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Briefing Paper

**Mainstreaming hate:  
how the Right exploits  
the crisis to divide us**

BY LIZ FEKETE, LIAM SHRIVASTAVA and SOPHIA SIDDIQUI

## AN IRR BRIEFING PAPER

### Mainstreaming hate: how the Right exploits the crisis to divide us

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**This briefing paper asks if it makes sense any more to isolate the far Right from a reconfigured, identitarian and traditionalist hard Right. It attempts to do so by providing a detailed but easily accessible account of how far-right ideas have already passed into the mainstream and what we can do to push back against them.**

## I Introduction

Five-and-a-half decades ago Enoch Powell MP was dismissed from the Tory shadow cabinet for saying morally, socially and politically unacceptable things about immigration and ‘alien hordes’ ‘taking over’ the country in the most lurid, inciteful language.<sup>1</sup> On 3 October 2023 the then home secretary and would-be next Tory leader Suella Braverman was warmly received at Conference for decrying a ‘hurricane of mass immigration’, calling the Human Rights Act the ‘Criminal Rights Act’, and that she stood with ‘the hard-working commonsense majority against the few ...the privileged woke minority, with their luxury beliefs’, which included saying that a man can be a woman.<sup>2</sup> She was, she said (as did supposed ‘Tory tribune’ Powell) telling the ‘unvarnished truth about what is happening in our country’ and she was not squeamish about being smeared ‘as racist’. Every far-right idea or trope found its way into her bilious rant – foreign prisoners, who should be ‘booted out’; grooming gangs, who should be tracked down; the police who had to be allowed to catch criminals; gender ideology, vagrants, white privilege, anti-British history, political correctness – all the obsessions of the far Right – got an honourable mention.

### How did we come to this?

In recent years, there has been a ‘cultural revolution from the Right’, with what were once considered extremist ideas travelling into the heart of Britain’s political culture at a time when the state itself has become more authoritarian on a range of issues. Nativist, racist and bigoted views are now being defended in parliament in the name of free speech. Aggressive protests outside asylum accommodation are commonplace, and [abortion clinics](#), Drag Story Hour events and cultural installations celebrating the contribution of the Black British community, have also been targeted. In the pages of mainstream newspapers, influential hard-right cultural commentators use their privileged access to the media to wage ‘a war against woke’, mobilising conspiracy ‘theories’, ridiculing those who campaign against structural racism as perpetuating ‘woke myths’, whilst also claiming to speak for the working class by which they mean white and native workers.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> It recently emerged that Susan Hall, the Conservative candidate for London mayor, had previously liked tweets praising Enoch Powell. Walker, P (2023), ‘Tory London mayor candidate liked tweets praising Enoch Powell’. *Guardian*, 15 September 2023. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2023/sep/15/conservative-london-mayor-candidate-susan-hall-liked-tweets-praising-enoch-powell>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ukpol.co.uk/suella-braverman-2023-speech-to-conservative-party-conference/>

<sup>3</sup> Davies, H and MacRae, S, ‘An Anatomy of the British war on woke’, *Race & Class*, 65/2, October 2023.

Make no mistake, neo-Nazi organisations and networks are preparing for race war, as evidenced by the number of far-right activists now imprisoned for terrorist offences.<sup>4</sup> But in light of this much wider cultural shift, we need to ask whether the old tactics of establishing a *cordon sanitaire* around violent, white nationalist or neo-Nazi groupings and parties, that ‘shall not pass’ are enough to preserve the health of our democracy. Does it make any sense anymore to isolate the far Right from a reconfigured, identitarian and traditionalist hard Right, or to talk of the need for a basic broad front against Nazism?

## II Context

### Authoritarianism and neoliberalism

Political culture is shaped by economic and legal norms. Today, the authoritarian drift in society is exemplified by a raft of new laws – such as the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act, Public Order Act, Judicial Review and Courts Act, National Security Act, Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act and Illegal Migration Act – all introduced since the re-election of the Conservative government.<sup>5</sup> These are the culmination of decades of neoliberal economic policies, that have dis-invested from communities, dramatically widening the gap between rich and poor and entrenching inequality which has also been racialised.<sup>6</sup> There is a very real sense today, especially with the cost of living crisis, that the fabric of our society has been stretched to its limit. The human geographer Danny Dorling describes Britain as a ‘divided’ and ‘shattered’ nation, on course to disintegrate politically, with the union ‘slowly splintering, like the empire before it’.<sup>7</sup>

### Alliances and right fight back

This has not gone unchallenged, with issues of race, gender, class and discrimination against LGBTQ+ people, as well as to save the environment and defend workers’ rights, increasingly being linked together by community organisations, social movements and trade unions. In response, the hard Right (*for usage of terms see page 18*) has orchestrated a vicious and divisive campaign against ‘woke’ issues. In educational settings, the underachievement of white working-class boys is now blamed on a ‘national conversation’ which ‘had become much more consumed with other groups’ which, in turn, led to a lack of ‘self-esteem’ in white working-class families who suffered from ‘status deficit’.<sup>8</sup>

Today’s hard Right encompasses the rebellion within Conservatism that now links itself to US politics, through Conservative Political Action Conference and NatCon, new electoral vehicles like Laurence Fox’s Reclaim Party, media outlets like GB News and Talk TV, conservative think-tanks like Policy Exchange and associated academics who provide a

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<sup>4</sup> Bentham, M. (2023) ‘Far-Right convicts soar in new sign of rising threat posed by neo-Nazi extremism’, *Evening Standard*, 8 June 2023. Available at: < [Far-Right convicts soar in new sign of rising extremism threat | Evening Standard](#)>

<sup>5</sup> Webber, F (2023). ‘Britannia Enchained’. IRR News Service, 10 February 2023. Available at: <https://irr.org.uk/article/britannia-enchained/>

<sup>6</sup> See [BME statistics on poverty](#), Institute of Race Relations, 2023

<sup>7</sup> Dorling, D. *Shattered Nation: Inequality and the geography of a failing state*, Verso, 2023.

<sup>8</sup> Weale, S. (2020). White working-class children suffering due to ‘status deficit’, MPs told’. *Guardian*, 13 October 2020). Available at:

<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2020/oct/13/white-working-class-pupils-suffering-due-to-status-deficit-mps-told>

quasi-intellectual veneer. And it also draws support from the mainstream press, with the *Daily Mail*, the *Daily Express* and *The Sun*'s coverage of migration issues, particularly during the government's 'Stop the Boats' campaign inspiring increased far-right activity.<sup>9</sup>

### Conspiracy theories<sup>10</sup>

Racist rhetoric associated with 1960s and '70s, when the British Conservative MP Enoch Powell talked about 'alien hordes' and 'aggressive minorities' gaining the 'whip hand' over white people, is being revitalised, this time under the banner of the Great Replacement conspiracy theory which holds that white European populations are being deliberately replaced, particularly by Muslim populations, and are at risk of being wiped out through changing demographics due to migration, miscegenation or violence.

As a general election looms, the Right has become adept at using social media to spread conspiracy theories like the Great Replacement as well as disinformation, around climate change, Covid 19, Low Traffic Neighbourhoods, '15-minute city' planning and so on. The latest manifestation of this is the social media campaign against London's low emission zone (ULEZ) which pushes the Islamophobic theory that the mayor plans to 'exempt Muslims' and other 'minority religions' from the charge, leading to a marked uptick in racist social media messages, referencing ULEZ, sent to London mayor Sadiq Khan.<sup>11</sup>

### Labour and far-right influence

Some may look to the next election to resolve these issues, in the hope that the return of a Labour government will disappear the problem of the far Right on our streets. History, though, teaches us otherwise. The National Front, which had formed the NF Trades Unionists Association and was appealing directly to the white working class, won its largest ever vote in the mid-1970s when Labour was in power, at one time rising to the fourth largest party in the polls. The NF's decline came with Margaret Thatcher's notorious 1978 interview in which she stole the NF's clothes by saying that the British people were worried that 'this country might be rather swamped by people of a different culture'. She went on to beat Labour in the 1979 election.

Now, after three decades of neoliberalism and austerity, there are signs of systemic collapse, with our most important institutions beset by scandal after scandal. This ranges from the relentless exposure of racist, homophobic and misogynistic WhatsApp groups in police forces up and down the country, to the failure of NHS leadership to act on the concerns of its staff, as seen by the Lucy Letby scandal, or the Grenfell Tower Inquiry's condemnation of the state of our public and private sector. All of this can be linked to the fact that the UK now has [one of the highest levels of income inequality in Europe](#). The problem of fascism and authoritarianism is not confined to culture wars and the politics of division and hate.

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<sup>9</sup> Stoking the Flames: The influence of press and government rhetoric on far-right anti-migrant engagement, Hope Not Hate, 21 May 2023. Available at: <[https://hopenothate.org.uk/2023/05/21/stoking\\_the\\_flames/](https://hopenothate.org.uk/2023/05/21/stoking_the_flames/)>

<sup>10</sup> As Naomi Klein has recently observed it would be more correct to use the term conspiracy culture because it really is conspiracy without a theory; i.e., 'throwing a lot of stuff at the wall, seeing what sticks'. See Klein, N. *Doppelganger: a trip into the mirror world*, London, Allen Lane, 2023.

<sup>11</sup> Walker, P (2023), 'False claims in tweets about Ulez plans cause concern at London mayor's office'. Guardian, 1 August 2023. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2023/aug/01/fake-tweets-about-ulez-plans-cause-alarm-at-london-mayor-office-sadiq-khan>

Culture wars are a good way of diverting [people](#) from the kind of progressive politics needed to heal society and bring people together. Furthermore, the ‘war on woke’ is deliberately crafted by the hard Right to wrong-foot Labour which it portrays as the party of both a woke elite and technocratic state interference.<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately, the Labour opposition, to date, has not countered these slurs. Such silence can legitimise racism. And criticism of Labour is mounting, as it avoids speaking out to defend targets of far-right culture wars, like the Windrush lawyer, Jacqueline McKenzie, the football commentator Gary Lineker, asylum seekers living in hostels and targeted by the likes of Patriotic Alternative, or trans people targeted by hateful acts.

### III What can far-right activism look like today?

Whilst this briefing paper focuses on the UK, we should also pay close attention to the similarities in far-right organising in neighbouring Ireland, scene of a far-right ‘riot’ in November 2023 during which anti-immigrant protesters, some carrying ‘White Lives Matter’ placards, battled with police, torching vehicles and looting shops. Prior to that, on 20 September 2023, also in Dublin, around 200 people gathered near Leinster House, the Irish parliament, to protest against the government. Parliamentary estates are often the sites of demonstrations for a range of causes and campaigns across the political spectrum. But this was not a peaceful protest. Politicians, their aides and journalists were threatened. People walking to work were racially abused. Two women had urine thrown at them and a number of high-profile legislators, including the Sinn Féin leader Mary Lou McDonald were trapped in a car park. Most unsettling was the erection of a set of mock gallows covered with portraits of prominent Irish politicians. What brought 200 hundred people to undertake such a violent, hateful and as the Irish Deputy Prime-Minister put it, ‘fascist-like’ protest? Organisers called it ‘Call to the Dáil’, ostensibly in protest against the government’s protracted hate speech bill. But a number of other issues featured in speeches and on placards and leaflets handed out during the day: against housing asylum seekers; concerns over sex education and ‘gender ideology’ in schools; covid-19 and vaccines; ‘globalism’ and the World Economic Forum. In attendance were a [number of prominent far-right activists](#) and conspiracy theorists including Derek Blighe of the anti-immigration party Ireland First and the disgraced former journalist Gemma O’Doherty, who [was sued](#) by a grieving mother for suggesting the suicide of her son was due to the covid-19 vaccine. Another attendee was former soldier Mike Connell, who has shared Facebook and Youtube posts depicting the murder of politicians. As they passed through the gates of the Oireachtas campus, politicians and their staff were pushed, harangued and called ‘traitors’.

#### A narrative of betrayal

In this hatred towards elected officials, the judiciary and anyone deemed to represent ‘the elite’, campaigners in Ireland saw a parallel with the post-Brexit climate in the UK and the murder of the British MP Jo Cox. When Cox’s far-right murderer appeared in court after stabbing and shooting her days before the EU referendum in 2016, he gave his name as ‘death to traitors, freedom for Britain’. The anti-immigration tenor of much of the Leave campaign, combined with austerity, falling wages and living standards has reinvigorated a politics of scarcity, fear of the other and deep anxieties over an increasingly globalised, dislocated and financialised economic system that is failing to deliver decent housing, jobs and education. Much like Europe in the 1920s, the reactionary Right has stepped forward to take advantage

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<sup>12</sup> Davies, H. and MacRae, S, ‘The anatomy of the war on woke’.

of this perma-crisis, scapegoating migrants, racial and sexual minorities whilst advancing a betrayal narrative, not just against politicians; against teachers, ‘lefty lawyers’, charities, local councils, the ‘Marxist’ Black Lives Matter movement and ‘Remainers’.

## Disinformation in a digital world

The fallout from both the Brexit vote and the pandemic has toxified our political culture. There are now dividing lines that go beyond leave versus remain: from lockdown scepticism, anti-vax and ‘world government’ conspiracies to resistance against clean air and net zero initiatives to demonstrations against asylum seekers’ hotels, drag artists reading to children and virulent hostility in private messaging boards and on social media, to pro-Palestinian<sup>13</sup> and Black Lives Matter activists and feminists, with the threat posed to women by incel subculture becoming more publicly obvious following a shooting rampage in Plymouth in 2022.<sup>14</sup> The individuals that coalesce around these causes may not share a homogenous world view or come from the same (or any) political tradition. Some may have previously identified as being on the Left, with a strain of anti-vax thought connected to the wellness industry and alternative medicine, as often publicised in conspiracy newspaper and website [The Light](#). This convergence is what Quinn Slobodian and William Callison have called ‘[diagonalism](#)’, where individuals ‘contest conventional monikers of Left and Right (while generally arcing toward far-right beliefs)’.<sup>15</sup> What connects these burgeoning movements is a politics of reaction. In a digital world, where information and events move swiftly, but disinformation flows just as freely, chaos and confusion has created the perfect conditions for the far Right to flourish. Whilst covid-19 lockdowns may never return, the mass movements and online networks against coronavirus measures across the globe have left a legacy of growing extremism.

## The radicalising of anxieties

This often emotional response to real or imagined crises is discussed in Robert Topinka’s report ‘[“post-pandemic” politics and reactionary digital cultures](#)’. It shows how right-wing extremists have successfully tapped into the anxieties of these online audiences with radicalising effects. Within the context of the worst cost-of-living crisis in decades, amidst rising homelessness and in-work poverty, it is unsurprising that mobilisations against accommodation housing asylum seekers have gained traction across the UK. From [Ireland to Knowsley](#), the far Right has targeted areas facing acute housing shortages and high levels of deprivation, circulating myths and misleading online videos that position migrants as a threat to women and girls. We see similar tactics with protests by ‘concerned parents’ against LGBTQ+ inclusive education and drag story hour events, with false claims that this is ‘sexualising children’ by stealth and a resort to arguments associated with biological fundamentalism. With increasing distrust of institutions and ‘mainstream media’, countering these narratives is far from straightforward. Take the example of the misogynist influencer

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<sup>13</sup> In the run-up to the London Armistice Day national demonstration calling for a Gaza ceasefire, [Hope Not Hate](#) reports that far-right WhatsApp groups were awash with extreme racism, with some fascists threatening to use crowbars and other weapons against pro-Palestinian demonstrators. A [media investigation](#) also revealed that a private messaging board Discord, was set up by the ‘British Defence League’ filled with Islamophobic content.

<sup>14</sup> Dearden, L. (2023) ‘Emerging Threat’: Rising number of suspected Incels referred to UK counter-terror police’. *Independent*, 26 January 2022. Available at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/incels-terror-shootings-prevent-plymouth-b2269736.html>

<sup>15</sup> Callison, W. & Slobodian, Q. *Coronapoltics from the Reichstag to the Capitol*. (2021) <https://www.bostonreview.net/articles/quinn-slobodian-toxic-politics-coronakspeticism/>

and alleged human trafficker Andrew Tate. After Tate was banned from video blogging platform TikTok for his extreme content, posts containing his hashtag increased from 12 billion to 18.2 billion between August and October 2022.<sup>16</sup>

It is in this context of misinformation and acute economic downturn that understandable anxieties or simply confusion and a lack of information on a particular issue can end up as a gateway to more extreme, overtly far-right attitudes.

### Official influencing

Former Home Secretary Suella Braverman, a qualified lawyer, has done more than most to mainstream far-right narratives, describing those seeking sanctuary as an ‘invasion’, ridiculing police officers for taking the knee during BLM protests, decrying ‘woke rubbish’, encouraging moral panics over [‘trans ideology’](#) and solidarity with Palestine, even suggesting that LGBTQ+ people seeking asylum from persecution are [unworthy of protection](#).<sup>17</sup> Legislation and policy have only added further legitimacy to the far Right, with the Illegal Migration Act, increases to the Immigration Health Surcharge, acting as a nod to ‘Britons first’ narratives.

Both mainstream and populist media have also intensified the politics of reaction. Hope Not Hate finds that as mainstream media coverage of migration and asylum issues increases, articles from these newspapers are shared on Telegram, often alongside extreme racist language. Following the ‘shock-jock’ tactics of Fox News in the US, TV stations such as GB News amplify and broaden the reach of far-right protests, as their anchors argue that [‘asylum seeker hotels are disproportionately affecting the working-class’](#).

## IV Moving into the mainstream

Recognising far-right inroads for the deceitful and divisive campaigns they are can be hard to do since they can focus on areas where there are genuine concerns such as over jobs, benefits, housing. And they utilise seemingly commonsense slogans to then push emotional buttons about ‘us’ and ‘them’, the national as opposed to the international, individual advancement as opposed to social solidarity. What is significant is the way that such far-right ideas are rapidly being incorporated into the mainstream of society, law, politics, public discourse and ‘learning’.

We look now at some of the ways that far-right (including the extreme Right and the so-called Alternative Right)<sup>18</sup> slogans and demands have travelled from the margins to the

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<sup>16</sup> Topinka, R. (2022) *'Post-Pandemic' Politics & Reactionary Digital Cultures: How Covid Scepticism Fuels Extremism Online*.

<sup>17</sup> Taylor, D. (2023). ‘Suella Braverman accused of breaching barristers’ code over racist language’, *Guardian*, 14 May 2023. Available at: <[Suella Braverman accused of breaching barristers’ code over ‘racist’ language | Suella Braverman | The Guardian](#)>

<sup>18</sup> Hope Not Hate argues that given the complexities and confusions over terms like ‘alt-right’, ‘alt-light’ and New Right, it is more useful to refer to these seemingly new movements as the Alternative Right, an international movement ‘whose core belief is that “white identity” is under attack from pro-multicultural and liberal elites’. See Hope Not Hate, ‘The International Alternative Right: From Charlottesville to the White House’, September 2017.

centre, particularly on issues of immigration.<sup>19</sup> This is not a straightforward journey in that racist ideas are usually translated into a new vernacular before attaching themselves to mainstream discourse. There is a difference between the ways a member of Patriotic Alternative and a hard-right politician or cultural commentator or an Alt-Right influencer expresses themselves. However, this does not mean that these ideas live in separate boxes. When we study the ways, sometimes nuanced, in which vocabulary shifts we can see the process of repackaging far-right ideas to pass from the ‘lunatic’ fringe to the centre of respectable discourse. (And we have to take account of the way that today’s slogans can be iterations of past extremist campaigns, too.)

The relationship between fringe and mainstream is now clearly a symbiotic one. The organisation Hope Not Hate has tracked the link between the media and government’s rhetoric against migrants and the rise in far-right engagement around migration, revealing an increase of 102% in far-right anti-migrant activity in 2022.<sup>20</sup>

But to stop the far-right drift means not reinforcing it by accepting given frameworks or repeating its tropes. The Labour Party shadow frontbench has dismally failed in this respect, particularly when it comes to discussions on asylum seekers. Labour follows the logic of the hard Right (‘Stop the Boats’) when the shadow home secretary [responds](#) to the Illegal Migration Bill by telling the media that ‘a Labour government will aim to stop all small boat crossings’ and Sir Keir Starmer [says](#) people facilitating the crossings should be ‘treated in the same way that we treat terrorists’. The Labour leader was also criticised for failing to call out the racism of a caller, identifying as ‘white British female’, to a radio phone-in who drew on the Great Replacement conspiracy theory, the inherent tropes of which Starmer was seemingly unaware of.<sup>21</sup>

## Issues and slogans

### *‘British Jobs for British Workers’/‘Our own people first’*

Those with long memories will remember the slogan ‘British Jobs for British Workers’ from British National Party and National Front pamphlets in the 1970s. In fact, it was continental Europe’s electoral far-right parties, like Jean Marie Le Pen’s National Front in France, and Jörg Haider’s Freedom Party in Austria, which first made this nativist slogan respectable.<sup>22</sup> They campaigned in the early 1990s for an exclusive cultural identity and national preference in immigration, employment, housing and social security provisions, leading to electoral breakthroughs in local, regional and national governments. Regrettably, the slogan ‘British Jobs for British Workers’ was mainstreamed by Chancellor Gordon Brown in a speech given three weeks before he became prime minister in 2007<sup>23</sup>. The slogan was then in 2009 on banners used by refinery and power workers during unofficial strikes over UK construction jobs being awarded to European workers.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> There is of course a longer history of this. See, Ali, N. *The violence of Britishness: racism, borders and the conditions of citizenship*. Pluto, 2023.

<sup>20</sup> Hope Not Hate, *Stoking the Flames*, 2023

<sup>21</sup> Taylor, D. (2023). ‘Kier Starmer under fire for failing to challenge radio caller’s racism’. *Guardian*, 14 December 2020. Available at: <<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2020/dec/14/keir-starmer-under-fire-failing-challenge-radio-caller-racism>>

<sup>22</sup> See Fekete, L, *Europe’s Fault Lines: racism and the rise of the Right* (London, Verso 2018)

<sup>23</sup> ‘Gordon Brown’s speech in full’, available at: <[http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk\\_politics/7010664.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/7010664.stm)>

<sup>24</sup> ‘Brown stands by British jobs for British workers remark’, *Guardian*, 30 January 2009. Available at: <<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2009/jan/30/brown-british-jobs-workers>>



Since then, nativist arguments about immigrants needing to be stopped from stealing ‘our jobs’ and taking advantage of ‘our system’ have meant the increasingly strict enforcement of policies such as the ‘No Recourse to Public Funds’ condition and hospital charges for undocumented migrants, and visa fees set at ‘commercial’ levels, which the Conservatives have recently increased by up to 35% to fund public sector pay increases. The Immigration Health Surcharge (paid by international workers to access the NHS) was also increased by 66% from £624 to £1,035 per year.

### *‘White Lives Matter’/‘All Lives Matter’*

The slogans ‘White Lives Matter’ and ‘All Lives Matter’ emerged in the US as a riposte to the renewed activism of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement after the police killing of George Floyd. After a surge of popular support for BLM, expressed particularly by sportspeople who took the knee, the reactionary slogans travelled to the UK. In 2020 a [Burnley football fan lost his job](#) at the aerospace manufacture Paradigm Precision after unveiling a giant White Lives Matter banner at a premier league fixture with Manchester City. And in 2021 [Patriotic Alternative scaled Ben Nevis](#) in Scotland and erected a giant White Lives Matter at its top. Such protests echo the ‘Rights for Whites’ far-right slogan of the 1990s that led to an electoral breakthrough for the British National Party (BNP), with Derek Beackon winning a by-election in the working-class Millwall ward of Tower Hamlets.

Perhaps most disturbing, is the rehashing of White Lives Matter themes in numerous private police WhatsApp groups that over the last year or so have been exposed for their racist, sexist and homophobic content, leading to gross misconduct hearings and dismissals. It is noteworthy that the Metropolitan police chief Sir Mark Rowley recently banned officers from wearing the Thin Blue Line badge, which, in the US, is firmly associated with white nationalism.<sup>25</sup> Significant, too, is the fact that Suella Braverman questioned Rowley’s decision and herself used the phrase ‘Thin Blue Line’ to show her support for the police in her 2023 Conference speech.<sup>26</sup>

### *Welcoming the Alternative Right*

The far Right’s whiteness agenda cloaks an unspoken appeal to white supremacy. But to obfuscate the racism in that message, it goes through a respectability mangle, to emerge as the defence of white cultural identity from ‘state-imposed multiculturalism’ and ‘woke causes’ that, alongside anti-discrimination laws and ‘unlimited immigration’, discriminate against the cultural rights of the white majority, violate meritocracy and disadvantage white people. Here it’s hard to spot any difference between the far-right worldview and the international identitarian movement (Alternative Right) whose core belief is that white identity is under attack from pro-multicultural and liberal elites. Such beliefs have been cited as inspiration in the manifestos of extremist mass killers at Christchurch (2019), Buffalo (2022), El Paso (2019), Bratislava (2022) etc.

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<sup>25</sup> Fekete, L. ‘Racism, radicalisation and Europe’s “Thin Blue Line”’. *Race & Class*, Volume 64, Number 1, July-September 2022.

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-12257231/Suella-Braverman-demands-know-Met-banned-officers-wearing-Blue-Line-badge.html> and <https://www.ukpol.co.uk/suella-braverman-2023-speech-to-conservative-party-conference/>

International vehicles for the repackaging of Alternative Right ideas are the US Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) and the National Conservatism Conference (NatCon) which met in Budapest and London in Summer 2023. Nigel Farage, former leader of the United Kingdom Independence Party and then the Brexit Party, has spoken more than once at the US CPAC – a group which has aligned itself with anti-woke causes as well as the Great Replacement theory. Appearing on a panel at a CPAC event in February 2024, alongside former prime minister Liz Truss, Farage declared that ‘radical Islam is becoming mainstream in British politics and predicted that ‘by the 2029 general election, we will have a radical Islamist party represented in Westminster’.

### *Demographic threat*

The National Conservatism (NatCon) conference set up by the Washington-based Edmund Burke Foundation, which met in London in May 2023, substitutes Christian nationalism for white nationalism. While never openly supporting the Great Replacement Theory, it remoulds it in a quasi-scientific language and threat scenarios around population movements. And in emphasising the ‘demographic threat’, it plays to what Sophia Siddiqui describes as the ‘birth-rate agenda’<sup>27</sup> which provides a space for anti-immigrant, demographic and ideologically anti-feminist agendas to converge.

It is significant that amongst attendants at the NatCon Conference were Conservative ministers Suella Braverman and Michael Gove, and MPs Jacob Rees-Mogg, Danny Kruger, and Miriam Cates. Cates is an evangelical Christian who argues that the biggest threat to our society comes from the ‘liberal individualism that has failed to deliver’ babies, with the solution being to ‘reduce immigration and build more homes’ in order to support ‘family formation’.<sup>28</sup> Danny Kruger and Miriam Cates, co-founders of the New Social Covenant Unit, recently launched the New Conservatives, a pressure group of Red Wall Conservative MPs campaigning for a dramatic reduction in immigration. In this way, Cates and Kruger follow the logic of Policy Exchange’s senior fellow, the sociologist, Matthew Goodwin, another participant at NatCon, who argues that immigration and ‘higher fertility rates’ amongst migrants are ‘the main driver of population growth’ and pose a threat to indigenous democratic and cultural security.<sup>29</sup> Goodwin was recently appointed as a commissioner of the Social Mobility Commission which has a remit ‘to challenge employers, the professions, universities and schools to promote social mobility’.<sup>30</sup> In addition, Cates, who opposes the protection of women entering abortion clinics from abusive protests, mirrors far-right proponents of the Great Replacement, who blame global elites and feminism for aiding replacement through increased abortion rights and [access to contraception](#).

The individuals and organisations that came together under the NatCon banner cannot be considered fringe. They have had a significant impact on government policies such as the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act, which creates a fertile environment for bigoted

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<sup>27</sup> See Siddiqui, S. ‘Racing the nation: towards a theory of reproductive racism’, *Race & Class*, 63/2, October 2021

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.miriamcates.org.uk/news/our-declining-birth-rate>

<sup>29</sup> Edgar, D. ‘National Conservatism: gateway to the far Right’, Searchlight, 22 July 2023, available at: <https://www.searchlightmagazine.com/2023/07/gateway-to-the-far-right/>

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/social-mobility-commission/about>

ideas to pass into the mainstream under the guise of ‘viewpoint diversity’.<sup>31</sup> This is part of a wider ‘anti-equalities agenda’, supported by the Conservative minister Kemi Badenoch, the former home secretary Suella Braverman and former prime minister Liz Truss, that uses the ‘war on woke’ to press for changes to the Equality Act and other laws meant to protect vulnerable minorities from racism, homophobia and transphobia.<sup>32</sup> Liz Truss’s new ‘Popular Conservatism Movement, launched in February 2024, with Jacob Rees-Mogg, Priti Patel and Nigel Farage in attendance, is another step in this direction.

Some could even be driving forward a ‘set of ideas’ that could allow for legislation in favour of white nationalism. For example, Eric Kaufmann, a senior fellow at Policy Exchange, has argued for ‘racial self-interest’ to be considered a legitimate point of view which could be factored into policymaking decisions.<sup>33</sup> (The specious argument about racial self-interest not being racism could play on socially conservative views amongst working-class people, in relation to racial and sexual minorities and amongst trade unionists who may be ill-informed about what they could perceive as non-class-based politics of identity.)

*Stop ‘Benefit broods’ / ‘Our human stock is threatened’*

Following the Nazi Holocaust, it is no longer acceptable to argue that some peoples are inferior to others, that the ‘hereditary intelligence’ of the ‘well-bred’ needs to be protected from the ‘feeble-mindedness’ or the ‘racial impurities’ of the masses. But within Thatcher’s Conservatives of the 1980s such a view was aired by Thatcher’s mentor Sir Keith Joseph who in a notorious [speech](#) claimed that ‘our human stock is threatened’ by the high proportion of births to ‘mothers least fitted to bring children into the world’, in social classes 4 and 5. Echoes of Joseph’s views, criticised at the time for harking back to the 19<sup>th</sup>- century eugenicist movement, were evident in the run-up to the introduction in 2017 by the Tories of the two-child limit for child benefit, with the media carrying stories on ‘benefit broods’, demanding that something be done to ensure that parents make decisions on whether or not to have children based on what they could afford. Labour says it will [keep](#) the two-child benefit cap, which is widely seen as a generator of child poverty, and discriminatory, particularly against Muslim families.

The control of certain women’s capacity to have and care for children is today a key tactic of both the far Right and the hard Right which see it as women’s duty to carry out the reproductive labour that strengthens and purifies the nation. But those who are deemed undesirable – which here includes those on welfare – have their rights restricted. The 2-child benefit policy can be seen as one aimed to control fertility and reduce the number and size of ‘undesirable’ families who are seen as unproductive and a burden on the welfare state.

*‘Breaking Point’ / ‘We will not be replaced’ / ‘Stop the Boats’*

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<sup>31</sup> Fekete, L & Shrivastava, L. ‘The government is crying crocodile tears over free speech on campus’, *Byline Times*, 19 August 2021. Available at: < <https://bylinetimes.com/2021/08/19/the-government-is-crying-crocodile-tears-over-free-speech-on-campuses/>>

<sup>32</sup> Liz Truss, ‘Fight for fairness’ speech sets out government’s new approach to equality’, 17 December 2020. Available at: < <https://www.fenews.co.uk/fe-voices/press-release-fight-for-fairness-speech-to-set-out-governments-new-approach-to-equality/>>; <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/apr/04/kemi-badenoch-could-rewrite-law-to-allow-trans-exclusion-from-single-sex-spaces>; <https://www.suellabraverman.co.uk/news/suella-delivers-speech-equalities-and-human-rights>

<sup>33</sup> See p60 of <https://policyexchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Racial-Self-Interest-is-not-Racism-FINAL-1.pdf>)

The unveiling of Nigel Farage's June 2016 EU referendum poster of a queue of migrants and refugees with the slogan 'Breaking point: the EU has failed us all' was, hours later, followed by the murder of the Labour MP Jo Cox by a white supremacist who repeatedly shouted 'Britain First' as he shot and stabbed the pro-refugee MP. The subliminal message of UKIP's poster is clearly that Britain is being overrun by immigrants. The failure to take action against UKIP's incendiary poster, despite a complaint by Unison to the police that it incited racial hatred, has emboldened the far Right to amplify the Breaking Point message. Today, Patriotic Alternative leaflets handed out at anti-asylum protests say 'Stop the Invasion: We will not be replaced' and a banner drop at a summer camp in the Peak district declared 'We will not be replaced' 'White Lives Matter' and 'White British Minority by 2066'.

One of the first pieces of legislation proposed by Rishi Sunak as prime minister was the Illegal Migration Bill. It was quickly sold in the media as the Conservatives' 'Stop the Boats' bill, with Home Secretary Suella Braverman, a day after a far-right attack on a migrant centre in Dover, calling for an end to the 'invasion of the south coast'. The embracing of the far Right's 'kick them out' message is also reflected in the government's proposal to deport asylum seekers to Rwanda or the Ascension Island in the South Atlantic. Suella Braverman's sacking and the Supreme Court's ruling that asylum seekers could not be sent to Rwanda, both in November 2023, have not diminished the far Right's influence. In early December the government put forward legislation which would force judges to find Rwanda safe and would allow ministers to override orders from the European Court of Human Rights - but the Right of the party wants to see the UK outside the European human rights convention altogether.

Notably, the Labour party, has not intervened in any meaningful way to stop the passing of far-right ideas on immigrants into the mainstream. It could of course challenge the narrative by saying quite clearly that it is not immigrants but spending cuts that puts pressure on public services. Instead, it goes along with the dominant narrative and focuses on getting the numbers down, presenting itself as the efficient manager that can bring order to the Tories' asylum chaos. For example, shadow home secretary Yvette Cooper responded to the Conservatives' Small Boats Week by attacking the Conservatives for their failure to get the numbers down. She [complained](#) that only 23 of 24,000 'inadmissibles' were actually removed. Despite widespread condemnation by trade unions and the intervention of the Fire Brigades Union around the Bibby Stockholm ship, in Portland, Dorset, the Labour shadow minister for immigration [Stephen Kinnock has said](#) that the party will temporarily continue to use barges, as well as military camps, for the detention of [irregular](#) arrivals until the asylum backlog is down. He claims that the Labour party has no choice 'given the mess we have inherited'. Labour was [criticised](#) for its failure to join other political parties in promptly condemning Conservative deputy chair Lee Anderson when he said (in reference to opposition to the Bibby Stockholm), 'If they don't like it they can fuck off back to France'.

*'It's political correctness gone mad' / 'they're turning a blind eye out of fear of being called a racist'*

Also in discussions around 'British Pakistani grooming gangs', an issue exploited by the English Defence League for over a decade, there has been little difference between the positions adopted by the mainstream parties and barely any concern about how the racialisation of sex crimes plays out on the streets, despite the fact that Muslim communities in northern towns have been systematically targeted in provocative far-right and so-called 'counter-jihadi' incursions which have included Britain First and the English Defence League, with Muslim communities, in the face of police indifference, having to defend

themselves, leading to the notorious case of the Rotherham 12.<sup>34</sup> After the British prime minister said grooming gangs are hard to prosecute due to ‘political correctness’ (and that ethnicity data will be handed over to police to assist with investigations), the Labour party responded by publishing an advert which claimed that Rishi Sunak, who is of South Asian heritage, does not support jailing child sex abusers –thus playing into racist stereotypes. In response to uproar about the racialised connotations of the advert, Labour’s leadership dug in, with justifications ranging from it’s just a part of the ‘cut and thrust nature of politics’ (Lucy Powell), to those who say it’s racist are wrong (Emily Thornberry), and we shouldn’t be ‘squeamish’ because ‘being blunt’ about crime is necessary (Sir Keir Starmer).

Today, the Muslim grooming gang narrative and the moral panic around the migrant ‘invasion’, are fuelling attacks on asylum housing in the UK and Ireland. Such moral panics draw connections between the presence of Muslims or asylum seekers and acts of sexual violence against (white) women. Such narratives are used by the far Right to gain footholds in communities, by feeding off anxieties about crime, economic insecurity, housing shortages and diminishing healthcare. When home secretary Suella Braverman announced a consultation on child sexual abuse, she added fuel to the fire by accusing professionals of turning a ‘blind eye’ out of fear of ‘being called racist’.

### Ramping up the rhetoric

Whilst it was Priti Patel and Boris Johnson who first mooted the Rwanda policy, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and especially Suella Braverman are now in the business of mainstreaming far-right concepts and ideologies in the UK (as at the Tory Conference on 3 October 2023) and abroad. On 26 September 2023, Braverman was in Washington DC giving a speech that questioned whether the refugee convention was ‘fit for our modern world’ and spoke of the ‘misguided dogma of multiculturalism’. She also spoke of the ‘high birth rate’ among ‘foreign-born mothers’, which would add pressure on school places – a clear gesture towards the Great Replacement theory. This birth rate anxiety featured heavily at the National Conservatism conference in London in May 2023. Braverman’s rhetoric was then condemned by the UN. The leader of Patriotic Alternative Mark Collet responded to the speech, ‘we should capitalise on this... and steer the national conversation’. One user on Tommy Robinson’s Official Telegram Chat wrote of the Home Secretary, ‘I can see her standing for PM’. The right-wing media hailed Braverman as a new ‘international superstar of the right’.

The naked ambition of Braverman for the Tory leadership is well known. Since being sacked as home secretary in November 2023, over an article accusing the Metropolitan police of bias over pro-Palestinian protests, she has been championed by the likes of the [Telegraph](#). Less well-known, though is the role of her political mentor, Sir John Hayes MP, leader of the ‘anti-woke’ Common Sense Group of conservative MPs, Hayes was heavily criticised after writing a [joint letter](#) to the National Trust referencing ‘cultural Marxism’, a phrase that appeared in Anders Breivik’s manifesto and which Braverman has [also used](#). Miriam Cates MP also used the phrase at the National Conservatism conference in May 2023. (The Antisemitism Policy Trust, whilst acknowledging that the term is not antisemitic in itself, has raised concerns about its current usage in political discourse, suggesting that it is a ‘shadowy

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<sup>34</sup> Hussain, V, ‘The Rotherham 12: A tale of 12 Pakistani men fighting institutional racism’. The Justice Gap, 23 February 2018, Available at: <https://www.thejusticegap.com/rotherham-12-tale-12-pakistani-men-fighting-institutional-racism/>

term openly used by antisemites, neo-Nazis and others with nefarious intent’ and is ‘now code for a Jewish conspiracy’.<sup>35</sup>)

### **Media and the role of influencers with links to the far Right**

The role of new and legacy media is another factor in the mainstreaming of the far Right. The public broadcaster has played a part in elevating hard-right politics. BBC’s ‘Question Time’ has not only handed Nigel Farage more appearances than any other politician this century, but it also hosted the leader of the British National Party, Nick Griffin in 2009. But currently our concern should be about the ‘Foxification’ of our news - which refers to the process of mass media, particularly television news, adopting the format, practices and perceived political leanings of the Murdoch-owned US cable network, Fox News. Here ‘Foxification’ of the broadcast landscape occurred through the launch of GB News (in 2021) and Talk TV (in 2022).

Home to a number of Conservative MPs hosting their own shows, GB News has breached broadcasting rules on numerous occasions including for platforming anti-vax [conspiracies](#). The channel has also interviewed a number of [far right groups](#) and supporters, whilst host Martin Daubney [promoted a fake story](#) about ‘sexual harassment from refugee boys’ sourced from a ‘Hotels Housing Illegals’ Telegram chat. A Facebook group of the same name was [reported](#) as hosting misinformation that led to the violence in Knowsley. Previously a Brexit Party MEP and Deputy Leader of Laurence Fox’s Reclaim Party, Daubney has shared video content from far-right protests with his sizeable social media following. Laurence Fox, Martin Daubney and the anti-abortion ‘deacon’ Calvin Robinson, have all been promoted as guest speakers at events organised by Turning Point UK, an offshoot of Turning Point USA, with [links to Conservative MPs](#) which also generates content for the Alternative Right in the US. The role of these media personalities is not just to attract attendees, but to amplify far-right narratives and share selective content internationally. The huge platform of these international right-wing influencers and the apparent coordination between them, makes disinformation a key front in the ‘culture war’.

Robinson and Fox were recently sacked by GB News, following a misogynistic tirade by Fox against the journalist Ava Evans. Whilst Fox and Robinson may be deemed even too right-wing for the home of Nigel Farage and Jacob Rees-Mogg, the removal of these public figures from a national broadcaster may not prevent their rise and increasing influence via far-right and conspiracist alternative media.

## **V How the far Right targets community issues**

Below we examine some examples of how far-right campaigns are attempting to lay down roots in communities by harnessing their ideas to local concerns.

### **From covid conspiracies to climate and cars**

Whilst the covid-19 pandemic laid bare the rampant race and class inequalities present across health, housing, employment and education, it also revealed a crisis of confidence in government and institutions, expressed on social media platforms when much of the world was forced to isolate. As governments struggled to contain the virus whilst maintaining their legitimacy and social guarantees, the chaos and confusion of the pandemic created space for a

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<sup>35</sup> Antisemitism Policy Trust. (2020). ‘Special Briefing. Cultural Marxism an Antisemitic conspiracy theory?’ Available at: <<https://antisemitism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Cultural-Marxism-October-2020.pdf>>

growing conspiracy movement of culture that the far Right has relentlessly exploited. During 2020, regional Telegram chats hosted by networks such as The White Rose [peddled](#) anti-vax and covid-19 conspiracies. Users in those groups started to share other conspiracist content, with speculation that lockdowns would be used to fight climate change. As the world opened up and normality resumed, these same networks have brought environmental planning policies into their conspiracy orbit: ULEZ, [15-minute cities](#) and Low Traffic Neighbourhoods are held up as another element of the ‘great reset’ for the elite and global bodies such as the World Economic Forum to exert control over public space and restrict people to their immediate surroundings. Reversing net-zero commitments, Rishi Sunak has appealed to right-wing anti-climate and even [conspiracist](#) positions, saying ‘anti-motorist’ policies are [against British values](#).

### **Asylum accommodation**

The government policy that has boosted the far Right more than any other in recent years is undoubtedly its housing of asylum seekers – in hotels, in military barracks and on former RAF bases. The inhumane and dangerous conditions in asylum accommodation have been well documented, including in *IRR News* by the campaigner [John Grayson](#) and in Joseph Maggs’ [in-depth analysis](#) of the heavily overcrowded Manston facility, which saw outbreaks of diphtheria and the [death](#) of a man in November 2022. Whilst progressive campaigners have [successfully pushed](#) the government to shut such sites on suitability and humanitarian grounds, far-right activists have also mobilised swiftly to protest at asylum hotels and join local campaigns opposing asylum sites. Sometimes posing as ‘independent journalists’, these self-styled [‘migrant hunters’](#), follow a pattern of infiltrating communities and local Facebook groups, engaging in conversations to rally support and promote racist and anti-migrant content. In Portland, where the Bibby Stockholm is docked, a Facebook group [‘No to the Barge’](#) has become a hotbed of violent racism and Islamophobia, with users openly discussing ‘bombing’ the barge, how migrants are rapists and should be put into a proposed waste incinerator.

Across the country, groups such as Patriotic Alternative deliver leaflets raising concerns over housing provision, suggesting refugees and asylum seekers get 5-star treatment whilst ‘Brits freeze’. A particularly active fascist group organising in and around asylum sites is the National Support Detachment (NSD) led by Alek Yerbury, a former soldier, who has concentrated the NSD’s efforts in Lincolnshire around RAF Scampton, where there was public outcry after a £300m development was pulled to house 1,250 asylum seekers in shipping containers. Exploiting the public anger, Yerbury not only pursues his own brand of nativism but has also suggested the NSD will [target trade unions](#), ‘their offices and picket lines’. At the beginning of October 2023, a suspected homemade petrol bomb was discovered near the external fence at [RAF Scampton](#).

### **‘Protecting’ women and children**

Whilst housing and local investment are the ‘bread and butter’ issues the far Right taps into to gain local support against asylum accommodation, more violent responses have stemmed from its weaponisation of gender-based issues. Positioning migrants as a threat to women and girls, the large mobilisation that led to a riot in Knowsley, Merseyside, in February 2023 was prompted by the spread of disinformation through a video purporting to show an asylum-seeking man attempted to ‘groom’ a teenage girl. Utilising the language of ‘child protection’,

the far Right has now replicated this sexualised threat of ‘grooming’ against the LGBTQ+ community with a number of protests against Drag Story Hour (DSH).

Drag Queen Story Hour (DQSH, now known as [Drag Story Hour](#) DSH) is an event where drag artists read stories to children. Typically held in libraries, community centres and pub function rooms, such events are held all over the world including the UK. More recently, DSH has been targeted by Alternative Right and far-right groups, with DSH organisers in the US [noting a marked uptick](#) in aggressive and homophobic protests after the January 6 2021 Capitol riot. As [documented](#) by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD), anti-drag protests have crossed continents, with several in Australia and at least 57 events targeted in the UK between 1 June 2022 and 27 May 2023.<sup>36</sup> One DSH event at the Honor Oak pub in south-east London has been regularly picketed by Turning Point UK (TPUK), with [serious violence](#) committed against the local LGBTQ+ community and [questions raised](#) over the police response. Despite such challenges, the local LGBTQ+ community, anti-fascists, trade unionists and residents have consistently outnumbered the far Right. When local MP Vicky Foxcroft asked Rishi Sunak what he thought of the monthly TPUK protests, he failed to condemn the group, whose honorary president is Tory MP Marco Longhi. Sunak said the government was reviewing its relationships and sex education (RSE) guidance in schools to ensure it was ‘age-appropriate’.

Anxieties over RSE and the apparent proliferation of ‘gender ideology’ and, indeed, inclusive education in schools as a whole, is another fixture of contemporary ‘anti-woke’ organising. Teachers are increasingly at the frontline against such campaigns, and in October 2023, Geoff Barton, general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, accused equalities minister Kemi Badenoch of ‘grandstanding’ after she demanded OFSTED carry a snap inspection into Rye College in East Sussex, immediately after the [Daily Mail](#) claimed a teacher at the school was at the centre of a ‘gender row’.<sup>37</sup> Public Child Protection Wales (PCPW) [unsuccessfully](#) challenged the Welsh government in court for its sex education in primary schools, describing a ‘dangerous woke agenda’. When PCPW launched the legal challenge, it gave an interview to the far-right [Voice of Wales](#), which has been involved in ‘migrant hunter’ actions and anti-drag protests. PCPW also attracted the interest of the conspiracy movement, with *The Light* newspaper describing its legal loss as a victory against the ‘sexualisation of our children’.<sup>38</sup> Once again, these far-right moral panics are lent legitimacy by politicians, with Miriam Cates and Danny Kruger’s New Social Covenant Unit producing a report calling for a government review on sex education in schools.<sup>39</sup>

#### IV Meeting the challenge

Set against the backdrop of continual crisis, it is easy to feel overwhelmed and confused by this complex web of conspiracies, racism, misogyny, anti-LGBTQ+ and anti-migrant, anti-

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<sup>36</sup> Institute for Strategic Dialogue, 2023. *A Year of Hate: Anti-Drag Mobilisation Efforts Targeting LGBTQ+ People in the UK* <https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Anti-Drag-Mobilisation-Efforts-Targeting-LGBTQ-People-in-the-UK.pdf>

<sup>37</sup> Dyson, J. (2023). Gender row school: Badenoch ‘grandstanding’ over inspection demand. *Schools Week*, 23 June 2023. Available at: <https://schoolsweek.co.uk/gender-row-school-badenoch-grandstanding-over-inspection-demand/>

<sup>38</sup> Court victory in fight against sexualisation of our children. *The Light*. December 2022, Page 12 [https://thelightpaper.co.uk/assets/pdf/Light-28-Dec-2022-Web-Final\\_2022-12-20-223957.pdf](https://thelightpaper.co.uk/assets/pdf/Light-28-Dec-2022-Web-Final_2022-12-20-223957.pdf)

<sup>39</sup> New Social Covenant Unit, 2023. *What is being taught in Relationships and Sex Education in our schools? A call for a government review.* <https://www.newsocialcovenant.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/nscu-education-2023-v1.pdf>



refugee activism. Far-right actors know this and they thrive on such chaos. Neither they nor the political class that stand to benefit from such hatred and division have any answers to the very real socio-economic and ecological threats facing us. The job of anyone committed to a more just and equal society is not only to resist this reactionary turn, but also to present alternatives and a different way of organising society that is anti-racist, inclusive and advances the cause of the working class both here and abroad.

We can be left with little doubt that the far Right is growing in confidence, and for good reason. The diverse conspiracy movements, the hard Right's fixation with so-called 'woke' issues and the government's cruel immigration system make fertile recruiting ground, but it is the bolstering of their messaging from the media and high office that should most concern anti-racists and anyone committed to a progressive and fair society. Hard-right rhetoric has the potential to make an issue that may not be the most important to 'ordinary working people' suddenly become a key concern in the mind of target voters. Despite soaring interest rates, volatile inflation and a precarious rental market, sections of the political class and the media want us to focus on confected moral panics and 'wokery'. Whilst the politics of reaction may dominate our culture, it is important to point out that it does not necessarily reflect the values of most people. The obsession with the 'broken' immigration system is at odds with the fact that most people [feel positively about immigration](#) and don't believe it causes crime or negatively impacts on British workers. However, it would be foolish to think that the constant media-driven frenzy on these issues isn't making an impact.

Reactionary positions on issues of race, religion, gender and migration are designed to activate a base of supporters who will recruit and radicalise others to their cause.

## **So, what then can be done?**

### **Invest in political education**

There is an urgent need for trade unions in particular to educate their members not only on the dangers of conspiracies like the Great Replacement, but also the conditions that have allowed them to spread. We need an accessible political education programme that enables workers to join the dots between power, structural racism, exploitation and the crisis in housing and the cost of living.

### **Combat the spread of disinformation**

The spreading of disinformation is a key mechanism that exploits people's emotions, propels far-right narratives and racist stereotypes and can lead to violence on the ground. We all need to robustly combat disinformation online and in physical spaces, by amplifying evidence-based information and analysis.

### **Push back against the scapegoating of minorities**

Difference (whether this is racial, religious, sexual, gendered or depending on immigration status) is being weaponised against us, to falsely position groups in competition with each other rather than in solidarity. We must push back against this scapegoating by identifying the real root of social and economic problems – which is not minorities, but three decades of neoliberalism and austerity. Understanding the issues that unite us and seeing how they connect should be the basis of a strong solidarity.

## Unify in struggle

With the far Right building racially and politically diverse alliances, we need to make a conscious effort to forge strong links with social movements that are anti-racist, pro-migration and trans inclusive. This means reciprocal solidarity at demonstrations, and sharing knowledge and resources to unite in struggle for economic and social justice.

## Stand against nativism

In a time of economic precarity, it's important that the trades union movement dismantles the nativist idea that deprivation and a lack of opportunities is because 'multiculturalism has failed', with some groups getting more whilst others are 'left behind'. The cost of living is a manufactured crisis, and we must call those in power to account for their policies and resist the scapegoating of minorities for economic problems.

## Fightback against the war on refugees and asylum seekers

The fight for the rights of migrants and asylum seekers is not just a human rights issue, it is a class issue. The performative cruelty meted out to the most vulnerable is both the government's demonstration of force against a crisis of its own making and, in Neil Ascherson's words, an example of 'how they would treat the rest of us if they thought they could get away with it'.

## Authors

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## Glossary

### Groups referred to in this report include

- Blood and Honour
- British National Party (BNP)
- Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC)
- Combat 18
- Commonsense Group of MPs
- English Defence League (EDL)
- Generation Identity
- Ireland First
- National Front (NF)
- National Support Detachment (NSD)
- Patriotic Alternative (PA)
- Public Child Protection Wales
- Reclaim Party
- Turning Point UK (TPUK)
- Voice of Wales

## USE OF TERMS

*When to define a tendency as extreme-right, far-right, fascist or a variant of fascist is something on which academics, historians and anti-fascists might disagree. Below we explain how we understand currently used terms and ideas.*

**Alternative Right:** Often shortened to ‘Alt Right’. A fairly new international movement that rose to prominence after the election of Donald Trump with roots in 4chan and 8chan online message boards. In the US it has overlaps with ‘incel’ and Men’s Rights Activism (MRA). Sometimes referred to as ‘identitarians’, that builds on the historical legacy of the New Right. It foregrounds ‘The Great Replacement’ conspiracy theory and white identity politics claiming that ‘white identity’ is under attack from pro-multicultural and liberal elites. Generation Identity and its various offshoots in the UK are an Alternative Right ‘identitarian’ movement.

**Biological Fundamentalism:** An approach that essentialises sex which is seen as innate and immutable depending on what sexual organs you have. Crucially, biological fundamentalism ignores scientific research that shows that sex doesn’t fit into a binary, whether it be determined by genitals, chromosomes, hormones or bones, but exists along a spectrum.

**Counter-jihadi:** A far-right current that became vocal after September 11 2001. It is best described as a spectrum – with street-fighting forces at one end and cultural conservatives and neo-conservatives at the other. Tommy Robinson’s now defunct English Defence League was a counter-jihadi movement, as are the Christian fundamentalist Pax Europa and Stop the Islamisation of Europe movements.

**Culture wars:** Originating from the German *Kulturkampf*, it is generally a vehicle pursued by the Right to distort and discredit the Left. Often waged in traditional and social media and through political rhetoric, it targets racial and sexual minorities, utilises misinformation and diverts attention away from the immiseration of society through hard Right economic and social policies.

**Eugenics:** Eugenics is the now scientifically disproved theory that humans can be improved through selective breeding of populations. It emerged out of the scientific racism of the nineteenth century which created a hierarchy of races with the white race at the top. In the lead up to World War II and the Holocaust, Nazi scientists used eugenics, ‘racial hygiene’ to ‘cleanse’ the German people of those deemed ‘unworthy of life’.

**Extreme Right:** Electoral parties which are to the Right of traditional conservative parties, especially in terms of willingness to use racist language and rhetoric, though falling short of inciting racism or open violence against opponents. While they may have their roots in pre-war fascist parties or share some of the traits of a racist, ultra-nationalist or even a fascist party, the extreme Right tends to work within the democratic framework, while attempting to subvert it from within.

**Far Right:** Distinguished from the extreme Right in that, for the most part, such groups do not reject incitement and violence and are more clearly associated with neo-Nazism.

**[The] Great Replacement:** In French, Grand Replacement. Coined by French conspiracy theorist and polemicist Renaud Camus in 2010 who argued that immigrants from the Middle East and North Africa were colonising France. Followers of this theory believe that there is a deliberate attempt to replace white European populations, leading to the replacement of Europe's culture. While Islamophobia is central to the dissemination of this conspiracy theory in Europe, it has been linked to antisemitism in the US. It was at the 2017 Charlottesville 'Unite the Right' rally in Virginia in the US, where neo-Nazis shouted 'Jews will not replace us' and antifascist housing paralegal Heather Meyer was killed, that the theory became more broadly known. The perpetrator of the Christchurch Mosque massacre in New Zealand in 2019 posted a counter-jihadist manifesto entitled 'The Great Replacement: Towards a new society'.

**[The] Great Reset:** An initiative from the World Economic Forum focused on global sustainability as a response to the covid-19 pandemic. Whilst the WEF plan is light on detail, conspiracy theorists believe that the great reset is a plot by a global elite that created Covid-19 to control populations and usher in a world government. The great reset conspiracy theory is often invoked against environmental planning such as clean air measures and Low Traffic Neighbourhoods.

**Hard Right:** Terms like hard Right, or ultra Right are helpful in linking the multi-dimensional aspects of parliamentary and extra-parliamentary forces, and the fact that parties, tendencies and think-tanks often fall into more than one category. The hard Right crosses over with the extreme Right and can advance anti-immigration and other conspiracy theories. It embraces nationalism, nativism, [welfare chauvinism](#), cultural conservatism, and authoritarian attitudes towards racial and sexual minorities.

**Incel:** Originated as a word for 'involuntarily celibate', but now is understood as a reference to a male supremacist subculture of radical misogyny, largely amongst young white heterosexual men, who are active on online forums like Reddit and express extreme hatred towards people who are sexually active. The incel community is also influenced by homophobia and far-right conspiracy theories. Jake Davidson, who killed his mother and went on to shoot dead five people in a rampage in Plymouth in 2022 and then killed himself was lionised by the online 'incel' community.

**National Conservatism (NatCon):** A hard Right, 'anti-woke' international alliance dominated by Republicans in the US which opposes 'cultural Marxism', 'critical race theory', 'woke ideology' and left-wing cultural hegemony as a threat to western civilisation and 'faith, flag and family'.

**Nativism:** The call for national preference in all economic and social decision-making, often rallying around the slogan 'our own people first'.

**Neo-Nazi:** Movements that clearly support elements of Nazi doctrine, including antisemitism, Holocaust Denial, and incorporate Nazi symbols into their propaganda.

**New Right:** Although the New Right is an international illiberal tradition with roots in the post-war period, it was particularly strong in the UK in the 1970s where it was associated

with Thatcherism, the *Salisbury Review* and the philosopher Roger Scruton. The Alt Right could be considered the latest wave of the New Right which has traditionally united around core beliefs such as hostility to concepts like universalism, pluralism and equality, hatred of Communism and ‘cultural relativism’.

**Political correctness:** This term originated as a positive one describing interpersonal sensitivity in politics but has since become an abusive term used by the Right to scorn and repudiate those who try to make society, culture and language take account of diversity.

**QAnon:** A conspiracy theory and political movement, originating in the US. QAnon followers believe in a satanic paedophile ring run by democratic politicians and global elites, which Donald Trump secretly worked to stop. QAnon is one of the most prominent conspiracy theories which have grown exponentially following the covid-19 pandemic.

**Thin Blue Line:** In the US is associated with white nationalism, encapsulating the idea that the police are the last defence against collapse and chaos, with the threat to society often heavily racialised. In the US, ‘Blue Lives Matter’ campaigns and the Thin Blue Line avatar were mobilised after the death of George Floyd as an explicit response to Black Lives Matter and to reframe the history of police brutality to African Americans by claiming that police are the targets of Black on Blue violence. In the UK, the Thin Blue Line avatar and hashtag are seen on twitter feeds of individual police officers who post comments attacking Black Lives Matter also representing themselves as a besieged minority and the wronged party in debates on police racism and the use of force.

**Viewpoint diversity:** This term is usually being used as a defensive attack on equalities legislation, diversity programmes and hate crime legislation; the belief that legislation that outlaws the bigoted views within majority populations towards racial or sexual minorities should be scrapped, in favour of ‘viewpoint diversity’ which would include all views.

**White genocide:** A far-right conspiracy theory popularised by US white supremacist, David Lane around 1995 in the ‘White Genocide Manifesto’ which rests on the idea that there is a plot to promote reproduction in different races in order to cause the extinction of the white race. Builds on the work of twentieth-century eugenicists like Madison Grant, who, in 1916, wrote *The Passing of the Great Race*.

**White nationalism:** A euphemism for white supremacy which gave legitimacy to the view that an ‘ethno-state’ should be created for whites only. Today it represents a spectrum, embracing white supremacists at one end and neo-conservatives, who argue for the promotion of white people’s interests at the other.

**White supremacism:** Belief in the supremacy of the white race and associated with groups like the Ku Klux Klan, the Aryan Resistance and Blood and Honour.

**Woke:** Originally used by the African American community since the 1940s, it generally means to be politically aware or sensitive to issues of justice. Politicised after Black Lives Matter protests following the death of Mike Brown in 2014, more recently it has been used pejoratively by Conservatives and the Alt Right to discredit progressive causes, diversity, Black politics and the Left in general. Because of this woke has an elastic, vague meaning.