VB – which seeks an independent Flemish state – surged by 14 points in Flanders, with a nationwide share of 11.5% (three seats), compared with just 4.3% in 2014. The party also came second in the national vote for the federal parliament which happened simultaneously. A telling sign of the party’s normalisation came just days after the elections when Belgium’s King Philippe held an official meeting with the party’s leader, Tom van Grieken, the first meeting between the monarchy and the far right since 1936. The party is a member of Identity and Democracy.

FRANCE – RASSEMBLEMENT NATIONAL (RN)

RN, formerly the Front National, polled 23.3% in the European election, only fractionally down on 2014, but this still gave it 22 seats in the European Parliament. The party is a member of Identity and Democracy.



SWEDEN – SWEDEN DEMOCRATS (SD)

The SD, which often under performs in European elections, saw significant gains, rising to 15.3% from just 9.7% back in 2014, and gain an extra MEP, bringing its total to three. The party is a member of the European Conservatives and Reformists parliamentary group.

**FINLAND – FINNS PARTY (PS)**

PS won two seats in the European elections with 13.8% of the vote. In the country's parliamentary elections it secured 17.5% and 39 seats, making it the largest opposition party to the Social Democrats. The party is a member of Identity and Democracy.

DENMARK - DANISH PEOPLE'S PARTY (DFP)

The DFP lost nearly two-thirds of its votes and three MEPs. The party managed to muster just 10.7% of the vote, compared with the 26.6% it polled in 2014. However, it is worth noting that the Danish Social Democrats has, in part, pulled the rug from under the DFP with a very hardline immigration policy. DFP is a member of Identity and Democracy.

**ESTONIA – CONSERVATIVE PEOPLE'S PARTY OF ESTONIA (EKRE)**

EKRE, along with its alt-right-linked and seriously extreme youth wing, Blue Awakening, had already had a good 2019, increasing its representation in the national Parliament from seven to 19 seats and securing eight cabinet posts in the coalition Government. The party also picked up one MEP when it polled 12.7% in the European Elections. The party is a member of Identity and Democracy.

POLAND – LAW AND JUSTICE (PiS)

PiS polled 45.4% of the vote and returned 27 MEPs, and is a member of the European Conservatives and Reformists parliamentary group. The party also won Poland's parliamentary election in October with 43.59% of the vote, giving it a narrow majority of five seats in the Sejm (lower house), though lost control of the Senate (51 seats to 49).

**GERMANY – ALTERNATIVE FÜR DEUTSCHLAND (AFD)**

The AfD underperformed, securing fourth place with 11% of the vote. However, this still translated to 11 MEPs and is a significant rise from the 7.1% it garnered in the 2014 European elections. The party is a member of Identity and Democracy.

**CZECH REPUBLIC – FREEDOM AND DIRECT DEMOCRACY (SPD)**

The SPD won 9.14% of the vote, coming fifth and attaining two seats in the European Parliamentary election. The party is a member of Identity and Democracy.

**ITALY – LEGA**

Lega, formerly Lega Nord, polled 34.3%, giving it 28 seats in the European Parliament. The party is a member of Identity and Democracy. In August, Lega's coalition with the Five Star Movement broke down and Lega returned to being in the opposition.

HUNGARY – FIDESZ

In coalition with the Christian Democratic People's Party, Fidesz came first and gained a seat, giving it a total of 13 seats with 52.6% of the vote. Fidesz is a member of the European People's Party (EPP) parliamentary group, but was suspended in March 2019 for the government's undermining of Hungarian democracy and the rule of law.

HATE CRIMES IN THE UK

THE NUMBER of hate crimes reported to police annually has more than doubled since 2013.

Hate crimes rose 10% overall across 2018-19 (from 94,121 offences to 103,379), according to the latest Home Office figures, though some of this rise is a result in improvements in crime recording

The majority of hate crime offences recorded by police forces in England and Wales were RACIAL – 78,991 – up 11% from the previous year

The largest increase in hate crimes for 2018-19 was against people based on SEXUAL ORIENTATION (up 25%, to 14,491 incidents)

Hate crime

is widely believed to be under-reported.

Seven out of 10 people

never report hate crimes to the police, according to a 2019 survey by Citizens UK.

Transgender

identity hate crimes increased by

37% to 2,333 last year,

though Stonewall says that four out of five anti-LGBT hate crimes go unreported.



Disability hate crimes

officially rose by

14% across 2018-19,

to 8,256. Dimensions, a nonprofit organisation supporting people with learning disabilities and autism, says 73% of people with learning disabilities and autism have experienced a hate crime.



Religious hate crime

Just under half (47%) of police-reported religious hate crime offences were targeted against Muslims (3,530 offences). Reporting service Tell MAMA recorded

a 593% rise in incidents

in the week following the Christchurch terror attacks.



Hate crimes against Jewish people

more than doubled, according to the Home Office, with 18% of religious hate crime offences targeting Jews (1,326 offences), compared with 672 in the previous year. 2019 was also the worst year on record for antisemitic incidents, according to the Community Security Trust, which recorded

1,805 incidents,

up 7% on 2018.

12% of police-recorded hate crime offences

were estimated to have more than one motivation, with the majority of these being

both race and religion



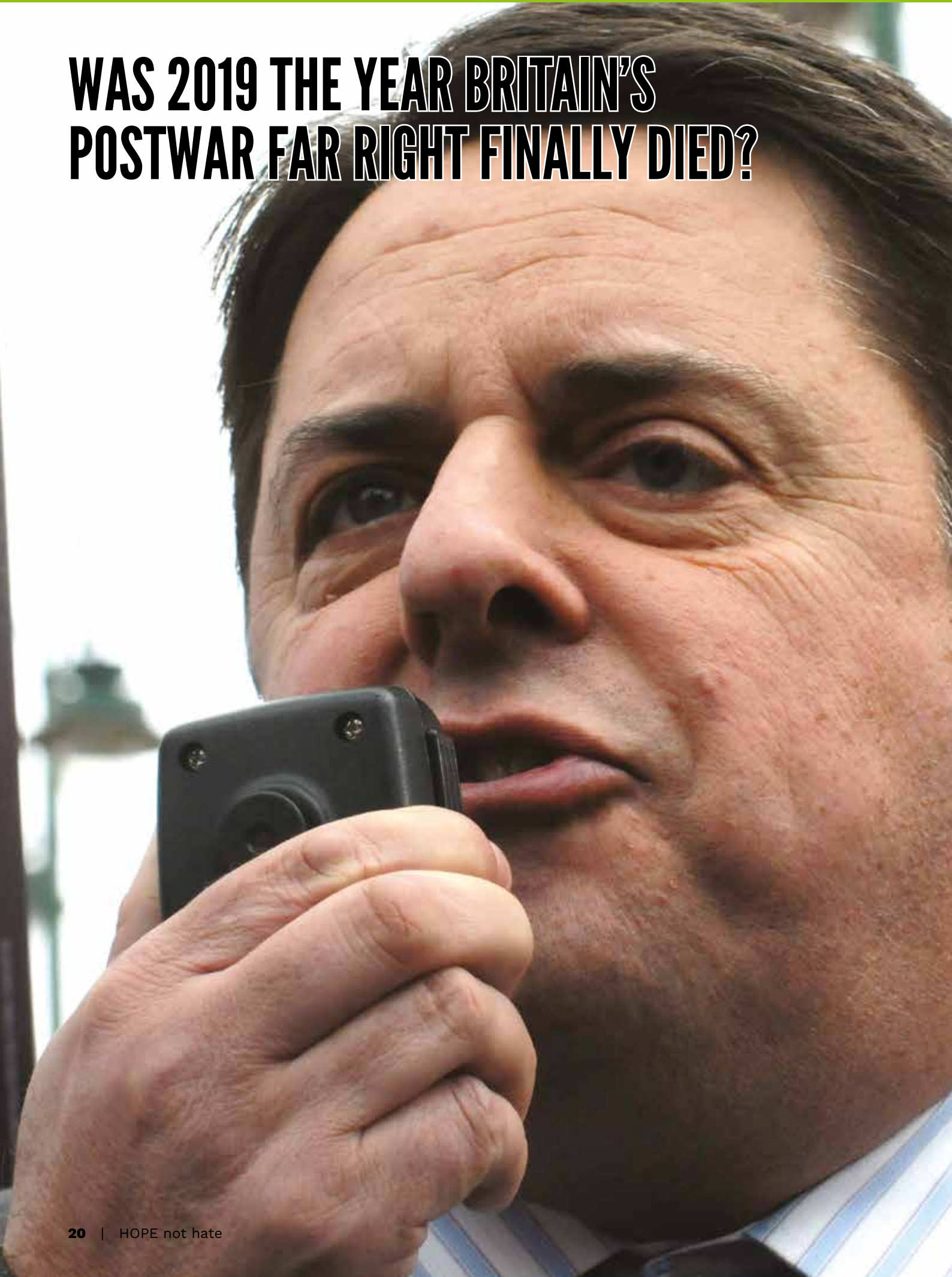
Discrimination against Travellers

A 2017 survey carried out by the Traveller Movement found that

90% of respondents had experienced discrimination

and 77% had experienced hate speech or a hate crime.

WAS 2019 THE YEAR BRITAIN'S POSTWAR FAR RIGHT FINALLY DIED?



BREXIT, MAINSTREAMING AND THE NEW POST-ORGANISATIONAL FAR RIGHT BY JOE MULHALL

AT TIMES 2019 felt like a very depressing year, with both major parties in the UK marred by their own racism scandals: antisemitism in the Labour Party, and the Conservative Party dogged by anti-Muslim racism.

Meanwhile, Brexit loomed large over a polarised and increasingly divided society, while hate crimes rose again. Nigel Farage's Brexit Party won May's European Parliamentary elections and December saw a landslide victory for a Conservative Party led by a man who described gay men as "tank-topped bumboys", compared Muslim women to "letterboxes", said that "Islam is the problem" in the wake of the London bombings, and described non-white people as "piccaninnies" with "watermelon smiles".

However, in a year when racism was rarely out of the news, one thing was conspicuous by its absence: the traditional far right. Despite 2019 seeing record numbers of far-right terror arrests, the voice of the traditional far right – in this context meaning the right of the radical and populist right – was seemingly absent from the public debate.

In fact, the traditional far right in the form of fascist parties like the British National Party (BNP) and the National Front (NF), plus longstanding antisemitic and racist print publications such as *Candour* magazine and the *League Sentinel*, as well as Holocaust denial publishers like the Historical Review Press, all but died out. These were the organisations, fronted by figures such as Nick Griffin and Richard Edmonds, that once loomed large over political discussions about immigration, race and identity in Britain. In 2019 they were nowhere to be seen, begging the question: was 2019 essentially the end point of the UK's post-war, traditional far right?

2019 AND THE TRADITIONAL FAR RIGHT

Just a decade ago, the BNP, a party founded in 1982 by John Tyndall, who started his far-right political career in the League of Empire Loyalists in the 1950s, had a member on the London Assembly and two seats in the European Parliament. At the 2010 General Election, under the leadership of far-right veteran Nick Griffin, it stood 339 candidates, dwarfing anything managed by a fascist party in the UK since 1979, when the NF managed to stand 303 candidates. Last year, in December's election the BNP stood just one candidate, the lowest since being founded.

Both the NF and the far-right British Democratic Party stood none at all, while an increasingly far-right UKIP mustered just 44, down from 467 just two years previously. A notable exception in all this is that For Britain, the anti-Muslim party led by Anne Marie Waters, increased its number of candidates in the local elections from 15 to 43 – and had its first two council successes, one of them involving an ex-BNP member. Despite this, the party remains almost completely irrelevant.

2019 saw the smallest ever turnout for the NF's

decades-old annual Remembrance Sunday march, which this year saw an embarrassing 18 people attend. The year also saw what currently looks like the demise of *Candour* magazine, the longest running far-right publication in the UK. Founded in 1953, *Candour* was launched by the notorious antisemite A. K. Chesterton, who went on to be the founding leader of the NF in 1967. While it has been in serious decline and had financial problems for some time, 2019 saw no issues published and the accompanying website going blank as a result of the current editor, Colin Todd, going to prison for assault causing actual bodily harm.

Whether we ever see another issue from this bastion of the UK fascist scene seems unlikely. The influence of these traditional far-right groups has collapsed, and as they have failed to attract new and young activists we are witnessing an aging movement literally die out.

While these traditional groups and individuals can trace their history back to WWII and sometimes back into the pre-war period, they have increasingly been replaced, especially since 9/11, by other far-right movements. These groups, typified in the UK by the English Defence League (EDL), did not emerge directly out of the racial nationalist movement and the post-war fascist milieu. While still being racist and far right, they emerged from different traditions and often had a narrower focus, namely on Islam and Muslims.

While fascist parties like the BNP and NF sought to co-opt Islamophobia as a route to the mainstream, they were unsuccessful, failing to take the ground occupied by the likes of the EDL and later the less structured ecosystem around Stephen Yaxley-Lennon (AKA Tommy Robinson).

In 2018, this movement managed to combine anti-Muslim politics with a grievance narrative of suppressed free speech and 'Brexit betrayal' to muster the largest far-right demonstrations seen in Britain for decades. However, remarkably and for a host of reasons, 2019 saw this movement head into rapid decline in the UK, with Lennon and co experiencing a terrible year.

Lennon had already been banned from Twitter in March 2018 but in February 2019 he was banned from Facebook, where he had more than one million followers, depriving him of his primary means of communicating to and organising his supporters. Another major blow came on 2 April 2019 when YouTube finally acted and placed some restrictions around his channel, which resulted in his views collapsing. This has left the encrypted messaging app Telegram as his primary means for communication with his supporters: he has amassed just 42,000 members on his channel so far.

In addition to Lennon's social media presence being curtailed, his ability to have an impact last year was significantly reduced by a period in Belmarsh prison. In July he was given a nine-month prison sentence after being found guilty of contempt of court. He served just nine weeks of the sentence,



2019 saw the smallest ever turnout for the NF's decades-old annual Remembrance Sunday march

during which time he claimed to have been held in isolation for his own security. Interestingly, despite being incarcerated again, the 'Free Tommy' movement that saw such large demonstrations in 2018 made little impact in 2019. The demonstrations outside Belmarsh were tiny. Another low point for Lennon in 2019 was his humiliation during the European Parliamentary elections, where he stood as a candidate in the North West of England. Despite a high-profile campaign, he polled just 2.2% of the vote, taking a tiny 39,000 votes and losing his deposit.

Other groups in the UK anti-Muslim scene also had a disastrous year. Britain First, once a major cause for concern, essentially disappeared from prominence. UKIP, previously a radical-right party with genuine influence, made the dreadful decision in 2018 to shift further right and team up with a group of right-wing YouTubers, which calamitously backfired and contributed towards disappointing results in the 2019 local, European and General elections.

In recent years, a glimmer of hope for many on the far right was the emergence of a British branch of the international Generation Identity network. However, following an infiltration by HOPE not hate and a major fall out with the movement's foreign leaders in August, the group split from the network and relaunched as Identitarian Movement England, before completely folding in January 2020.

Of course, none of this means that the traditional far right is gone forever, or that there won't be a time when the movement once again coagulates and produces a political party or street organisation of note, united around a particular leader. At the moment however, there is no such thing on the horizon and while the scene around Lennon has more life in it than the traditional far right and fascist scenes, it too failed to play any significant role in the debates around Brexit, immigration and identity that were ever present last year.

All of this begs the question: why?

BREXIT, MAINSTREAMING AND A POST-ORGANISATIONAL FAR RIGHT

The most obvious reason for the current irrelevance of the traditional far right is that Brexit has completely dominated the public debate, and the traditional far right has had little to offer outside of what is already being offered by mainstream positions. Unlike previous elections when debates about immigration often played a central role – ground on which the far right could make headway – this past year was almost solely about leaving the EU, ground on which the traditional far right had little to add beyond its own support.

Heritage and Destiny, the most prolific far-right magazine still being published in the UK, acknowledged that some far-right parties have stood aside in the elections, “recognising that it will be dominated by the Brexit issue and that most racial nationalists will wish to use their votes to support a pro-Brexit candidate.”

In addition to the NF not standing any candidates, both Britain First and Lennon called on their activists to support Boris Johnson and the Conservative Party with a view to “getting Brexit done”. The Brexit Party also played a significant role in occupying the far right's ground on the issue. While the party clearly harbours far-right elements, the Brexit Party is not a traditional far-right or fascist party, thereby offering voters a less toxic option than Gerard Batten's UKIP, Lennon's demonstrations, or the activities of old fascist parties such as the BNP.

However, when seeking to explain the often-prejudiced nature of societal discourse in recent years, it is worth noting that just because the old far right had no direct impact on the tone and content of politics last year, this does not mean that their presence over past decades has not had a residual or cumulative effect. Here the media and tech companies have played a role by offering platforms to extreme figures such as Nick

Griffin and Stephen Yaxley-Lennon, amplifying and normalising their prejudiced politics.

The *cordon sanitaire* that kept the far right “beyond the pale” for much of the post-war period has undoubtedly become more porous, letting the politics of prejudice seep into the mainstream – especially around the topics of Islam and Muslims. While the BNP has collapsed and the EDL is now irrelevant, decades of their hateful messages being heard on our streets, in our newspapers and on our TV screens, and consumed and promoted on increasingly pervasive social media, has likely had an effect.

In addition, while there remains a strong societal opposition to explicit Nazism and racial nationalism, anti-Muslim politics is deemed far more acceptable. Ironically, this normalisation of Islamophobia may have eroded support for the traditional far right.

Just as in 1978, when Margaret Thatcher’s claim that British people feared being “swamped” pulled the rug from under the NF, the normalisation and mainstreaming of Islamophobia may be undermining support for the organised anti-Muslim far right. Why face all the social consequences of supporting Lennon when one can vote for a Prime Minister that calls Muslim women letterboxes or read columns by Rod Liddle, Melanie Philips and Douglas Murray that spread negative views about Islam and Muslims via the pages of mainstream publications? Maybe one reason the traditional far right is so small right now is because it is simply not needed.

Another contributing factor, however, is that the far right itself is undergoing significant changes, some of which mean that their impact and effect is no longer direct (as with elections and demonstrations) but rather indirect, less obvious and harder to measure. For some years, we at HOPE not hate have been talking about the challenges posed by the emerging “post-organisational” far right. That is, individuals who engage in far-right politics outside the confines of traditional organisations and structures.

From the comfort and safety of their own homes, people can engage in far-right politics by watching YouTube videos, visiting far-right websites, networking on forums, speaking on voice chat services like Discord, and trying to convert or attack “normies” on mainstream social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook. The social cost of activism has often disappeared, as anonymous activists make micro-donations of time, money and effort, not at the behest of formal leaders but rather as part of a decentralised mass.

Impossible prior to the internet, this post-organisational far right is international, often anonymous, amorphous and extremely hard to combat. It also operates on a deeply concerning scale. While the old far right (‘white nationalism 1.0’ as this newer mass sometimes refers to it) in the UK is aging and shrinking, the post-organisational movement continues to grow. Take, for example, the far-right British YouTube account and magazine *The Iconoclast*. Despite being unknown by most people, the channel has over 217,000 subscribers and more than 21 million video views. Last year the channel produced racist and Islamophobic content and grew by roughly 30,000 subscribers.

The veteran British fascist Mark Collett, once a key member of the BNP and now turned social media content creator, also had a good year adding roughly 25,400 new subscribers, taking his total to just



Both Britain First and Lennon called on their activists to support Boris Johnson and the Conservative Party with a view to “getting Brexit done”.

short of 100,000. Other far-right British YouTubers include Colin Robertson (AKA Millennial Woes), with over 57,000 subscribers; On The Offensive, with over 63,000 subscribers, and Way of the Worlds, with 102,000 subscriber. Many of these individuals met offline in 2019 at the new Patriotic Alternative conference organised by Collett last year.

At the more moderate end of the far right is Paul Joseph Watson, ostensibly now independent of US conspiracy website InfoWars and its controversial boss Alex Jones, who has a staggering 1.78 million subscribers and a remarkable 431,335,000 views.

It is extremely difficult to measure the impact that this large post-organisational far right network has on UK politics, not least because we do not know what percentage of its subscribers and viewers are based here. Similarly, there are a plethora of far-right influencers based around the world being viewed here in the UK. However, while no exact number is available it is extremely likely that thousands, if not tens of thousands, of people in the UK are seeking out and positively engaging with far-right content: numbers that would have been beyond the reach of the BNP or the NF in decades past. What direct or indirect influence this is having is impossible to say, but it seems unlikely that such large numbers consuming content of this nature is not having an osmotic effect on our politics.

While we may indeed be witnessing the slow death of the traditional post-war, racial nationalist far right, we are of course not witnessing the death of the wider British far right. Rather, we are seeing it change into a more amorphous and decentralised threat, and thus a harder to combat movement. We are also experiencing the normalisation and mainstreaming of some far-right ideas, especially anti-Muslim politics.

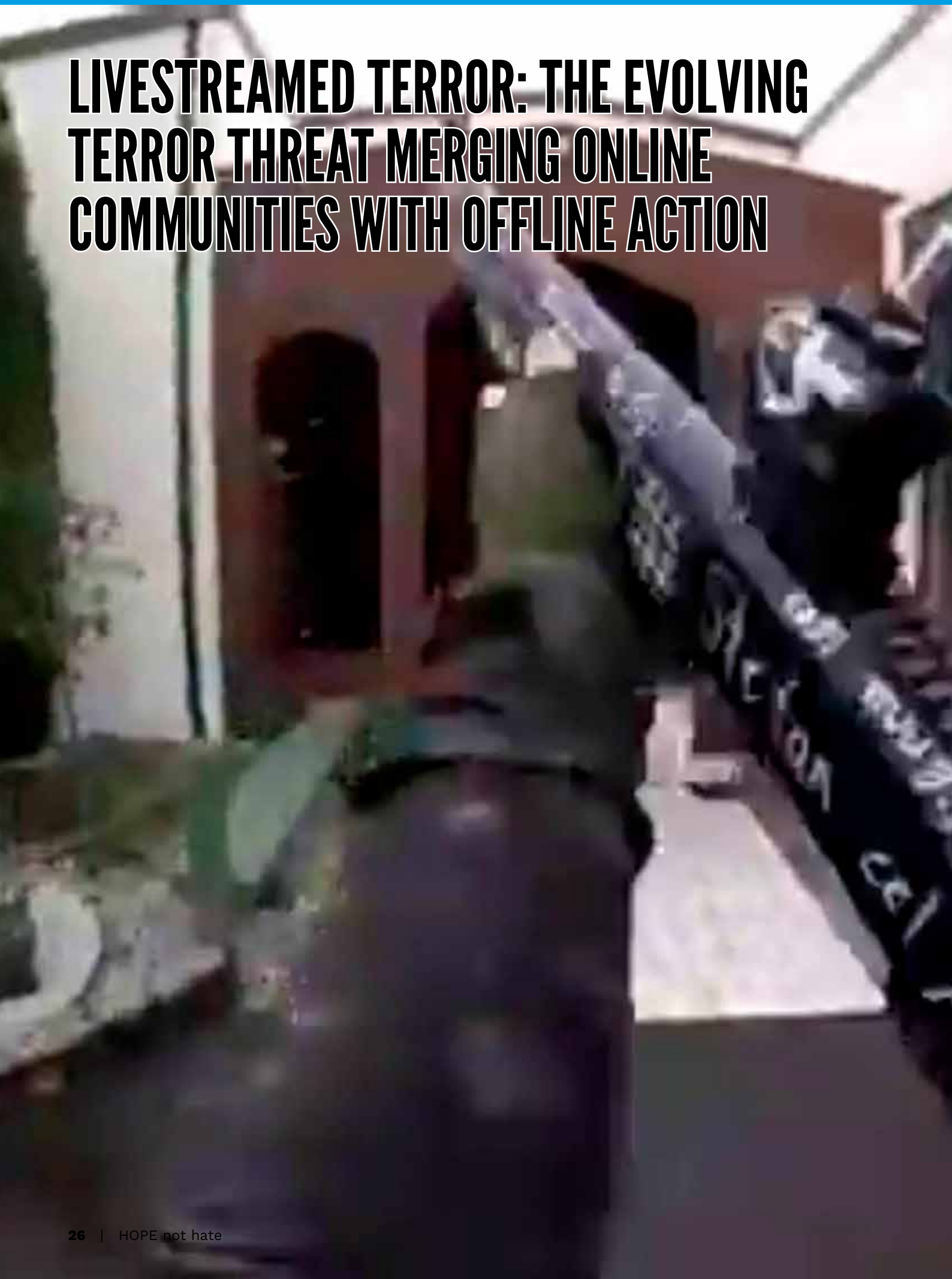
All of this raises serious challenges for the anti-fascist movement and society more generally. Will traditional anti-fascist tactics work against the post-organisational far right, and will they work against far-right politics in the mainstream? The danger is that during a time when we face new and different challenges we focus on traditional and recognisable far-right targets, spending disproportionate amounts of time on unimportant people and groups using methods that do not fit the bill. The nature of the threat continues to change and evolve, and so must we. If we fight new battles with old tactics, the results will be at best ineffective, and at worst counter-productive.

SECTION 3 – TERRORISM





LIVESTREAMED TERROR: THE EVOLVING TERROR THREAT MERGING ONLINE COMMUNITIES WITH OFFLINE ACTION





BY PATRIK HERMANSSON

FEW EVENTS of 2019 brought the danger of the far right into focus as much as the terror attack in Christchurch, New Zealand in March. With 51 lives taken during an attack against two mosques, this was the largest terrorist incident by a far-right perpetrator since 2011, when Anders Behring Breivik killed 77 people in Norway. Setting the attack apart was not only the number of victims but the way it was carried out and how it was tailored to play off far-right online communities to spread the killer's message and spark further violence.

Shortly before Brenton Tarrant arrived at the Al Noor mosque in Christchurch, he uploaded a manifesto to 8chan /pol/, an anonymous forum frequently used by the far right, where he detailed his motivations. The manifesto portrayed white people, and “European culture”, as victims of Islam and Muslim immigration, and referred to other far-right terrorists as his inspiration.

He also livestreamed the attack on Facebook using a GoPro camera mounted on his helmet. The gruesome video gave his online followers the ability to follow his murderous rampage in real time. He peppered his video with far-right slogans and terms immediately familiar to those who spend time in far-right communities online, as well as other contexts he seemed to have spent time in, such as gaming communities.

The familiarity with its language indicates that he knew the far-right sub-culture on imageboards well, and knew how to capture its attention. The attack, which he described as a “real-life effort post”, was a homage to an online community that he knew would be excited by his actions and the video – a video which would likely spread and be repurposed over and over again to get maximum impact, leading others to these dark corners of the internet.

In the months that followed several other attacks inspired by Christchurch took place in Europe and North America, where far-right shooters attempted to replicate the atrocity. Several other attacks followed, each attempting to copy Tarrant's deadly assault with varying degrees of success. Just over a month after Christchurch, on 27 April, John Earnest published a manifesto which cited Tarrant as an inspiration, then opened fire inside Poway synagogue in California. He attempted to livestream the attack as well but failed.

In October in Halle, Germany, another young man attempted to enter a synagogue with a homemade weapon and explosives while livestreaming his actions. He also published a manifesto shortly before the attack on another imageboard (as 8chan had been shut down at this point).

LIVESTREAMED TERROR

It has now become increasingly commonplace for far-right terrorists to integrate a form of social media ‘strategy’ into their attacks. Elliot Rodgers, for example, who killed seven people in California in 2014, published several videos (including one during his attack), outlining his motivations. More recently, the far-right extremist who opened fire in a synagogue in Pittsburgh in October 2018, similarly announced his attack on social media platform Gab, shortly before he began. However, Tarrant was the first far-right terrorist to livestream their attack and it likely played a vital role in making the video go instantly viral.

Tarrant’s attack was not just aimed at causing terror and violence then and there, but also to create a video of extreme violence that people on far-right forums, as well as users on mainstream social media platforms, couldn’t resist sharing. Part of the goal was to cause *more death and violence* by inspiring others to follow suit. Tarrant wrote in his manifesto that he intended to: “... incite violence, retaliation and further divide between the European people and the invaders currently occupying European soil”.

This strategy means that modern far-right terror doesn’t end when the last bullet has been fired; instigating follow up attacks and hate should be seen as a fundamental part of far-right terrorists’ aims. It is, therefore, necessary to ask what role media outlets, social media companies and ordinary people have in contributing to these attackers’ goals.

Facebook reported that 200 people watched the livestream video as the Christchurch attack unfolded. None of them reported it and copies of the video kept reappearing across all the larger social media platforms for days afterwards. Facebook reported that it had removed over 1.5 million videos of the attack. YouTube has stated that, at one point, more than one copy of the video was uploaded on the platform every second after the attack.

The sheer speed at which the video spread and the many different sites it was published on, including giants like YouTube, Facebook and Twitter but also on far-right forums and over the Torrent file-sharing network, sadly demonstrates how some are attracted to gruesome videos. Yet, it is also an indication of how diffuse, international and dynamic the far-right movement is online. Despite largely lacking a formalised or hierarchical organisational structure, its supporters are able to quickly assemble and work collaboratively while remaining anonymous behind their screens. Even if most are unlikely to have a direct connection to Tarrant, in editing the video to circumvent efforts by the social media platforms to remove it, and in sharing the manifesto and producing memes to spread its ideas, the online far right played a vital role in realising part of the motivation behind his crime.

A very clear example of this came from far-right forum Kiwifarms which became one of the primary hubs to spread the video, refusing to stop it being

shared on the site and refusing to aid the police in their investigation into Tarrant. The forum’s founder published a defiant response:

“You’re a small, irrelevant island nation barely more recognizable than any other nameless pacific sovereignty. You do not have the clout to eradicate a video from the Internet and you do not have the legal reach to imprison everyone whose [sic] posted it.”

INTERNATIONALISATION

A commonality between the attacks after Christchurch is a view of the threat as racial or civilisational. The Halle shooter, whose native language is German, chose to speak and write in English and spent time on English language imageboards. Both the livestream and documents were mostly in English, therefore immediately accessible and understandable to a global online audience. This echoes previous attacks where shooters have broadcasted their rampages and inevitably reached an international audience. Their manifestos later spread and were translated into multiple languages. The Christchurch terrorist’s manifesto has now been translated into multiple languages and can be bought in hardback copies from far-right activists online. Writing and speaking in English is a way to connect with potential supporters across the West and reflects the importance of international, usually English language, online far-right spaces for such connections.

Even though the Christchurch shooter was born in Australia he frequently identified himself as “European” and spoke of “European culture” as being under threat. He had also written down several people’s names on his weapon, visible during the livestream. Among them was Ebba Åkerlund, a Swede who was killed in a terror attack in central Stockholm in 2017 which was carried out by an immigrant from Uzbekistan. Not only did these words function as clues for watchers to look up on their own, but they indicate that the shooter saw himself as an avenger of these victims on another continent.

GAMIFICATION

The planning documents published by the shooter in Halle exemplify another worrying trend in pro-terror online spaces: what has become known as the ‘gamification’ of far-right terror attacks. One page of the document lists a number of “achievements” which would be gained if a specific weapon was used, if people of different religions were killed and even points for targeting children. These ‘achievements’ were given different names akin to the way many computer games reward players. As a result, the nazi website The Daily Stormer called it a “gamer uprising”.

Ever since the Christchurch mass shooting, commentators on the now-closed 8chan /pol/ forum and various pro-terror Telegram channels and other forums have discussed far-right terrorism in terms of their “score”. This vocabulary is borrowed from TV



The memorial to Anis Alibayeva, 23, who was killed in the Christchurch mosque attacks on March 15, 2019.
Photo: Steve Miller/VOA

and computer games but used here to describe the number of lives a shooter takes. Sometimes it also reflects a desire to beat the high score of previous terrorists. Lists of the most deadly attacks, rendered in graphics reminiscent of retro computer games, are circulated on Telegram and far-right forums as “leaderboards”, where the most deadly terrorist attacks over the last decade are ranked and the shooters celebrated. The Christchurch shooter is, for instance, often referred to as a “saint”.

However, there is more to gamification than a score system and borrowing language from the world of gaming. It is also about terror as *entertainment*, and the excitement these supporters derive from watching someone set a new “high score”. This is a topic we explore further in relation to chat app Telegram in another article in this report. For the potential terrorist, part of the motivation appears to be the prospect of ending up at the top of the scoreboard and thereby gaining some significance through delivering on those expectations and outdoing previous shooters.

Glorification of death and murder is not new to the far right, but the video of the Christchurch terror attack popularised the tactic of livestreaming video of a mass shooting. It resulted in imagery that anybody who has played a first-person shooting game would recognise. The camera mounted on the helmet made the attack look like a first-person shooter game and, following the attack, edited versions of the video even appeared online with the interface of a game added. It is upsetting footage that is in line with a great deal of other content on image boards, platforms long defined by their anonymity and an anything-goes attitude, where a layer of irony and lack of clarity is laid over

every topic. Effectively these allow the viewers to distance themselves from the reality of the content and ideas they are spreading. Video of the Halle shooting spree was even livestreamed on the popular game streaming platform Twitch.

The Halle shooter’s stream begins with the alleged shooter talking to the camera and then apologising to the streaming audience when he fails to gain entry to the synagogue, possibly reflecting the feeling that he had failed to deliver what the audience expects. Many commentators on far-right forums argued that the attack did not live up to the listed “achievements”, thought the gunman amateurish and the plan poorly thought through. Similarly, after the Poway synagogue attack in which one person was killed, a user on 4chan /pol/ wrote:

“Can you imagine your son throwing his whole life away for a high score of 1? It’s just embarrassing. He couldn’t even kill the fucking rabbi. Like, how do you walk into a synagogue to commit a mass shooting and not kill the rabbi?”

WIDER THREAT

Often the talk in the media is of ‘lone wolf’ terrorists, a term that can, when used incorrectly, give the impression that an individual has radicalised in complete isolation. The truth is that while some terrorists do plan and carry out their attacks alone, it is very rare for them not to have emerged from an ecosystem of sorts.

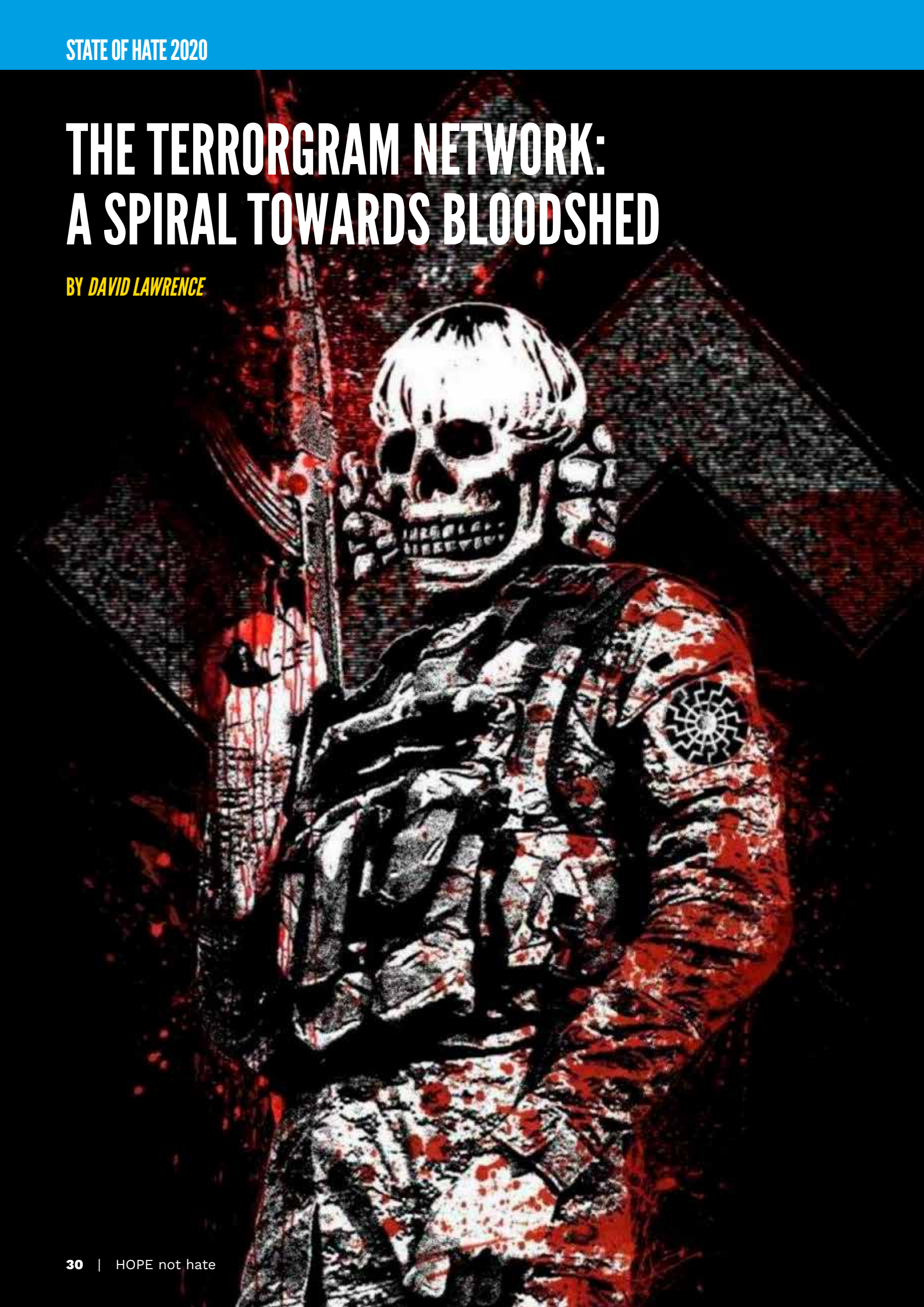
Across the entire far right we are seeing the emergence of a post-organisational threat, a decentralised collective of anonymous people working in broadly the same direction and towards similar goals, often in informal interaction with one another. That is not to say formal organisations are no longer important – they clearly are. National Action and its splinter groups have shown the very real threat posed by structured far-right terror groups.

However, there is also a worryingly large number of people engaging with extreme and pro-terrorism content online, that are ostensibly unaffiliated to any formal organisation. In various corners of the internet, they are engaging in a form of collective politics – just not as a formal member of a structured organisation. As the breadth of targets of hatred highlighted by the shooters’ manifestos, these unstructured online communities are imparting a variety of extreme ideologies and influences, from antisemitism and Islamophobia to extreme misogyny and hatred against LGBT+ people.

The internet has catalysed this form of informal decentralised collective action, with forums and imageboards and communication platforms such as Discord, Telegram and Wire facilitating discussion and sometimes planning. If we are to understand the real nature of contemporary far-right terrorism, we have to look beyond branded organisations and also explore this complex, labyrinthine and hard-to-monitor world of pro-terrorism online spaces.

THE TERRORGRAM NETWORK: A SPIRAL TOWARDS BLOODSHED

BY *DAVID LAWRENCE*



2019 SAW a fresh and ferocious kind of far-right violence emerge in Western countries. In March, a 28-year-old Australian attacked two mosques, murdering 51 in Christchurch, New Zealand. In April, a teenager in Poway, California, gunned down a woman and injured three others in a synagogue. In August, a 21-year-old massacred 22 in an anti-Latino spree in a Walmart store in El Paso, Texas. In October, an armed 27-year-old man in Halle, Germany, tried and failed to force his way into a synagogue on the Jewish holiday of Yom Kippur, instead executing a passer-by and a staff member in a nearby kebab shop.

All four killers released manifestos heavy with slang and in-group references, and the Christchurch and Halle attackers livestreamed their actions online. While they were not known “members” of any formal organisations, all four made clear that they viewed their actions not as isolated incidents, but as part of a wider offensive, drawing inspiration from previous attackers and detailing their motivations and methods in the hope of sparking further rampages.

Over the past two years, we have also witnessed small, decentralised, international and terroristic extreme-right “groups” announcing themselves online. While these secretive and fragmented networks may differ politically in some aspects, they all draw inspiration from existing far-right terror networks, such as the Atomwaffen Division (AWD), and similarly preach a message of sabotage and guerrilla warfare in order to accelerate the collapse of the “system”, thereby unleashing a carnival of homicide in which their perceived enemies will be annihilated.

What connects these two phenomena is a bloodthirsty far-right ecosystem that has taken root in recent years, suppurating on anonymous imageboards, public channels, private forums and messaging apps. This subculture cheerleads for and deifies terrorists, and regards mass murder not only as a means to revolution and retribution, but as a form of entertainment. It was the audience to which these gunmen addressed their sprees, and enables budding far-right activists to radicalise and network, and allows new groupings to coalesce.

If we are to understand the nature of contemporary far-right terrorism, it is imperative that we navigate this complex, labyrinthine and hard-to-monitor world of pro-terrorism online spaces. In particular, we must explore the so-called “Terrorgram” network, a collection of a few dozen public channels and private chat groups on the messaging app Telegram, which is developing into a central hub through which this subculture operates.

TELEGRAM

While pro-terror content is accessible on almost any social media platform, many of the major firms have become more proactive in tackling the issue since the far-right rally in Charlottesville, USA, in August 2017, when a neo-nazi drove his car into a crowd and killed a counter-protester, Heather Heyer. This more proactive approach from social media firms is of course welcome. But one consequence is that deplatformed groups and individuals have re-congregated on platforms with a more laissez faire attitude towards extremism. Since its foundation, the encrypted messaging app Telegram has placed an overriding emphasis on privacy; founder Pavel Durov once claimed that “our right for privacy is more important than our fear of bad things happening, like terrorism.”

The platform, which now has hundreds of millions of active users across the globe, has long been central to the operations of jihadi groups, most notably supporters of the so-called Islamic State (IS). A 2017 report by the Counter Extremism Project showed how extremist groups used the platform “to recruit new members, fundraise, incite to violence, and even coordinate terrorist activity.” Elements of the far right have also made Telegram home, increasingly since the Christchurch attack. The SITE Intelligence Group reported that almost 80% of a select sample of 374 far-right Telegram channels and groups were created between the 15 March massacre and 30 October.

After years of inaction, Telegram finally began purging accounts associated with IS and al-Qaeda in November 2019. However, as terrorism analyst Rita Katz has highlighted, the platform has yet to do the same for the multitude of public nazi channels, private groups and accounts, despite many being just as threatening as jihadists.

OPERATION AND IDEOLOGIES OF TERRORGRAM

Telegram’s stance is particularly concerning given the stark extremeness of Terrorgram channels, which prolifically spew out white supremacist propaganda, snuff videos of lynchings and shootings, survivalist and guerrilla training manuals, and instructions for manufacturing weapons, carrying out attacks and evading detection.

Most channels are in English or Ukrainian, although German and Spanish channels also exist; many of those in English appear to be US-oriented, although a handful are known to be UK-based. While some channels are dedicated to specific extreme-right organisations and others to obscure variants of far-right terrorism, the most popular take a more broad approach and serve as feeds for all types of far-right, pro-terror content, heavily recycling posts from, and actively promoting, other Terrorgram channels.

It’s possible to assume a large amount of crossover in followers across Terrorgram channels and groups. The biggest have accrued over 4,000 followers in under a year – significant numbers for outlets urging viewers to “Piss away any morals you have left” and take up arms.

A major preoccupation of Terrorgram is the worship of terrorists, who are canonized as “Saints”. Most of their pantheon consists of white supremacists, including the 1999 London nailbomber David Copeland and the perpetrator of the 2011 Norway attacks, Anders Breivik. A surprisingly diverse range of other killers are praised and discussed on Terrorgram, often used as case studies from which potential attackers can learn. For example, Islamist terrorist Omar Mateen has been dubbed a “hero” for murdering 49 people at a gay nightclub in Florida in 2016, and Christopher Dorner, an African American, has been celebrated for his nine-day 2013 campaign of warfare against police.

The Provisional IRA is often glorified for its longevity, tactical sophistication and aesthetics. Even the Zodiac serial killer, who murdered at least five people in the 1960s and 1970s, has been praised for his ability to evade capture, and Jim Jones, the cult leader who led over 900 to mass suicide, was included in a “leader board” of “Saints” for the sheer numbers he took to the grave.

The celebration of such figures reveals the bleak nihilism underpinning Terrorgram; for many the capacity for death is the highest virtue, and political or religious alignment is secondary.

Of course, the modern terroristic nazi scene predates Terrorgram. One major influence is the now-defunct nazi forum Iron March (IM), linked to both the proscribed UK-based nazi terror group National Action (NA), and the US-founded Atomwaffen Division (AWD). Despite having little over 1,200 users when it folded in November 2017, as a forum Iron March has had an outsized influence on modern nazism. In particular, it popularised *SIEGE* by veteran American nazi James Mason, a work promoting the establishment of underground, leaderless terrorist cells, working towards destabilising society and ushering in revolution.

Iron March was also key in the development of the “terrorwave” aesthetic, a distinctive and deeply menacing form of visual propaganda that succinctly communicates a message of terrorist violence. Usually rendered in red, white and black, the style often incorporates images of historical fascists, terrorists or paramilitaries wearing skull masks, alongside esoteric far-right symbols and simplistic slogans (such as “TRAITORS WILL HANG” and “RAPE THE POLICE”).

The influence of IM on Terrorgram is profound, and the philosophies of *SIEGE* and the terrorwave aesthetic are ubiquitous across Terrorgram channels.

While all are unequivocally dedicated to decentralised terrorism, there is a degree of ideological variation within the Terrorgram circuit. There are several channels dedicated to “eco-fascism”, for example: a loose and intensely antisemitic far-right scene that emphasises a mystical connection to the land, the violent enforcement of animal rights, and often genocidal solutions to the issue of overpopulation.

The scene became increasingly visible during 2019, in part due to the Christchurch killer self-identifying as an eco-fascist, and the El Paso killer using eco-fascist arguments in his manifesto.

There is also a strong strain of esotericism and occultism woven into Terrorgram propaganda, lending a mystic sheen to the movement. Esoteric Hitlerism is frequently referenced, a bizarre pseudo-religion cooked up post-war by Nazi zealot Savitri Devi, who co-opted elements of Hinduism and alleged that Hitler was an incarnation of the god Vishnu.

The iconography of the Order of Nine Angles (O9A), a neo-nazi Satanist group, also often appears on Terrorgram. Founded in the UK in the 1960s, O9A combines Hitler worship with occultist trappings, and encourages adherents to commit violence, rapes and even the “culling” of human victims in order to undermine civilisation. A key acolyte was David Myatt, a man who influenced both the nazi terror group Combat 18 and the London nailbomber David Copeland in the 1990s, before converting to fundamentalist Islam and spending over a decade promoting al-Qaeda.

While it is unlikely many Terrorgram users genuinely believe the teachings of Devi and Myatt, the sheer extremeness of their philosophies are alluring to young activists in search of the “edgiest” positions available, and fluency in the wilfully baffling jargon and occult symbolism are used to signal in-group status. As we report elsewhere in *State of Hate*, O9A has experienced a resurgence in recent years, with members of NA and AWD dabbling in its ideas. It is also believed to have been influential on the Sonnenkrieg Division (SKD), an offshoot of NA, which has produced some of the most sickening and degraded content ever produced by the British far right.

ORGANISING

Most worryingly, Telegram has extended the reach of an array of international terroristic organisations, some of which continue to announce new cells in Europe, Australasia and North America. The platform has also played midwife to several new terroristic groups over the past year, some of which, although small, are establishing cells offline, committing hate crimes and threatening public officials.

AWD remains a looming presence on Terrorgram. Founded by IM users in 2015, the group was the first of a new generation of nazis to embrace the philosophies of *SIEGE*, and has been linked to five murders in the US. Whilst it has suffered crackdowns and numerous arrests in recent years, cells outside of the USA continue to broadcast its message.

In October, a pre-existing Telegram channel with thousands of followers announced itself “the official channel for THE ATOMWAFFEN DIVISION”. The same day it claimed that “in the past months the AWD have received hundreds of emails with positive feedback and key cells across the globe have been established within such a short time”, posting a video of heavily-armed activists from its recently formed Ukrainian branch.

AWD in turn has influenced The Base, another key name on the Terrorgram circuit. Formed in July 2018 and taking its name from al-Qaeda, the “Siegepilled” (*SIEGE*-promoting) group held paramilitary training camps in the USA during 2019. The group has had a disastrous start to 2020, with six members arrested in the USA for various charges including conspiracy to murder an anti-fascist couple, and *The Guardian* revealed that Rinaldo Nazzaro, an American living in Russia, was the mastermind behind its operations. It is unlikely that the group will survive, although its legacy will continue to resound on Terrorgram.

Also notable is the emergence of the Feuerkrieg Division (FKD). Established in late 2018, FKD is believed to have fewer than 50 members, primarily based in Europe, including the UK, the Netherlands and Estonia, and has recruited activists in Canada and the USA.

In August last year, an alleged FKD activist was arrested in Las Vegas for allegedly plotting antisemitic and homophobic attacks, with bomb-making materials found in his home. Following the September arrest of an alleged teenage member, the group also received press coverage in the UK after it posted a picture on Telegram of the Chief Constable of West Midlands Police with a gun to his head. Another post bore the words “Release our member or your heads will be our agenda”, alongside the addresses of police stations and offices.

Smaller, more recently formed groups include the eco-fascist outfit The Green Brigade (GB), which launched on Telegram in November 2019 and quickly accrued over 1,000 followers. Describing itself as “an organization consisting of openly accelerationist, militant environmentalist members focused on tearing down the system that exploits our people, land and animals”, activists have distributed posters in Arkansas and New Hampshire in the USA, Stockholm in Sweden, and London and Scotland, UK.

VICE magazine has linked GB to an arson attack on a mink farm in Sölvesborg, Sweden, and labelled it “a cell within The Base”, although GB claims it has “no formal agreements with any other group and it will remain that way”.



(top) Image from a large Terrorgram channel

(left) Image in the “Terrorwave” style



The Vorherrschaft Division (VSD), established in August 2019, is yet another pro-SIEGE group. Although undoubtedly tiny, in October last year a synagogue in Michigan was plastered with VSD posters featuring images of Hitler with the words: “Did you forget about me?” VSD’s Telegram channel has also published the detailed personal details of the families of perceived enemies, including children, and encouraged readers to “pay them a visit”.

The purpose of establishing these myriad outfits is decentralisation, ensuring that when a group becomes compromised (such as The Base), others are untarnished. The effect is also disorientating, inflating

their scope and creating the illusion that there are nazi cells in every town poised for violence. While their Telegram channels may have hundreds of followers, in reality some of the smaller announced “groups” may at this stage consist of little more than a logo, a Telegram channel and an email address, and their “cells” being single activists.

However, to minimise the threat of far-right terrorism is both foolhardy and dangerous. As we have seen in Christchurch, Poway, El Paso and Halle, it only takes a single individual to carry out a deadly attack.

WHAT NEXT?

Telegram continues to fail to take action against the cruel subculture operating through its software, and must do much more to impede its spread. All tech companies have a responsibility to deal with the use of their platforms for nefarious purposes, and Telegram must be held to account.

It is crucial to recognise that Telegram is just one part of a wider underground ecosystem. Members of this system are conscious that they may soon be forced to find a new home online. As one popular channel posted: “This won’t last forever though, none of this stuff we’re doing on Telegram will. Eventually there will be a ban, a leak, an arrest, and we’ll have the option of finding our next Twitter/Discord/Telegram or we can begin to take things into our own hands.”

While Telegram bans alone will not eradicate the threat, it will take away one key means by which terrorists radicalise, propagandise and network. The platform must take action now, and we must track down potential terrorists wherever they run to next.

'FAR-RIGHT TERRORISTS'

A TOTAL ON TWELVE PEOPLE WHO WERE IN FAR-RIGHT GROUPS OR INFLUENCED BY FAR-RIGHT IDEOLOGY WERE CONVICTED OF TERRORISM-RELATED OFFENCES IN THE UK LAST YEAR. THEY WERE:



KIERAN CLEARY

Praised Hitler online and attempted to build a shrapnel bomb, telling friends he was going to "kill many people". He was jailed for terrorism and explosives offences.



DANIEL WARD

Ward was jailed for three years for links to National Action. He attempted to obtain semi-automatic weapons and described his "thirst for gratuitous violence" in emails to NA members.



STEVEN BISHOP

Bishop was convicted for plotting to bomb Baitul Futuh Mosque in Morden as revenge for the 2017 Manchester Arena attack. He was given a four year sentence.



MICHAEL SZEWCZUK

Szewczuk produced Sonnenkrieg Division propaganda that glorified Anders Breivik and called Prince Harry a "race traitor". Szewczuk also called for "systematic slaughtering" of women and rape of children.



OSKAR DUNN-KOCZOROWSKI

Dunn-Koczorowski was charged for encouraging terrorism by posting Sonnenkrieg Division propaganda alongside Szewczuk.



TRISTAN MORGAN

Morgan set fire to a synagogue in relation to a ceremony commemorating the Holocaust. He was also charged with encouraging terrorism by publishing far-right songs to Soundcloud.



JACEK TCHORZEWSKI

Tchorzewski was jailed for four years for possessing bomb-making manuals and instructions on how to make firearms. He had links to Sonnenkrieg Division and was heard in a voice recording saying that he dreamt of carrying out a terror attack.



PAWEL GOLASZEWSKI

Golaszewski was found with instructions on his computer on weapon-making and assassination techniques. He has previous terrorism charges and has posted anti-Muslim rants on his Facebook.



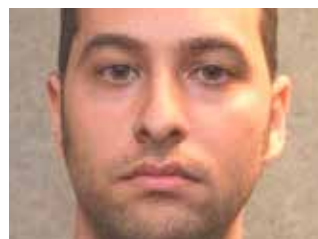
VINCENT FULLER

Fuller stabbed a teenager in a car park who he thought was Muslim. Before the attack he had praised the shooter in Christchurch, New Zealand on his Facebook as well as saying that "White supremacists rule. I'm going to murder a Muslim".



MORGAN SEALES

Seales and Gabrielle Longo planned to commit a terror attack inspired by Christchurch. He was also found guilty of possessing material for terrorist purposes.



GABRIELLE LONGO

Identified by Morgan Seales' phone records and discussed how to commit an attack similar to the one in Christchurch, New Zealand earlier in the year. Longo was additionally found guilty of disseminating terrorist publications



DURHAM TEENAGER

The youngest person to be convicted of planning terrorism in the UK, the teenager wrote about race war and listed locations he planned to attack in his personal notes. He described himself as a "natural sadist" and etched the symbol of the Order of Nine Angles on his notebook.

A CASE TO BAN THE O9A

THE ORDER of Nine Angles (O9A) is a Nazi-Satanist group which seeks to overthrow the alleged “Nazarene/Magian” (Jewish) influence on society by subverting and destabilising society through both “magick” and practical action.

It is the most extreme Satanist group in the world and is having an increasing influence on a generation of young nazis who are being drawn into terrorist activity. Over the last 12 months four nazis convicted of terrorist offences have been linked to O9A, and there are two more cases pending.

The material put out by the group, which encourages murder and rape, is considered so extreme that some of it is held in a secure section at the British Library and can only be accessed under supervision.

The O9A was set up by David Myatt in the early 1970s. Estimates of membership range from a few dozen to 2,000 worldwide. In addition to Myatt, who also writes under the pseudonyms Anton Long, Godric Redbeard and Abdul-Aziz bin Myatt, the other key O9A leader is Richard Moul, who operates under the Satanic name Christos Beest.

During the course of Myatt’s 50 year involvement in Satanism, he has been involved in a number of violent nazi groups, including the National Socialist Freedom Movement, Column 88, Combat 18, plus he led the National Socialist Movement, which counted the London nailbomber David Copeland as one of its members.

In the streetfighters and pub brawlers of C18, Myatt saw the raw material from which a revolutionary movement could be formed. Myatt was particularly interested in the skinhead followers of Blood and Honour. “These mostly young Aryans have the right instincts; they have the right feelings about life. Their often rowdy behaviour, their tendency to like brawls, is natural and healthy because it is part of the warrior heritage.” Myatt saw his role as the educator, producing material to turn the C18 stormtroopers and Blood and Honour skinheads into fully conscious Aryan warriors.

He had called on C18 and NSM supporters to channel their energies into a terrorist campaign. “The primary duty of all National-Socialists,” wrote Myatt, “is to change the world. National-Socialism means revolution: the overthrow of the existing System and its replacement with a National-Socialist society. Revolution means struggle: it means war.”

In a *System Breakdown: A Guide to Disrupting the System*, widely considered a terrorist manifesto, Myatt called for terrorism: not a few “wasteful and pointless” attacks on isolated targets but instead a prolonged attack on society, tantamount to a strategy of tension. “It means persistent and calculating pressure applied to the whole structure of everyday life – and it means that a power base has been built which can supply the dedicated people needed to mount and sustain such pressure



over a period of many years. Tension within certain communities can be raised by ‘direct action’. Members of covert action groups should infiltrate themselves into organisations, groups, businesses and other concerns to either (a) sabotage it from within, or (b) obtain useful hardware. All covert direct action organisations must be prepared – at some time in the future – for armed conflict with the forces which aid and support the system.”

In 1998 he also wrote another pro-terrorist essay called *A Practical Guide to Aryan Revolution*. Chapter titles included ‘Assassinations’, ‘Terror bombings’ and ‘Racial War’. A copy of this essay was found in David Copeland’s flat at the time of his arrest, and a copy was also found in the possession of the National Socialist Underground (NSU), a German terror group responsible for the murders of 10 people between 2000 and 2006.

After the collapse of C18, Myatt converted to Islam, initially with the view of bringing nazis and Islamists together to attack Jews, but when this failed he simply became a pro-al Qaeda propagandist. He also praised Osama bin Laden, called the 9/11 attacks an ‘acts of heroism,’ urged the killing of Jews, supports suicide missions and encouraged young Muslims to take up Jihad.

THE CURRENT O9A THREAT

The Order of Nine Angles threat is on two levels. There is the infiltration of and recruitment from existing nazi groups, and then there is the spreading of its propaganda.

Much of their material specially targets young people because they are willing to do things others in society are unlikely to do.

Reflecting on 40 years of political activity, Myatt said in a 2005 interview with Aryan Nations: “In my own life, I have tried to create some things which can disrupt our societies and which can lead to the creation of strong, really dangerous, ruthless individuals – some things which are so subversive that no laws could ever outlaw them, and that attempts to restrain them, to outlaw them, would only make them more attractive to some individuals.”

ORDER OF NINE ANGLES: AN INCUBATOR OF TERRORISM

WARNING: THIS ARTICLE CONTAINS SOME EXTREMELY OFFENSIVE/UPSETTING CONTENT



BY DAVID LAWRENCE, PATRIK HERMANSSON AND NICK LOWLES

IN JANUARY this year, there was a liberal outcry in the UK after the non-violent environmentalist group Extinction Rebellion appeared on a watch-list compiled by counter-terror police. Titled *Safeguarding young people and adults from ideological extremism*, the 12-page document, produced by officials in the south east, listed a variety of ideologies deemed dangerous enough to warrant reporting an individual to the Government's Prevent safeguarding programme.

While Extinction Rebellion made the list, one group that did not was the Order of Nine Angles (O9A/ONA), a UK-originating Nazi-Satanist cult that has openly promoted extreme violence for decades, and has influenced terroristic nazi groups on both sides of the Atlantic. Despite its distinctive terminology and iconography, the availability of its published works, its understood goals, strategies and tactics and its documented impact on the extreme fringes, O9A continues to fly under the police radar, who appear too bewildered by the group to understand its threat and take action.

HISTORY AND IDEAS

While it claims to have pre-Christian roots, O9A's modern iteration originated in the early 1970s, when British nazi David Myatt, using the alias Anton Long, developed a system that intertwined elements of Satanism, paganism and Nazism into a bizarre pseudo-religious political cult. In brief, O9A seeks to harness supernatural forces and overthrow the alleged "Nazarene/Magian" (Jewish) influence on society, reduce the population of "mundanes" through acts of extreme barbarism, and usher in a new imperial aeon (age) ruled by a race of Satanic supermen who would colonise the solar system.

Such notions are patently absurd, but as Jacob C. Senholt of the University of Aarhus claims, unlike many Satanic creeds, O9A is inherently intertwined with extreme politics, and is bent on subverting and destabilising society through both "magick" and practical action.

There is a deeply transgressive spirit and a very real cruelty at the core of O9A, which encourages acolytes to engage in forbidden and illegal acts, including extreme violence, sexual assault, assassinations and human sacrifices (or "culling"). Doing so supposedly enables contact with sinister supernatural forces, and accelerates the breakdown of the current system. In *The Dreccian Way*, leading O9A figure Richard Moulton (AKA Christos Beest) writes: "To cull humans is to be the ONA."

O9A is organised into "nexions" (chapters), and climbing O9A's hierarchy requires founding and leading one's own nexion. Groups resembling O9A are known to have been founded in mainland Europe, the US and New Zealand, but as Senholt writes, it

is difficult to ascertain which of these groups "are merely inspired by ONA, sharing their ethos, and which groups are a direct result of an initiate's work within the order".

The group's hierarchy also requires followers to undertake "insight roles", which means spending a minimum of six months infiltrating and subverting other organisations or religions in order to gain new experience, thereby strengthening O9A. The O9A work *Hostia* directs initiates to: "Undertake the role of extreme political activist and so champion heretical views (by e.g. becoming involved in extreme Right-Wing activism)", or alternatively to join the police.

Myatt, who regards Nazi Germany to be "a practical expression of Satanic spirit", has been actively involved in extreme right politics for decades. In the 1990s he contributed to the emergence of a militant far-right underground in the UK. He was a particular influence on the Sargent wing of the nazi terror group Combat 18, and also founded the National Socialist Movement, which counted the 1999 London nailbomber David Copeland among its members.

When asked in 2005 if O9A was posing as nazis to recruit and spread its message, Myatt responded: "You seem to have missed the point about ONA and National Socialism. From the get-go the ONA have propagated holocaust revisionism, have praised Hitler, have encouraged members to join NS groups, with one of their core principles being, to quote Professor Monette, 'the Way of Defiance of and Practical Opposition to Magian Abstractions'. This principle refers to the ONA's opposition to what it perceives as illegitimate Magian (western Judaeo-Christian) control of global culture and economics.

"Magian is ONA code for ZOG [Zionist Occupation Government – a phrase to describe the Jewish control of the state that became widely adopted by nazis in the 1980s and 90s]."

For Myatt, a National Socialist society can only be achieved by revolution: "Revolution means struggle: it means war. It means certain tactics have to be employed, and a great revolutionary movement organised which is primarily composed of those prepared to fight, prepared to get their hands dirty and perhaps spill some blood."

In 1998, Myatt wrote *A Practical Guide to The Strategy and Tactics of Revolution*, widely considered his terrorist manifesto [see side bar].

Myatt converted to fundamentalist Islam, initially as an attempt to unite jihadists and nazis over their mutual hatred of Jews, but when that failed he threw himself into hard-line Islamism. He became a strong supporter of Hamas and al-Qaeda, writing long diatribes in support of terrorism and suicide attacks.

Whether Myatt had genuinely converted is open to question, but given his life and the O9A rules, his promotion of Islamism is just as likely to have been another period of "insight" rather than a true conversion.



‘THE TERRORIST MANIFESTO’

In 1998 O9A leader David Myatt wrote *A Practical Guide to The Strategy and Tactics of Revolution*, widely considered to be a terrorist handbook.

In it Myatt explains that there are few possible legal ways for National Socialists to achieve a new society through engaging in the democratic system, which is rigged against them, as they live under a [Jewish controlled] Government of Occupation.

Rather, he advocates: “Active resistance to tyranny through organized insurrection” and: “Active resistance through leaderless (or lone-wolf) activism.”

The *Guide* calls for a decentralised army of resistance, driven forward by a shared vision and belief. “Such is its nature that it can never be destroyed by the enemy, just as it can never be infiltrated by ZOG spies and agents. So long as one person keeps its aims, its ideals, alive; so long as one person acts in its name; so long as one person takes its Oath of Allegiance and becomes a Soldier of the Aryan Liberation Army, it will survive, unconquered by our enemies.”

The secret army pushes out the ideas, and its adherents are encouraged to develop “Lone-Wolf Resistance” and act without coordination or even personal contact with anyone else.

Supporters can form small cells, or “Active Service Units”, to carry out actions, so if they get caught they have no knowledge of the rest of the organisation.

He then sets out four ways of covert direct action: assassination of individuals; terror bombing; sabotage of the infrastructure of the System – e.g. roads, communications, television transmitters, power stations etc., and terror campaigns directed at their enemies – “indiscriminate or otherwise”.

A copy of this essay was found in David Copeland’s flat at the time of his arrest, and a copy was also found in the possession of the National Socialist Underground (NSU), a German terror group responsible for the murders of 10 people between 2000 and 2006.

No-one should be in any doubt as to Myatt’s violent intent, as he concludes in the *Guide*: “There is going to be no war, no revolution, no breakdown unless we who know, who feel, who understand, create it. There is going to be no awakening of our people, unless we awaken them through such things. The very future of our land, our people, really does depend on us. The whole fabric of this decadent materialistic society must be broken down and destroyed, by whatever means are necessary and practical, and however ruthless we have to be, for such ruthlessness is now necessary to save our people and our land and enable us to live in freedom and as we must live: among our own kind according to the laws and traditions of our noble warrior culture.”

THE RESURGENCE

Given its clandestine and decentralised nature, it is difficult to estimate O9A’s true size and influence with confidence. Some believe it’s comprised of just a handful of people, while others put its global membership at 2,000. Whatever the true figure, what is abundantly clear is that O9A has enjoyed a recent resurgence among several of both the USA’s and UK’s most extreme terroristic far-right groups, and has gained a new visibility online. Most disturbingly, the adoption of O9A’s philosophy of unbridled transgression and depravity appears to have played a role in excusing, or even fostering, a culture of violent sexual sadism and the promotion of weaponised rape among certain sections of the extreme right.

O9A operates on two levels. It sends its supporters into existing organisations to influence and recruit, but it also disseminates its propaganda far and wide, both through its own platforms and those of others. O9A functions both as a covert organisation, and as a brand suited to the online post-organisational far right: young radicals drawn to extreme fringe ideas can easily access O9A material and take from it what they wish.

■ National Action

Ryan Fleming was a prominent activist within the now-banned British terrorist group National Action (NA). He got involved in NA in February 2015 after he made contact through the now-defunct nazi forum Iron March (IM), offering his services as a cyber-security expert. His first public appearance for NA was on its Newcastle demo, where he made a hard-line barnstorming speech, described by soon-to-be terrorist Jack Renshaw as “great bants”.

What his new NA friends did not know was that Fleming was an important figure in O9A, running its Yorkshire nexion, and was closely linked to its offshoot in the US, the ‘Tempel ov Blood’ (ToB).

Fleming was also an established writer on the occult and Satanist scene, writing several books under the pseudonym A. A. Morain. Among his masterpieces were *Scithain: Vampyrical Witchcraft of the Drakon Covenant* and *Codex Aristarchus*, with the latter having a foreword written by Czar Azag-kala of ToB. Fleming’s books focus on hunting down people in rural settings and feeding on them.

In 2011, Fleming was jailed for the sexual assault of a vulnerable young man, who he had imprisoned and tortured before forcing him to perform a sex act. This was not considered serious enough to have him excluded from NA. In 2017, after NA was banned, he was jailed for sexually abusing a 14-year-old girl.

It would also appear that West Yorkshire Police was either totally unaware of Fleming’s involvement in O9A, or did not think it was in anyway related to his politics. This meant that they ignored a possible Satanic/political element to his abuse, as well as the impact his views were having on others.



(left to right) Ryan Fleming, Michal Szewczuk, Oskar Dunn-Koczorowski and Jacek Tchorzewski

Through Iron March, which did much to develop the modern terrorist nazi scene, Fleming guided interested users to O9A texts in private messages. His profile on the forum was chilling: “The best political weapon is the weapon of terror. Cruelty commands respect. Men may hate us. But, we don’t ask for their love; only for their fear.” Any knowledge of his involvement in O9A should have made the authorities far more concerned with statements like these.

We will probably never know how effective Fleming was in spreading his Satanism, but what we do know is that others within the NA orbit began dabbling in O9A.

When police raided Garron Helm for alleged membership of NA in September 2017, they should have noticed the framed O9A picture hanging above the mantelpiece in his living room. Likewise, they should also have realised that the picture stuck onto the notebook of Andrew Clarke, another former NA activist arrested at the same time, was the logo of O9A.

Helm became a strong believer, and described his participation in Prevent, the government’s deradicalisation programme, as “insight”. He is now rumoured to have begun recruiting for his own nexion in the North West.

■ AtomWaffen Division

More widely reported is O9A’s influence on the Atomwaffen Division (AWD), a US-based group that grew from Iron March in 2015, in part inspired by NA. The group aims to establish a network of leaderless cells in order to wage a brutal terrorist war and overthrow the system. Journalist Jake Hanrahan and ProPublica, who have done much to expose the leadership, organisation and ideology of AWD, estimated in February 2018 that the group had established as many as 20 cells across the US. However, since being linked to five murders, it has suffered crackdowns and numerous arrests.

AWD has also suffered deep internal rifts due to the increasing influence of O9A and ToB, a development that emerged after John Cameron Denton (AKA “Rape”) took control of the group. AWD has increasingly incorporated Satanic iconography into its propaganda, including images of Myatt, and also promoted O9A and ToB literature on its website. Its endorsement of books such as *Liber 333* and especially *Iron Gates*, a horrific fiction that graphically depicts the murder of a child in its opening pages, has proved particularly divisive, with several AWD members quitting in protest in 2018.

Since then, ToB Satanists have reportedly strengthened their hold on AWD’s leadership. Journalist Nate Thayer reported last year that leading AWD activist Corwyn Storm Carver had posted pictures of himself posing with O9A literature while deployed in Kuwait with the US military, alongside the caption “Hidden in plain sight. #O9A #orderofnineangles #hostia #knowledge #esoteric #military #soldier”.

■ Sonnenkrieg Division

While it would appear that O9A got involved in National Action either as ‘insight’ or to recruit, a much stronger link existed with the Sonnenkrieg Division (SKD). SKD emerged as a split from within System Resistance Network (itself an NA splinter group), after several members were expelled due to their preoccupation with O9A. Members of the small group, which described itself as an “offshoot” of AWD, celebrated rape, paedophilia and murder, and, like Fleming, were fixated on the Moors murderers.

In June 2019, SKD members Michal Szewczuk, 19, and Oskar Dunn-Koczorowski, 18 (previously a member of NA), received four years and 18 months, respectively, for terror-related offences. Szewczuk ran a blog that encouraged the rape and torture of opponents, including small children, and Dunn-Koczorowski wrote about decapitating babies.

In September 2019 Jacek Tchorzewski, 18, who had links to SKD, received jail time for possessing bomb-making manuals and instructions on how to make firearms. He was also found to have Satanist literature depicting rape and paedophilia at his house. Disturbing images of the apparent rape of a woman, who had a swastika cut into her flesh, were also circulated by another alleged member of the group.

HOPE not hate is aware of several other SKD activists linked to the O9A.

Recently, a nazi who was just 16 at the time of his arrest, became the youngest person ever convicted for planning a terror attack in the UK, and was jailed for six years and eight months. He was obsessed with Satanism, etching the O9A symbol into his revolting terror manual.

“I believe there is primal enjoyment to be had in sadism,” he wrote. “How wonderful it is to be an amoral individual”.

THE SPREAD

The threat of O9A also manifests through the propaganda spread by its supporters. The internet, and particularly the encrypted platforms increasingly used by violent nazis, are awash with O9A and ToB material. Some such material focuses on pure nazism, while others gleefully promote sexual violence. This is especially the case across the so-called Terrorgram network on the messaging app Telegram, which is detailed elsewhere in this report.

There are several small dedicated O9A channels and groups on Telegram, spaces where PDF files of O9A/ToB texts and music are shared, and occult propaganda, sometimes featuring Myatt’s face, is posted. The relatively large channel “RapeWaffen”, which claims to have splintered from AWD, states that its “official beliefs are o9a Satanism and Esoteric Rapistism”, encouraging followers to “JOIN YOUR LOCAL NEXION” [see sidebar].

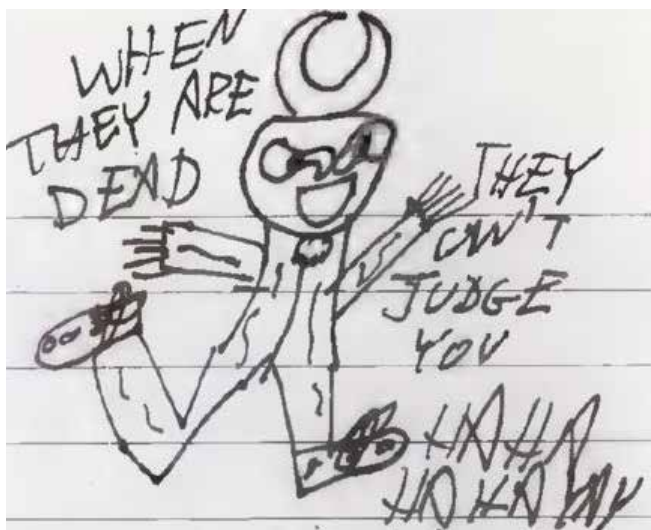
What is most disconcerting is that O9A material has become so commonplace and normalised that it is even accepted by those who do not actually share in its Satanism. HOPE not hate knows of one person, currently awaiting trial on a terrorism charge, who shared O9A material while stressing that he did not actually agree with it all.

“I am not into ONA, I’ve read into their stuff [...] it isn’t mind blowing stuff”, he wrote, yet he regularly used O9A symbols in his artwork, thereby extending its spread.

Many people understandably find it difficult to discern the extent to which support for O9A/ToB is sincere, as its terminology and trappings have taken on lives of their own, adopted into the lexicon of the wider terroristic far right. Embossing propaganda and weapons-making manuals with Satanic symbols provides them with a sheen of occult mystery, and the sheer notoriety of O9A means that references to it function as shorthands for extremism and violence.



O9A continues to be a divisive force on the extreme right, and the proliferation of its ideas and imagery on platforms such as Telegram is much to the dismay of other nazis. One far-right channel exists solely to “expose” O9A Satanism on Telegram, considering Satanists to be violating the purity of National Socialism, degrading it into “utter hopelessness, nihilism and pointless hatred”. This only intensifies the allure for some; O9A is enticing to certain individuals



David Myatt

THE “RAPEWAFFEN” TELEGRAM CHANNEL

One of the channels on Telegram that most clearly identifies with O9A calls itself “RapeWaffen”. As the name suggests, the group actively promotes rape and sexual violence, alongside other calls for violence more common among Terrorgram channels. The group represents some of the most extreme content on Telegram, putting its calls for violence in recognisable O9A terms, and expressing sadism, amorality and the “need to dehumanize themselves and face the bloodshed”. Another posts says: “by the Order of The 9 Angels [sic] I will do my best to fulfill the prophecy of the Rape War, heil Rape”.

In private chat groups related to the channel, users have been soliciting and sharing what appear to be genuine videos of women being subjected to sexual abuse, as well as videos of extreme violence and murder. The channel’s founder, who has gone by various different variations of the username “Sinisterius” and “Sinistrovs”, has also given detailed descriptions of where and how followers can find victims.

Notably, the channel’s founder has also repeatedly claimed that RapeWaffen is a splinter group of the American nazi terror group Atomwaffen Division (AWD), but he has made AWD’s support for O9A and sexual violence more explicit, thereby finding a way to make it even more abominable. In a message in another far-right chat group, he also described how he attempted to spread his ideas to existing far-right terror groups, saying that he had “slowly been Rapepillling the FKD”, referring to the recently disbanded Feuerkrieg Division.

RapeWaffen highlights how O9A’s ideas and imagery have become appealing for the ever more extreme and anonymous far-right online communities that proliferate on Telegram and other parts of the internet. The channel’s founder openly discusses the pleasure he finds in immorality and transgression. Its calls for “culling”, Satanism and general deriding of morality is appealing for those who want to transgress every possible social boundary, but also those that want to find a framework to contextualise their hate. While rape is not a central tactic of O9A, and some have argued that rapists should be “culled”, rape can just as well fit into the transgressive and immoral elements of the movement, an interpretation

precisely because it frightens, and holds status as the “edgiest” set of beliefs available.

But given the history and writings of Myatt and others, O9A’s links to people connected to terrorism in the UK, and the violence of groups linked to it in the US, we have to take O9A seriously.

TIME FOR ACTION

In the post-organisational far right, where young people are increasingly radicalised online and getting drawn into the occult, the allure of the O9A is growing. For an organisation that spent decades on the fringes of the fringe, its propaganda and message has become more widely distributed than ever before.

O9A’s sick ideas have drawn in young extremists



of Myatt’s call for “ruthless individuals”.

Worryingly, the channel’s content is shared by other Terrorgram channels, where users already generally support the use violence, and could therefore be more likely to find RapeWaffen’s interpretation of O9A’s ideas appealing –the founder’s claim of being in contact with FKD provides an acute example.

Wording such as: “Rape is a figure of speech... When you say you’re ‘going to rape x’, you’re going to violate it”, provides a context that pro-terror groups understand, while staying ambiguous enough to appeal to elements of the far right that might not otherwise have supported such extreme methods.

An example of this was when the channel’s founder promoted the group in a much less extreme chat group dedicated to alt-lite figure Milo Yiannopoulos. In Yiannopoulos’ group, he described RapeWaffen as “rape shitpost”, while his own channel and its chat room, as described above, explicitly calls for terror and sexual violence.

The possibility of framing O9A ambiguously, both as a real organisation that calls for recruits, as well as a practice of trolling and “shit posting”, shows the varying ways its ideas can be easily spread on largely anonymous platforms like Telegram.

in the UK and elsewhere, and have helped nourish a dangerous culture of unprecedented depravity amongst the extreme right, which has none of the moral constraints that previous generations of far-right activists had.

Reflecting on 40 years of political activity, Myatt said in a 2005 interview with Aryan Nations: “In my own life, I have tried to create some things which can disrupt our societies and which can lead to the creation of strong, really dangerous, ruthless individuals – some things which are so subversive that no laws could ever outlaw them, and that attempts to restrain them, to outlaw them, would only make them more attractive to some individuals.”

It is time that the Order of Nine Angles is proscribed as a terrorist organisation.



INSIDE IRON MARCH – A FORUM FOR HATE

BY PATRIK HERMANSSON

A LEAK of thousands of private messages and detailed user information from notorious nazi forum Iron March (IM) provides an unprecedented glimpse into communications between some of the most extreme fascists in Europe and the USA. The forum was used extensively in its early days by the now-banned nazi group, National Action, and allows us to trace the beginning of this British terror group, its recruitment strategy and attempts at international collaboration.

Between its launch in 2011 and its shutdown in 2017, IM was one of the most extreme fascist forums on the internet. Compared to similar websites such as Stormfront and The Daily Stormer, it was smaller and gained less public attention, but it compensated for its smaller size in its level of extremeness. Iron March openly encouraged its users to take action offline, a sentiment reflected in its slogan: “GAS THE KIKES, RACE WAR NOW, 1488 BOOTS ON THE GROUND”. In its pseudonymous founder Alexander Slavros’ own words, the forum was supposed to provide “one-stop shopping for all those fascist needs”.

Its extremeness and commitment by its members, many posting several thousand messages over the forum’s six years online, meant that IM became more influential than its relatively small size (of just over 1,200 users when it folded) might suggest. It inspired the creation of several of the most violent far-right terrorist groups in recent years. Most notable among these was US-based Atomwaffen Division (AWD), a nazi terror group behind at least five murders, including the killing of two of its own members in May 2017 by Devon Arthurs (who went by the username TheWeissewolfe on Iron March). Early propaganda for AWD was printed with “Find us at ironmarch.org”, a sign of the forum’s centrality to the group’s recruiting efforts.

Users on the site could also be credited with the resurgence of James Mason’s *SIEGE*, a set of newsletters released over several years in the 1980s. The text promotes the use of leaderless resistance tactics where small cells of terrorists should work without a formal structure to destabilise society and eventually spark race war. In private messages on IM, users interested in AWD were told by its leader at the time to “[r]ead *SIEGE* then get back to me,” before they could apply to join the group.

However, IM also attracted the attention of both antifascists and law enforcement, and in November 2017 it abruptly went offline. Reasons for the sudden disappearance has been attributed to hackers, as well as Alexander Slavros shutting it down for fear of action by law enforcement.

THE LEAK

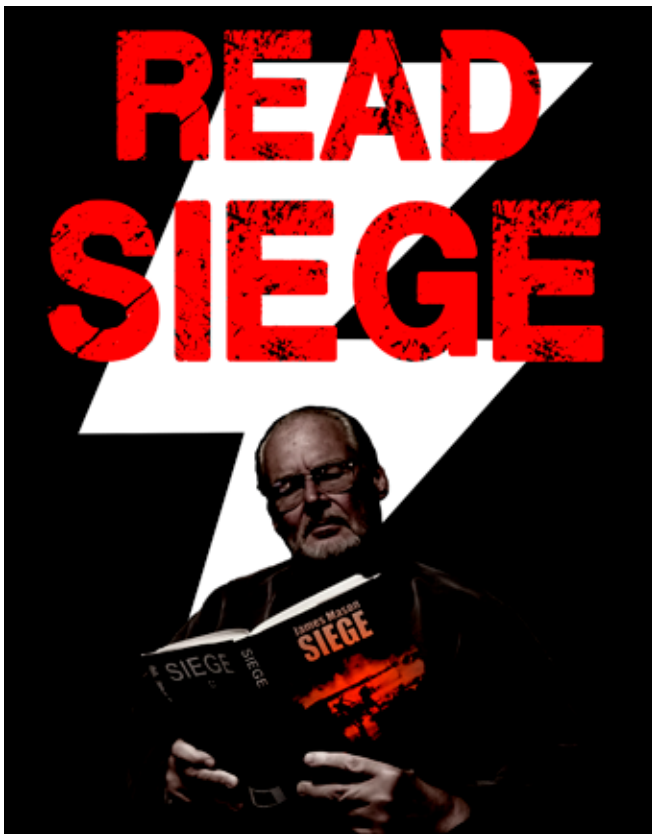
Two years later, in November 2019, a copy of the database running the forum was released online. The data contained posts, user information and private messages between users for the whole lifespan of the



(top to bottom) Benjamin Raymond, Zack Davies and Alexander Slavros

forum. While not entirely complete – some profiles and private messages were deleted (likely by the users themselves in order to cover their tracks) – the private messages and user information allows us to glean unprecedented insights into some of the most engaged fascists of the period, and the organisations they were part of and founded.

(right) James Mason appeared alongside members of AtomWaffen Division in a 2019 video
(below) Propaganda images for Mason's *SIEGE*



The leak makes clear that although Slavros, whose real name has been revealed as Alexander Mukhitdinov, had close connections to AWD and produced extensive ideological writings, he did not run it by himself. Several other activists were central to the forum, moderating it and maintaining direct contact with Slavros, working on changes, enforcing its rules, answering queries and running the many projects surrounding the forum. These side projects included an online archive of far-right literature, the webzine NOOSE (a reference to hanging), several social media channels and a gamer community. Together with the forum, the whole project was known as the “IronPride Network”.

Highlighting the increasing internationalisation of the far right is the member list found in the leak. By locating the IP addresses (the unique identifier for any device connecting to the internet) of the last connection by each account, it shows connections were made from over 50 countries. This is an imperfect method to geolocate users as they can make efforts to hide their IP addresses, but comparing assigned countries with previous knowledge of these users indicates that it’s accurate in almost every case.



Of the approximately 1,300 users in the leak, British users were the second-largest group after only the USA. Among the UK users are several known fascist activists. Among them is Ben Raymond, now most infamous as the founder of the banned nazi terror group National Action. He used the name DaddyTerror on Iron March, and was a moderator and one of the most active users on the site, contributing over 3,000 posts. Other National Action-related users on the forum were Alex Davies, Christopher Lythgoe and Zack Davies, the latter who attempted to decapitate a Sikh man in a supermarket in 2015.

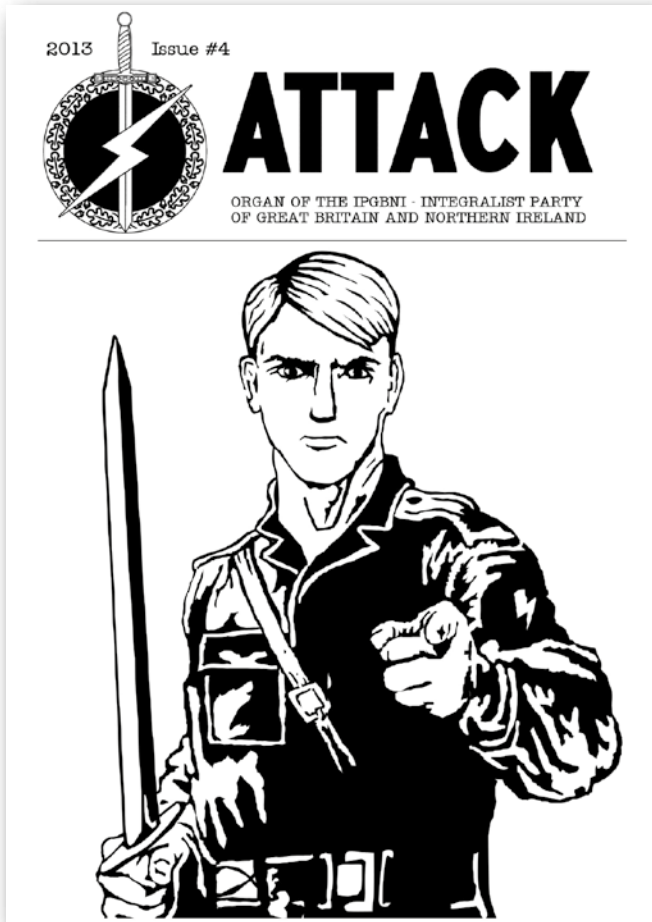
The leaks also help us understand details about the central premise of the forum: how it helped in getting the “boots on the ground”. Raymond provides an interesting case of how Iron March was used as a recruitment and networking tool, connecting people and organisations across national borders.

RECRUITMENT

The relationship between Raymond and Slavros started before IM, on another forum called the

International Third Positionist Federation (ITPF). Archives of the site show that Raymond joined in July 2010 and Slavros about one month later. Raymond and Slavros were both prominent contributors and administrators of ITPF. After its shutdown, Iron March was created by Slavros as a replacement for ITPF. Raymond continued as a moderator on Iron March and was one of the first registered users on the site. While Slavros was the ultimate decision-maker (and, according to Raymond’s private messages, was paying for the site), Raymond became an important moderator of the forum and private messages show how he policed users, handed out bans and told them to cool down when he considered them to be out of line.

More importantly, Raymond made full use of IM as a recruitment ground for his project at the time: The Integralist Party of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, which he started while at university in 2009. A big message on the group’s website linked to IM and, well-aligned with IM’s purpose, its aim “was to make fascism accessible, demystify it, ‘we were fascists and you could be a fascist too’”. In the first issue of *Attack*, its propaganda publication, it wrote



(both) *Attack* was Ben Raymond's magazine first published through the Integralist Party and later National Action. it was part of the Iron March archive and promoted the forum.

that it was “COMMITTED TO [...] THE DESTRUCTION OF POLITICIANS.” This was a point that activists in Raymond's next project, National Action, attempted to follow to the letter.

Among Raymond's private messages there were several examples reaching out to new UK-based users in order to gauge their interest about joining the group. In the messages, Raymond asked about the skills and location of the new users, and to those that responded with interest he referred to the Integralist Party forum where he “put out jobs for various things that need doing, discuss ideas, and share material”. There are also cases of users reaching out to Raymond asking him for details about the group, his views on fascism and recommended readings.

The tactic proved efficient. In February 2012 Raymond got in touch with a user called “Insurrectionist” a week after they joined. Raymond forthrightly queries Insurrectionist's background and asks him to join the Integralist Party forum, to which he replies that he is a “25 year old engineering student from Cheshire” and “currently running the English National Resistance – North West Division, which is just a simple ethnic nationalist group aimed at youngsters”. Insurrectionist was actually Christopher Lythgoe, who would later go on to be an organiser and leader of National Action after its proscription in 2016. He is currently serving an eight-year prison sentence for membership of the proscribed organisation, following a 2018 trial.

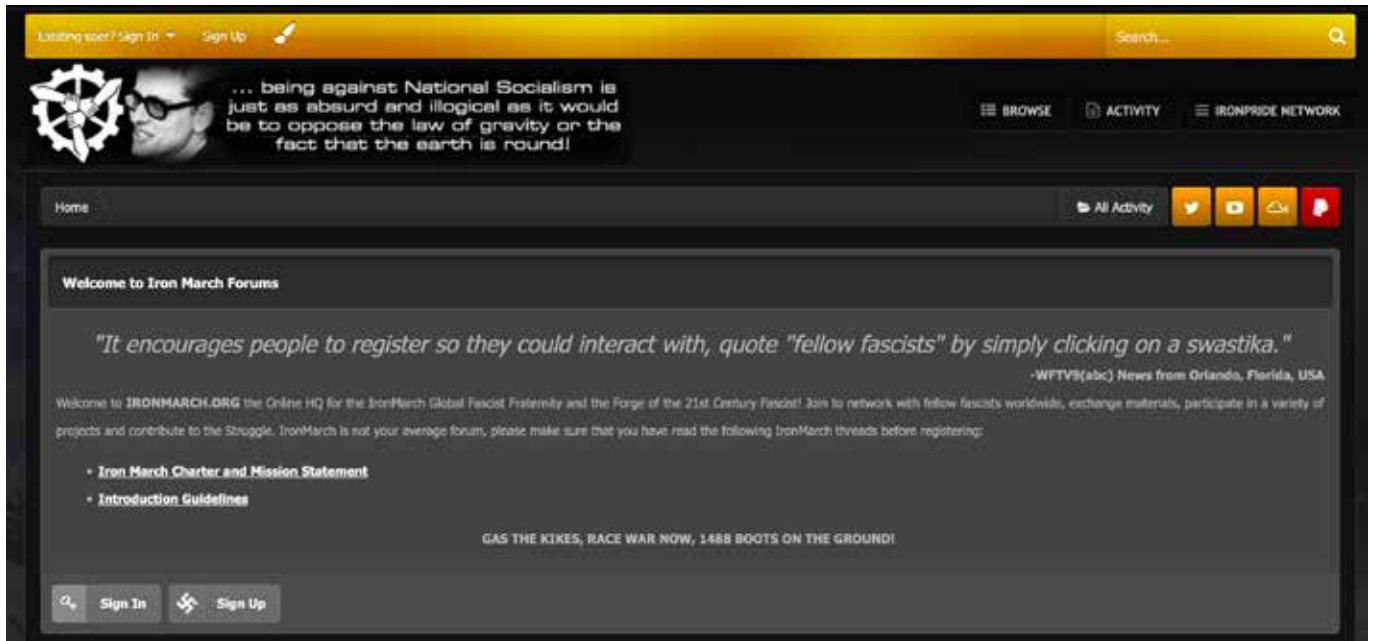
The Integralist Party folded in 2012, which prepared the way for National Action. Raymond founded the group and was joined by Alex Davies, who went by

“IntegralCymru” on IM. National Action continued to use IM as a recruitment tool, and private messages show how individuals who would later take on important roles got in touch via the site. This included Ryan Fleming, going under the name “Atlas”, who was contacted by Lythgoe via the forum in 2015. Fleming became responsible for National Action's cybersecurity and likely wrote its widely shared cybersecurity manual. Fleming was later convicted of paedophilia and jailed for three years in 2017.

Fleming was also a follower of the Order of Nine Angles (O9A), a nazi-Satanist group founded in the 1960s. O9A's ex-leader, David Myatt, was influential on terror group Combat 18 and David Copeland, the 1999 London nailbomber. Private messages show how Fleming guided interested users to readings on O9A and its ideology.

“THE POINT IS TO CAUSE FEAR”

Besides being a recruitment tool, the IM forum was also a networking hub. Private messages show how members from various different far-right groups connected, shared tactics and in some cases organised meetings. These messages revealed how Raymond connected an Australian user with the UK branch of the Misanthropic Division [the international recruiting arm of the ultra-nationalist Ukrainian paramilitary unit, the Azov Battalion], and its leader at the time, Chris Livingstone, ahead of a 2015 “White Man March” demonstration in Newcastle. The same year Raymond also met with AWD's then-leader Brandon Russell (known as Odin on IM) who came to visit him in London.



(left) The Iron March logo (above) Iron March homepage 2017



Lythgoe was also in touch with a user called “The Yank”, who according to private messages managed AWD when Russell was in military training. In the messages, the two discussed how they could collaborate and share concrete tactics. The Yank shared his thoughts on stickering at universities, a tactic they dubbed “Stickercaust”.

“The point of this is to cause fear,” he wrote, “[w]hen stickers show up in the middle of the night, people don’t know how many Nazis they have in their area, taking classes with them, riding the bus with them, living next to them.” The following month, in July 2016, stickers of a figure giving a Nazi salute along with the words “White Zone - National Action”, showed up around Birmingham university.

AFTER NATIONAL ACTION

The proscription inevitably forced National Action to change tactics. Messages show that Fleming tried to push the group away from using IM’s direct messaging system, due to its insecurity (as exposed later with the leak). Even before National Action’s proscription users often asked to communicate over more private channels; over time, chat apps such as Wire and Telegram took over.

However, other messages in the leaks continue to show that the groups replacing National Action following its ban kept using similar tactics. Messages show how System Resistance Network, which was set up by Alex Davies, kept recruiting on Iron March.

Since IM went offline, several members of National Action have been jailed following the actions of whistleblower Robbie Mullen, who came to HOPE not hate to expose a plot to murder Labour MP Rosie Cooper. There have also been at least 11 arrests of Atomwaffen members since 2017. But IM’s impact is still noticeable.

The slogan “Read SIEGE” has become popular in the most extreme sections of the far right and pro-terror channels on Telegram, and Slavros’ many texts are shared frequently on the chat app and elsewhere.

Another forum, called Fascist Forge, has also attempted to fill the gap left by IM. It has users sympathetic to some of the most extreme fascist ideas today. The Base, the loosely-organised fascist group inspired by AWD, has connections to the forum. So too does a 17-year old man from Durham, who was active on the forum and was arrested in March 2019, charged with planning attacks against local synagogues. Although yet to reach the same level of engagement as IM (it has been offline for periods) during its short existence Fascist Forge has attracted more members than IM had at its peak.

Looking back, having access to years of private messages from one of the most extreme far-right forums on the internet has provided invaluable insight into the recruitment tactics of groups such as National Action. Although the forum itself is gone and the far right has since migrated to multiple new platforms and forums, these insights are valuable in the monitoring of other online spaces. The leaks also shine a light on the role played by individual extremists in connecting and binding together groups and individuals across borders. Those such as Ben Raymond are a danger because their extreme activism spans these borders, actively connecting nodes in a network of far-right extremists stretching across the world. Some of these are people determined to step off the internet and commit themselves to extremely dangerous acts of violence.



COMBAT 18

COMBAT 18: AN OLD SCHOOL THREAT

BY NICK LOWLES

EARLIER THIS year the German government outlawed Combat 18 (C18), a militant nazi group that took its distinctive name from the first and eighth letter of the alphabet – AH – or ‘Adolf Hitler’. At the same time police raided the homes of several prominent C18 activists across the country.

“Right-wing extremism and anti-Semitism have no place in our society,” Germany’s interior ministry said.

According to the ministry, the decision was made following the murder last June of pro-migrant German politician Walter Lübcke, allegedly by a C18 supporter, and the deadly attack months later on a synagogue in the eastern city of Halle.

“The hideous murder of district president Dr Walter Lübcke and... the terrorist act in Halle last year have shown us, brutally, that right-wing extremism and anti-Semitism are a significant danger to our free society,” Interior Minister Horst Seehofer said in a statement.

At a time when we are witnessing a new wave of far-right terrorism, mostly driven by online radicalisation and – in the UK at least – involving much younger people, it might seem a surprise to some that C18 had been targeted.

But the truth is that C18 never really went away.

Combat 18 was formed in London in 1991 initially as a stewards group for the far-right British National Party (BNP). Over time, C18 adopted an ideology and would eventually describe itself as a revolutionary, national socialist, terrorist organisation. Its enemies were no longer individual blacks, Asians or others but the political, cultural and economic system which, it claimed, discriminated against white people. It borrowed a considerable amount of its terminology from the United States – concepts like ‘ZOG’ [Zionist Occupation Government], *leaderless resistance* and race war – where, over the past 20 years, increasing numbers of white supremacists have given up the electoral process and turned to terrorism.

For most of its supporters the talk of race war and terrorism was just that. Yet a small group began to emerge around deputy (and later) leader Will Browning, who actively sought to spark a conflict. Much of this was funded by a highly lucrative nazi music scene, which brought in an estimated £200,000 between 1994-2000 from the production and sales of CDs.

In 1997, under Browning’s instructions, several bombs hidden in video cassettes were sent from Denmark to opponents and rivals in the UK.



Will Browning with Thorsten Heise

C18 INTERNATIONAL

THE WORLDWIDE NETWORK OF EXTREMISTS BEHIND COMBAT 18

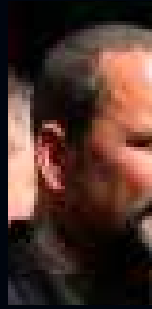
RESEARCH AND PHOTOS: [HTTPS://EXIF-RECHERCHE.ORG/](https://exif-recherche.org/)



Niels Erik Clausen
DENMARK



Uwe Veljaca
AUSTRIA



Wolfgang Schlemmer
AUSTRIA



Danny Janssen
NETHERLANDS



Ed Polman
NETHERLANDS



Shane Mcassy
USA



Jon Pressley
USA



William Browning
UK



Omar Tonani
ITALY



Leandro Braun
BRAZIL



Marc Bettoni
FRANCE



Juan de Dios Osuna-Montanez
SPAIN



Lars Bergeest
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SWEDEN



Marko Jarvinen
FINLAND



Erika Pavano
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Geatan-Venturi
SWITZERLAND



Andre Senn
SWITZERLAND



Janos Dohar
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Dinter Arthur
HUNGARY



Krzysztof Tomasz
Słowinski POLAND



Grzegorz Jastrzebski
POLAND



Ale-Pavo
ITALY



Kostas Papadopoulos
GREECE



Dragan Petrovic
SERBIA



Thorsten Heise
GERMANY



Jan Bogdahn
GERMANY



Heiko Zylinkski
GERMANY



Robin Schmiemann
GERMANY



Patrick O'Sullivan
AUSTRALIA



The violent imagery and rhetoric soon spread across Europe, with C18 groups emerging in Scandinavia, the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany. Key C18 leaders began to emerge, including Marcel Schilf and Erik Blücher in Scandinavia and Thorsten Heise in Germany. Another key figure to emerge was Dragon Petrovic, a former member of the White Eagle paramilitary unit, in Serbia.

In 1999 a meeting of C18 leaders from across Europe was set for Slovakia, where a European-wide bombing campaign was to be planned. However, Browning never made it, as he was stopped at the border with Austria at the request of British intelligence.

Also taking up arms were C18 supporters in the Netherlands and Belgium. In 2006, 14 soldiers linked to C18 were arrested in Belgium along with 400 guns. Prosecutors alleged that they planned to spark a race war by anonymously assassinating leading Muslim and far-right political leaders.

The following year, Dutch C18 activist Arris De Bruin was convicted for possessing a machine gun, other firearms and several nail bombs.

Across Europe C18 quickly began to earn the reputation as the militant wing of the Nazi movement. People would even identify with it even though they had no actual links. A case in point was 25-year-old Maxime Brunerie, who tried to kill President Jacques Chirac on the Champs-Élysées during the annual Bastille Day parade in 2002. Brunerie identified himself as C18 on his arrest, even though he was not thought to have had any actual links.

Years later, in 2019, Scottish loner Conor Ward was sentenced to life imprisonment after he plotted a wave of terrorist attacks. Like Brunerie, he too claimed a C18 link.

Police and intelligence services were all over the respective chapters of C18, with a wave of arrests and convictions in numerous European countries between 2000–2006. This really brought the organisation to its knees, and activities were reduced in many areas.

While the police were generally on top of the C18 threat, they were oblivious to a trio of Nazis from eastern Germany, who operated under the banner of the National Socialist Underground (NSU). They embarked on a murderous spree over six years that left 10 people dead. The three killers were financed and supported by C18.

Imprisonment, death and – in the case of Will Browning – cancer, greatly reduced C18's ability to operate across much of Europe. However, it never went away and just as police action might have ended operations in one country, it sprang up somewhere else.

At the latest count there are C18 groups in about 21 countries, mostly in Europe but also in Australia, the US and South America, including in Chile, Colombia and Brazil.

In 2018, C18 supporters were arrested in Greece on suspicion of being behind a bombing campaign. Then last year the Canadian government announced it was now classifying C18 as a terrorist group, while French President Emmanuel Macron noted that he was minded to do likewise.

But it is in Germany where C18 has been most organised – even to the point where members pay a monthly fee. While membership is believed to be between 80–100, the group has an influence on many more Nazis. At the centre of operations is the C18-supporting Nazi skinhead band Oidoxie, from Dortmund, who use their regular gigs across the continent to spread the C18 message.



(Centre) Oidoxie Streetfighting Crew
(below left) Greek C18
(below) Italian C18



Such gigs remain a major feature for the C18 operation, both as a means to meet and organise but also to raise funds. Two recent concerts put on by Thorsten Heise were attended by 6,000 and 5,000 people, respectively – the largest nazi gigs ever held in Europe. With people paying €20 a ticket, the profits are huge.

Another key C18 organiser is fellow Dortmund nazi Robin Schmiemann. A very close friend of Browning's, Schmiemann received an eight-year jail sentence in 2007 after he shot a security guard during a botched armed robbery. He returned to activism on his release and in the immediate aftermath of the murder of Walter Lübcke, and wearing a poor disguise, he read out a statement on behalf of C18.

"Germany has arrived at the point where every citizen is forced to protect himself and his family alone," he said. "The citizens' trust in politicians, judiciary, and the media has been completely destroyed."

Combat 18 has not had a public presence in the UK for many years. There has been the occasional music gig or social but what does exist is a small network

of committed nazis and old friends, numbering a few dozen, coming together socially more than anything. Now 50, Browning has both mellowed and remained steadfast over the years. He thinks the far right is finished and yet remains firm in his belief of a Jewish conspiracy. He considers himself a "non-racist racist" but still pens the most appallingly racist lyrics ever put to music. He dismisses the British far right as cranks, perverts and informers while he holds up Hitler's Waffen SS as a model army. He has largely dropped out of public activity, but remains at the heart of the international C18 operation. He is lying low but believes the day for violent action will definitely come.

Browning has seen co-conspirators imprisoned, old comrades drop out – and even friends killed. He has attacked people, armed himself and others with guns and orchestrated bomb plots. He has been jailed, harassed by the authorities and, more recently, battled cancer. And it is perhaps because of all of these experiences that he has changed his approach.

He appears to no longer be chasing the 'war', rather waiting for the war to come to him. "What happened in the Balkans is the future for Europe," he tells people. "It is no longer a question of whether civil war will happen but when."

C18 was banned in Germany to great fanfare, but it is highly unlikely the ban will affect it too much. After all, given that Lübcke's murder had taken place six months previously, C18 had been expecting it.

But the threat of C18 is less from an *organisation*, more from the mindset it invokes. It remains, even in our increasingly digital world, the single most violent and widespread network of militant nazis around the globe. By the very nature of those it attracts, it means that future violence and even terrorism is likely.

At its core is a small group of hardened and experienced nazis, many together for years and well versed in promoting and financing terror, which makes them all the more dangerous.

C18'S CATALOGUE OF TERROR



1998 – DENMARK

Three C18 supporters, led by Thomas Nakaba, sent bombs hidden in video cassettes to political opponents and rivals in the UK in a plot orchestrated by Will Browning.

2000 – SERBIA

Special anti-organized crime police units arrested 10 Serb C18 supporters, one of whom was Dragan 'Bajba' Petrovic, a key figure in the C18 network.



JULY 2002 – FRANCE

25-year-old Maxime Brunerie tried to kill President Jacques Chirac on the Champs-Elysees during the annual Bastille Day parade. Brunerie identified himself as C18.



2000-2006 GERMANY

The National Socialist Underground, influenced, financed and supported by C18, killed nine immigrants and a police officer, and carried out a string of armed robberies while on the run.

SEPT 2006 – BELGIUM

Seventeen nazis arrested, including 14 soldiers, for plotting to instigate a race war in the country. The group, led by C18 supporters, had stockpiled over 400 guns and explosives.

MARCH 2007 – NETHERLANDS

C18 activist Arris De Bruin convicted for possessing a machine gun, other firearms and several nail bombs.



2008/2009 – HUNGARY

Six Roma were killed and 55 injured in a series of arson attacks on Roma houses in a town outside Budapest. Four C18 activists were given life sentences.

JUNE 2010 – CZECH REPUBLIC

Four nazis in the Czech Republic were jailed for 22 years for an arson attack on a Roma family. The leader of the group was David Vaculík, a hardline nazi with C18 tattooed on his chest.

SEPT 2010 – RUSSIA

The C18-affiliated group, Format 18, is banned by Russian authorities after a series of violent attacks were filmed and put on the internet.

FEBRUARY 2012 – CZECH REPUBLIC

Three nazis were convicted of the attempted murder after an arson attack on a Roma family. Several others, including the leader of Bohemia C18, were convicted for establishing, promoting and supporting a neo-Nazi group.



MAY 2014 – FRANCE

Police arrested four alleged C18 supporters after they posed with automatic weapons and threatened violence.



MARCH 2018 - GREECE

Police arrest six alleged C18 supporters in Athens and surrounding towns, claiming they were responsible for numerous bombings against migrants and left-wingers. Among items seized were shotguns, several Molotov cocktails, 50kg of explosives, knives and drugs.



APRIL 2018 – UK

Conor Ward was given a life sentence after being convicted of preparing acts of terror. Police found that Ward, who told jurors he thought Hitler had made mistakes, had started to compose a book called *Combat 18 British Mosque Address Book*.



JUNE 2019 – GERMANY

C18 supporter Stephen Ernst shot dead Walter Lübcke, a leading CDU politician, for speaking out so passionately for immigration in recent years.

NOVEMBER 2019 – ITALY

Guns were found during raids of 19 extremists linked to the formation of a new nazi party in Italy, along with plans to set up military-style training. The group was in contact with C18 internationally.

INSPIRING NAZI TERROR

AN EXAMPLE of the threat posed by Combat 18 (C18) is best illustrated with the example of the National Socialist Underground, a terrorist group that operated in Germany between 1999 and 2006. During that time the three key members of the NSU killed nine migrants and a police officer, were responsible for several bombings and at least 14 armed robberies.

While there is no indication that the three terrorists, Uwe Mundlos, Uwe Böhnhardt and Beate Zschäpe, were directed by C18 or even were in any way members, they were certainly *influenced* by them.

Mundlos, Böhnhardt and Zschäpe emerged on the German nazi scene in the late 1990s, when C18 and its confrontational ideology began to gain traction in the country, especially in East Germany where the three lived.

Theories of race war and terrorism swept through the German nazi scene, largely pushed by C18 and the Blood and Honour network it ran.

The trio attended C18-run Blood and Honour gigs in the late 1990s, including possibly some of the concerts where Will Browning's band, No Remorse, performed. The band's Barbecue in Rostock album, which glorified the murderous attacks on refugees in East Germany in the early 1990s, was declared by the German authorities as the most extreme CD ever produced.

The NSU planted its first bomb in 1999, just weeks after David Copeland's nailbombing campaign in London. From there they went on to murder nine migrants in individual incidents, two further bombings and a string of armed robberies.

Their murderous campaign was only brought to a halt in 2010, when Mundlos and Böhnhardt died in a fire they themselves started and Zschäpe was arrested.

Zschäpe's trial eventually began in May 2013 and on 11 July 2018, she was convicted of murder on 10 counts and sentenced to life imprisonment. Four others were convicted assisting the trio.

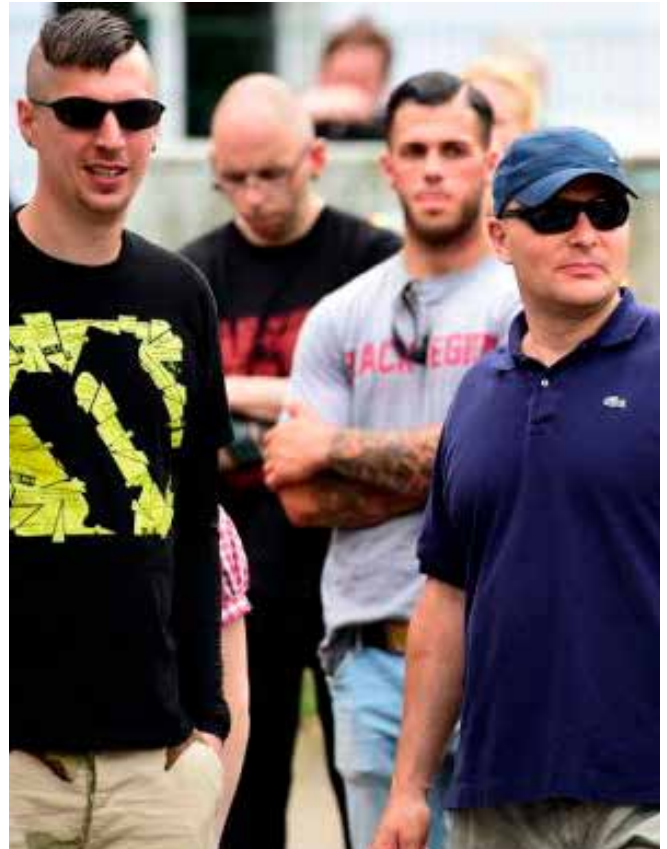
COMBAT 18 LINKS

Despite the long trial and accompanying investigations, the full story of the NSU may never be completely known – not least because of Zschäpe's silence since her arrest.

But what is known is that Jens Werner, leader of Blood and Honour in eastern Germany and a close confidant of C18 leader Will Browning, was in direct contact with the trio. The Netflix documentary, the NSU-complex, states that Werner tried to obtain weapons on their behalf and, as they went on the run, proceeds of an armed robbery were passed on to the trio from Werner's girlfriend's bank account..

Investigators found that German C18 leader Thorsten Heise was on a list "with proven contacts to perpetrators or accused".

And intriguingly, Will Browning's No Remorse performed at a Blood and Honour gig held in the region where the NSU killers lived, just two months before they carried out their first bombing. It was in



Robin Schmiemann and Will Browning in 2016 in Dortmund Germany. Photo: (Foto: Recherche Nord)/ antifainfoblatt.de

a period where Browning was determined to instigate terrorist attacks across Europe and so was under constant surveillance by M15, Britain's domestic intelligence service. During the gig, Browning slipped out for a meeting in the nearby woods.

No-one knows who he met, including the authorities, who lost sight of him as he slipped out of the gig, but whoever he met warranted extreme secrecy.

It was a letter written by Zschäpe to key C18 man Robin Schmiemann while she awaited trial, and he was in prison for armed robbery, that is most intriguing. Why did a woman who had remained silent for so long write a long, and quite open, letter to someone she had never met? And why Robin Schmiemann, someone over 10 years younger than herself?

Perhaps, just perhaps, they had actually met or at least knew each other through mutual acquaintances. Two of the NSU murders took place close to where Schmiemann was based and as was evident during the trial, the trio were supported by over 150 fellow nazis while on the run.

Whatever the reason for Zschäpe's letter, what is known is that the accompanying media publicity caused panic within the top echelons of C18 and the order went out to Schmiemann in prison to say nothing and remain silent.

SECTION 4 – ONLINE HATE

Start Up
project

28%

Activity

78%

Tech Business Finance

Bank

14528

100



THE BRITISH FAR RIGHT: YOUTUBERS

YOUTUBE HAS BECOME A CENTRAL PLATFORM THROUGH WHICH THE MODERN FAR RIGHT COMMUNICATES, INCLUDING THE BRITISH FAR RIGHT. SEVERAL BRITISH CHANNELS HAVE TENS OR HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF SUBSCRIBERS, AND AS MANY OF THESE VIEWERS ARE NOT UK-BASED, THE PLATFORM IS AN EFFECTIVE WAY FOR THE BRITISH ACTIVISTS TO EXPORT THEIR IDEAS AND INFLUENCE INTERNATIONALLY.

THE CHANNELS BELOW REPRESENT THE MOST INFLUENTIAL BRITISH CHANNELS ASSOCIATED WITH THE RACIST ALT-RIGHT. THE FIGURES WERE COLLECTED ON 5 FEBRUARY 2020.

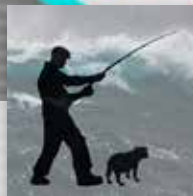
WAY OF THE WORLD

WAY
OF THE
WORLD

Views:
7,255,000
Subscribers:
102,000
Created:
3 Dec 2014

'Way of the World' is a British YouTuber who creates videos on alt-right themes.

MORGOTH'S REVIEW



Views:
2,369,000
Subscribers:
25,100
Created:
7 January 2018

Geordie vlogger, 'Morgoth's Review', first came to prominence in the British alt-right under his blog of the same name.

THE ICONOCLAST



Views:
22,116,000
Subscribers:
218,000
Created:
12 September 2016

The Iconoclast published its first video in January 2017 and also began a magazine in October 2017, edited by a man using the name "Dan".



MILLENNIAL WOES

Views:
3,745,000

Subscribers:
57,300

Created:
16 December 2013

Colin Robertson (AKA Millennial Woes) is a prominent Scottish alt-right/white nationalist YouTuber.



LAURA TOWLER

Views:
2,068,000

Subscribers:
47,400

Created:
12 May 2018

Towler is an editor of the far-right 'Defend Europa' site and vlogger from Yorkshire.



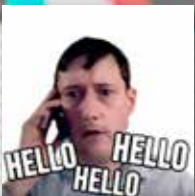
MARK COLLETT

Views:
6,867,000

Subscribers:
96,000

Created:
25 July 2006

Collett is a Leeds-based nazi and the former Head of Publicity for the British National Party (BNP), notorious for starring in several humiliating documentaries during his time at the party. He has attempted to reinvent himself in recent years as a commentator in the alt-right.



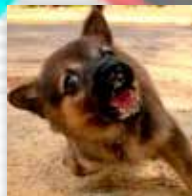
EDWARD DUTTON

Views:
1,720,000

Subscribers:
32,400

Created:
20 May 2018

Dutton is an English aristocrat living in northern Finland who vlogs about pseudoscientific 'race science'.



ON THE OFFENSIVE

Views:
4,322,000

Subscribers:
63,400

Created:
28 March 2016

On The Offensive is an alt-right YouTube channel run by "Hugh", a British man living in Vietnam.



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Click here to help Sue t... £0.00

2nd UK #1 Best Seller £15.00

UK #1 Best Seller

Public figure

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674,416 people like this

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See All

within a day



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Tommy Robinson

@TRobinsonNewEra

check out my website tommyrobinson.online

Luton England

facebook.com/thatommyrobins...

View broadcasts

Joined September 2011

Tweets 98.4K Following 12.5K Followers 413K Likes 60K

Tweets Tweets & replies Media

Pinned Tweet
Tommy Robinson @TRobinsonNewEra · Mar 25
Hear the Speech the UK wanted to stop you from hearing. youtu.be/xH4Uy3LfyZ4 via @YouTube

76 724 1.2K

Retweeted
Big Bro @BigBroHeavy · 7h
Russia has been given zero proof of their alleged involvement in the poisoning of that traitor spy. Now the West are expelling their diplomats. Saudi Arabia provided 17 of 19 hijackers re 9/11. Zero of their diplomats were expelled. Work that out #wearenotidiots

52 295 541

Show this thread

DEPLATFORMING WORKS

BY JOE MULHALL

EVER SINCE major social media platforms became ubiquitous, debates have raged about their obligation to remove hate speech and hateful individuals from their platforms.

When discussing deplatforming the far right, there are essentially two questions to address. The first is more philosophical, regarding whether we ethically *should* deplatform or not. This can lead us to consider the effect on radicalisation and violence, as well as broader issues such as the impact on free speech and the health of public discourse. The second question is more concrete, namely whether deplatforming actually *works* in the fight against online hate, and the dangerous real-world effects such hate spreads.

With these in mind, one can broadly separate the opponents of online deplatforming into three camps:

1. Those who oppose it merely because they and their ideological kin are the *victims of it* (and often ignore or celebrate when it befalls opponents)
2. Those who see it as an *infringement* upon free speech and open debate
3. And those who simply believe it does not work as a *tactic*.

Many of the most outspoken opponents fall into the first camp. White nationalist YouTuber Colin Robertson (AKA Millennial Woes) has fearfully bemoaned “the massive purge” against himself and like-minded fellow extremists from YouTube, while far-right conspiracy theorist Paul Joseph Watson has accused Facebook of issuing a “fatwa” against him.

Then there are those who oppose deplatforming due to their belief that it curtails free speech. This group can be split into those on the far right who do so disingenuously and hypocritically, and the liberals with more genuine concerns about the eroding of the right to freedom of expression, even for those they fundamentally disagree with.

For the far right, deplatforming from social media is emblematic of the wider ‘war’ on freedom of speech and the supposed sacrificing of their rights on the altar of political correctness. Scratch the surface though and it becomes evident that for many this is not a ‘right’, but merely a tactic.

With their ideas long marginalised from the mainstream, they are using the guise of free speech to try and broaden the ‘Overton Window’ (the range of ideas the public is willing to consider and potentially accept) to the point where it includes their prejudiced and hateful politics.

Take for example the hypocrisy of ‘alt-light’ personality Milo Yiannopoulos, who organised a ‘Free Speech Week’ at the University of Berkeley, California in 2017, despite having called for the banning of Glasgow University’s Muslim Students Association. He openly conceded at a talk in New Mexico in 2017:

“I try to think of myself as a free speech fundamentalist, I suppose the only real objection, and I haven’t really reconciled this myself, is when it comes to Islam. [...] I struggle with how freely people should be allowed to preach that particular faith [Islam] in this country”.

For those such as Yiannopoulos, free speech should be universal – except for those, they dislike. However, not all those who oppose deplatforming on the basis of free speech do so disingenuously or merely out of self-interest. Many earnestly cite John Milton’s *Areopagitica*, George Orwell’s *1984*, or parrot misattributed Voltaire quotes and selective readings of John Locke and JS Mill.

Nick Cohen, a columnist for *The Observer*, is an archetypal example of this old liberal position, arguing in favour of the “principle that only demagogues who incite violence should be banned” and stating that “censors give every appearance of being dictatorial neurotics, who are so frightened of their opponents that they cannot find the strength to take them on in the open” and “see no reason to treasure free debate”. He rather glibly argues that: “If you can’t beat a bigot in argument, you shouldn’t ban them but step aside and make way for people who can. It’s not as if they have impressive cases that stand up to scrutiny.”

Leaving aside the complexity of how one defines “incitement to violence”, the argument that the best way to defeat white supremacists or fascists is to simply expose their bankrupt arguments – often phrased as “sunlight is the best disinfectant” – relies on a series of false assumptions. Most untenable is the oft-repeated notion that debate inevitably leads to greater understanding: the “truth will out” in the words of Shakespeare. Another is that diversity of opinion always leads to the attainment of the truth, and yet another is that the correct argument will always win if debated.

It would be wonderful if these idealised descriptions of discussion always rang true, but this optimism ignores the possibility that ill-informed opinions will flood the debate and that “he who shouts the loudest” will end up drowning out others.

In reality the ‘marketplace of ideas’ can often signal little about the quality or value of the speech being sold. These arguments look even less tenable when applied to the febrile online world with its trolling and ‘pile on’ cultures. One also has to explain how nearly a century of “sunlight” on far-right ideas has yet to “disinfect” them, and begs the question how many more people have to die in terrorist attacks such as those in Poway, Christchurch and El Paso until someone finally manages to comprehensively debate white supremacy out of existence.

DOES IT WORK?

Though the philosophical arguments against deplatforming are often based on untenable assumptions, one still has to ask whether it actually works as a tactic in the fight against hate.

The usual arguments against deplatforming are neatly summarised by Nathan Cofnas, a philosophy DPhil candidate at the University of Oxford, in an article for the reactionary libertarian website Quillette. In it he argues:

Banning people from social media doesn't make them change their minds. In fact, it makes them less likely to change their minds. It makes them more alienated from mainstream society, and, as noted, it drives them to create alternative communities where the views that got them banned are only reinforced. Banning people for expressing controversial ideas also denies them the opportunity to be challenged.

He adds that:

Firstly, banning people or censoring content can draw attention to the very person or ideas you're trying to suppress. [...] Secondly, even when banning someone reduces his audience, it can, at the same time, strengthen the audience that remains. [...] Thirdly, any kind of censorship can create an aura of conspiracy that makes forbidden ideas attractive.

Others also make the legitimate argument that pushing extremists to marginal platforms makes it harder for civil society groups and law enforcement to monitor them. While Twitter is open, channels and discussion groups on apps like Telegram or dark web forums are often much harder to find and monitor.

The trade-off between different types of platforms is one that those on the more extreme end of the far right are already well aware of: what scholars Bennett Clifford and Helen Christy Powell have called the “online extremists’ dilemma”, which is the lack of platforms that allow extremists to both recruit “potential new supporters” and maintain “operational security”. Many critics of deplatforming summarise this as “forcing them underground”, the idea that kicking them off open platforms makes it much harder to find and actually combat them.

Understanding these criticisms is important, but so too is avoiding caricatures of the pro-deplatforming position. Few, if any, are simply arguing for the deplatforming of the far right from mainstream platforms and then ignoring them on smaller or more secret platforms. The difficulties that arise from extremists migrating to other platforms is well understood, yet the decision to continue to push for deplatforming is made on a cost/benefit analysis.

If we conceptualise mainstream platforms like Facebook and Twitter as *recruitment platforms*, where extremists can meet and engage possible new recruits; while smaller platforms like Gab and Telegram can facilitate inter-movement *collaboration*, discussion and even planning – we should still conclude that the benefits of reducing their ability to propagate hate and recruit people outweighs the challenges faced by monitoring them on marginal and more secure platforms.

In addition, it starves extremists of victims to target online, which is also an important advantage of deplatforming. Many liberal anti-deplatforming critics fail to consider this point: a core indictment of their arguments.

Clifford and Powell suggest a strategy of “marginalisation”, which seeks to simultaneously make it difficult for extremists to reach the public, but also maintains the possibility for law enforcement to continue to detect and monitor them. The aim of such a strategy is to “force extremists into the online extremist’s dilemma between broad-based messaging and internal security” thereby keeping “extremist narratives on the periphery by denying them virality, reach and impact.”

DEPLATFORMING WORKS

The success of this tactic is shown clearly in a report by researchers from the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) and Swansea University, *Following the Whack-a-Mole*, which explored the impact of deplatforming on the British far-right group, Britain First.

The group had a wildly disproportionate online presence, with 1.8 million followers and two million likes on Facebook in March 2018, making it “the second most-liked Facebook page within the politics and society category in the UK, after the royal family.” However, its removal from Twitter in December 2017 and from Facebook in March 2018 had an enormous effect on the organisation’s influence in the UK.

As the report states, Facebook’s decision “successfully disrupted the group’s online activity, leading them to have to start anew on Gab, a different and considerably smaller social media platform.” Never able to attract large numbers of activists onto the streets, the anti-Muslim group’s astute social media operation had been successful at attracting huge numbers online, which allowed it spread masses of anti-Muslim content across the internet.

Facebook’s decision dramatically curtailed Britain First’s ability to spread hate and left it on small, marginalised platforms. Its following on Gab is now just over 11,000 and similarly small – just over 8,000 – on Telegram. This has undoubtedly been a key factor in the decline of Britain First as a dangerous force in the UK.

Those who have been deplatformed on the far right have articulated how it has severely retarded their influence. Milo Yiannopoulos recently moaned: “I lost 4 million fans in the last round of bans. [...] I spent years growing and developing and investing in my fan base and they just took it away in a flash.” He went on to state how he and others have simply failed to build a following on platforms such as Telegram and Gab that are large enough to (financially) support them. “I can’t make a career out of a handful of people like that. I can’t put food on the table this way,” he complained.

He described Gab as “relentlessly, exhaustingly hostile and jam packed full of teen racists who totally dictate



the tone and discussion (I can't post without being called a pedo [sic] kike infiltrator half a dozen times)" and Telegram merely as "a wasteland".

"None of them drive traffic. None of them have audiences who buy or commit to anything," he said. This failure to transfer audiences from major to minor platforms is a perennial problem of the deplatformed.

Another interesting case study is that of Stephen Yaxley-Lennon (AKA Tommy Robinson), who suffered a raft of recent deplatformings that have greatly impacted his influence.

In March 2018 Yaxley-Lennon was permanently banned by Twitter, and then in February 2019 he was banned from Facebook, where he had more than one million followers, depriving him of his primary means of communication and organising with his supporters. Another major blow came on 2 April 2019 when YouTube finally acted and placed some restrictions around his channel, which resulted in his views collapsing.

Hundreds of thousands of fewer people now see his content every month, which is a huge step forward. It may have also played into the severely reduced numbers we saw at pro-Lennon events in 2019. During the summer of 2018 London witnessed demonstrations in excess of 10,000 pro-Lennon supporters, while this year numbers have struggled to reach beyond a few hundred. The reasons for this are by no means monocausal, but he and his associates' inability to spread the word about events and animate the masses beyond core supporters has clearly played a role.

Debates around deplatforming the far right from social media are, of course, complex. It would be wrong to reduce those who oppose deplatforming as being supporters of the far right; many will have principled and well-reasoned arguments against the tactic. When it comes down to the philosophical debates regarding its effect on free speech, there will be no convincing absolutists and libertarians.

However, it is possible to value and uphold freedom of speech and expression while simultaneously calling for the removal of dangerous extremists from social media platforms. We must not confuse their right to say what they please (within the law) with their right to say it wherever they please: a right they do not have.

On the question of whether it works, the evidence that it does has now mounted to a point where it is harder and harder to oppose on empirical grounds. Arguments that "sunlight is the best disinfectant" and the idea that hate can be debated into submission increasingly sound at best idealistic, and at worst downright ignorant.

The last decade has seen far-right extremists attract audiences unthinkable for most of the postwar period, and the damage has been seen on our streets, in the polls, and in the rising death toll from far-right terrorists. Deplatforming is not straightforward, but it limits the reach of online hate, and social media companies have to do more and do more now.

TRENDS IN UK ONLINE ISLAMOPHOBIA

BY *SIMON MURDOCH* AND *GREGORY DAVIS*



ONLINE ISLAMOPHOBIA remains an ingrained issue when it comes to tackling hate in the UK. The police recorded 89 online anti-Muslim hate crimes in 2018, while monitoring group Tell MAMA recorded 327 verified online anti-Muslim incidents in 2018, down 10% from 2017, though still five percent up compared to 2016 figures. Explaining the discrepancy with police figures, Tell MAMA noted that as it was “primarily a victim support agency” it “more often deal(s) with cases of discrimination, hate speech, and anti-Muslim literature than the police, as these may not warrant criminal convictions”. (The Home Office October 2019 hate crime report also highlighted that police statistics on online offences were “likely to have been an underestimate”.) Such breadth is highlighted below, where we examine the spread of violent anti-Muslim ideas and disinformation, as well as the online ecosystems in which these grow.

A POROUS TERROR

Official figures for 2019 are currently unavailable, but Tell MAMA recorded a spike of almost 593% in the UK following the Christchurch terror attack, which included online threats to Muslims made in relation to the attack. Christchurch underlined how interconnected online and offline anti-Muslim hatred is today; indeed, it emphasised the need for recognising the increasing porousness of the online/offline distinction. Reviewing the attacker’s manifesto, HOPE not hate’s Patrik Hermansson noted that following the attack the numerous ideologies referenced and language used indicate clearly that the attacker had developed his world view online. The attacker wrote that “you will not find the truth anywhere else” other than the internet. Furthermore, as Patrik commented, it’s important to understand that far-right terror doesn’t end when the last bullet has been fired. The ensuing media coverage and virally-replicated memes are often part of a perpetrator’s plan to sow division and hatred. Such intention also appears to arise in efforts to radicalise. Patrik highlighted that along with the manifesto, the far-right keywords graffitied onto the killer’s weapons functioned as gateways to extreme online environments, able to be picked up by viewers in the livestream of the attack.

Christchurch also typified the densely transnational nature of online Islamophobia and hate more generally today. As Tell MAMA noted in their report: “Although we verify reports of online anti-Muslim hatred to ensure only those based in the UK are recorded in our research, globally trending debates and news stories can motivate and spark trends in anti-Muslim rhetoric”.

Research from Cardiff University’s HateLab published in July 2019 broke ground on developing an understanding of these trends. It indicated “a consistent positive association between Twitter hate speech targeting race and religion and offline racially and religiously aggravated offences in London,” suggesting that “online hate victimisation is part of a wider process of harm that can begin on social media and then migrate to the physical world.”

NETWORKS OF HATE

Transnational interaction continues to play a role in the spreading of Islamophobia online more generally, beyond the extremes detailed above. Online forums and image boards populated by the international far right coordinate Islamophobic social media campaigns and spread wholly fabricated messages across social media.

One example highlighted from HOPE not hate’s research regards the image of a woman in a headscarf on the day of the Westminster attack, in March 2017. The picture shows a Muslim woman walking with a phone in her hand, past a group of people aiding one of the other victims of the attack. It gained significant attention after a Twitter user called @Southlonestar claimed that the woman was indifferent to the suffering of others and that this was generally true for all Muslims. That the woman was indifferent was not true (this has been refuted by both the photographer and the woman herself). Other pictures in the series show her noticeably distraught by what she has just witnessed.

In fact, @Southlonestar was one of the approximately 2,700 accounts that Twitter identified as being part of a Russian-sponsored influence operation in November 2017. Along with spreading Islamophobic hate, it also spread messages before the US presidential election and was one of the accounts that tweeted pro-Brexit messages on the day of the EU referendum in June 2016. Regardless of the circumstances behind the picture, it was quickly shared by several major far-right and Islamophobic accounts on Twitter, including those of alt-right leader Richard Spencer and Islamophobe Pamela Geller.

However, this image of the Muslim woman would soon be used for even more nefarious purposes. The same evening it was shared, the picture was appropriated by users on the /pol/ board on the online forum 4chan. One user posted a picture where the woman was superimposed into another setting, with the simple comment next to it “you know what to do”, meaning that he wanted his fellow users to create images superimposing the woman into other settings.

In the comments that followed were hundreds of variations of the posted image, most situating the woman next to various kinds of atrocities. Clearly inspired by the original post or its derivatives, the pictures aimed to send the message that the woman (and Muslims overall) were unmoved by the suffering of others – or even enjoyed it. Many of the doctored images were extreme and obvious parodies and did not leave the forum. In one she is seen walking past what looks like a Nazi extermination camp in Germany. However, importantly some did not stay on 4chan. Two weeks later a manipulated image was spread on social media in Sweden, after four people were murdered by a car in a terrorist attack in Stockholm. The image showed a paramedic walking between what looked like covered bodies while in the background the familiar silhouette of the woman on Westminster



The first image shows a real photograph suggesting the woman in the headscarf is unaffected by the attack. The second shows the same woman superimposed to appear to be walking out of the arena in Manchester after the bombing in May 2017.

Bridge was superimposed. It was blurred to make it fit in with the setting, but undoubtedly it was a cut-out from the Westminster photograph. It did not get widespread reach, as it was debunked quickly by Twitter users, but a similar attempt was made again after the Manchester attack on 22 May 2017. The same woman was again superimposed into a picture of the place of the attack, making it look as if she was leaving the scene untouched, with victims lying behind her. This image was retweeted 52 times and liked 158 times.

WIDENING AND DEEPENING FAR RIGHT ENGAGEMENT

Away from the more open spread of content on Twitter, HOPE not hate research over the past year

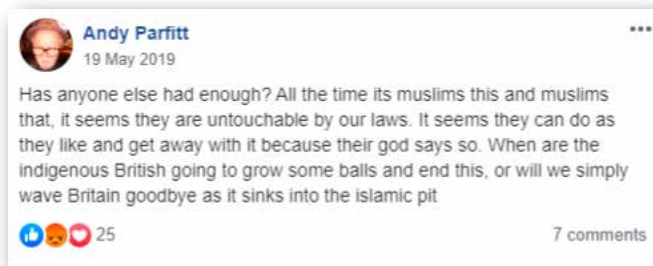
has also highlighted how Facebook’s communal and private dimensions are playing a role in catalysing Islamophobia and hate more broadly.

Facebook groups in particular are built such that they can lead to both a widening and a deepening of an individual’s prejudiced politics through content shared by other members within that group (so too on pages). Far-right activists have, in other online contexts, actively attempted to lead individuals they perceive to be susceptible to far-right ideas into the movement or encouraged people who are engaged in more mainstream or moderate far-right politics to take up more extreme positions. One example is the case of the commenting platform Disqus, which provides comment functionality to many large news sites. There have been coordinated attempts by far-right activists to engage in comments fields on mainstream news sites and alternative news outlets such as Breitbart News as a way to propagate far-right ideas to the readership of these sites. Far-right users accessed articles and engaged in conversations in the comments fields in order to link to more extreme positions related to the topic of the article or use it to argue for other far-right positions. The goal was to take those who agree with more mainstream far-right ideas or have specific grievances around, for example, immigration and move them deeper into the far right or add more extreme interpretations of a certain issue. The tactic could, for example, be used to connect issues like immigration to antisemitic and anti-Muslim conspiratorial ideas.

The danger of this practice is that when an individual joins a Facebook group reflecting a specific interest or anger that they have, they can be set on a path to consume wider far-right material they otherwise would not have come across. Single issue engagement towards, for example, the construction of a new mosque in their area, can via Facebook groups introduce them to other Islamophobic ideas, and wider far-right propaganda on other topics. This can contribute to the adoption of more extreme views and broaden their prejudice from a single issue or few issues to a more fully formed far-right worldview. Importantly, in the case of Facebook groups, the effect of being introduced to new far-right positions needs to be seen in the context of the relationship between members in a group. That they have joined a group, sometimes a relatively small one, generally indicates a level of support for similar ideas. As such, there is a risk that a perceived sense of commonality and agreement can make members more trusting and receptive towards content posted by other members in the group. This could further exacerbate the risk of the broadening and/or deepening of their far-right engagement.

Illustrative of this is Yellow Vests UK, a closed group which presents itself as a British counterpart to the original French *Gilets Jaunes*. It has approximately 1,400 members at the time of writing. Like the original movement, at least superficially, the group is centered on anti-government and populist sentiments about the UK government not representing the “will of the

people” and that it has “contempt for the working class.” A vast majority of posts in the group reflect a feeling of betrayal from UK politicians towards the electorate and highlight the incompetency as well as supposed corruption of UK politicians and especially, though not exclusively, the Labour Party. Content about British people not getting the support they need from the social security system are also common and similarly used to highlight the failure of the state. Smaller topics include occasional anti-immigration posts and posts romanticising British history, such as quotes by Winston Churchill and references to the Magna Carta. Despite this, following its creation in December 2018, the group has exhibited frequent Islamophobia, often demonstrating a slide into more explicitly racial nationalist politics. A user in May 2019, for example, posted the following making reference to the ‘indigenous British’:



And replies included a further change of language to “white British”:



The group has also seen a broadening of far-right views, from anti-LGBT+ views to posts about the ‘Kalergi Plan’ far-right conspiracy theory. This alleges that there is a deliberate plan to undermine white European society by a campaign of mass immigration, integration and miscegenation conducted by sinister (and often Jewish) elites.



COALESCING CONCERNS

The above areas of developing online Islamophobia in the UK (and internationally) do not always occur in isolation. Illustrating misinformation through images and the dynamics of Facebook groups, is an example similar to that given above of the woman passing the



site of the London Bridge terror attacks. The use of photos stripped of context to incite anger and hatred against Muslims can be seen in Facebook groups that do not have Islamophobia as their apparent purpose. In the ‘Jacob Rees-Mogg: Supporters’ Group’, a public Facebook group with over 24,000 members that was ostensibly set up to promote the Conservative MP, a photo of Muslims praying in the road on London Bridge was posted with a caption that implied the men were choosing to pray illegally in the middle of a road and stopping traffic by doing so.

The post prompted an avalanche of vicious rhetoric from the group’s members, including dozens of violent fantasies of running the men over, spraying them with pig faeces or throwing them off the bridge. Even if it were true that the men were illegally blocking a road for their prayers, this level of vitriol would be extreme. Yet the missing context – perhaps deliberately obscured by the persons sharing the image – was that the road had already been closed by a minicab drivers strike. Both lanes were blocked by minicab drivers – of every religion and none – who had parked up their cars in protest against the congestion charge. Those drivers who happened to be Muslim were simply observing their prayers while doing so.

As with the *Gilets Jaunes* group, there are many reasons that someone might choose to join the ‘Jacob Rees-Mogg: Supporters’ Group’ – support for his stance on Brexit, admiration for his character, or out of curiosity. But the lax moderation policy of the group’s admins – some of whom have posted anti-Muslim material themselves – means that whatever their initial reasons for joining the group, they will subsequently be exposed to fake news, conspiracy theories and violently anti-Muslim rhetoric. Those who are strongly opposed to bigotry might immediately choose to leave the group, but those whose views on diversity and equality are less certain will find a steady drip-feed of weaponised far-right propaganda in their Facebook newsfeed from that point onwards. The effects of such exposure are hard to measure, but it is something that social media companies must urgently consider when evaluating their impact on our communities. With means of propagating Islamophobia online continuing to coalesce in online spaces in the UK and abroad, we must work harder to stem its spread.

SECTION 5 – GROUPS/INDIVIDUAL PROFILES





STEADY FALL OF STEPHEN YAXLEY-LENNON

WHAT A DIFFERENCE A YEAR MAKES. IN LAST YEAR'S *STATE OF HATE* REPORT WE EXPLORED THE GROWING POPULARITY OF FORMER EDL LEADER STEPHEN YAXLEY-LENNON, BETTER KNOWN AS TOMMY ROBINSON. NOW, 12 MONTHS ON, HE APPEARS A MUCH LESS SIGNIFICANT FORCE. HERE'S A RECAP OF 2019:



FEBRUARY 2019

Facebook banned Yaxley-Lennon, and 100 of his associates, from their platform. This was a massive blow, given that he had more than a million followers and was the primary means of communication and organising his supporters



FEBRUARY 2019

Yaxley-Lennon thinks he has turned the tables of BBC Panorama and HOPE not hate when he releases his Panodrama documentary to 3,000 supporters outside BBC HQ in Salford. But there was no media interest in the story and concerns about legal elements of the film limited how it was pushed out by even his own supporters

MARCH 2019

Loses legal fight against Cambridgeshire Police over claims of harassment. Costs him over £20,000



MARCH 2019

Has a separate stage at the Brexit betrayal demo in Whitehall. Metro reports that he managed to make the protest all about himself



APRIL 2019

YouTube finally place some restrictions around his channel, which resulted in his views collapsing



APRIL 2019

Puts the family home on the market for £900,000



APRIL 2019

Yaxley-Lennon now uses the messaging app Telegram as his main way of communicating with his supporters, but with just over 40,000 followers, this is way down on the numbers he would reach through Facebook and YouTube



APRIL 2019

Announces decision to contest the North West region in the European Elections. Campaign is overshadowed with violence from his own supporters and with being milkshaked

MAY 2019

Humiliated in the European Parliament Elections, polling just 2.2% and taking a tiny 39,000 votes. He fled the count on learning of his defeat. He really thought he was going to win



JULY 2019

Asks President Trump for political asylum

JULY 2019

Given a nine-month prison sentence after being found guilty of contempt of court at an earlier hearing for "aggressively confronting and filming" defendants accused of the sexual exploitation of young girls. He served just nine weeks of the sentence, during which time he claimed to have been held in isolation for his own security



JULY 2019

Despite being incarcerated again, the 'Free Tommy' movement that saw such large demonstrations in 2018 ran out of steam in 2019 and the demonstrations outside Belmarsh mustered tiny numbers



AUGUST 2019

Advertisers agree not to place adverts on the TR News website, so depriving him of another fundraising avenue

AUGUST 2019

Free Tommy demo (3 August) ends in violence, 24 people arrested



SEPTEMBER 2019

Lennon released from prison and admits he looks "a mess". He announces his support for Julian Assange



NOVEMBER 2019

Libel action against Yaxley-Lennon commences at the High Court for comments made in 2018 about a Syrian refugee who was filmed being attacked in a school in Huddersfield

NOVEMBER 2019

Encourages "everyone should vote for Boris Johnson" in the upcoming General Election



JANUARY 2020

Receives the Danish Free Press Society's Sappho Award for defending free speech

FEBRUARY 2020

Addresses hundreds of people at the Libertarian conference in St Petersburg, Russia



TR NEWS

2019 saw the launch of Stephen Yaxley-Lennon's (AKA Tommy Robinson) 'news' website, TR News, with the first article appearing in March. While the website's primary focus has been Islam and Muslims, it also covers a range of other topics popular with the far right, such as anti-environmentalism, anti-left wing and anti-trans politics. Interestingly the website also promoted the far-right conspiracy theory known as the The Great Replacement, popularised by the Identitarian movement. As such, TR News has a much broader far-right platform than Yaxley-Lennon's traditionally narrower Islamophobic focus.

However, it appears that Yaxley-Lennon has actually provided very little content to the website himself, with the bulk being provided by Australian activist Avi Yemini. Yemini is a controversial Australian far-right activist who was convicted of unlawful assault against his former wife in July 2019, after he threw a chopping board at her, leaving her with a contusion on her forehead.

According to the website analytics site Similar Web, the number of visits to TR News has declined significantly since its peak in July. While the site can hardly be described as a success and has generally failed to become a force on the far right, it is one of Yaxley-Lennon's only remaining means to reach large audiences, since last year's deplatforming which saw his social media reach severely curtailed.

POST-NATIONAL ACTION NAZI TERRORIST GROUPS

FOLLOWING THE proscribing of National Action as a terrorist group in December 2016, the young militant wing on Britain's far right splintered far and wide. While a few stayed involved in the NA network, and paid through imprisonment, most went off into different groups or became unaligned.

Out of the ashes of National Action came NS131, System Resistance Network (SRN) and Scottish Dawn. None stayed around for too long.

Scottish Dawn, which brought together Scottish NA members and some from the Scottish Defence League, was banned by the Home Secretary in September 2017, as was NS131.

The SRN split, between those who were influenced by Order of Nine Angles and those who rejected the Satanism. The O9A faction went on to form the Sonnenkrieg Division, unquestionably the most extreme and offensive far right group ever, which was exposed by the BBC in December 2018 and folded last year and several members were imprisoned for terrorist offences.

Some of the remnants of National Action remain in contact with each other, though mindful not to be seen together publicly for fear of arrest. Leading this group is Ben Raymond, one of the original leaders of NA. Despite still nominally being under police investigation, Raymond felt confident enough to attend a National Action terrorism trial in Birmingham earlier this year and pull faces at people giving evidence.

Others, like Greater Manchester based Liam Pinkham, who had been in the NA orbit before the ban, operate now as free agents though still in touch with a wide cross-section of the movement.

Two new groups that emerged in Britain last year was the Feuerkrieg Division, (FKD) and the Blutkrieg Division (BKD).

The FKD is a spin-off from the US-based Atomwaffen Division, a neo-Nazi group allegedly tied to five murders across the US, though its leader is believed to live in Estonia, while the BKD is a homegrown group, based in the North East of England. However, both advocated terrorism and shared terrorist material. Both groups appear to have collapsed due to arrests.

■ As State of Hate goes to press, the Government have proscribed SKD and SRN.



NICK GRIFFIN

Last year was a relatively quiet one for former BNP leader Nick Griffin. Apart from moving home, which saw him hop over the border to Shropshire, Griffin confined his political activism to the continent, where he continues to get paid by the Alliance for Peace and Freedom, a far right grouping in the European Parliament and politically led by his old friend Roberto Fiore.

Amongst the trips undertaken by Griffin on behalf of AFP was to Lebanon, where he met representatives of Hezbollah.

Griffin also did a series of quite horrendously antisemitic interviews and podcasts. Free from the respectability of the BNP, he really revealed his true fascist self.

The former BNP leader contemplated a political comeback last year, as he sounded out old friends and foes to test the appetite. The fact that nothing has emerged suggests that he was shunned.



PIE AND MASH

LEADER: JOE TURNER

SUMMARY OF 2019

It's been a very quiet year for Joe Turner and Pie and Mash, which is partly reflective of the demise of the EDL, DFLA and street demonstrations more generally.

Joe Turner's cousin, Samantha Turner, also very active in Pie and Mash, was caught trying to smuggle £33,000 worth of cocaine, spice and mobile phones into Salford prison as she was visiting her boyfriend, Stephen Benson.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

The expected re-emergence of the North West Infidels during 2020, combined with the far right potentially finding a voice in a post-Brexit world, might give Pie and Mash the opportunity for greater activism.



RADIO ALBION

LEADER: STEVE STONE

SUMMARY OF 2019

Radio Albion is simply Radio Aryan by a different name. Run by Steve Stone, under the name "Sven Longshanks", this antisemite and former associate of National Action activists spews out his hatred on a daily basis. His accompanying website carries antisemitic and Holocaust denial material.

Radio Aryan folded shortly after Steve Stone was exposed in the national media.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

Daily broadcasts should be expected.



WODEN'S FOLK (WF)

SUMMARY OF 2019

Based on an ancient German tradition that has severe 'blood and soil' undertones, Wodinism was popular among Nazis in the 1930s when they dabbled with the occult. Similar to Odinism, Wodinism has taken off in the UK and found willing allies and adherents in some former National Action members, as well as former members of another nazi terror group, Combat 18.

While some are simply attracted to the ceremonies and traditions, the involvement of former National Action activist and convicted antisemite, Garron Helm, makes Woden's Folk (WF) more worrying, especially given his own active involvement in the Order of Nine Angles (O9A). Whether Helm remains involved in WF now he is setting up his own O9A nexion (branch) is unclear, though he might do so in order to recruit.

WF hit the headlines in 2019 when *The Telegraph* ran an exposé, then in *The Sun*.

The person editing their literature is veteran NF activist turned national anarchist Troy Southgate.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

Woden's Folk is one of a number of small, occult worshipping groups springing up around the UK. It is likely to continue as before in 2020.

NATIONALIST UNITY (NU)

LEADER: PETER HOLLINS

SUMMARY OF 2019

Set up early last year by former Leeds BNP organiser Peter Hollins, Nationalist Unity is a secret Facebook group used to discuss the pitiful state of the far-right movement and to pontificate on solutions.

Most of the 950 people who belong to this group are former members of the BNP, NF, etc, but who now find themselves organisationally homeless.

It has recently been a forum for sharp political exchanges between Hollins and Mark Collett.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

Whether it becomes a formal group remains to be seen, though it is likely that most of those who engage on it would prefer to remain rootless.

NAZI GROUPS

BRITISH MOVEMENT (BM)

IDEOLOGY: NATIONAL SOCIALIST

LEADERSHIP: STEVE FROST

OTHER LEADING ACTIVISTS:

JOHN "BENNY" BULLMAN, TIM RYAN



SUMMARY OF 2019

The British Movement (BM), or British National Socialist Movement to give it its proper title, has been remarkably resilient in recent times, which is probably not surprising given the longevity of the organisation.

While most other traditional far-right groups contracted or even collapsed during 2019, BM continued, albeit at a remarkably slow pace.

Its printed magazine *Broadsword* has disappeared, to be replaced by an online newsletter, *Emblem*. The group also has a regular podcast and a Telegram channel.

There are few open BM activities, but the group continues to be influential in Blood and Honour and presents itself as a non-sectarian party open to debate and discussion with others. Last summer it hosted a memorial event in Leeds for fallen far-right leaders Colin Jordan and John Tyndall. Among the speakers were the NF's Richard Edmonds, Andrew Brons and James Lethwaite of the BDP, and Peter Rushton from Heritage and Destiny.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

While the BM will have little public profile, expect it to continue in the same mould this year.

NEW BRITISH UNION (NBU)

IDEOLOGY: FASCIST/MOSLEYITE

LEADER: GARY RAIKES



SUMMARY OF 2019

The NBU, which seeks to emulate Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists, continued to be widely derided throughout 2019, doing little more than be active on Twitter.

Leader Gary Raikes reacts furiously to claims that he is the party's only member, but the truth hurts. There are literally a handful of members and while some gullible fools do pass through their website they rarely hang around for long when they realise what they have got themselves into.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

The group will continue to be irrelevant.

Will Browning



COMBAT 18 (C18)

IDEOLOGY: NATIONAL SOCIALIST

LEADER: WILL BROWNING

SUMMARY OF 2019

Another very quiet year for Combat 18 in the UK, with no gigs or formal meetings of any note. There have been a couple of Oi gigs organised by John 'Slaz' Henderson and his Last Orders band, which have attracted many in the C18 network: these are little more than social affairs.

Browning now lives in the Netherlands and rarely visits London, but two activists who are keeping the C18 flame going are Millwall hooligan Duncan Robertson and former skinhead-turned-biker, Chris Jones.

Far more active is the Sargent wing of C18. Led by Steve Sargent, this group, comprising almost entirely people who were around the C18 world in its early days and numbering up to 40, have attended several of the pro-Brexit demos that took place last year.

PROSPECTS FOR 2019

Little is expected of C18 during 2020.



Chris Jones



Duncan Robertson

RACIAL VOLUNTEER FORCE (RVF)

IDEOLOGY NATIONAL SOCIALIST

LEADER: MARK ATKINSON

SUMMARY OF 2019

The Racial Volunteer Force (RVF) is virtually defunct as an organisation, with its only publicly showing in the last 12 months was when Mark Atkinson and his sidekick Louis Capaldi attended the Brexit Day party in Parliament Square at the end of January.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

Further decline. The group is unlikely to be active in 2020.

BLOOD AND HONOUR (B&H)

SUMMARY OF 2019

2019 was another miserable year for the Blood and Honour white power music scene, but it continued to organise events, unlike many other groups who folded.

B&H held only six gigs during the year:

- 19 January – east London. 150 attended an event held at the home of B&H organiser Rob Talland. Performers included Embers of an Empire, and Ken McClellan doing a solo.
- 16 March – Newcastle. Only 30 turned up to hear East Midlands-based Whitelaw.
- 11 May – West Yorkshire. 200 attended and the bands Embers of an Empire, Blackout, Whitelaw and Ken McClellan played.
- 27 July – Sunderland. Just 80 were present to watch Whitelaw and Blackout perform.
- 21 September – Leeds. The largest gig of the year was the annual Ian Stuart Memorial gig, held on the outskirts of Leeds and which attracted 500 people. The bands that performed were Brutal Attack, Section 88, Legion of St George, Code 291, Whitelaw, Billy (formerly lead singer of Celtic Warrior), Embers of an Empire and Squadron. It was the presence of Squadron that accounted for much of the large crowd.
- 9 November – Bathgate, Scotland. 300 watched Brutal Attack, Code 291 and Stigger.

One of the interesting features of 2019 was the complete absence of foreign bands performing at B&H gigs in the UK, quite a departure from previous years. There were also far fewer foreign nazis at the British gigs. This is a result of the growing insignificance of the British white power scene, but also the increasing difficulties foreign nazis and bands have had entering the UK in recent years.

Another consequence of the declining B&H scene is that British nazis are increasingly going abroad for gigs. During last year, sizeable contingents of B&H activists went to gigs in Italy and France. The French gig, held in December and headlined by the Australian nazi band, Fortress, meant that there was no B&H White Xmas gig for the first time in many years.

A second consequence has been the disappearance of the *Blood & Honour* magazine. Sales of recent editions had dwindled in the last few years and there is little appetite to even put a magazine together by the organisation's leaders.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

Blood and Honour will continue as an occasional social gathering for aging nazis but it will continue to have little influence on the wider far right movement.

REUNIONS

One of the features of the skinhead scene in the last few years has been the return of some of the biggest bands around. In 2018 we had the nazi band Squadron, who performed their first gig in 20 years. Last year it was the turn of the Australian band Fortress to come out of performance, with a number of large gigs in Europe.

Another band making a comeback in 2019 was the infamous 1980s skinhead band Condemned 84. While Condemned 84 isn't specifically a nazi band, they are happy to mix with nazis and a huge contingent of their gigs are from Blood and Honour.



(above) Thomas Stenhouse, Scotland gig organiser
(below, left) Vicky, Yorkshire gig organiser
(below, right) Stan, North East gig organiser



FAR-RIGHT GROUPS

BRITISH NATIONAL PARTY (BNP)

LEADER: ADAM WALKER

SUMMARY OF 2019

The British National Party (BNP) remains operational, but that is more to do with ensuring receipt of wills and donations than a drive for political action.

With an estimated £1m to be heading its way, and perhaps much more, there is little incentive for the party leadership to close up shop: but at the same time there is no desire to do more than necessary to stay operational.

BNP membership is probably now less than 100, though there are probably a few people who took out life membership in the party's heyday and never got round to cancelling.

Like the NF, the BNP has also lost its website.

The only functioning branch is London, where organiser David Furness also doubled up as the party's sole candidate in the General Election, though with a pathetic 0.9% of the vote in Hornchurch, east London, he probably should not have bothered.

The party remained mired in a legal fight with former party official Chris Barnett claiming that the leadership failed to follow and altered the party's constitution.

It is conceivable that the party leadership will use its expected windfall to build up the BNP again, but recent form suggests they will invest the money in more property and continue to live off the proceeds.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

Do not expect the BNP to really do anything in 2020, though it is likely that David Furness will contest a London Assembly seat.



BNP Chairman Adam Walker



BRITISH DEMOCRATIC PARTY (BDP)

LEADER: JAMES LEWTHWAITE

SUMMARY OF 2019

Largely inactive as a national body, the BDP has no profile outside West Yorkshire and the East Midlands.

Its only public activity in 2019 was when former BNP councillor James Lewthwaite stood in Wyke ward in Bradford. While he didn't win, he polled a respectable 25% of the vote, coming second ahead of the Conservatives, the Lib Dems and the Greens.

The BDP provided several speakers and some of the audience for the joint Tyndall/Jordon memorial meeting.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

with unlikely future viability as a political party, expect the BDP to work closer together with the British Movement and Heritage and Destiny.

NATIONAL FRONT (NF)

LEADER: TONY MARTIN

SUMMARY OF 2019

The sight of Richard Edmonds being too ill to walk on the National Front's Remembrance Sunday demo just about summed up the state of the once significant political force. Tired, ill and looking thoroughly dejected, the former deputy leader of the British National Party cut a very sad figure as he waited for the march to reach him.

And that just about sums up the fortunes of the NF.

Politically marginalised for years, even in the context of Britain's far right the NF is politically on a life-support system. Riven by personality and ideological splits, the NF isn't quite an open nazi party (though most of its members are), but it's not a functioning political party in any way, either. It has even lost its website.

Its leader remains Tony Martin, though he has spent quite a bit of time engaging in the yellow vest protests in London.

Prominent activists who have dropped out of the NF, or at least from activity, including Jordan Pont and the South and West Yorkshire branches.

The party only has functioning branches in South London, Northern Ireland and Hull.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

The NF might try to stand Edmonds in the London Assembly elections, but this is likely to be no more than a paper campaign.



Anne Marie Waters, centre, with former BNP activists Eddy Butler, Jeffrey Marshall, Susan Clapp and Julian Leppert

FOR BRITAIN

SUMMARY OF 2019

2019 saw Anne Marie Waters' anti-Muslim party score its first electoral victories, and also move further towards the extremes.

Hoping to capitalise on UKIP's decline, For Britain stood 42 candidates in the local elections, up from 15 in 2018 and matching or exceeding UKIP in terms of numbers of candidates in eight council areas. Despite campaign mismanagement, with Waters failing to properly support local candidates or even provide them with funds to produce leaflets, For Britain won two seats; Karen King in Hartlepool, and former British National Party (BNP) councillor Julian Leppert in Epping Forest, where the local campaign was coordinated by the BNP's former elections guru, Eddy Butler. In Stoke-on-Trent, however, the party's disastrous councillor Richard Broughan, who was elected on a UKIP ticket, crashed out of his seat in eighth place, and the party also performed badly in its target areas of Leeds and Sandwell. Strapped for resources, For Britain did not contest the May European Election or the December General Election.

In May, the party received some press coverage after former The Smiths frontman Morrissey performed on the Jimmy Fallon show in the US wearing a For Britain pin.

During 2019 HOPE not hate exposed the links between For Britain and the far-right youth movement Generation Identity UK (GI UK), a group which advocated for a form of racial separatism before folding early this year. Waters spoke at the GI UK conference in July, which also heard speeches from

the far-right former professor Tomislav Sunic and white nationalist Colin Robertson (AKA Millennial Woes). Indicating her shift to more explicitly racist and conspiratorial language, Waters told the audience: "The only reason that the mass migration into white Europe is happening on the scale that it's happening is to disempower white people, to make us a minority and therefore unable to wield political power".

The group suffered a heavy blow in October when PayPal closed its account, forcing it to cancel thousands of member subscriptions who paid via the service.

In November 2019, the group held its second annual conference in Merseyside. The event featured David Vance of the marginal far-right alternative media site AltNewsMedia, and the prominent American anti-Muslim activists Pamela Geller (banned from entering the UK) and Bill Warner via video link.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

For Britain stands to benefit from the decline of UKIP and the "mothballing" of the Brexit Party, and some of the most extreme and anti-Muslim elements of these parties may gravitate towards Waters' vehicle. The continuing influence of former BNP figures in For Britain also means that Waters will likely continue delving into race politics.

However, Waters' own shortcomings and internal disarray will mean that For Britain will remain a marginal force in British politics.

There is also the possibility of the ex-BNP faction, led by Eddy Butler, making a pitch for control of the party.

PAUL GOLDING: THE COMEBACK KID?

2019 WAS A TRULY HORRENDOUS YEAR FOR BRITAIN FIRST (BF) LEADER PAUL GOLDING AS HE FACED FINANCIAL AND POLITICAL RUIN, IMPRISONMENT AND EVIDENCE OF DOMESTIC ABUSE. YET DESPITE IT ALL, HE REMAINS ACTIVE AND DETERMINED TO FIGHT ON. HERE ARE THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THE LAST 15 MONTHS:

DECEMBER 2018

Golding is embroiled in a fight with one of his own activists in a Belfast street

JANUARY 2019

YouTube removes BF adverts from Brexit-related videos



MARCH 2019

Golding is acquitted of charges of incitement of racial hatred

APRIL 2019

Banned from Facebook and Twitter, Britain First launches a Telegram channel to communicate with supporters. However, the page currently has 8,383 subscribers, well down on the two million who liked the party's Facebook page



MAY 2019

BBC air documentary in which Golding is secretly recorded admitting to assaulting his long-time deputy and former girlfriend Jayda Fransen over a long period of time. He also admits to assaulting another woman

JUNE 2019

Sentenced to three months imprisonment, suspended for two years, for producing material intended to stir up hatred



JULY 2019

Golding is one of several far right leaders from around the globe to speak to MPs in the Russian Parliament. The title of the event was the aptly named: International Conference of Peace-loving Forces. In a short address, Mr Golding claimed the west was "under attack by the forces of globalisation and the left"

JULY 2019

Britain First is fined £44,000 by the Electoral Commission for multiple breaches of electoral law



SEPTEMBER 2019

A trip to Calais ended in humiliation after they were pelted with rocks by migrants. Hours later, BF begins launch vigilante patrols off the Dover coast, which they entitled 'Operation White Cliffs', to look out for migrants crossing the channel illegally.



OCTOBER 2019

Golding returns to Moscow to give another talk to Russian MPs. He is arrested and held by counter-terror police on his return

NOVEMBER 2019

The Britain First annual conference attracts only 30 people, though it is addressed by a member of Generation Identity

DECEMBER 2019

Calls on his supporters to "vote wisely" in the General Election, and launches daily online attacks on Labour, including the claim that food banks are Labours fault

DECEMBER 2019

Announces that he, and 5,000 of his supporters, have joined the Conservative Party. A couple of weeks later he receives a letter from Tory Central Office informing him his membership has been refused

DECEMBER 2019

Golding is run out of Northern Ireland after a feud with East Belfast UVF

FEBRUARY 2020

Paul Golding is charged with an offence under the Terrorism Act after refusing to give police access to his phone on his return from Russia in October.

FAR-RIGHT PARTIES

UNITED KINGDOM INDEPENDENCE PARTY

INTERIM LEADER: PATRICIA MOUNTAIN

SUMMARY OF 2019

UKIP experienced a catastrophic 2019, enduring three disastrous elections, three leaders and a truly extraordinary civil war, rounding out the decade in disarray, marginal and on the verge of insolvency.

The year began with then-leader Gerard Batten reckoning with the consequences of the explicitly anti-Muslim, far-right direction in which he had led the party. Provoked by Batten's relationship with far-right extremist Stephen Yaxley-Lennon (AKA Tommy Robinson), former talisman Nigel Farage quit in December 2018, subsequently joining Catherine Blaiklock's Brexit Party. This provoked swathes of dissatisfied Ukipers, including whole branches and almost all its MEPs, to follow suit in the first half of 2019.

Reeling from these losses, UKIP was able to muster just 1,420 candidates in the May 2019 local elections, less than half its target of 3,000. Left with few local organisers and its new recruits inexperienced, incompetent and uncommitted to run an effective ground campaign, UKIP lost 80% of the seats it was defending. The defeat was all the more crushing given the ostensibly ideal conditions in which the election was fought.

The European elections later that month proved even worse. Nigel Farage's slick Brexit Party presented a more acceptable face for anti-EU voters and quickly mobilised support. In contrast, UKIP's campaign coverage was dominated by the candidacy of misogynistic YouTuber Carl Benjamin (AKA Sargon of Akkad), and Batten's refusal to condemn Benjamin's numerous scandals, including his rape "jokes" about Labour MP Jess Phillips. On top of this, Batten's relationship with Yaxley-Lennon soured after the latter was barred from joining by the party's NEC (despite Batten's support), and instead ran as an independent in the North West. This meant that for all Batten's pro-Lennon cheerleading and what it cost UKIP, ultimately it could not even reap the support of many of Lennon's followers. UKIP's vote share plummeted 24% from its 2014 triumph, managing just a tenth of the Brexit Party's vote and losing all three of its remaining MEPs, including Batten.

Batten stepped down, triggering a leadership election in which he hoped to be re-elected. However, as UKIP's internal tensions again boiled to the surface, Batten was barred from standing as leader by UKIP's NEC. In August Richard Braine, an Islamophobe endorsed by Batten, won the leadership by a landslide, but was blocked by the NEC from installing Batten as deputy leader. Amidst the feud, Braine boycotted his own party conference, citing the embarrassingly low ticket sales, and was subsequently accused of a "complete insult" by UKIP chairman Kirstin Herriot in



Gerard Batten with Stephen Yaxley-Lennon

an email to members. In October, Braine and three other members were suspended after being accused of stealing data. UKIP pursued legal action, but the High Court ruled in December that the party withheld key information in the trial, ordering that it pay the costly legal bills of the defendants.

In the throes of this remarkable episode, UKIP fought its dismal General Election campaign, fielding a paltry 44 candidates (12% of its 2017 slate). Interim leader Patricia Mountain made the news for a gaffe-heavy manifesto launch, in which she claimed that she had only met "a few" racists in her party, although did not consider them to be "seriously racist". The party was wiped out, polling 1.1% in the seats it contested and taking just 0.1% of the overall vote.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

On 1 January 2020 Batten finally resigned from UKIP, leaving it completely devoid of figures with any public profile. UKIP will be holding a leadership election early in 2020, although the NEC has ruled that candidates must have been a member of good standing for five years and be able to pay a non-refundable deposit of £10,000, severely limiting the pool.

With Brexit achieved, UKIP is a busted flush, with membership plummeting, huge financial holes and persistent internal issues. While it is unlikely to completely disintegrate, it will never revive its fortunes.

THE POPULIST RADICAL RIGHT

LEAVE.EU

LEADER: ARRON BANKS

SUMMARY OF 2019

Leave.EU, the unofficial Brexit campaign led by former UKIP donor Arron Banks, had another characteristically divisive and toxic year. As political discourse in the UK became ever more polarised over Brexit, Leave.EU stoked the fire with regular social media posts referring to remain-leaning MPs as “traitors”, “cowards” and “swamp creatures,” as well as making provocative attacks on judges who ruled against the Government in Brexit-related matters in the latter part of the year.

The campaign has endorsed a number of highly divisive populist figures from across Europe, including Italy’s Matteo Salvini, Hungary’s Viktor Orbán and France’s Marine Le Pen, describing them as “patriots”. The group has also continued to stoke fears about migration, using inflammatory images that echoes UKIP’s infamous “Breaking Point” poster of 2016. In June, it approvingly tweeted the former Romanian PM, describing the so-called migrant crisis as a “Muslim invasion”. In October, Leave.EU was forced to make a rare public apology for a tweet that called German Chancellor Angela Merkel a “kraut”, which even Banks agreed had gone too far.

In February, Leave.EU was fined a total of £60,000 for data protection violations during the EU referendum campaign. The Information Commissioner’s Office determined that the campaign had unlawfully sent political advertising to customers of Banks’ Eldon Insurance company, while promoting Eldon Insurance to its own political subscribers. In December, a whistleblower alleged that he had been ordered to hand the membership data of over 100,000 UKIP members to Leave.EU, which might have been in breach of electoral law.

The campaign was a strong proponent of an electoral pact between the Conservative Party and Brexit Party in the 2019 General Election. Initially advocating a formal electoral pact between the two parties, it enthusiastically endorsed Nigel Farage’s decision to stand down in all Tory-held seats, and urged him to go further by standing down in Labour-Conservative marginals too. This represented a significant falling out between Banks and Farage, and it is unclear whether their previously strong relationship can be repaired.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

With the UK’s exit from the European Union at the end of January, Leave.EU may struggle to maintain its relevance in a post-Brexit UK. It may choose to do so by focusing full-time on other divisive topics, such as immigration.

TURNING POINT UK

LEADER: OLLIE ANISFIELD

SUMMARY OF 2019

The UK branch of Turning Point, a US-based populist-right movement aimed primarily at college students, launched in December of 2018, to much media interest. The group describes itself as “dedicated to educating students and other young people on the values of free markets, limited government and personal responsibility”, but its output focuses primarily on so-called “culture war” issues rather than traditional conservative economic concerns. Candace Owens, one of the group’s leaders, said at its launch event: “We very much believe that we are in the midst of World War 3 [...] it is an ideological war we are fighting for Western values.”

The group quickly received endorsements from some Conservative MPs, including Jacob Rees-Mogg and Priti Patel, as well as senior Brexit Party figures, and US founders Charlie Kirk and Candace Owens appeared at several events across the country. In June, the group also held an expensive dinner addressed by Brexit Party leader Nigel Farage.

Despite the significant media attention given to its launch, the group did not make a noticeable impact on university campuses or wider political debate in 2019. December’s General Election saw the Conservative vote share among its target demographic of 18-24-year-olds fall further to a historic low. The group cites this as proof of a pressing need for its campaign to continue, but perhaps also suggests that its work this year did not have the impact it had hoped for.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

Turning Point will be hoping that the stark age differential in voting patterns will prompt a renewed interest in its work this year, but it will need to prove that its brand of divisive culture war tactics can cut through among young people in the UK.



(L-r) John Mappin, George Farmer, Charlie Kirk and Candace Owens



THE BREXIT PARTY

LEADER: NIGEL FARAGE

SUMMARY OF 2019

The Brexit Party had perhaps the most dramatic year of any of the organisations in this report. The party was set up in November 2018 and formally announced in 2019 by Catherine Blaiklock, who served as its leader until March, when she resigned after HOPE not hate revealed numerous instances of racism and Islamophobia on her Twitter feed. Nigel Farage later denied that Blaiklock had been anything more than an “administrator”, despite having earlier stated that the party was “her idea entirely”.

The party’s organisational structure drew considerable interest: having registered as a limited company, it did not have any formal membership system or democratic processes. Members of the public were encouraged to pay £25 to become “registered supporters”, but this gave them no voting rights or say over party policy, which remained entirely in the hands of Farage and his allies.

Despite this inauspicious start, the party went on to achieve an impressive result at the European elections, coming first with 31% of the vote and sending 29 MEPs to sit in the European Parliament. In the wake of this success, Farage renewed his vow to stand candidates in every constituency at the next General Election, which had not yet been called. However, with Theresa May’s resignation and Boris Johnson’s succession as Prime Minister in July, support for the Brexit Party began to be squeezed. The party began announcing its prospective parliamentary candidates in August, and continued to maintain that it would contest every constituency, although Farage later admitted that he was privately approaching the Conservative Party to propose a formal electoral pact.

From September onwards, the Brexit Party came under intense pressure from the pro-Brexit media to stand down for fear of splitting the pro-Brexit vote to the benefit of pro-Remain parties. His efforts to construct a Brexit pact coming to no avail, Farage

announced in November that he would unilaterally stand down his candidates in all 317 seats currently held by the Conservative Party, although he withstood the pressure to do the same in some key Labour-held marginals. While the decision to stand down drew praise from many pro-Brexit commentators, it left many of the decommissioned candidates bitterly disappointed, many of whom had spent months campaigning in their constituencies and only heard about the decision when it was announced in the media.

The party’s selection and vetting of electoral candidates came under much scrutiny throughout the campaign as HOPE not hate uncovered dozens of candidates with far-right and occasionally bizarre views. Two candidates were replaced before the nominations had formally closed as a result of these revelations, but the party continued to stand by some of its most extreme and divisive candidates. Farage’s own conduct also came under renewed focus, with HOPE not hate revealing that he had given interviews to a number of deeply troubling broadcasters, including extreme conspiracy theorists and antisemitic evangelical TV channels.

The General Election proved hugely disappointing for the party, which failed to win a single seat despite having polled highest in 414 constituencies in the European elections. While Farage attempted to portray the huge majority for the Conservatives as a sign of its success, claiming that the party had taken votes from disaffected Labour supporters to allow Conservatives to win, the majority of psephologists have concluded that the Tory majority would in fact have been higher if the Brexit Party had not stood at all.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

The future for the Brexit Party is uncertain. With Brexit and talks on the UK’s future relationship with the EU now resting entirely in Tory hands, the party has lost its *raison d’être*. Farage initially spoke of rebranding it as the “Reform Party”, with a focus on constitutional issues such as overhauling the House of Lords, but in late January he said the party would be “mothballed”, leaving the possibility open that it might return if Brexit does not get resolved to his satisfaction.

IDENTITARIANS

THE IDENTITARIAN MOVEMENT

(PREVIOUSLY GENERATION IDENTITY UK & IRELAND) (DISSOLVED)

LEADERS: BENJAMIN JONES (IDENTITARIAN MOVEMENT), DAVID WRIGHT (IDENTITARIAN FOUNDATION)

SUMMARY OF 2019

The Identitarian Movement (IM) was, until August 2019, the British and Irish branch of the pan-European youth movement, Generation Identity (GI). IM subscribed to the far-right ideology of 'identitarianism', which espouses the view that non-white, and especially Muslim immigrants, pose an intrinsic threat to white, non-Muslim Europeans.

2019 started badly for GI in the UK and Ireland, with dwindling press interest, deplatforming by social media and a majority of its actions being carried out by the same small group of activists. Moreover, in January 2019 the group underwent a split following the creation of a breakaway 'British Revival' group.

In April HOPE not hate revealed further links between GI and various members of the anti-Muslim For Britain party, including branch chairs and local election candidates. Then in May HOPE not hate revealed that UK GI activists had travelled to the US for the far-right American Renaissance conference, which hosted members of the extreme US far right, and where they met US identitarian group, the American Identity Movement.

In July disaster struck for UK GI as its choice to publicly host the Scottish antisemitic alt-right vlogger Colin Robertson (AKA Millennial Woes) at its London conference was met with disavowals across Europe by other branches. Despite the hypocrisy – with Austrian identitarians also being

on good terms with Colin Robertson, for example – internal messages seen by HOPE not hate during an infiltration of the group indicated that there had been a definitive split and the UK branch would be forced to relinquish the GI name and branding.

In August the group officially rebranded as the 'Identitarian Movement' (IM), continuing under Benjamin Jones' leadership. It also rebranded its supporter groups of older and non-public activists – Generation Identity Supporters Group (GISG) – to the 'Identitarian Foundation', continuing under the leadership of David Wright. In the process, key supporters from the GISG left during the rebranding. Information acquired later in the year revealed that key activists from IM itself had departed and its branches were increasingly collapsing.

The West Midlands regional leader had left and there were understood to be as few as two activists left in the region; the sole Welsh activist had also departed; and the Scottish branch was gone. Activity in Ireland had likewise dwindled. The only remaining branches of much activity were London, the North West and some in Yorkshire.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

IM/GI UK and Ireland's spiral out-of-control during the summer of 2019 was symptomatic of an incompetence that has dogged the branch since its launch, and in January 2020 the branch announced its dissolution.

BRITISH REVIVAL (BR)

LEADER: MICHAEL WRENN

SUMMARY OF 2019

Launched in January 2019, British Revival (BR) is a splinter group from Generation Identity (GI) United Kingdom and Ireland (the latter rebranded as the Identitarian Movement).

The split arose from personal differences between GI UK and Ireland leader, Benjamin Jones, and Damien McAllinder of GI Ireland. Members of GI’s South West branch, including regional leader Michael Wrenn from Torquay, Annie Kennerdale from Trowbridge, and Ben from Bath (AKA YouTuber ‘Libertas Metapolitics’), are also understood to have left to join BR.

BR had one high-profile moment in 2019, after Wrenn was interviewed on the BBC’s *Countryfile* show in a segment highlighting his and BR’s far-right politics, underlying their presentation as a group for “patriotic environmentalists”. Despite this airtime, BR remains very small and inactive, with just an action in August stickering, leafleting and litter-picking, and an action in October putting up anti-EU posters.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

While BR’s presentation as an environmentally-focused group could have allowed it to capitalise on the ascendancy of climate change as part of the political agenda, it failed to do so and Wrenn’s *Countryfile* appearance, despite questionably giving the group publicity, did at least mean its extreme underpinning ideology was laid bare to mainstream environmentalist audiences to reject.

With a floundering start and little energy since, BR is unlikely to grow in size or activity in 2020.



PROUD BOYS UK

LEADER: PAUL YATES

SUMMARY OF 2019

A new group on the far right is Proud Boys UK, a British chapter of the North American organisation originally created by *VICE* magazine co-founder, Gavin McInnes.

Led by Paul Yates, an American living in Manchester, Proud Boys UK has several groups around the country and also a unit in Scotland.

Yates has been living in the UK for almost five years. He was previously a US marine who once served in Kuwait.

Last year Proud Boys UK held a summer camp in Yorkshire, attended by approximately 20 people, and also a number of meetings around country. They have also attended a few ‘Tommy Robinson’ demonstrations.

Beyond that, the limit of their activity appears to be stickering.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

Unlikely to do much more than they have been doing up until now.



British Revival Photo: Twitter

YELLOW VEST PROTESTORS

THE 'DIY' Yellow Vest movement collapsed in 2019, when the short-lived protest group – which had emerged in late 2018 – split over political direction, finances and leadership.

While the movement combined a series of heavily-laden conspiracy theories and genuine concerns over perceived injustices, it rallied primarily in support of Stephen Yaxley-Lennon (AKA Tommy Robinson) and Brexit.

From there, it did not take them too long to perceive a global elite acting against the interests of the non-cosmopolitan working class.

Christened 'Paypal Patriots', a series of self-designated mini-celebrities threw themselves into political confrontations with their opponents, especially around Westminster, where they became best known for abusing anti-Brexit MPs and campaigners.

The majority of these activists were based in the north east and north west of the country, with a smaller group based in Leeds.

From the north east, two formidable DIY protest groups, 'Justice for our Boys' and 'Justice for Women and Children' were accused of antisemitism and of being too close to the National Front.

Despite being the figurehead and the inspiration of the Yellow Vests, Yaxley-Lennon was never fully in control of it and before long others began to speak out against him.

Yaxley-Lennon's foul-mouthed off-sider, Danny Tommo, was in turn attacked and robbed of his phone by individuals linked to the Democratic Football Lads Alliance (DFLA). He was later denounced by Justice for our Boys leader Tracy Blackwell for his constant begging for money.

The decision by Yaxley-Lennon to stand in the North West constituency in the European elections only increased the already growing disharmony within this ragged coalition. Although he and his TR News outfit had supported a number of the DIY leaders, many grew frustrated about the limits of what they could and could not say.

For his part, the former EDL leader became increasingly concerned that their conspiracy theories were becoming increasingly antisemitic, and fearing a repeat of what happened to the EDL in 2013, he began distancing himself from them.

There was also unease about the growing influence in the Yellow Vests movement from Tony Martin, leader of the National Front, and during the course of 2019 more moderate activists began to drift away.

The deplatforming (from social media) of a number of people only further heightened tensions in the Yellow Vest camp and highlighted the gulf in influence and objectives throughout the camp.



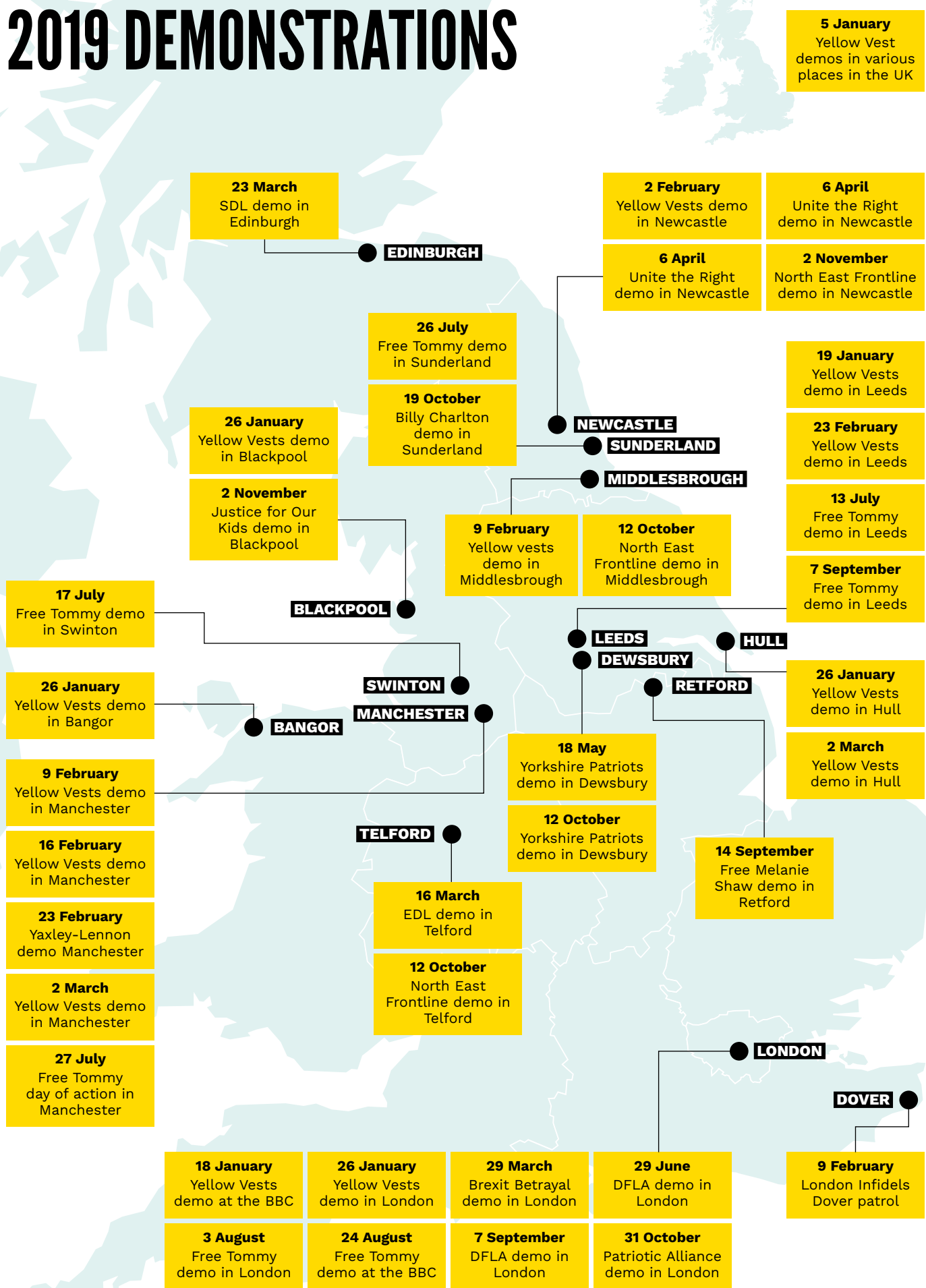
In the north west the Yellow Vests morphed into the 'Manchester Collective' to escape the constant attentions of those close to Yaxley-Lennon. Former Britain First Deputy Leader Jayda Fransen threw her diminishing weight behind this group, too.

There now exists an open war in Manchester between the Manchester Collective and Britain First, who for a short time were also ensconced in the city and with the Collective. Fransen's decision to work with the Collective was due in no small part to Britain First leader Paul Golding recruiting the former love interest of the Collective's leader.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

With Brexit having been delivered, it is likely that some of the yellow vesters will find other issues around which to protest. However, for many of them, leaving the EU meant this was the end of their road. What is abundantly clear is that they can no longer all wear the same vest at the same time.

2019 DEMONSTRATIONS



STREET GROUPS

NORTH WEST INFIDELS

LEADER: SHAUN CALVERT

SUMMARY OF 2019

The North West Infidels had a very quiet 2019, with no public activities. Leader Shaun Calvert has stayed out of political activity since coming out of prison, deciding instead to become a poster boy for a charity warning about the dangers of male suicide.

However, privately, Calvert remains in contact with many of his own foot soldiers, who appear to be biding their time for his return.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

We are likely to see Calvert return to political activity and with him, some of his former NWI followers who remain around but who are not currently politically active.

DEMOCRATIC FOOTBALL LADS ALLIANCE

LEADERSHIP: COLLECTIVE

SUMMARY OF 2019

A relatively quiet year for the Democratic Football Lads Alliance (DFLA), who mostly attended pro-Brexit demonstrations in London organised by other organisations.

Became involved in some of the internal fights in the DIY Yellow Vest movement, with the DFLA issuing a statement distancing themselves from antisemitics who had become increasingly vocal.

Several DFLA groups continue to exist and operate on Facebook and twitter, but few of the local groups organised anything meaningful offline during 2019. Even the official DFLA twitter account has posted anything for the last two months.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

Hard to see the DFLA being any more active in 2020, but it continues to have a network across the country that could be activated if something arises.

YORKSHIRE PATRIOTS

LEADER: DAVID SMALLER

SUMMARY OF 2019

A small group based in Yorkshire, the Yorkshire Patriots mixes racism, Islamophobia and Yorkshire Pride.

Most of Smaller's time is spent posting material on social media, which mainly consists of reposting Stephen Yaxley-Lennon's posts. This is probably not so surprising given that he had previously been involved in the EDL.



Yorkshire Patriots leader David Smaller (right)

The group did organise two demonstrations in Dewsbury during the year.

He has a handful of supporters around who occasionally meet up socially for drinks.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

The Yorkshire Patriots have announced a demonstration for Bradford in June.

ENGLISH DEFENCE LEAGUE

LEADER: CURRENTLY NO LEADER

SUMMARY OF 2019

The English Defence League has basically died as a national organisation, so few individuals still identify themselves with the group. What few activists they did have became active with the Yellow Vest protests and remained aligned to Stephen Yaxley-Lennon, both helping him in the European Election campaign but also attending the various Free Tommy demos in the summer.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

It is hard to see the EDL resurface without new leadership and purpose. There is a reunion planned for West Yorkshire this summer, which will be attended by some close to Yaxley-Lennon, but little is expected to emerge from this.

SCOTTISH DEFENCE LEAGUE

SUMMARY OF 2019

Unlike its English counterpart, the SDL continues to exist and organise, though what it does is very limited. Perhaps its organisational resilience is because of the broad base of its far right support and the lack of any obvious Yellow Vest movement in Scotland.

It held one demonstration in 2019, though admittedly it was poorly attended.

The SDL continues to bring together football hooligans and more hardline nazis.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

The SDL will probably continue as in 2019.

ANTI-MUSLIM FIGURES



4FREEDOMSLIBRARY

SUMMARY OF 2019

4 Freedoms is an online ‘counter-jihad’ discussion forum run by Alan Ayling (AKA Alan Lake) and “Kinana Nadir”, sharing and circulating articles and views about Islam and the “fundamental defects in the constructed model of Western secular democratic government.”

The forum remains very small, with just a handful of posters producing the vast majority of the content, Ayling among them, and most chat rooms having less than 20 members. The forum underwent no developments of note in 2019 with membership now closed to new members.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

If it continues to exist it is unlikely to undergo any changes of note in 2020.

LAW AND FREEDOM FOUNDATION (LFF)

LEADER: GAVIN “MOSQUE BUSTER” BOBY

SUMMARY OF 2019

Founded in 2011 and led by planning lawyer and self-styled “mosque buster” Gavin Bobby, The Law and Freedom Foundation remained active in 2019, attempting to prevent planning applications for mosques.

Both the Law and Freedom Foundation and the associated Mosque Buster Facebook groups posted very sporadically last year. Bobby also launched a YouTube channel in May 2019, but has amassed just over 10,700 views since then.

In June Bobby attended Mosbjerg Folkefest, a far-right festival in Denmark, this year also attended by members of the Identitarian group Generation Identity.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

The Law and Freedom Foundation and Bobby are certainly not as high profile as they once were, but he continues his activism and will likely continue to pop up when high-profile or controversial mosques are being built in the UK.

SHARIA WATCH UK

SUMMARY OF 2019

Sharia Watch UK is a tiny organisation that seeks to “document the advancement of sharia law in Britain, the methods by which this advancement occurs, and the groups and organisations which promote it.”

2019 was a very quiet year for Sharia Watch UK, with just a handful of updates on its outdated website. The project has become increasingly inactive ever since Anne Marie Waters became preoccupied with her own political party, The For Britain Movement.

However its Twitter account remains very active, with a steady stream of daily updates on the supposed Islamification of the world.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

The organisation will likely continue to exist, but is unlikely to have any noticeable impact.



(top, left) Alan Ayling. (above) Anne Marie Waters and (below) Gavin Bobby



FAR-RIGHT DISCUSSION GROUPS

TRADITIONAL BRITAIN GROUP (TBG)

LEADER: GREGORY LAUDER-FROST

The Traditional Britain Group (TBG) is a London-based discussion group that hosts far-right gatherings, dinners and conferences. The group’s ‘High Tory’ pretensions enable it to present a more moderate and “respectable” image than it warrants, and has attracted attendees from the UKIP and Tory fringes as well as open white supremacists.

SUMMARY OF 2019

Last year saw the TBG continue its status as one of the most important networking points for the more “high brow” and pseudo-academic end of the UK far right.

In May, the group hosted its annual black-tie dinner, with former UKIP deputy leader and climate change denier, Christopher Monckton, delivering an address to 50 attendees in Charing Cross. The group also held a Christmas social in London in December.

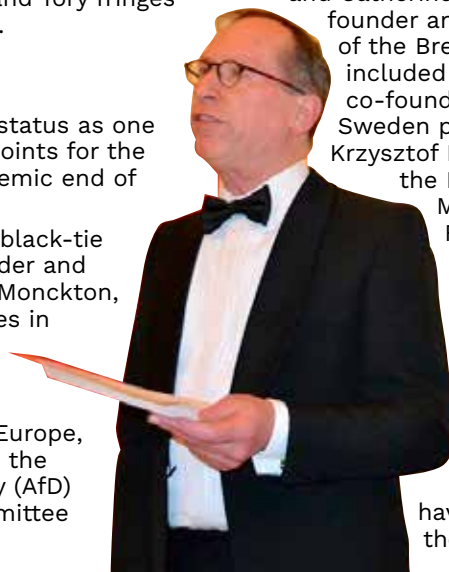
The group continued to network in Europe, and in April Lauder-Frost addressed the anti-Muslim Alternative for Germany (AfD) conference in Berlin, with TBG committee member Andrew Moffat in tow.

The group’s major event of the year, its annual conference, took place in October 2019 in Charing Cross, and was its largest conference yet, with roughly 160 attendees. Speakers included the British far-right YouTuber Edward Dutton, writer John Laughland and Catherine Blaiklock,

founder and former leader of the Brexit Party. Speakers from the continent included Gustav Kasselstrand and Erik Berglund, co-founders of the extreme Alternative for Sweden party; Bernhard Zimniok, an AfD MEP; Krzysztof Bosak, a member of the lower house of the Polish parliament; and, most significantly, Martin Helme, the Estonian Minister of Finance.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

The TBG will continue to be an important meeting point for far-right elitists in the UK, and increasingly, Europe. It is also looking to expand its presence online, building its social media and producing articles for its online journal. However, it is unlikely to have any significant wider impact beyond the confines of the far-right scene.



(inset above) Gregory Lauder-Frost
A Traditional Britain Group meeting



VORTEX LONDINIUM (VL)

LEADER: FRANCESCO SUSINNO

SUMMARY OF 2019

Vortex Londinium (VL), the UK-based branch of the Italian fascist group CasaPound, was energetic in the first half of 2019, holding several events in London and branching out into mainland Europe, although its momentum slowed as the year progressed.

In February, the group held a screening of the film *Rosso Istria* ('Red Land'), a depiction of the Foibe massacres during and following WW2. VL continued to be active in the far-right music scene, organising gigs in April and October for the Italian band Topi Neri in London.

Significantly, the group held its first international conference in Brussels, Belgium at the end of March, addressed by Susinno, Andrea Bonazza of CasaPound Italy, Julian Bender of the German far-right party Der III. Weg, Valentin Linder of the Spanish group Hogar Social, and Melisa Rodriguez of the French group Bastion Social. While the event saw a modest attendance of roughly 50 people, VL has indicated that it will seek to organise further such events.

In July, VL hosted a launch event for *Io Sono Matteo Salvini* by Chiara Giannini, a book about the then-Italian Deputy Prime Minister, released by the far-right publisher Altaforte Edizioni. After London Metropolitan University cancelled the event booking at its Holloway campus, VL was forced to find a new venue last minute. The event was poorly attended.

VL's activities dwindled towards the end of the year, although Susinno and other key activists made several trips to Italy for contact with CasaPound. In September a VL contingent travelled to Verona, northern Italy, to participate in CasaPound's annual rally, and in December travelled to Sicily to partake in a remembrance ceremony for Frederick II, alongside the local branch.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

VL will continue to hold similar events in the UK capital and to network in mainland Europe, although the group will remain confined to the far-right fringes.



Alan Harvey (left)

THE PATRIOTIC FORUM/SPRINGBOK CLUB

LEADER: ALAN HARVEY

SUMMARY OF 2019

The Patriotic Forum (formerly known as The Swinton Circle) continued to hold tiny monthly events throughout 2019, including a December event addressed by John Browne, former Tory MP for Winchester. Members also attended pro-Brexit demonstrations in London in October.

The pro-apartheid Springbok Club, also run by Harvey, received negative press coverage in April after HOPE not hate revealed that Stuart Agnew, then a UKIP MEP, had addressed a meeting of the group that month.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

Harvey and his friends will continue to have little influence.

LONDON SWINTON CIRCLE

LEADER: ALLAN ROBERTSON

SUMMARY OF 2019

The London Swinton Circle is a splinter from Alan Harvey's Swinton Circle (now named The Patriotic Forum) in 2008. The group has continued to dwindle, doing little more than holding the odd small meeting. It maintains a website, but produced just two issues of its tatty online magazine last year.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

Its handful of members will continue to meet, and to wield little-to-no influence on the wider far right.



Swinton Circle rally in the City of London

RIGHT-WING ALTERNATIVE MEDIA

WESTMONSTER

EDITOR: MICHEAL HEAVER

SUMMARY OF 2019

Created in 2017 by Leave.EU and former UKIP donor Arron Banks, and former UKIP figure (now with the Brexit Party), Micheal Heaver, Westmonster's output in 2019 focused heavily on pro-Brexit content, in a departure from an earlier spate of content focusing on Islam and immigration. Following a split between Banks and Heaver over the utility of the Brexit Party, the site announced it was going into hiatus in August.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

Though Heaver may choose to refocus efforts on Westmonster following Britain's departure from the EU, without Banks' backing and with Nigel Farage hinting at turning the Brexit Party into the 'Reform Party', Heaver may continue to focus on party politics.

SUMMIT NEWS

EDITOR: PAUL JOSEPH WATSON

SUMMARY OF 2019

Registered by far-right YouTuber Paul Joseph Watson in November 2018 while he was still working for US conspiracy theory channel InfoWars, Watson announced in March 2019 that he would be leaving to launch his own news site. He stated that he would be heading the project, but hoped to "generate the next generation of YouTubers, of young political commentators." While he would be "head honcho" of the new organisation, InfoWars boss and longtime associate, Alex Jones, added that the project was "pretty much [his] idea" and had been in the works for some time. Watson said that the project would still involve "working together" with InfoWars and would still "be affiliated" with it. However, despite an appearance on InfoWars in October 2019, Watson has not returned and Summit News has not shared any InfoWars content since that time. To date, the site is focused on Watson's own content and has followed his own key targets including Islam and Muslims, with 'Islam' having a dedicated tag for stories on the site.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

With Summit News continuing to focus on Watson's output and little indication of further far-right personalities being brought into the fold, it is likely that the site will continue to be used by Watson simply as a further means to raise his own profile.



(left) Micheal Heaver
Paul Joseph Watson. Photo: YouTube





KATIE HOPKINS

SUMMARY OF 2019

Katie Hopkins' descent into explicit far-right politics continued in 2019, with her social media output focusing heavily on denigrating multiculturalism and diversity. She continued to work closely with the increasingly extreme UKIP, giving speeches to the party's conference and at various party events across the country. She also premiered her documentary 'Homelands', a deeply Islamophobic and alarmist film about Muslim migration to Europe.

Hopkins received endorsement from Donald Trump in the form of retweets, as he shared her tweets attacking both Sadiq Khan and a US congressman, both with whom Trump was feuding. Such endorsements have helped to increase her global profile and in August Hopkins reached one million Twitter followers. However, Twitter finally took action against her in January of 2020, suspending her account for an indefinite period.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

Despite the continued rise of her Twitter following and occasional appearances on US media, Hopkins' reach has never recovered from the loss of her *Daily Mail* column and LBC radio show. If her suspension from Twitter becomes permanent, this will represent a heavy blow to her online reach. She will remain a provocative and divisive figure whose endorsement will be sought by far-right parties, but will not regain the celebrity or influence she once enjoyed.



Katie Hopkins. Photo: Almostangelic123 / wikimedia.org

POLITICALITE

EDITOR: JORDAN JAMES

SUMMARY OF 2019

The Tommy Robinson-supporting "news" site Politicalite started 2019 with reasons to be optimistic. Its profile had risen considerably over the previous year, and was reportedly gaining up to 50,000 weekly interactions on Facebook alone. However, it began to run into difficulty in April, when the site was removed from Facebook and Paypal and Google Ads both suspended their relationship with it. It also faced considerable pressure from the Stop Funding Fake News campaign, which was cited as having considerably reduced revenue by persuading some major advertisers to blacklist it.

In December, it was announced that Politicalite would wind up operations, with Jordan James claiming that "populism had won" and that it was time to "give the baton to new, young, exciting voices". In January, James announced a new site called Lion News, which would launch on 13 January. The Politicalite Twitter account was deleted on Jan 17th, but there is no sign of the new website yet, and both the Twitter account @LionNewsGB and the article announcing it have since been deleted.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

Jordan James' stated reasons for closing Politicalite seem suspect, given that he immediately announced a new news platform to take its place. It therefore seems likely that this was little more than an attempt to escape the blacklisting that Politicalite had faced, and campaigners will no doubt be watching closely to see if the now-delayed launch of the Lion News site brings a similarly dishonest and racist agenda.

BREITBART LONDON

EDITOR: OLIVER JJ LANE

SUMMARY OF 2019

Breitbart London continued to decline in importance last year, following Raheem Kassam's departure in mid-2018. James Delingpole is its only remaining high-profile contributor, and its social media growth slowed dramatically last year, as did the rate of interactions its content produced.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

Breitbart London will continue to be an important news source for the far right in the UK, but its growth appears to have slowed significantly and does not seem likely to achieve a similar status to that of its parent organisation in the US.

THE ALT-RIGHT

DEFEND EUROPA (DE)

EDITOR: LAURA TOWLER



SUMMARY OF 2019

Defend Europa (DE) is a small, volunteer-run alt-right/white nationalist news and opinion site, active since April 2017. The site's content largely focuses on popular talking points within the alt-right, including Islam and "population replacement".

Its contributors in 2019 were based in Croatia, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Italy, France, England, Scotland, and America. The site's video content featured just one interviewee in 2019, when editor Laura Towler spoke to Edward Dutton, an English proponent of pseudoscientific 'race science' based in Finland. While contributors 'William', Jason Bergkamp, Borna Volkov, 'Alex Z' and 'O Beirão' were previously listed as co-editors, Towler is the sole listed editor.

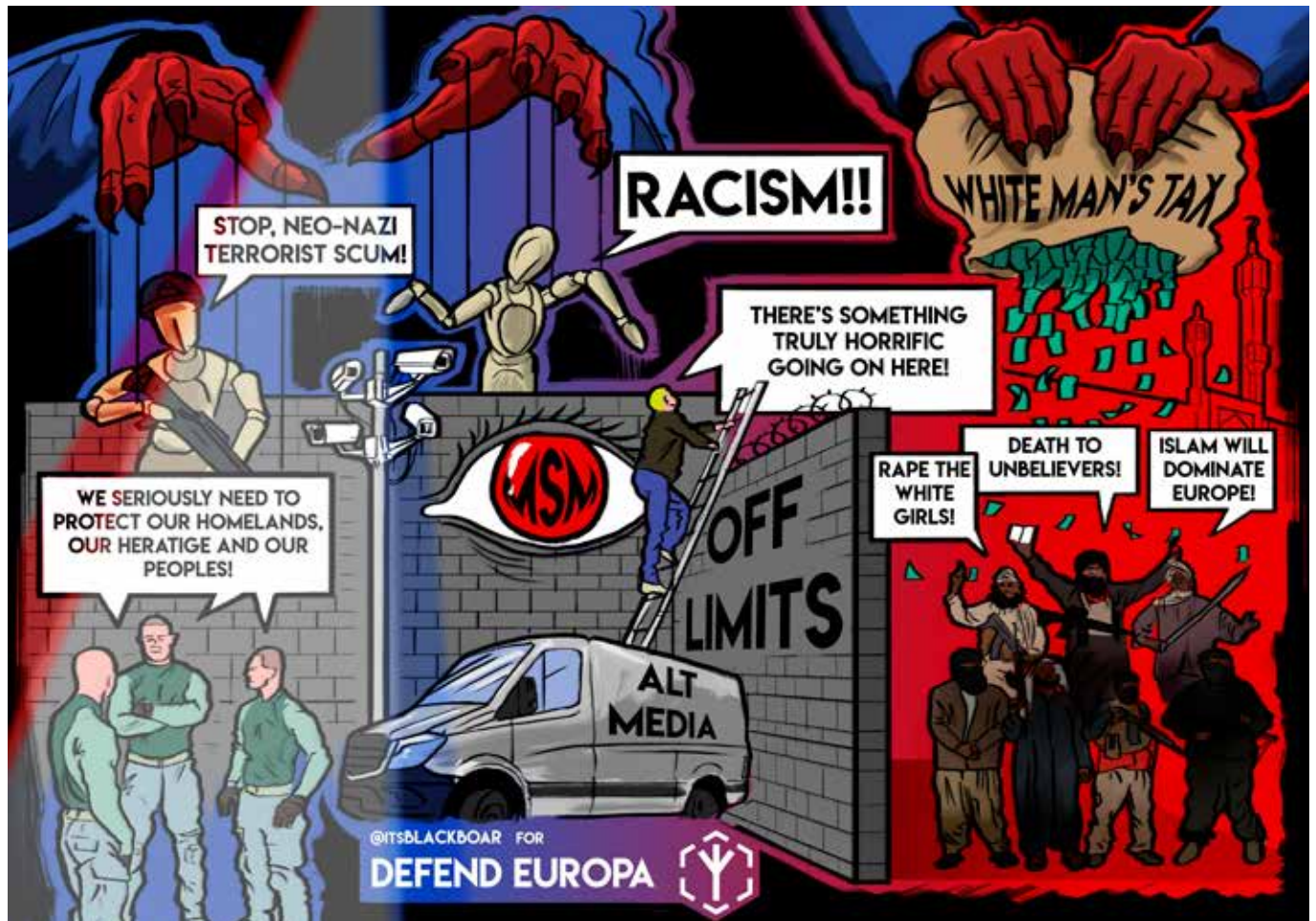
Throughout 2019 Towler increasingly focused her time on her personal YouTube channel and on Patriotic Alternative, a group she co-organises with Mark Collett.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

While DE is popular with the online English-speaking alt-right and makes an effort to present itself as a professionally-run webzine, it is likely to continue catering just to a fringe white nationalist audience. Its productivity is also likely to decrease further, with Towler's attention directed elsewhere.



Laura Towler
Photo: Twitter



Colin Robertson
(AKA Millennial Woes)
Photo: wikipedia.org



COLIN ROBERTSON (AKA MILLENNIAL WOES)

SUMMARY OF 2019

Robertson has not returned to regularly publishing the gloomy monologues on YouTube that made him famous. He did, however, make a smaller interview series and produced several livestreams on his channel. He also hosted his annual “Millenniyule” video series, interviewing figures from the US and British far right. The series included the American white nationalists Jared Taylor and Greg Johnson, online “comedian” and former UKIP member Mark Meechan (AKA Count Dankula), and nazi conspiracy theorists Henrik Palmgren and Lana Lokteff of Red Ice, plus Mark Collett, Laura Towler and several other well known far-right figures.

In March he announced that he was planning to come back after a long hiatus, but the promise was not

fulfilled. He also promised that he would focus on offline activism, though little has seemed to come from this. Robertson continued to talk at far-right conferences in the UK and Europe, addressing Scandza conferences in both Copenhagen and Stockholm.

He spoke at the first conference of Mark Collett’s Patriotic Alternative, a private gathering in Ireland in May and at the annual conference of Generation Identity UK, with his invitation becoming one of the reasons why the UK branch of the European network was excluded and later renamed.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

Robertson is likely to continue to speak at events across Europe. He will also likely continue to sporadically make videos and continue with projects like Millenniyule, “ask me anything” livestreams and interviews on his channel. However, based on his low output over the last year and personal updates, he is unlikely to return to regular production, expressing that he finds it too stressful.



Mark Collett with Eva Van Housen

MARK COLLETT / PATRIOTIC ALTERNATIVE

SUMMARY OF 2019

Mark Collett's new project Patriotic Alternative, an ethnonationalist political party currently pending its application to the Electoral Commission, had its first conference in September. Speakers included Colin Robertson (AKA Millennial Woes), Marcus Follin (AKA The Golden One) and Laura Towler, among others.

During the summer Collett and Towler coordinated a survey and alongside fellow activists polled people on the street in several locations across the country on questions related to immigration. Patriotic Alternative also organised one camping trip and a few social meetups, but otherwise little concrete action has come out of the project so far.

Collett's weekly live stream "This Week on the Alt Right" was renamed to the "Patriotic Weekly Review", but the channel was later banned from YouTube. He continues to publish the regular livestreams with far-right commentary on Bitchute. Collett also spoke at the Scandza conference in Copenhagen in October.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

Most of Collett's time will likely go to Patriotic Alternative, as well as his relatively successful social media career. He has announced that Patriotic Alternative will have two conferences in 2020, one northern and one southern. There are also plans for more camping trips and days of action. Patriotic Alternative is looking to formalise its structure, attempting to recruit organisers around the country to coordinate local events, and claims to be making strides in establishing a Scottish branch. The goal is to release a manifesto for the party and start to take in members formally. Collett is also likely to be invited to speak at far-right conferences in Europe.



MORGOTH'S REVIEW

SUMMARY OF 2019

Morgoth's Review is a racist blog run by the pseudonymous Geordie blogger "Morgoth" which, since its founding in 2014, has become well-read among the British alt-right for its commentary on cultural and political issues. The comments section functions as a far-right discussion board, routinely receiving hundreds of comments on its blogs.

During 2019, Morgoth moved away from blogging and instead produced more videos for his YouTube channel. The shorter posts on his blog, published alongside the videos, continue to function as lively discussion forums. His shifting focus to YouTube has paid off, and the channel grew significantly over the year, with Morgoth interacting more directly with key far-right social media figures. During the year he interviewed American white nationalist Greg Johnson and appeared on Red Ice Radio.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

Morgoth will continue to be a significant British alt-right activist on social media, and the blog an important alt-right platform.

ON THE OFFENSIVE

SUMMARY OF 2019

On The Offensive is a YouTube channel run by "Hugh", a British man based in Vietnam. During 2019 he gained a significant amount of subscribers and made collaborations with various well known far-right activists, including videos with Colin Robertson (AKA Millennial Woes), Mark Collett and Carl Benjamin (AKA Sargon of Akkad). He also travelled to the UK and spoke at the inaugural conference of Collett's Patriotic Alternative party in September.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

He is likely to continue to gain importance on YouTube and make appearances in person at far-right conferences. He has announced that he plans to branch out from his shorter videos, instead making documentary-style content in 2020. He also hopes to publish a "politically incorrect poetry book".

THE ALT-LITE



CARL BENJAMIN

(AKA SARGON OF AKKAD)

SUMMARY OF 2019

Having joined Gerard Batten's UKIP in June 2018, in May the misogynistic vlogger Carl Benjamin was put forward as the party's second candidate for the South West England, during the European elections.

From the beginning Benjamin's candidacy was met by widespread condemnation, and drew UKIP much negative attention for his numerous scandals, which Batten failed to adequately condemn. This included his repeated rape "jokes" about Labour MP Jess Phillips and use of racist slurs. He attended various UKIP events, and embarked on a tour of the south west, which was broadcast online. During his campaign he also had milkshakes thrown at him, which gained mainstream press attention.

Benjamin's other speaking engagements included addressing the misogynist International Conference on Men's Issues in Chicago in August, and Messages for Men in London in November.

On YouTube Benjamin currently runs four channels. His third, "Akkad Daily", launched in September and aims to publish daily videos, with commentary on the news of the day. The new channel has steadily gained subscribers while his older channels, despite being active, have lost some momentum and their number of subscribers has stagnated.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

Benjamin will continue to produce regular video content for his various channels. Judging from the relative success of his much shorter daily content, it is likely that this is the format to which he will dedicate much of his time. It is unlikely that he will return to making response videos to other YouTubers, which was the format that first gained him attention, as these videos are often removed for breaking YouTube's community guidelines. He is also likely to continue to appear with other YouTube activists and at misogynist conferences.

Carl Benjamin (AKA Sargon of Akkad)
Photo: Rebel Wisdom / wikipedia.org

PAUL JOSEPH WATSON

EDITOR: SUMMIT NEWS

SUMMARY OF 2019

2019 was a comparatively quiet year for the vlogger and conspiracy theorist Paul Joseph Watson. While he gained greater attention in 2018 after encouraging his viewers to support UKIP and playing the role of advisor to the party, he distanced himself from UKIP as 2019 went on, instead throwing his support behind Nigel Farage's Brexit Party.

In March 2019 Watson announced his departure from his longtime employer, US far-right conspiracy hub InfoWars, and launched his own site, Summit News. In May 2019 Watson had his Facebook and Instagram accounts banned on the basis of promoting hate speech. Watson's ban gained greater attention after Donald Trump tweeted: "So surprised to see Conservative thinkers like James Woods banned from Twitter, and Paul Watson banned from Facebook!" and retweeted Watson's post regarding the ban, saying: "Dangerous. My opinions? Or giving a handful of giant partisan corporations the power to decide who has free speech? You decide." Towards the end of 2019, Watson's relationship with InfoWars came to the fore again after it emerged that he had warned its owner, Alex Jones, against pushing the conspiracy theory that the Sandy Hook school shooting in America had been a hoax. Watson revealed this in a deposition in November 2019 as part of a defamation lawsuit brought by a parent of a child killed in the attack.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

With Watson's ties to InfoWars cut and his social media presence undermined in 2019, he is likely to continue to focus on creating content for his Summit News site and newsletter in 2020, as well as continuing to produce content for his popular YouTube channel.



MARK MEECHAN

(AKA COUNT DANKULA)

SUMMARY OF 2019

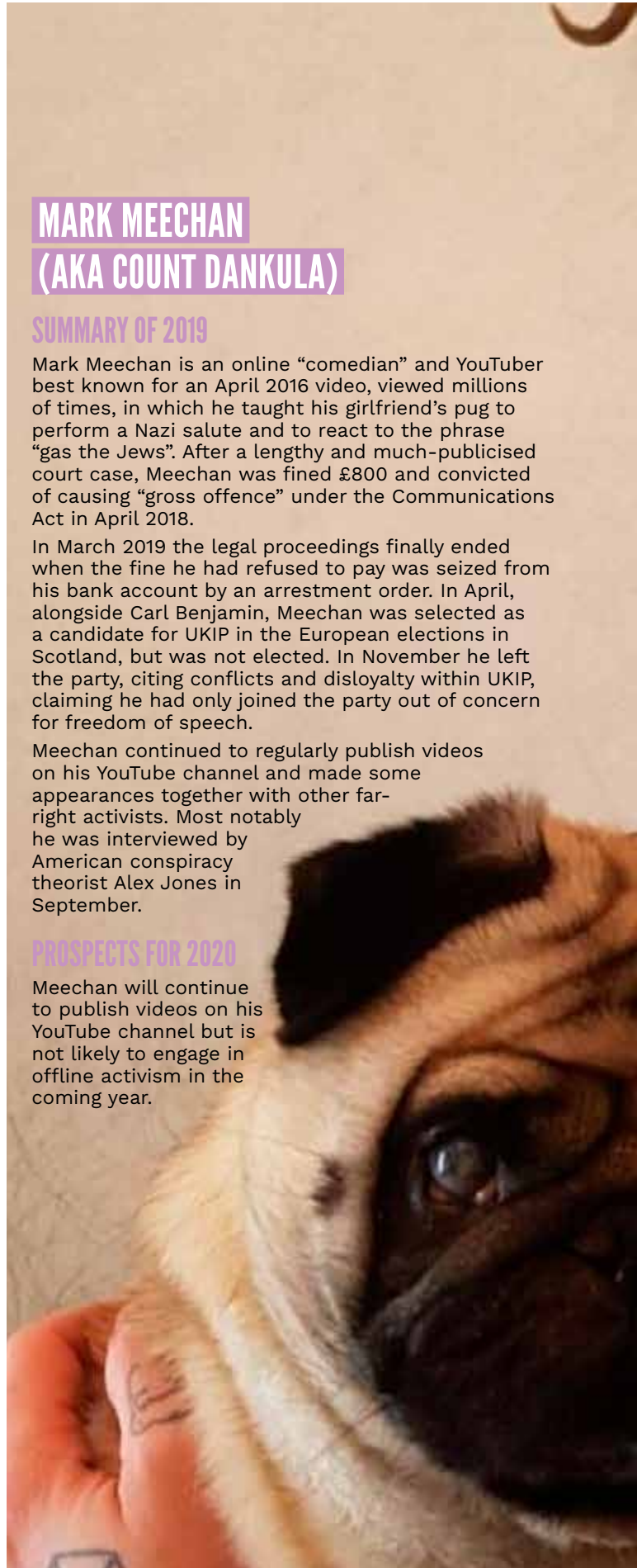
Mark Meechan is an online "comedian" and YouTuber best known for an April 2016 video, viewed millions of times, in which he taught his girlfriend's pug to perform a Nazi salute and to react to the phrase "gas the Jews". After a lengthy and much-publicised court case, Meechan was fined £800 and convicted of causing "gross offence" under the Communications Act in April 2018.

In March 2019 the legal proceedings finally ended when the fine he had refused to pay was seized from his bank account by an arrestment order. In April, alongside Carl Benjamin, Meechan was selected as a candidate for UKIP in the European elections in Scotland, but was not elected. In November he left the party, citing conflicts and disloyalty within UKIP, claiming he had only joined the party out of concern for freedom of speech.

Meechan continued to regularly publish videos on his YouTube channel and made some appearances together with other far-right activists. Most notably he was interviewed by American conspiracy theorist Alex Jones in September.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

Meechan will continue to publish videos on his YouTube channel but is not likely to engage in offline activism in the coming year.





Milo Yiannopoulos. Photo: Kmeron / flickr.com

MILO YIANNOPOULOS

SUMMARY OF 2019

UK-born, Florida-residing alt-lite figurehead Milo Yiannopoulos had another disastrous year. After being banned from Facebook and Instagram in May, having already been deplatformed on Twitter and YouTube, Yiannopoulos grew increasingly desperate. Relegated to Russian chat app Telegram, he complained that he did not have a large enough fan base to put food on the table. In October he sold the domain name dangerous.com and closed down the website completely. Instead he started writing and publishing a weekly web talk show on censored.tv, alongside other fading alt-lite figures such as Gavin McInnes.

Offline his activism has also been a series of failures. His attempt at carrying out a speaking tour of Australia (having already cancelled one in 2018) did not succeed after he was barred from entering the country in March, having made Islamophobic comments following the mass shooting in Christchurch, New Zealand. In another desperate attempt at getting attention he tried to attend a ‘furry convention’ in Chicago, but he was decisively stopped from entering the venue.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

Once an effective far-right troll, Yiannopoulos is a much-diminished and isolated figure, and will never fully recover the blows he has suffered over the last few years. He is yet to announce any meaningful plans for 2020.

PUBLISHERS

HERITAGE AND DESTINY

EDITOR: MARK COTTERILL

SUMMARY OF 2019

Heritage & Destiny (H&D) continues to be Britain's leading non-party racial nationalist publication. The magazine produced its six bi-monthly editions last year, with a regularity unusual for other nationalist publications, featuring news articles, updates on the racist scene in the UK and book reviews. H&D continues to run a website, although it is only updated sporadically.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

The magazine will continue to publish and be influential in nazi and far-right circles, although it is unlikely its small readership will increase.



Friberg remains CEO, John Bruce Leonard is editor-in-chief, Tor Westman is chief marketing officer and Gregory Lauder-Frost of the Traditional Britain Group is the head of Arktos UK.

Arktos was at the center of a major rift within the alt-right in 2019, with Friberg continuing his feud with fellow alt-right publisher Greg Johnson of Counter-Currents Publishing. Early in the year the two exchanged vitriolic accusations, with many major alt-right figures being forced to choose one side or the other.

Over the year Arktos published a series of new books including *Ethnic Apocalypse*, the last book completed by influential European New Right thinker Guillaume Faye before his death.

Arktos also continued its 'Interregnum' podcast, with stand out guests being the Russian far-right philosopher Alexander Dugin in January and the American racist Jared Taylor in March. The group also continued to publish the Arktos Journal online.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

2020 will see the 10-year anniversary of the founding of the publishing house, during which time it has established itself as one of the premier far-right publishers anywhere in the world. This is likely to continue over the next year.

A.K. CHESTERTON TRUST / CANDOUR MAGAZINE

EDITOR: COLIN TODD

SUMMARY OF 2019

Candour magazine, Britain's longest-running fascist publication, has long been in decline and last year announced that it is on "hiatus", due to editor Colin Todd suffering illness. With Todd serving time for assault causing actual bodily harm, it now appears that 2019 may well have been Candour's final year, with no activity and its website being left blank.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

Even if Candour does reemerge in 2020, it will continue to be irrelevant.



CASTLE HILL PUBLISHERS

LEADER: GERMAR RUDOLF

SUMMARY OF 2019

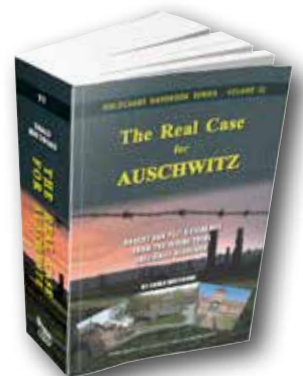
Castle Hill Publishers is a UK-based publisher of Holocaust denial literature, set up in 1998 by the convicted German Holocaust denier Germar Rudolf. Based in Hastings, it publishes a large catalogue of denial literature, and in 2014 merged with the American Holocaust denial organisation CODOH (Committee for Open Debate on the Holocaust), and is now part of the CODOH website.

In 2019 Castle Hill released 10 new books, eight new editions of older books and some 30 titles as e-books. It also released audio books for the first time.

The CODOH Forum also grew slightly in 2019 rising to 1,700 members by December, up from 1,570 in 2018. Also, after being removed from YouTube and Vimeo it moved to Bitchute where it has now posted over 250 videos.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

Castle Hill was very active in 2019, bucking the trend of the traditional, pseudo-academic Holocaust denial scene more generally, and indications suggest that it will continue to be a leading creator and distributor of Holocaust denial content.



ARKTOS MEDIA

CEO: DANIEL FRIBERG

SUMMARY OF 2019

Launched in 2010 by Daniel Friberg, Arktos Media has become the most important purveyor of European New Right and alt-right literature in the world. The group is registered in the UK, despite being based in Budapest, Hungary.



LEAGUE ENTERPRISES: STEVEN BOOKS / LEAGUE OF ST GEORGE

SUMMARY OF 2019

League Enterprises / Steven Books is the commercial arm of the long-standing Nazi League of St George. The organisation continued its meagre existence in 2019. The League's website is updated very infrequently, usually with obituaries.

Steven Books, the publishing site linked to League of St George, continues to distribute racist, Holocaust denial and fascist books and pamphlets in the UK. It also hosts a series of Oswald Mosley speeches on SoundCloud.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

Steven Books will continue distributing fascist and other far-right books.

THE ICONOCLAST

EDITOR: "DAN"

SUMMARY OF 2019

The Iconoclast launched its first issue in October 2017 and has published sporadically since. In 2019 it released two issues, one in April and another in September. The former included a guest contribution by the leader of the now defunct British branch of Generation Identity, Benjamin Jones, while the later editions saw contributions from the British far-right YouTubers 'On The Offensive' and Laura Towler.

In addition to the print magazine, *The Iconoclast* has a YouTube channel with an impressive 217,000 subscribers and over 21 million video views. Guests on the channel in 2019 included the British Nazi Mark Collett, the Islamophobic leader of For Britain, Anne Marie Waters, and white nationalist Colin Robertson (AKA Millennial Woes).

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

The Iconoclast is one of those strange anomalies on the British far right, managing to be almost unknown to the general public but having a huge online following. It is impossible to say what percentage of the YouTube channels viewers are in the UK, but it will remain one of the largest British far-right channels in 2020 if it continues to avoid the website's moderators. We can also expect a few more editions of the magazine, which will continue to have little impact.



MJOLNIR MAGAZINE

EDITOR: DAVE YORKSHIRE

SUMMARY OF 2019

Mjolnir, a project which began as a "White Eurocentric arts magazine", again failed to produce a single issue in 2019. Dave Yorkshire has instead continued to run the *Mjolnir* blog, and to produce the "Mjolnir at the Movies" YouTube series. Yorkshire is sometimes joined on the film review series by co-hosts Neil Westwood, who also launched a new synthwave music project in 2019, and "James", who runs the miniscule YouTube channel Bevel E.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

Mjolnir and Yorkshire will likely continue to produce poorly-viewed YouTube videos but have little to no impact on the wider far right.



HISTORICAL REVIEW PRESS

FOUNDER: ANTHONY HANCOCK (DECEASED)

SUMMARY OF 2019

Despite the death of founder Anthony Hancock in 2012, the HRP continues to exist. Its website continues to sell a variety of fascist, far right and Holocaust denial literature, much of it produced by others.

PROSPECTS OF 2020

Like much of the traditional Holocaust denial scene, HRP is a shell of its former self. It will likely continue to be a place that antisemites and Holocaust deniers can buy existing literature, but is unlikely to offer anything new or significant in 2020.

BLACK HOUSE PUBLISHING

DIRECTOR: JANET ELAINE SLATTER

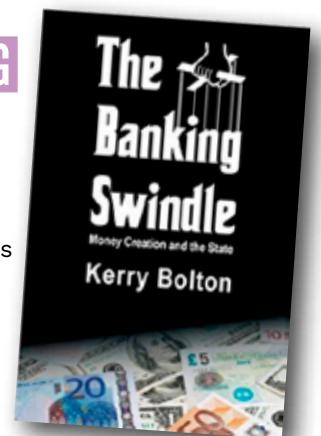
SUMMARY OF 2019

This tiny enterprise publishes and sells reissued versions and reprints of fascist, Nazi, Third Position and right-wing literature. Published authors include Oswald Mosley, Oswald Spengler, and Australian far-right author Kerry Bolton.

Its books are still available for purchase on websites including Amazon, and its Facebook page is infrequently active.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

It is unlikely that there will be any notable changes in 2020.



HOLOCAUST DENIERS

NICK KOLLERSTROM

Kollerstrom is a former honorary research fellow at the University College London who was dropped by the university in 2008, after he was exposed as engaging in Holocaust denial. In 2014, he released the book *Breaking the Spell: The Holocaust: Myth and Reality*, published by Gernar Rudolf's Holocaust denial publishing house, Castle Hill Publishers.

SUMMARY OF 2019

Over the year Kollerstrom attended several meetings of the conspiracy group Keep Talking, which he co-organises alongside Ian Fantom. He spoke at two meetings, in February discussing the possibility that there might have "more than one 'Paul McCartney' presented to the public", and in July where he discussed the moon landings. He continues to write for his obscure blog, using it in October to argue that the shooting in Halle, Germany was staged. Kollerstrom also appeared on a number of marginal conspiracy-theory oriented media outlets, including THA Talks in October, where he discussed the September 11 attacks.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

Kollerstrom will continue to run Keep Talking meetings, and to promote various different conspiracy theories on his blog and in other outlets that might give him a platform.

JAMES THRING

Thring is a Holocaust denier, known for his involvement in both left and right wing antisemitism.

SUMMARY 2019

Thring regularly attended conspiracy theorist meetings in London, particularly Keep Talking where he, during Pete Gregson's lecture in March last year, declared that camps established during the Holocaust were "work camps". Thring also occasionally writes for Heritage and Destiny.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

Thring will continue to be a presence in the conspiracy theory scene and to contribute to far-right publications with denialist material.

(left to right) Nicholas Kollerstrom, James Thring, David Irving, Michèle Renouf and Alison Chabloz

DAVID IRVING/

FOCAL POINT PUBLICATIONS

David Irving remains Britain's most well known Holocaust denier. While once enjoying 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.

SUMMARY OF 2019

Despite his ill health, 2019 was an active year for Irving. Likely motivated by his penniless situation, Irving toured the Midlands and Scotland in February and continued to speak in the US later in the spring. Irving announced in March that he would conduct a guided tour of Nazi death camps as well as other important sites of Nazi occupied Poland, Lithuania and Latvia in September. The tour was, however, cancelled after the Polish foreign minister announced that Irving would not be welcome, due to the Holocaust denial being unlawful in Poland.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

Irving announced that he is bringing his biography on Himmler to completion in the first part of the year, but he has been claiming the book is imminent since at least 2015. He has also promised a new edition of his most well known title, *Hitler's War*. He continues to list tickets for his "Real History tour" in Poland on his websites, but has not made any further announcement on the trip. It is unlikely that anything has changed since 2019 regarding his possibilities on carrying it through. While Irving remains a pillar of the traditional, pseudo-academic denial scene, he is becoming increasingly irrelevant alongside the diminishing influence of the scene as a whole.



MICHÈLE RENOUF

Michèle Renouf is an Australian-born former model and Holocaust denier.

SUMMARY 2019

Renouf continues to split her time between the UK and Germany. Her conflict with fellow denier Alison Chabloz continues to be a topic of debate and splits in the denial movement. In January Renouf handed out the inaugural “Robert Faurisson International Prize” in honor of the recently deceased denier at a ceremony in Vichy, France. She also made a handful of interviews with deniers and conspiracy theorists on YouTube, but was otherwise relatively inactive.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

Renouf will continue to be a central figure within the far-right and traditional Holocaust denial scenes in the UK and continental Europe.

ALISON CHABLOZ

Chabloz is a musician, blogger and Holocaust denier from Glossop in Derbyshire.

SUMMARY OF 2019

Alison Chabloz had another eventful year. The first half of 2019 she spent under a ban of posting anything on social media, following her conviction for antisemitic songs she performed at the London Forum in September 2016. During the proceedings in 2018, Chabloz gained publicity among the international extreme right and Holocaust denial scenes, portraying herself as a martyr for “free speech”. She continued to project this image for much of 2019 and posted regularly on her blog instead. She was, however, found to have breached the terms of her suspended sentence, and did a brief stint in New Hall Closed Women’s prison in September as a consequence.

She is more or less ostracised by the UK denial scene, in part due to a conflict with Michèle Renouf in 2017. During the year, the infighting continued with several sharp articles by Peter Rushton in *Heritage and Destiny*. Rushton also threatened to sue Chabloz after an article in which she attacked him was published in the French *RIVAROL*. In return, she wrote that Rushton alongside Renouf and Richard Edmonds had “defiled the field of historical revisionism with their garbage”.

As she has become a more and more isolated figure in Britain, she has spent more time in France and has made several musical

performances there during the summer.

She also attended and performed at the far-right Forum de l’Europe in May in Paris. However, in August she posted on Gab that she had been detained when coming back from France, and that she had been “banned from entering France until 2059”.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

Chabloz is likely to seek further publicity during her legal process, and will continue to be active and paint herself as a martyr, especially as an interviewee by other far-right activists on social media. However, she is an increasingly isolated figure in the UK following conflicts within the denial scene.



THE MANOSPHERE

BY SIMON MURDOCH

IT HAS LONG been the case that far-right movements have held sexist, misogynist and anti-feminist views. Yet, in a pronounced way, for elements of the contemporary far right these ideas are not merely a result of their wider political outlook, but rather the central pillar of their ideology (in some cases alongside disavowals of other bigotries).

One influence on the contemporary far right's understanding of gender politics is the "manosphere": a loose collection of websites, forums, blogs and vlogs concerned with men's issues and masculinity, oriented around an opposition to feminism and, within parts, the embrace of extreme misogyny.

The prevailing interpretation within the manosphere is that feminism is about promoting misandry (contempt or prejudice of men), rather than gender equality. This perception is central to understanding the manosphere, for whilst many of its interests and ideas are inherently sexist, anti-feminist and misogynistic, others, such as concerns about male suicide, are not themselves expressions of these prejudices. Rather, they are viewed in the manosphere through a lens which places the blame for such issues at the feet of women, feminism and progressive politics.

The manosphere's factions emerged online throughout the late 2000s and by the mid-2010s shared an increasingly politicised and conspiratorial rejection of feminism and progressive politics more widely.

The manosphere's core ideas have snowballed into an ideology that has taken on a life of its own outside of its online niche, in part because the

rejection of feminism and a broader conspiratorial outlook continues to find resonance with the wider contemporary far right.

Whilst sexism and misogyny remain endemic issues in the UK, organised political movements that are primarily focused on these ideas remain small and at the political fringes. Fringe party Justice for Men and Boys (J4MB) are the most active organised element of the British manosphere. Active mainly in London and led by former Conservative Party consultant Mike Buchanan, J4MB is electorally marginal and in practice functions as a pressure group whose main activities are to coordinate anti-feminist activity in the UK and in collaboration with fellow activists abroad.

Their activities this year remained largely online, consisting of blogs on their site. Offline, the group also took part in the annual International Conference on Men's Issues (ICMI), the key international meeting of anti-feminist activists. The 2019 ICMI was held in Chicago and was organised by the Honey Badger Brigade, a Canadian anti-feminist organisation. Conservative MP Philip Davies, who has previously spoken at ICMI, spoke there again in 2019, as did British far-right vlogger Carl Benjamin (AKA Sargon of Akkad). Elisabeth Hobson from J4MB also took part in the Battle of Ideas, the annual debating festival put on by Brexit Party MEP Claire Fox's Academy of Ideas organisation, in November, and Hobson co-hosted the Messages4Men conference in London in the same month alongside anti-feminist activist Natoya Raymond.

THE MANOSPHERE'S SUBCULTURES

■ **Men's Rights Activists (MRAs):** Emerging in response to second-wave feminism, MRAs initially supported feminism's aims but focused on how traditional masculinity also harmed men. In the 1980s and 1990s offshoots emerged who either reasserted traditional masculinity (the 'mythopoetic' movement) or who judged – often implicitly white, cisgender, heterosexual – men to be undergoing a crisis that was the fault of feminism and progressive movements more broadly. As Data & Society's Alice Marwick and Rebecca Lewis note, the men's rights movement today is "defined as much against feminism as it is for men's rights".

■ **Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOW):** MGTOW are gender separatists who reject, or seek to greatly minimise, interaction with women. MGTOW is understood to have developed from fractures in the MRA community in the early-to-mid 2000s, over unwillingness of some to cooperate with female MRAs and a belief that MRAs should not work as a collective.

■ **Pick-Up Artists (PUA):** As the Southern Poverty Law Centre describes, PUAs focus "on teaching men how to manipulate women into sex, all the while constantly disparaging women and the idea of consent". As Marwick and Lewis note, the PUA community distorts dating advice so that it dehumanizes women and grants all sexual agency to men. The PUA community snowballed online, receiving mainstream attention in the 2000s.

■ **Involuntary Celibates (incels):** Incels are men who believe their lack of sexual and romantic success is involuntary and is the fault of feminism and women. Originating in the late 1990s in a support group for men and women "struggling to form loving relationships", from the mid-2000s a misogynistic strand grew (partly due to an influx of men disillusioned with PUAs). Edinburgh University's Tim Squirrell notes this resulted in less emphasis on support and an increasing pressure to take the 'blackpill': a fatalistic notion that "a man's life chances are fundamentally determined by his attractiveness". Many conclude their options are "living in misery or taking violent action".



Conservative MP Philip Davies

J4MB announced in December that they would be co-organising further ICMI in North America and Europe, and that there may be two or more a year in the future. They also announced that they would be hosting a national event in Manchester in May 2020. Outside of these events, however, J4MB are likely to continue to attract little interest.

Beyond ‘Men’s Rights Activists (MRAs) like J4MB, another manosphere subculture, ‘Pick-Up Artists’, reached UK headlines after Adnan Ahmed from Scotland was jailed in October for threatening and abusive behaviour towards women. On Ahmed’s YouTube accounts he uploaded his secret filming of him approaching women and other videos advising men on pick-up artistry, or ‘game’ as it is sometimes referred to. As the BBC reported, his tips included “how to overcome “last-minute resistance” to sex”. In a July BBC documentary, *Inside The Secret World of Incels*, a Northern Irish man who had identified as an “incel”, a particularly toxic manosphere subculture, was featured explaining how he was drawn into the online community.

EXPLAINER: THE FAR RIGHT AND THE CULTURAL WAR

ROSIE CARTER

THE BLURRING of the lines of the far right with new subcultures, such as the alt-right, the misogynist manosphere, conspiracy theorists, incels, and others, means the paths into the far right are now more numerous and less obvious than before. But the conflation of multiple issues in this way is about more than the spread across new fringes, and critical in the societal mainstreaming of far-right ideas.

Anti-Muslim politics has long acted as a far-right springboard towards the mainstream, as modernising arms of the far right distanced themselves from biological racism to adopt a more ‘palatable’ platform that tapped into broader societal prejudice against Muslims .

As actors ‘soften’ their rhetoric, they are able to set the tone of common discourse, pushing the boundaries of acceptability. Anti-feminism and the anti-Trans movement are offering new slip roads towards a normalisation of far-right politics, placing these as a resistance to progressive movements towards ‘identity politics’ tapping into a broader worldview of displacement, resentment and hierarchy.

Our *Fear and Hope* report from 2019 found that a third of people believe that feminism is to blame for making some men feel marginalised and demonised in society (33%) while slightly more disagree with this. This question was based on a statement from British far-right vlogger Carl Benjamin (AKA Sargon of Akkad), “This is what feminism has wrought – a generation of men who do not know what to do, who are being demonised for what they are”.

While the vast majority of people would not know who Benjamin is, and would reject him because of his far-right associations, the mainstreaming of these ideas was staggering. Among men, 42% agreed, and 28% disagreed. A quarter of women agreed, while 47% disagreed. Despite the fact that younger age groups hold more socially liberal views over all, 18-24 year olds were more likely to hold this

anti-feminist view (33%) than people of working age (29% among 25-49 year olds).

Posed as part and parcel of an anti-P.C. pushback, the pervasiveness of the anti-feminism movement feeds on engrained sexist norms, but is able to reach a much larger base than traditional far right narratives on gender. Narratives from the ‘manosphere’ and the men’s right’s movement appeal to many young men feeling shafted in an age of changing social norms. Feminists are framed as a suppressive opposition, part of an out-of-touch elite, conflated with other ‘oversensitive’ liberals.

For those who already feel a lack of control over their own lives, this sense of displacement and loss feeds anxieties and speaks to pre-existing prejudice, as a sense of power and privilege slipping away fuels resentment. For those who have long been at the top of social hierarchies, white, male, able-bodied, and straight, and who have failed to keep up with changing social norms, narratives from the fringes about a suppression of men’s rights resonate.

Personal experiences such as applying for jobs or housing can suddenly be seen as an attack on people’s own identities, and ground these narratives in perceived realities. For example, in a recent HOPE not hate focus group in Basildon found participants drawing on their own personal experiences, which they later linked to more extreme views:

“What I work in, they, they wouldn’t tell it in public, but they don’t want to hire white men. They’re specifically, I’ve even got documents on my phone, they want to hire BAME and women. Which, no problem, but if you’re, especially if you’re- well they should really tell people. You’re 20 years old and white, you’ve pretty much got no chance... White British are the last minority aren’t they?”

The mainstreaming of far right narratives is about more than the actions of fringe characters, but their role in conflating issues transports far right ideas into normalised discourse. As broader political polarisation deepens, the potential for further societal fracturing becomes clear.

MANOSPHERE IN THE

BY OWEN JONES

TACKLING PREJUDICE in the classroom is a relatively straightforward task. Very hard work in practice, but the pedagogy is simple: expose the prejudice, analyse with the students the harm it causes, and then get them to think of a strategy to remove it from their lives.

Despite the headlines about a rise in recorded hate crimes in schools, the bulk of young people are extremely reasonable and it just takes a skilled educator from the HNHCT Education Unit to explain to them why certain aspects of their behaviour are problematic. The majority will acknowledge the need for change. There is one clear exception to this – misogyny.

Sexism is nothing new and has unfortunately probably been around since the beginning of time, but what I and my team are witnessing in the classroom is a much nastier version of this.

Around a year ago at a school in Norfolk I saw a small group of boys hound a teacher for “hating men”. The teacher was rather bemused as to why she was being accused of this, so the boys explained.

In a previous lesson she had mentioned that she believed in gender equality and would consider herself to be a feminist. They explained to her that feminists hate men, want to oppress men and it was appalling that the school would allow “someone like her” to teach. Other teachers were in the room, and nothing was done. I cannot believe that if these boys hounded a black teacher for believing in racial equality insisting that meant hating white people that such little action would be taken.

A month later I was delivering another session to some Sixth Form boys in a school in Manchester. The same thing happened again, but this time with a little hint as to where these views had come from.

The incident was virtually identical, the only part of the script that changed was a slightly more forthright female teacher, who was clearly not prepared to be labelled as a man-hater in her school. That is when one of the boys justified his behaviour quoting a YouTube channel he subscribes to, saying that because of feminists, young boys were “being oppressed” and that “white males had nothing to look up to anymore.” These are just two examples of an argument I have witnessed being employed by students time upon time in classrooms all over the country.

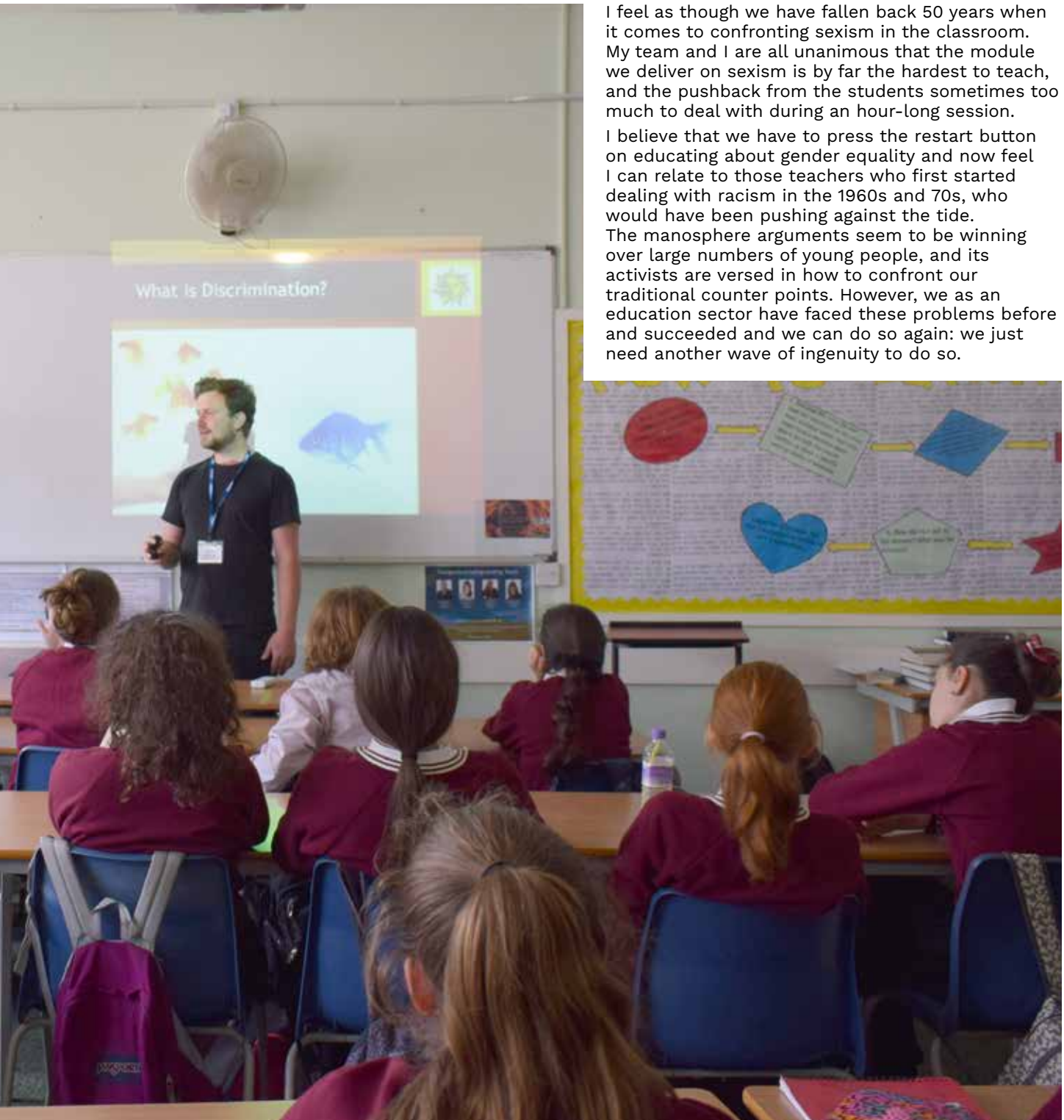
I am no stranger to prejudicial and discriminatory behaviour, but what was so shocking about these encounters was that they were almost word-for-word the same. The penny only dropped after a meeting with my colleague Simon on his research updates to assist with my safeguarding. All these boys had come into contact with the online “manosphere” and were spewing this bile onto female teachers’

I undertook a few minutes’ research myself into this world, just on YouTube, and the volume of material delivering the same narrative about feminism being a tool to oppress men was shocking. There was even a large number of videos that taught the viewers how to tackle their “cultural marxist” teachers, and this is where what I had observed in the classroom had come from. The scale of the issue is terrifying.

We deliver safeguarding talks to teachers as part of their professional development training and I often discuss what I think are the biggest threats to the wellbeing of their students. Sexting is number one: the scale is incredible, with research showing that every teenage girl will be asked for nude pictures. County lines is the second: the way that drug gangs are grooming young school children is disturbing and destroying lives. I place the manosphere third: how it plays on normal heterosexual teenage boys’ anxieties is very insidious, and provides a very easy inroad towards a whole dark world of extremism. Tackling the problem needs a whole new approach.



CLASSROOM



I feel as though we have fallen back 50 years when it comes to confronting sexism in the classroom. My team and I are all unanimous that the module we deliver on sexism is by far the hardest to teach, and the pushback from the students sometimes too much to deal with during an hour-long session.

I believe that we have to press the restart button on educating about gender equality and now feel I can relate to those teachers who first started dealing with racism in the 1960s and 70s, who would have been pushing against the tide. The mansosphere arguments seem to be winning over large numbers of young people, and its activists are versed in how to confront our traditional counter points. However, we as an education sector have faced these problems before and succeeded and we can do so again: we just need another wave of ingenuity to do so.

SECTION 6 – CONSPIRACY THEORIES





CONSPIRACY THEORIES: THE DANGER AND THE APPEAL

BY **DAVID LAWRENCE**

IT IS TEMPTING to dismiss conspiracy theorists as harmless eccentrics, gathering in dingy pubs and online forums to discuss peculiar, but ultimately ineffective, ideas. However, the tendency to mock and to minimise the threat posed by conspiracy beliefs gives them the space to spread, despite the fact that this dangerous mode of propaganda can be used to scapegoat and to justify attacks on particular target groups. In an age in which conspiracy theories continue to flourish, it is only by understanding both the allure and the threats posed by this widespread and persistent form of false belief that we can begin to tackle it in a meaningful way.

WHAT ARE CONSPIRACY THEORIES, AND WHY ARE THEY ATTRACTIVE?

As Michael Barkun outlines in his work *A Culture of Conspiracy: Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America*, a “conspiracy belief is the belief that an organisation made up of individuals or groups was or is acting covertly to achieve some malevolent end”. Believers in conspiracy theories tend to reject official versions of the truth, to read intention into

seemingly random events, and to view unrelated events as interconnected.

As such, conspiracy theories provide a framework for interpreting unpredictable and bewildering events across the world, tending to spike in popularity during times of turmoil, crisis and upheaval. In the 21st century, the UK has experienced unpopular wars, terror attacks, a financial crash, a decade of austerity and years of divisive and painful Brexit proceedings. In relation to the surge of conspiracy thinking in the US, Anna Merlan, author of *Republic of Lies: American Conspiracy Theorists and Their Surprising Rise to Power*, points to the hardening class structure, increasing disenfranchisement, disappearing social safety net and complex healthcare system as contributing factors. Circumstances on both sides of the Atlantic have led many people to feel that they lack agency in their own lives, and some have sought a strange form of solace in conspiracy theories. This way of thinking personifies the hardship and danger in people’s day-to-day experience, and therefore enables blame.

There is a frisson that accompanies uncovering supposedly forbidden information, and the sense that one is unravelling some hidden scheme can be addictive. David Aaronovitch, author of *Voodoo*



David Icke giving a lecture in Budapest on the 19 October, 2018. Lurdy house, Budapest, Central Europe. Photo: Elekes Andor / wikimedia.org

Histories: The Role of Conspiracy Theory in Shaping Modern History, also highlights a narcissistic element, as conspiracy theories enable believers to inhabit the role of selfless “truth-seekers”, heroically struggling against shadowy forces, and superior to supposedly sheep-like, brainwashed public that accept the false official versions of events. In our era of “fake news”, where hostility to authorities and traditional gatekeepers is widespread, the feeling of empowerment arising from the belief that one possesses the “real” truth can be highly attractive.

The automatic mistrust of information provided by governments, the media, universities and other institutions means that conspiracy beliefs can be exceedingly difficult to tackle. As Barkun notes, conspiracy theorists can accuse mainstream accounts of being fabricated false reports, rendering their beliefs impervious to contrary evidence. Moreover, the messianic self-stylings of conspiracy theorists such as David Icke mean that efforts to limit the spread of their ideas, be it through negative press coverage or other forms of perceived “censorship”, often simply reaffirm the belief that they are the victims of a conspiracy to silence them. This in turn can nourish martyr complexes, and further entrench the beliefs of their followers.

This is a cause for genuine concern in light of the negative impact conspiracy beliefs can have in society. For example, misdiagnosing the root cause of genuine social injustices can mean that the energy of dedicated, potentially progressive activists are directed into worthless causes, derailing opportunities for manifesting real change. Additionally, in the social media age, key events, debates and votes are reliably accompanied by a swirl of misinformation and conjecture which obscures

truth. This can mislead or even paralyse action through sheer confusion.

Most worrying, however, is the use of conspiracy theories as a tool to attack minority groups. Of course, belief in a conspiracy theory naturally entails belief in sinister conspirators, often portrayed as possessing an almost superhuman degree of cunning. While the identity of these alleged conspirators varies according to the theorist, there is one group in particular that has, for centuries, faced blame for an enormous variety of upheavals, tragedies and calamities, both historical and mythic. Jew-hatred has deep roots within the tradition of alternative conspiracy thinking, and while the so-called “Jewish Question” is hotly debated among conspiracy theory communities, antisemitic tropes are rarely far removed from a diverse array of conspiratorial notions, concerning, for example, 9/11, the refugee crisis or even climate change.

The persistence of antisemitism within the 21st century conspiracy scene partly stems from its status as a “taboo”. As Barkun writes, for many conspiracy theorists “the greater the stigma, the more attractive the source becomes, for the intensity of rejection is its truthfulness”.

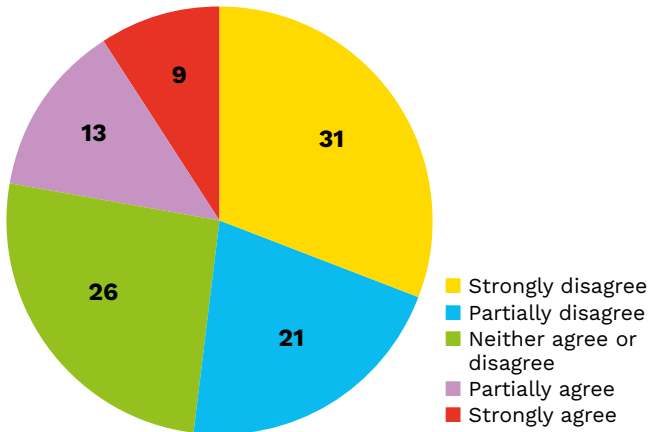
Therefore, if speaking about a notion carries threats of social ostracization, media condemnation or even legal penalties, this only reaffirms its truth, as these consequences are interpreted as elite attempts to suppress forbidden knowledge. As such, susceptibility to conspiracy thinking can be a gateway into darker territories, and the path from ostensibly non-antisemitic conspiracy theories to flirtation with, or open endorsement of, conspiratorial antisemitism and even Holocaust denial, is well trodden.



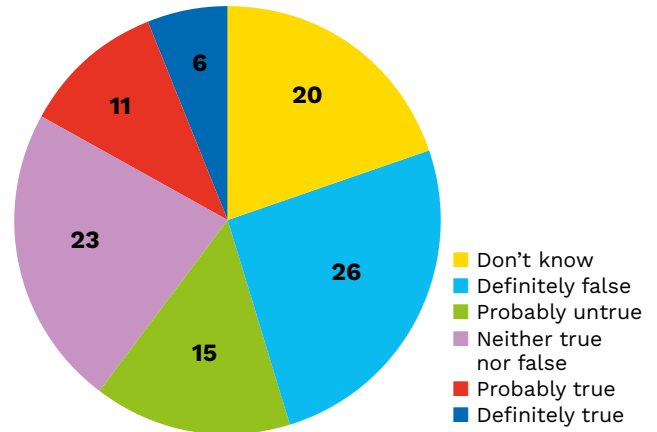
CONSPIRACY POLLING

AUTUMN 2019, HOPE NOT HATE POLLED 1,800 BRITONS ON THEIR VIEWS ON A NUMBER OF CONSPIRACY THEORIES. THIS IS HOW THEY RESPONDED:

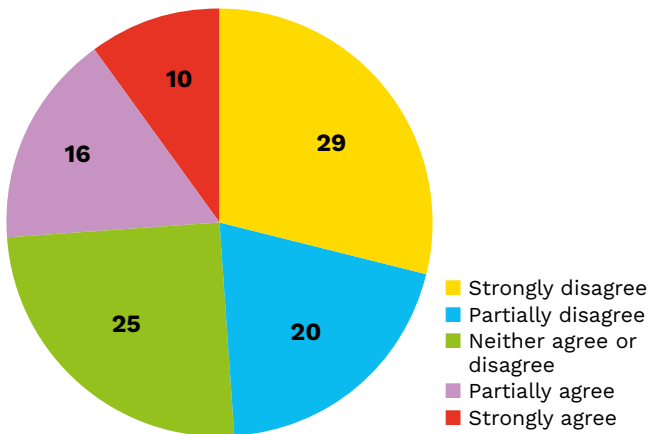
Climate change is a propaganda campaign by mainstream media and global elites



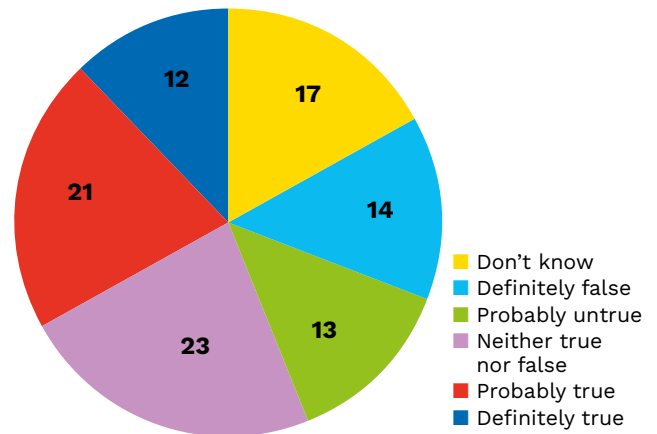
ISIS [Islamic State] was the creation of the CIA and Mossad



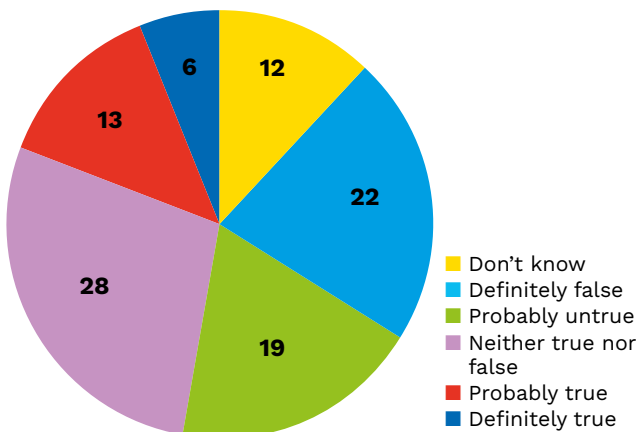
The threat of climate change is being exaggerated by Governments in order to control how we live our lives



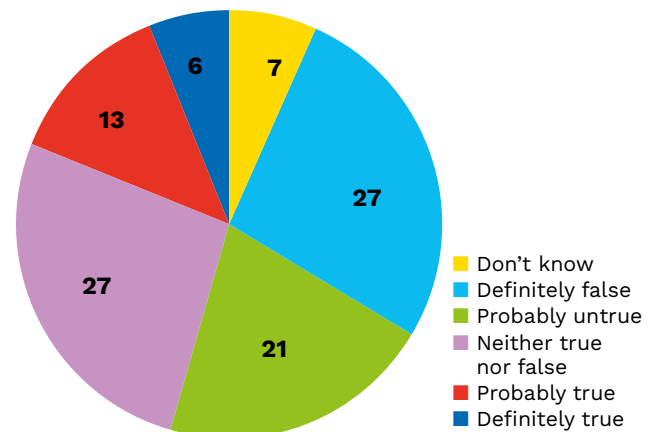
Parts of many European cities are under the control of Sharia Law and are 'no-go' zones for non-Muslims



Jewish people have an unhealthy control over the world's banking system



Vaccines have harmful effects which are not being fully exposed to the public



THE INTERNATIONAL ALT-RIGHT FASCISM FOR THE 21ST CENTURY?

BY PATRIK HERMANSSON,
DAVID LAWRENCE, JOE MULHALL, SIMON MURDOCH

PATRIK HERMANSSON, DAVID LAWRENCE,
JOE MULHALL, SIMON MURDOCH



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Heidi Beirich,
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Proponents of Pizzagate connected Comet Ping Pong (pictured) to a fictitious child sex ring. Photo: Farragutful / wikimedia.org

THE LIE MACHINE

PATRIK HERMANSSON ON HOW THE INTERNET HAS CATAPULTED CONSPIRACY THEORIES FROM THE MARGINS TO THE MAINSTREAM

IN DECEMBER 2016 a man with an assault rifle barged into a small pizza restaurant outside of Washington D.C. called Comet Ping Pong. He fired three shots, but fortunately only hit walls and furniture. According to his account, he had driven to Washington D.C. from North Carolina, motivated by his conviction that the restaurant was being used by a child sex-trafficking ring led by Hillary Clinton. This conspiracy theory had spread on Twitter and imageboards (anonymous internet forums) 4chan and 8chan.

Then in October 2019, a man in Halle, Germany attacked a synagogue and killed two people in the surrounding area using weapons he had built himself and tested over the previous year. In a livestreamed video, he claimed he thought “the Holocaust never happened” and blamed feminism and “mass immigration” on “the Jew”. Although the investigation is ongoing, the shooter also showed many signs of having spent significant time on far-right imageboards. These are just two examples of how conspiracy theories can cause real-world harm and death. It is also increasingly clear that online platforms play an important role in forming, spreading, and amplifying these ideas.

INFORMATION POLLUTION

Of course, the internet by itself is not solely to blame for the existence of conspiracy theories, nor is it the only driver that makes people take action on well-worn theories, such as the idea of an international Jewish conspiracy. One contributing factor is that, world leaders regularly make claims that are verifiably false, as well as lend explicit or implicit credibility to conspiracy theories. For example, the attacks of US President Donald Trump on the press as liars, “fake news” and “enemies of the people” has made it more difficult to agree on a common set of facts and falsehoods.

However, it has long been recognised that the internet is playing a key role in the modern development and dissemination of conspiracy theories, a role for which it is particularly well-suited. It is not only the scale, speed, accessibility and ubiquity of the internet that sets it apart from other communication technologies. As the free-to-use model has been established as the norm, advertising is the main source of income for all of the large social media networks. Advertising revenue, in turn, depends on the amount of time users spend on the platform, leading techno-sociologist Zeynep Tufekci to conclude that attention is “the crucial resource of the digital economy”. Algorithms mediate our communication on social media platforms and premier the content that is attention-grabbing, which is often in direct conflict with accuracy.





(left to right) David Icke, Alex Jones and Paul Joseph Watson

While YouTube, for example, has made some attempts to limit the spread of conspiracy theories through attempting to avoid recommending its most extreme videos, and by supplying links with accurate information from Wikipedia, the videos often remain on the platform. The attention-grabbing aspects of conspiracy ideas mean they are shared extensively in comments and on other sites.

Whitney Phillips argues that the huge amount of information of varying quality, be it true or false, results in a “polluted information” environment online. When so many actors, from individuals to multinational corporations and states, struggle to gain attention in an ever-faster and more crowded information environment, the line between trolling, honest opinion and well-researched opinions starts to blur. At a glance it can be hard to distinguish between conversations around conspiracy theories, the news of the day, and discussions around political issues. Because social media sites like Twitter and Facebook expose us (and encourage us to react) to information in areas we have little insight into every day, we also are often blind to the intent of the account arguing a position.

It is also easy to overestimate our capacity to differentiate between fact and opinion. The latest PISA survey from December 2019, which tests the

abilities of students in 79 countries, found that only 11.5% of 15-year-old children in the UK can accurately determine texts stating a biased opinion (such as a press release by a special interest group) from arguments based on journalistic or scientific research.

The danger of information pollution, according to Phillips, is that we lose trust in many institutions and basic facts, and turn to conspiratorial ideas that confirm existing biases. Democratic processes in turn become more problematic when there is no consensus on basic truths and falsehoods, which could lead to disengagement and passivity.

PARTICIPATORY ONLINE CULTURE

The possibility of self-expression and communication across vast distances and to huge audiences can, of course, be a wonderful thing. The possibility to collectively direct engagement and speak with a unified voice has brought forth progressive movements like #MeToo. But the same tools that can be used for progressive goals, such as amplifying minority voices, can also allow for the emergence of ideas that had previously been discarded for their sheer ridiculousness. The possibility of extremely niche ideas reaching a critical mass of followers has greatly expanded.

This participatory aspect of the internet and different social platforms is important when it comes to conspiracy theory communities online. Internet sleuths have been an important feature of internet culture from the very beginning, driven by almost infinite access to information, the possibility of pooling time and resources and, importantly, the willingness to question prevailing narratives. As social scientist Danah Boyd argues, the “process of doubt and discovery is invigorating”. To be able to take part in and research a conspiracy theory fits well with this culture. Additionally, just like offline conspiracy theory circles, it also creates a sense of purpose and community.

4chan’s and 8chan’s /pol/ boards (short for “politically incorrect”) have received extensive attention for their connection to far-right ideas and far-right terrorism, but they are also spaces where conspiratorial world views are spread incessantly. The anonymous user “Q” behind the QAnon conspiracy theory (which believes that there is a secret plot by an alleged “deep state” against President Trump) started posting on 4chan’s /pol/ and quickly gained a large following. Although Q’s identity remains unknown, the user was named one of the 25 most influential people on the internet in 2018. 8chan’s /pol/ board was simultaneously used to announce far-right terror attacks motivated by Islamophobic and antisemitic conspiracy theories in 2019. In this way, imageboards have become a central hub, where both very specific and more modern conspiracies, like QAnon and Pizzagate, as well as much older and broader systemic conspiracy theories like the idea of undue Jewish influence, come together and are discussed extensively. The shooter in Halle, like the man who attacked the Chabad of Poway synagogue in California in April 2019 (who blamed Jews for the “meticulously planned genocide of the European race”), had both spent time on image boards and used rhetoric common on the forums.

COUNTERING CONSPIRACIES ONLINE

Unfortunately, it is incredibly hard to counter conspiracy theories online. Not only are most conspiracies “self-sealing”, meaning that evidence against them is often reversed and used to strengthen them, but Danah Boyd also argues that the reasons why people share content online are complex. She has found that people can share content that they know is dubious in order to make a statement, or to signal belonging to a group or opposition to others.

The issue is described in the internet axiom known as “Poe’s law”, which says that without explicit indication, it is impossible to determine if someone online is serious or parodying extreme views. Without verbal and visual queues available in real life, it is hard to determine if someone is joking or completely honest about their opinions. This is especially true on imageboards where users can only be differentiated by their randomised ID called “tripcode”, which can be changed at any time. Therefore, other users have no insight into what other users have posted before.



In practice, the intent behind a conspiracy theory post online might not matter, as it will inevitably contribute to the confusion. An example is the conspiracy theory that Finland does not exist, which started to spread around the internet in late 2014, after being posted by a user on Reddit called “Jack”. In a later interview, Jack said he did not believe it himself and it was posted as a joke. However, this has done little to slow the spread of the idea. The conspiracy theory now even has a sub-forum on Reddit, and Jack gets responses from people being both angry at him for popularising the idea as well as those who seem to sincerely believe in it.

The effect is that it is difficult to determine the right approach to argue against ideas online, as people might sincerely believe what they share, or might do it simply to upset and cause outrage, or may not believe the specific fact that is shared, but are sharing it simply to make a statement. Without knowledge of intent, a response could mistakenly serve to entrench the idea further, or give it unnecessary attention.

The spread of conspiracy theories online and offline are inherently connected, and to limit their harm one cannot solely focus on online platforms. Conspiracy theory communities online can give a sense of community and purpose to those isolated and adrift, and there are wider social issues that must be addressed beyond technology and the internet. Likewise are issues about trust towards media and governments not inherently an online issue.

However, the attention-driven structure of current online platforms is problematic and remains a major contributing factor. While many major platforms have to some degree attempted to respond to false information and conspiracy theories, the structure of the platforms continues to promote the spread of information rather than the quality of it, which contributes to an environment where the difference between true and false is increasingly hard to determine.

CONSPIRACY THEORISTS

DAVID ICKE

SUMMARY OF 2019

The year began with disappointment for the world-famous conspiracy theorist and antisemite David Icke. In February, after lobbying from community groups, Australia's immigration minister revoked Icke's visa just hours before he was due to board his flight, forcing him to cancel his planned speaking tour.

April saw the release of the feature length film *Renegade: The Life Story of David Icke*, the "first authorized documentary" into his career, with premiere events in Manchester and London in the UK, Los Angeles and New York City in the USA. Despite his longstanding and well-documented antisemitism, on 25 April talkRADIO hosted Icke for a 35-minute slot to "promote" his film.

On the 18th anniversary of the September 11th attacks, Icke released a book titled *The Trigger: The Lie That Changed the World – Who Really Did It and Why*. Over 928 pages, Icke argues that the official account of 9/11 is a lie to obscure "the massive and central involvement in 9/11 by Israeli government, military and intelligence operatives".

Icke continued to be a major disseminator of conspiracy theories on social media. During 2019 he averaged 1.5 million views a month on his YouTube channel, and now boasts a staggering total 95,520,000 video views since the founding of his channel, with 215,000 followers on Twitter.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

Icke will continue to be the most significant figure spreading conspiratorial antisemitism in the UK, and a major figure internationally. He is also set to embark on a European tour in autumn, with dates in Copenhagen in Denmark, Gothenburg in Sweden, Oslo in Norway, Rome in Italy, Malaga in Spain and Manchester, UK.



(above) David Icke Photo: Elekes Andor / wikimedia.org
(below) Speaking at the Bilderberg Fringe Festival 2013
Photo: Tyler Merbler / flickr.com



RICHIE ALLEN

SUMMARY OF 2019

David Icke's Manchester-based protégé Richie Allen continued to run his own online conspiracy show throughout 2019, which functions as a platform for a variety of crackpots and conspiracy theorists, including prominent Holocaust deniers and dedicated antisemites.

The year got off to a rocky start for Allen, who was forced to postpone broadcast through most of February due to illness. During 2019 his guests included nazi Mark Collett (three times), American white nationalist Lana Lokteff, Holocaust denier Alison Chabloz and Eric Gajewski, who runs the deeply antisemitic TradCatKnight website.

In August, Allen received negative press after HOPE not hate revealed that two MEPs for Nigel Farage's Brexit Party had appeared on Allen's show: former Conservative minister Ann Widdecombe three times between August 2017 and April 2019, and TV presenter David Bull in April 2019 (on the same episode as Lokteff). We also revealed that Stuart Waiton, Brexit Party parliamentary candidate for Dundee West, had appeared five times between June 2018 and May 2019, also appearing on the same episodes as antisemitic conspiracy theorists.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

Already having hosted antisemites Kevin Barrett and Gilad Atzmon in January 2020, Allen looks set to continue to provide one of the biggest online platforms for conspiracy theorists, and conspiratorial antisemites, in the UK.



KEEP TALKING

Leader: Ian Fantom

Areas Active: London

Keep Talking is a conspiracy theory group that holds monthly meetings in the UK capital. Prominent Holocaust denier Nick Kollerstrom has been an active member of the group, and has sold his denial material at events.

SUMMARY OF 2019

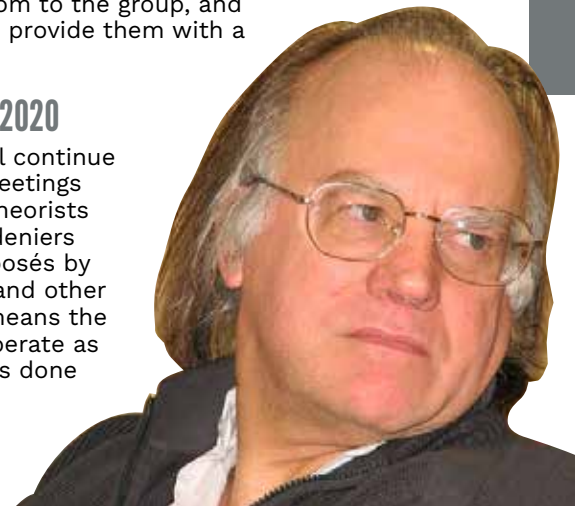
The group remained active in 2019 and held meetings on a range of conspiracy theories, including an event on: "The loss of freedom of speech in Israel, thanks to bogus anti-Semitism claims". Speakers throughout the year included Kollerstrom, Mark Devlin and John Petley, who caused uproar at a Labour conference fringe event when he appeared to support the questioning of the Shoah. Figures who attended meetings included well known Holocaust deniers such as Alison Chabloz and James Thring.

The group suffered a small setback in October when St Anne's Church in Soho publicly apologised after renting out a room to the group, and promised not to provide them with a venue again.

PROSPECTS FOR 2020

Keep Talking will continue to hold small meetings for conspiracy theorists and Holocaust deniers in 2020, but exposés by HOPE not hate and other organisations means the group cannot operate as secretly as it has done before.

(right) Ian Fantom



SECTION 7 – MAINSTREAM POISON





LABOUR AND ANTISEMITISM: ANOTHER YEAR OF TROUBLE

BY *LIRON VELLEMAN*



Jeremy Corbyn
Photo: Rwendland / wikimedia.org

THE RELATIONSHIP between the Jewish community and the Labour Party was in pretty dire straits at the start of 2019. The summer of 2018 had been dominated by a row over Labour’s eventual acceptance of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism, which occurred after the unprecedented ‘Enough is Enough’ rally led by Jewish community organisations in Parliament Square.

INCIDENTS

The year soon saw a stream of Labour Party members and candidates facing disciplinary processes for alleged antisemitism. In February, a row broke out between some members of the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) and Jennie Formby, the party’s general secretary after MPs Catherine McKinnell and Ruth Smeeth proposed a motion calling on the leadership to “adequately tackle cases of antisemitism”.

Other members of the PLP also accused Formby of covering up antisemitism over her refusal to release any data on disciplinary cases. A week later, the Labour Party released limited figures claiming that there were 673 cases of alleged antisemitism. The party had expelled 12 people to that date.

In March Jackie Walker was expelled more than two years after her original offending comments, including claims that Holocaust Memorial Day only commemorated Jewish victims. Leaks also showed that Jeremy Corbyn had involved himself in a disciplinary case and that his staff had asked to be copied into complaints, both of which had been denied by the Labour Party until this point.

In May, Pete Willsman was suspended for claiming that the Israeli embassy had organised a letter from 68 Rabbis in 2018, criticising Labour for changing the IHRA definition of antisemitism. In the summer, the Community Security Trust (CST) uncovered a network of Twitter accounts that had been at the centre of promoting a narrative about the weaponisation and denial of antisemitism in the Labour Party. These 36 accounts were part of a network that would run hashtag campaigns to target MPs and other leading figures who were speaking out against Labour antisemitism.

One particular account referenced was @socialistvoice, run by expelled member Scott Nelson, who regularly interacted with Holocaust deniers and neo-Nazis. Another was Heather Mendick, who was appointed by Jeremy Corbyn as Jewish Community Liaison Officer, an active supporter of then MP Chris Williamson and Pete Willsman..

Over the course of the year, many other candidates, councillors and activists were also caught up in antisemitism allegations. Multiple candidates were forced to resign, were suspended or became mired in controversy. For example, a senior councillor in Leicester was suspended for sharing content from David Duke, former grand wizard of the Ku Klux Klan. Three of Labour’s 16 candidates in Torbay’s local



March saw the expulsion of Jackie Walker
Photo: Altg20April2nd / wikimedia.org

elections were suspended for posting content such as “New World Order Zionist Jews admitting they want to destroy every none [sic] Jew” and talking about “fifth columnists” in Labour. A council candidate in Manchester wrote in 2014 that seeing an Israeli flag made her feel sick, but was allowed to remain as a candidate and won her election.

After the General Election, these incidents continued, particularly with members blaming Zionists or media smears on Labour for the party’s defeat, and denying the problem of antisemitism had an impact in the election.

These issues have continued into the Labour Leadership Race. After the Board of Deputies released its 10 pledges for Labour leadership candidates, Rachael Cousins (the owner of the Rachael Swindon Twitter account) tweeted a list of demands to the Board of Deputies, including insisting the organisation should apologise for and condemn Israel, a common trope holding all Jews responsible for the Israeli government.

JEWISH LABOUR MOVEMENT

The relationship between the Labour Party and the Jewish Labour Movement (JLM), an affiliated socialist society of the party, is emblematic of the complete loss of trust between Jews and the party. JLM was instrumental in calling, and collating evidence, for the Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) inquiry into antisemitism in the party. After the resignation of Luciana Berger, its Parliamentary Chair, JLM debated disaffiliating from Labour. Although this didn’t happen, the movement passed a motion at its AGM saying that Labour was institutionally antisemitic and that it had no confidence in Jeremy Corbyn.

Prior to this, Labour had scrapped the JLM training which had begun to be carried out in local party

branches and at conferences. The relationship plunged to a new low at the start of the General Election, when JLM confirmed that it would only campaign “in exceptional circumstances” and instead campaigned solely for Ruth Smeeth, Margaret Hodge, Alex Sobel and Rosie Duffield.

CHRIS WILLIAMSON

The disgraced former MP for Derby North became a symbol of Jew-baiting and hatred, and caused an unnecessary saga that took far too long to resolve. Williamson came into 2019 still facing calls for the Labour whip to be suspended from him for sharing platforms with expelled members, denying antisemitism in the Labour Party and signing a petition in support of controversial jazz musician Gilad Atzmon.

Despite this, Jeremy Corbyn told Derbyshire Live: “Chris Williamson is a very good, very effective Labour MP. He’s a very strong anti-racist campaigner. He is not antisemitic in any way.”

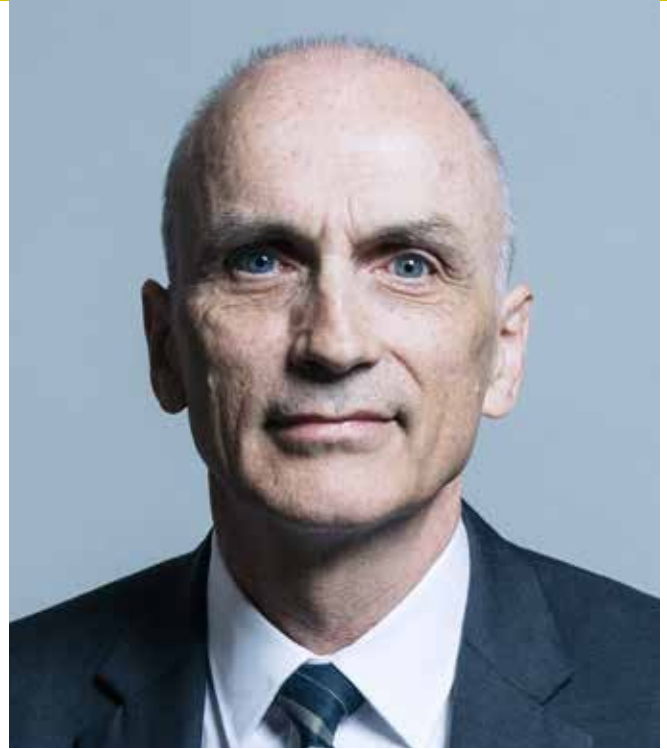
Williamson further angered anti-racists in Labour by booking a room in Parliament to host a film screening in Parliament for then-suspended member Jackie Walker. In late February, footage was uncovered of Williamson saying that Labour was “too apologetic” over antisemitism. The party confirmed that he would be under investigation for a pattern of behaviour but would remain as an MP. However, after much anger from then-deputy leader Tom Watson, backbench MPs and a statement from HOPE not Hate, he was suspended.

Unfortunately, this did not prove to be the end of this sorry tale. In June, Williamson’s suspension was lifted by a three-person NEC panel and he was issued with a formal warning. It then took two days, and pressure from 120 MPs and peers, plus 70 Labour staff members, for his suspension to be reimposed. He unsuccessfully attempted to return as a Labour MP through the courts and after he was refused permission to stand as a Labour Party candidate in the General Election, he resigned from the party. He got his final kicking of the year at the ballot box, receiving just 635 votes and losing his deposit in Derby North. However, it should be remembered that his case was yet another that dragged out so long that Labour never had to take the final decision to expel him.

RESIGNATIONS

2019 saw the exodus of leading Labour figures who felt that the Labour Party could no longer find a way back to effectively fighting antisemitism, from Members of Parliament to key activists. In February, after years of fighting left wing antisemitism, from within student politics to amongst Labour members, and a fortnight after a proposed no confidence motion from Liverpool Wavertree CLP, Luciana Berger quit the Labour Party. She stated that she had become ‘embarrassed and ashamed to remain in the Labour Party,’ that the ‘leadership ha[d] wilfully and repeatedly failed to address hatred against Jewish people within its ranks’ and that she looked forward to ‘leaving behind a culture of bullying, bigotry and intimidation.’ Other MPs who left the Labour Party at a similar time also referred to Labour antisemitism in their resignations, including Mike Gapes, Ian Austin and Ann Coffey.

In October, Labour was faced with another resignation from a Jewish woman in a Liverpool constituency, with Dame Louise Ellman resigning two weeks after a no



Chris Williamson got his final kicking of the year at the ballot box, receiving just 635 votes and losing his deposit in Derby North Photo: Chris McAndrew / wikimedia.org

confidence motion was tabled against her in Liverpool Riverside CLP on Yom Kippur, the holiest day in the Jewish year. Dame Ellman said that ‘antisemitism had become mainstream in the Labour Party’ and that ‘the Labour Party is no longer a safe place for Jews and Jeremy Corbyn must bear the responsibility for this.’

EHRC

In 2019, the Labour Party became the second ever political party after the British National Party to be investigated by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), a body they set up whilst in government. The investigation was triggered by complaints made to the EHRC that led them to believe that Labour may have ‘unlawfully discriminated against people because of their ethnicity and religious beliefs.’ Due to the volume and severity of the complaints, the EHRC made this a full statutory investigation.

The Labour Party rejected that it acted unlawfully, but state they have fully cooperated with the investigation. The Jewish Labour Movement have been instrumental in coordinating testimonies from Labour members and non-members and whistleblowing statements from former and current staff that have been sent to the EHRC. Some of the whistleblowers took in a BBC Panorama documentary entitled ‘Is Labour Anti-Semitic?’ which began to uncover the extent of the failures to deal with antisemitism and the political interference in the disciplinary processes.

Rather than setting to work to address the issues raised in the documentary, Labour made complaints to Ofcom and the BBC about perceived ‘inaccuracies’ in the programme but both were rejected. Part of their submission to the EHRC was leaked in the week before the General Election, detailing political interference by Jeremy Corbyn’s office, discrimination against Jewish members and lenient sanctions for antisemitism.

2020 will see the findings of the investigation and will be a pivotal moment in uncovering the true extent of antisemitism in the Labour Party and a huge test for the next leader of the Labour Party to deal with.

ISLAMOPHOBIA IN THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY: A YEAR IN REVIEW

LIMITED DISCIPLINARY ACTION, A MEMBERSHIP RIVEN BY ISLAMOPHOBIC VIEWS AND A LEADERSHIP WHICH HAS BRUSHED OFF CRITICISM – THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY’S APPROACH TO ITS ISLAMOPHOBIA CRISIS IS DEEPLY DISAPPOINTING WRITES *GREGORY DAVIS*.

LAST YEAR there were growing calls for the Conservative Party to tackle the Islamophobia crisis within its ranks. A steady drip-feed of allegations emerged throughout the year of Islamophobic behaviour from individuals at every level of the party, ranging from the grassroots up to the very top with the leadership.

Yet the party has appeared reluctant to acknowledge the scale of the problem, which is the first step towards tackling any issue effectively. It has seemed, at times, as though the party was intent on repeating every mistake that Labour has made in its handling of its antisemitism crisis.

Despite the party’s claims that its disciplinary procedures were ‘transparent’, a consistent refusal to provide basic information about the number of complaints, or their outcomes, has made it impossible for outside observers to verify the actions taken or true scale of the problem. As it stands, the evidence we have already suggests that the problem is larger than the leadership cares to admit.

ROT FROM THE TOP?

The election of Boris Johnson as Conservative leader in July last year has understandably given cause for concern, given his track record of making inflammatory comments about Muslims and Islam.

His article for the *Telegraph* in August 2018, which likened Muslim women who wear the burka to “letterboxes” and “bank-robbers”, was feted by anti-Muslim figures and displayed a callous disregard for the impact his words might have had on a vulnerable minority group.

A number of other offensive articles he’d written over the past two decades also garnered renewed attention, including one in which he proclaimed: “... the problem is Islam. Islam is the problem” (*The Spectator*, 2005). Provocative and indiscriminate statements such as these hardly inspire confidence that Mr Johnson is committed to tackling anti-Muslim sentiment in his party.

A number of the party’s candidates in December’s

The election of Boris Johnson as Conservative leader in July last year has understandably given cause for concern, given his track record of making inflammatory comments about Muslims and Islam
Photo: Chatham House



GE2019: THE TROUBLING TORY CANDIDATES

KARL MCCARTNEY, Lincoln

A HOPE not hate investigation revealed that McCartney, who was fighting to win back his old seat of Lincoln, had frequently retweeted a number of anti-Muslim figures such as Katie Hopkins, Paul Joseph Watson, and Gavin McInnes, and numerous tweets in support of far-right agitator Stephen Yaxley-Lennon ('Tommy Robinson'). He offered an unsatisfactory apology and faced no disciplinary action by the party.



ANTHONY BROWNE, South Cambridgeshire



In his previous career as a columnist for the right-wing *Spectator* magazine, Anthony Brown wrote about Muslims that "it is hardly a national strength to have a large minority with such divided loyalties during war". A former aide to Boris Johnson, Brown apologised but faced no further disciplinary action.

ANJANA PATEL, Brent North

In mid-November it emerged that Anjana Patel had directed an aggressive tweet towards the Pakistani human rights campaigner Malala Yousafzai, previously shot by the Taliban, appearing to hold her responsible for the actions of extremist Islamist militants. BuzzFeed reported that party headquarters had been aware of Patel's tweets prior to her selection as a candidate, but took no action against her.



BOB BLACKMAN, Harrow East



Bob Blackman has a long history of Islamophobic incidents, including inviting the controversial Hindu nationalist politician, Tapan Ghosh, from India to an event at the House of Commons – despite Ghosh's notoriously anti-Muslim views.

Blackman has also been revealed as a member of numerous far-right Facebook groups and has met and retweeted Stephen Yaxley-Lennon. His claim that all of these events were accidental stretches credibility, but the party has chosen to take no action against him.

LINDEN KEMKARAN, Bradford East

Three days before the election, Linden Kemkaran retweeted a number of offensive tweets, including one saying that Muslims "always play the race card" and have a "nasty culture". No action appears to have been taken against her.



Jeff Potts from Solihull, who was suspended for having retweeted a call for all British Muslims to be deported.

General Election were revealed to have made Islamophobic comments on social media, too (see sidebar). There have also been a deluge of allegations against local councillors.

Dossiers compiled by the *Guardian* and LBC showed evidence of anti-Muslim and racist posts on social media by more than 30 current and former councillors, including claims that Muslims were "barbarians" and the "enemy within", as well as promoting Islamophobic conspiracy theories. These included notions such as the existence of supposed "no-go zones" for non-Muslims and the idea that Muslims have been infiltrating public life in order to "take over".

The Conservative Party claims that it takes immediate and decisive action when such claims emerge, and made an unspecified number of suspensions as a result of these dossiers. Yet the disciplinary processes that follow these suspensions remain opaque, with the party claiming that confidentiality prevents it from providing details of any individual cases.

A *Guardian* report in March last year showed that 15 councillors who had previously been suspended for racist and Islamophobic behaviour had been quietly readmitted, despite the-then party chairman Brandon Lewis publicly criticising similar behaviour by Labour.

Recently readmitted councillors include Jeff Potts from Solihull, who was suspended for having retweeted a call for all British Muslims to be deported, and David Abbott of Houghton Regis, who was suspended for comments on social media about "the infiltration requirements of Mohammedanism" and suggested that Muslims were "breeding for Islam".

While the Conservative Party insists that both men have apologised and undergone diversity training, it is legitimate to ask whether such actions amount to more than a box-ticking exercise, with eventual readmission as a foregone conclusion.

There were also numerous reports of complaints made to party HQ that had been either ignored or effectively stonewalled, with victims of discrimination feeling forced to resign from the party in protest.

In March 2019, HOPE not hate's chief executive Nick Lowles wrote to Brandon Lewis to demand an explanation, in light of the fact that Lewis had stated in a tweeted reply to HOPE not hate in November 2018 that there were "no outstanding cases [of Islamophobia complaints]".

A number of news reports emerged over the course of 2019 that revealed unresolved complaints made prior

NEW POLL OF CONSERVATIVE PARTY MEMBERS

'ISLAM IS GENERALLY A THREAT TO WESTERN CIVILISATION'

60% BELIEVE THIS

'ISLAM IS GENERALLY A THREAT TO THE BRITISH WAY OF LIFE'

54% BELIEVE THIS

Concluded a YouGov poll of 1024 self-identified Conservative party members from June 2019

to this tweet, which you would expect the party Chair to know.

One complaint had come from Ajay Jagota, a local Conservative chair in South Shields, who had been subject to anti-Muslim abuse by a Tory councillor. Despite having raised his complaints with Brandon Lewis in person at the party conference in September last year, Jagota eventually resigned his party membership in January, after failing to receive a reply to his numerous follow-up letters.

AN ISSUE AT EVERY LEVEL

Polling of Conservative Party members carried out by YouGov on behalf of HOPE not hate in 2018 and 2019 consistently found worryingly high levels of Islamophobic sentiment and false perceptions about Muslims among Tory grassroots members.

Over three-quarters – **67%** – of members polled believed that “there are areas of the UK that operate under Sharia Law”, while a staggering **60%** said that “Islam is generally a threat to Western civilisation”.

Nearly half – **45%** – believed that “there are areas in Britain in which non-Muslims are not able to enter”, and over half – **54%** – thought that Islam was also “generally a threat to the British way of life”. Meanwhile, a worryingly high **43%** said they would “prefer to not have the country led by a Muslim”.

Brandon Lewis rejected the conclusions of the polling, by casting doubt on both the sample size and self-reported status of YouGov’s membership data, despite having approvingly cited previous YouGov polls of Tory members. Rejecting such polling out-of-hand, particularly from such a widely respected pollster, does not seem indicative of a party leadership that is genuinely committed to tackling the issue of anti-Muslim prejudice.

The findings of the polling also appeared to tally with media reports of large numbers of Conservative

Party members being reported for making similar anti-Muslim statements on social media. In July, ITV News handed a dossier to Conservative HQ containing abusive anti-Muslim social media posts from over 200 alleged party members. While the party denies that some of the individuals in these dossiers are members, it has consistently refused to provide the actual number of complaints they’ve received – citing confidentiality issues – despite Labour providing regular data on its own complaints statistics.

Much of the anti-Muslim social media activity reported to the party appears to be taking place in Facebook groups that were set up to support either the party itself or specific Tory MPs, appearing in groups such as the ‘Jacob Rees-Mogg: Supporters’ Group’, of which Cllr Abbot (see above) was and remains a moderator.

Such groups are not directly controlled by or endorsed by the Conservative Party or the MPs they support, and Rees-Mogg himself has specifically condemned the anti-Muslim content of the group. Yet the fact that pro-Conservative groups with thousands of members can be home to such large quantities of unchallenged anti-Muslim hatred should be a matter of great concern to the party.

December saw the Conservatives announce the launch of an investigation into the handling of complaints relating to *all* forms of prejudice, including Islamophobia. While any form of investigation is to be welcomed, the remit of this investigation is both too narrow and too broad to address the scale of the problem they face.

Limiting their investigation only to the handling of complaints, and expanding the remit to include all forms of prejudice, does not demonstrate a willingness to tackle the specific and widespread problem of Islamophobia in the party, and HOPE not hate will continue to demand a full inquiry and decisive action.

REVEALED: NEW EVIDENCE OF ISLAMOPHOBIA AMONG CONSERVATIVE OFFICIALS AND ACTIVISTS

THROUGHOUT 2019 there was a steady flow of allegations made against Conservative Party councillors, activists and members which, when viewed alongside the polling of members conducted by YouGov in July, painted a picture of a party that had a significant problem with anti-Muslim sentiment at local level. Now HOPE not hate can reveal a new dossier of Islamophobic social media posts by more than 20 Tory officials and activists, including six sitting councillors.

We are calling on CCHQ (Conservative Campaign Headquarters) to take immediate action against these individuals, and will continue to demand that they take proper steps to tackle the Islamophobia crisis that has gripped the party at every level.

Cllr Steve Vickers, Nottinghamshire County Council

After the 2016 terror attack in Nice, Cllr Vickers claimed that Sadiq Khan “and his brethren” were “part of the problem”. He went on to inquire as to whether an Islamic school in Nottinghamshire would be making a statement on the attacks, but also stated that such a statement would be “too little too late”.



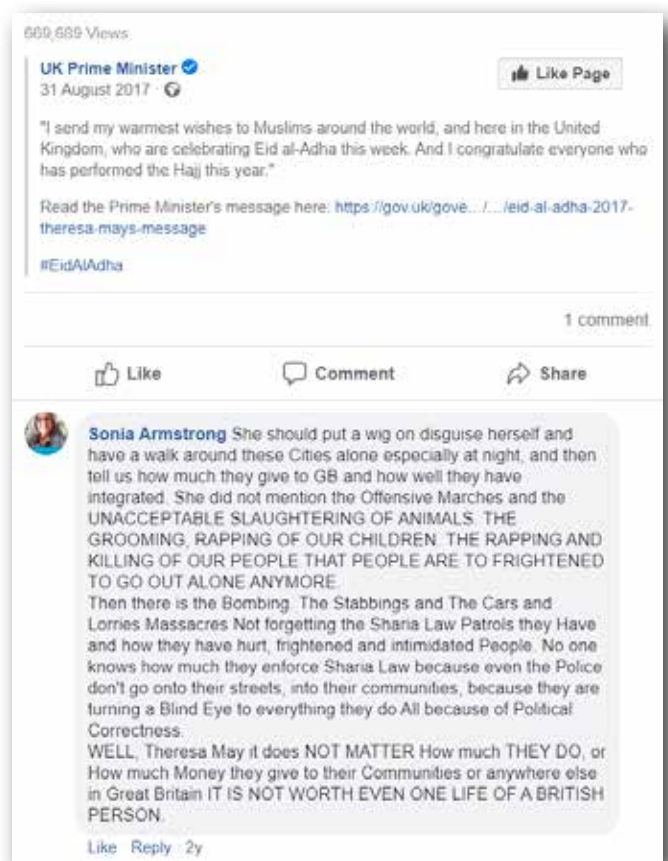
Ex-Cllr Susanna Dixon, Coventry

Former Coventry City councillor from 2004 – 2012, Susanna Dixon has shared and liked numerous misleading articles about British Muslims from far-right sources, including Britain First. These include stories regarding attacks on British soldiers by “gangs of Muslims” and the allegation that “Islamofascists” are taking over British towns.



Cllr Sonia Armstrong, Harworth and Bircotes Town Council

Town councillor and local party chair Sonia Armstrong has posted a number of anti-Muslim rants to her Facebook profile, including this one that was triggered by Theresa May wishing UK Muslims a happy Eid.



Cllr Judith Clementson, Winchester City Council

City councillor Judith Clementson uses the anonymous Twitter handle @Clem205 to post Islamophobic conspiracy theories about a “dangerous Muslim agenda for world domination”.

Cllr Ranjit Pendhar Singh Gill, Hounslow

The borough councillor for Turnham Green, Cllr Gill, gleefully celebrated the election of Donald Trump and his promised exclusion of Muslims, along with alarmist posts about “75 million Muslim Turks” with plans to “infiltrate the UK”.



Cllr Derek Bullock, Bolton Council

Cllr Bullock posted an article about Sayeeda Warsi from Robert Spencer's 'JihadWatch', to which he added "She's been a cuckoo in the nest!"

Parliamentary Assistant Fraser McFarland

In September of 2019, the Parliamentary Caseworker for Brendan Clarke-Smith shared an article by Debbie Schlusell, a notorious anti-Muslim activist. This lengthy rant contained innumerable Islamophobic generalisations, and placed collective responsibility for the 9/11 attacks at the feet of the entire global Muslim community.

Ex-Cllr Bryan Denson, Wakefield

Mr Denson, who has served multiple terms as councillor and led the Conservative Opposition on Wakefield Council between 2007 and 2009, shared a post by the far-right English Democrats that sought to associate Islam generally with the acts of extremists.

Ex-Cllr Gail Hall, Gwynedd

Serving as county councillor from 2008 to 2012, Gail Hall remains an active member of her local party. Hall has shared countless anti-Muslim posts from far-right pages, including calling Muslims "savages" and promoting conspiracy theories about Muslim officials, and has 'liked' comments that refer to Muslims as "Scumbags" who should "sling their hooks back to their ancestral homelands".

Ex-Cllr Martin Akehurst, Henley-On-Thames

Martin Akehurst, who served as both Tow and District councillor between 2010 and 2017, has endorsed a number of anti-Muslim posts on social media. He 'liked' a post that said "Muslims hate everything and everyone who is not Muslim. They have no conception of truth", and he has endorsed the conspiracy theory that immigration is intended to "obliterate" the host culture.



EX-CLLR CHRISTOPHER MEAKIN, SOUTHWARK

Leader of the Conservative opposition on Southwark council in the 1970s and 80s, Meakin also stood for Southwark council in 2002. Meakin has written dozens of disturbing posts advocating the murder of Muslim migrants and his belief in the conspiracy theory that Europe is being "invaded".

In 2016, he posted a status in which he called for machine guns to be used against Muslim migrants, saying: "The enemy must be eliminated". This kind of rhetoric is more commonly associated with neo-Nazis than Conservative Party members. Yet this status earned Mr Meakin 31 'likes' on Facebook, and there were some worrying names on the list.

One of them was Cllr Malcolm Griffiths.

Mr Griffiths was suspended by the party in November 2019 after his name was included in a dossier of party officials who had made anti-Muslim comments on social media. However, both Redcar and Cleveland Council and his local party in South Tees still list him as a Conservative on their websites, suggesting that he remains an active member of the party.

Another who apparently 'liked' the idea of refugees being massacred was Christopher Newbury, a county councillor in Wiltshire and former diplomat. Newbury was also named in a Guardian story, but again he appears to have retained his position as a Conservative councillor. Also on the list was Cllr Derek Bullock and former Coventry City councillor Susanna Dixon.

SECTION 8 – RELIGIOUS SECTARIANISM





Israelite School of Universal Practical Knowledge (ISUPK) (left to right): Karathya Yasharahla, Parashyah Benjamin, Chaarawan Yasharahla



PREACHING HATE

GREGORY DAVISON US-BASED EXTREMIST BLACK HEBREW ISRAELITE GROUPS SPREADING HATE IN THE UK

HOPE NOT HATE can reveal that the three largest Black Hebrew Israelite (BHI) hate groups in the US have officially-endorsed UK franchises.

A number of news stories emerged over the past year which have drawn attention to the activities of Black Hebrew Israelite churches in the UK, some of which preach an extreme black-supremacist ideology that is founded on antisemitism and racism, as well as extreme homophobia and misogyny.

A group calling itself the Church of Yahawashi travelled to Stamford Hill, London in September to harass and threaten the local Haredi Jewish population, calling them “devils” and “abominations”. In late November, a Jewish family was verbally abused on a train by a man who accused the family of being “impostors who have stolen our identity”. Social media posts by the alleged perpetrator contained numerous references to extremist BHI ideology, although it is not clear whether he belonged to a particular group.

These events coincided with an uptick in antisemitic violence from adherents of extremist BHI ideology in the USA, where the movement originated. In October, two Jewish men were assaulted by a homeless man in Miami, who later told police that he was “a black Israelite” and a “real Jew, not like these fake Jews.” In December, a shooting at a Kosher supermarket in Jersey City that left three people dead was allegedly carried out by extremist BHI adherents who had formerly attended the Israelite Church of God in Jesus Christ. Just weeks later, a man who had appeared to make reference to elements of BHI ideology in his journals was suspected of carrying out a mass-stabbing at the home of a rabbi in Monsey, NY, that left five people wounded.

WHAT IS BLACK HEBREW ISRAELISM?

Black Hebrew Israelism is the most commonly used term for a diverse set of religious beliefs that emerged in the USA over a century ago, centred on the idea that African Americans are descendants of the ancient Israelites. Beyond this central tenet, the theological and ideological manifestations of the BHI ideology vary hugely between the different sects and churches, with some groups adhering more closely to Jewish tradition and others practising a form of messianic Christianity.

It is important to make clear that the hate groups profiled in this report are part of a particular hateful strand of BHI ideology, and do not represent the entire religious identity.

All of the groups profiled below can be described as belonging to the ‘One West Camp’, an umbrella term which covers the multitude of extremist groups that have splintered from the New York-based Israelite Church of God in Jesus Christ, many of which now dwarf the original church in membership. While theology differs somewhat between these groups,

One West-inspired churches have a number of unifying tenets and practises that locate them on the extreme end of the broader BHI movement.

Firstly, they believe that Black Americans, Native Americans and Latinos – and sometimes including black Africans – are the only true descendants of the ancient Israelites, and therefore that any other group claiming that descent are impostors. This concept distinguishes them from other BHI sects who do not deny the Israelite descent of other Jewish groups. This leads them to hold extreme antisemitic beliefs about the mainstream Jewish population, and particularly Ashkenazi Jews, who are referred to as “fake Jews”, “impostors” and “devils”. The antisemitism espoused by these groups also draws on tropes and conspiracy theories that are more commonly associated with neo-Nazi and white supremacist movements, such as that of a powerful global conspiracy controlled by Jewish people.

Secondly, they believe that religious salvation is limited to these black and Native American descendants of ancient Israel. Every other racial and religious group is considered irredeemably evil and destined to be destroyed by God on an impending Day of Judgment, which is often portrayed as a race war in which BHI adherents will exact revenge on all other races and religions, as well as non-believing members of their own ethnicities. While white and Jewish people are the primary targets of One West hostility, they are extremely intolerant of every other racial group and religion.

“The scripture says “Prepare slaughter for his children for the iniquity of their fathers”. So because of the crimes that the forefathers committed against us - that’s why I want white babies to die”

Captain Tazaryach, Israelite School of Universal Practical Knowledge

Thirdly, they are distinguishable by the confrontational street preaching sessions held by groups of adherents, known as ‘camps’. Although all of the major churches now make extensive use of social media and video upload sites to spread their message, it is these combative and hate-filled street preaching sessions with which extremist BHI ideology is most closely associated. These camps typically involve a group of 5-20 people, of which one or two will preach while others stand ready to read out biblical verses when instructed by the group leaders. The subject of the ‘sermons’ are typical fare for street preaching – that God’s judgement is imminent and that the wicked will soon pay for their actions. What makes One West street preaching uniquely disruptive and damaging is their identification of the wicked along racial lines, as well as the extreme nature of their misogyny and homophobia.

EXTREMIST BHI GROUPS IN THE UK

Church of Yahawashi 144

Leader: Royce Asante-Mathieson, AKA Captain Ban Yahawadah (UK)

Based: London

“All these black bitches [...] they don’t pay no regard for our authority. But we ain’t gonna pay them no regard when the Lord gives us the power to start chopping their fucking heads off”

Royce Asante-Mathieson, AKA Ashan Ban Yahawadah

In January, HOPE not hate called on the authorities to take action against this group for their abusive and threatening street preaching sessions. The group split from the larger Great Millstones (GMS) movement in 2018, when Asante-Mathieson fell out with his superiors, but he appears to still consider his group to be part of the wider GMS milieu.

As well as their foray into Stamford Hill, the group hold regular ‘camps’ in Brixton, Southwark and Dalston, in which they loudly threaten passers by with violent, misogynistic, racist and homophobic language. Like many in the extremist BHI community, the Church of Yahawashi are obsessed with the apocalypse, which they believe is imminent and will involve them personally acting out the will of the Lord.

The graphic descriptions of the vengeance they intend to mete out goes well beyond the realm of religious expression and crosses over into criminal threats and incitement to violence, and we continue to urge the authorities to take action against them.



Elder Tahar (photo: Youtube)

Great Millstones (GMS)

Leader: Elder Tahar (US)

Based: New York

The Church of Yahawashi can be seen as an offshoot of the broader GMS movement, which has at least 23 active groups across the USA and appears to have four or more UK affiliates, including around 30 active members in London. GMS groups tend to be particularly extreme in their misogyny; the Church of Yahawashi’s statements about beheading women are a clear echo of the street preaching by the group’s founders in New York, who viciously abuse women and promote what is known as the “Rape Doctrine”, which says that the spiritual elect will be able to rape women and girls in the upcoming reign of God:

“When the Kingdom comes, we’re gonna take women when they’re twelve years old. As soon as their period starts, we’re gonna deal with them, have sex with them”

Elder Tahar, founder of GMS

A group calling itself GMS London Camp posts regular videos of its preaching in Enfield, North London, in which a group of up to 20 men gather to preach that homosexuals should be “put to death” and that white children are “Little devils who will grow up to be big devils”. A group also preach on London’s Oxford Street, where they will say that Jewish people are “impostors” and “f*cking heathens”, and talk of Caribbean women as “ugly f*ckers” and “demons” who will be “put out of their misery” on an imminent judgement day.

“That’s why all those rat Jews, calling themselves Jews, they’re the seeds of Amalek. Coming up here, saying you’re a Jew. You ain’t no Jew, man, you’re a gutter rat.”

Ratazah Ahla, GMS London Camp

HOPE not hate has been able to identify at least 20 YouTube channels owned by these groups, one of which has over 2,700 subscribers, although it is not clear how many of these are UK residents. In September of 2019, the group was visited by a Los Angeles-based GMS preacher who joined them for one of their live camps, broadcast on YouTube.



Centre (with microphone): Royce Asante-Mathieson
AKA Ashan Ban Yahawadah.

Israelite School of Universal Practical Knowledge (ISUPK)

Leader: General Yahanna (US)

Based: Pennsylvania

The ISUPK is perhaps one of the best known extremist BHI groups in the UK due to its appearance on documentaries such as *Louis Theroux's Weird Weekends* and the Viceland documentary *Hate Thy Neighbour*. However, the existence of highly active UK-branches has gone largely unreported until now. The Birmingham branch appears to be the most active, with a registered street address and over 3,100 subscribers to their YouTube channel and 3,400 likes on their Facebook page. However, comments on their videos suggest that at least some of these followers are based in the USA and other countries.

“The so-called Jew is particularly cruel, he’s crueller even than the others. He get control of the earth, you’re gonna have a problem”

General Yahanna, Founder of ISUPK

As with GMS, the lectures they post online contain extreme denigration of other religious and racial groups. In one video, high ranking UK member Sekani Gordon, aka ‘Officer Parashyah Yasharahla’, explains that Hitler had “valid” and “logical” reasons for hating the Jews, who were “liars” and “behind every wicked scheme”. In the same lecture, he tells his followers that “the so-called Jews are going come before your feet, they’re going to worship before your feet”. Perhaps reflecting the particular demographics of Birmingham, the ISUPK devotes considerably more time to ‘refuting’ Islam than other such groups in the UK. In one video, a man calling himself Karathya Yasharahlah says of Muslims: “They’re terrorists, they’re violent, they’re animals [...] You’re supposed to stay away from them, every Arab and every Muslim.”

The group also displays extreme and violent homophobia in both street preaching sessions and the lectures they post on YouTube, condemning homosexuality as “disgusting” and “vile” and that homosexuals deserve to be “put to death”.

“In our kingdom you’d be known as the guy who was gay and got stoned to death. You’d be known as the guy who got a rock to the head”

Officer Dam Gabar, ISUPK Birmingham

The group receives frequent visits from US-based church leaders, who tour the country to give lectures. Furthermore, UK adherents travel to the US for training and religious events. In April 2019, the group announced that members from Birmingham, London, Manchester and Bristol were all flying to New York to attend the ISUPK Passover celebrations.



Antisemitic post from an official IUIC facebook page.

Israel United In Christ (IUIC)

Leader: Bishop Nathanyel

Based: Atlanta

“That’s why Jews don’t accept the New Testament. Because according to the Bible, you’re the devil. And you ARE the devil.”

Bishop Nathanyel, founder of IUIC

The IUIC hit headlines in 2019 due to the disappearance of Joy Morgan, a church member who was later found to have been murdered by another member of the group. The murder does not appear to have been motivated by church doctrine, but Joy’s family reported that the church was a ‘cult’ that had taught their daughter to hate white people and even her own mixed-race siblings. The church strongly denies that it is a hate group, but online lectures by the most senior church leaders are filled with racism and antisemitic conspiracy theories, such as claiming that Jews control the world and calling them ‘Amalekites’ who God will “wipe from the face of the earth.”

The IUIC appears to be the largest BHI group in the UK. Their church in Ilford is estimated to have 150 members, and has active branches in Birmingham, Manchester, Nottingham and Leicester. Senior figures including Bishop Nathanyel have made frequent visits to the UK to assist the setting up of the local branches, and taken part in street preaching sessions whilst here.



Bishop Nathanyel (centre) advertises a visit to London.

WHAT REALLY HAPPENED WITH THE



Birmingham, UK - Friday 7th June 2019 - Protesters chant near the Anderton Park Primary School in Birmingham in a protest against the No Outsiders education program - A High Court injunction is in force to prevent protesters gathering directly outside the school. Photo Steven May / Alamy Live News

BIRMINGHAM SCHOOLS PROTESTS?



NICK RYAN LIFTS THE LID ON THE PROTESTS WHICH NEARLY PARALYSED SEVERAL BIRMINGHAM PRIMARY SCHOOLS LAST YEAR.

Towards the end of last year, the High Court in London held a most extraordinary hearing.

It heard of a divisive petition, ugly and vocal protests, children withdrawn from schools, accusations of homophobia and intolerance, claims of ‘outside forces’ and a focus – for a few fevered months – of the nation’s attention on a small group of Birmingham primary schools where (mainly) Muslim parents and protesters had seemed to visibly clash with the very notion of a modern, British identity.

In November the High Court permanently extended a ban on highly-vocal protests outside Anderton Park primary school in Sparkhill, Birmingham, which had been regularly targeted by up to 300 (mainly Muslim) adults. Some – but not all – were parents outraged at the school’s teaching of LGBT+ inclusive lessons.

The protesters had claimed children were being “sexualised” and that the school’s teaching about LGBT+ identities conflicted with their religion. However, the High Court judge, Mr Justice Warby, said that Muslim activists who had led the protests had “grossly misrepresented” what they claimed was being taught. “They have suggested the school is promoting homosexuality when it is not,” he ruled.

It brought to an end, at least temporarily, a very bitter dispute in the heart of Birmingham’s growing Muslim communities.

But what had brought things to such a head: where staff were treated for stress, an openly gay assistant head said he was targeted with threats, and the Government’s official counter-extremism body suggested “outsiders” had sought to inflame parents’ religious sensitivities to increase tensions?

IT ALL BEGAN WITH A PETITION

In January last year Mariam Ahmed, whose child attended another local Birmingham primary school, Parkfield Community in Alum Rock, raised a petition which claimed that the school’s teachings around LGBT+ inclusivity, as part of something called the ‘No Outsiders’ project, contradicted the Islamic faith.

Like Anderton Park, which was later affected, these were local primary schools that happened to serve a largely Muslim intake of children, many from Pakistani-heritage backgrounds.

“Children at this age don’t even know if they are coming or going, let alone knowing what sexual orientation they will become,” Mrs Ahmed said when she launched her petition. (Many Muslims consider acts of homosexuality to be *haram*, or forbidden.)

Some parents claimed the school had handled the introduction of No Outsiders without adequate consultation, though the programme had been piloted

back in 2014 and had been adopted by other schools across the country. In February 2019 Parkfield was rated ‘outstanding’ by Ofsted.

No Outsiders was in fact the brainchild of Andrew Moffat, the assistant head teacher at Parkfield. Moffat is openly gay and author of several books and educational resources. He was previously awarded an MBE for his work in equality education.

Moffat said he created No Outsiders to teach children about the characteristics enshrined in the 2010 Equality Act, and about British values. He wanted pupils to “be proud of who they are while recognising and celebrating difference and diversity”.

The project used books about subjects such as a dog that didn’t fit in, two male penguins that raised a chick together, and a boy who liked to dress up like a mermaid.

With Mrs Ahmed’s petition gaining attention early last year, meetings took place between Moffat and concerned parents. Some became “personal and aggressive”, the school said in a statement. It was then that a number of parents began protesting outside Parkfield as the children left for the day, while others chose to keep their children at home.

These parents claimed in their own statement that No Outsiders “falsely claims to rely on legislation (Equality Act 2010) in justifying promotion of homosexuality. Children are expected to affirm, verbally and in writing, that “being gay is OK””

The statement talked about “an imposition of belief, which undermines the faith, beliefs and values espoused by the parents and community that the school serves” and stated that: “The school is promoting Mr Moffat’s personal beliefs and convictions about the universal acceptability of homosexuality as being normal and morally correct.”

The stage thus seemed set for a clash between socially conservative parents of one faith, and the education system and laws of the land on the other (the Equality and Human Rights Commission says that the 2010 Equality Act, which Andrew Moffat claimed his programme helped enshrine, is designed to “protect the rights of individuals and advance equality of opportunity for all” and “promotes a fair and more equal society”).

Despite pausing and later modifying the No Outsiders lessons, the protests outside Parkfield accelerated and were soon held on a daily basis. Four other schools in the city – Leigh Primary School, Alston Primary School, Marlborough Junior and Infants School and Wyndcliff Primary School – halted their lessons. In March hundreds of children were withdrawn from Parkfield for the day.

Andrew Moffat said that he received “nasty emails” and threats, including one which warned he “wouldn’t last long”.

PROTESTS SPREADING

It was at this point – in March 2019 – that the protests also spread to another primary school, Anderton Park, in Birmingham’s Sparkhill, one of the city’s most diverse communities.

The school had been highly praised by Ofsted for its community ethos, and hailed by the city council as “the leading light in Birmingham for its equalities work”. It carries a tribute to Jo Cox across the wall in a communal area, with her message “We have more in common than that which divides us” writ large.

Though Anderton Park didn’t specifically teach No Outsiders, protesting Muslim parents argued the school’s equality teachings “were the same” as Parkfield.

Soon the protests there, too, were being held on a daily basis, highly vocal with megaphones and sound system. The head teacher, Sarah Hewitt-Clarkson, later told the National Association of Head Teachers’ conference that protesters outside the school had waved banners with slogans such as “Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve”, and “We have a say in what they learn”.

She also claimed: “The lead protesters have no children at my school.”

SO WHO WERE THESE PROTESTERS?

One was a man named Amir Ahmed, who co-ordinated protests outside seven Birmingham primary schools.

He had no children at any of the affected schools, but claimed he was motivated by his religious beliefs, believing that No Outsiders was proselytising for a gay lifestyle.

“We are a traditional community – we have traditional family values and morally we do not accept homosexuality as a valid sexual relationship to have,” he told the BBC. “We do not believe in homosexuality but that does not make us homophobic.”

Meanwhile, the protests outside Anderton Park school were led by another man with no children at the school (though he’d gone there as a child), a 32-year-old property developer called Shakeel Afsar. He got involved, he said, after his sister’s son brought home a book about a boy who wanted to dress up as a girl. His own daughter was sent to an Islamic school.

The 32-year-old spent weeks appearing outside Anderton Park with a microphone, chanting slogans alongside fellow campaigners such as: “Let kids be kids” and “Our kids, our choice”.

According to reports, Afsar had grown up in a heavily-politicised household. His father, Najib Afsar, was head of the Birmingham-based Jammu Kashmir Liberation Council (JKLC), and would regularly give talks and organise protests about the disputed region. Afsar senior called Ms Hewitt-Clarkson a “dictator” and said he was proud of his son.

With things hotting up, former CPS Chief Prosecutor, Nazir Afzal, a practising Muslim who’d successfully prosecuted so-called ‘grooming gangs’ in the north west, was brought in to mediate between parents and Anderton Park. But efforts broke down, leaving him furious with the protesters and claiming they were being manipulated.

“Stop this immediately. It is disgraceful,” he posted in a video. “You are grown men and a few women standing outside a primary school in a residential street shouting and chanting and screaming.”

What he found, he said, was “disturbing” and “frustrating” with “outside forces” at work, deliberately generating fear and confusion, including sharing false images of what was claimed to be being shown to very young children.

“People are presenting to parents false ideas that children are being shown books featuring gay sex, there’s talk of grooming, talk of wanting to ‘take our kids’. It is malicious,” he said.

“I have looked at the curriculum and studied the books used. The more I looked at it, the more I



Shakeel Afsar speaks to press regarding the High Court injunction imposed on protesting outside Anderton Park primary school. Photo: Vladimir Morozov

thought ‘what the hell are they playing at?’ There is nothing remotely sexual in the content. Then I realised something more was at work.”

‘OUTSIDE FORCES’

Things came to a head in late May last year.

On 20 May over 300 people gathered outside the school’s gates, demanding Ms Hewitt-Clarkson’s resignation. Hundreds of children were withdrawn from Anderton Park they claimed.

At the protest that day a controversial imam called Mullah Bahm appeared. He was filmed shouting: “There are paedophiles in there. Paedophiles in there. They are pushing a paedophile agenda.” As he shouted, he held up an image of a gingerbread man drawn with genitals.

Bahm claimed that gay people “want to take our children” and called for mass protests, saying there was a need to show “Muslims are not asleep”. His audience included young children, who heard him describe Ms Hewitt-Clarkson as “shatani” (devilish), saying: “That woman needs to be broken.”

Birmingham Labour MP, Jess Phillips, confronted Shakeel Afsar near the school, accusing him of damaging the reputation of Birmingham’s “peaceful and loving” Muslim community.

“It is hate preaching. The protest has to be stopped. I feel like everyone is pussyfooting around a load of

bigots. They shouldn’t be allowed anywhere near the schools. These are people with a religious extremist agenda. They are holding schools under siege.”

With the nation’s news cameras descending on the area and fears rocketing, it seemed the city council had heard the message. In June it obtained a temporary injunction banning the increasingly vocal protests.

By this point, 21 teachers had been treated for stress, many were in tears at a meeting organised between the council, head teachers and the Department for Education, local residents had reported “alarm” and “panic attacks”, while children had had to be taught with windows shut, and some parents – who didn’t agree with the protests – said they were “intimidated”.

As for Shakeel Afsar, at the later High Court hearing he tried to deny claims he’d given Mullah Bahm a platform for his views, saying he had never met the controversial imam. But he was filmed with Bahm at the protests, even holding his microphone and the gingerbread man illustration, despite telling the court he “did not realise what was on the paper”.

Acting for Birmingham City Council, Jonathan Manning QC said: “You are the elected spokesperson of the parents’ group, many of them as you say who don’t speak any English, and you know that suggesting this is being taught in classrooms ... is totally irresponsible and designed to do nothing but inflame concerned parents.”

WHO WAS TO BLAME?

Nazir Afzal says that the protesters actions were “disgraceful”.

And the protests certainly fed into far-right and Islamophobic memes about Muslims, with Ms Hewitt-Clarkson saying her school had been sent anti-Muslim and far-right material.

An anonymously-quoted Prevent official said they believed that both Islamist and far-right activists were using the protests “to foster division between communities”.

After the protests began in Birmingham, it’s also true that other schools across England received letters opposing similar classes, some from Christian parents and others Muslim.

The head teacher of a London primary school told BBC Newsnight that more than 100 children at her school had been withdrawn from similar classes as Parkfield and Anderton Park. She said the majority of parents who objected were Christians.

All this sparked MPs to demand further action. Fifty Labour MPs wrote to the-then Education Secretary, Damian Hinds, demanding the government make LGBT education a legal requirement rather than a recommendation.

An official probe by the Commission for Countering Extremism said it found evidence that the school protests were exploited by the Islamist group Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT) and other pro-Islamist organisations, in order to foster divisions against the LGBT+ community. The Government had been slow to react, it said.

The Commission also said that the spreading of information by a protest group called Stop RSE, in late 2018, about forthcoming statutory changes to relationships and sex education in 2020, was also a key trigger for the protests.

The leader of Stop RSE, Dr Kate Godfrey-Faussett, said on YouTube that the Government had a “totalitarian endeavour to indoctrinate our children in sexual ideologies”. She was another ‘guest speaker’ at the Anderton Park protests.

It seems quite possible that sensitivities over the Trojan Horse ‘scandal’ – into an alleged hardline “takeover” in Birmingham schools in 2014 (an accusation and finding which is hotly disputed by many Muslims) – *might* have played into the schools dispute, as might fears and antipathy generated by past controversies over the Government’s Prevent safeguarding programme.

According to one senior Muslim figure I spoke to, many traditional Muslim communities might not be “as open as they should be” when it comes to same-sex relationships.

They felt mistakes had been made in initially linking the No Outsiders project to Prevent – at least in people’s minds – by mentioning “deradicalisation” in some of the project’s original materials. Some of these materials were “very in your face”, they said, making them more difficult to deal with in a community context where around half of all Muslims were born outside the UK (and an even higher number for those aged over 40).

But, they said, “we should not be pandering to homophobes” either.

Another local Muslim believed there were issues with some of Andrew Moffat’s material. “There’s very little mention of racism, sexism, ageism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, disabilities, mental health issues in

the programme,” they claimed. “There needs to be a balance of all these to cover equality for all. The whole programme is promoted as an equality for all, but only talks about homosexuality in Andrew Moffat’s book.”

That does seem to reflect a view found in parts of the local Muslim community, and is one hotly disputed by figures such as Nazir Afzal, as well as the schools, council and clearly the courts. But it also reveals the perception gap which has opened between parents, local Muslims and the schools and wider education system – a dangerous gulf indeed.

LASTING HARM?

As for any lasting harm, the effects of the protests were certainly felt by teaching staff, some of who were told they would “burn in hell”, and many of whom had to receive additional support. It must have clearly caused confusion for some children, too, caught between opposing demands at home and school and having to run the gauntlet of protesters.

Andrew Moffat, the assistant head at Parkfield School who developed No Outsiders, went on to lead the Birmingham Pride march last year, but said that he had “never experienced homophobia like I have in the last six months”; at the end of last year Sarah Hewitt-Clarkson was named ‘Person of the Year’ by teachers’ magazine, the *TES*.

Ms Hewitt-Clarkson, however, said that Birmingham East – where her school is located – had seen a significant rise in homophobic hate crimes, rising from six to 26 incidents March 2018 vs March 2019 (West Midlands police figures). There was also a rise in attacks on Birmingham’s Muslim community around the same time, although on a smaller scale (22 incidents in March 2019 vs a monthly average of 10).

One interesting uptick from all this, according to a source I spoke to, is that they believed homeschooling *might* have increased in the Muslim communities around the schools – though cited no direct evidence for the claim.

And that perhaps speaks of the difficulty here, in the perception gaps which lie quite openly between all the parties here.

After November’s High Court ruling, Dr Tim O’Neill, director of education and skills at Birmingham City Council, admitted something of the sort, when he said: “There remains a gap between the reality of what is and isn’t being taught at the school.”

Then he echoed the words of Nazir Afzal and the Commission for Countering Extremism. “Protests of this kind only serve to attract fringe elements whose aim is to stoke division and hatred.”

Meanwhile, some Muslim LGBT+ activists have said they’ve been left fearful by these events. “The ruling is going to cause a lot of uproar and upset,” said Saima Razzaq, a Muslim LGBT+ activist and a member of the group Supporting Education of Equality and Diversity in Schools (Seeds).

“I don’t think [the ban] is going to be a solution to the issue. I do fear things are only going to get worse. The people who are protesting are not going to change their opinion overnight.”

Meanwhile, in a press conference following the verdict, the protesters said an appeal was “highly likely” and their campaign would go on with protests at the edge of the exclusion zone. And if that’s the case, then extremists of all shades will undoubtedly welcome them.

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