

RADICAL MILIEUS IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

United Kingdom



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DARE: Dialogue about Radicalisation and Equality

**Radical milieus in historical context
Country level reports**


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Contents

<i>Executive Summary.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>1. Introduction.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>2. Setting the scene.....</i>	<i>4</i>
2.1 Historical context.....	4
2.2 Locating the British New Right milieu.....	6
<i>3. Sources, data collection and analysis.....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>4. Key Findings.....</i>	<i>11</i>
4.1 The role that historical memory and ‘grievance’ or ‘humiliation’ narratives play in radical milieus and how these might shape the ‘radicalisation’ process.....	11
4.2 What roles have conspiracy theories played in radicalisation ‘waves’?	14
4.3 The circumstances under which radical milieus (compared across geographical-cultural-historical contexts) might contribute to escalation of violence.....	17
4.4 Examining the nature of the relationship between radical milieus, violent political groups and the broader social and political, (including gender), environment.....	18
<i>5. Conclusions.....</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>6. References.....</i>	<i>23</i>

Executive Summary

This report uses a case study of the radical milieu of the British 'New Right', which enjoyed its heyday during the 1980s, to examine four interconnected and interrelated research questions:

- 1) The role that historical 'counter memory' plays within radical milieus and, in particular, how narratives of 'grievance' and 'humiliation' may or may not shape 'radicalisation' processes;
- 2) The role that conspiracy theories might or might not play in radicalisation 'waves';
- 3) Under what circumstance radical milieus might have contributed to escalation of violence;
- 4) The relationship between radical milieus, violent political groups and the broader social and political, (including gender), environment.

Research into this milieu confirmed findings from other studies that there is no clear-cut correlation between radical thinking and radical action. The report represents a case study of a milieu undergoing a process of ideological realignment which moved it away from violence, towards a cultural meta-political strategy that led it to be critical of (though not totally immune from) some of the more traditional canons of the far right thought, for instance the conspiratorial view of history and biological racism. What such 'non-findings' highlight, particularly with regard to the role that a radical milieu can play in shaping radicalisation 'waves', is that the relationship between the radical milieu and political groups is not necessarily co-terminus. This complicates our understanding of how the two might interact with and influence one another.

This case study also revealed a tension between the radical milieu and more violent groups and ideas within its broader orbit. This highlighted the range of opinion within such spaces, indicating a lack of ideological homogeneity or perhaps rather a broader tolerance of a spectrum of opinion than is automatically assumed. In situating this radical milieu within its wider domestic and international context, the report also found a broader friction at a 'national' and 'international' level with regard to the acceptance of the ideas the milieu was propagating, indicating more broadly the heterodox nature of the far right space. The report also drew attention to the fact that whilst this radical milieu was not markedly successful in gaining a widespread audience for its ideas, these survived the demise of the milieu itself to re-emerge twenty years later amongst the corpus of thought inspiring the so-called 'Alt-Right' and 'Identitarian' movements today. This in itself says something about the longevity of 'radical milieus' which have proven far more durable entities for the transmission of ideas across time than have political parties, which have been the traditional focus of research with regard to extreme and far right politics.

1. Introduction

The 'New Right' milieu in Britain has been selected because, historically, the nature of ideas circulating within this scene represent an important precursor to those circulated contemporaneously within Identitarian and Alt-Right groups today. New Right milieu, which existed on the margins of the political arena, provides an interesting point of departure for exploring how activists navigated important questions that were raised within the wider political firmament to which they belonged. The New Right milieu also had a number of nominally non-aligned ideological and counter-cultural outlets – the most important being *Heritage & Destiny*, *National Democrat* and *The Scorpion*. These important, though largely untapped, sources provide a window into how milieu activists articulated questions of 'grievance' and 'humiliation' in relation to the broader arc of British and European history. They evidence how activists sought to inoculate those who engaged with their ideas on cultural struggle by providing a form of 'counter memory' at odds with traditional historical interpretations. Such alternative interpretations and conceptions of history, historical figures and historical events play an interesting role within the construction of radical worldviews. Today these might very well be considered part-and-parcel of a process of individual 'radicalisation' – though it was decades before such a term would be used to describe such processes of knowledge acquisition.

The New Right milieu was also selected as a case study because it offers an interesting counterpoint to other forms of right-wing extremism prevalent at the time. This relates, in particular, to its articulation of a form of radical politics that sought to publicly divest itself of anti-Semitic conspiracy theory that served as the principal interpretive lens for much of the wider political movement. The New Right also served as a forum through which authors and activists could discuss contemporary events and ideas, some of which related to violence. This gives a window into how an ideologically radical milieu offered a critique of violence that emanated from, or was justified by, other elements within the wider scene. In this instance the case study in question serves as an example of a radical milieu that whilst sometimes embracing and proselytising 'extreme' ideas demurred from behavioural radicalisation and escalation.

2. Setting the scene

2.1 Historical context

The New Right milieu in the United Kingdom evolved from within the National Front (NF), which, during the 1970s, was the country's preeminent extreme right organisation. By the middle of the decade, however, several younger party militants had become disillusioned, both personally and politically, with the party's leadership and tactics. They took a more anti-authoritarian stance, characterised by a degree of ideological 'radicalism' on social and economic issues, which put them at odds with the more orthodox national socialist position espoused by the NF leader, John Tyndall. Contemporary commentators, both inside and outside the movement, often branded those activists at odds with Tyndall's leadership as 'Strasserites' because of their perceived 'leftist' leanings. Irreconcilable tensions within the NF led the party to split in 1975 and the formation of the 'racial populist' National Party (NP), a short-lived organisation which had largely atrophied by 1977 leaving some, though by no means all, of these younger militants without a political home for the time being.

Those who had remained within the NF soon experienced the failure of their political project too. In 1978, the Conservative Party leader Margaret Thatcher co-opted the NF's central political message by declaring that she understood why many British people felt 'swamped' by immigration thereby reinforcing the perception that the Conservatives would be 'tough' on immigration. The extent to which this political manoeuvre cut the ground from under the NF was reflected in the party's disastrous showing at the 1979

general election, although this was not the only reason for its failure. In response to its poor vote, the NF leader, John Tyndall, demanded more autocratic powers and, when the party's national directorate refused to assent to his demands, he resigned from the party in high dudgeon. Thereafter the NF began to haemorrhage popular support and members, fragmenting into a variety of political factions although the NF remained the largest of these.

Following the electoral failure of the NF and the broader fragmentation of the milieu, which followed, many activists staged their own post-mortem in order to understand and evaluate the reasons for their failure at the ballot box. Several younger activists concluded that the root cause transcended the purely 'political' and extended to the cultural sphere in which their ideas had failed to flourish. Such deliberations led one cluster of activists within the extreme right milieu to reject 'mass' political activity as the principal means through which they sought to build support and instead began to devote their energies to 'meta-politics' through which they aimed to build a stronger cultural base for their ideas as a precursor to building a successful political movement.

Foremost amongst these activists was Michael Walker, formerly the central London organiser for the NF. Walker had come to believe that the politics of the 'old Right' was not only almost entirely negative but 'shrill, monotonous and wholly predictable,' which was 'an insult to intelligence' (Walker, 1986: 8). Indeed, he agreed that there was much truth in the old anti-fascist joke: 'Do you have half a mind to join the NF. That's all you need'. Walker not only despaired of the NF's lack of intellectual dynamism, he also lamented its failure to understand the importance of culture. Symptomatic of this was the closure of the party's headquarters in East London (Excalibur House) which Walker felt highlighted the leadership's lack of understanding of the importance of maintaining physical spaces for its activists where members could 'meet for a drink or play billiards'. That the NF leadership did not comprehend the impact that the loss of such a social venue would have 'suggested to Walker that 'they do not understand the importance of social cohesion, association, and solidarity as a prerequisite of any political advance or influence.' (Walker, 2008).

He drew succour, however, from developments in France where 'Nouvelle Droite' (ND – New Right) publications, largely emanating from the circle around French thinker Alain de Benoist, a central figure in the *Groupe de recherche et d'étude pour la civilisation européenne* (GRECE), which was the principal engine of New Right/*Nouvelle Droite* thought in Europe, were 'uplifting' and 'positive'. As Walker later recalled:

I was drawn to the French New Right as an organization which was prepared and, indeed, keen to talk issues through, rather than just having a number of ideas or beliefs (this time from the nationalist corner) as just 'taken as read'. I was also much impressed by the intellectual and, above all, cultural fanaticism of the French New Right – it was like a breath of fresh air, the experience that 'right wing intellectual' did not have to be an oxymoron. (Jackson: 2008: 8)

Walker established contact with Alain de Benoist 'fairly early on' after translating one of his articles into English. His 'first contact' with de Benoist was to send him a copy of the translation. Thereafter Walker attended an ND conference, founding *National Democrat* the following year. He retitled the magazine as *The Scorpion* in 1983 to serve as a vehicle for a set of ideas and strategies he believed were unjustly marginalised (Counter-Currents Radio Podcast 2018).

The milieu that coalesced around these magazines and other similar initiatives during this period was notable for its efforts to engage in the 'cultural' struggle outside of formal 'political' activity and party structures, though there was inevitably some overlap. This wider meta-political project came to assume the dimensions of an intellectual tendency within the extreme right during the 1980s though its writers and ideologues were not beholden to any particular organisation or party faction. Beyond these domestic

dimensions, the British New Right milieu was also part of a broader transnational milieu though (for reasons discussed in Section 2.3) it never seamlessly integrated into the wider European scene. Indeed, Alain de Benoist was never entirely at ease with what he perceived as the failure of British colleagues to distance themselves from their political origins. Ultimately, the impact of the British New Right milieu was limited for a variety of reasons, and its endeavours stagnated. Their ideas find an echo in contemporary Alt-Right and Identitarian movements, however, whose principal intellectuals and ideologues have followed a markedly similar route in their efforts to transform the cultural terrain upon which political struggle is waged. The same can be said for those more esoterically-inclined New Right groups and individuals operating contemporaneously, who draw upon a slightly more eclectic set of ideological inspirations than those animating the earlier New Right incarnations discussed in this report (Macklin, 2015: 177-201).

2.2 Locating the British New Right milieu

Magazines like *Heritage & Destiny*, *National Democrat* and thence *The Scorpion* did not function in a political vacuum. Indeed, their editors intended that their respective publications would educate and ultimately influence debate within the broader political milieu of which they were apart. The British New Right never achieved the same level of influence beyond its immediate milieu, as its French counterpart led by Alain de Benoist. There were several reasons for this. Although the New Right emerged as a response to the 'failure' of extreme right politics during the late 1970s, it was also an inauspicious moment at which to launch an intellectual counter-cultural project. Even before its political defeat during the 1979 general election, the NF had already been going through a period of social and political realignment, which had only accelerated after 'The Battle of Lewisham' in south London in August 1977. The violence that accompanied this deliberately provocative demonstration, which was part of the party's strategy to racialise crime, had ended in 214 arrests. Although leading lights did not see it that way at the time, the demonstration was in fact a public relations disaster for the party.

There is certainly anecdotal evidence that the social composition of the party began to change as a result of 'The Battle of Lewisham', the adverse publicity causing many older members to leave the party. They were replaced by militant racist youth, attracted by the same violence that caused others to leave. NF strategy began to shift to take account of the changing demography of the party, making overt appeals to the 'white working class' whilst eschewing the cross-class appeal that it had previously promoted. Whilst the shift within the NF, which gradually saw the party embracing skinhead violence (Pearce, 2013: 59) rather than seeking to cultivate mass public appeal, was largely antithetical to the appeal for 'cultural' struggle made by the New Right, there were other political factors that further constrained opportunities for the nascent New Right milieu. The most obvious limiting factor was the very one which had led to the formation of this new cultural project in the first place: the implosion of the NF in the wake of its disastrous showing in the 1979 general election. This engendered an internal crisis culminating in the resignation of its leader John Tyndall who left the organisation in January 1980 to found his own New National Front (NNF), which, in April 1982, morphed into the British National Party (BNP), which would finally succeed in supplanting the NF as Britain's principal extreme right party only in the 1990s.

Tyndall had been initially sympathetic to cultural endeavours like *Heritage & Destiny* in the pages of his own magazine, *Spearhead* (*Spearhead*, no. 137, March 1980). Michael Walker had also engaged with *Spearhead*, contributing a number of letters to the publication, opining that the Left had enjoyed a 'near monopoly' of the cultural terrain and *ergo* influence upon the young 'and deservedly so in view of the pusillanimity and negativism of the right in opposing this development' (*Spearhead*, no. 140, June 1980: 16). However, a mixture of personalities, party factionalism, and entrenched ideological differences, soon curtailed any influence that the New Right might have wielded across the broader movement in the aftermath of the 1979 general election.

For his part, Tyndall perceived Walker's endeavour to be a front for NF activity – a not altogether outlandish fear given Walker's proximity to the self-proclaimed NF 'national revolutionary' faction, which, during the early 1980s, was in the process of transforming the party in its own image. Their leftist platform – often dubbed as Strasserite – was one that Tyndall, a more or less orthodox national socialist, viewed as ideological heresy. The growing eclectic ideological esotericism of this young national revolutionary faction continued to offend his ideological sensibilities to the extent that he denounced the group's 'Strasserite' position as 'Infantile Leftism' (*Spearhead*, no. 146, December 1980) – a play on Lenin's denunciation of the Bolshevik's left-wing critics entitled *Left-Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder* (1920). Despite some efforts at bridge-building during this period, relations between the BNP leader and this younger group of NF militants continued to deteriorate amidst mutual recrimination, their denunciations of one another growing ever shriller over time.

Such political contretemps undoubtedly coloured Tyndall's view following Walker's launch of *National Democrat* in 1980. Walker noted that Tyndall had hinted in *Spearhead* that the magazine was part of the 'homosexual conspiracy'. Perhaps more seriously, Walker highlighted that many of activists were simply confused as to how to situate the magazine politically – was it part of a new 'anti-NF faction' or was it merely an NF publication 'in disguise'? Addressing such befuddlement Walker stated that although as a 'nationalist publication' *National Democrat* was of course interested in politics it refrained from commenting on that which is 'specifically political' although if the magazine had a political leaning it was 'a bias against all universalisms.' This included 'the doctrine of National Socialism' (*National Democrat*, no. 2, Spring/Summer 1982). Such ideological revisionism was perhaps always likely to limit the influence that either *National Democrat* or *The Scorpion* would wield over the wider milieu. Walker's subsequent involvement in 'Heritage Tours' (*Searchlight*, no. 99, September 1983) alongside several other NF 'national revolutionaries' including future BNP leader, Nick Griffin, would undoubtedly have confirmed Tyndall's suspicions that his counter-cultural project was in fact little more than an appendage of the NF. The same might have been said of Walker's decision to address the NF 'Dining Club' on 22 January 1983. Billed as the 'guest speaker,' Walker spoke to its membership about 'various Nationalist (and not-so-Nationalist groups) on the Continent and outlined their diverse ideologies and tactical approaches' (*National Front News*, no. 45, March 1983).

The NF continued to atrophy throughout the 1980s, a development that saw the party eclipsed by Tyndall's BNP, which had emerged by the end of the decade as the preeminent extreme right organisation in Britain. This development – and the type of politics enshrined in BNP ideology – only served to underscore the lack of influence that *The Scorpion's* cultural project had had upon the broader movement. Walker's own view of Tyndall's personal politics reflected this gulf. Walker had retained his disdain for Tyndall's totalitarian politics, critically reviewing his autobiography, *The Eleventh Hour* (1986), as profoundly out-of-step with his own thinking on issues such as race and nation. Walker was particularly scathing of Tyndall's reactionary ideological vision, which to him was 'indistinguishable' from that of the Nazi party, its own political and cultural output so turgid 'that it is possible to guess more than half of each month's contents in advance.' Walker continued to lament Tyndall's almost complete lack of 'cultural strategy' noting that his addiction to the 'old time religion' of Nazism constituted an impediment to his own political progress. For Walker, the central lesson that flowed from having allowed a clique of national socialist activists to dictate the direction of 'British Nationalism' was that neither the leader nor party organisation alone was capable of effecting any 'massive change' in how the majority of the population thought, many of whom were increasingly abstaining from politics and political participation altogether. From Walker's perspective, social change was possible through the socio-cultural hegemony of movements not parties. In this respect, he was impressed by the contemporary cultural and political salience of the ecology movement, particularly in West Germany. This contrasted sharply with the stance of the British extreme right whose positions, exemplified by Tyndall, appeared preserved in aspic.

“Fascists’ are still using the language of the thirties. It’s time they grew up,’ Walker concluded (*The Scorpion*, no. 13, Winter 1989/1990).

The BNP ignored Walker’s analysis though some of its central points – such as rejecting crude biological racism had entered the party’s political propaganda via a circuitous route by the turn of the century. Whilst some activists read *The Scorpion*, for the most part they regarded it as providing interesting intellectual marginalia though no practical application for political campaigning. Ironically, Walker’s intellectual indictment of the BNP came at precisely the moment the party was beginning to experience, for the first time since its foundation in 1982, a modicum of popular support in the East End of London because of its ‘Rights for Whites’ campaign (Copsey, 1996: 118-140). The belief that the party was on the cusp of achieving electoral support thus rendered *The Scorpion*’s cultural critique even less salience within this context. Nonetheless, in the midst of this campaign, one of its architects, BNP organiser Eddy Butler, highlighted the value to the broader extreme right movement of an independent culturally-orientated magazine ‘that broadly, if occasionally critically, supported the BNP’ believing that this would be a more ‘productive and constructive outlet’ for the milieu around *The Scorpion*. ‘This would be similar to the role of the excellent French magazine *Le Choc du Mois* in relation to the National Front in France,’ Butler observed with an eye to transnational developments (*Spearhead*, no. 277, March 1992).

Although the BNP heeded the electoral lessons of the French Front National (FN), it paid less attention to the ideas of cultural struggle that New Right milieus both in France and closer to home were propounding. The new BNP leader, Nick Griffin, who prior to his election in 1999 had been a leading figure in the ‘national revolutionary’ tendency of the far right, paid a certain amount of lip service to the cultural strategy that *The Scorpion* advocated. For Griffin, the utility of such a strategy was as a means of entrenching the local electoral support that the BNP had begun to achieve within certain segments of the de-industrialised communities of the North of England and thereby ensure its longevity beyond the electoral cycle (*Identity*, no. 9, April 2001). Ultimately, however, *The Scorpion*’s gradualist approach collided with the BNP’s political priorities and the party’s ideological sense of apocalyptic urgency; that Britain faced ‘white genocide’ because of immigration and changing ethnic demography. Having once heralded New Right ideas as being of crucial importance Griffin now dismissed them as ‘useless’ because ‘we don’t have the luxury of several generations... Time’s up for the West... the burden of saving our civilisation and the people who built it falls on this generation’ (*Identity*, no. 53, March 2005).

The ideas of the French ND and particularly those of the group’s leading intellectual, Alain de Benoist, had had a deep-seated impact upon the development of the New Right milieu in Britain. The ND had begun to make overtures to British activists by the end of the 1970s. A GRECE delegation held ‘talks’ with members of the pan-European League of St. George group in London on 19 July 1979, which the latter regarded as ‘very successful’ though little concrete appears to have emerged thereafter, despite the enthusiasm of its journal (*League Review*, vol. 1, no. 26, 1979).

Heritage & Destiny meanwhile had introduced its readers to the ND in the summer of 1981, stating that it was ‘in part inspired by the example and achievement of the ND’ but conceded, ‘there is little evidence of a parallel intellectual and cultural initiative surfacing in Britain’ (*Heritage & Destiny*, no. 4, Summer 1981). *Heritage & Destiny* was not the vehicle for such an initiative either since it folded two years later. The real focus for such ideas would become *National Democrat* and *The Scorpion*. However, *National Democrat*’s initial interest in ND ideas highlighted the contingent nature of such early encounters. British transliteration of ND thought did not always accord with how the ND perceived itself. Indeed, after publishing a translation of de Benoist’s article ‘Racism and Totalitarianism’ in its inaugural issue, Walker received a letter from a French reader disputing his magazine’s characterisation of de Benoist as an ‘anti-communist’ which he felt gave a ‘distorted impression’ of his politics. ‘You also suggest that GRECE defends Western culture,’ he continued; ‘more precisely we defend European cultures, not ‘Western

civilization.’ We do not want to be ‘westernized’ since that amounts to adopting the ‘American way of life’ and the search for the ‘pseudo happiness of consumer society’.’ *National Democrat* conceded the point, adopting ‘anti-egalitarian’ as its descriptor for GRECE and thereafter for its own canon of thought (Pestiel, 1982: 19).

Whilst the influence of the ND quickly became apparent in earlier issues, issue ten of *The Scorpion*, which appeared in the autumn of 1986, highlighted the extent to which ND ideas had permeated the British milieu. The magazine included both a long interview with de Benoist and a long article on GRECE as seen through Anglo-Saxon eyes. However, as Nigel Copsey observes, ND ideas and thinking struggled to gain an intellectual toehold in Britain, despite their popularity in France (Copsey, 2013: 287-303). Just as it had been domestically, so too internationally, the launch of *National Democrat* (1981) and *The Scorpion* (1983) proved oddly out-of-synch with developments on the continent. By the time such British publications had embraced its ideas, the influence of the French ND had already declined considerably. As the Belgian New Right thinker Robert Steuckers observed, between the years 1982 and 1987, the French ND had entered ‘a kind of no-man’s land’ because of a series of setbacks (Steuckers 2014). Thus, ironically, almost at the moment of *The Scorpion’s* own conception, the intellectual currency of its ideological progenitor had begun to lose its value.

Whilst the ND became progressively less important in France during the 1980s, it nevertheless continued to play an international role, disseminating a set of ideas that contributed to the development of a ‘transnational spirit’ within the wider extreme right milieu, thereby helping to facilitate and foster the creation of a shared European-wide, right-wing political culture (Bar On, 2011: 199-223). Ideas do not simply diffuse in a linear fashion, however. Nor do their intended recipients uncritically accept them, even within the same milieu. Forty years after the emergence of the European New Right (ENR), de Benoist, paused to consider why, despite the creation of a plethora of conferences, publications, publishing houses, think-tanks and networks, New Right ideas had failed to entrench themselves more broadly beyond the Francophone sphere. This lack of diffusion was not a new problem. French fascism appealed to a number of British intellectuals during the interwar period but had ‘no appreciable impact on political movements and activists,’ a lacuna which was thrown into sharp relief by the clearly observable influence of Italian fascism or German Nazism upon their British counterparts (Griffiths, 2003: 173).

For his part De Benoist was keenly aware that little had changed in the intervening decades, which he believed stemmed from a ‘general lack of interest in intellectual debate in the Anglo-Saxon world’ that favoured pragmatism whilst philosophy itself (and *ergo* New Right ideas) was relegated ‘to practical considerations that determine the agenda of the ruling class.’ It did not help that in the Anglo-Saxon world people already identified the term New Right with the neo-liberal politics of British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and US President Ronald Reagan who embodied a set of ideas, which ‘represented everything the ENR had set out to radically criticize.’ The triumph of this particular incarnation of New Right politics made it very difficult for this alternative variant to gain either visibility or traction not just in Britain but across the Atlantic too. Moreover, noted de Benoist, the ND were at odds with the ‘racialists’ who historically had dominated the Anglo-American extreme right tradition since the ENR, in his words, ‘has consistently fought against their principles and presuppositions’ especially their biological racism and conspiratorial anti-Semitism (De Benoist, 2009).

This was evident with regards to *The Scorpion’s* own stance. The magazine was the principal means through which French ENR thinkers found an English speaking audience. *The Scorpion* regularly featured translated articles and original content from figures like de Benoist and Guillaume Faye and advertised their journals and activities, not to mention those of other ideologically attuned thinkers like Belgian ideologue Robert Steuckers. This interest arguably culminated with the autumn 1986 issue, which was devoted almost entirely to casting a ‘spotlight’ on the thought of the Nouvelle Droite (*The Scorpion*, no.

10, Autumn 1986). However, although *The Scorpion* championed these thinkers in some significant respects, it also diverged from its central corpus of ideas and strategies, so much so in fact, that de Benoist later claimed that Walker had never fully internalised the core components of the ENR's meta-political struggle because of which the ENR 'never really penetrated the Anglo-Saxon world.' Despite being 'sympathetic' towards *The Scorpion*, de Benoist argued that the magazine itself 'has never been completely part of our movement' ('French New Right Philosopher,' 2012). In the verdict of the leading scholar of the ENR, this was because *The Scorpion* remained 'impregnated' with overt, racial ultra-nationalism and Holocaust 'revisionism' – an anathema to ENR meta-political strategy – which undoubtedly impeded further collaboration between de Benoist and Walker (Bar On, 2017: 142, 144). Whilst *The Scorpion* ceased publication in 2005, its editor has contributed to other ventures, addressing several 'white nationalist' conferences in the United States organised by *American Renaissance* as well as contributing to the Counter-Currents website. Despite his own meta-political interests, both of these publications embrace ideological positions such as biological racism, and in the case of Counter-Currents, conspiratorial anti-Semitism, which run counter to de Benoist's conception of ENR politics (Macklin, 2017: 204-223).

De Benoist has also highlighted other differences, which, he intimated, precluded an easy meeting of minds. These 'ambiguities' included differences in 'vocabulary' regarding the use of the word 'liberal', which had 'radically different meanings' in Western Europe and the United States. The ingrained antipathy of the ENR towards the hegemony of the United States and 'global Americanization' – a 'standard topic' for the ENR milieu – also served to stall the wider diffusion of ENR thought there. This was, to a lesser extent, the case in Britain too where ENR ideas, as an emanation of 'old Europe,' also remained *terra incognita*, de Benoist lamented. British activists therefore had little interest in disseminating some of the central ideas of the ENR or indeed translating them into English in the first place. 'It is significant that very few texts by ENR authors have been translated into English although they have been translated into fifteen other languages,' opined de Benoist (De Benoist, 2009). A case in point is the first volume of de Benoist's seminal trilogy, *Vu de droite* (1977), which despite earning him France's highest literary prize from the Académie française, did not appear in English translation until 2017, forty years after being published in France. This undoubtedly significantly impeded the transmission, evolution and understanding of de Benoist's ideas within an English-speaking milieu which, as a result, it is tempting to speculate, remained wedded to more entrenched ideological paradigms ensuring that it was harder for the New Right milieu in Britain to break the mould (De Benoist, 2017).

3. Sources, data collection and analysis

This survey of Britain's meta-political milieu in the 1980s utilised both primary and secondary source research and data collection. It used the archival holdings of the British Library in central London, the Searchlight magazine archive at Northampton University and also the author's own personal collection of literature and publications pertinent to the topic. This primary source research, which relies largely upon literature produced by the actors and movements themselves, was combined with a literature review of the relevant secondary source literature and academic publications on the topic as well as newspaper reports, contemporary blogs and interviews that participants have subsequently published on other meta-political and alt-right websites and blogs. Approximately twenty-five key words were utilised as search terms to retrieve information from searchable news databases (i.e. Factiva/Gale) as well as in the conduct of broader Google searches to identify other relevant material. These terms were iteratively refined throughout the research.

In the United Kingdom the ideas, emotions, and social ties of the far right movement, prior to the advent of the internet, were propagated and perpetuated through a patch work of zines, newsletters, newspapers, magazines, journals and books and through countless meetings, marches and speeches by ideologues and orators. For the purposes of this report, however, only those publications related to the emergence of the British New Right are focused upon, particularly *Heritage & Destiny*, *National Democrat* and *The Scorpion* with a particular concentration upon the period 1979 to 1989 when the milieu was, arguably, at its zenith. These sources were augmented by digitised and digital material that has also since become publicly available to researchers in the form of online journals conducting ‘historic’ interviews with ideologues and activists. Previously obscure or otherwise unattainable journals have also become available to researchers in a digital age as a result of scanned copies being uploaded to websites as activists seek new ways to allow these ideas to be heard.

4. Key Findings

4.1 The role that historical memory and ‘grievance’ or ‘humiliation’ narratives play in radical milieus and how these might shape the ‘radicalisation’ process

One of the central preoccupations of this case study was to explore the role of historical memory – and the narratives of ‘grievance’ and ‘humiliation’ that can emanate from it – and what role these ‘narratives’ play in shaping ‘radicalisation’ processes. The use and/or misuse of history for political purposes by totalitarian regimes like the Third Reich, and those who subsequently sought to defend or rehabilitate them is hardly new (see: Dennis, 2012; Hell, 2019; Evans, 2002; Lipstadt, 2005; and Valencia-García, 2020 for only some of the most recent work on this). The role that ‘history’ or perhaps more accurately historical writing plays, and its interpretation within British extreme right radical milieus during the post-war period, has not received as much scholarly attention it perhaps might have done. To an extent this is understandable given that the veracity or otherwise of the historical claims that such marginal and marginalised milieus often disseminate had little import for or affect upon wider society. Increasingly, however, the rise of online digital milieus and the technology underpinning them facilitates new forms of cultural production that utilise history to inform and shape their extreme ideological agendas; for instance, ideas of masculinity and the virulent misogyny circulating in ‘alt-right’ fora are often supported online through reference to classic Greek and Latin texts (Zuckerberg, 2018). Such developments highlight that debates about the ‘true’ meaning of such texts and indeed history itself continues to rage outside academia.

Understanding the role that historical memory plays in shaping and reinforcing the broader narratives of radical milieus is vital for understanding the self-perception that those within such spheres may have of themselves and their positionality, both with regard to the ‘mainstream’ and, more broadly, the world around them, not to mention their place in it as ‘historical’ actors. As Sam Jackson highlights:

The political identity of extremists begins with an understanding of history... As extremism exists in distinction to an established political system, so extremist identity rests on an imagined history that diverges with the imagined history that supports the established system and related identities. Extremists work to disrupt the political system supported by the dominant identity. They work to replace that system with one supported by (and supporting) their identity; they work to replace the dominant history with their imagined history. (Jackson, 2019: 248)

This was equally true for the so-called ‘Neo-Tories’ in 1920s Britain, who represented a strain of thinking analogous to the German Conservative Revolutionaries, for whom history was the ‘starting point’ of all their political thinking:

They did not just address the classical themes of British history in their books: scarcely an article or political comment piece appeared without detailed historical reflection. History as the anchor for their criticism of modernism. In most cases, they used it as a distorting mirror which presented the modern as estranged, an aberration. In short, there was no scientific analysis and description of history; rather, it was used by the Neo-Tories to serve their political interests. The Neo-Tories were not engaged in historical analysis, but in historical politics. They had no interest in a neutral investigation of the past without fixed expectations: they intended to establish a particular view of the past so that they could change the present. (Dietz, 2018: 31)

Whilst the extreme right has displayed an ‘abiding interest’ in history and cultural heritage, historians of British fascism, for instance, have generally paid little attention to how such milieus have interpreted this. Those historians who have reflected more deeply on the nature of historical politics as propagated within such milieus, have argued largely that such ‘history’ is shallow; utilised to confer ‘gravitas and legitimacy’ upon their extreme right discourse about the present but having little more depth than that (Woodbridge, 2015: 27-48).

Whilst there is much truth in this assertion, simultaneously it risks mischaracterising the role that ‘history’ – even a history cursorily understood and poorly articulated for political purposes – plays within the radical milieu. Historical politics serves to foster a shared collective memory, and with it, a common sense of meaning and understanding both in relation to a group’s own past and, consequently, how its activists perceive their own positionality *vis-à-vis* ‘mainstream’ society, its norms and values. For those who have imbibed such ‘historical politics’ (whatever the actual empirical or political content may be) it is important to note that this interpretive lens underpins the wider milieu’s prognostic and diagnostic frames for action. The obvious deficiencies of ‘historical politics’ aside, the principal point is that it forms part of a radical milieu’s broader philosophical analysis; one that contributes to the development and maintenance of a ‘counter-memory’ that informs processes of politicisation and social consciousness raising.

The concept of ‘counter-memory’ helps us better understand the centrality of this point. Extreme right groups and radical milieus, like other subcultural phenomena, apply their own interpretations to historical events ‘to articulate what they consider to be authentic readings of the past and, hence, or the present.’ This construction and perpetuation of a ‘counter-memory’ is arguably ‘essential’ for maintaining the radical milieu. Such ‘memory-building’ enables those within it to forge collective identities and histories based around common propositions regarding the centrality of race and nation (Flood, 2005: 221-236). As far as this case study is concerned, the truth or otherwise of such alternative historical interpretations is immaterial since those engaged within the milieu accept them as ‘true’. Through such memory work, the milieu develops, preserves and transmits its ‘authentic’ understanding of the past - a diagnosis of present ills and a prognosis for the future. It allows those involved to reconnect with the ‘higher’ values of the past, supposedly traduced by the base ‘materialism’ of present-day liberal democracy and multi-cultural society, and to project these forward into the future as a possible panacea. To an extent, these are enshrined through the operation of the extreme right as a form of ‘cultic milieu’ (Campbell, 2002: 12-25) i.e. part of a permanent oppositional counter-culture that rejects prevailing norms, values and – in this instance – historical interpretations and interpretations of history – that have gained common currency within society.

One clue to the attraction that de Benoist’s GRECE group held for the British New Right milieu was its name, which signalled the idea of ‘historical regeneration’ that would reconfigure society along the lines of a ‘new Hellenism’ (Faye, 1982-1983: 11). This again was implicit in the name of de Benoist’s milieu

(*National Democrat*, no. 3, Winter 1982-1983). Marginalised and forgotten cultural impulses were to be valorised through the milieu's own meta-political efforts as a means of restoring a 'real' authentic and organic past that could serve as a suitable guide for regenerating both present and future.

One of the principal narrative threads visible across all these milieu publications was an implicit contempt for a rejection of liberal modernity and with it the Whig idea of history as progress. The magazine *Heritage & Destiny*, edited by a key figure in the NF split that had produced the National Party, had an editorial agenda that focused expressly upon culture and heritage as a means of building for the future – an idea explicitly rendered in the journal's title. This core theme was reflected across countless articles dealing with prehistory and archaeology, each seeking to mobilise ancestral heritage and the legacy of such cultures, beliefs and practices, as a means of informing present politics. Underpinning it all was a basic belief in the immutability of race which, in and of itself, was trans-historical. Identity, both racial and cultural, could be safeguarded by understanding the difference between 'patriotism' and 'nationalism.' The latter was a duty inexorably bound to the 'state' (that had historically failed in its central task of protecting its people's past, present and future) whilst the former represented a faith in a people's destiny and therefore the only mechanism through which they could 'rediscover itself, and thereby its joy in living' (Walker, 1983: 5). Over the course of the 1980s, however, the milieu became more and more interested in (purer) forms of regional 'micro-nationalism' as the 'authentic' embodiment of cultural and racial identities that had been stifled by the tyranny of the 'modern world'.¹

This sense of grievance and *ergo* humiliation was implicit in its oft-articulated interpretation of history as a means of critiquing and condemning liberal modernity, which was held as the principal engine for the corrupting influence of materialism, and egalitarianism. The imposition of these 'totalitarian' ideals had deliberately denigrated traditional 'sacred' values ('above all the sacred value of ourselves as a people, a belief in ourselves, our past and our future' [Hampshire, 1982: 12-15]), bringing society to the brink of spiritual and racial ruination. It was imperative therefore in an age of cultural nihilism to reassert 'what for us is sacred, what *is* loved... we must restore a notion of *belonging* to the past and to the future of our people.' Without this sense of transcendence – in which historical understanding and anchoring played a key role – 'our political efforts will be vanity and selfishness' ('Editorial,' 1982-1983: 2).

Liberal modernity, publications like *The Scorpion* asserted, was the principal point of departure for man's alienation from himself and his roots. Urbanisation, and with it the idea that the town represented the embodiment of culture, was another anathema for the New Right's prevailing 'counter-memory'. This conceived of modern towns and the cultural mores they reflected in their architectural form, as the incarnation of sterile conformity and rationalisation. They failed to radiate beauty in part because they denoted a 'cynical indifference to the past'. For publications like *National Democrat*, architecture reflected 'forms of soul' – the modern town doing little more than traducing 'culture' and 'spirit' to a utilitarian form which signalled the impact of Marxism upon man. It was, they argued, little more than a metaphor for the vapid nature of 'egalitarianism' which was reshaping society in its own barren image. Rather than heralding progress, it signalled the 'end of History'. Such publications directed their anger and despair just as much towards Conservatives who, they opined, had failed to conserve, let alone maintain, the country's 'heritage' (Walker, 1982: 4-5).

¹ This stance was also a means of arresting the advance of history vis-à-vis greater European centralisation. Decentralised micro-nationalism alone – itself a vision of the cultural achievements of the past – offered Europe a means of future renaissance: 'The lesson of history seems to the author to be clear,' wrote one author (MacEwan, 1983: 13). The division of Europe into smallish independent states has benefitted it enormously; may indeed be the secret of its outstanding contributions to world culture.'

Each issue of *National Democrat* (and subsequently *The Scorpion*) focused on a particular theme. *National Democrat*'s third issue centred upon 'belonging' highlighting its belief that the historical link between modern man and his cultural heritage had been denuded. This was a development particularly evident in relation to modern art, which now reflected 'market value' rather than the outer embodiment of man's 'cultural soul.' Echoing the Nazis, the magazine railed against 'Degenerate art, cosmopolitan art' as 'dehumanizing' ('The Emperor's new clothes,' 1983:3). The milieu was keen to offer a cultural alternative to the degraded materialist view of life, which offered the young only 'mediocrity and egalitarianism' – folk music instead of 'alien 'beat' music' and historic figures like Hereward the Wake and T. E. Lawrence as objects of 'hero worship' instead of Che Guevara and Frank Zappa. Publications like *The Scorpion*, invoked history, and examples of historical vitalism, as a means of providing an alternative vision; a counterpoint to a gilded and insipid present, which lacked courage, physical beauty, romance or traditional values. A vision of the past was therefore a key component of the struggle with the Left for the control of the future and – from a cultural point of view – 'the world of the young' (*Spearhead*, no. 140, June 1980: 16).

Despite their professed meta-political strategy, *The Scorpion* were not cultural missionaries in the sense that the magazine actively propagated its ideas outside their own radical milieu, which helped ensure their ongoing insularity *vis-à-vis* 'mainstream' culture. It was not so much that many of its ideas were outside the mainstream. Culturally, the magazine's tastes, particularly when it came to music, gravitated towards Wagner's Ring Cycle, which was both the embodiment of and repository for the sacred values at the core of its worldview from which 'the beginning of a new history' was waiting to emerge – 'in short, a regeneration' (Locchi, 1983: 16). Whilst Wagner was not culturally marginal, the preoccupation of such publications with more culturally conservative forms of 'high' culture were unlikely to resonate more widely in the struggle to capture 'the world of the young' from the Left.

New Right publications railed against the Left for seeking to dissolve social structures and traditional values through the promotion of 'egalitarianism'. Possibly, they were perhaps more vitriolic in their criticism of 'Conservatives' who, they argued, 'seem only to be active when it comes to destroying our national heritage, destroying anything that might remind us of our past, who we are; always in the name of 'economic priorities'' ('Against Reaction, Against Equality,' 1982: 10). The New Right were mindful of the limits of national critique, however. Perhaps the overarching grievance for this milieu and indeed others like them was, as Richard Wolin observed in his book, *The Seduction of Unreason*, the political, cultural and financial hegemony of the United States – the 'Site of Catastrophe' – which had accelerated the pace of dissolution in their eyes (Wolin, 2006: 278-314). The subsequent 'Americanisation' of European life had resulted in 'losing our souls, renouncing our potential, forgetting our origins' (Steuckers 1983: 8). Fixation on the threat posed by America to the European 'way of life' by American materialism, which was the focus of the entire of issue seven of *The Scorpion*, did not imply necessarily a doom-laden jeremiad, however. As Walker observed subsequently: 'We can lose everything but if we do not lose ourselves everything can be regained' (Walker, 1984: 8).

4.2 What roles have conspiracy theories played in radicalisation 'waves'?

The case study also examined the role that conspiracy theories and eschatological narratives played in radicalisation 'waves'. Broadly speaking, the New Right radical milieu had actively distanced itself from the wave of radicalised street protest and racial violence that developed in the wake of the implosion of the NF at the 1979 general election. Nonetheless, conspiracy theories and eschatological narratives played a role in the articulation and formulation of the milieu's own 'counter-memory', which itself underwent a certain degree of 'radicalisation' during the 1980s. This is not unsurprising since the 'alternative' readings of history that are propagated by such groups naturally provide a persuasive frame through which the present perceived predicament of race and nation can be narrated and understood. Almost from the

outset, the principal publications of the radical milieu betrayed an interest in the Focus Policy Group (FPG) run by 'revisionist' historian David Irving. Indeed, *Heritage & Destiny* postulated that the New Right might have found a 'parallel' voice in Irving's magazine, *Focal Point*. It did highlight that its 'specifically Christian perspective' (as opposed to de Benoist's pagan one) meant that the venture was closer to the American rather than the French model (*Heritage & Destiny*, no. 5, Summer 1982). Other New Right publications also advertised the FPG to its readers (i.e. *National Democrat*, no. 2, Summer Spring 1982 and *The Scorpion*, no. 4, Spring 1983).

Whilst these publications themselves were not vehicles for Holocaust denial (Irving himself did not publicly embrace such a stance until the late 1980s), their willingness to advertise Irving's publications signalled a certain sympathy with the central tenets of his 'revisionist' historical writing. Indeed, they were indicative of a burgeoning underground 'counter-memory' that extreme right radical milieus had long propagated in relation to historical events like the Second World War and the Nazi genocide. They disseminated these as a means of overcoming the stigmatisation of racial ideologies and racist politics after 1945. Irving's book *Hitler's War* for instance, published in 1977, argued that there was no evidence that Hitler had ordered the Holocaust and indeed he had only become aware of it in 1943. A later edition simply removed references to 'extermination' altogether relying instead upon vague allusions to the 'Jewish tragedy' (Evans, 1998). Irving's group attracted an international audience. Alain de Benoist, the leading luminary of the ENR, had attended one of its meetings (*Focal Point*, 31 January 1983).

Regarding revisionist history, the focus of both *National Democrat* and *The Scorpion* was upon the rehabilitation of certain French intellectuals who had collaborated with the Nazis. Robert Brasillach, editor of *Je suis partout* foremost amongst them. This goal was pursued over propagating a crude denial of the Holocaust, as 'neo-Nazi' publications were wont to do. That figures like Brasillach were relatively unknown within Britain made this form of 'revisionism' less obvious in its intent. Some contributors to *The Scorpion* vindicated the 'ideal' of French collaborationism by situating it within the longer historical trajectory of uniting Europe around France and Germany, harking back to Charlemagne and prefiguring the post-war European Union. 'The collaborationists were undoubtedly modern European,' argued the contributor. 'They simply chose the worst possible moment to campaign for their ideal' which they assumed could be achieved within a 'master/slave' relationship, this being their 'fundamental error' (Tame, 1983: 20).

The Scorpion differentiated itself from numerous other publications within the racial nationalist milieu in its rejection of anti-Semitic conspiracy theory, which most other contemporaneous magazines embraced. It was critical of *The New Unhappy Lords* (1965), the seminal conspiratorial text that served as a touchstone for many NF activists in Britain (Hampshire, 1982: 18). That said, *The Scorpion* had accepted advertisements from *Candour*, founded in 1954 by the author of *The New Unhappy Lords*, A. K. Chesterton (*The Scorpion*, no.4, Spring 1983 and *The Scorpion*, no. 6, Winter Spring 1984 for *Candour's* response). It had little time for the effusions of other conspiratorial journals like the short-lived, *Lords of the Realm*, which it openly ridiculed in print (*The Scorpion*, no. 5, Summer 1983). *The Scorpion* rejected the conspiratorial view of history subscribed to by the bulk of contemporary extreme right publications. Indeed, on one occasion, *The Scorpion's* editor stated of the anti-Semitic canards that saturated US white supremacist publications:

Even if it were true of America, which it patently is not, what possible relevance would it have to Europe? In Europe people of Jewish faith represent an insignificant and unimportant fraction of the overall population. Even in America, the idea that Middle Class New York Jews want to see America handed over to the black and other races stretches credulity... Anti-Semitism is irresistible to these authors and to others because it removes the need to think about the real state of our societies and how they can be changed. If all our problems stem from Jews, then it

follows that expelling these people, or even killing them, will solve our problems. This is plainly nonsense (*The Scorpion*, no. 17, Spring 1995).

Whilst the New Right milieu abjured from the most overt forms of anti-Semitic conspiratorial thinking, it did on occasion reflect a tendency evident across the wider movement with regard to eschatological thinking. It reviewed and sold *The Camp of Saints*, a seminal piece of racial apocalyptic literature, of which *National Democrat* stated: 'This novel is more than a prophecy of the end of the White World; it is an examination of the causes of our coming end' and 'a merciless expose of the contradictions of the liberal way of life.' (Hampshire, 1982/1983: 12) Further historic interpretations of how western civilisations had become imperilled derived from publications like Elmer Pendell's *Why Civilisations Self-Destruct*, which argued, amongst other things, that the accelerated decline of social institutions and 'our way of life' result from the higher reproductive rates 'of those who should reproduce least.' (Robertson, 1982: 8; Robertson, 1982-1983, 18; Pendell n.d.)

This case study of the New Right provides little evidence for the role of conspiratorial theories and eschatological narratives in 'waves' of radicalisation, largely because they were not a core part of its cultural and political expression. Following the model of the French Nouvelle Droite, the foundation of magazines like *The Scorpion* at least represented an attempt – never entirely successful as de Benoist himself highlighted – to shift the milieu away from its addiction to crude anti-Semitic conspiracy theories. That said, milieu publications often engaged in 'revisionist' history, which sought to trivialise or otherwise lessen the Nazi genocide in order to rehabilitate the wider racial nationalist tradition. This development was part of an effort to intellectualise the movement's 'counter-memory' of the Second World War. Through this, participants could recast themselves and their ideas as being on the right side of history, which, the national narrative dictated, they never had been and never would be again. These comparatively more sophisticated variants of historical 'revisionism' subsequently mutated into open Holocaust denial – Irving's personal career is a case in point. Historical revisionism was not the principal preoccupation of the New Right, despite its early promotion of such themes. However, the impact of its engagement with such authors and publishing ventures, though hard to quantify in any meaningful manner, clearly helped bestow a certain legitimacy upon such ideas, which were beginning to gather momentum elsewhere in the wider scene during this period.

The British extreme right milieu did indeed undergo a process of intense political development during this period as – outside of the milieu, albeit with some overlap in ideas and personnel – the NF 'national revolutionary' faction evolved into the International Third Position in the late 1980s. Within the more overtly national socialist 'scene,' a similar shift towards militancy took place slightly later within the BNP, leading to the establishment of Combat 18 in 1992, elements of this group moved towards terrorism later in the decade. *The Scorpion* and indeed its comparative lack of overtly conspiratorial politics appear in no way related to these wider developments, however.

The politics of 'counter-memory' also plays an important – though largely unremarked upon – role in individual socialisation processes. This is not simply for the view that it inoculates but for the other points of view that its own alternative readings of history crowd out and ultimately exclude. Narrowing the field of knowledge, by refusing to acknowledge or accept a plurality of interpretation or by rejecting the good faith of those arguing an alternative point of view, might indicate an increasing commitment to the 'counter-memory' of the milieu. Whilst it is nearly impossible to determine the extent to which the development of such beliefs have, historically, played a role in 'waves' of radicalisation, it is perhaps enough to note that they are the ambient presence that underpins the ebb and flow of such 'waves'. These beliefs form a free-floating intellectual reserve of 'stigmatized knowledge' (Barkun, 2016: 1-7).

4.3 The circumstances under which radical milieus (compared across geographical-cultural-historical contexts) might contribute to escalation of violence

The third question underpinning the series of historical case studies on radical milieus conducted as part of the DARE project was the circumstances under which radical milieus – when compared across geographical, cultural and historical contexts – have contributed to an escalation of violence. This case study highlights that a radical milieu, whatever the precise nature of the political ideas circulating within its immediate environment, does not automatically contribute to an escalation of violence. Indeed, if anything, in this case, the opposite is true. The shift from political to cultural struggle within the editorial stance of the various New Right magazines represented a shift away from the violent street politics of extreme right-wing organisations like the NF, which, in the aftermath of the Battle of Lewisham in 1977, were recruiting those more orientated towards confrontation. The establishment of magazines like *The Scorpion* represented a rejection of this broader political trend. Likewise, although *The Scorpion* was engaged with the more radical ‘national revolutionary’ fringe of the party, which would go on to become the ‘political soldier’ faction of the party, the New Right milieu never followed this tendency into the cul-de-sac of revolutionary abstraction. Whilst there is no data on how readers of such New Right magazines engaged with the ideas that they proselytised, there is also no evidence that they influenced violent escalation within the milieu.

The New Right milieu and its meta-political strategy also failed to have a discernible impact on larger political groups like the BNP, which by the end of the 1980s had come to replace the NF as the principal vehicle for extreme right politics. The failure of its ideas to resonate more broadly across the milieu during this period meant that the New Right milieu both remained of marginal importance and free of the taint of the BNP’s ‘street gang’ politics.

This case study highlights that political parties or groups ‘radicalise’ their behaviour and/or tactics, sometimes exacerbated through encounters with either their political opponents or state agencies. There can however exist milieus within the broader ‘movement,’ which are simultaneously in tension with such developments. Indeed, as the case of the British New Right demonstrates, there is no simple equation between holding, developing and fomenting radical beliefs and simultaneously propagating a strategy – in this case meta-politics – which pulls away from the main developments elsewhere within political formations within their proximate orbit. This returns us to the question of what sort of ‘radicalisation’ are we looking at? What sort of ‘action’ does the milieu generate based on its belief system? Why does this differ from those produced by other milieus, which share some of the same beliefs based upon the importance of race as either a biological or cultural unit of analysis? The case study further entrenches the importance of understanding and indeed articulating that ideological and tactical radicalisation are not the same thing. Ideological radicalisation does not automatically presage a behavioural shift and indeed could insulate against it. This largely depends on the extent to which some of the milieu’s underlying assumptions – in this case the salience of meta-political cultural struggle over and above political struggle – entrench themselves, becoming common intellectual currency amongst those activists moving within this environment.

The failure of a radical milieu to embed its ideas within a broader political movement can ultimately lead to a structural crisis. Once certain key figures or publications within the cultural milieu cease to be involved, the milieu itself can stagnate and ultimately cease to exist. Those involved might then drift out of the milieu or find their activities displaced into different spheres of activity as the wider movement continues to evolve. This was certainly the case with regard to the New Right milieu, which was structurally configured around *The Scorpion* and indeed Walker himself. As *The Scorpion* appeared increasingly infrequently so the momentum of the milieu declined, or at least its lack of activities or

outputs meant that there was less and less of an obvious ‘milieu’ for those interested in such ideas to physically engage with.

4.4 Examining the nature of the relationship between radical milieus, violent political groups and the broader social and political, (including gender), environment.

The fourth research question addressed in these case studies concerns the nature of the relationship between radical milieus, violent political groups and the broader social and political environment, including gender. Radical milieus often share the broader perspectives and objectives of more violent groups, approving of similar forms of violence and often supporting such clandestine activity morally and logistically. Indeed, it has been argued that ‘radical milieu’ represents the conceptual ‘missing link’ in research on political violence (Malthaner and Waldmann, 2014: 979-998). It is well known – or at least it should be – that there is no straightforward relationship between radical belief and radical action (McCauley and Moskaleiko, 2017: 205–216). Therefore, it is crucial to understand the moral and logistical support that a radical milieu can offer to groups seeking to enact violence. The broader social and cultural environment in which violent groups operate – which is part of what the radical milieu provides – can serve to facilitate and sustain violent campaigns but equally it can serve as a ‘brake’ on violence (Busher, Holbrook and Macklin, 2019). This case study examined a radical milieu that, in terms of its political positionality, was part of a wider ‘movement’ that contained violently inclined groups. Those involved in this milieu were not engaged in perpetrating such violence, or indeed of proselytising for it but were, for the purposes of analysis, conceptualised as being adjacent to it. Studying such a milieu provided a useful means of capturing discussions about violence that emanated from within their own political orbit – albeit at a distance. This also highlighted the heterogeneity of responses to violence from within the extreme right itself. The meta-political milieu that began to coalesce around publications like *The Scorpion* during the 1980s was indeed ideologically radical and intellectually sophisticated (compared with other contemporaneous publications) but its interests were cultural not political; its meta-political approach precluded the adoption of the sorts of radical tactics that were advocated and indeed embraced by some militants in different groups.

A lack of archival sources currently inhibits our ability to draw a hard and fast conclusion about the relationship between the violent groups and radical milieu based on this case study. It is clear, however, that they read and analysed one another’s publications, enabling contemporary researchers and analysts to draw some tentative conclusions from the pages of the magazine itself. The New Right was never a tightly bounded milieu. Its boundaries were seemingly porous insofar as an ostensibly meta-political journal like *The Scorpion* would also publish advertisements from more overtly racist grouplets like W.I.S.E., and publications like the *South African Patriot* and *Rising: Booklet for a Political Soldier*, a key text produced by the NF ‘national revolutionary’ faction (*The Scorpion*, no.4, Spring 1983). Accepting advertisements from such groups did not imply altogether uncritical acceptance of their ideas, however. Reviewing another ‘national revolutionary’ publication entitled *Yesterday and Tomorrow: Roots of the National Revolution*, the reviewer lamented that: ‘For my part I felt that the book would have gained by omitting photographs of nazi parades, since these gave a superficial but erroneous impression that the book was just another nostalgic nazi weepy about the 1930s’ (Hampshire, 1983: 22).

Whilst there was engagement with these more militant groups from the outset, *National Democrat* (prior to changing its name to *The Scorpion*) had vehemently criticised terrorism as a strategy. Paraphrasing the Conservative political philosopher Michael Oakeshott, the magazine had lamented the ‘jump to glory’ style of activism that embraced ‘propaganda by the deed’ which its editor viewed as yet another manifestation of the ‘nihilism’ eroding values (*National Democrat*, no. 2, Spring/Summer 1982). Although *The Scorpion* rejected terrorism, it sometimes reviewed publications that emanated from the violent demimonde – this was more evident in its later issues during the 1990s. These disquisitions give an insight

into how the radical milieu responded to broader political and tactical debates taking place within the activist scene. The decision to review *Merrie England 2000*, a racist dystopian fantasy penned by veteran national socialist militant Colin Jordan threw its position into stark relief (on Jordan see Jackson, 2017).

The Scorpion observed that although the *Merrie England* ‘deserves wide circulation’ (which it conceded it would not receive), the book’s self-evidently racist illustrations lacked ‘subtlety’ which reflected the wider ‘curse’ of many writers since 1945 who ‘have tried to ensure that the White homelands remain White.’ Whilst *The Scorpion* criticised such racist depictions as ‘a throwback to the Alf Garnett school of racialism,’ these were nonetheless something that ‘the intellectual Bolshevik can easily cope with.’ Concluding its review, *The Scorpion* argued: ‘Mr. Jordan himself is not a subtle writer. He is an admirer of Adolph Hitler and that puts him beyond the pale for many who would do well to listen to what he has to say here regardless of what they think of the late German chancellor’ (*The Scorpion*, no. 17, Spring 1995).

Walker’s decision to review and indeed to sell copies of Jordan’s work to his readership generated adverse comment from some readers. This was indicative perhaps of a desire to police the milieu’s ideological parameters by erecting a *cordon sanitaire* between it and the national socialist would-be revolutionaries. Patrick Harrington, a former NF chairman who had dissolved his faction of that party to form the Third Way group, was particularly critical of this and indeed other examples where *The Scorpion*’s editor had signalled more militant sympathies. ‘By offering it for sale [Jordan’s book], you go beyond critical evaluation to promotion.’

This is not the first time, it seems to me, that you have reacted to attempts at censorship by seeming to side with Nazis, neo-Nazis and Revisionists. In addition, you seem to place certain values above others in a curious hierarchy. When you wrote of [German-Canadian Holocaust denier] Ernst Zundel in No. 15 of *The Sting* you stated *Whether he is a ‘hatemonger’ or not, he is courageous*. If he is a courageous hatemonger as opposed to a cowardly one, should we then respect him? Let these people fight their own battles. Nothing they have to say will help to create a more just and progressive society, unless it is a contradiction or a refutation of it. ‘The Jews’ are not to blame for our problems. Colin Jordan and others of like mind should look within themselves, instead of conjuring demons to externalise truths they cannot accept (Harrington, 1997).

Responding to Harrington’s criticism regarding Zundel, Walker commented: ‘I have to answer with a candid ‘yes’; in my book a courageous man is worthy of respect even if his ideas are anathema to me.’ He also dismissed Harrington’s assertion that he was promoting Jordan’s work rather than evaluating it, indicating that: ‘My readiness to sell this book [*Merrie England 2000*] to readers indicates that I feel it is worth promoting but not that that I agree with everything in it or that I agree with Mr. Jordan’s politics generally’ (*The Scorpion*, no. 18, Spring 1997). In the following issue, appearing nearly a year later, Walker published an anti-Semitic riposte from Jordan himself who stated ‘‘Mr. Harrington’s exoneration of Jewry results either from an ignorance of the realities of power and influence in the present world or else a contemptible cowardice. Personally I diagnose his affliction as chronic cold feet’ (*The Scorpion*, no. 19, Spring 1998).

Whilst these later issues of *The Scorpion* indicated an ideological affinity with Jordan’s diagnosis of the perceived threat to race and nation, it rejected the violent panaceas he and others proposed. *The Scorpion* reviewed books including the race war novel *Hunter* by William Pierce, which sanctioned political assassination, as well as Michael Hoffman’s *Candidate for the Order*. Though the reviewer sympathised with the ‘despair’ both authors felt ‘as they see the Great Republic slowly submerged under a flood of immigrants and the off-spring of their own Black minority,’ the former was ‘an out and out nazi tract’ whilst the latter had ‘nazi overtones’. For the reviewer, whilst both books had something to commend them given that they ‘dare to speak about race’ both authors ‘remain locked in the darkness of the past,

locked in a racism so extreme as to confirm the liberal case [rather] than refute it' (*The Scorpion*, no. 17, Spring 1995).

This rejection of violence, Nazism and anti-Semitism (association with which tarnished their efforts to project a positive vision of 'European ethnic-racial identity') came to the fore in a subsequent review of Jordan's book, *The Uprising*, a fictionalised account of race war. For the reviewer Jordan's novella was essentially derivative of *The Turner Diaries* by William Pierce, which had gained widespread public notoriety following the Oklahoma bombing in 1995, which killed 168 people, including 19 children (Michel and Herbeck 2001: pp. 38-39). Specifically, the reviewer described the book as a 'graphic depiction of how such terrorism might be carried out' (*The Scorpion*, no. 24, Spring 2005). *The Scorpion* was particularly disparaging of the double standards it observed at work in Jordan's writing stating that:

This book indicates a change of heart about terrorism. Racial nationalists have persistently denounced the terrorists of the IRA for their bombings, not only for the politics be it noted but for the method too. I trust that Colin Jordan and others who admire Bob Matthews [deceased leader of The Order, a US terrorist group] will no longer denounce the tactics of the IRA or Muslim fundamentalists. That would be highly disingenuous now that we have this gleefully depicted scenario of increasing terrorism leading to the overthrow of the hated alien multi-racial regime... Now Colin Jordan is inviting racial nationalists to follow the IRA down the terrible road of terrorist mayhem (*The Scorpion*, no. 24, Spring 2005)

In later years, as the BNP underwent a 'modernisation' under the leadership of Nick Griffin, national socialists like Jordan condemned the changes as 'trimming.' *Electronic Sting*, the email newsletter of *The Scorpion*, signalled its dismissal of Jordan's Nazi politicking: 'People do not want to hear about the thirties any more, not even about the fifties and the Empire. They want to hear about hospitals, asylum seekers, crime and the environment, specifically, their environment' (*Electronic Sting*, no. 12, 17 June 2001). *The Scorpion's* stance reflected more broadly its efforts to shift the sphere of 'nationalist' activity from the political to the cultural realm. Ideologically, whilst its own panaceas were no less radical in intent than those proposed by rival voices within the milieu, the preceding discussion highlights that there were at least some voices within the British extreme right articulating non-violent panaceas, though the extent to which its arguments were heeded by those outside its immediate environs is open to question.

The theme of gender within the milieu is impossible to answer since there is no data on who was consuming such views and what impact this might have had upon the wider environment in which they participated. We can observe notions of gender in milieu publications, which were pronounced in relation to the ideal of the 'heroic' as a historical exemplar, embodied in myth and legend (and in the case of a prolonged disquisition on Hergé's *Tintin*, cartoon too), which was the central preoccupation of *The Scorpion's* fifth issue (*The Scorpion*, no. 5, summer 1983). The perceived 'attack' on hero worship for instance was an attack not just on the qualities of heroism, but an attack on the 'real man' – on manhood itself – which was a threat to the ethos of egalitarianism. If the material world had dulled 'manly' virtues, and *ergo* the heroic spirit, then it was apposite to call for a reinvigoration of both. 'If we ask ourselves 'where have all the heroes gone?', we must necessarily ask ourselves 'where have all the men gone?'' (Walker, 1983: 7).

Calls for a revival of (male) heroism both specifically and in the abstract, as an ideal and an aspiration, served as a rallying call amidst the underpinning lament suffusing milieu publications, that the age of materialism, and 'realism' of modern society, had 'killed off all the heroes.' Romanticism² and spiritual life were devalued: the 'Common Man' – 'the untrained, untutored, undisciplined and unthinking man' –

² Walker, M. (1985): 4 observed that the 'romantic' was 'was always associated with a return to origins, a quest for purity, a seeking after the source, individual heroism, respect for nature, idealism and chivalry.'

had won out leading *The Scorpion* to articulate that a new breed of man was required. They would represent ‘an aristocracy of talent and character, ever widening, ever more inclusive, loyally guarding and preserving what is best in the past and redefining it as a vision of the future in which all men can aspire not to a higher standard of living but to a *higher standard of life*’ (Heriot, 1982: 11). *The Scorpion* bolstered such thinking regarding ‘true’ aristocracy through a series of articles discussing the life and works of the Italian Traditionalist philosopher, Julius Evola, for whom Fascism was ‘not enough’. He was thereby introduced to an English audience to whom, up until that point, he had been relatively unknown (Aprile, 1983: 20-21). His ideas about heroism and spiritual significance stood in sharp relief to the gender-based undertones that sometimes surfaced with regard to Evola’s criticism of the United States. Indeed, *The Scorpion* reprinted another of his articles as part of a wider broadside against American materialism, in which Evola argued that that the country’s supposedly ‘primitive mind’ resulted from its ‘disproportionately feminine outlook.’ In the same article Evola also ridiculed ‘American morality,’ claiming that American women were ‘characteristically frigid and materialistic’ – sexual relationships used to render men materially beholden to them (Evola, 1984: 18).

5. Conclusions

This case study of the British New Right radical milieu centred upon four interconnected and interrelated research questions. It examined the role of historical ‘counter memory’ and its use of ‘grievance’ and ‘humiliation’ narratives and the role that these might play in shaping ‘radicalisation’ processes. It also explored the role that conspiracy theories did or did not play in radicalisation ‘waves’ and under what circumstance radical milieus might have contributed to violent escalation. Finally, it explored the relationship between radical milieus, violent political groups and the broader social and political, (including gender), environment. In most instances, given the nature of the radical milieu chosen as the case study, there was no clear-cut correlation between radical thinking and radical action when historically contextualised. Much of this is undoubtedly the result of case selection. The New Right was a radical milieu traversing *away* from the political strategies of confrontational street violence that had dominated the politics of the extreme right. Its concentration on a cultural meta-political strategy meant that as far as its publications were concerned, it was barely interested in the radicalisation of street protest during the 1980s. If anything, the advent of ‘skinhead’ culture of the NF alienated this milieu even further from the political movement from which it had originally emanated. Indeed, as an intellectual cultural milieu founded at least in part as a reaction to the movement’s wider political failure, the group had much to be critical of with regard to its own wider political camp, distancing itself, not completely successfully, from the conspiratorial view of history and biological racism. More broadly what such ‘non-findings’ highlight, particularly with regard to the role that radical milieus play in shaping radicalisation ‘waves,’ is that the relationship between the radical milieu and political formations which sit, conceptually speaking, above them, is by no means clear cut. Certainly, in some instances it does not appear be to part of the equation at all, complicating our understanding of the relationship between the two.

Whilst this report has presented a historical case study of one small radical milieu, it has a clear contemporary relevance, because of the role that such milieus play vis-à-vis more political groupings within their immediate orbit, and with those committed to more violent paths. To take the latter first. With regard to the relationship between the radical milieu and violent political groups, in this case study, there was a tension between discussing ideas and helping to propagate them. This was implied by the decision to sell books by the national socialist author Colin Jordan for instance that clearly did not sit well with all members of the milieu. This much is ascertainable from the letter columns of movement magazines and indeed more generally from the reaction of ideologues from other parts of the network. Despite this ambivalence when it came to discussing the content of such ideas, violent panaceas appear

to have been roundly rejected in print;,, hardly surprising given that cultural struggle rather than violent revolution was the order of the day for this milieu. What is rather harder to ascertain – and which further research might be able to illuminate – is the extent to which such arguments were influential outside the milieu’s immediate environs. The extent to which they functioned to constrain ‘vanguard’ tendencies within the wider ‘movement’ is unknowable at present. What such debates do highlight, however, is the extent to which radical milieu, even within the same movement, functioned autonomously from one another. The fact that there was dialogue between them – as indeed there was between several different points within the movement – highlights that there was no broad agreement about the best way to achieve their end goals, or indeed agreement about what these goals might be. Whether this relationship between radical milieus and violent political tendencies might have altered, given different external circumstances or national contexts capable of erasing or at least overcoming internal ideological and strategic differences, is an unknowable counter-factual. However, cross-case comparison could provide further illumination.

To the extent the radical milieu related to political groups, it appears that it was of peripheral interest only to them; its influence likely limited to a few of the more culturally informed organisers within the scene. This was perhaps to be expected, given that the British New Right milieu was committed to disseminating ideas about culture rather than ‘politics’ per se. The milieu had emerged as part of an internal revision within extreme right politics. It began within a sub-section of the NF during the mid-1970s, before emerging as a distinct milieu and intellectual tendency outside of party structures from the early 1980s onwards. It was also part of a wider political shift, which saw such groups, with varying degrees of commitment and consistency, move from discussing their core ideas through a biological lens to a cultural one. Contemporaneously, this had little import for many actors on the extreme right who remained resolutely wedded to the older racial nationalist paradigm (which continued to find an echo in New Right publications too, indicating that the shift was incomplete even here). Both of the main political formations at that time – the NF and the BNP – largely failed to engage with or pay any heed to its ideas during the period in question. Even those that did, had problems reconciling Gramsci’s ideas about the ‘long march through the institutions’ with the sense of urgency that was implicit in their anti-immigrant politicking and ideas of ‘White Genocide’ or more contemporaneously ‘The Great Replacement’ which have become a common part of the lexicon today.

This is not the same as arguing that this milieu had no impact, however. Indeed, the British New Right radical milieu had arguably its greatest impact in the decades that preceded its demise, or rather the demise of the publications around which it gravitated. The ideas that the radical milieu propagated and championed have undergone something of a revival in the last decade or so, rediscovered by a new generation of militants and activists, as a result of the concerted efforts of several far right publishing houses in Europe and North America. Together, these publishers have brought many old works back into print – sometimes for the first time in English translation – whilst also publishing new ones drawing on the New Rights’ underlying premise concerning the primacy of achieving cultural hegemony as a precursor to political success. Today, such ideas can be seen disseminated across both so-called ‘Alt-Right’ and ‘Identitarian’ movements (Zúquete, 2018). They have explicitly drawn upon many of the meta-political ideas about cultural struggle that were originally articulated thirty to forty years earlier by a multitude of radical milieus across Europe, including the one considered here. This in itself says something about the longevity of ‘radical milieus’ which have proven far more durable entities for the transmission of ideas across time than have political parties, which have been the traditional focus of research with regard to extreme and far right politics.

6. References

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