

WEAPONISING COVID-19: FAR-RIGHT ANTISEMITISM IN THE UNITED KINGDOM AND UNITED STATES

BY DR RAKIB EHSAN



**CENTRE ON
RADICALISATION
& TERRORISM**

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Front Cover: (from left to right) Logo for British National Socialist Movement (BNSM), screenshot taken from Telegram; Virus Image by PublicDomainPictures from Pixabay, <https://pixabay.com/illustrations/virus-infection-cell-bacterium-213708/>; and New National Socialist Movement Flag, 18 February 2018, Author Derivative work: Carnby, Wikipedia commons https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/ad/Flag_of_National_Socialist_Movement_%28United_States%29_%282016%29.svg.

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Contents

About the Author	2
Acknowledgements	2
About The Henry Jackson Society	2
About The Centre on Radicalisation and Terrorism.....	2
1. Introduction.....	5
2. Exploitation of COVID-19: Far-Right Antisemitism in the UK and US	7
<i>2.1: British National Socialist Movement (BNSM).....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>2.2: National Socialist Movement (US)</i>	<i>13</i>
3. COVID-19’s “One Ring of Racism”	17
4. Conclusion and Policy Recommendations	19
<i>UK</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>USA.....</i>	<i>21</i>

About Us



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About The Henry Jackson Society

The Henry Jackson Society is a think-tank and policy-shaping force that fights for the principles and alliances which keep societies free, working across borders and party lines to combat extremism, advance democracy and real human rights, and make a stand in an increasingly uncertain world.

CENTRE ON RADICALISATION & TERRORISM

About The Centre on Radicalisation and Terrorism

The Centre on Radicalisation and Terrorism (CRT) at the Henry Jackson Society is unique in addressing violent and non-violent extremism. By coupling high-quality, in-depth research with targeted and impactful policy recommendations, we aim to combat the threat of radicalisation and terrorism in our society.

1. Introduction

Far-right extremists have historically blamed Jewish people for a range of international problems and national crises, and the COVID-19 global pandemic is no different.¹ There has been an explosion of antisemitic conspiracy theories online, populating social media channels as mainstream news coverage on the new coronavirus gathered pace.² Antisemitic material has been tracked and recorded on mainstream social media sites like Facebook and Twitter, as well as in more obscure corners of the internet where extremists gather, such as 4chan message boards and encrypted messenger apps such as Telegram.³ The content is consumed with the same hateful obsession: that Jewish people must be responsible for the destructive effects of COVID-19.

The association of Jews with disease and infection is by no means original. Indeed, it draws on a long history and deep-rooted antisemitic tropes. One of the first examples of this is from the fourteenth century, when bubonic plague – more commonly known as ‘the Black Death’ – swept through Europe, claiming more than 20 million lives.⁴ In Western Europe, a third of the population was killed.⁵ In many places, Jews were blamed for causing the plague by allegedly poisoning wells.⁶ The scale of persecution during the Black Death was so vast that it led to Western Europe being virtually emptied of its Jewish communities, many of whom travelled east to escape persecution and to begin the rich civilisation of Polish Jewry that thrived until the Holocaust.⁷

The path to the Holocaust was built, in part, on the antisemitic association of Jews with disease and infection. Adolf Hitler compared Jews to a “harmful bacillus” in *Mein Kampf* and referred to a “Jewish virus” that posed a fundamental threat to Germanic civilisation.⁸ Nazi propaganda regularly compared Jews to fleas, lice and other disease-bearing creatures, most notoriously in the film *Der Ewige Jude (The Eternal Jew)*, which depicted Jews as rodents spreading their infection across Europe. Indeed, the film begins with the narration: “Just as the rat is the lowest of animals, the Jew is the lowest of human beings.”⁹ This is the antisemitic legacy that is now echoed by contemporary far-right conspiracist extremists who are exploiting the coronavirus pandemic to push their own antisemitic agenda. COVID-19 has provided an opportunity for the far-right to demonise Jewish communities and spread antisemitic tropes. As this report documents, far-right organisations have developed ideas to ‘bio-weaponise’ the COVID-19 pandemic – formulating ‘bioterrorism’ plans designed to infect and contaminate synagogues and predominantly Jewish neighbourhoods.

¹ Far-right beliefs centre on the promotion of a separation of the races, rooted in the view that there is a common, exclusively white identity that is threatened by the presence of an ‘other’. The term is frequently used interchangeably with the terms ‘extreme right’ and ‘white supremacism’. In the United States, violence from activists holding these beliefs is often characterised as ‘religiously or ethnically motivated terrorism’ (REMT). ‘Neo-Nazi’ can be considered as a literal phrase meaning ‘new Nazi’, referring to those who have attempted to keep the Nazi flame burning since the defeat of 1945. Neo-Nazism borrows elements from traditional Nazi doctrine, such as ultra-nationalism, antisemitism, homophobia and ableism. Definitions sourced from: Ehsan, R. and Stott, P., ‘Countering the Far Right: An Anthology’, *The Henry Jackson Society* (2020), available at: <https://henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/HJS-Far-Right-Anthology-Report-web.pdf>, last visited 11 May 2020.

² *Community Security Trust*, ‘Research Briefing: Coronavirus and the Plague of Antisemitism’, (2020), available at: <https://cst.org.uk/data/file/d/9/Coronavirus%20and%20the%20plague%20of%20antisemitism.1586276450.pdf>, last visited 11 May 2020.

³ Telegram is a cloud-based instant messaging and voice over IP service. Default messages and media (as well as client-server communication) in Telegram are encrypted. Telegram was launched in 2013 by Nikolai and Pavel Durov, who also founded the Russian social network VK (which is based in Saint Petersburg).

⁴ Ward, B., *A Journey Through History: A Story of Medicine* (New York: Rosen Publishing Group, 2012).

⁵ Horrox, R., *The Black Death* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013).

⁶ Poisoning wells is historically known to be the malicious manipulation of water resources in order to cause death or grave illness (and, in wartime, to prevent enemy combatants from accessing clean water). During the pre-modern era, well poisoning was one of the three gravest antisemitic accusations made against Jewish people (along with blood libel and host desecration).

⁷ Piotrowski, T., *Poland's Holocaust: Ethnic Strife, Collaboration with Occupying Forces and Genocide in the Second Republic, 1918-1947* (London: McFarland & Company Inc., 1998).

⁸ Jackel, E., *Hitler's World View: A Blueprint for Power* (London: Harvard University Press, 1981).

⁹ Sax, B., *Animals in the Third Reich: Pets, Scapegoats, and the Holocaust* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2000).

In a research briefing published in April 2020, the London-based charity Community Security Trust (CST) has documented instances of antisemitic exploitation of the COVID-19 global pandemic.¹⁰ This includes social media material which peddles antisemitic conspiracies, suggests Jewish complicity in the spreading of the coronavirus, celebrates coronavirus-related Jewish deaths, and encourages individuals to infect Jewish people by coughing on them – an act labelled in far-right online subcultures as a ‘Holocough’.¹¹ Using the CST’s briefing as a point of departure, this report provides a concise overview of how the COVID-19 global pandemic is being exploited by far-right organisations in the UK and US in order to generate antisemitic violence and hatred. It also seeks to develop a critical understanding of how new instances of social crisis (such as the COVID-19 global pandemic) are being integrated into existing conspiratorial frameworks used by far-right organisations. As well as identifying areas of convergence between British and American far-right organisations in their antisemitic exploitation of the COVID-19 pandemic, the report also pinpoints potential instances of transatlantic collaboration on this front.

The report focuses on antisemitic coronavirus-related material produced, uploaded, and shared by two far-right organisations – the British National Socialist Movement (BNSM) and the US-based National Socialist Movement (NSM). While the BNSM has a relatively small membership, it maintains an active social media presence primarily through its organisational account on Telegram. The NSM is one of the leading members of the broader US Nationalist Front – a coalition of white-supremacist and white-nationalist organisations originally conceived by the NSM and the Traditionalist Worker Party (TPW).¹² The NSM is of particular interest in light of the FBI’s shootout with Timothy Wilson on 24 March 2020.¹³ The FBI ‘sting’ operation discovered that Wilson sought to conduct a terrorist attack on a hospital in the Kansas City area, which he viewed as a ‘target-rich’ location due to the coronavirus pandemic. Wilson has been accused of having significant links with the NSM, and is believed to have been active on NSM social media and to have served as an administrator for one of its online chatrooms.¹⁴

To demonstrate the degree that antisemitic content is being hosted on peripheral social media platforms and more obscure parts of the internet, this report focuses on COVID-19-related material collected from two sources – the BNSM’s Telegram account and the NSM’s organisational website (specifically the podcast section). The first reported case of COVID-19 being transmitted within the UK was registered on 28 February 2020,¹⁵ and the first reported case in a person with no known exposure to the virus (no link to travel or close contact with a known infected individual) in the US is believed to be two days earlier, on 26 February 2020.¹⁶ Therefore, the report primarily focuses on antisemitic coronavirus-related material produced, uploaded, and shared in the months of March and April 2020. Following the presentation of this material and a short analysis of how antisemitic conspiracies over the COVID-19 pandemic cut across different ideological terrains, the report concludes by proposing practical and realistic policy solutions designed to create a more robust, coordinated, and effective response to combat far-right antisemitism in both the UK and US.

¹⁰ *Community Security Trust*, ‘Research Briefing: Coronavirus and the Plague of Antisemitism’ (2020).

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² The Nationalist Front was initially called the Aryan Nationalist Alliance.

¹³ Halaschak, Z., ‘FBI says man who planned to bomb hospital during pandemic killed himself’, *Washington Examiner*, 15 May 2020, available at: <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/news/fbi-says-man-who-planned-to-bomb-hospital-during-pandemic-killed-himself>, last visited: 19 May 2020.

¹⁴ Alcock, A., ‘FBI: Terrorism suspect who planned to bomb hospital visited Neo-Nazi chatrooms’, *KSHB Kansas City*, 27 March 2020, available at: <https://www.kshb.com/news/local-news/investigations/fbi-terrorism-suspect-who-planned-to-bomb-hospital-visited-neo-nazi-chatrooms>, last visited: 11 May 2020.

¹⁵ Paul, A., ‘When did coronavirus first come to the UK’, *Metro*, 19 April 2020, available at: <https://metro.co.uk/2020/04/19/first-case-coronavirus-uk-covid-19-diagnosis-12578061/>, last visited: 11 May 2020.

¹⁶ Guardian Staff and Agencies, ‘New coronavirus case in northern California may be first with no link to travel’, *The Guardian*, 27 February 2020, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/feb/26/us-coronavirus-california-case>, last visited: 11 May 2020.

2. Exploitation of COVID-19: Far-Right Antisemitism in the UK and US

This part of the report demonstrates how far-right extremists in the UK and the US have sought to exploit the COVID-19 pandemic. It focuses on the material produced and shared by the BNSM on the encrypted messenger app Telegram (with this incorporating posts from 9 February 2020 to 2 May 2020), and on online content uploaded by the NSM (primarily in the form of podcasts dated from 14 April 2020 to 28 April 2020). With older NSM podcasts being regularly removed from the BlogTalkRadio website, more recent and available uploads were analysed and included in this report.¹⁷

2.1: British National Socialist Movement (BNSM)

The British National Socialist Movement (otherwise known as simply the ‘British Movement’) was founded in 1968 by Colin Jordan.¹⁸ On its website, the organisation’s logo is accompanied by the phrase “14 Words” – linking it with neo-Nazi discourse and situating it firmly in far-right ideological territory.¹⁹

Figure 1: British Movement logo from the organisation’s website²⁰



The BNSM sprouted from the National Socialist Movement which had been established six-years earlier, in 1962. Under different organisational names, the BNSM has a long and chequered history of violent extremism, with the group having engaged in paramilitary training activities in the UK and other European countries such as Germany.²¹ During the late 1970s and early

¹⁷ Please note that older podcasts produced by the NSM were accessed but removed before attempts to capture this material.

¹⁸ Jackson, P., *Colin Jordan and Britain's Neo-Nazi Movement: Hitler's Echo* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc., 2017).

¹⁹ “14 words” is a reference to the 14-word slogan: “We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children”. The slogan was originally coined by David Lane. For more information, see: Michael, G. (2009), ‘David Lane and the Fourteen Words’, *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 10(1): 43-61.

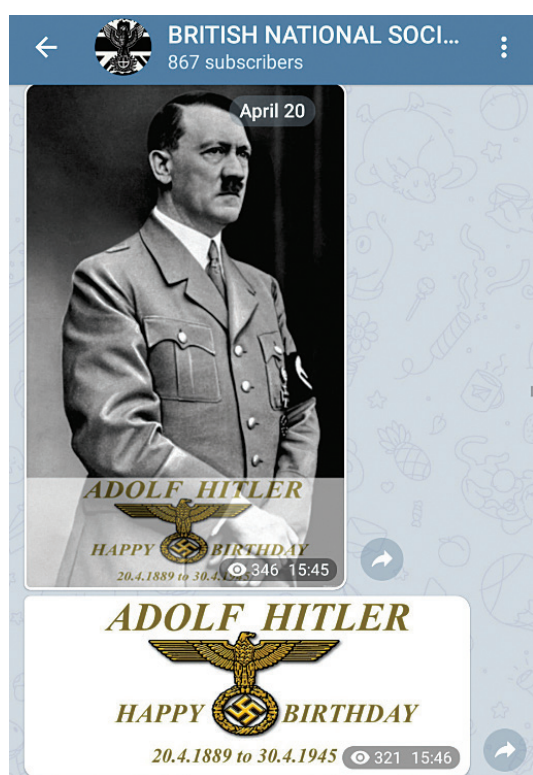
²⁰ Image captured on 2 May 2020.

²¹ Jackson, P., *Colin Jordan and Britain's Neo-Nazi Movement: Hitler's Echo*.

1980s, the British Movement orchestrated a number of racially-motivated attacks on black and Asian families in London (particularly in the City of London and the borough of Tower Hamlets).²² During its annual meeting of 1985, the British Movement established a new group called the British National Socialist Movement (BNSM) – with the two entities being closely related in terms of organisational membership, from the BNSM’s inception.²³ The British Movement was involved in the rioting which led to the 1985 Heysel Stadium disaster in which 39 people died.²⁴

While the BNSM remains on the fringes of the UK’s broader far-right movement, it maintains an active presence on the encrypted messenger app Telegram, posting extremist content through its organisational account. This account has a total of 867 subscribers.²⁵ The organisation used its Telegram account to celebrate the birthday of Adolf Hitler (20 April) by posting a stream of material that glorifies the Nazis.

Figure 2: Image from BNSM Telegram Account (20 April 2020)²⁶



The BNSM account has posted antisemitic content relating to the COVID-19 global pandemic which broadly falls into three categories: that which claims Jewish people are responsible for spreading the coronavirus; that which accuses Jewish people of reacting positively to the COVID-19 pandemic; and that which encourages coronavirus-infected individuals to contaminate Jewish places of worship. Currently, the BNSM is not a proscribed terrorist organisation in the UK.²⁷

²² Kelly, J., 'Nicky Crane: The secret double life of a gay neo-Nazi', *BBC News*, 6 December 2013, available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-25142557>, last visited: 11 May 2020.

²³ Goodrick-Clarke, N., *Black Sun: Aryan Cults, Esoteric Nazism, and the Politics of Identity* (New York: New York University Press, 2003).

²⁴ Harris, G., *The Dark Side of Europe: The Extreme Right Today* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994).

²⁵ Figure registered on 11 May 2020.

²⁶ Image captured on 11 May 2020.

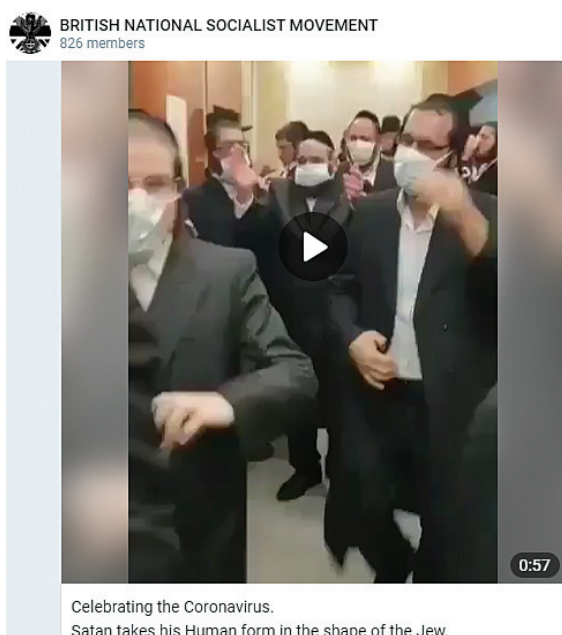
²⁷ Home Office, 'Proscribed terrorist organisations', 28 February 2020, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/869496/20200228_Proscription.pdf, last visited: 11 May 2020.

Figure 3: BNSM Telegram post (2 May 2020)



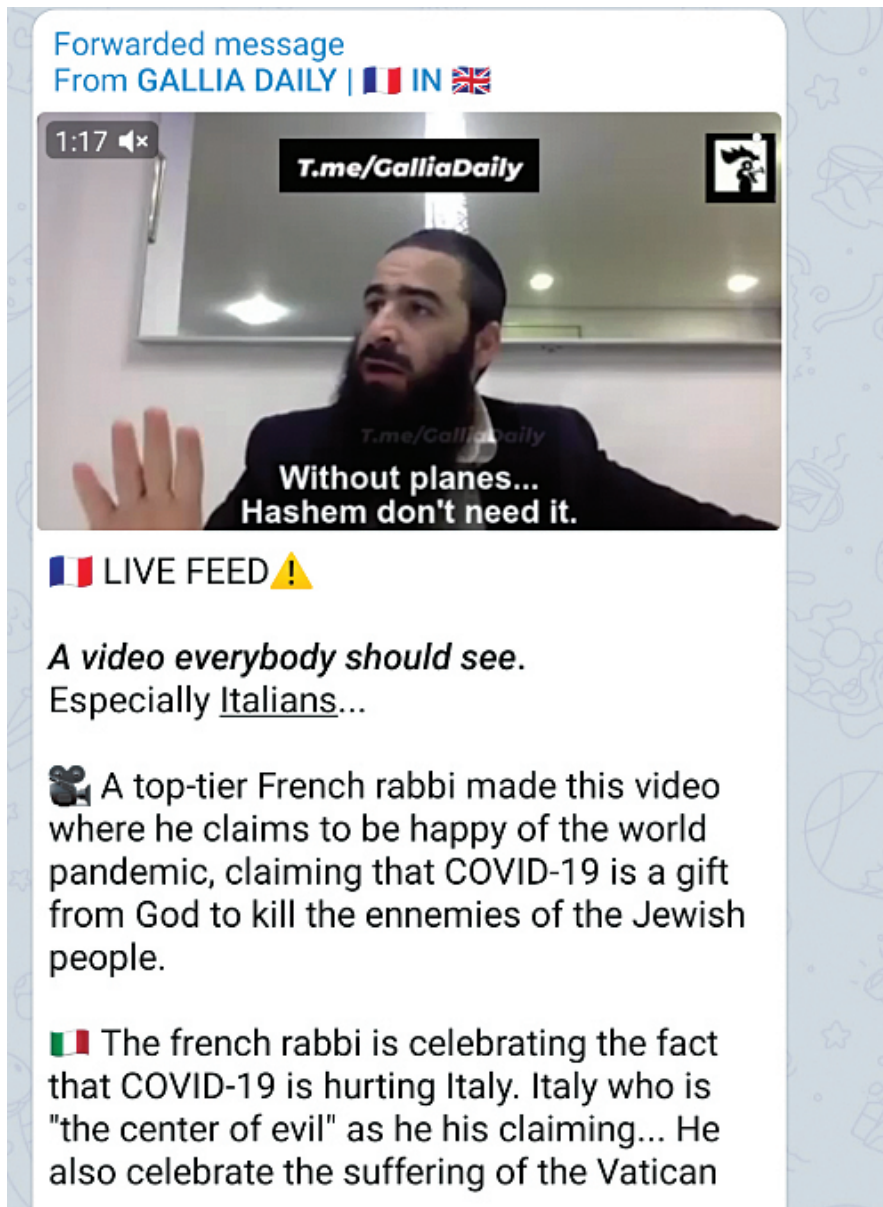
Drawing inspiration from traditional Nazi references to the “Jewish virus”, the BNSM has posted memes (such as the one depicted above as Figure 3) where images of virus molecules are shown with an antisemitic slant, such as the virus with a human head wearing tefellin and having a large-sized ‘hooked nose’. The use of antisemitic motifs or anti-Jewish imagery, alongside or on top of images of the virus, is used to suggest that the virus is somehow ‘Jewish’ or that Jews are responsible for and exploiting the COVID-19 pandemic. The meme presented in Figure 3, referring to the COVID-19 pandemic, taps into long-standing antisemitic tropes which suggest that Jewish people are inherently cunning and are able to effectively provide the image of being trustworthy when holding nefarious intentions.²⁸ As of 11 May 2020, the post had received 405 views.

Figure 4: BNSM Telegram post (9 February 2020)



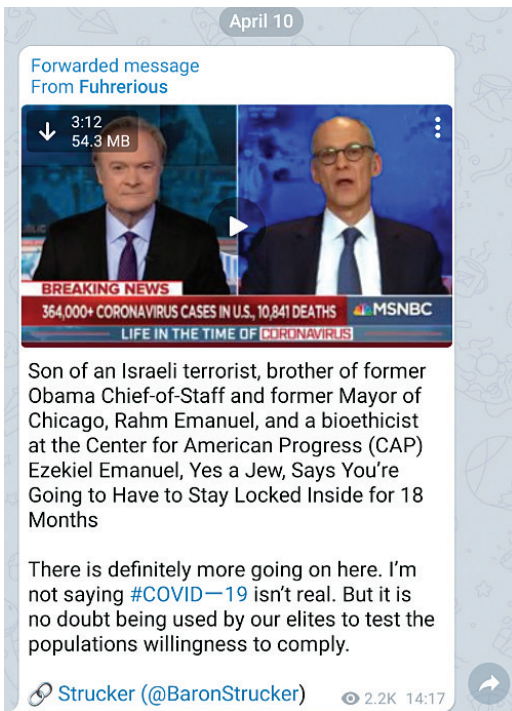
²⁸ Vyleta, D., *Crime, Jews and News: Vienna 1890-1914* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007).

Figure 5: BNSM Telegram forwarded post (3 April 2020)



The BNSM has also posted images and footage which are designed to fuel the antisemitic belief that Jewish people, as a collective, are either behind the spread of the coronavirus or pleased with the effects of it. Examples of this are shown in Figures 4 and 5. Figure 4 is a screenshot of a video-clip which shows a group of Jewish men socialising and wearing masks. It is accompanied by the caption: “Celebrating the coronavirus. Satan takes his Human form in the shape of the Jew.” As of 4 May 2020, this post had received 275 views. Figure 5 is another screenshot of a video-clip shared by BNSM on its Telegram account, which supposedly features a “top-tier French rabbi” (speaking in French) who is accused of glorifying the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and suggesting that the new coronavirus is a “gift from God” – sent to kill “the enemies of the Jewish people”. The speaker in the shared video offers the view that coronavirus-related deaths in Italy, as well as the Islamic Republic of Iran, are the result of historic Catholic–Jewish tensions and Iran’s tumultuous relationship with Israel. Despite the speaker being referred to as a “top-tier rabbi” in France – implying that he occupies a high-profile position within France’s religious Jewish population – the inflammatory content in the clip has not been reported as a story in the mainstream French and broader European press. As of 4 May 2020, the clip had received a total of 15,900 views on Telegram.

Figure 6: BNSM Telegram forwarded post (10 April 2020)



The BNSM Telegram account has also shared and forwarded posts which suggest that the new coronavirus was manufactured and released by Jewish-controlled public authorities as a step towards creating an authoritarian police state. Figure 6 shows a screenshot of a video-clip shared by BNSM on Telegram, which includes Center for American Progress oncologist Ezekiel Emanuel discussing the virtues of a lockdown in order to slow the spread of COVID-19 in the US. In the post, Emanuel is referred to as a “Son of an Israeli terrorist”, and his Jewish identity is emphasised (“Yes, a Jew”). The post suggests that social elites are utilising the coronavirus outbreak to “test” the willingness of populations to comply with state instruction in preparation for the introduction of a more authoritarian form of governance. As of 22 April 2020, the clip had received a total of 2,200 views.

Figure 7: BNSM Telegram post (9 March 2020)



Figure 7 shows an image of German Chancellor Angela Merkel greeting Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The wooden horse is shown to be concealing three people, each equipped with a spear and a shield: with one having a virus molecule as its head. The horse's wheels are depicted as the Star of David. This relates to antisemitic white-replacement theories which proffer that Jewish people are secretly behind the diversification of the European continent and use Turkey as an important pathway to 'transfer' non-white people to Europe from other parts of the world.²⁹ These conspiracy theories rest on the assumption that Jewish people feel safer in more 'multicultural' societies with a diminished 'white European' population (due to historical factors such as the Holocaust).

Far-right white-replacement theories have often accused Israeli refugee agencies of playing an integral part in the relocation of refugees to Europe. Chancellor Merkel has personally been criticised by both mainstream politicians and far-right political parties across Europe for her management of the migrant/refugee crisis in the middle part of the 2010s.³⁰ The depiction of the virus molecule potentially alludes to the antisemitic conspiracy theory that Jewish people are looking to accelerate the spread of the new coronavirus in the Western world through the promotion of a liberal refugee policy (along with the unfounded assertion that non-white migrants transmit the disease in a more aggressive manner).³¹ The meme itself ultimately links the spread of the new coronavirus with speculated Jewish efforts to destroy Christian Europe. As of 27 April 2020, the image had received 306 views.

Figure 8: BNSM Telegram post (12 March 2020 - now removed)



²⁹ Ehsan, R. and Stott, P., 'Far-Right Terrorist Manifestos: A Critical Analysis', *The Henry Jackson Society* (2020), available at: <https://henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/HJS-Terrorist-Manifesto-Report-WEB.pdf>, last visited: 11 May 2020.

³⁰ Connolly, K., 'Angela Merkel rejects criticism of open-door refugee policy', *The Guardian*, 15 October 2020, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/oct/15/angela-merkel-rejects-criticism-open-door-refugee-policy-germany>, last visited: 11 May 2020.

³¹ Colborne, M., 'As world struggles to stop deaths, far right celebrates COVID-19', *Al Jazeera*, 26 March 2020, available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/world-struggles-stop-deaths-celebrates-covid-19-200326165545387.html>, last visited: 11 May 2020.

On the encrypted messenger app Telegram, the BNSM shared a poster titled “What to Do If You Get COVID-19” (shown in Figure 8)³² which encourages infected individuals to commit personal acts of bioterrorism on synagogues, along with mosques and ethnically diverse neighbourhoods. This strikes parallels with warnings made by US Federal investigators over how members of American neo-Nazi organisations were planning to spread the new coronavirus in predominantly Jewish and non-white neighbourhoods through saliva-filled spray bottles.³³ The poster itself contains dark forms of satire which tend to predominate within far-right online subculture, in this case featuring the logos for the World Health Organization (WHO) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The American English spelling used for the term ‘neighbourhood’ and the inclusion of the logo for the CDC (the leading American national public health institute) suggest the poster may have originally been designed and produced in the US (but this has not been verified).

2.2: National Socialist Movement (US)

The National Socialist Movement (NSM) is an American organisation based in Detroit, Michigan, which is designated as a “neo-Nazi hate group” by the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC).³⁴ On its official website, the NSM refers to itself as “the premier white civil rights organization – fighting for white civil rights”.³⁵ It is part of the Nationalist Front, which has been referred to by American author Vegas Tenold as a “ragtag coalition of white pride malcontents”.³⁶

Figure 9: Image from NSM website³⁷



³² Demonstrating the dark satire which characterises far-right meme subculture, the following passages accompany the four main headings displayed on the poster: **Visit your local mosque!** – “Muslims have higher sanitary standards than the average person and are far safer to be around in flu season.” **Visit your local synagogue!** – “The Jewish community has pledged to assist with the COVID-19 outbreak and will provide complimentary masks to anyone who attends synagogue as of March 2, 2020.” **Spend time in diverse neighborhoods!** – “Increased exposure to diversity is clinically proven to provide short-term and long-term benefits to immune system function.” **Spend the day on public transport!** – “Modern public transport vehicles are made with antibacterial materials, meaning they are safer to use and reduce risk of re-infection.” The post was captured on 21 March 2020, and is no longer on the BNSM Telegram account feed.

³³ Folly, A., ‘FBI warns white supremacists encouraging members to spread coronavirus to law enforcement, Jews: report’, *The Hill*, 22 March 2020, available at: <https://thehill.com/blogs/blog-briefing-room/news/488919-fbi-white-supremacists-encouraging-members-to-spread>, last visited: 11 May 2020.

³⁴ Link to SPLC page on the National Socialist Movement: <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/group/national-socialist-movement>, last visited: 11 May 2020. As of 19 May 2020, the NSM had neither addressed or denied the designation by the SPLC that they are a “neo-Nazi hate group”.

³⁵ Link to NSM homepage: www.nsm88.org.

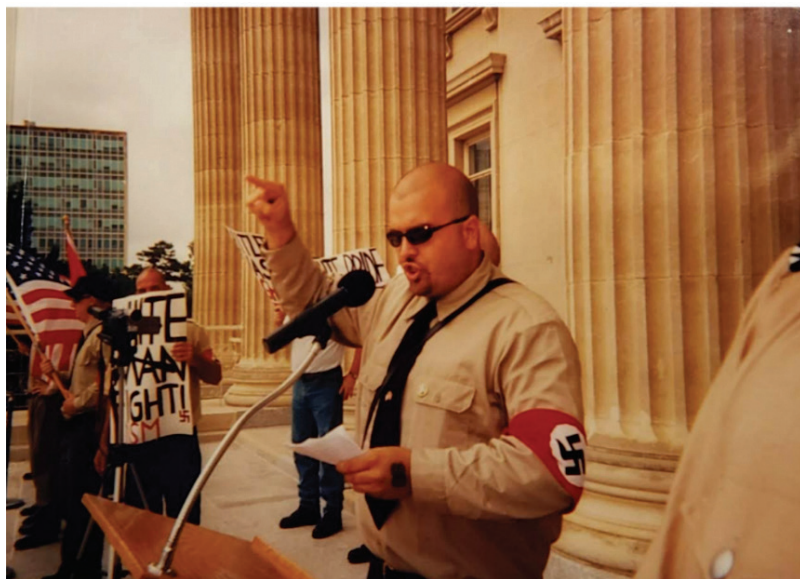
³⁶ Tenold, V., *Everything You Love Will Burn: Inside the Rebirth of White Nationalism in America* (New York: Nation Books, 2018).

³⁷ Image captured on 6 May 2020 from NSM homepage.

The NSM's official website has posted antisemitic content relating to the COVID-19 global pandemic. This includes Figure 9 above, which relates to the antisemitic conspiracy that Jewish people are seeking to exploit the US's national health crisis, brought on by the COVID-19 global pandemic, in the name of financial gain. The NSM is of particular interest in light of alleged claims that it had notable links with Timothy Wilson,³⁸ who planned to conduct a terrorist attack on a Kansas City area hospital during the coronavirus outbreak, before dying in a shootout with the FBI.³⁹

Figure 10: Image of NSM “Commander” Burt Colucci from organisation’s website⁴⁰

Welcome to the Commander's Desk
Commander Burt Colucci's Blog



This section provides a concise overview of the anti-Jewish hatred and antisemitic coronavirus-related conspiracy theories contained within a select number of NSM podcasts hosted by the BlogTalkRadio website.⁴¹ Three leading NSM figures feature across the podcasts: Burt Colucci, Harry Hughes, and Daniel “Norse” Burnside.⁴² The podcasts – five in total – are listed in chronological order with their respective durations:

Podcast: 14 April 2020 (135 minutes)⁴³

This “Open Phones” podcast is hosted by NSM “Commander” Burt Colucci.⁴⁴ Over the course of the show, Colucci receives phone calls from members of the public.

³⁸ Alcock, A., ‘FBI: Terrorism suspect who planned to bomb hospital visited Neo-Nazi chatrooms’, *KSHB Kansas City*, 27 March 2020, available at: <https://www.kshb.com/news/local-news/investigations/fbi-terrorism-suspect-who-planned-to-bomb-hospital-visited-neo-nazi-chatrooms>, last visited: 11 May 2020.

³⁹ Halaschak, Z., ‘FBI says man who planned to bomb hospital during pandemic killed himself’, *Washington Examiner*, 15 May 2020, available at: <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/news/fbi-says-man-who-planned-to-bomb-hospital-during-pandemic-killed-himself>, last visited: 19 May 2020.

⁴⁰ Image captured on 4 May 2020.

⁴¹ NSM Radio Channel on BlogTalkRadio website: https://www.blogtalkradio.com/nsm_media_network.

⁴² On the NSM website, Burt Colucci is stated as the organisation’s “commander”. Harry Hughes, who introduces himself in podcasts as NSM’s “public relations director”, is also listed on the NSM website: www.nsm88.org; Daniel “Norse” Burnside is one of the main presenters for the NSM’s radio channel hosted on the BlogTalkRadio website: https://www.blogtalkradio.com/nsm_media_network; for more information on Burnside, see: Daniel, Z., and Olson, E. ‘Nazis, Ku Klux Klan fliers and a dog named Adolf: Is this small US town a hotbed for white nationalism’, *ABC News*, 6 July 2019, available at: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-07-07/potter-county-residents-decry-the-neo-nazi-next-door/11243672>, last visited: 12 May 2020.

⁴³ Original link to NSM podcast (14 April 2020): https://www.blogtalkradio.com/nsm_media_network/2020/04/15/national-socialist-movement-open-phones-04142020, last visited: 4 May 2020. Podcast captured: 2 May 2020.

⁴⁴ The title of “Commander” is used for Burt Colucci on the NSM website: www.nsm88.org.

This podcast features the long-standing antisemitic trope that Jewish people are responsible for mass deaths caused by the spread of disease. The host suggests that Jewish people were behind the Black Death, and that from medieval times to the present, Jews have demonstrated an inherent tendency for killing large numbers of non-Jews through efficient methods (58 minutes, 15 seconds).

Peddling Zionist-occupied government (ZOG) conspiracies,⁴⁵ the podcast also contains material which accuses the US Government of allowing Jewish people to continue attending their places of worship, but withdrawing this right from Christians.⁴⁶ Disseminating a coronavirus-related conspiracy which is interwoven with both anti-Jewish and anti-Muslim sentiments, the NSM also suggests that there are efforts to create a Jewish-Muslim alliance over the COVID-19 global pandemic (which is primarily affecting Western Christian people).

Podcast: 20 April 2020 (156 minutes)⁴⁷

The NSM podcast for 20 April 2020 was presented by Daniel “Norse” Burnside. Burnside’s podcasts tend to provide interpretations of Adolf Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* and other forms of Nazi literature.

At the beginning of the podcast, Burnside wishes Adolf Hitler a “happy birthday” (2 minutes, 23 seconds). During the podcast, Burnside publicises a sign at an anti-lockdown COVID-19 demonstration which refers to Jews as “the real plague” and characterises Jewish people as rats. The owner of this sign is hosted on the show, and claims that he was confronted by a “half-Jewish person” at the anti-lockdown protest. Touching on ZOG conspiracies, the podcast contains material which implies that the US government is depending on loans from Jewish-owned banks and wealthy Jewish individuals, in order to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic. During a conversation with an external caller, Burnside suggests that the US Federal Government “went to BlackRock and all the other rich Jews like Larry Fink” for coronavirus-related financial support.⁴⁸ (59 minutes, 45 seconds).

Podcast: 26 April 2020 (116 minutes)⁴⁹

This NSM podcast is hosted by Harry Hughes, who introduces himself as the organisation’s “Public Relations Director”. In the earlier stages of the podcast, Hughes states that he celebrated Adolf Hitler’s birthday by attending an anti-lockdown COVID-19 protest in the south-western US state of Arizona.

During the podcast, the conspiracy theory that 5G is associated with the spreading of the coronavirus is peddled – with British conspiracy theorist David Icke being specifically mentioned.⁵⁰ There is also the suggestion that Jewish people are complicit in disseminating the disease through this speculated method, with Hughes commenting that 5G is “banned”

⁴⁵ These are antisemitic conspiracy theories which claim that Jewish people secretly control the governments of Western states, including the US Government. For more information, see: Hatonn, G., *Truth From the “Zog Bog”* (Las Vegas: Phoenix Source Publishers, 1993).

⁴⁶ This antisemitic conspiracy has also been peddled in the British context by former leader of the far-right British National Party (BNP) Nick Griffin on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/NickGriffinBU/status/1248151117948731394>, last visited: 4 May 2020.

⁴⁷ Original link to NSM podcast (20 April 2020): https://www.blogtalkradio.com/nsm_media_network/2020/04/21/national-socialist-movement-nsm-101-04202020, last visited: 6 May 2020. Podcast captured: 5 May 2020.

⁴⁸ Larry Fink is the CEO of BlackRock, an American multinational investment management corporation. Fink was raised in a Jewish family based in California.

⁴⁹ Original link to NSM podcast (26 April 2020): https://www.blogtalkradio.com/nsm_media_network/2020/04/27/national-socialist-movement-nsm-weekend-04262020 last visited: 6 May 2020. Podcast captured: 5 May 2020.

⁵⁰ In telecommunications, 5G is the fifth-generation technology standard for cellular networks. Cellular networks, on a global basis, began to deploy this technology in 2019. YouTube has deleted David Icke’s official channel from its platform, after repeated warnings over Icke violating its policies by posting misleading information about the coronavirus pandemic. For more information, see: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-52517797>.

in Israel and France, with the latter being referred to as the “number two Jewish country in the world.” (26 minutes, 16 seconds). The podcast also contains long-standing antisemitic conspiracies over media control, with suggestions that there is a lack of transparent reporting over COVID-19 because of Jewish involvement and interference in the press (and that this was less of a ‘problem’ in the case of media reporting over the ‘Spanish Flu’).⁵¹

Podcast: 27 April 2020 (125 minutes)⁵²

The NSM podcast for 27 April 2020 had Daniel “Norse” Burnside as its presenter.

During the podcast, Burnside refers to an article published by the oldest continuously published weekly magazine in the US, *The Nation*. The article is titled: ‘For White Nationalists, Covid-19 Came Right on Time’.⁵³ The host suggests that the outlet is a Jewish-owned publication, offering the view that the media is exploiting the COVID-19 pandemic and vilifying white people (10 minutes, 43 seconds). Following on from what was discussed during the previous day’s podcast (26 April 2020), Burnside raises suspicions over the introduction of 5G and the coronavirus outbreak – suggesting that “the brain of the International Jew” (1 hour, 31 minutes, 8 seconds) is part of a broader plot to “scare” people into staying at home, in order to decrease energy consumption in the name of environmental sustainability.

Podcast: 28 April 2020 (141 minutes)⁵⁴

This “Open Phones” podcast is led by NSM commander Burt Colucci. Over the course of the show, Colucci takes phone calls from members of the public.

The show features a caller referring to himself as “Norse”, who suggests that “powerful Jewish editors” in the US media are exploiting the COVID-19 pandemic to spread hatred of white nationalists.⁵⁵ Later in the podcast, Colucci states that “untold atrocities” have been caused during the coronavirus outbreak in the name of money, suspecting Jewish people of being involved in such alleged endeavours.

The last part of the podcast includes the announcement: “White citizens of the United States – your country has sold you out in the name of diversity to the international Jew. The only chance white people have to survive in the United States, is to stand up and say no more.” (2 hours, 15 minutes).

⁵¹ Spanish Flu is also known as the 1918 flu pandemic.

⁵² Original link to NSM podcast (27 April 2020): https://www.blogtalkradio.com/nsm_media_network/2020/04/28/national-socialist-movement-nsm-101-04272020, last visited: 6 May 2020. Podcast captured: 5 May 2020.

⁵³ For more information, see: Nakagawa, S., ‘For White Nationalists, Covid-19 Came Right on Time’, *The Nation*, 27 April 2020, available at: <https://www.thenation.com/article/society/white-nationalism-coronavirus-racism/>, last visited: 11 May 2020.

⁵⁴ Original link to NSM podcast (28 April 2020): https://www.blogtalkradio.com/nsm_media_network/2020/04/29/national-socialist-movement-open-phones-04282020, last visited: 6 May 2020. Podcast captured: 5 May 2020.

⁵⁵ It is unclear whether the caller is Daniel Burnside, who has the nickname “Norse”.

3. COVID-19's "One Ring of Racism"

While the report has focused on the far-right antisemitic exploitation of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important to note that antisemitism is a form of prejudice which unites elements of the far-right, far-left, and Islamist extremists – all of which can be brought together under the umbrella of the "One Ring of Racism" concept.⁵⁶

The cross-ideological exploitation of the coronavirus outbreak has seen the antisemitic "One Ring" disseminate similar conspiracy theories – far-right, far-left and Islamist conspiracists are finding common ground over their belief in the Jewish exploitation of the coronavirus outbreak.

What unites the extremists – who belong to different strands of ideology – is a shared belief that the West's market-based societies are constructed to serve the financial interests of an "international Jewry".⁵⁷ The imaginary enemy is an all-powerful Jewish financier class which controls the global banking system, provides extensive financial support to pro-market mainstream political parties, and aggressively promotes Zionist propaganda through the mainstream media. It is worth noting that some of these themes featured in the pre-attack manifesto published by John Earnest, before he allegedly conducted an antisemitic terrorist attack on a California synagogue during Passover celebrations in April 2019.⁵⁸

Peripheral publications have also provided a platform for coronavirus-related material which has the potential to incite violence and hatred. *National Justice*, an American online publication which is "dedicated to shattering the narratives of the controlled left and right in post-truth America", has previously published material expressing solidarity with Jeremy Corbyn, who was supposedly betrayed by "elements of the Judeo-Left" during his period as leader of the Labour Party.⁵⁹

It has also published claims that a Jewish health agency donated 50 ventilators to Borough Park Hospital in New York – on the condition that Jewish Covid-19 patients are given priority access over "Gentiles".⁶⁰ In addition to this, the *National Justice* website has indulged in coronavirus-related anti-Israelism, warning people to reject any kind of vaccine produced by the Israel Institute for Biological Research (IIBR), labelling it a "highly secretive biological warfare unit of the Israeli military".⁶¹

Indeed, there is a significant overlap between the conspiracies about the new coronavirus being promoted by extremists of different ideological complexions. For example, the Algerian news service *Al Masdar* spread the conspiracy theory that Zionist forces were behind the

⁵⁶ Tweet by Maajid Nawaz (founding chairman of Quilliam) on "One Ring of Racism": <https://twitter.com/MaajidNawaz/status/1211146946875920385>, last visited: 11 May 2020.

⁵⁷ *Commission for Countering Extremism*, 'Challenging Hateful Extremism', October 2019, available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/874101/200320_Challenging_Hateful_Extremism.pdf, last visited: 11 May 2020.

⁵⁸ For more information, see Ehsan, R. and Stott, P., "Far-Right Terrorist Manifestos: A Critical Analysis", *The Henry Jackson Society* (2020).

⁵⁹ Striker, E., 'New Document Reveals How Jews Manufactured Corbyn "Anti-Semitism" Hysteria in Quest For Power', *National Justice*, 12 April 2020, available at: <https://national-justice.com/new-documents-reveal-how-jews-manufactured-corbyn-anti-semitism-controversy-power>, last visited: 11 May 2020.

⁶⁰ Striker, E., 'New York: Jews At Brooklyn Hospital Will Enjoy Privileged Access to Ventilators Over Gentiles', *National Justice*, 3 April 2020, available at: <https://national-justice.com/new-york-jews-brooklyn-hospital-will-enjoy-privileged-access-ventilators-over-gentiles>, last visited: 11 May 2020. ("Gentiles" is a biblical term which is used to describe non-Jewish people).

⁶¹ Striker, E., 'Israeli Lab Claiming to Have COVID-19 Vaccine Is an IDF Biological Warfare Research Facility', *National Justice*, 19 April 2020, available at: <https://national-justice.com/israeli-lab-claiming-have-covid-19-vaccine-idf-biological-warfare-research-facility>, last visited: 11 May 2020.

“manufacturing” of the new coronavirus and stand to profit from the subsequent demand for vaccines.⁶² The exploitation of the COVID-19 global pandemic has exposed how antisemitic extremists, of different ideological colours, find common ground through their shared anti-Jewish hatred. It also proves that in these anxious and uncertain times, there are extremists who thrive on exploiting crises to further their antisemitic objectives.

⁶² Ghoraba, H., ‘Islamists Call Coronavirus a Zionist-American Conspiracy’, *The Investigative Project on Terrorism*, 16 March 2020, available at: <https://www.investigativeproject.org/8346/islamists-call-coronavirus-a-zionist-american>, last visited: 11 May 2020.

4. Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

This report highlights the extreme lengths to which far-right organisations – both in the UK and the US – have gone to exploit the COVID-19 global pandemic to further their antisemitic objectives.

Material discovered on the Telegram account belonging to the BNSM and on the website of the US-based NSM demonstrates that far-right organisations are actively weaponising the COVID-19 pandemic to generate antisemitic hatred and incite anti-Jewish acts of violence. This includes antisemitic conspiracy theories which suggest that Jewish people were behind the ‘manufacturing’ of the coronavirus to profit from the demand for new vaccines, as well as language directly encouraging infected individuals to contaminate Jewish places of worship and neighbourhoods. Reflecting the internationalist nature of the far-right movement, both the organisations at the centre of this report have disseminated antisemitic conspiracy theories of a similar nature.

The online regulation of extremist content remains a major point of debate. While mainstream ‘core’ social media platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter have hosted antisemitic content, all three have developed extensive user-led procedures which allow for the reporting and subsequent removal of extremist content. Strengthened forms of internal regulation and more efficient removal of problematic content have contributed to waves of “online migration” from core to peripheral, so-called “alt-tech” platforms such as Telegram.⁶³ The hosting and dissemination of extremist content on certain alt-tech platforms poses a challenge for the UK and US, with both having strained diplomatic ties with countries such as Russia and China, making international collaboration on the issue more difficult.

The severity of extremist content being uploaded and shared on peripheral platforms should be of serious concern to security services and counter-extremism agencies in both the UK and the US. 8chan has been used as a platform for alleged far-right terrorists to post “pre-attack manifestos” which provide justification for their deadly acts of terror.⁶⁴ This includes the April 2019 terrorist attack on a synagogue located in Poway, California, with the alleged perpetrator John Earnest positing a pre-attack manifesto containing a range of antisemitic conspiracy theories.⁶⁵ In both countries, conversations are ongoing in civil society over personal freedom of speech and the degree to which boundaries should be applied to such freedoms in the broader collective interest. In the American context, this strikes at the heart of sensitive discussions over the First Amendment of the US Constitution.

As well as the online regulation of extremist content, innovative thinking beyond the narrow approach of outright bans could prove invaluable in terms of counter-radicalisation policy. Countering the spread of disinformation over the COVID-19 pandemic has been critical – from both public safety and security perspectives. The dissemination of non-evidenced conspiracy theories presented as fact poses a fundamental threat to the democratic health and social wellbeing of Western societies such as the UK and US. Targeting those who are at the earlier stages of radicalisation by using mainstream online public information campaigns designed to weaken conspiratorial narratives could be of value. Moving into the real-world space, there has to be an on-the-ground securitised response to antisemitism which commands the public

⁶³ Nouri, L., Lorenzo-Dus, N. and Watkin, A-L., ‘Following the Whack-a-Mole: Britain First’s Visual Strategy from Facebook to Gab’, *Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies*, 4 July 2019, available at: https://rusi.org/sites/default/files/20190704_grntt_paper_4.pdf, last visited: 11 May 2020. “Alt-tech” is a shortened version of “alternative technology”.

⁶⁴ Ehsan, R. and Stott, P., ‘Far-Right Terrorist Manifestos: A Critical Analysis’, *The Henry Jackson Society* (2020).

⁶⁵ Ibid.

support of British and American communities. At the same time, support should be provided to Jewish groups which strive to raise awareness of the socially destructive effects of both historical and more contemporary forms of the 'oldest hatred'.

Therefore, this report proposes the following policy recommendations:

UK

1. The introduction of stronger forms of internet regulation for alt-tech social media platforms, along with organisational websites, which produce hateful content that has the potential to incite acts of violence towards particular social groups (such as Jewish people). This includes open-source outlets such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube further strengthening their internal moderation systems in order to facilitate the removal of material originally posted on peripheral, alt-tech platforms such as Telegram, 8chan, and GAB, but which is subsequently shared on their sites. In the likely event of non-compliance among peripheral platforms, the Commission for Countering Extremism (CCE) should launch a research initiative dedicated to examining the most effective ways to counter the uploading and dissemination of online extremist content on alt-tech platforms. The initiative could also help to propose new responsibilities for regulatory agencies such as the Office of Communications (OFCOM) and the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO), fleshing out the role they can play in containing the spread of disinformation which has the potential to incite hatred and harm towards particular groups in society.
2. UK police have considerable powers to tackle online hate and extremist activity. However, police officers – especially newer influxes of recruits – may benefit from greater training provision designed to raise awareness of antisemitism and improve their understanding of the historical context so that they can identify when offences are being committed and what their role and responsibility in reporting, investigating, and enforcing the legal powers are. Education about antisemitism, as a specific form of harassment, prejudice, and violence, should be more prominent within national police training programmes and curriculums at a national and local level, with a common thread running from local neighbourhood police officer training to the more specialist counter-terrorism programmes. Such an approach does not currently exist in the British context.
3. Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) should direct their Chief Constables to take positive, proactive steps at a local level to strengthen relations with local Jewish communities and provide a clear strategy for their safety and protection – especially at places of worship. This crucially provides Labour-affiliated PCCs with the opportunity to play an integral part in rebuilding their party's frayed ties with the UK's Jewish communities (with Labour currently under investigation by the Equality and Human Rights Commission [EHRC] over allegations of institutionalised anti-Semitism).⁶⁶
4. The spreading of disinformation during the COVID-19 pandemic – including antisemitic conspiracies – emphasises the need for a rethink on innovative ways to counter the spread of hatred in the online space. It would be helpful for the Home Office's Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism (OSCT) to create anti-conspiracy online units with the responsibility of countering non-evidenced conspiracies which pose a threat to the security of targeted social groups and broader public safety. While the removal of online extremist content should be part of the broader discussion, the dismantling of antisemitic

⁶⁶ Harpin, L., 'EHRC's into Labour antisemitism "on-going" despite coronavirus outbreak', *The Jewish Chronicle*, March 18 2020, available at: <https://www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/ehrc-s-into-labour-antisemitism-on-going-despite-coronavirus-outbreak-1.498205>, last visited: 11 May 2020.

conspiracy theories and exposing their fundamental lack of credibility, through well-organised social media campaigns, could be effective in terms of countering processes of radicalisation which rely on socially divisive 'otherisations' based on conspiratorial narratives. This could include the dissemination of online content where conspiracy theories are debunked by respected individuals in relevant fields (depending on the nature of the conspiracy).

5. Antisemitism is a rising scourge in contemporary British society. A 2018 survey by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights found that 89% of British Jews believed antisemitism had increased in the UK over the last five years, with nearly 7 in 10 – 68% – believing that the UK government was not combatting antisemitism effectively.⁶⁷ In an era of heightened antisemitism and widespread ignorance over the historical injustices against Jews, it is important that British Jewish civic associations and advocacy groups are given stronger forms of public financial support to carry out community initiatives to challenge antisemitic beliefs in their respective societies. This would include state-funded grassroots information campaigns designed to increase awareness over the historical injustices experienced by Jewish people in Europe (such as the Holocaust and the demonisation of Jewish communities over the Black Death).
6. The CCE, since its creation under former Prime Minister Theresa May in March 2018, has delivered important research on hateful extremism. This includes the October 2019 publication 'Challenging Hateful Extremism', which touches on valuable work conducted by the Antisemitism Policy Trust (APT) and Community Security Trust (CST) and emphasises how antisemitism cuts across various ideological terrains.⁶⁸ Building on this research, and responding to the anxieties felt within British Jewish communities over the social and political forces of antisemitism in the UK, the CCE should commission an inquiry which is dedicated to exploring the root causes of this particular form of hatred and prejudice. This inquiry could fall under the remit of an Anti-Semitism Assistant Lead Commissioner, under the guidance of the current Lead Commissioner Sara Khan.

USA

1. Exposure to extremist propaganda disseminated in the online space is increasingly associated with far-right antisemitism in the US.⁶⁹ This has manifested into lethal antisemitic terrorist attacks in the Midwestern city of Pittsburgh and the California city of Poway, with antisemitic hate crimes on the rise in major cities such as Los Angeles, New York, and Chicago.⁷⁰ In the American context, far-right antisemitism is both a public safety issue and homeland security matter. As such, Congress should launch a review to examine the most effective ways to counter the uploading and dissemination of online extremist content on alt-tech platforms. The review could also help to propose new powers for the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and explore how it can play a greater role in strengthening public safety and homeland security (which is currently stated as one of its main responsibilities).⁷¹

⁶⁷ *European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights*, 'Experiences and perceptions of antisemitism – Second survey on discrimination and hate crime against Jews in the EU' (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2018).

⁶⁸ *Commission for Countering Extremism*, 'Challenging Hateful Extremism'.

⁶⁹ Parvini, S., 'Poway synagogue shooting suspect linked to anti-Semitic internet manifesto', *Los Angeles Times*, 28 April 2019, available at: <https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-synagogue-shooting-john-earnest-san-diego-20190428-story.html>, last visited: 11 May 2020.

⁷⁰ Hassan, A., "'A Different Era': Anti-Semitic Crimes, and Efforts to Track Them, Climb', *The New York Times*, 3 January 2020, available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/03/us/anti-semitism-hate-crimes.html>, last visited: 11 May 2020.

⁷¹ The FCC regulates interstate and international communications by radio, television, wire, satellite, and cable in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and US territories. It is an independent US government agency overseen by Congress. The Commission is the federal agency responsible for implementing and enforcing US communications law and regulations. For more information, refer to the FCC's "What We Do" page: <https://www.fcc.gov/about-fcc/what-we-do>, last visited: 11 May 2020.

2. Antisemitism awareness schemes should be better integrated into basic and in-service training for agents, officers, and prospective agents/officers at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers (FLETC).⁷² Through the Office of State and Local Training, FLETC can also spearhead efforts in providing antisemitism training to state, local, and campus law enforcement agencies. In order to address deficiencies in current US police training, education about antisemitism, as a specific form of harassment, prejudice, and violence, should be incorporated into police academy training programmes at both the state and federal level. US law enforcement will benefit from greater training provision designed to raise awareness of antisemitism and improve understanding of the broader historical context. This will equip law enforcement agents and officers with the knowledge to effectively identify when antisemitic offences are being committed, and better understand their responsibilities when exercising their powers to investigate and report cases of antisemitism.
3. Police departments – especially those that have notable Jewish populations within their jurisdiction – must take positive, proactive steps at a local level to strengthen relations with local Jewish communities and provide a clear strategy for their safety and protection – especially at places of worship. Police commissioners and chiefs of police – typically appointed by a mayor or selected by a city council/commission – should be strongly encouraged to prioritise such efforts. Recent research by the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism (California State University) has shown that antisemitic hate crimes in the country’s three largest cities – New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago – are at their highest point for the last 18 years.⁷³ Therefore, strengthening public confidence in law enforcement within Jewish communities should be a priority for the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD), City of New York Police Department (NYPD), and Chicago Police Department (CPD).
4. Like many other countries, the US has witnessed the spreading of disinformation within its own society during the COVID-19 pandemic – including antisemitic conspiracies. This emphasises the need for a rethink on innovative ways to counter the spread of hatred in the online space – one which is not focused on outright bans which enter sensitive territory in respect of the First Amendment. The Department of State has orchestrated effective counter-narrative campaigns in respect of Islamic State (IS) and Russian-origin disinformation. A US-focused initiative which sees the creation of anti-conspiracy online units, designed to control the spreading of antisemitic disinformation facilitated by domestic organisations such as NSM, could fall under the remit of the US Department of State’s Bureau of Counterterrorism and Countering Violent Extremism (which is led by Coordinator for Counterterrorism Nathan A. Sales).⁷⁴ The Department of State recently designated the far-right antisemitic Russian Imperial Movement (RIM) as a terrorist organisation.⁷⁵ While this is a welcome development, there should be a review – led by the Coordinator for Counterterrorism – solely focusing on the role of domestic far-right antisemitic organisations in inciting forms of violence and hatred which pose a fundamental threat to the public safety and security of particular groups in American society. Depending on its findings, this could inform the future designation of domestic far-right groups as terrorist entities.

⁷² The FLETCs serve as an interagency law enforcement training body for US government federal law enforcement agencies. FLETC’s parent department is the Department of Homeland Security. <https://www.fletc.gov/>, last visited: 11 May 2020.

⁷³ Hassan, A., “‘A Different Era’: Anti-Semitic Crimes, and Efforts to Track Them, Climb’, *The New York Times*, 3 January 2020.

⁷⁴ US Department of State profile for Nathan A. Sales: <https://www.state.gov/biographies/nathan-a-sales/>, last visited: 11 May 2020.

⁷⁵ The RIM is a far-right, ultranationalist paramilitary organisation based in the city of Saint Petersburg. On 6 April 2020, the US Department of State added the RIM to the Specially Designated Global Terrorist list. This made RIM the first far-right white-supremacist organisation to be designated as a terrorist organisation by the US Department of State.

5. As previously stated, the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism (California State University) has shown that antisemitic hate crimes in New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago have reached a near two-decade peak.⁷⁶ In addition to this, a 2020 Pew Research Center survey found that 55% of the American public did not know that six million Jews were killed in the Holocaust.⁷⁷ In an era of heightened antisemitism, violence and hatred, along with broad-based ignorance over the historical persecution of Jews, it is important that American Jewish advocacy groups and educational charities are given stronger forms of state support to carry out community initiatives to challenge antisemitic beliefs. The non-profit Anti-Defamation League (ADL) has in recent times had to rely on major contributions from the private sector – corporations such as J.P. Morgan, Apple, MGM Resorts, and Uber – and individuals such as James Murdoch (former CEO of 21st Century Fox).⁷⁸ To help frame the tackling of antisemitism as a truly nationwide public effort, the US Congress should explore how antisemitism awareness organisations – who may currently be heavily dependent on private sector donations and the financial support of Jewish philanthropists – can be better funded through state finances to conduct their activities.
6. The CCE in the UK is a relatively new initiative, with the agency itself being unique in terms of developing definitional frameworks for extremism and facilitating the production of relevant and topical research. The creation of a new federal government agency – essentially an American equivalent to the CCE which could aid the US’s broader counter-extremism efforts – is strongly recommended. This newly created agency could launch a research initiative, drawing on the expert knowledge of university academics and well-credentialed researchers within the US’s think-tank communities, to investigate the socio-demographic characteristics and socio-cultural factors which are most strongly associated with far-right antisemitism in the American context.

There is no room for complacency on either side of the Atlantic when it comes to combatting the threat of antisemitic extremism. The antisemitic Pittsburgh and Poway synagogue terrorist attacks, in October 2018 and April 2019 respectively, demonstrate the threat far-right extremism poses to the US’s Jewish communities. Far-right extremism is now the fastest-growing terror threat in the UK.⁷⁹ With the recent conviction of a teenager who planned to attack synagogues in north-east England, there is a need for the UK, along with the US, to adopt a robust response to countering the spread of far-right extremism and the threat it poses to their Jewish populations.⁸⁰ With the issues at hand taking on international dimensions, this will require greater cross-country alignment on what is considered to be hateful content and how to better control the transnational spreading of extremist material in the online space.

Ultimately, a more robust, better coordinated multi-agency response – involving elected figures, government commissions, police forces, security agencies, counter-extremism units, internet providers, social media platforms, and grassroots community groups – is needed to counter the spread of antisemitism and enhance the safety and protection of British and American Jewish communities.

⁷⁶ Hassan, A. (2020), ‘A Different Era: Anti-Semitic Crimes, and Efforts to Track Them, Climb’, *The New York Times*, 3 January 2020.

⁷⁷ *Pew Research Center* (2020), ‘What Americans Know About the Holocaust’, 22 January. Available at: <https://www.pewforum.org/2020/01/22/what-americans-know-about-the-holocaust/>, last visited: 11 May 2020.

⁷⁸ *Business Day*, ‘US Anti-Defamation League flooded with donations after neo-Nazi violence’, 22 August 2017, available at: <https://www.businesslive.co.za/bd/world/americas/2017-08-22-us-anti-defamation-league-flooded-with-donations-after-neo-nazi-violence/>, last visited: 11 May 2020.

⁷⁹ *BBC News*, ‘Fastest-growing UK terror threat “from far-right”’, 19 September 2019, available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-49753325>, last visited: 11 May 2020.

⁸⁰ *BBC News*, ‘Durham neo-Nazi teenager convicted of planning terror attack’, 20 November 2019, available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-tyne-50470957>, last visited: 11 May 2020.

Title: "WEAPONISING COVID-19: FAR-RIGHT ANTISEMITISM IN THE UNITED KINGDOM AND UNITED STATES"

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**CENTRE ON
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