

Home Affairs Committee

Oral evidence: [Hate Crime and its Violent Consequences](#), HC 609

Tuesday 10 January 2017

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Members present: Yvette Cooper (Chair); James Berry; Mr David Burrowes; Mr Ranil Jayawardena, Tim Loughton; Stuart C. McDonald; Naz Shah; Mr Chuka Umunna; Mr David Winnick.

Questions 211–286

Witnesses

[I](#): Bart Bardz, Productive Learning Project, GMB; Barbara Drozdowicz, Chief Executive, East European Resource Centre; Mrs Joanna Mludzinska, Polish Social and Cultural Association; and Tadeusz Stenzel, Chair of Trustees, Federation of Poles in Great Britain.

[II](#): Julia Ebner, Policy Analyst, Quilliam Foundation; Professor Matthew Feldman, Centre for Fascist, Anti-Fascist and Post-Fascist Studies, Teesside University; and Professor Matthew Goodwin, Professor of Politics, University of Kent.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Bart Bardz, Barbara Drozdowicz, Mrs Joanna Mludzinska and Tadeusz Stenzel.

Chair: Welcome to this afternoon's session, and thank you very much for coming to give evidence. Could I ask you quickly to introduce yourselves and say which organisations you are from?

Bart Bardz: My name is Bartłomiej Bardz. I work for the GMB trade union as a migrant worker organiser and branch secretary in the Yorkshire region.

Barbara Drozdowicz: Hello, my name is Barbara Drozdowicz. I am the chief executive of the East European Resource Centre, a charity.

Mrs Mludzinska: Good afternoon. Joanna Mludzinska, chair of the Polish Social and Cultural Association.

Tadeusz Stenzel: Good afternoon. I am chairman of the Federation of Poles in Great Britain, an organisation that originated in 1947. We try to represent the Polish community as a whole and combine everybody with each other. We have something like 40 member organisations.

Q211 **Chair:** Thank you very much for coming to give evidence to our inquiry into hate crime in the UK. We have taken evidence on levels of hate crime, and the changes and patterns and levels of hate crime, particularly over the last year. Could you each start by telling us briefly what your perception is of the changing patterns of hate crime that you and the communities that you are involved in or represent have experienced? How far has that changed, particularly around the referendum last year? Mr Stenzel, could you start, please?

Tadeusz Stenzel: There have been some changes. My worry is that we are getting more crime being reported than previously. I actually sit on a hate crime panel in Leicestershire, so I am fairly aware of the sorts of thing that have been happening. Leicestershire does not seem to have been quite so badly blighted as other areas of the country. Despite the large immigrant population in Leicestershire, the growth has not been quite so marked. I sense that a lot of it is reporting—there seems to be more being shown to be happening, particularly since the referendum. There have been occasions where one or two people who previously perhaps would not have said anything have been emboldened by the result of the referendum.

Q212 **Chair:** People have been emboldened to say racist things, or abusive things?

Tadeusz Stenzel: There is less of a brake on them. They were worried before that they could be contravening race law and so on, whereas now perhaps they think it is fair game because they are migrants: "It is not a racist situation; it is against a migrant."

Q213 **Chair:** What kinds of abuse or hate crime have you seen?

Tadeusz Stenzel: It is difficult; you see lots of examples. You get comments from people who are being picked on at work: "I'm not too happy. I do the best job I can, yet they're still picking on me. They want me to do more." That sort of situation.

Mrs Mludzinska: We at the Polish Centre, as you may be aware, experienced an example of it, in that we had this graffiti across the front of our building, which was definitely a first for us. We had never had anything like that in the centre. We are very much part of the local community, so that was a big shock to us and to the staff and the people who come to the Polish Centre. I would like to say—again, you may be aware—that we had the most amazing outpouring of response from the British community, with masses of flowers, messages, cards and so on, which was really nice for us. That is why we became involved in the #betterthanthat campaign. We feel that something we need to get across to people is that this is a minority. As Tadeusz said, these are people who may have begun to feel emboldened by the referendum vote to say and do things, but they are still a small minority. In general, the communities support us. I think that that is a very important thing to state.

That does not detract from the fact that we do see hate crime. We had that one example, but lots of people who come to our centre tell us about their experiences. Some of it is quite casual: a waitress in a café being told, "Why haven't you packed your bags and gone home?"—that sort of thing. Quite a lot of it is in schools, from children who presumably hear it at home—"You should be going home now." A friend of mine who, like me, was born here of Polish parentage and would not normally be picked out as somebody of a Polish background was on a bus in Nottingham, where she lives, talking to her mother in Polish on the phone. Somebody turned round to her and said "What are you doing speaking Polish? Go home."

There is a lot. Some of it is quite casual and not that bad, if you like, although it is still unpleasant, but I know that it gets much worse. I'm sure Barbara has more direct experience than we do and will be able to tell you more about that.

Barbara Drozdowicz: We have noticed an increase in inquiries about hate crime. That increase started around March or April; people started to feel a bit uncomfortable when the date of the referendum was known and the campaign grew. From 24 June we got an explosion of telephone calls and emails: "Something happened to me. This is what I thought it was. Was it hate crime?"

We have had bad cases of abuse in the workplace. For example, in one of the local councils in the south of England, a Polish citizen who worked for the council was abused on the night of the count—she was on the vote-counting committee and was told, essentially, that she would need to pack and go away, finally.



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We have had many, many reports of physical abuse and violence in schools towards eastern European children, broadly speaking, with very little response from the schools as institutions, which is our concern. Some schools are exemplary in how they have dealt with tensions since the Brexit referendum, but we feel that some are still turning a blind eye. That is a big concern for the future of the communities. These children will be Brits at some point and will grow in these communities.

A huge problem is the workplace. As Tadeusz mentioned, and I am sure Bart will be able to build on, we have had lots of reports of hate speech in conjunction with other labour abuses. People are not being paid wages because they are being told that they have to pack their bags and go home, or they are not being paid for their contracts as self-employed subcontractors. That is combined with racial abuse. Unfortunately these are sometimes groups or teams of workers, for example in construction, who are being turned away and told to go home, sometimes in very crude words that are very personally abusive.

Finally, we have had quite a few reports of casual racism, as you would say, and casual hate speech on public transport. There are well known cases of people being spat on or told to "take your Polish bastards and go home"—that was said to a man with a toddler in a buggy. Older people have been abused when they have been seen reading Polish, Romanian or other eastern European magazines, which are quite common within these communities.

Unfortunately, the problem, in our experience, is deepened by the mixed response from the police. When people want to report hate crime or hate speech or just have concerns and go to the police, who should be doing something about it, I am sorry to say that not all police services are ready to respond to hate crime. Sometimes it is being waved away as an employment issue that is not a police matter because it is discrimination, for example, or harassment. Sometimes people are being told in quite crude words that if they do not speak fluent English they are partially to blame for the fact that they are victims of hate speech and hate crime, which I find astounding, quite frankly. Therefore, the problem is that you do not really talk about successful cases. You talk about cases that are hugely unsuccessful: you are being turned away, and that is hurtful because hate crime affects your identity mainly. Therefore, it is a very personal type of issue. This is what you already talked about.

Our concern as an organisation is that the problems with reporting or dealing with hate speech and hate crime are, broadly speaking, community tensions that might have a long-term impact on how communities work together and on the policing of the communities, because mistrust is being built as we speak, and the same would apply to schools, to a large extent.

I am bringing these examples because they are very tangible institutions and eastern European migrants have an explicit trust in them, and expect that everything should be fair and square. Yet, it does not seem so. Experiences are being talked about within the community and that brings



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general discontent. As we can see in certain London boroughs that turn to us for advice on what to do about various neighbourhoods, it builds general community tension and it comes to implode.

Communities—local neighbourhoods—start to implode because people start to blame each other for various things and it just spirals completely out of control. Romanians are being blamed for coming and stealing dogs—or Poles quite often, or just anyone who is eastern European. People feel they are being victimised and therefore they start to turn on their neighbours, and the situation around local neighbourhoods is going to be very nervous, I am afraid, possibly, but hopefully not, within the next few months.

I am keen to point to the Brexit developments in this context, because it seems that every statement and every political activity around the Brexit negotiations brings a spike in inquiries to our organisation. There is a direct correlation with how people react to it, because something has happened to them. We might expect that when article 50 is triggered it might bring another level of discontent.

Q214 Chair: Since the referendum, what else has triggered an increase in activity?

Barbara Drozdowicz: I would imagine that the referendum itself contributed—the campaign around it, rather than Brexit itself. Another thing that we have consulted on and spoken about with quite a few local authorities is that the pace of change within local communities is sometimes too much, it seems. There seems to be a lack of understanding: “What is going on in my local neighbourhood? Where are these people coming from?” It is maybe not for this Committee to discuss this, but we have a concern that integration policies within local communities are not yet there to respond to these changes. Another thing that builds on the rhetoric about the pace of change and immigration is the fact that people who are not born in Britain—people who are immigrants—are quite often framed as a problem for local communities, not an asset. Therefore, when local communities ask us for advice, it is framed as, “We have a problem with the Polish community in this area”. The problem is that the Poles living there might have been living there since 1951. They are not a problem—they are members—but they are not seen as an asset. Again, it is not only semantics; it affects how local communities co-operate within the area, whether they want to include people or whether they tend to exclude them and point them out as a problem. That brings out this tension that allows people to voice opinions that we would consider to be hate speech.

Q215 Chair: What do you think the situation is right now? Some of the evidence we heard from the police was that there had been an increase in hate crime and abuse reports immediately after the referendum result, but that that reduced over the summer. What is your perception?

Barbara Drozdowicz: I don’t believe that there are fewer incidents. I believe that there might be fewer reports. The reason for that is that



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people tend not to panic about things that happen to them. When you have a problem, the first thing you think about is not immediately to go to the police. Whether that is right or wrong, that is a common approach that we see among our users, as an organisation that is obviously not representative of all Europeans in the country. It takes some time for you to build up the will and the strength to go to the police, and that is when the problem starts. Sometimes the reports that we have on hate crime do not relate to hate crime as such; they relate to how people were treated when they tried to report it. What they seek from us is help to report the crime, because they already know it should be reported.

We had a case very recently. The incident took place on 11 November. It took six days and my caseworker to report it to the police—there were a number of attempts to report it. Over 12 weeks later, the police asked for the first statement. If that story goes out within the community, it makes you think, “The police are not going to do anything for me. I have to think about my safety and my family first.” If it happens in your local neighbourhood—literally, people are being abused by their own neighbours—that is a very dangerous situation to be in, because you don’t know whether this person is going to take revenge for the report or whether there is going to be any impact on your family. If kids are involved, it is just the end of the road. That is the problem.

Q216 Chair: We want to come back shortly to the issues around police response. Finally, what is the worst example you have heard of abuse in schools? That is to Ms Drozdowicz, before I move to Mr Bardz.

Barbara Drozdowicz: It was a school in west London—a comprehensive secondary school. On the 24th—literally, after the referendum—a Polish boy was beaten. It was witnessed by teachers who did not respond to it. When the child went back home, his mum immediately addressed the school authorities about the issue—why the police were not called, why no support was given to the boy, and so on and so forth. His mum was told that if the child was black, it would have been a racist issue. It is bad. She sought our advice on what to do with the school authorities. The issue we see there is that it was not verbal abuse; it was physical bullying with a clear race component of being Polish thrown into it. I think that was the worst one, because the response of the school was completely unsatisfactory.

Q217 Chair: Mr Bardz?

Bart Bardz: On the same issue?

Chair: Yes. Could you tell us the sorts of things you have either experienced or had reported to you by your members?

Bart Bardz: It is difficult for me to add anything to the statistics, apart from the fact that after Brexit we noticed some nervousness on both sides—from Polish migrants and British people. That spike could be explained partially by that, but on all sorts of questions about our future—questions of residence or work permits—people were nervous on both sides. I am not focused on that, so maybe that is the reason, but I have



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not noticed any particular experiences, from my experience or from people I have talked to, that say that something really changed drastically.

There are some underlying issues that I would like to talk about, now or later, about why I think all this could have happened. It did not happen that on 23 June it was just like opening Pandora's box, when everybody was expecting tension in general in society. Those underlying issues, broadly speaking, are about how we are perceived here. We—the Poles and the A8 countries—are a new wave of migration. That is a big chunk of migration now, and we are noticed as a group. Polish people are the biggest group in numbers. How we are perceived is important.

What are the two main sources of how we are perceived? I would say that they are industrial relations—work—and the media. We spend half our conscious life at work, so how we are perceived at work constructs people's view. That takes me on to a completely different area of industrial relations, which is about agencies, bogus self-employment and zero-hour contracts. All those things—agencies, the media, zero-hour contracts, bogus self-employment, limited companies—are all sides of the same story, which is an attack on employment rights. It so happens that the lion's share of people working in that position are migrants. I know from my experience—I have gone all the way from agency working through to all sorts of employment, so I know how it works in detail. I do not want to elaborate on that today, but very often it looks like this: mostly British employees, on full employment with full rights, and mostly or solely migrants, as agency workers, put against each other as rivals for work. That is what astonished me, that a law that should flatten the ground and make it equal allowed divisions to be created, and even deepened.

That is what happened when I came here, which was in 2004. I noticed it straightaway. So we have many years of those kind of practices and I am not surprised that people perceive us as those who are stealing work, lowering health and safety standards and so on. We are used to it really, because all migrants are easy targets when we come. We don't know so much. There is a language barrier. We do whatever we need to survive. So if we are pushed into the position of an agency worker who, in accordance with the law, is stripped of their rights regarding unfair dismissal or something, we can't do anything.

Q218 Chair: Is your sense that such discrimination is about abuse of employment law, or is it possible within existing employment law?

Bart Bardz: Both. Existing law, like that on worker status, allows someone to be sacked at any time without reason. Those people are effectively coerced. They have to do whatever. Somebody could say that we workers have some rights. Okay, but if you try to challenge them at a tribunal—you have tribunal fees now, for discrimination or unfair dismissal you have £1,200—even if you are brave enough to do so and know how to do it, the next day you will lose your job because, as I said, in accordance with the law you can sack somebody.

Q219 Chair: It would be helpful if you were able to send us some further details



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of the many examples of that kind of discrimination or abuse at work, anonymising it if you feel you need to. It would be very helpful to have some of those examples.

Bart Bardz: No problem.

Chair: Thank you. I am going to hand over to other members of the Committee but I just want to say that the abuse, discrimination and hate crimes that you have described are clearly appalling and we obviously note what Mrs Mludzinska said about this still being a minority. It is welcome that you had other support; nevertheless, that minority abuse, hate crime and persecution is still appalling and deeply un-British, and it should have no place in our country.

Q220 **Mr Umunna:** I absolutely endorse the comments you have just made, Chair. Thank you all very much for coming and giving evidence to us this afternoon. It is much appreciated.

Obviously, Brexit—the vote, the campaign, that referendum—hangs like a big cloud over this issue. Ms Drozdowicz—I apologise if I have mispronounced your name; people do it to me very often—you referred to the nature of the campaigning. Do you believe that the different organisations and the leading advocates in them campaigning for us to leave the European Union—Leave.eu, UKIP, obviously, and the Vote Leave campaign—bear a responsibility for the increased hostility and incidence since the referendum that you have referred to?

Barbara Drozdowicz: I can't really put my fingers on it. Quite honestly, the leave campaign seemed to have been built around controlling migration. Controlling migration is not a neutral term in Britain after the campaign. It might have been so earlier, but not anymore. That is definitely the perception of European communities, because they are directly affected. When it was directly said that limiting the access of European workers to the British labour market would improve Britain's chances in the world, for lack of a better term—sorry about that; it is a bit awkward—that was read by my co-expats as directly blaming us for lots of things that might have gone wrong. It might have encouraged some people who are more biased towards blaming migrants for all sorts of evils to focus on that, but it is ultimately people's choice what they think. I would not take responsibility for making people responsible for such things.

Another thing that I would be keen to highlight is that there is a difference between Brexit issues and issues of hate crime and community tensions. The latter might have already existed. As Bart suggested in his contribution, things have been happening ever since 2004. Brexit might have emboldened them.

Q221 **Mr Umunna:** May I pick up on one particular issue? I have an interest in it. I chair the all-party group on social integration, and you mentioned that issue several times. Do you think if there was more integration, there would be less of a space and people would feel less emboldened to illustrate the kind of prejudice and hostility that you referred to, because



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there may be better understanding of different communities?

Barbara Drozdowicz: On the one hand, I would say yes. Integration works both ways and everyone is part of it. You need policies, whether they are local, regional or national, to encourage new communities to grasp Britishness. The reason why they are here, frankly, is because they want to be here. Lots of people come because they love London and they admire British culture. They trust that judges are not corrupt and so on. There is lots of good stuff about Britain that people really love. There does not seem to be a lot on a practical level to enable them to immerse themselves in Britishness as such, even though values are similar across Europe. There is not much difference there.

On the other hand, there is the host communities, for lack of a better word. The communities that open their homes to visitors and guests have some input into how the process will work.

Q222 **Mr Umunna:** So it is a two-way street?

Barbara Drozdowicz: Again, it is not always obvious that there is support or policies to guide communities in how to make it happen.

Tadeusz Stenzel: I agree. One of the big problems was the immigration aspect of the Leave campaign. There is also the problem of integrating the community. There are many more Polish people scattered around the UK now and they are much more dispersed than the previous migrations have been. Broadly speaking, 200 centres of counting in the ONS survey, out of 350, had a population of more than 1,000 Polish people. The average population of those areas was 160,000-odd, so there are 1,000 Poles in every 160,000 people. They are scattered in that way.

I want to come back to one little thing on the employment aspect, which might have been bypassed. One of the reasons why there is a certain amount of aggression or aggravation from what I would call the indigenous population is that migrants tend to work at a higher rate. I was involved in a work measurement in my younger years, and they were working at 120%, rather than 70%, which was the norm. They appear to be more efficient, so the employers prefer to select them, because they will then get more work per hour out of everyone. That causes a certain discord.

The other aspect, of course, is that because of the distribution, you end up with a group of people—for example, Poles—appearing in a small village in Lincolnshire that has never seen any other migrant from anywhere in the world. There is a natural reserve, no matter what you say. Even if Scottish people arrived in Lincolnshire in the same village, they would cause a bit of a rumpus, because they would not be understood in the same way. So there is that aspect of it, which is one that we have difficulty in tackling.

Q223 **Mr Umunna:** May I ask one question that I was going to ask Ms Drozdowicz, but will ask you instead? This is my final question, I promise, Chair. Do you find that the perpetrators of these acts and types of behaviour distinguish between more recent immigrants from, say,



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Poland, and more long-standing immigrants? Or does it depend on whether they have a sense of someone being more recent?

Let me give an example. I represent Streatham, the constituency at the centre of the world, and we have a long-standing and settled Polish community, who are part of what makes Streatham such a wonderful place to live in. They have been there for decades and decades, and then there are more recent arrivals. Your average guy on the street will not be able to distinguish between the two other than, maybe, an accent. A more long-standing Polish person who has been born in the country might have a different kind of surname. Other than the surname, you would not be able to tell they were of immigrant stock. You are more likely to think that I am the one of immigrant stock, rather than any of my Polish constituents, just because I look the way I do and because of the Nigerian complexion that I carry with me. I wonder whether a distinction is made in the reports you get back, or is it just the same.

The other question connected to that is, are you working with other organisations that represent other groups of immigrants and that have found the same problems? I address that to you all. I will shut up now, Chair.

Tadeusz Stenzel: Yes. I work with other organisations. I chaired a forum of minority ethnic groups in the county of Leicestershire. I have represented all sorts of minorities. I also interface with a city forum with migrants from 147-odd nations, so we try to communicate and to increase the awareness. We try to expand that to the Polish community.

One of the problems that I have found is that it is difficult to induce the new migrants to become more Anglophile, more English. For a start, they do not necessarily need to learn English, because they learn enough just to get by at their place of work, but they live in a sort of dual entity—they live physically in the country, and are earning money here and eating here, but all their communication systems are linked to their mother country, Poland. They get satellite TV, they are on Skype to their families and, a bit like in the Casey report, they tend to club together into small groups of interfacing people. They have a certain independence, which they maintain. It is difficult to induce them out.

I said that one of the problems was lack of training in English—in ESOL, for example—and the reduced spending on that is a problem. The other problem is that you can produce and provide courses, but although you can lead a horse to water, you cannot make it drink. You can produce all the courses you like, but if people have no interest in coming, they will not come. There is that problem.

Mrs Mludzinska: On that point, yes, learning English is very important, but if you are working extremely hard and saving all your money and so on, first you may not be able to afford it and, secondly, you may not have the time. That is a very important issue.

On integration, I think integration is very important, but I do not know how you make it happen. You mentioned a two-way street, but it is not a



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two-way street; it is all sorts of different communities that need to integrate together. That is where it is about bringing different community groups together and so on—since we have had interest growing in our own organisation, we have had different groups. We are open to all sorts of groups. We have very different groups in our building, using our gallery, our theatre, our function room. We have lots of different ethnic groups coming through our building and mixing. There needs to be more of that.

I would like to go back to the point you asked about whether the referendum campaign was to blame. What is more important now—this is something we have been calling for and I hope you saw the letter we published in the *House* magazine about a clear Government statement on the future of European migrants in Britain. That would be so helpful just to your own feeling about, well, somebody is telling me I have to go home. If I am very sure I do not have to go home because the Government have said I don't, then that is going to make me feel stronger and less of a victim and less uncertain. I would like to bring that to your attention and anything you can do—

Q224 **Mr Umunna:** So your message to the Prime Minister is, "Give us that guarantee"?

Mrs Mludzinska: I have said it personally to her and I would repeat it now. I am a signatory of that letter and anything you can do to get that done would be a real help to migrants and EU migrants.

Barbara Drozdowicz: I want to refer very quickly to the divisions between immigration waves. We have observed—although this is from our unique perspective, of the unique organisation—that victims of hate crime are more likely to be so if they look like low-income people, weak people, people coming here and potentially posing a threat to public funds rather than high fliers working in the city, because eastern Europeans split into the middle classes and then the manual labourers and so forth.

We have a very interesting but very wide spread of victims reporting or people perceiving themselves as victims of hate crime in terms of age. One would imagine that if I were a perpetrator, I would consider age as some form of indicator of length of stay; possibly older people might be seen to be a settled minority. There is absolutely no indication that this happens at all. It is a very poor indicator on its own, but it gives us some space to imagine things.

I think people are much more likely to attract the attention of hate crime and hate speech perpetrators if they are perceived to be poor or manual workers or people on benefits, or those bad immigrants, in other words. This does not necessarily happen if they are doctors and lawyers and managers and middle classes and so on and so forth. The name does not even count, whether it is Polish or Romanian. It might indicate a broader issue of the general lack of contentment with the changes in communities with migration levels, possibly. I am not sure. Maybe the next panel will shed some light, maybe they have undertaken some interesting research on that, but there seems to be a clear indication that, the weaker the



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victim seems—and income seems to be an indicator—the more likely that tension will grow.

Tensions will grow most likely in neighbourhoods with relatively high levels of deprivation, because it is the same story. These are people who are possibly abusing their access to resources that are scarce. This is where we have the claims about overusing the NHS or schools. I would not relate it to the length of stay or level of settlement or perceived integration, because it does not seem to matter at all.

Q225 Tim Loughton: May I concur with the Chair's comments about the completely unacceptable nature of the hate crimes, of which you have recounted some examples today? The Polish community is the largest EU community at more than 830,000. Ironically, it is probably one of the oldest—although not the oldest—European community, because of our links during the war. Many members of the Polish community were over here well before the EU became a reality anyway, so if anybody is well integrated, it is the Polish community. May I go back to the point you made, Ms Mludzinska, about guarantees, which I entirely concur with? Have you also urged the Polish Prime Minister and President to give similar guarantees that might make such a guarantee more forthcoming?

Mrs Mludzinska: I haven't personally had the opportunity to do that, no.

Q226 Tim Loughton: It might be helpful.

Mrs Mludzinska: Yes, perhaps we should, although there are not that many Brits living in Poland.

Q227 Tim Loughton: But the principle would still be helpful and might urge a few other European leaders, where there are more Brits, to give similar guarantees, in which case it becomes less of a problem when article 50 is triggered and we get down to a hard-tacks negotiation. That is just a thought.

Going back to the referendum, the accounts of and publicity given to hate crime showed a spike of hate crimes, although the figures—these are only reported figures, obviously—seem to indicate that hate crime reports had gone back to whatever normal is; those sorts of levels. That is the reported crimes. What do you think might have happened if the vote had gone the other way?

Mrs Mludzinska: Who knows?

Tadeusz Stenzel: That is an important question.

Q228 Tim Loughton: It is important, because what is difficult is attributing that spike in hate crime to the way that the referendum went. The sort of people who commit these hate crimes—let's admit it—are morons who will commit hate crimes against whatever race, even if they know the race they are committing those hate crimes against. If any opportunity is afforded to them to do that, they will do it. Similarly, one could conjecture that if they had not got the result that many of them might have liked—I am not saying that they were all leavers—they might have



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reacted even more maliciously. I just think it is helpful to stick to the facts in terms of what is the cause of these hate crimes, rather than just attributing it to people voting in a certain way.

Mrs Mludzinska: I think we have talked about that. Chair, you asked about what is likely to happen in the future and what is happening now. I think there may be another point at which things get worse, when the people who, for whatever reasons, thought that everything would be resolved by Brexit—that their own particular situations might improve, and so on—find that that does not miraculously happen. I think there will potentially be another flashpoint then. When Brexit takes place—so far, we have just had the vote—and people do not suddenly see, which I don't think they will, a wonderful, immediate betterment of their lot, there might be another wave of response there: "Why aren't we getting what we wanted and these people are still here?"

Q229 **Tim Loughton:** And part of the reason for this inquiry is to make sure that we take all measures to try to mitigate the possible effects of that.

Mrs Mludzinska: Exactly. I think we need to look to the future on that.

Q230 **Tim Loughton:** Let me ask a final question. I think we pride ourselves on the diversity and tolerance in this country.

Mrs Mludzinska: Absolutely.

Tim Loughton: As Mr Umunna says, his Polish community in Streatham is just one example of how that integration is taken completely for granted. But how do you think this spate of hate crimes compares with how other nationalities are treated in other parts of the EU, where, of course there are many stories about very violent attacks on certain communities, be that other European communities, Jewish communities, African communities, Muslim communities, or whatever else? Do you think that we in this country still rate as a very tolerant society compared with many others?

Mrs Mludzinska: I would say we do, absolutely. Personally, having been born and brought up in London, in the Polish community, which as you say, is integrated and so on, to me the attack on our centre was such a shock.

Tadeusz Stenzel: That was my response.

Mrs Mludzinska: Tadeusz mentioned the small villages in Lincolnshire where suddenly there is a group of migrants where they have never had migrants before, but these things are happening in London. It is not just the attack on our centre; Barbara gets a lot of cases happening in London, which I have always believed, and still do, is a wonderful and diverse city and community—yet these things are still happening.

Barbara Drozdowicz: It is very difficult to make those comparisons because we are looking at completely different historical pathways of various parts of Europe and society and culture and this and that. I would agree that it is objectively true that Britain is tolerant compared with other



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places in Europe, and that it is also perceived as such. That is also part of the reason why Britain is so popular: people do not expect to be treated as immigrants; they expect to be treated as builders, nurses, painters or whatever. That is why it might be shocking. Standards are quite high.

However, it doesn't really matter, quite frankly, because if you can't feel safe in your neighbourhood or your community, it does not make any difference how you felt when you lived in Bucharest, for example, or Warsaw or Berlin or Madrid. It is not substantial. Having said that, a substantial part of the appeal of Britain is that tolerance and that culture of diversity. That is absolutely something that everyone will tell you.

Q231 Mr Winnick: I hope it is of some satisfaction to your members that, however much the House of Commons is divided—as, indeed, it is over various aspects of Brexit and what should happen in negotiations in the next two years—Parliament as a whole is totally united against all forms of hate crime, unanimously so. I hope that opinion will be put forward to your members.

Is it not the case that, to a large extent, while there remain a large number of people from other EU countries, the Poles living in this country have been more in the firing line? Some of that is for reasons that Ms Drozdowicz mentioned—because they are poor, or are seen as poor, and not middle class or professional. Therefore, when having a go, those people who carry out acts of abuse, which are totally unacceptable, and in some cases far worse than abuse, lump all the resentment they have against EU people on to the Poles, because the Poles seem the most high profile group. Would that be right?

Mrs Mludzinska: We are the biggest group.

Tadeusz Stenzel: Pure statistics: 60% of the A8 residents in the UK came from Poland. Now, with Romania joining, it is down to about 50%, but they still constitute a very large number. Quite often, when crimes are performed or incidents happen involving other nationalities that are not Polish, they are quoted in the press as being Polish, because people do not understand the difference between a Lithuanian, a Pole, a Czech and so on, unfortunately, because Poles are the biggest group, and have the biggest residential group, like myself and Mrs Mludzinska—I was born in Wales; I feel quite Welsh but I am Polish at the same time. We feel that the country is very good for us and I do not see any point in leaving now.

Q232 Mr Winnick: It seems to me that this is very similar with people who, in some instances, continue to have a deep resentment against Asian immigrants. They lump them all together as “Pakis”, even though so many do not come from Pakistan, of course, but from India and Bangladesh; they are certainly not all Muslims but they are all “Pakis” to the ignorant who have that xenophobic attitude. To some extent, that is similar to what is happening to the Poles, isn't it?

Barbara Drozdowicz: It is similar in some areas—quite recently, in some areas that have been shown to have a much higher proportion of, for example, Romanian communities than Polish, “Romanians” is becoming



this word. Suddenly, we are all Romanians in certain areas of London, for example, just as we are all Poles, because we speak with a certain accent and come from a certain part of Europe. I think it is because we are large and because we were a prominent group after the 2004 accession that we have all become Poles, in a sense. But in certain ways, it is possibly not all about language or nationality; it is a proxy for fears about access to jobs, resources and so on. When you look at the fact that after the referendum, the spike of hate crime affected not only eastern European or, broadly speaking, European communities but all communities that were perceived to be not British—they might have been settled Asian or African communities; they still got their fair share of hate crime—that shows that it is probably not all about nationality. On the other hand, it might not be about Brexit at all in certain circles. It is just an excuse to express unhappiness about the situation locally.

Bart Bardz: Whether we wanted it or not, Polish people have become the face of the new wave of migrants. We are not associated as such with worldwide terrorism or things like that, but we are associated with the housing crisis, job uncertainties, stagnating wages and NHS problems. That is how we are perceived, and that is the reason for resentment towards us, whether it is true or not.

Q233 **Mr Winnick:** The point has been made during the questioning that those from EU countries, like the individuals you represent, would like the security of knowing that they can stay in the UK. The Committee has pressed Ministers on this, and the Government's attitude, as you know, is, "Yes, if we can get a guarantee from the other 27 countries regarding the UK." Do you think that if the British Government say they are not going to change their line—they may because of pressure in Parliament; who knows—it would be useful if the Governments of the 27 made it clear in the early stages of the negotiations that as far as they are concerned, British nationals living in those countries will continue to be there, so there would be less excuse for the British Government to say, "We can't at this stage agree to what you want"?

Mrs Mludzinska: Yes, but I think they would say, "Why should we be the first to do that?" It is a game that really isn't worth playing. I cannot see it as a serious negotiating issue, which is why I think the British Government could and should take that first step. Maybe it would be seen as a goodwill gesture. Why not?

Q234 **Mr Winnick:** And it would obviously give more security to those involved, be it your members or those from other EU countries, if that was the case. Am I right?

Mrs Mludzinska: Yes.

Tadeusz Stenzel: If we could induce the Polish migrants who are here to influence their Government to offer that guarantee, that would be the way to go. I cannot see anyone else saying to the 27 countries, "Say that we will keep British people and give them all the rights they have now, irrespective." They will not go down that route, because it is a negotiation



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point from their point of view, the same as it is from the point of view of Mrs May and the Government here. That is one of the reasons I didn't actually sign the letter asking for this guarantee, although in my heart I want that guarantee to be forthcoming. I believe it will come anyway in the fullness of time, but I do not know that we can actually influence all the 27 countries unless we can get all the migrants who are here to influence their own Governments. If we can do that, great. I will make every effort to influence the Polish people I know in this country to talk to their representatives and the Government of Poland to do so.

Chair: Thank you.

Q235 **Mr Burrowes:** Just quickly, you have given us examples of person-to-person abuse and hate crime, but what about online? Are you aware of evidence of online abuse, particularly focused on attacking eastern European nationals and the Polish community?

Mrs Mludzinska: I don't have any particular evidence of that.

Tadeusz Stenzel: We have no information.

Q236 **Mr Burrowes:** None at all? Do you have any perception or understanding of why that is the case? I do not want it at all, but there are other forms of hate crime that are particularly prevalent online. Why is it not directed online?

Mrs Mludzinska: I think it probably is in social media, but I can't say I have personally seen—

Q237 **Mr Burrowes:** Perhaps if you get any further information or evidence on that, you can let the Committee know.

Tadeusz Stenzel: If I can come in on that, I think you will find that the communications of the various ethnic groups will be in their own languages. They won't necessarily pick up hate crime that is directed at them from English people, and the English people may not have their addresses or contacts to be able to address them. You do get occasional appearances on things like Facebook, where there are one or two items I have seen that have been a bit borderline.

Mrs Mludzinska: And Twitter.

Tadeusz Stenzel: And on Twitter—you get occasional things happening there. But without a major exercise to analyse the traffic, it is almost impossible to say.

Q238 **Chair:** Thank you. Finally, before we close this session, I have already asked Mr Bardz if he can send us some more information about the workplace examples. Ms Drozdowicz, you described some of the abuse taking place in schools, and some of the examples you have had of the poor policing response to it. Again, can you send us any further examples?

Barbara Drozdowicz: Yes.



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Q239 Chair: If any of you wants to raise anything else that you think the police, schools, employers or the Government should be doing about this that you have not mentioned so far, send it to us in writing. Let me just ask you one last question. We are about to move on to some evidence about far-right extremism. Have you any perception of any of the kind of abuse you have seen being about organised far-right extremism?

Tadeusz Stenzel: Yes. Not so much the abuse, but there are definite movements, certainly on the fringes of the Polish community, and I am aware of Hungarian and Romanian communities where there are very strong right-wing sentiments being expressed.

Q240 Chair: And this is within the community?

Tadeusz Stenzel: Within the communities, yes. There was an example—I can't remember—somewhere in north London, I believe. There was a bit of a contretemps between blackshirted "fascists" who were attacking a garden party. I'm not sure what nationality they were, but it was a local community event. I managed to glean some photographs from the internet, and some of the writing on some of those shirts was undoubtedly in the Polish language, which is shameful, as far as I am concerned. I am very concerned about the connections of this extreme right-wing faction. It is a very small minority, but it does exist. There are international links, which we have noticed, with Hungary, Bavaria, Germany and Italy. There are some in France. There are some very strong right-wing links. Fortunately, they are very, very fringe people, and I hope it doesn't transpose itself into hate crime events. I don't think it does at the moment, apart from that incident.

Q241 Chair: Are they organised groups from either Poland or Hungary that happen to have elements here?

Mrs Mludzinska: Yes.

Q242 Chair: Or is it a specific organisation generated here?

Tadeusz Stenzel: They will be branches of existing organisations in their own countries.

Mrs Mludzinska: And, of course, examples of hate crime against Poles fuel those people. They will use that. "You see how we are being attacked. We have to stand up to it"—that kind of thing. It is very fringe and very small, thank goodness.

Tadeusz Stenzel: There are groups within the Polish community who come from a different angle—very much religious, fighting for God, and so on—who are generating paramilitary groups. They identify themselves by occasionally wearing camouflage jackets, berets and that sort thing. They have got their own flags, and they purport to be representing a very nationalistic, very religious fervour within the community. Again, they tend to be slightly on the other extreme.

Q243 Chair: That was going to be my second question—the far-right elements within the Polish community. My other question was: are organised far-



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right organisations behind some of the hate crimes experienced by eastern European communities?

Mrs Mludzinska: Not as far as we know.

Barbara Drozdowicz: Not as far as we know.

Tadeusz Stenzel: No direct links could be identified, although there are youth groups that tend to link to these things.

Chair: Thank you very much for your time and evidence. We really appreciate it. This has been an immensely informative session. Thank you.

Examination of Witnesses

Julia Ebner, Professor Matthew Feldman and Professor Matthew Goodwin.

Q244 **Chair:** Thank you very much for coming to give evidence. In this session we want to ask you some questions about far-right extremism and to be able to ask you about the full range of extremism, hate crime and organised far right from terrorist and violent extremism through to different kinds of online organised far-right activity as well. Initially, will you briefly introduce yourselves and give us your thoughts on how you would characterise the state of the far right currently, including what the main targets are for far-right activity at the moment, whether that be Islamophobia, antisemitism or different kinds of targets?

Professor Feldman: Matthew Feldman, I am the co-director of the Centre for Fascist, Anti-Fascist and Post-Fascist Studies at Teesside University. We have looked at the far right and its sometimes violent opposition both historically and contemporarily. To take your last question first, Chair, I would suggest that anti-Muslim prejudice or Islamo-prejudice is the lowest common denominator that we have seen in the last 10 or 15 years.

There is lots and lots that separate groups on the far right, including, for example, forms of racism. Some of them might take a cultural form; some of them might take the old-fashioned eugenic biological form. The one thing it seems to me that all of the groups that span that spectrum you mentioned can agree on is anti-Muslim prejudice and its currency in contemporary Britain.

Julia Ebner: Good afternoon. My name is Julia Ebner and I am a policy analyst at the Quilliam Foundation, where my work mainly focuses on the dynamics of reciprocal radicalisation. I am also looking at the links between online and offline far-right extremism and the ideological links between the more populist, non-violent far right and the militant, violent far right.

In terms of the dynamics, I think that we are seeing an increasingly fractured and leaderless far right in the UK. I agree with Professor Feldman very much that it agrees in its anti-Muslim resentments. I think we are seeing very much this counter-jihad movement occur on the



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populist side as well as on the militant side. That is also really the ideological link between the two. Its manifestation is, however, rather on a racial basis simply because on the streets it is easier to target someone who looks foreign than to be able to tell their religion. I think there is a difference to make in terms of the ideology. They agree on this anti-Muslim hatred, but, in terms of the manifestation, it is racial.

Professor Goodwin: Hello. I am Matthew Goodwin from Chatham House and the University of Kent. I agree with much of that. In essence, if we were having this conversation in 2009 or 2010, we would be very much talking about groups like the British National party. Today, the collapse of the traditional extreme right in Britain has been largely replaced by a more fragmented landscape of very small but more confrontational organisations that are less interested in pursuing votes and participating in elections, and more interested in demonstrations and spreading ideology online.

That makes it much harder as a movement to analyse, and for the security services and the police to monitor. However, in that I think there is also actually a point about success, given that historically we have always emphasised the threat from the far right, and there is always a sort of enduring threat from it, but we have also come a long way from when I was studying the far right in the early mid-2000s, when there was a very organised, very large-scale movement, and today that is certainly not the case. It is far smaller, more fractured and more volatile.

Q245 **Chair:** What do you make of the new online far right networks? A lot has been written about the so-called "alt-right" movement in the US, or you could call it the white supremacist movement in the US, or some of those trends in the US. Do you see that as being very different from here, or do you see links or similarities? Anybody?

Professor Goodwin: I can take that, but I'm sure that you guys have comments. Essentially, I would consider the alt-right to be a traditional far-right movement. It is a collection of very different organisations and think-tanks, but they are essentially converging on ideas that have long been circulating within the European far right, for example biological racism. If you were to read some of the reports coming out of the think-tanks around that network in America, those are ideas that you might have read in 1980s pamphlets by the BNP or the National Front; they're not as sophisticated as some of their proponents would have you believe.

However, that takes us to the question of where the far right in general is headed, and I think that post-US election there is now a lot of interest within European networks and UK networks in that scene, and how it has presented itself to a wider audience. There is a sort of interest in, say, some of the media organisations that have surrounded the alt-right and how they have tried to present a cultural front but are less interested in, say, elections and street demonstrations. I think that is certainly influencing how things are mobilising here.



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Julia Ebner: I would totally agree with that. I think also that because of the new media and the way that the interactions have now been really facilitated between the alt-right movements in the US with European identity movements, for example, we see a lot more almost like loose membership, or a formation of echo chambers, where these groups can co-operate and communicate with each other, which is also why this fragmented picture that we see in the UK is not necessarily something that we should see as comforting, because in fact the ideological appearance seems to be almost on the global level; it's almost the globalisation of the ideology, I would say.

Professor Feldman: Very briefly, in a sense the internet is the perfect storm in a teacup for the far right: it's global; it's potentially anonymous; it is potentially permanent in terms of the material that is there; and of course places like the United States, which are pretty close to having unrestricted free speech, allow you to host servers there. So, in that sense the far right has cottoned on to the value of the internet. A group like Stormfront is in its 21st year and has—what?—I think upwards of 150,000—We shouldn't say "members"; as Julia said, it's very important to think of them as "supporters". They are people who, in a sense, can choose their own level of engagement, radicalism, engagement with hate crimes and so forth.

So, in that sense, the internet, which has, of course, transformed many, many lives and many other ideologies as well, is, in a sense, perfectly built for a far right that was, let's say 30 or 50 years ago, meeting in the backrooms of pubs, dealing with these kind of dodgy off-prints of holocaust denial, or something like that. It is much, much easier now to circulate and attempt to normalise some of that discourse.

Q246 **Chair:** Would you regard the Breitbart website as being far right?

Professor Feldman: I would use the phrase "near right". I don't think they are far right in terms of what we would traditionally consider as that, but I do think they have a kind of transmission belt that allows people to move towards the far right and, dare I say it, back again. If you find yourself, as Professor Goodwin said, a member of the BNP in 2013 or 2014, when the wheels have come off you might find that some of those political views might be vented through other parties, and that can have a de-radicalising influence. We should not think of it as a conveyor belt on which you start here and you end there. If we look at 100% of terrorists and violent extremists, of course they are going on a conveyor belt—of course they must—but there are many ways one can stop off it, which is why the importance of de-radicalisation programmes and so forth suggests that it is not a conveyor belt, that there are places where people can stop off and, in fact, go backwards.

Q247 **Chair:** Do you see things like the Breitbart website and some of those US organisations as increasing far-right, extremist views, both in the US and abroad?

Julia Ebner: I would also not label them as far right per se. Breitbart and other news are what they are. I think they are used almost as weapons by both far-right extremists and Islamist extremists because they are used as polarising media outlets—

Q248 **Chair:** How do you mean? Explain what you mean by that.

Julia Ebner: We have been monitoring the echo chambers of extremists on all kinds of sites, be they far-right, far-left or Islamist extremists. They are all using the same media outlets, and it is mainly those polarising news outlets that convey a very biased picture of the world, one in which the west is at war with Islam or in which all Muslims are terrorists. So I think it is used as a weapon, or as an amplifier, by all the different extremists that we see in the spectrum.

Professor Goodwin: The way I would look at it is that there is a broader reservoir of ideas that the far right draws on, and there are multiple media organisations and think-tanks that cultivate that broader climate in which these groups will pick up ideas and run with them. There are lots of ideas, for example, within the American media—on the right of the American media—around things like ethnic nationalism, ethnopluralism and what is often called cultural racism, the idea that certain groups cannot co-exist because they are culturally very different, which is a subtle change from the classic racism that dominated in the '30s. Far-right groups pick up on some of those ideas and they run with them. That is not to say necessarily that those media organisations are right-wing extremists, but to say that they are perhaps indirectly cultivating a climate in which those groups are operating. That would be my view.

Q249 **Chair:** Do you see those networks or websites having an influence here or is there still a level of insulation?

Professor Goodwin: Those websites can have a clear impact anywhere. If you were to look, for example, at one of the most extreme cases, Anders Breivik was what you would call a self-starter in being radicalised almost exclusively through online websites and forums within the European far right. If you were to look at most of the people I interviewed for my PhD research who went on to join groups like the BNP and neo-Nazi groups, lots of those individuals were self-starters in that they would adopt the ideas online and then attend a meeting and it would escalate from there on. The internet plays an important role.

The challenge for Government, security services and others is to figure out a way of disrupting those echo chambers where individuals are not exposed to different ideas and ideologies. A PhD student of mine who spent many years in the police refers to the role of social media and online radicalisation as facilitating a supermarket form of extremism, in that we are now seeing individuals who will pick and choose elements of narratives that will fit their own circumstance. If we think about recent cases in the UK where individuals have gone on to commit murder, the transcripts and narratives that they have used are often not as ideologically coherent as those we may have seen in the '70s and '80s. They have picked a bit from

the counter-jihad movement in Germany, a bit from the ultra-right in America and a bit from the English Defence League. They have put all of that together and it has justified their world view as far as they see it.

Wrapped up in all of that are some real issues around mental illness, alcohol abuse and drug abuse—there is lots of evidence from Germany that suggests that those factors are just as important as what people read about online and as ideology. But I think we need to think about how you can expose people to a plurality of views and make sure that they are not just going home every night and spending five hours on the Stormfront forum.

Q250 Chair: In the US, things that five years ago we might only have heard from shock-jock radio hosts are now coming from very mainstream voices in the new Administration. If you were going to predict what might happen four or five years down the line, given the potential of these sorts of networks to organise, would you think that we are not likely to see very much change and that the far right will continue to be the sorts of fragmented organisation that we have in the UK at the moment? Or do you see trends emerging in where this might be heading?

Professor Feldman: While I agree that the far right is in disarray and fragmented, that has also been the case historically. I say this as a historian: if we take a longer-term view, there tends to be a generational coming together of the far right—think of the BUF in the 1930s and then the Union Movement after the war. It took something like 20 years for those different little wings of the far right to come together again in 1967 and give us the National Front, and another 15 or even 20 years until the BNP started making breakthroughs in places like Tower Hamlets.

Rather than this idea of there being a consistent far right, I think it is better to think of it as peaks and troughs. Absolutely the leading vehicle of the far right until 2010 was the BNP, and the wheels have come off, for lots of different and complex reasons. But that is not to say that the far right will continue to be fragmented and in disarray. There has been a signal change in 2016.

Again, especially for a historian, prediction is a very dangerous project, but I think normalising these kinds of attitudes is certainly one of the risks. I put it to you, Chair, that it depends what we understand by threat and risk. Certainly violent extremism and terrorism are one risk that is rightly associated with extreme right-wing views, but there are other forms of threat. For example, threats that relate to community cohesion, hate crimes, policing budgets or things like that may not necessarily rise to the level of a terrorist threat that might be part of the Contest strategy, but are equally felt on our streets by communities who might feel increasingly unsafe. That can lead to this idea of a cumulative extremism, where different extremes can, in a sense, turn the temperature up for whole communities, even if they are just 1% or 2% of that community. I suggest that a wider-ranging understanding of threat, including the normalisation of frankly bigoted sentiments, is something that we might very well see in coming years.



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Julia Ebner: I agree with you. Building on that, I think the biggest danger we see in the post-Trump and post-Brexit period is that if these disenfranchised communities that now feel re-enfranchised do not feel that their grievances are being addressed appropriately by the new Government, which is the political solution that they saw for this, they might shift to a more militant solution. The potential support base for a strong and militant far right is now there: the grievances are there, the narratives are there, the identity crisis is there and the ideologies are there. All it needs is a charismatic leader, and then we will have the big danger of a more coherent, militant far-right movement.

Professor Feldman: Or, dare I say, somebody opening the door for that charismatic leader. I don't think it has to be the charismatic leader—it might be someone who says, "I can get a political advantage by normalising some far-right ideas."

Professor Goodwin: I know you weren't suggesting this, Julia, but I think it is also very important, post-Trump and Brexit, that we are very clear on terminology. Donald Trump, for example, is not in my view a fascist. I am not entirely convinced that Donald Trump is a populist. Populists speak for the people; Donald Trump speaks for Donald Trump. I certainly would not suggest that Brexit is to be conflated with right-wing extremism at all. In Europe generally, we are now seeing a landscape where you have very different forms of mobilisation. In central and eastern Europe, if you think about Greece and Hungary, they have had Golden Dawn and Jobbik, very traditional pseudo-neo-Nazi organisations that are marching on the streets and contesting elections—they want to overthrow parliamentary democracy. If you think about western Europe, most of the organisations that we would associate in the popular press with the far right or populism have actually had to modify their programmes over the last 30 years to be operating within the borders of the democratic state. Those organisations that have called for an overthrow of democracy, or for minorities to be deported, have met only very small levels of support.

There is a point in here, as I said earlier, about democracy having actually defeated the traditional far right. That is not to downplay the threat from xenophobia and other challenges that we face today, but we need to keep that in mind. When you refer to confrontational, militant, right-wing extremist organisations—for example, the English Defence League, which was never officially categorised as right-wing extremist by the Government or other security agencies, and there is a question mark over why that decision was taken, given clear evidence of neo-Nazis being prominent in EDL organisations and rallies—those organisations have struggled to sustain a presence, not necessarily because their ideas have not been picked up, but largely because of public order issues. If you talk to policing about why the English Defence League collapsed, it was mainly related to changes around how they were policing demonstrations and rallies that made them not fun anymore. Instead of being in the centre of a town, they put them in a supermarket car park on the outskirts, and suddenly no one was watching the rallies.



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Lots of policing would say there is an important role for public order. There is an important role for research too. If you think about the Government's post-2010 extremism taskforce, there was almost zero interaction with the social science community, so in terms of trying to understand what we knew, what we know and what we don't know about this particular challenge, I think there are some areas where we could be improving and making sure that we have those mechanisms in place, should a challenge in the future emerge.

Q251 Mr Burrowes: Do you consider UKIP to be a far-right party, or at least providing support or cover for a far-right body? Matthew, you said in *The Guardian* that UKIP has "considerable policy overlaps with the extreme right" and that "on the doorsteps of voters it is often pushing the same message as the extreme right".

Professor Goodwin: I do not think that UKIP is a right-wing extremist political party. To be a right-wing extremist party you need, essentially, to share two things: you need to reject parliamentary democracy and the principle of human equality. I would classify UKIP as a radical right organisation, not an extreme right organisation, but one that campaigns on the same issues. Inevitably, there is overlap within that arena of mobilisation. It is an organisation that was consciously aware earlier on that it might attract individuals from the traditional extreme right. I think it is probably important to point out that UKIP proscribed those individuals from joining, whereas other organisations, such as the English Defence League, the British National Party and so on—the traditional extreme right—never took that step of proscription. I think the boundaries there were clearer than they are in other organisations in British politics, where you often see members falling in and falling out in a very fluid way.

Q252 Mr Burrowes: You also included in your article that "a significant portion of the UKIP base closely resembled that of the BNP".

Professor Goodwin: If you look at the UKIP electorate, there is a significant overlap in it with organisations like the British National Party in earlier years, which pulled many votes from working-class, economically disaffected communities, in Labour as well as Conservative areas. Those organisations did to some extent draw support from similar sections of British society. The difference between the two is that UKIP also pulled votes from sections of the lower middle classes and more Conservative areas. It was more successful among women than the BNP was. It was more successful among pensioners in Britain. Look, I have spent a lot of time around the BNP and a lot of time around UKIP. Ideologically, they are completely different organisations, in the sense that the BNP was an unadulterated racial-nationalist, almost neo-Nazi organisation. UKIP is an ultra-conservative, populist political party that plays within the democratic rules. I understand the temptation politically to say perhaps they are part of the same phenomena. I think it is important that we draw a distinction between the two.

Julia Ebner: I would like to add something. I totally agree: I would also not label UKIP per se as a right-wing extremist group. I think it has



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attracted supporters that were rather on the far right side. There are numbers in an article in *The Independent*, which said that 10% of UKIP supporters label themselves as very right wing, and I think 96% identified themselves as being right wing. So I think there is some evidence for that as well, but I agree that UKIP has clearly distanced itself from Pegida and even more, of course, from the more militant far-right groups. I think it is unfair to mix up the different groups.

Q253 Naz Shah: I have a couple of questions, following on from the Chair's questions about Breitbart. You have said that Breitbart cultivates a broader climate for extremism and you have used words like "the transition belt"—it is used as a weapon and it amplifies hatred. Thinking about what you have just said about rejecting the idea of democracy, why then doesn't Breitbart fit into the narrative of being right-wing extremists? What differentiates it from the extreme right wing? I understand it when you are talking about the political parties, but please help me understand it when talking about this platform.

Professor Goodwin: I haven't spent a great deal of time studying that in depth. It is akin, if you like, to the tabloid media in Britain, which has often pushed very tough messages on social issues like immigration, has used very strident language—some would say at times socially irresponsible language—on issues of migration, Islam and integration, and has certainly cultivated a climate that is perhaps not necessarily conducive to an integrated society.

I think organisations on the ultra-right of American politics that have tried to get a foothold into Europe are working in the same way, but in Breitbart's case it is fair to say that they are pushing ideas that are more niche than they are about mainstream xenophobia. They are ideas around specific arguments that have been developed within that network—around putting culture before politics, around what they call ethno-nationalism or ethno-pluralism at the heart of politics. They are not openly, at least from my reading, calling for the overthrow of parliamentary democracy. If anything, based on the readings that I have done on Breitbart, they argue that democracy and the nation state are under threat from economic forces and ultra-capitalist forces, as well as other forces in society. I haven't seen anything that would make me think this is a categorically an organisation that is right-wing extremist, but like I say, I am not really an expert on the Breitbart media organisation.

Professor Feldman: Just a few observations about this because I think it is a really important question. Historically, I think we could quite happily say, in Europe and beyond, "Here is the cordon sanitaire. These are the mainstream parties. Even if they are pretty far to the right or pretty far to the left, they are on our team. Here is the cordon sanitaire and the parties that are beyond that." I think that what we are seeing in the last 10 or 15 years is a real disillusion or breaking down of that cordon sanitaire, where we say, "These are the guys that are outside democratic legitimacy."

I tend to agree with what Professor Goodwin has said, for example, about the BNP, but let us also remind ourselves—what is the title of their 2010



election manifesto? "Rebuilding British Democracy". Now, I do not tend to believe that that understanding of democracy is anything like a parliamentary understanding of democracy, but after 1945, the knockout blow that fascism received, and the stigma that it had for its persecution, meant that it had to euphemise, it had to change and it had to have echo chambers.

What we see with something like Breitbart News is both the assault on the cordon sanitaire—I am not suggesting that it is an intentional assault, but dissolving that makes it much harder to say, "These groups are beyond the pale and these are not"—and that also, when we look at a group like Breitbart News, they are quite happy to use certain means and ideas, like "globalism", for the vast majority of that population who are reading it. It has to be said there is much bigger—not an echo chamber—circulation; they are talking to conservatives and they might be talking to libertarians, as well as people on the alt-right, far right or neo-Nazi. It is a house where people can come together in different rooms. They are also using terms that some people know, like "globalism", which 50 or 75 years ago was simply code for Jews. I am not suggesting that everybody who logs on to Breitbart is nodding and winking, but some of the rehabilitation of that is part of this dissolved cordon sanitaire that we are seeing right across Europe and into the United States. That, to me, would be one of the real areas of concern—these mainstreaming breaking taboos that allow for certain ideas that are really beyond the pale to be given, frankly, a coat of white paint over what is asbestos and say, "It's fine. You can go back into this house."

Q254 Naz Shah: Thank you for that. HOPE not hate has described anti-Muslim hate as the "undisputed number one issue" for most of the far-right movement. To what extent does the far right still represent a threat to other BME communities, and is anti-Semitism still an integral strand of the far right today?

Professor Goodwin: It depends on what organisation you are looking at. If you look at classic neo-Nazi-type groups, such as National Action, an organisation that was recently proscribed—it is one of the first far-right groups to be proscribed in the UK—you see that it is unequivocally anti-Semitic, anti-Muslim and pretty much anti every group that it does not consider to be white British. If you look at other organisations, such as the defence leagues or some of their offshoots, you see that they have, whether strategically or sincerely, expressed allegiance with Israel as part of what they see as an alliance against Islam and the perceived threat from Muslim communities. So it depends on what organisation you are looking at.

There is no doubt that across Europe, however, the so-called counter-jihad movement, which is focused almost exclusively on trying to galvanise anti-Muslim sentiment, is much stronger than it might have been if were having this conversation 10 years ago or five years ago. It is certainly likely to permeate the campaigns in Europe that we see this year in France, the Netherlands—where that is essentially the core programme of Geert Wilders—and Germany, where the Alternative for Germany has also



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moved very sharply in that direction from its more Eurosceptic beginnings. It depends on what organisation you are looking at.

I would also note that, having been seconded in my career to DCLG in 2012–13, one of my pet frustrations is that the Government have very rarely done any meaningful or systematic work looking at this issue in an evidence-based way. Thinking about Islamophobia or other forms of xenophobia, there has been a significant lack of investment in an attempt to pull together what we know about these different forms of political prejudice. I hope that that will change, given the political changes.

Professor Feldman: Broadly speaking, I tend to think that what we might call the difference between the biological, or old-fashioned, extreme right and a new right, which tends to have traffic in cultural stuff, tends to be the issue of Jews and Israel. You find a lot of groups that are perhaps rejecting the neo-Nazism and rejecting the outright extremism actually embracing Israel or calling themselves Judeophilic, whereas their new real enemies, and I think there is some strategy there, are the Muslims—undifferentiated, sort of “outside the borders”, and “We’ve got to keep them out.” So I think that anti-Semitism remains a serious concern for hate crimes. It is also a kind of way station for where one might situate oneself in terms of biological, race-based hate crimes—still, almost four out of five hate crimes recorded are ethnic-based—and what we might consider religious or ideologically-based attacks.

The other observation I would make about hate crimes is twofold. You mentioned other groups beyond, let’s say, people of the Muslim faith in this country. One, we need to think of hate crimes as similar to crimes in a way, in that some of them are opportunistic. Maybe a lot of them are opportunistic—someone sees another person crossing the street, or online, or any of these kinds of place, and says, “I’m going to take that opportunity.” If that is the case—the whole phrase about radicalisation is that it takes months and months, or is a conveyor belt—radicalisation may take 30 seconds, or a minute. We can think about it as opportunistic.

The second thing that I would observe about anti-Muslim hate crimes, unlike every other strand of hate crime we know—as Professor Goodwin said, I think we still need to know more and to disaggregate those hate crimes by police force so we can compare them—is that one of the things that really stands out is that anti-Muslim hate crime tends to be male on female. Hate crime is almost overwhelmingly male on male; anti-Muslim hate crime, especially where a victim is wearing visibly Muslim clothing, has tended to be male on female.

Q255 **Naz Shah:** I’d like to talk about the “alt-right” terminology. It seems to me that there is a culture of accepting the alt-right, and that that terminology normalises it. What is the difference between alt-right and far right? Can you pick that apart for us?

Professor Feldman: It’s a propaganda term. You’re meant to say, “Oh, they must not be radical right.” It’s a synonym, in my view.

Julia Ebner: I would say that alt-right is a more specific subcategory of the far right, which I see as white supremacism; correct me if you do not agree.

Professor Feldman: Sure.

Julia Ebner: I agree that it is almost a new rebranding of something that is just part of the far right. Even labelling themselves as the alternative reflects the zeitgeist of these new supporters of the far right, who are increasingly young.

Q256 **Naz Shah:** Isn't that a dangerous route to be going down—normalising this the more we use the term "alt-right"?

Julia Ebner: Definitely, yes.

Professor Feldman: I believe it's a mistaken term to use. It has done for the radical right, or is trying to do for the radical right, what hipsters did for beards, and I think that's a very dangerous thing indeed—not with respect to beards, but with respect to normalising certain forms of bigotry, eugenics and hatred.

Professor Goodwin: There have basically been two innovations in the post-war ethnic nationalist scene. One was in the '70s, when French thinkers came up with the idea of the new right. They said that if they were to get their case across, they needed to stop talking about biology, genes, white supremacism and all the ideas that were outdated and stigmatised after 1945, and start talking about culture and values. The second innovation is what we are seeing now, which is an attempt, particularly in North America, to repackage once again ideas that are very similar in ways that carry greater resonance, in particular among younger voters and more recent generations of voter. The alt-right is certainly trying to repackage ideas that have long been circulating within that wider orbit.

Q257 **James Berry:** I have been looking at Breitbart's UK website. I am not a regular visitor, but they have lots of stories at the moment like, for instance, "Asian youths force Morris dancers to abandon performance with accusations of racism".

That is the kind of thing that you would see on the *Daily Mail* website, for instance, but it would be mixed up with legitimate things: the "Free Shaker Aamer" campaign, stories about Kim Kardashian's breast enlargements, whatever.

But on the Breitbart page, it is all stories like that, so anyone looking at this page would think, "God, this country is overrun by migrants, going to the dogs, etc." I don't see how we can tackle that, because they are not really breaching—they are not libelling anyone, although if they are, I am sure they will be taken to court. They are operating within the bounds of free speech, which are more restricted here than in the US.

In the same way, there are some very left-wing websites that, if you just read them, you would see a diatribe of hard left material. You talk about



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the counter-narrative, but I am wondering how we can come up with a counter-narrative to sites like this, which certainly project themselves as legitimate news outlets.

Professor Goodwin: Again, when you have a situation in which individuals go over and over again to the same sources of news and information, they are going to develop a world view and a belief system that either reflect that or corroborate that to them. You will often find that people who are drawn to the ultra-right will go to Breitbart or the *Express* or the *Mail* over and over again, and that is where their source of information comes in. What you can do in response to that, as a state actor, is very minimal at this point in time. We have a free press. We have a plurality of views and opinions that are out there in the media landscape. If organisations tip into areas that contravene legislation and law and start calling for inciting violence and racial hatred and religious hatred, that is obviously something else altogether.

I add that we do not have a well-established tradition, like other European states, of also monitoring media and political organisations and the links between them and hate crime, in the way that, say, Germany has done for much of its post-war period for obvious reasons. On hate crime, we have only really started to collect information on that in the last three or four years. Somebody on the previous panel asked how we compare to other European countries. The answer is that we don't know, because everybody collects all this stuff in different ways, which is a real problem.

To respond to your question, I do not know if there is anything in particular that we can do. You mentioned counter-narratives. There has been a massive investment of resources in developing counter-narratives to so-called IS and so-called IS-inspired organisations. At the same time, I have not seen a large body of research or evidence testing whether any of that makes a difference. We just assume that if we develop a counter-narrative it will work, so we should give one organisation £10 million and another— I have not seen the Government sit down and look at what works in counter-extremism policy.

Q258 **James Berry:** That is quite difficult to measure, I suppose. I have one more question that you might be able to link into the answer that you, Ms Ebner, wanted to give on the previous question. Do you know, as researchers, if there is any link between the rise of far-right organisations and general dissatisfaction with things that people on the far right are not happy with, which is, essentially, what they describe as an excessive amount of immigration? When there is a feeling that the Government— Labour or Conservative or whatever stripe—hasn't got a grip on immigration, is there a rise in membership or involvement in far-right organisations? Similarly, if the Government are seen to have a grip on it, do membership and involvement go down?

Professor Feldman: That perception is, of course, subjective between groups. I tend to agree with that, and think that there can be long-term trends that can be radicalised or claimed by groups. However, I am also careful, because invariably—I am certainly not suggesting that this is part



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of your question—we end up getting back to Weimar Germany: “Is it these crises that are going to cripple us?” Certainly, there were crises in Weimar Germany, but there were also things that were indigenous to German democracy at that time, and there were problems that were intrinsic to German democracy for a long period.

I guess my cautionary note would be that those groups are always going to claim it; they are going to try to stake their little flag there and say, “That is a Breitbart issue,” or anybody else. To me, that leads to short, medium and longer-term responses. Down the line we would like to have an educated populace that is digitally literate and understands the difference between fake news and that kind of stuff. In the medium term, we would like to have much better disaggregation of hate crimes and things like that.

Immediately, if there is something that can actually be done, and if there is something that is truly, breaking-point egregious, that is almost invariably going to be hosted on servers. You can’t interdict it, but surely you can put pressure on companies that are hosting servers and materials in this country. That is where I would imagine that may be beyond law and into morality and shame. I think that that actually has a much better role in 21st century politics than it is perhaps oftentimes given credit for.

James Berry: I agree.

Julia Ebner: I agree with you, in terms of the long-term strategy, that it is important to also address the underlying grievances that lead people to fall prey to extremist ideologies. In the short and medium term, relating to the point about the media that you mentioned, it is important to focus on education—as you said, teaching digital literacy and critical thinking skills in citizenship classes or other classes. We could maybe even have some case studies of biased media outlets and analyse those. That is something that teachers need to be trained on, but training journalists could also be a good way to go about it—I think that was mentioned in the December session. Then there could be co-operation with private companies. Several projects tried to get people out of their own echo chambers, with people swapping echo chambers for a week to get some other news feeds in their Twitter or Facebook streams. That could potentially be a project that changes people’s outlooks on Facebook and Twitter.

Q259 **Chair:** Do you think this filter bubble issue is a big deal?

Julia Ebner: I think so. I think there are three ways to go about it. One is starting with the audience—through educating the media audience. The second is working with the people who make the news, with the journalists. The third is going through the filter bubbles, the outlets and the platforms that are giving those biased stories.

Q260 **Mr Winnick:** You wouldn’t have been invited here in the first place if there was any complacency about the far right, but as has been indicated in evidence today, fascist movements go back a long time—before Mosley, in fact. Obviously you know more about it than I do, but there is



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all that has occurred since 1945, such as the White Defence League, the National Socialist party, Tyndall, Jordan and all the rest of it, yet not once have any of these groups been able to get elected to the House of Commons. It may be argued—I would argue—that our electoral system helps in that way, but it is a fact, isn't it, that despite what happened in the '70s, particularly with the BNP, and a bit later, they must have been extremely disappointed that they could not make the breakthrough to the House of Commons, although, of course, two were elected to the European Parliament?

Professor Feldman: Sure. I absolutely agree with you about the first-past-the-post system. It is not a benefit to far-right parties. Where I am based in the north-east, for example, it is not for the lack of trying. The BNP stood in 43 wards and did very poorly, but is important to remember that they are trying, and not just the BNP. I think we have to be aware of regional hotspots, so the national picture might be hostile to the far right, but let us go down to south Wales—very far away, right?—where the National Front, I think, stood something like 15 candidates in the Welsh elections, between Swansea and Newport. The question is why. We need to get into some of the local drivers. Sometimes having a national picture can occlude really specific local or regional instances. Although I certainly agree with you in terms of the national picture, I suggest that the National Front would not bother to stand 15 candidates anywhere in London. The question is, why south Wales? Why, for example, have we seen very large Defence League marches pretty much every year in Newcastle, but you are not seeing them in other parts of the country? Those are the evidence-based questions that we could, over the medium term, try to tease out and provide some metrics for.

Q261 **Mr Winnick:** At this moment in time, there does not seem to be—as I said earlier, with no complacency, given online, social media and the rest of it—an organisation that has replaced the BNP.

Professor Feldman: Yet, I would suggest.

Q262 **Mr Winnick:** At this moment in time, no fascist organisation has anywhere near the profile of the BNP, and the National Front before that. Is that not so, Professor Goodwin?

Professor Goodwin: I would agree. There has been fragmentation on the traditional extreme right, where you now have very small groups that are disparate and do not always have formal memberships—some of which have been proscribed whereas others are active and doing different things, whether that means demonstrations or trying to link up with European groups—and I think that is absolutely right. I think we are probably entering an era where we might want to be less fixated on groups and organisations than on how the ideas are circulating through social media. Think about the Lee Rigby case, for example. It was very clear in its aftermath that organisations that might not be big and strong in their own right—for example, Britain First—were doing a very adept and ruthless job of spreading their ideas through Facebook and social media to tens of thousands of people, presenting that ideology as legitimate British



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nationalism and bringing individuals into that orbit. I think we are probably now in an era where we are not going to see the National Fronts or the British National parties, but we will see the ideas circulating in different arenas.

Q263 **Mr Winnick:** I wonder whether I can turn to you, Ms Ebner, regarding the threat of terrorism from very small, but very dangerous elements within the Muslim community. How far do you think a distinction can be made between those who undoubtedly engage not in hate crimes, but hate propaganda, and those who resort to outright terrorism or have a potential willingness to engage in terror? Can one draw a line between those two things?

Julia Ebner: There is definitely a link, especially with the hateful atmosphere that has been created online through the rise of online hatred. We have seen different examples across Europe where that has fed into actual self-starter attacks. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Winnick: Democracy!

Chair: We have a Division, so I will suspend the Committee. Apologies for that. When we return, we will be keen to carry on asking you in particular about violent extremism and the Government's response to it, as well as the different forms of police and Government response to far-right extremism. There may be two votes. We will return as swiftly as we can.

Sitting suspended for Divisions in the House.

On resuming—

Chair: Professor Feldman has just popped out, but we will get going again; there is nothing like a Division to clear the room. Unfortunately, some of our Members have had to go and speak in the debate that is now starting on the Policing and Crime Bill. Apologies for that. We are very keen to conclude the session—don't worry—so let me hand back to David Winnick.

Q264 **Mr Winnick:** I was trying to see how far we can make a distinction between those promoting hate within elements of the Muslim community and others who would resort to carrying out terrorism if the opportunity arose. Can you answer from your work at the Quilliam Foundation?

Julia Ebner: There are strong ideological links between the two, and violent attacks or terrorist attacks are often inspired by what is said and the hatred that is spread online. The best example is probably Anders Breivik, who in his manifesto referred to a lot of the things that were being said in online spaces but also by non-violent groups simply referring to the ideologies, which is something that I think is very commonplace.

In that way, especially with this perception that is being spread in several far-right forums but also through the social media feeds of extremists that a war between Muslims and non-Muslims is inevitable, I think that is something that almost calls for action. Some who are prone to extremism



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would then see that their only way to act is through violence. I think that is the link. That is how I see it. I don't know whether you want to add something.

Professor Goodwin: Yes. I would like to see, if possible, some work that actually looks at what we do know about the perpetrators of hate crime and how that links to political movements and individual experiences.

If you look at the evidence base in Germany, for example, one of the conclusions appears to be that those who are drawn into hate crime often come from a background of alcohol abuse, drug abuse and petty criminality. They may not actually initially share a grand ideological world view, but they are none the less drawn into that world through those individual experiences.

In Britain, the comparative literature is pretty weak. Our PhD student is looking at hate crime, and there are very few comprehensive studies in that area. That is remarkable given that we have good data and we are now talking about hate crime after things like Lee Rigby, Brexit and so on. It is striking to me that there is not more out there and there has not been a greater attempt to synthesise what we know. That would be incredibly useful.

Q265 **Mr Winnick:** This is my last question. For white extremists—even, it could perhaps be argued, for Mosley, but certainly post 1945—anti-Semitism has been a hard sell. In so far as there has been any sort of impact on white communities, it has been, obviously, on those considered to be black or Asian.

In the Muslim community, for those who are vulnerable—hopefully a very small number—to not necessarily terrorism but hate propaganda, anti-Semitism seems an easier sell. Is that only because of Israel and policies that many of us deplore? I would venture that it is more than that. Perhaps it would be interesting to have your views on why it is easier to sell anti-Semitism for those engaging in hate propaganda within the Muslim community.

Professor Feldman: Some would say that anti-Semitism is the oldest prejudice, so in that sense it has historically given rise to loads of themes—even memes, dare I say?—and terms and ideas; the “usurious” person, or the “conspiring” person. So it contains multitudes in and of itself.

We could come at it the other way, which I tend to think is slightly more catholic, as it were, about hate crimes, which is to say that they tend to target the most vulnerable in society. I think that we see in many societies that Jews historically have been vulnerable—“out groups” is the term that’s used. I think that attendance to the vulnerable, the needy and the people who are most exposed is, to me, at the heart of hate crime. It’s supporting the vulnerable and saying that the dignity of the person is absolutely non-negotiable, and the persons who need it most are oftentimes those minority communities.



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Also we know, of course, that something like 0.5% of Britain is the Jewish community. That is one tenth of the Muslim community, at present. Both of them are seriously minority communities and in certain circumstances are potentially vulnerable.

Q266 Chair: Do you think that a lone act of terrorism from the far right is taken seriously enough?

Julia Ebner: No, I don't think so, neither by the media nor by politicians. I think the problem is really situated within the whole media debate about terrorism and inconsistent labelling of violent attacks. I think we saw very clearly after Jo Cox's murder that the media was very reluctant to label this as terrorism, whereas if the perpetrator had shouted "Allahu Akbar" that would have been on the newspaper headlines immediately afterwards.

That, of course, makes the public have their biased perception towards Islamist extremism being more prevalent, although, as the Royal United Services Institute study has revealed, far-right terrorism might be an even bigger threat, and in terms of numbers and the European statistics far-right terrorism is actually more frequent, even if it's less co-ordinated very often and more on a "self-starter" basis. I wouldn't call it "lone wolf", because ideologically they are connected.

I think that the problem is really situated within the media not labelling as such, and then creating pressure on politicians to address Islamist extremism but not in the same way as far-right extremism.

Q267 Chair: So you think we should describe far-right violent extremism as terrorism?

Julia Ebner: Absolutely. It depends, of course, if the definition of terrorism applies, which is that it is ideologically or politically motivated and a deliberate act of violence. I think that is very clearly to be labelled as such, yes.

Professor Feldman: While remaining a bit agnostic on that, I have worked with the CPS on three self-directed terrorist cases that all came from the extreme right, and the perspective I would offer is that, one, self-directed terrorism, like other forms of terrorism, is promiscuous; it's not just one group but, of course, it can change over time. So, 120 years ago, the big "lone wolf" threat was from anarchists, and that's gone through a whole bunch of different sort of waves. My point is that we are arguably seeing a jump from so-called "lone wolf" terrorism by extreme right-wingers to other ideologies—arguably jihadi Islamist terrorists, as well. I think that might be a concern for the future.

However, the self-directed terrorism that we have seen came out of America, broadly, in the 1990s, and it had a certain hinterland or a certain value that was attached to texts like "The Turner Diaries", or to murderers like a person named Joseph Paul Franklin. The point was that it was a specifically American phenomenon. It was seen as a way of doing an end run around the security services. It was very easy to penetrate groups

like—let’s say—the British National party, so the best thing that they could do was what they came up with, which was called “leaderless resistance”.

The point is that these self-directed terrorists, in a sense, were owned by the extreme right wing for 20, 30, 40 years, and of course it jumped transatlantically in 1999, when we saw the horrors in this city that David Copeland unleashed with that really horrific ideology.

Also, I’m sure that I don’t need to point out the term that I would say is an analogue to Islamism, which is “Christianism”, which we can absolutely see in Anders Behring Breivik. There is no question in my mind that it shows both a perversion of a monotheistic doctrine and, maybe more importantly, the potential destructiveness of these so-called lone wolves.

The most recent case I did was somebody who, while we were in Iraq, was able to make a weapon of mass destruction in their own garage by themselves with a credit card and a computer. That’s all you need.

Q268 **Chair:** In the UK?

Professor Feldman: This was in the UK in 2009. He was the first person to be convicted under the Chemical Weapons Act in this country. We were looking for chemical weapons in a sovereign country when you can do it in your basement. To me, that is very much a red line.

Q269 **Chair:** What is your characterisation of the extent of the threat of violent or terrorist right-wing extremism at the moment?

Professor Goodwin: It is very difficult to say, because if you are talking about violence, the individuals who eventually rise above the surface—if you look at cases like Breivik and others—don’t really have a footprint before emerging. Tommy Mair, for example, was largely not a prominent person on the far-right landscape.

Linking to your previous question, one of the enduring criticisms of how we have tried to counter extremism in this country is that we have devoted our attention almost exclusively towards religiously inspired forms of extremism, and we have ignored far-right and political extremism. Then we added the far right as a bolt-on, but many people—in particular, within British Muslim communities—felt that that was tokenistic and was not sincere. They felt they were being persecuted or their communities were being securitised, while white working class communities were not, and that there was an imbalance.

I think that criticism is valid to some extent, given what we have seen within the far right in Britain over the last five years. There is clearly a need to take this scene far more seriously, to monitor it and to draw together what we know about it, but to do that in a very careful way that doesn’t simultaneously stigmatise white working class communities.

Going back to the Connecting Communities programme pre 2010, there are the beginnings of the same problem that we saw with Prevent. White working class communities thought, “Well, hang on a minute. We’re not all



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BNP; we're not all far right." The Government has to tread very carefully in that, but there is a need to balance the scales so it is a bit fairer.

If you look at the US, far more acts of violence and hate crime have been committed by the far right than religiously inspired groups. If you were to drill down and look at the data in the UK, you would see a significant number of attacks and provocations by politically motivated groups. The threat is not as big as it was five or 10 years ago, but tomorrow an incident could emerge perpetrated by somebody who has no clear links to an organisation but is expressing the same ideological views and narratives that are well entrenched across the landscape.

Q270 Chair: If you look at the perpetrators of either the far-right violence or the terrorist attacks that we have had, what would you see as being the common characteristics or the particular reasons why those people might have become extremists? What are the factors affecting radicalisation?

Julia Ebner: I think that is precisely what is so dangerous about the current threats we see from the militant far right. If you disagree with this, say so, but I don't think there is a pattern in the perpetrators we have seen, from young to old. We have seen the perpetrators becoming increasingly young—not only on the militant side, but on the popular side—increasingly educated, and coming from across all social classes. That, combined with their lack of co-ordination, makes it very difficult to pre-empt those kind of self-starter attacks.

I think that is where the real danger comes from, which the RUSI report refers to. Having groups such as National Action adopt strategies and learn from the strategies used by jihadis—used by ISIS, for example—is adding an additional danger, in that they become more appealing to young people. They widen their echo chambers and appeal to a lot of young people.

Q271 Chair: What kind of examples? What is an example of them using a similar strategy?

Julia Ebner: So, for example, they have had their "white jihad" campaign, which borrowed elements. They produced a video clip that was very similar to what ISIS produces in their rhetoric and in the way they have very colourful pictures and graphic materials. They even did, I believe, a combat training camp, which looked very similar to what we see in ISIS propaganda. This is I think a new dynamic that we see in these counter-jihad, more militant groups.

Professor Feldman: I would add one other thing. We tend to talk about white males, 15 to 50 or something like that, and then a case comes that completely upsets that apple cart: someone like James von Brunn who was 92 or 93 and shot up the US Holocaust Memorial Museum. So I do think that we really have to be careful when we come up with a profile, not least because it could be securitising certain demographics.

The other thing I would add beyond demographics—I certainly agree with Professor Goodwin that we can be stigmatising the white working class in



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the same way as the perception is that Muslims have been stigmatised under Prevent—is mental health: the one thing that I do think seems to be over-represented. I completely agree with my colleagues here that we do have a dearth statistics on all of this stuff. I think we are all of the same voice, saying, “We really do need to drill down and commission some work on these types of matters: hate crimes; violent self-directed acts of terrorism and so forth.”

The one thing that I do think can be a bit lazy is: “mental health issues lead people to go and do violent acts.” We know that most people who suffer mental health issues do not commit violent acts, of course. So even if we say that there seems to be an over-representation from so-called self-directed terrorists, I would be very careful that we do not turn around and say something like, “If you’re mad, you could go out and commit an act of political violence or terrorism.”

I would be very keen not to make that link as well when we are not stigmatising groups, because I think not this Committee, and certainly not Parliament, but in some of the windier sections of the tabloids there seems to be a link forming between mental health challenges and political violence. I would suggest that that is tenuous in much the same way as a lot of these things are, depending on which way you look out of the telescope, as it were.

Julia Ebner: I would like to add one more thing on the typical profile or the lack of a typical profile. I think in 2011 the Prevent strategy document said that those who become involved with right-wing extremism are “usually male, poorly educated...and often unemployed.” That simply does not apply any more. There is a need to redefine what we are looking at and the threats we are looking at.

Something that has really changed is the new media and how everyone can fall prey to conspiracy theories and fake news. And everyone can be a victim of fake news, no matter what their formal education level is and no matter whether one is rich or poor. That is something that we have really learned from some of the examples of fake news we have seen recently. That is more about critical thinking than about formal education.

Q272 **Stuart C. McDonald:** I just wanted to explore a little bit the extent to which Government policy or police strategies and so on can be effective in tackling far-right extremism. In describing the fragmentation of the far right, some of you mentioned peaks and troughs and the lack of a charismatic leader or the dawn of supermarket ideology, and the only policy that seems to have had any effect in all that was a change in policing of BNP marches. Are you saying that there should be severe limits on what we can expect the Government or police to achieve, or are you saying that it has not pursued the right policies so far?

Professor Goodwin: I think there is an open question over whether policies make a difference, and there is some work to be done on that. I think the policing experience around the EDL is a really valuable one

because it shows that often groups can be disrupted through very basic changes in how their demonstrations and marches are policed.

But I also think what has been quite striking over the last six years has been, from my perspective, the lack of investment in integration as a strategy for the country. If you look at how funding has been withdrawn from interventions that were designed to bring different communities together locally, I think that will come to be seen as quite damaging for the country, given the amount of useful work that was going on before that.

I will give you a few examples. If you think about some of the regional interventions that were set up between 2001 and 2010 to foster cohesion locally, they have been largely gutted. Local Prevent officers and funding in that area has come under challenge. There has not been any engagement, so far as I can see, with the social science community at any level of Government, including the extremism taskforce. That would all come under scrutiny, were there to be an event or an incident. People would say, "Why have we not been engaging with people who are working in this area? Why have we not been investing locally? Why are communities arguably more segregated than they were 15 years ago?"

Q273 Stuart C. McDonald: Professor Feldman, you spoke specifically about the need for local strategies particularly in relation to south Wales. Presumably you would go along with some—

Professor Feldman: I would, and I would not want to make any presumptions about your accent. The Scots have released a fantastic report on intersectionality and hate crime. Let's say you are a non-white, Muslim woman. You might be attacked for any one of a number of multiple identities. Avoiding a top-down approach and listening to local knowledge and local people seems to me to be a useful thing. The independent report in Scotland was published in September 2016, I believe, and it has some seriously cutting-edge, academic-led recommendations.

The other simple observation I would make is that Wales has signed up to the UN convention on the rights of the child, and that goes up to the age of 25. That allows for some younger people not simply to be sent to things such as the Channel project and other forms of securitised counter-terrorism that have a stigma and presumably would be on someone's record; it allows for certain types of mental health interventions or interventions based on a third-sector model. I do think there are some really good ideas out there, but casting around for local knowledge seems really important, because so many things can be drivers to local extremism.

Julia Ebner: I would add that I think it is important not only to undermine the ideologies, but to create alternative narratives, as has been mentioned previously. For that reason, it is important to amplify moderate voices coming out of all kinds of communities that we are looking at.



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The issue is about giving moderate people a platform on all these platforms and ensuring that they feel comfortable with it and do not feel that they will be targeted immediately by extremists. It is about encouraging them. I think the other thing is to show potential far-right supporters or far-right supporters that there are other ways to go about solving their grievances than joining extremist groups—that a war between Muslims and non-Muslims is not inevitable and that there are other solutions to the problems when there might be some tensions in communities.

Q274 Stuart C. McDonald: That brings me on to my second question, because I think at one point Professor Goodwin suggested that there was not an evidence base about counter-narratives, yet throughout your evidence you all seem to be suggesting that there is just not enough evidence. That chimes with what one of our previous witnesses said about the counter-extremism strategy failing to fully understand the nature of the contemporary far right and focusing too much on neo-Nazi activity. Would you agree with that piece of evidence? Is there a lack of understanding of the far right?

Professor Goodwin: The basic point is that we need a lot more evidence and we need to be engaging more with research communities to build that up. That to me is a no-brainer. Every other west European democracy does it. Germany does it, France does it and we should be doing it a lot more.

To give you one example, if we think about the Government's working group on anti-Muslim hatred, which was set up as a symbolic way of gesturing to British Muslims that their grievances were being taken seriously, that working group was not really given any resource. There is a really useful piece of work that could have been undertaken there, and that links to your point about showing communities that being Muslim and being British or being white and being at ease with multiculturalism are not irreconcilable things in pushing back against extremist rhetoric.

Those groups have often been handicapped, if you like, before they have even got going because they do not have the resource to actually engage in those areas. If we are serious about building up that evidence base, we need to give some of those groups the tools with which to do it.

Q275 Stuart C. McDonald: Are there any particular examples that you would highlight as to where? Is it a general complaint about the lack of an evidence base or are there more specific concerns?

Professor Feldman: No, I would agree with Professor Goodwin. We have to look back to 7/7. The horrors of 7/7 were such that it is understandable that people in the Government and the security services said, "We are going to put almost all our energies into looking at the threat posed by jihadi Islamist terrorism." Looking back, I don't think anybody would turn around and say that that was an unreasonable response to what happened on 7/7, and of course 21/7 being thwarted. However, there is a limited amount of resource and a limited amount of people who can do these



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kinds of jobs. Invariably, if you have 100 desks that are looking at different forms of extremism—Britain has five pillars that it sees as different forms of extremism—and you all of a sudden devote 90 of those desks to countering jihadi Islamist terrorism, understandably after 7/7, it is going to let other forms of extremism have a certain degree of latitude that they might not otherwise have had.

In response to your question about neo-Nazis, people running around saying that Hitler was right or any of that other nonsense in York or other cities plays really well and is visible. However, I think that is but one face of the far right—I use the term far right as an umbrella term—and that is the visible face that is the really hardcore people that you look at and say, “1945 is over; it’s time to move on.” I don’t necessarily feel that those are the ones that we necessarily have to be the most vigilant about. Something like National Action will appeal to less than 1% of this country, but a group like Britain First, if it got its act together, could appeal to a much larger section, because they are not saying Hitler was right; they are saying they love British bulldogs and other things, and “Click like if you like puppies” and things like that. In a sense, it is a rather more savvy approach than, “We’re going to double down on Nazism.”

Julia Ebner: I just want to add one more thing about the moderate voices, because I think it is really important. There has been a lot of fear, especially in minority communities, of standing up for human rights in public, because they have been attacked—this is also where reciprocal radicalisation comes in from all of the different extremes—by Islamist extremists for working with the Government or for what they say is not showing loyalty to their communities, and they have been attacked by far right extremists simply because they have been more visible. It is important to provide a safe space for moderate voices coming out from minority communities.

Q276 Stuart C. McDonald: I have one final question, referring to National Action. In December the Government obviously proscribed that neo-Nazi group. Do you think that is effective, or does it actually just drive them underground and make it harder to follow them?

Professor Feldman: I am agnostic about that. Certainly, among the extreme right scene, it makes them martyrs and so forth. My understanding is not that the whole group was proscribed, but that the group itself was in contravention of the Terrorism Act 2006 by glorifying terrorism—“Death to traitors” and all that nonsense that came out of the Thomas Mair thing. Yes, I agree, they are the first group to be banned on the extreme right; they are also the 85th group to be banned in this country.

Again, if we are talking about whether it is going to work or not—we crossed that Rubicon 10 or 12 years ago. We can look at different banned groups. The one thing I think is not a viable concern is the idea that they could change their name from National Action to National Faction. That has already been sutured up after the stuff with Anjem Choudary playing



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games with names and so forth. I do not think that that is necessarily the concern.

The issue is, if you have a group like the BNP, or a smaller group like National Action, you know where those extremists are or how they're congregating. If you disperse them to the winds, you don't. There is a trade-off. Of course, they were having demonstrations and targeting people like Luciana Berger with stuff that couldn't even be repeated in this room because it is so horrific. By no means am I suggesting that they were anything other than well beyond the boundaries of acceptable discourse in this country.

The real question is—this is probably a better one for parliamentarians—what happens when you ban groups? What happens when you make them, arguably, free speech martyrs and people who are standing up for that? Personally, I am agnostic on that question, but we have 84 other cases from Northern Ireland and jihadi Islamist terrorist groups in this country that we can draw upon for a comparative basis.

Q277 Stuart C. McDonald: Are there any non-agnostics on that question?

Professor Goodwin: I would agree.

Julia Ebner: I just want to add one sentence on National Action: I think they have been quite good at using the dark net as well. One of the dangers is that they are driven underground. As I said, I hope that is being tackled as well.

Q278 Chair: Using the dark net for what?

Julia Ebner: For having their discourse on a non-visible, anonymous level.

Professor Feldman: And the other thing about the dark net—this is my biggest concern when it comes to single-actor terrorism; I know that is not directly the question here—is that it is the place to traffic things like terrorist manuals. I would put something like a terrorist manual in the same basket as I would things associated with child pornography, for example. The person who owns that manual has to come up with what I would suggest is an impossible excuse for why they have it for a non-violent or non-extremist reason. As far as I am concerned, other than professional nerds like myself, why anybody would want to look at these things that are simply about how you can cause damage and distress to communities, I do not understand. We do not have the same energetic response as we would to things like trafficking or child pornography.

Q279 Chair: Are there any other organisations that you would put in the same category as National Action, in terms of their extreme behaviour, and which are they?

Professor Goodwin: There are groups that are as confrontational and combative as National Action. For example, some of the things that Britain First has done, such as walking into mosques, harassing British Muslims, or parading down Brick Lane in military vehicles, is intimidation—that is



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pretty aggressive. It is a level of activism that I have not seen for 10 years or so. The BNP even would hold back, whereas these smaller groups are far more willing to cross that line.

Professor Feldman: I could name you several, but I think we are looking at a couple of dozen or three dozen members, so these are small groups. They are certainly by no means as large as, or have that profile brand that we might associate with National Action, but certainly we can talk historically about Combat 18, which was involved with pretty extreme values and views. I like the way that the Germans have a distinction between “radical”, which might include pretty searching critiques of democracy but still be in the democratic camp—think the English Defence League or even, maybe, the BNP—and “extreme”, as in, “We’re revolutionary, we want to overthrow the state and we are willing to use violent means to do that.” That distinction between radical and extreme is something I would definitely recommend thinking about in this country.

If are talking about extreme, I am happy to put Combat 18 there, and happy to put a group like the National Socialist Movement there. Again, we are talking about a couple of dozen members, so not a huge number. Racial Volunteer Force is another one that has been on the radar screen. Even one that we heard testimony about earlier, the Misanthropic Division, which is Polish nationals living in the UK who are engaged in certain forms of violent extremism. These are guys who reject democracy. I would put them in the same basket with National Action.

Julia Ebner: I would add Blood and Honour to that as well. I also want to say, I would add not just groups but forums that are really inciting hatred and even provoking violence, or platforms. Something like Stormfront or the Daily Stormer are sites that are not even listed on the Google index in countries like France, Germany and Austria, but they are completely available in the UK.

Q280 **Chair:** How does France manage to ban them?

Julia Ebner: They do not ban them; they are just not listed on the Google index, which makes them harder to find.

Professor Feldman: I think that an important point—I could be wrong—is that the French do not host servers in America. I really do think that for Anglophones, you will find any of those things that really sail anywhere close to the wind are simply based in America. That makes the idea of interdiction at heart, at root, a non-starter. That is not the same thing as saying that ISPs might not host that material or other forms of representation to people who host those materials is out of the window, but I think the idea of saying, “This isn’t a free speech issue; it is a matter of incitement”, or what have you, will simply not wash when you are up against the American First Amendment, which is not absolute but very close, in my view.

Q281 **Chair:** As a final question, what area should we be most concerned about, or where is a stronger Government or public response called for?



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Professor Goodwin, you seemed to suggest that Britain First was a significant concern. Is your central concern what form that organisation might take in future, or do you have a different concern?

Professor Goodwin: In my view, it would be the disengagement with evidence and the social science community. A bit like the APPG on integration, which has actually drawn on research and evidence to inform its ideas and policies, a really useful step for this country would be to establish a forum that brings together people working on these issues day in, day out with those responsible for policy, policing and the response to those issues. That would be a very useful mechanism for us to have.

As far as I am aware, every other European democracy has that and does that. If you want a test case, Norway has just given a considerable amount of state resource to establishing a centre for countering extremism, which brings policy, policing and security agencies together with those who are actually looking at this in very different ways: psychologists, sociologists and political scientists. For obvious reasons, Norway has sensitivities around the issue, but that is a great example of where others could perhaps follow.

Julia Ebner: Another good investment would be to have a better understanding of the regional level. You mentioned it briefly, but we look into the areas that are most concerned by far-right extremism and have a higher prevalence of groups but also hate crimes. From my research, there are four different dynamics that you can find in terms of the concentration of far-right groups. First, we have a high presence in parts of the country where there is a small or almost non-existent Muslim community, which is interesting because it is perceived as something further away—fear of the unknown, I would say—but also, as the Casey review highlighted, in parts where we have high segregation and concentration of minority communities. That is the first dynamic.

The other dynamic is reciprocal radicalisation hotbeds, where we see that far-right communities settled originally either because of grooming scandals, like in Bradford and Rotherham, or because they are places where we have seen Islamist extremist incidents or areas that perpetrators have come out of, like Luton and West Yorkshire in general, with Dewsbury being a hotspot. It would be really interesting to see what these reciprocal radicalisation hotbeds or concentrated areas need and how we can address this very complex mixture of dynamics.

Q282 **Mr Winnick:** Hearing your very valuable evidence today and being somewhat pessimistic about some of the dangers—the obvious danger is terrorism. Who knows when the next atrocity will happen on British soil? We have no illusions about that, and 7/7 did not come as a surprise. Despite what I have just said, are the three of you fairly optimistic? Whatever atrocities are committed, whatever the far-right, white-type politics and whatever happens within the Muslim community or elsewhere, after 10 or 20 years, will we be able to say that British democracy basically remains intact—well, it will certainly remain intact, but that it is not damaged in any substantial way? Are you sufficiently



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optimistic?

Professor Goodwin: In terms of British democracy surviving, yes, absolutely.

Mr Winnick: I did qualify that.

Professor Goodwin: In terms of whether there will be terrorist attacks and atrocities, I am not going to predict that stuff. Of course British democracy will be standing, because we have widespread public belief in democracy, we have widespread respect in the rule of law and parliamentary democracy, and we have lots of things there that have been there for a long time. So I am optimistic about that.

Q283 **Mr Winnick:** With respect, I did qualify that. That it will remain intact is not in question—I shouldn't have put it in that way—but will it be damaged in any way that would cause harm to this country? That hasn't occurred so far, despite 7/7 and some of the extremists. Are you reasonably confident that in 20 years' time we will be able to say that we have withstood whatever has happened—jihadist terrorism, which will no doubt continue for a long time to come—but our democracy is basically as secure as it is now?

Professor Feldman: Terrorists cannot do that to us; we can only do that to ourselves. I do not believe that terrorism has ever been an existential threat in this country. That is not to say that there are not terrorists seeking weapons of mass destruction—that is a serious concern. We gave evidence about an extreme right-wing terrorist who was engaging with chemical weapons. But you are also more likely to be killed by a cyclist in this country than by a terrorist, and I think we need to keep that in perspective, not overreach and continue being reactive.

I absolutely agree with my colleagues: let's get ahead of this—this rise of the far right, this greater visibility of the far right, or whatever we want to call it. Let's have some toolkits. Let's talk to people locally and work with local knowledge. Let's try to break this completely wrong idea that there are certain communities within Britain that need to be especially watched. I don't think that helps anybody. It doesn't help those communities and it doesn't help other groups that might be getting away with more than they should.

We can get ahead of this if we have a huddle and put our heads together. I agree with Professor Goodwin that we need to fund certain strategic areas, like these triggers for reciprocal radicalisation that we saw around Brexit and others. We can get ahead of this, but cooler heads need to prevail. We are still more likely to be killed by cyclists than by terrorists.

Q284 **Mr Winnick:** If I was in your profession and was marking your contribution, I would probably put "8 to 10: optimistic about the future".

Professor Feldman: As someone who grew up reading Samuel Beckett, I think that many of my colleagues would be appalled by that optimism.

Q285 **Mr Winnick:** And the Muslim community? Are you reasonably optimistic



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that it will overcome the hatemongers, the potential terrorists and all the rest of the poison?

Julia Ebner: I very much agree. I think that was very well said. In the long term, we need two things: politicians need to gain back the trust that they have lost from certain communities, and we need to overcome divisions on all levels—on a national level, but also on a community level. There are severe divisions within Muslim communities and severe divisions within political parties. It seems like there are more and more fractures within different parts of society and the overall picture is increasingly fractured. Overcoming divisions and regaining trust are the two big challenges for the future.

Q286 **Mr Winnick:** And I think Professor Goodwin is reasonably optimistic.

Professor Goodwin: As long as we hold up the moderate centre, I think we should be okay.

Chair: Thank you very much. I appreciate your time this afternoon and your patience through the interruptions, while we exercised democracy.