



**The Henry Jackson
Society: The Threat
to British Democracy
caused by Security
Think Tanks**

Authors:

Richard McNeil-Willson
European University Institute

Rob Faure Walker
University College London

Isobel Ingham-Barrow
University of Exeter

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Authors

Richard McNeil-Willson

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Executive Summary

This report explores the impact that security think tanks such as the Henry Jackson Society (HJS) are having on British democracy and societal cohesion. It highlights links between such groups and the British and international far Right which combine with patterns of divisive and agenda-driven reports based in impoverished methodologies to shape UK policy and political discourse for the worse. Such groups have caused concern amongst numerous equalities, community, and faith groups and are cited as enabling and encouraging Islamophobia and racism, facilitating far Right mobilisation, and pushing successive UK governments towards policy positions that damage societal cohesion.

This report brings together open-source articles, reports, and public instances of events to document the problematic work being carried out by these security-focused think tanks and map the impact that they have had on British society. Whilst the report is particularly concerned by the on-going work of HJS, the findings are applicable to a broad network of private and publicly funded security organisations that benefit financially from the on-going War on Terror, and which routinely publish poorly researched work, thereby encouraging hostile attitudes and repressive policies against Muslims and minorities across the UK.

Key Findings

- What little is known about HJS funding links it to a network of organisations in the UK and the US that appear to be funded with the common purpose of normalising the othering and exclusion of Muslim communities within Western public, political, social, cultural, and economic life.
- Past and current key figures within HJS present notable anti-Muslim, anti-Islam, and anti-immigration attitudes that mirror far Right theories and political agendas to misrepresent and pathologise minority communities in the West, often demonstrating a reluctance to distinguish violent extremists with (socio-)political grievances [who draw on religious language](#), from Muslims as a whole.
- Supposedly ‘independent’ appointments of individuals emerging from security think tanks (such as Robin Simcox’s appointment as interim head of the Commission for Countering Extremism, and William Shawcross being appointed to lead the Independent Review of PREVENT) raise serious concerns surrounding the nature and processes for independent appointments. Indeed, considering the nature of these individuals’ political leanings and attitudes, the appointment of these figures suggests a deeply entrenched political framing of the projects that they are tasked with overseeing.
- Many security think tanks rely on the use of limited data and constructed narratives to pursue a notably neo-conservative and far Right agenda. While frequently popular in the media and providing convenient political soundbites, these reports and ‘research’ are often lacking in methodological rigour and contextual information, thus often presenting a misleading depiction of events and misrepresenting Muslim communities under the guise of ostensibly academic and ‘evidence-driven’ analysis.
- A definition of ‘extremism’ often adopted within the Government’s PREVENT strategy is that “the belief of an in-group’s success or survival can never be separated from the need

for hostile action against an out-group”.¹ The reports of security think tanks, such as HJS, frequently appear to fall into this category by promoting hostility towards Muslims and minority groups as a seeming necessity for Western preservation.

- As demonstrated by the work of HJS’s project, Student Rights, PREVENT is mobilised by security think tanks to make accusations of ‘extremism’, ultimately restricting and diminishing Muslim political participation and excluding Muslim voices from legitimate political debates within universities and elsewhere.
- Through close links with Government Ministers, security think tanks, such as HJS, are able to encourage and promote institutional Islamophobia, thus pushing UK governments towards increasingly repressive policy positions against Muslims and minorities. Meanwhile, public money from the UK Home Office has been spent in funding and advancing the work of the HJS. The impact of this is to bring the far Right into the heart of the UK Government, giving greater credence and strength to Islamophobic, xenophobic, and highly securitised narratives that frame Islam and Muslims in hostile terms.

¹ J.M. Berger, *Extremism*, ed. MA & London Cambridge, UK (MIT Press, 2018), 170.

Introduction

Security think tanks have become a prominent fixture in the landscape of British political life, particularly since the start of the War on Terror following the 2001 attacks in the US and the Madrid and London bombings in 2004 and 2005. Such organisations include Policy Exchange (2002-), the Henry Jackson Society (2005-) and the now-defunct Quilliam (2008-2021), alongside a host of smaller organisations that tend to focus their attention on issues such as terrorism, extremism, and the promotion of free speech specifically to facilitate right-wing voices.

The rise of organisations claiming such self-professed extremism ‘expertise’ has played a significant role in patterns of securitisation in Britain and the West.² Research into security concerns – largely built around combatting ‘Islamism’ as a supposed gateway to terrorism and often conflating public articulations of Islam with extremism – have contributed to a climate of suspicion towards Muslims, other minorities, and migrants in Britain.³

Militarily, the War on Terror has been a resounding failure, resulting in the deaths of thousands and the failure of military engagements which have led to the rise of Islamic State in Iraq and the return of Taliban government in Afghanistan. However, even whilst international theatres of conflict show the War on Terror to be poorly conceived and disastrously executed, its legacy at home in the UK continues to grow, with counterterror language and practice increasingly embedded across British society. Similar to the language of the Cold War, in which alarmist concern about communism led to the construction of an ‘enemy within’, the War on Terror has constructed Muslims as a new, internal threat, with Muslim communities framed as potentially harbouring an enemy within.⁴

The logic of the War on Terror is very much alive, with a slew of recent counterterror and counter-extremism policies proliferating in recent years. The drive for much of this policy comes from security think tanks, which act as powerful lobbying groups to promote security interests within recent UK governments. These groups are often beholden to far Right and pro-Trumpian funders, with many refusing to disclose their funding for fear of public or Parliamentary scrutiny.

Using the Henry Jackson Society (HJS) as a primary example, this report provides a brief and non-exhaustive analysis of open-source, publicly available data to detail the problems represented by security think tanks. Focussed on the UK context, it highlights how organisations such as HJS and similar security-focussed think tanks are intertwined with the global far Right and extreme funding bodies, how they conduct often poor-quality research, and how they maintain close links to the UK Government, key ministers, and politicians. Indeed, one of HJS’s own founders, Matthew Jamison, has [described](#) the organisation as “racist”, “corrupt”, “undemocratic”, and a “monstrous animal” following revelations surrounding payments to the organisation to conduct political smear campaigns, as well as calling it a “far Right, deeply anti-Muslim racist organisation... utilised as a propaganda outfit to smear other cultures, religions and ethnic groups”.

² Lisa Stampnitzky, *Disciplining Terror: How Experts Invented Terrorism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Hilary Aked, “Islamophobia, Counter-Extremism and the Counterjihad Movement,” in *Racism, Social Movements and the State*, ed. Narzanin Massoumi, Tom Mills, and David Miller (London: Pluto Press, 2017); David Goldberg, Sushrut Jadhav, and Tarek Younis, “Prevent: What Is Pre-Criminal Space?,” *BJPsych Bulletin* 41, no. 4 (2017).

³ Christina Pantazis and Simon A. Pemberton, “From the Old to the New Suspect Community: Examining the Impacts of Recent UK Counter-Terrorist Legislation,” *British Journal of Criminology* 79 (2009); Marie Breen Smyth, “Subjectivities, ‘Suspect Communities’, Governments and the Ethics of Research on ‘Terrorism’,” in *Critical Terrorism Studies: A New Research Agenda*, ed. Marie Breen Smyth & Jeroen Gunning Richard Jackson (London: Routledge, 2009).

⁴ Anna Triandafyllidou et al., “Nation and Religion - Reflections on Europe, the Mena Region and South Asia,” in *GREASE: Religion, Diversity and Radicalisation* (Florence: European University Institute, 2019).

This is an indication of how far HJS has travelled since its inception as a purportedly bipartisan organisation with a realist approach to international relations. Following the trajectory of the US Republican Party, as Marko Atilla Hoare, another former member of HJS, has [stated](#), the organisation has become “a mere caricature of its former self... it has become an abrasively right-wing forum with an anti-Muslim tinge, churning out polemical and superficial pieces by aspiring journalists and pundits”. In promoting divisive, securitised narratives, along with other security think tanks, HJS risks enabling an increasingly hostile environment for Muslims, migrants, and other minority communities, as well as eroding civil rights and British democracy.

The Henry Jackson Society (HJS)

HJS is a transatlantic foreign policy and national security think tank which seeks to claim a monopoly on what is 'valid analysis' of socio-political phenomena among policy circles. The organisation describes itself as dedicated to spreading democracy and liberal values across the globe and is known for its notably neo-conservative and right-wing stances on security, foreign intervention, and extremism.

HJS states that:

"We work across borders and party lines to combat extremism, advance democracy and real human rights - and make a stand in an increasingly uncertain world."

It states in its founding [statement of principles](#) that it supports "the maintenance of a strong military by the United Kingdom, the United States, the countries of the European Union and other democratic powers" and gives "two cheers for capitalism". However, as noted by Matthew Jamison and Marko Atilla Hoare, the reality of this conservative ethos has been replaced in intervening years by a much more radical and right-wing [agenda](#).

The society was founded in 2005 by academics and students from Cambridge University, including Brendan Simms, Alan Mendoza, Gideon Mailer, James Rogers, and Matthew Jamison. In 2011, the [Centre for Social Cohesion](#) (CSC), [self-described](#) as the "first thinktank in the UK to focus exclusively on issues of radicalisation and extremism in Britain", [merged](#) with HJS, with Douglas Murray becoming its Associate Director following the merger.

Being well funded and extremely well connected within political and media circles, HJS possesses the resources and relationships through which to shape political narratives, and subsequently influence the development of policy and political agendas – an influence which consistently advocates for increasing securitisation and pre-criminalisation of Muslims, as well as the curtailment of democratic standards and civil liberties for minority communities more broadly.

The Henry Jackson Society works through eight different workstreams:

- i.** Asia Studies Centre
- ii.** Global Britain Programme
- iii.** Russia & Eurasia Studies Centre
- iv.** Centre for the New Middle East
- v.** Centre on Radicalisation & Terrorism
- vi.** Student Rights
- vii.** Centre for Social & Political Risks
- viii.** HJS Initiative for Inclusive Capitalism

Particular concern is raised in this report around workstreams v. (Centre on Radicalisation & Terrorism) and vi (Student Rights), which have been seen to have visible negative impacts on Muslims, minorities, and democratic rights in the UK.

Funding

In 2014, HJS [withdrew](#) from the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Homeland and International Security after refusing to comply with the parliamentary standards commissioner's demand to disclose its funding sources. It appears that a significant source of HJS funding comes from American donors, including Nina Rosenwald's Abstraction Fund and Hertog Foundation. Nina Rosenwald herself has been [dubbed](#) "the Sugar Mama of anti-Muslim Hate", and is the founder and director of the Gatestone Institute, which has been [accused](#) of promoting the 'White Genocide' theory that white populations in the USA and Europe are being replaced by non-white populations as part of a deliberate policy. Alongside HJS, millions of dollars have been contributed by Rosenwald to organisations such as the Center for Security Policy, Project Ijtihad, the American Islamic Forum for Democracy, the Middle East Forum, the Clarion Fund, Commentary Magazine, and the Hudson Institute, as well as the Gatestone Institute – all of which have been [described](#) as having the common goal of fanning "the flames of Islamophobia."

While HJS does not disclose its sources of funding, known sources are indicative of distinctive political motivations, with a notable crossover with global far Right objectives, which arguably underscore and direct the political leanings of the organisation and its priorities. Moreover, there are further indications of potentially problematic practices highlighting a lack of transparency within government contracts and the Home Office's relationship with the organisation.

As but a handful of reported examples of HJS' funding sources:

- **The Traditional Alternatives Foundation** donated £195,000 to HJS in 2009, £125,000 in 2010, and £222,500 in 2013. The foundation was set up by Lord Stanley Kalms, who is also the founder of **the Stanley Kalms Foundation**, which appears to be a further source of HJS funding. Lord Kalm's son, Baron Kalms, who sits as a trustee of the Traditional Alternatives Foundation, was also a frequent donor to the Tory party but was expelled in 2009 after voting for UKIP.⁵
- **Nina Rosenwald**, whose Abstraction Fund donated \$10,000 through the American Friends of the Henry Jackson Society. Rosenwald is also a donator to several right-wing organisations, including the Gatestone Institute which has published Douglas Murray's writing, alongside Geert Wilders, the founder of the Dutch Party for Freedom. Wilders has publicly declared he "hates Islam" and was refused entry to the UK in 2009 to attend a showing of his film *Fitna* at House of Lords, which called the Qur'an a 'fascist book' – although this was later overturned on appeal.⁶
- In 2017, the **Japanese embassy** reportedly paid HJS £10,000 to promote anti-Chinese propaganda. According to the Sunday Times, HJS encouraged politicians and journalists to voice opposition to Chinese foreign policy as part of a [propaganda campaign](#).
- The **Emerson Family Foundation** in Los Angeles, donated \$50,000 to HJS in 2015 and [more funding](#) in recent years. In 2015, the Emerson Family Foundation also gave \$100,000 to [Turning Point USA](#), a right-wing group which has targeted academics with a 'Professor Watchlist' – disproportionately listing names of academics of colour. The list targets those who have been deemed by the organisation to be pushing "leftist propaganda in the classroom" and has resulted in [hate mail and death threats](#) against

⁵ T. Griffin et al., "The Henry Jackson Society and the Degeneration of British Neoconservatism: Liberal Interventionism, Islamophobia and the 'War on Terror'," *Public Interest Investigations, Glasgow* (2015).

⁶ Haroon Siddique and Peter Walker, "Far-Right Dutch Mp Refused Entry to Uk," *Guardian*, 12 February 2009; Adam Gabbatt, "Geert Wilders Wins Appeal against Exclusion from Uk," *ibid.*, 13 October.

academics. The Emerson Family Foundation has also made donations to the Investigative Project on Terrorism (IPT), as well as the David Horowitz Freedom Center and the Clarion Project, all of which have been identified as engaging in Islamophobia. The Emerson Family Foundation also donated to the Gatestone Institute and to the Middle East Forum which is run by Daniel Pipes, who famously [stated](#) that “all immigrants bring exotic customs and attitudes, but Muslim customs are more troublesome than most.”⁷

- The **Myron Zimmerman Foundation** [donated to HJS](#) in 2018, the same year it also gave \$164,000 to Turning Point USA and \$80,000 to the David Horowitz Freedom Center.
- The **Jack Roth Charitable Foundation** has given [donations to HJS](#), as well as funding Turning Point USA, the David Horowitz Freedom Center, and the Gatestone Institute.
- **The UK Home Office** made four [payments](#) to HJS amounting to over £80,000. The payments were made under the tenure of Home Secretaries Theresa May, Amber Rudd, and Sajid Javid. The payments were intended for the production of a report on UK connections to ‘Islamist Terrorism’, however, the contract was never made public. The Home Office blocked several freedom of information requests, under the argument of “safe-guarding national security”.
- HJS received a grant of \$23,900 from the **Henry M Jackson Endowment** in 2006, and another \$24,000 in 2012.⁸ In 2011, HJS also created a US fundraising arm, **the American Friends of the Henry Jackson Society**. Its refusal to disclose its own funding agents directly conflicts with HJS’ active support of a new UK Government bill legislating the registration of foreign interests due to its concern with ‘hostile’ foreign lobbying. As such, this position indicates a curious exemption that HJS seem to wish to apply to right-wing and politically aligned organisations that it does not extend to those of opposing political [opinions](#).

Again, whilst HJS does not disclose its funding, this pattern of reported funding ultimately links HJS to a network of organisations in the UK and the US that appear to be funded with the common purpose of normalising the demonisation and exclusion of Muslim communities within Western public, political, social, cultural, and economic life.

⁷ He continues by stating that “Also, they appear most resistant to assimilation. Elements among the Pakistanis in Britain, Algerians in France, and Turks in Germany seek to turn the host country into an Islamic society by compelling it to adapt to their way of life... Western European societies are unprepared for the massive immigration of brown-skinned peoples cooking strange foods and not exactly maintaining Germanic standards of hygiene. Muslim immigrants bring with them a chauvinism that augurs badly for their integration into the mainstream of the European societies. The signs all point to continued clashes between the two sides”. Daniel Pipes, “The Muslims Are Coming! The Muslims Are Coming!,” *National Review*, 19 November 1990.

⁸ Griffin et al.

Notable Current and Former Figures

Alan Mendoza

As a founder and the current Executive Director of the society, Alan Mendoza has been invited to speak at various far Right events, including the David Horowitz Freedom Centre's [Restoration Weekend](#) in 2017. The annual Restoration Weekend has been described as the [Southern Poverty Law Center](#) as consisting "largely of speeches given by notable personalities in the anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim circles of the United States, whilst the Freedom Center has described Hilary Clinton as evil, Barack Obama as a secret communist and the Democratic Party as a front for enemies of the [United States](#)."

Mendoza was also a guest of David Horowitz on his [Youtube TV show](#), discussing extremism in Western universities. During this interview, Horowitz claimed that Muslim student associations are orchestrated fronts of the Muslim Brotherhood – claims that have since been debunked as [Islamophobic conspiracy theories](#).

In May 2009, Mendoza, took part in a Washington conference, sponsored by the Middle East Forum (MEF), entitled 'Libel Lawfare: Silencing Criticism of Radical Islam.'⁹ A Center for American Progress report describes MEF as a "far Right thinktank that is known for its anti-Islam views and hawkish foreign policy [recommendations](#)."

Many of Mendoza's own public statements involve data manipulated to further theories concerned with the supposed uncontrolled population growth of Muslims in the West, their inability to 'integrate', and their alleged role in promoting anti-Semitism.

In a speech to AIPAC in June 2011, Mendoza [argued](#) that "The European Muslim population has doubled in the past 30 years and is predicted to double again by 2040". He asserted that "it has been difficult for European countries to absorb immigrants into their society given their failure to integrate newcomers".¹⁰ The argument was later proven to be merely a "hyperbolic and inflammatory claim" largely based on misrepresented data.¹¹ Two years later, in March 2013, he [suggested](#) that "the increasing European Muslim population was to blame for Europe's 'anti-Israel feelings'" and that the voices of Muslims "are heard well above the average Europeans".

As the leading figure within HJS, it is these sentiments and ill-evidenced assertions that seemingly fuel the organisation's approach to Muslim communities and shapes HJS's political work.

William Shawcross

A former director of HJS, William Shawcross, also formerly held the position of Chair of the Charity Commission and is now the head of the independent inquiry into the UK Government counterterrorism programme PREVENT and the [Independent Commissioner for Public Appointments](#). Since being appointed to the review of the PREVENT programme, over 500 Islamic, as well as other religious and civil society organisations have boycotted the review.¹²

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., 39.

¹¹ David A. Graham, "Why the Muslim 'No-Go-Zone' Myth Won't Die," *The Atlantic*, 20 January 2015; Doug Saunders, *The Myth of the Muslim Tide: Do Immigrants Threaten the West?*, (Toronto & London: Vintage, 2013); John Feffer, *Crusade 2.0: The West's Resurgent War on Islam*, Open Media Series (New York: City Light Books, 2012).

¹² Jamie Grierson, "Hundreds of Islamic Groups Boycott Prevent Review over Choice of Chair," *ibid.*, 17 March 2021.

Shawcross has supported the worst excesses of the War on Terror. This includes explicit [support](#) of Guantanamo Bay, including in a 2012 Huffington Post [article](#) entitled 'Justice and the Enemy: the Case for Guantanamo', and statements that downplay massive civil and human rights abuses in the detention centre, [stating](#): "were a Nazi transported by time machine from Nuremberg to Guantanamo he would be astonished by the privileges and safeguards which to which he was now entitled." He has offered support for torture, [calling](#) it a "natural response to the most urgent problems of terrorism", and even explicitly advocating for waterboarding (which he termed "equally essential") and extraordinary rendition – where suspects are sent to another country to be tortured (which he [stated](#) was "fine when necessary"). He continues to be a vocal supporter of both the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq.

During his time as chair of the Charity Commission, he was accused of institutional bias against Muslims and [unfairly targeting](#) Muslim charities. Less than a month after David Cameron's decision to increase the commission's powers during Shawcross' tenure, it emerged that "more than a quarter of the statutory investigations that have been launched by the Charity Commission since April 2012 and remain open have targeted Muslim organisations", with more than 20 of the 76 live investigations focusing on Muslim charities associated with running mosques, providing humanitarian relief, and aid to Syria.

Crucially, Shawcross possesses a considerable reputation for being an outspoken critic of Islam and Muslims, [arguing](#) during his time as a HJS director that, "Europe and Islam is one of the greatest most terrifying problems of our future, I think all European countries have vastly, very quickly, growing Islamic populations." He similarly [stated](#) that "the West is threatened by a vast fifth column – that there are thousands of European-born people, in Britain, in France, in Holland, in Denmark, everywhere – who wish to destroy us."

Such statements and attitudes explicitly link Muslim communities in Europe to terrorism and violence. It enables the securitisation of Muslims in Europe – communities which already face discrimination, inequality and harassment based on their religion – and is implicitly supportive of far Right conspiracy theories on the supposed 'replacement' of White communities and liberal values due to migration.

Douglas Murray

Douglas Murray joined as Associate Director after HJS's merger with the Centre for Social Cohesion (CSC) in April 2011. The CSC itself was a right-leaning think tank set up by Civitas in 2007. The CSC had previously been responsible for publications such as *The A-Z of Muslim Organisations in Britain* in July 2007 and *Crimes of the Community* in February 2008.¹³ Murray held his position as Associate Director of HJS through to 2018.

Murray also writes for *the Daily Mail* and *the Spectator*, and has authored numerous books which present Islam and Muslims as a threat to Europe, is prominently featured on broadcast debates, has been a significant contributor to *Breitbart*,¹⁴ a media organisation that has been accused of driving content that is misogynistic, xenophobic and racist, and described by Mary Creagh MP as "home to misogyny, homophobia, Antisemitism, Islamophobia, racism and wild conspiracy theories".¹⁵ Breitbart has also been cited as publishing and deliberately amplifying conspiracy

¹³ Griffin et al.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Rachel Wearmouth, "Jacob Rees-Mogg Urged to Remove Parliament Ads from Breitbart," *Huffington Post*, 4 October 2019; Michael M Grynbaum and John Herman, "Breitbart Rises from Outlier to Potent Voice in Campaign," *New York Times*, 27 August 2016.

theories, anti-Chinese and anti-Muslim xenophobia around COVID-19 and intentionally misleading stories.¹⁶

In 2010, CSC published a report claiming that “British university campuses are breeding grounds of Islamic extremism”.¹⁷ In a 2009 article, James Brandon, who had worked with Douglas Murray at the CSC, [stated](#) that Murray “often failed to distinguish Islam from Islamism.” Brandon wrote that Murray has “represented Muslims as a collective threat,” and described his time worked at CSC as a “constant struggle to ‘de-radicalise’ Murray and to ensure that the centre’s output targeted only Islamists – and not Muslims as a whole.”

He is a frequent critic of Islamophobia, [describing](#) it as a “crock term”, and has argued that the concept of hate crime and associated statistics are largely a political tool.

He is popular with right-wing activists and journalists, having attended and spoken in far Right events such as *Restoration Weekend* alongside Alan Mendoza, as well as an [event](#) organised by the extreme David Horowitz Freedom Centre with Robert Spencer, Frank Gaffney, and right-wing journalist Melanie Phillips.

In a talk to the Manhattan Institute, Murray presented a picture of Europe on the verge of being “outbred” by [Muslims](#) and in 2017 told the [BBC](#) that “less Islam in general is obviously a good thing.” This echoes Murray’s demand in a notorious 2006 speech to the [Dutch Parliament](#), in which he stated that “conditions for Muslims in Europe must be made harder across the board” and “immigration into Europe from Muslim countries must stop” before “a number of our largest cities fall to Muslim majorities.” He also suggested that European Muslims who “take part in, plot, assist or condone violence against the west must be forcibly deported to their place of origin”, as well as calling for the extension of the War on Terror to “Iran, Syria, and any regime which sponsors or supports terrorism.”¹⁸

Murray’s 2017 book, *The Strange Death of Europe: Immigration, Identity, Islam*, is described as “a highly personal account of a continent and culture caught in the act of suicide.”¹⁹ A review in the [Guardian](#) described it as circling “around the same repetitive themes: migrants raping and murdering and terrorising...about how Europe is too ‘exhausted by history’ and colonial guilt to face another battle, and is thus letting itself be rolled over by invaders”.

Murray is also the author of *Neoconservatism: Why We Need It*, in which he discusses the value of neo-conservatism in Western societies, which he frames within the wider discourse of the global War on Terror, the threat posed by Islam, and the need to protect “Us” from “Them”. In the book, he writes that “Islam is a proselytising faith, and one that is incompatible with British history, British law, and British society. With nearly two million Muslims currently living within Britain’s borders, no risk whatsoever should be taken... Britain must start implementing its response... we must not allow tolerance to prove the Achilles heel of our freedom. To defend our tolerance we

¹⁶ Jessica Roy, “What Is the Alt-Right? A Refresher Course on Steve Bannon’s Fringe Brand of Conservatism,” *Los Angeles Times*, 15 November 2016; Amy Qin, Vivian Wang, and Danny Hakim, “How Steve Bannon and a Chinese Billionaire Created a Right-Wing Coronavirus Media Sensation,” *New York Times*, 20 November 2020; Scott A. Elridge II, *Online Journalism from the Periphery: Interloper Media and the Journalistic* (London: Routledge, 2017).

¹⁷ Bridge Initiative Team, “Factsheet: Henry Jackson Society,” (Georgetown University, 2018).

¹⁸ Bridge Initiative Team, “Factsheet: Douglas Murray,” (Georgetown University, 2018).

¹⁹ ‘From the Publisher: The Strange Death of Europe is a highly personal account of a continent and culture caught in the act of suicide. Declining birth-rates, mass immigration and cultivated self-distrust and self-hatred have come together to make Europeans unable to argue for themselves and incapable of resisting their own comprehensive change as a society’ Fox News, “The Strange Death of Europe: Immigration, Identity, Islam” by Douglas Murray,” *Fox News* 2017.

must be intolerant to those who oppose us, even when we express tolerance. We must not tolerate them.”²⁰

In 2015, he [wrote](#) in the Spectator that, “The claim that Islam is a religion of peace is a nicety invented by Western politicians so as either not to offend their Muslim populations or simply lie to themselves that everything might yet turn out fine. In fact, since its beginning Islam has been pretty violent.” Douglas Murray also [stated](#) in 2013 that London has “become a foreign country” because white Britons were a minority in 23 of 33 London boroughs.

Murray has been pictured with Robert Spencer – the far Right US anti-Islam campaigner banned from Britain in 2013 by the Home Office when he attempted to address a march organised by the English Defence League (EDL) – and has confirmed that “I happen to know Robert Spencer; I respect him; he is a very brilliant scholar and writer”.²¹

Robin Simcox

Robin Simcox is a former research fellow at HJS, brought into the organisation along with then Associate Director, Douglas Murray. Simcox has [spoken](#) at a panel event organised by the *Centre for Immigration Studies* (CIS), a far Right Washington DC-based think tank founded by the late eugenicist and white supremacist John Tanton. CIS has been designated a “hate group” by the Southern Poverty Law Centre (SPLC) due to “its repeated circulation of white nationalist and antisemitic writers in its weekly newsletter” over a ten-year period, as well as hiring discredited ‘race scientist’ Jason Richwine, who has stated that Hispanic immigrants have lower IQs than “native whites”. Simcox was at the event to discuss a new report published by the CIS, promoting the idea of a link between refugees and Islamist terrorism.

Robin Simcox has since been appointed interim head of the Commission for Countering Extremism (CCE), the UK Government’s own advisory body on counter-extremism. This appointment has been heavily criticised by community groups and researchers, with Mark Potok of the Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right (CARR), [stating](#): “No person who takes the demonising propaganda from the CIS seriously should have anything to do with counter-extremism work. The reality is that the CIS is part of a right-wing extremist set of institutions organised by a racist activist to oppose immigration in virtually all instances”.

Simcox has been [accused](#) of endorsing anti-Muslim conspiracy theories, citing as authoritative sources various organisations and networks that promote discredited racist and anti-Muslim views. Simcox also has direct connections to anti-Muslim segments of the Trump administration, [including](#) being a “frequent confidante” of Katharine Gorka. Gorka is a former senior policy advisor in Trump’s Department of Homeland Security with a track record of anti-Muslim animus, including being a regular contributor to Breitbart News.

The appointment of Simcox as the interim head of the CCE, like the appointment of Shawcross to lead the Independent Review of PREVENT and – perhaps more worryingly – as the [Independent Commissioner for Public Appointments](#), raises serious concerns about the independence of the projects that they oversee and the process through which they were appointed. Indeed, considering the remit of these roles, it seems unlikely that either individual can claim to be truly independent in light of their political leanings and attitudes that are embodied by the political character of HJS.

²⁰ Douglas Murray, *Neoconservatism: Why We Need It* (London: Social Affairs Unit, 2005), 160.

²¹ Bridge Initiative Team, “Factsheet: Douglas Murray.”

Raheem Kassam

Raheem Kassam was employed as Campaigns Director at HJS in 2011 to manage electoral campaigns in the UK and US. Kassam was also the founder and director of another project of HJS, Student Rights, which is discussed further below. He has been a member of the Gatestone Institute and the Middle East Forum, and was involved in an attempted foundation of a UK version of the Tea Party movement. Kassam went on to co-found and be editor of Breitbart News London.

Kassam is a close [associate](#) of Steve Bannon – campaign manager for Donald Trump in the 2016 presidential election and international far Right organiser and figurehead – and co-hosted a podcast with him in October 2019.

In 2018, he joined the *Institut des sciences sociales, économiques et politiques*, founded by French far Right figures Marion Maréchal-Le Pen and Thibaut Monnier and has also addressed one of Pegida UK's demonstrations in Birmingham, alongside the German Pegida founder [Lutz Bachmann](#). He has been [described](#) as far Right, racist, homophobic, and right-wing by several media publications, and was former chief adviser to former UKIP leader Nigel Farage, together being the first British politicians to meet Donald Trump. During his campaign for UKIP's leadership following Farage's resignation, he [called](#) for a national referendum on banning women from wearing the Niqab. He has also [claimed](#) Trump's views are not anti-Muslim and has voiced support for racial profiling at airports with the aim of reducing terrorism.

Centre on Radicalisation & Terrorism

The Centre on Radicalisation and Terrorism (CRT) was established within HJS in 2014, claiming to tackle the “very real threat radical Islam poses to our society.”²² It attempts to influence British foreign policy through reports focussed on issues pertaining to the Middle East and North African region, extremism, and Muslim political engagement in the West. Examples of reports include *The Legal Case for British Military Action Against Islamic State in Iraq and Syria*;²³ *Free to be extreme*, which looks at online extremism, and suggests that Islamists pose a greater risk online than the far Right;²⁴ and *Islamist Terrorism: Analysis of Offences and Attacks in the UK (1998-2015)*, described as the “most comprehensive ever overview of the threat from Islamism-inspired terrorism in the UK”.²⁵ This latter report named East London and parts of Birmingham as “hotbeds of extremism” and [received](#) wide media coverage.

In November 2014 CRT produced a briefing entitled *Banking Restrictions on Extremism-Linked Muslim Groups*, within which it denied the accusation that HSBC had discriminated against Muslim organisations when it closed a series of Muslim owned accounts without warning in September 2014. Within the report, CRT principally claimed that several Muslim organisations who had their accounts closed by UK banks had links to terrorism.²⁶ However, one of the organisations singled out in the report, Finsbury Park Mosque, subsequently successfully [sued](#) Thomson Reuters for erroneously including them in their World-Check global risk-assessment database which was used by HSBC as a basis for their decision to close the mosque’s account.

In September 2020, HJS was forced to pay damages to Huda Television Ltd after it had claimed the UK Muslim TV station had a “radical agenda” in a report by HJS researcher Emma Webb, entitled *Extremism on the Airwaves: Islamist broadcasting in the UK*, published on 21 November 2018.²⁷ In addition to paying [libel damages](#) to Huda Television Ltd plus [legal costs](#), HJS has published a [retraction](#) of the allegations and an apology to Huda Television Ltd on the HJS website (where it is required to remain) and [on Twitter](#). HJS had falsely claimed that Huda Television Ltd “almost ubiquitously host well-known extremist speakers”,²⁸ but claimed in the retraction that it was a case of mistaken identity and that they had confused two similar sounding stations. Their retraction also implied that there was very little internal verification carried out into their research.

In 2019, another HJS researcher [Nikita Malik](#) shared an exposé in the Telegraph investigating a scout group run from Lewisham Islamic Centre, claiming that the organisation was segregating groups of children by gender – with HJS cited as key in the Telegraph investigation. The story incorrectly asserted that Mr Ahammed Hussain had been suspended by the Scout Association after concerns he had promoted “extremist Muslim values”, and was also picked up by the Times, the Daily Star, and the Mail Online. Ultimately, the newspapers were forced to correct their articles, as initial claims in the investigation over concerns by the Scout Association and a police investigation were found to be untrue. Several Muslim institutions were attacked in the exposé, including Khizra Mosque, Cheadle Mosque, East London Mosque, and Lewisham Islamic Centre,

²² Emma Webb, “Wolves in Sheep’s Clothing: How Islamist Extremists Exploit the UK Charitable Sector,” (London: Henry Jackson Society, 2018), 168.

²³ Hannah Stuart, “The Legal Case for British Military Action against Islamic State in Iraq and Syria,” (Henry Jackson Society, 2014).

²⁴ Nikita Malik, “Free to Be Extreme,” (Henry Jackson Society, 2020).

²⁵ Hannah Stuart, “Islamist Terrorism: Analysis of Offences and Attacks in the UK (1998-2015),” (Henry Jackson Society, 2017).

²⁶ Centre for the Response to Radicalisation and Terrorism, “Banking Restrictions on Extremism-Linked Muslim Groups,” (Henry Jackson Society, 2014).

²⁷ Emma Webb, “Extremism in the Airwaves: Islamist Broadcasting in the UK,” (Henry Jackson Society, 2018).

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

with one of the mosques using press regulator Ipsos to elicit a correction. In 2020, the Times agreed to pay “[substantial damages](#)” and costs for “these errors and for the distress caused by them”.

The reports by HJS and CRT exemplify an approach used by many security think tanks that relies on the use of limited data and constructed narratives to pursue a notably neo-conservative and far Right agenda. While frequently popular in the media and providing convenient political soundbites, these reports and ‘research’ are often lacking in methodological rigour and contextual information, thus often present a misleading depiction of events and issues that directly impacts political and media approaches to these subjects.

Indeed, the above examples demonstrate a pattern of promoting inaccurate information with the effect of pathologising Muslim communities under the guise of ostensibly academic and evidence driven analysis – a pattern that is visible in other security think tanks as well. As a particularly prominent [example](#), ‘grooming gang’ scandals involving groups of South Asian men (amongst others) systematically abusing young people across the UK since 2010 were capitalised upon by the now defunct Quilliam Foundation, who produced a report (which has since been removed) arguing that 84% of grooming gang offenders in the UK are Asian, with the majority being of “Pakistani origin with Muslim heritage”.²⁹ Under academic scrutiny, this statistic and accompanying report were described as “a case study in bad science: riddled with errors”.³⁰ However, the report had already been widely platformed by international media outlets, politicians, and pundits to further anti-Muslim and anti-immigration agendas.

²⁹ Haras Rafiq and Muna Adil, “Group Based Child Sexual Exploitation: Dissecting Grooming Gangs,,” (Quilliam, 2019).

³⁰ Kenan Malik, “We’re Told 84% of Grooming Gangs Are Asian. But Where’s the Evidence?,” *Guardian*, 11 November 2018; Ella Cockbain and Waqas Tufail, “Failing Victims, Fuelling Hate: Challenging the Harms of the ‘Muslim Grooming Gangs’ Narrative,” *Race and Class* 61, no. 3 (2020).

Student Rights

Launched in 2009, Student Rights (SR) is a university monitoring project of HJS. It seems to draw upon the model set by Daniel Pipes' *Campus Watch* in the US, describing its [work](#) as "dedicated to supporting human rights, liberal values and freedom from extremism on university campuses", and frequently provides detail on speakers and events that SR considers 'extremist'.

It has been accused of seeking to pressure universities to "impose restrictive measures on Muslim students that would, in effect, institutionalise Islamophobia" and working "to narrow the space for all radical political dissent on campus."³¹ SR was condemned by the [National Union of Students](#) for its use of flawed methodologies and has been widely [criticised](#) for its "dishonest pseudo-science in support of a toxic narrative". Meanwhile, the conclusions of SR's reports have been discredited and [labelled](#) "a witch-hunt which makes sweeping judgments about student Islamic societies". HJS has thus been condemned by the National Union of Students executive council, the NUS Black Students' Conference, and several university student unions, including LSE, UCL, Birkbeck, Queen Mary, and King's College London. The NUS [refuses](#) to work with SR.

Founder of SR, Raheem Kassam, admitted that SR was created in [response](#) to increased pro-Palestinian student activism on British campuses.³² Indeed, an examination of the criticisms levied by SR reveals that they are almost exclusively in relation to speakers and events hosted by Islamic and Palestinian societies. Meanwhile, SR expressed [opposition](#) to 'no-platform' policies directed at the British National Party (BNP) in 2009.

SR's annual [list](#) of extremist speakers at UK university campuses is an annual report that has [previously concluded](#) that "extremist hate preachers, pro-jihad activists and avowed anti-Semites have 'near-unfettered' access to students" and that there was an "industrial-scale failure by universities to apply their Prevent duties". Such reports have been criticised by academics as deploying "an ambiguous, discredited definition of extremism", of engaging in a "highly selective process of evidence gathering with an almost total focus on Muslim speakers" and of misrepresenting both the speakers and engagement [by students](#). Contrary to the claims of HJS reports, the Office for Students, the university regulator, found that, in recent years, 97% of universities met their statutory [PREVENT duty](#).

SR reports have been cited as actively [mobilising](#) far Right hostility on campus. In 2013, SR raised alarms about 'extremist' Muslim speakers on university campuses throughout the UK. In response, far Right groups, including the EDL mobilised, engaging in tactics of intimidation, harassment, and demonstrations outside Muslim-related event venues. This also led to several campus events being cancelled amongst fears for [student safety](#).

The ambiguous framing of 'extremism' promoted by SR and the impact of its work in limiting Muslim political participation on campuses should be seen in the broader context of security think tanks that often use the auspices of PREVENT to limit political opposition and stifle dissent, particularly with regards to Muslim voices. Indeed, the use of PREVENT by security think tanks in excluding Muslim voices from legitimate political debates is a salient driving force of institutional Islamophobia that is embedded within the application of security strategies.

³¹ Lee Jarvis and Tim Legrand, *Critical Perspectives on Counterterrorism* (Oxford: Routledge, 2015), 192.

³² Hilary Aked, "Ironically Named 'Student Rights' Group Exposed by Actual Students," *Huffington Post*, 17 December 2013.

Links to Parliamentarians and Government Ministers

Like many security think tanks, HJS maintains close ties with parliamentarians as an essential component in normalising their neo-conservative worldview across the UK political landscape. It is through this influence that security think-tanks are able to encourage and promote institutional Islamophobia, thus pushing UK governments towards repressive policy positions against Muslims and minorities.

As but a handful of examples of HJS's relationships with parliamentarians:

- In January 2015, five months before the Home Office made its first payment to HJS, Conservative MP, Damian Collins, hosted a lunch for HJS in Parliament. Collins was then a director of HJS – serving in that role from December 2010 to January 2017 – when he was replaced by Michael Gove MP.³³
- After the Home Office made its first payment to the HJS account, John Hayes, then the Minister for Security, met with HJS which he said was an “opportunity for HJS to explain their work relating to the minister's portfolio”.³⁴
- Sajid Javid had a HJS staffer, Sophie Bolsover, working as a research assistant in his office. She then became the HJS's parliamentary manager in March 2016. She left the Home Secretary's office in August 2019 and became a special adviser to the government chief whip, Mark Spencer MP.³⁵
- Eight Conservative Party MPs received benefits worth £10,798 from HJS since 2013. HJS has also provided funding to one Labour Party MP and one Democratic Unionist Party MP.³⁶
- Priti Patel received £2,500 from HJS in 2013 to fund her trip to Washington DC to be a “delegate” at a forum organised by AIPAC, as well as an HJS “programme” in the US Congress.³⁷
- MP for Surrey Heath and Education Secretary during the Trojan Horse scandal, Michael Gove, is an initial signatory to the statement of principles for HJS, and is still listed on their [website](#). Baroness Sayeeda Warsi described his policies as anti-Muslim and in line with [Trump](#). She also mentioned that the Conservative shift to the right and the ‘ukipfication’ of the party was largely down to Gove. In 2006, Gove wrote the controversial book “Celsius 7/7”, a book in which he highlights the “threat of Islamism” to Britain.³⁸ Critics [mentioned](#) the book was a “confused epic of simplistic incomprehension” and pointed out that, contrary to claims on the book's jacket that Gove was an authority on Islamist terror, he had in fact never lived or travelled in any Islamic country, knew little about Islamic history or theology, and showed no sign of having met or talked to any Muslims. Michael

³³ Mark Curtis and Matt Kennard, “Revealed: Uk Home Office Paid £80,000 to a Lobby Group Which Has Funded Conservative Mps,” *openDemocracy*, 14 July 2020.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Michael Gove, *Celsius 7/7* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2006).

Gove has since received funding directly from HJS to attend events, including £2,764 in 2016 for him and his family to [visit New York](#) to receive an award at the anniversary of the Algemeiner Journal and “attend events organised by the Henry Jackson Society”. [A year later](#), it paid him £492 for a trip to Washington DC to meet Trump administration officials, Congressional representatives, and NGOs.

- A former Labour MP and Eurosceptic, Gisela Stuart is another signatory to the HJS statement of principles and has served on its [board](#). In 2009, she became the chair for an All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Transatlantic and International Security, for which HJS was the secretariat. The APPG was one of two later dissolved after HJS refused to comply by Parliamentary rules about transparency of funding. Gisela Stuart is known for her strong opinions on foreign policy, military intervention, and anti-immigration stance. She was heavily criticised for the inconsistent messages from the Vote Leave campaign on immigration, where she was co-chair. In 2019 she mentioned that she would vote for the Conservatives despite being a member of Labour at the time. She now sits on the [Cabinet Office board](#), as well as being a non-executive board member of HJS.

Conclusions

HJS has proven **links to several far or extreme Right organisations**, including highly securitised and neo-conservative security institutes, pressure groups, and funding organisations that fund numerous groups accused of propagating Islamophobia. Many of these groups have openly cited far Right authors and research and advocated extreme ideologies, such as replacement theory, in which minorities are framed as a direct threat and conspiracies suggest that elites are engaged in a plot to replace white Western majorities. Muslims are often cast as dangerous and a 'fifth column' by these organisations, with Islam understood as anti-Western, violent, and conflated with terrorism. Immigration is often problematised and securitised by HJS and similar actors, stoking anti-migrant rhetoric.

HJS reports have used **highly problematic research approaches and methodologies**. This includes numerous accusations of 'extremism' or links to terrorism that have been used against groups or individuals – almost exclusively targeting those from Muslim communities – that have been shown to be false. HJS reports have misrepresented statements, confused groups, and conducted research shown to be lacking in fact checks and proper oversight. Those impacted by their problematic research have often had to work hard to rebuild their reputation after falsely being linked to 'extremism', as well as challenging HJS and the right-wing press that have amplified their reports through the courts. Accusations of extremism by HJS have helped to mobilise far Right actors, creating a society less safe for minorities and enabling Islamophobia and hate crimes.

Despite these concerning links and poor research practice, HJS continues to have **close links to the UK Government**, helping to shape governmental and Conservative Party policy discussions. HJS work continues to be evident in the Parliamentary Library, with reports cited in Parliamentary debates and HJS invited to policymaking discussions. Individual MPs and ministers, such as Michael Gove and Priti Patel, have received direct funding from the HJS – along with several other MPs from numerous parties – whilst public money from the UK Home Office has been spent in funding and advancing the work of the HJS. The impact of this is to **bring the far Right into the heart of the UK Government, giving greater credence and strength to Islamophobic, xenophobic, and highly securitised narratives that frame Islam and Muslims in hostile terms**.

Many civil society organisations, education institutions, unions, faith groups, academics and community groups have expressed concern at the work of HJS. Several have sought to push back against this and other security-focused think tanks by preventing HJS from speaking at events, by boycotting their work, or by actively supporting legal or other measures against accusations of extremism. It is important that these concerns about their impact are highlighted due to the intertwined nature of the current and recent UK Government with HJS, and the implications this has for democratic rights and community cohesion. If the UK Government is serious about tackling Islamophobia, discrimination, and hate crime, it is critical that it distances itself from such problematic security-focused think tanks.

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