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Article

Another Ideological Turn? Investigating the Re-Emergence of Race among the British Radical Right

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Abstract: This article investigates the unexpected re-emergence of race in both the rhetoric and activities of the British radical-right. In doing so it seeks to better understand the reasons why race has re-emerged, how race has been contemporarily deployed by the radical-right, and the extent to which the re-emergence of race will force the radical right's recent ideological focus on religion – more specifically, the religion of Islam and Muslims as adherents – begin to retreat. It does this first by setting out the methods and approaches used throughout. From here, necessary and appropriate context is provided about the British radical-right generally and the decades old ideological turn more specifically. Next, the circumstances and reasons for the re-emergence of race are critically engaged: focusing on the immediate aftermath of 2020's Black Lives Matter protests as also the wider socio-political landscape of contemporary Britain. Taking into account both established and newly formed groups and movements from within the British radical right, the role and function played by race is considered next. As part of this, an in-depth analysis of the role and function of race in the rhetoric and activities of Patriotic Alternative is included. In conclusion, this article reflects on a number of arguments about why the re-emergence of race among the British radical-right is – albeit to varying degrees – a cause for concern.

Keywords: radical-right; Patriotic Alternative; race; Black Lives Matter; nationalism

Introduction

Since the turn of the century, it might be suggested that 'race' has been conspicuous by its absence in the rhetoric and activities of Britain's radical-right. Despite coinciding with Britain becoming increasingly diverse[1], the main reason for race being in retreat among the British radical-right was due to an ideological turn: one that saw the hateful gaze of the radical-right shift away from race and racial groups to Muslims, the religion of Islam and immigration[2]. So much was this retreat that in the intervening decades, rhetoric and activities that ideologically centred on race became little more than the preserve of the extreme right-wing: differentiated here from the aforementioned radical-right on the basis of the latter's propensity for or willingness to enact violence to achieve its goals, see later[3]. In the past few years however, race has again begun to re-emerge within the British radical-right milieu. The catalyst for this seemed to be the Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests that took place in various towns and cities across Britain – and elsewhere in the world – in 2020 following the killing of George Floyd. Simultaneous to catalysing the re-emergence of race within the radical right, the protests were also a catalyst for a dramatic increase in the number of racially motivated hate crimes being reported to the police in England and Wales[4].

This article sets out to try and better understand the wholly unexpected re-emergence of race in both the rhetoric and activities of the British radical-right. In particular, to better understand the reasons why race has re-emerged, how race is being contemporarily deployed by the radical-right in terms of rhetoric and activities, and the extent to which the re-emergence of race can be seen to be a *volte face*, where the re-emergence of race will see the present century's ideological focus on religion – more specifically, the religion of Islam and Muslims as adherents – begin to retreat. As before this article sets out to respond to these questions. To do so, it is important to first set out the methods and

approaches preferred. From here, necessary and appropriate context is provided about the British radical-right generally and the decades old ideological turn more specifically. Next, the circumstances and reasons for the re-emergence of race are critically engaged: focusing on the immediate aftermath of the BLM protests as also the wider socio-political landscape of contemporary Britain. Taking into account both established and newly formed groups and movements from within the British radical right milieu, the role and function played by race is considered next. To better understand this, an in-depth analysis of the role and function of race in the rhetoric and activities of Patriotic Alternative is undertaken. In conclusion, this article reflects on a number of arguments about why the re-emergence of race among the British radical-right is - albeit to varying degrees - a cause for concern.

Methods and Approaches

As Blee rightly notes, researching the radical-, radical- and extreme-right is complex and problematic on the basis that many of those who exist within these ideological spaces deem academics as untrustworthy and hostile[5]. Accordingly, Goodwin resigns himself to stating that it is necessary to employ externalist methodological approaches that are heavily reliant on freely available materials and resources in the public and political spaces[6]. For those seeking to deepen rather than replicate knowledge that already exists therefore, the challenge is to devise and deploy new and novel approaches through which information and evidence can be gathered.

Responding to this challenge, this article draws upon a four-stranded methodological approach: two participatory methods and two externalist methods. The first comprised a detailed review of the author's extensive portfolio of resources gathered about the far-, radical- and extreme-right more generally and certain groups and movements more specifically including Patriotic Alternative. This includes resources that have been acquired personally or via third parties, many of which are no longer freely or widely available due to their potential criminal nature. These indicatively include previously unpublished documents, newsletters, manifesto type documents, and in-group member communications. Also included in this portfolio are various visual elements and content including logos, stickers, posters and images many of which were included in various internal and external communications. Finally, the portfolio contains materials shared by various frontline practitioners that were involved first-hand in the investigations and subsequent trials of various members. Where appropriate, reference to these resources is cited in-text as "Author's Portfolio". The second of the participatory methodological strands drew on extensive research notes gathered from the author's first-hand engagement with specialist practitioners in the field of policing and counter-terrorism and the author's own participation in various 'independent expert' roles on different national, regional and local panels, committees and similar. This participation can be twofold categorised. The first comprised face-to-face engagement, for instance including meetings, workshops, presentations, and both formal and informal conversations. The second was electronic, incorporating emails, message boards, message groups, and document sharing. This engagement afforded access to information and materials that were not widely available in the public and political spaces: some of which remains necessarily confidential and therefore unpublishable in any tangible form. Where appropriate, these resources are cited in-text as "Research Notes".

Complementing these participatory methods were two externalist methodological strands. The first comprised a detailed review of available resources and materials freely available in the public and political spaces including but not limited to policy documents, political briefings, transcripts of speeches and press releases, news reportage and various non-specialist op-ed type commentaries. The second comprised a literature review of the existing scholarly canon relating to the radical right in Britain and both the far-right and extreme right wing more generally. At times, the review was extended even further to include scholarly literature relating to fascism, British fascism both historical and contemporary, domestic extremism, domestic terrorism, political violence, and terrorism more widely.

It is necessary at this juncture to give some consideration to the language and terminology used throughout as a means of ensuring clarity and criticality. This is important on the basis that it is

typical for certain terms and descriptors to be used interchangeably in any discussion about the type of individuals, groups and movements that exist on the right of the political mainstream. These include but are far from limited to far-right, radical-right and extreme right-wing. As Copsey[7] explains, this is due to a lack of agreement about defining and attributing as also the myriad variables that need to be taken into account when doing so. Among others, these include ideology, affiliation, discourse, leadership, activities and various others. Of the numerous terms and descriptors in circulation, far-right is the most commonly used. As Mudde[8] explains, this is because it is best used as an umbrella term: one that encompasses a broad spectrum of different ideologies, actions and behaviours ranging from basic xenophobia to more pernicious forms of nationalism[9]. In the contemporary setting, Mudde adds that far-right can also be used to refer to certain forms of anti-establishment populism, calls to protect the sovereignty of the people, and the rejection of 'liberal' values relating to pluralism and minority rights[10].

While so, Mudde's definition fails to differentiate between those who use violence or have a propensity to use violence as a means to achieve their stated goals and outcomes from those who do not. Accordingly, Bjørge and Ravndal[11] put forward two terms that seek to incorporate that differentiation: the radical-right and the extreme right-wing. As they go on, while the radical right wing seek to achieve its stated goals and outcomes within the framework of democracy, the extreme right-wing seek to do so within a framework of violence. As such, the extreme right wing can be identified on the basis of either a propensity for or the deployment of violence – including terroristic violence - and various other non-democratic, criminal means. Accordingly, it is typical for the extreme right wing to reject democracy and the democratic process while also promoting violence or criminality as a legitimate means to achieve its goals and outcomes[12]. Violence and criminality therefore not only serve to differentiate and demarcate the radical right from the extreme right wing but so too do they define the latter. In the context of this article therefore, the focus is on the radical right; those groups and movements that neither use - nor have a propensity to use – violence to achieve their goals and outcomes.

The British Radical Right in Context

In the British setting, groups and movements espousing nationalist ideologies have been around for about a century. As was typical of elsewhere in Europe at the time, these ideologies drew heavily on the tenets of fascism and National Socialism much of which centred on antisemitism[13]. In Britain however, this changed following the arrival of large numbers of people from its former colonies in the 1950s and 1960s[14]. Moving away from antisemitism, the British radical-right increasingly deployed race and the rhetoric of colour-based racism to oppose ongoing non-white immigration[15]. By the 1970s, race had become the central feature of radical-right rhetoric. This was no more evident than with the National Front (NF): the largest radical-right political party at the time, its electoral campaigns were explicitly racist and included calling for the compulsory repatriation of all non-whites[16]. Stating the need to preserve Britain's ancestral ethnic and cultural heritage and the traditions, customs and values that emanate from this, a recurrent theme in the rhetoric of the radical-right both historically and contemporarily is defending or safeguarding the nation and its indigenous – namely white – people from outsiders and the threats posed by them[17].

From the outset, this was evident in the rhetoric of the British National Party (BNP) a radical-right group with electoral aspirations that emerged in the early 1980s following the decline of the NF[18]. Having failed to make any significant inroads into the political mainstream by the mid-1990s, its then leader – Nick Griffin – began a widespread modernisation programme in an attempt to make them more electable. While this included such things as requiring those standing for election to wear suits, shirts and ties to make them look like serious politicians and investing resources into youth activities, most significant was its ideological turn. Breaking with the historical traditions of the British radical-right, Griffin shifted the ideological gaze of the BNP away from race and the explicit racism of its predecessors to centre squarely on religion: in particular the religion of Islam. As well as the religion itself, not only did the gaze extend to all Britain's Muslims and their communities but so too the 'problems' associated to them and the 'threats' they were perceived to pose both to the nation

and its indigenous people[19]. What ensued was a new and very different public rhetoric from what had preceded it: one where race, racism and antisemitism were no longer evident[20].

The ideological turn saw the BNP achieve unprecedented success. Bolstered by the fallout from the 9/11 attacks in the United States, immediately after the 2005 terrorist attacks on the London public transport system (7/7) the BNP launched a series of overtly Islamophobic electoral campaigns 'Islam Out of Britain' and 'Islam Referendum Day'[21]. In municipal elections the following year, the support shown towards the BNP was the best of any radical-right party in British history. Gaining 33 locally elected representatives across the country, it was in the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham where its success was as unexpected as it was unprecedented. There, it gained 12 elected representatives resulting in the BNP becoming the first ever radical-right political party to be an official party of opposition. Three years later, municipal elections saw the BNP go on to achieve even greater success: gaining 100 elected representatives across the country as well as winning a seat on the Greater London Assembly. In 2009, European elections saw the BNP have two representatives – one of whom was Griffin – elected to the European Parliament[22]. As Griffin explained to supporters at the time, success was down to the BNP "positioning ourselves to take advantage for our own political ends the growing wave of public hostility to Islam"[23].

Despite the BNP having gone into rapid decline due to having failed to capitalise on its electoral success, the rhetoric of the ideological turn was already being deployed by others within the British radical-right. Rejecting many historical mainstays including mainstream political aspirations, hierarchical structures and formal membership, the English Defence League (EDL) was one of a number of new 'post-organisational' groups to emerge[24]. From being proactive across a number of different social media platforms, the EDL was soon able to mobilise relatively large numbers – at its peak, in excess of 3,000 people – to protest in opposition against a raft of issues to opportunistically target Muslim communities. Ideologically, the EDL positioned itself in the context of the BNP's ideological turn: unequivocally Islamophobic. Unlike the BNP however, the EDL did not replace race with religion but instead openly embraced it. Breaking with the traditions of nationalist ideologies, the EDL adopted the slogan "Black and White Unite". Not only did this function as a means by which the EDL could reject claims that it was a radical-right group but so too garner at least some support from certain ethnic and minority communities that would have been historically targeted by traditional nationalist ideologies. Among others, this included Jewish, Sikh and LGBTQ+ communities[25].

Around this time, the British radical-right was particularly dynamic: evident in the number of new groups forming as also in the diversification of audiences and constituencies many were seeking to reach out to. Most however deployed the same ideological focus as the BNP and EDL and included Britain First[26], the Football Lads Alliance (FLA), Democratic Football Lads Alliance (DFLA)[27] and the Infidels among others. Explicitly Islamophobic, none made reference to race or any associated issues in their public rhetoric. Nonetheless, even though some were relatively short lived all achieved notable success. Take for instance the FLA, a street-based post-organisational movement that mobilised rival football (soccer) hooligan firms to protest against the 2017 terrorist attack that targeted people attending an Ariana Grande concert at the Manchester Arena. While in-fighting brought about a quick end to the FLA, its initial demonstrations attracted previously unimaginable numbers: 60,000 people on one occasion, the largest ever radical-right gathering in British history[28].

Drivers for the Re-Emergence of Race

To explain and understand the re-emergence of race, it is necessary to consider the socio-political landscape of Britain. Key to this is how in the summer of 2016, a majority referendum vote was recorded in support of Britain revoking its membership of the European Union (EU). For many of those who voted in favour of 'Brexit' – a widely used colloquialism which refers to Britain's exit from the EU – leaving the EU would bring about an end to ongoing immigration[29]. Unsurprising given that immigration dominated many of the campaigns calling on people to vote leave, including numerous prominent voices within the Conservative government at the time[30]. Most influential however was the UK Independence Party (UKIP) - a populist right-wing political party lead by Nigel

Farage - which campaigned on a number of issues that had a clear resonance with both the traditional and contemporary radical-right not least the need to protect national sovereignty and importantly, Britain's borders. So too would some argue that UKIP's opposition to immigration was also informed by the need to preserve and importantly defend Britain's ancestral and cultural heritage[31].

In 2017, Britain was the target for a relatively high number of terrorist attacks perpetrated by those reported to have been inspired by Islamist ideologies[32]. Shortly after, a worrying trend became apparent the British Government's official statistics about the number of reported hate crimes in England and Wales. Published annually, the statistics are disaggregated into five monitored strands: race, religion, disability, sexual orientation and trans identity. What was evident from the statistics however was that following the Brexit referendum, not only did the number of reported hate crimes for each strand increase but so too did the numbers for all hate crimes reach year on year record highs[33]. By 2019/20, racially motivated hate crimes accounted for more than three quarters of all recorded hate crimes and were in excess of 76,000[34]. More surprising however was that the number of racially motivated hate crimes were again at record levels in 2020 despite the country having been in lockdown for around a quarter of the year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. According to both governmental and academic analyses, this was due to a surge in racially motivated hate crimes that occurred immediately after the BLM protests in the summer of the same year[35]. To illustrate this, the statistics show that the number of racially motivated hate crimes recorded post-BLM in June 2020 were 34 per cent higher than in the same month the year previous. While concerning, it is likely that the actual numbers were even higher.

In response to the BLM protests, some within the British radical-right mobilised quickly to organise a series of counter protests[36]. In doing so, they cited certain issues relating to race as both reason and justification. Centring on the widely publicised defacement and destruction of statues and memorials by those attending BLM protests - including a statue of the former Prime Minister, Winston Churchill in central London and the toppling of a statue of the former slave trader, Edward Colson into the harbour in Bristol - the counter protests were overseen by the hierarchies of Britain First and the DFLA[37]. Justified on the basis of needing to defend 'our' statues, in adopting the slogan 'White Lives Matter' those organising the counter-protests made explicit reference to 'race' and in particular, the 'white race'[38]. Not only was it deployed as a means to antagonise BLM supporters but so too was it deployed to serve as a clarion call to the British radical-right both collectively and individually. In giving voice to 'race' - re-emerging in the slogan 'White Lives Matter' - permission was afforded to others to also give voice to 'race' but so too a whole raft of socio-political and cultural problems and issues causally attributed it[39].

A number of groups duly responded. This included the Hundred Handers who adopted the slogan "Western civilisation is white civilisation" to feature in one of its stickering campaigns. Others such as the Pie and Mash Squad did similar with the slogan "It's OK to be Aryan"[40]. This was no more evident than in the social media content shared by radical-right groups and individual alike, much of which was not only re-focusing on 'race' but was also seemingly moving towards more traditional and historical ideological views associated with the British radical-right. This included evidence of an ever more explicit focus on 'whiteness', about the need to bring about an end to non-white immigration, and how the changing ethnic demography of Britain has had a detrimental impact on British society[41]. In the same way the Griffin's ideological re-alignment catalysed change within the British radical-right more than twenty years ago, so it would seem that the re-emergence of race has the very real potential to catalyse a similar retrogressive ideological turn.

Patriotic Alternative: a race re-emerged radical right group

Launched in the autumn of 2019, Patriotic Alternative has in recent years emerged as the largest, fastest growing and most active radical-right group in contemporary Britain[42]. A new and dynamic group that has sought to diversify its approaches and activities in an attempt to reach new, non-traditional audiences, so too is it a group that adheres to more traditional ideologies whereby race is a feature of its rhetoric and activities. Founded by Mark Collett - a former leader of the Young BNP who is also a notoriously divisive figure within the British radical-right - he and his deputy, Laura

Towler are the public face of the group. Well-known within radical-right circles, Towler came to prominence via her YouTube channel and as editor of the white nationalist *Defend Europa* website. Unlike post-organisational groups, Patriotic Alternative is founded on a network of local branches that are used to bring supporters together for a range of leisure pursuits such as hikes and camping trips. This network is important for Collett on the basis that he believes that nationalism will only succeed when like-minded people are brought together to form communities that simultaneously have a shared identity and provide a sense of belonging[43].

In terms of its dynamism, Patriotic Alternative is acutely aware of the need to 'package' its ideology and associated views in ways that make them more 'saleable' to new and non-traditional audiences while at the same time doing its utmost not to alienate the radical-right's existing support. In terms of reaching new audiences, Patriotic Alternative has sought to do this using a number of distinct and highly original activities. For instance, Patriotic Alternative has set up a company - *Grandma Towlers*[44] – through which it sells its own brand of 'traditional British' tea. Another centred around an online baking competition. Hoping to capitalise on the highly successful television series *The Great British Bake Off*, Patriotic Alternative no doubt hoped that its own competition might appeal to a similar audience as the television series: largely white and middle class, this is an audience that rarely engages let alone supports the radical-right. Scratch the surface however and both the tea and baking competition are constructed around the notion of a 'traditional Britain', a common trope among the British radical right[45]. Subtly alluding to an ideological idyll of what they believe Britain was and importantly, should be again, not only do such activities afford opportunities to reach out to and engage different audiences but so too do they ensure that the group's ideology is ever present no matter how obfuscated it might nonetheless be. So too do they justify the need to mobilise as a means of 'defending' Britain.

The same is true as regards the group's *Alternative Curriculum*, an online resource that comprises a vast array of freely downloadable learning materials for a range of different ages[46]. While almost all place a significant emphasis on tradition and importantly, what is great about Britain and being British some of the learning materials are somewhat bizarre. For instance, learning materials about the Roman festival of Saturnalia or another about the importance of learning Latin. First made available via its website during the COVID-19 lockdown, Patriotic Alternative clearly saw the shift towards home schooling due to school closures as an opportunity to engage with new and potentially much wider audiences. As with its tea company and baking competition, Patriotic Alternative sought to achieve its intended outcomes by being far more innovative than most radical-right groups have been in the past.

Without any doubt whatsoever, 2020's BLM protests catalysed Patriotic Alternative. Soon after expressing support for the counter protests, Patriotic Alternative organised a number of 'banner drops' across Britain that attracted significant media coverage. Popularised by the pan-European identitarian group *Generation Identity*, banner drops involve supporters merely unfurling or 'dropping' a banner from a prominent location that are then shared widely and rapidly on multiple social media platforms with the intention of attracting mainstream media coverage and provoking a response from within the political spaces[47]. In the wake of the BLM protests, Patriotic Alternative did this using banners emblazoned with the slogan 'White Lives Matter' emblazoned across them. To ensure maximum impact, the locations for the banner drops included Ben Nevis in Scotland[48], Mam Tor in Yorkshire[49] and Bodmin Moor in Cornwall[50]. The banner drops were extremely successful: prompting condemnation from mainstream political voices at the same time as garnering significant media coverage. Doing the same to mark Indigenous People's Day in 2020 and again in 2021, the banner drops helped codify race as an integral feature of Patriotic Alternative's public rhetoric.

Accordingly, notions of race are readily apparent across the group's website and in much of its campaign materials[51]. This is especially evident in the group's campaign to raise awareness about demographic change and the detrimental impact this change is likely to have on Britain's 'indigenous population'. Founded on the claim that current 'demographic trends forecast that the indigenous [white] people of the UK will be a minority by 2060'[52], the group causally attribute this to a number

of socio-political 'problems' to highlight how and why race – and importantly, the presence of non-white races in Britain – is as relevant as it is problematic. Developing this they variously cite a number of contemporary issues as being relevant to this including non-white migrants attempting to enter Britain by crossing the English Channel in dinghies, the 'black nationalist' and 'Marxist' agendas of the BLM movement, and the 2021 murder of the Conservative Member of Parliament, David Amess whose killer Patriotic Alternative are at pains to stress was 'non-indigenous'. In a volte face from the 'black and white unite' slogan deployed by the EDL[53]. Patriotic Alternative are conveying the message that not only is it necessary to speak about race but so too is it necessary for Britain's white indigenous population to realise that defending their race is key to their survival and by default, the survival of Britain, British culture, British values and so on.

To support this argument, the group draw on a number of themes from oft cited radical-right theories, Great Replacement and White Genocide theories in particular. In doing so, Patriotic Alternative are conveying the message that while Britain's white population should still be concerned about the threat posed by Muslims and the religion of Islam – the threat of Islamist-inspired terrorism has far from gone away – the presence and growth of non-white people in Britain presents a far greater threat to them: one that threatens their very existence. For them, the threat posed by Muslims and Islam is circumstantial whereas the threat posed by all non-white people is existential. In the same way race informed the views and activities of the NF historically[54], so race functions similarly for Patriotic Alternative. This is evident in Patriotic Alternative's manifesto and about what needs to be done now. Were it to acquire the appropriate political power it explains, Patriotic Alternative would encourage "those of immigrant descent who have obtained British passports...to return to their ancestral homelands"[55]. In all but the language used, Patriotic Alternative is advocating repatriation: a staple feature of almost all British radical-right groups and movements prior to the Griffin's ideological re-alignment two decades ago.

The Re-emergence of Race: a critical evaluation

In trying to evaluate the re-emergence of race among the British radical-right, a number of considerations are necessary. The first is the extent to which the re-emergence of race is opportunistic. Despite the success that followed Griffin's ideological re-alignment, his encouraging of supporters to take advantage of the 'growing wave of hostility to Islam' was – at the time at least – largely opportunistic. This is not to suggest that doing so did not make sense: on the contrary, it did. But it was the wider geo-political landscape – the impact of 9/11, 7/7 and other terrorist attacks in Madrid, Bali and elsewhere as indeed the ensuing 'War on Terror' – that established the seedbed from which the growing wave of hostility towards Muslims and Islam ensued and which Griffin and the BNP sought to duly exploit. Far from confining traditional nationalist ideologies and its focus on race to the annals of history, Griffin's ideological re-alignment was therefore wholly circumstantial: an opportunity that was presented and importantly, duly taken. In other words, Griffin and the BNP were in the right place at the right time with the right political message.

Fast forward two decades and it is entirely possible that the re-emergence of race is similarly opportunistic and circumstantial. In the same way Griffin spotted an opportunity to take advantage of a growing public sentiment, so too is it possible that some within the British radical-right saw a similar opportunity with the BLM protests. Given the counter-protests were loosely organised by Britain First and the DFLA, the two previously disunited groups would have engaged in some communication. That the popularity of both was also on the wane meant that any opportunity to re-package and re-present themselves as being relevant and credible would have been something both would have welcomed. That BLM self-referenced race in both name and ideology therefore had the potential at least to afford an opportunity for Britain First, the DFLA and the radical-right more widely to reciprocally respond. Not only did it afford an opportunity to repackage and re-present both groups as relevant and timely but so too would the inclusion of race in the public facing rhetoric of both would have had the very potential to convey a newfound sense of strength and bravery to known audiences and current support base. So too did it have the potential to reclaim some of the ideological ground acquired by those on the more violent and extreme fringe of the British right.

In this respect, Patriotic Alternative is not only important in itself but so too important in terms of the development of the contemporary British radical-right. Launched before the re-emergence of race, the group was in some ways established as both a response and antidote to the known failures of post-organisational groups like Britain First and the DFLA: the EDL especially. While those post-organisational groups had significant impact, that impact was relatively short-lived. So too did the option for supporters of those groups to buy in – and importantly, buy out – at any time given the lack of any formal membership not only limit their longevity but so too mean that the possibility to bring about real and tangible change was near impossible. For that reason, Patriotic Alternative responded by rethinking its structure and organisation, placing an emphasis on notions of community and identity in the same way that radical right groups had prior to the ideological turn. So too however did it identify the need to do more, to reach out to and engage new audiences in ways that were as unprecedented as they were innovative within the British radical right. Add in the re-emergence of race around the same time and it is possible that Patriotic Alternative not only saw this as an opportunity to do something different from many of its contemporaries but so too do something that would reunite it with the core traditions of the radical right and those that have historically to radical right ideologies.

If the re-emergence of race afforded those within the British radical-right the opportunity to be what they always have been and always were, what does this tell us about post-organisational groups like the EDL? As regards the BNP, evidence shows that prior to its ideological re-alignment it not only adhered to a traditional nationalist ideology but had a lineage that could be traced back to the very first British fascist and national socialist movements in the 1930s[56]. As regards its modernisation in the late 1990s, rather than make it a different party with a different ideology the intention was instead to repackage both itself and traditional nationalism in a modern and more public-friendly way: the goal being to make the BNP electable. This resonates with what Patriotic Alternative is trying to do now. In terms of the BNP, Griffin saw that religion – specifically, the religion of Islam – had a much greater potential to resonate with a much wider audience than race[57]. Because of the socio-political landscape of Britain at the time, it was much easier to demarcate Britain's Muslims as a threatening Other than it was Britain's black communities. Far from having a Damascene moment that saw Griffin and the BNP reject traditional nationalist ideology and the centrality of race within this, they instead merely relegated it. This was because at that moment in time, it was easier to repackage traditional national ideology around the religion of Islam than it was around notions of race.

In spite of the positively racialised slogans and overtly Islamophobic ideology of the EDL and other post-organisational groups, while it is entirely possible that they too merely relegated race in the same way Griffin did with the BNP another explanation might be more plausible, one that draws on the work of Martin Barker in the early 1980s[58]. For him, this was a period when in Britain traditional colour racism was rhetorically reframed and to some extent replaced, by what he referred to as cultural racism. Evident in the mainstream of the British political spaces, not only did this new form of cultural racism help negotiate Britain's newly introduced anti-racism legislation but so too did it afford a rhetorical means by which traditional racist views could be expressed in albeit far more subtle and coded ways. Rather than expressing hatred on the basis of skin colour, cultural racism saw that hatred being expressed on the basis of culture, values, way of life and similar. Rather than non-white people themselves posing a threat to Britain's white population, it was now the culture of those same non-indigenous people that posed a threat. No longer was it about an Other that had a different skin colour to 'us' but about how and why an Other was different from 'us'.

In this context, it is possible to argue that the radical-right's adoption of Islamophobic ideologies in preference of those centred on race was little more than a manifestation of cultural racism[59]. Accordingly, it was the Otherness of Muslims in terms of their religion, culture, values and way of life that was the problem rather than their race, ethnicity, nationality and so on. Publicly at least, it was the perceived threat to 'us' and 'our' culture being posed by 'them', 'their' religion and 'their' culture that was the problem: never was it about 'their' race hence why 'black and white' could unite under the auspices of the EDL. While the public rhetoric of the British radical-right might have

changed it is entirely possible that very little else did. Through the lens of cultural racism therefore, it is possible to conclude that religion – the religion of Islam specifically – functioned as a little more than a more palatable proxy for race among the British radical right and importantly, into the wider British public and political spaces too. If the ideological re-alignment was opportunistic and race was relegated rather than rejected by the radical right then it was always likely that when the socio-political circumstances were right, so it would be appropriate for race to re-emerge. In this respect, it would be easy to conclude that the BLM protests created a socio-political landscape within which those circumstances were right. Doing so however is too simplistic in that it fails to take into account the fullness of contemporary Britain's socio-political landscape: one that is the culmination of more than a decade of austerity policies, of Brexit, of terrorist attacks, of a marked shift towards populist political rhetoric and of ever more antagonistic and deepening social divides between different groups and communities.

According to Perry, such socio-political landscapes are problematic in that they create the circumstances within which they bestow 'permission to hate'[60]. For her, this is made possible through the ongoing predication of divisive ideologies and ideas being put forward by political and elite actors that seek to demarcate 'us' from 'them'. Constructing various 'Others' that are seen to be threatening and fear-inducing, so too are they blamed for a whole host of social, political, cultural and economic ills. Over time, those Others slowly become adjudged to be deserving of hate[61]. Rather than the cause therefore, the BLM protests were instead a point of culmination: where various socio-political factors asymmetrically combined to create the necessary circumstances within which race could not only re-emerge but re-emerge in a way that functioned as a means of demarcating 'us' from 'them'. At its most basic, this can be seen in how the 'black' in BLM was the catalyst for some within the radical-right to seize the opportunity and reciprocate it with 'white' in its rhetorical response. Race had never been rejected by the British radical-right, it had only ever been relegated.

Patriotic Alternative illustrates this perfectly. On the one hand, Patriotic Alternative are fully aware of the need to repackage traditional nationalist ideologies in ways that are palatable for much wider and non-traditional radical-right audiences if it is to ever gain any let alone enough power to bring about the changes their ideology demands. Given you can trace the lineage of Patriotic Alternative back to the BNP in particular, maybe Patriotic Alternative are merely the latest iteration of the modernisation programme Griffin started back in the mid-1990s. Despite being the largest n-right group in Britain today and showing unprecedented levels of innovation in trying to reach and engage new and non-traditional audiences, the continued lack of penetration into the mainstream by Patriotic Alternative would seem to suggest there is still a lot to do in terms of modernisation. Factor in Patriotic Alternative's commitment to traditional nationalist ideologies as also its willingness to deploy race in both its campaigns and rhetoric and the intended outcome of that same modernisation programme – to make the radical-right electable – seems even more distant.

Conclusion

In light of the task faced by Patriotic Alternative and the British radical-right more broadly, we should have no concerns about them becoming electable at any time soon or even making significant inroads into the political or public mainstream. Whether historically or contemporarily, there seems to be very little appetite among British people for either traditional nationalism or the ideologies underpinning it. At the national level therefore, the re-emergence of race in the rhetoric and activities of the radical-right should for the time being at least provoke little concern. That said, it is worth noting the worrying rhetoric currently emanating from the British Government in relation to immigration and the push towards introducing legislation that will enable security forces to deal with 'illegal immigrants'[62]. While somewhat different from the repatriation of non-white British citizens advocated by Patriotic Alternative, the rhetoric might have the potential to confer at least some legitimacy on the idea.

It is however at the local level where there is some justification for concern. In the same way that Griffin and the BNP were able to exploit the growing wave of hostility towards Muslims and Islam that was given credence by the conditions of the socio-political landscape of Britain at the time, it is

entirely possible that the British radical-right will be able to similarly exploit the contemporary socio-political landscape and the growing wave of hostility towards certain groups and communities that are differentiated and demarcated from 'us' along racialised lines. There are however some significant differences that are worthy of note. Today, the range of groups and communities towards which a growing wave of hostility is becoming increasingly apparent are more diverse and disparate than those targeted by the BNP. Back then, it was relatively easy for the BNP to construe all Britain's Muslims as a singular, one-dimensional Other via their adherence to the religion of Islam. The EDL did similar, identifying mosques as sites of protest on the basis of the symbolic function they performed: of Islam and by default, Muslims. There is nothing akin to mosques that function to symbolise all those being targeted today except of course, race.

Nonetheless, there are other ways the British radical-right might look to deploy race to exploit local tensions, exacerbate inter-community divides and like the BNP did, seek electoral gains in municipal elections. As regards exploiting local tensions, one might look no further than the recent disturbances between groups of young - almost exclusively non-white - men from Leicester's Hindu and Muslim communities[63]. Providing the radical-right with 'evidence' in support of its ideological views, so too would it seem relatively easy to both couple and exploit the fact that the number of people living in the city who identify as non-white now outnumber those identifying as white British. So too in Leicester might the radical-right seek to exacerbate tensions between the city's Hindus and Muslims. While the re-emergence of race has coincided with the relegation of religion, recent history gives credence to Muslims being a shared enemy of both the radical-right and Hindus. That it is alleged that some of the young Hindu men taking part in the disturbances were affiliated to India's Hindutva movement and the nationalist ideologies that are typically associated with it, so the link with the radical-right is already one of ideological unity[64]. In relation to electoral gains, there is some potential to replicate the model adopted by the BNP and which brought them unprecedented success. In the same way the BNP targeted white communities in locations where there was high levels of deprivation and a large Muslim population nearby, so today a radical right group seeking electoral success could do similar albeit focusing on locations where there are known tensions between Hindu and Muslim communities, where large numbers of refugees or asylum seekers have been housed, or where there have been a recent increase in the number of Roma for example.

There is one final cause for concern that relates to a point made at the outset, about how in recent years traditional nationalist ideologies that centre on race had become the preserve of the extreme right-wing. The re-emergence of race therefore brings about consequences that have the potential to provoke a final cause for concern. This is because the re-emergence of race has the potential to close the ideological gap between the radical-right and the extreme right-wing. In doing so, so too does the gap between those who are non-violent and those who have a known propensity for or willingness to use violence also close. That this creates the potential for more people to be drawn towards the extreme right-wing is the first of those concerns. So too does it have the potential to bring about greater unity not only within the radical-right at its broadest but between the radical-right and the extreme right-wing. On the basis that it is difficult to envisage the extreme right wing softening its ideological stance in order to move towards the radical-right, the likely outcome therefore is that the radical-right shifts towards more extreme ideologies.

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