

# The Internal Brakes on Violent Escalation: A Descriptive Typology

**FULL REPORT**

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Why do some ‘extremists’ or ‘extremist groups’<sup>1</sup> choose not to engage in violence, or only in particular forms of violence? Why is it that even in deeply violent groups there are often thresholds of violence that members rarely if ever cross?

Part of the answer will lie in the counter-measures deployed by state and non-state actors, and in other external constraints that inhibit the opportunities, capabilities and motivation of such groups to deploy violence. Yet the fact that few if any groups carry out as much violence as they are capable of indicates that in most cases external constraints comprise only part of the answer.

The basic premise of this project is that another part of the answer lies in what we call the ‘internal brakes’ on violent escalation: the intra-group mechanisms through which group members themselves contribute to establish and maintain parameters on their own violence.

Such internal brakes are often evident in detailed accounts of decision-making within groups that use or flirt with violence, yet they are rarely examined systematically. The aim of this project then was to develop a descriptive typology of the internal brakes on violent escalation that could provide a basis for more systematic analysis of such brakes.

We used three very different case studies to construct, test and refine the typology: the transnational and UK jihadi scene from 2005 to 2016; the British extreme right during the 1990s, and the animal liberation movement in the UK from the mid-1970s until the early 2000s (See Annexes A-C). Drawing across the literatures on social movements and contentious politics, terrorism studies, peace studies, and the sociology, psychology and anthropology of violence, we also undertook a review of existing research into the inhibition or

non-emergence of violence, how violence ends or declines, and intra-group dynamics during processes of escalation, de-escalation and non-escalation.

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## 1.1 THE TYPOLOGY

The typology is based around five underlying logics on which the internal brakes identified in this project operate:

- Strategic logic
- Moral logic
- The logic of ego maintenance
- The logic of out-group definition
- Organisational logic

While these logics sometimes coincide with one another, at other times they operate independently and sometimes appear even to contradict one another. Each of these underlying logics underpins a brake, which in turn is associated with a series of ‘sub-brakes’.

### BRAKE 1

*Identification of non- or less violent strategies of action as being as or more effective than more violent alternatives (strategic logic).*

- **1a.** Expressions of scepticism about their ability to beat their opponents in a violent struggle, including concerns that greater militancy will increase backlash or repression from opponents or the state towards them and their supporters.
- **1b.** Expressions of concern that violent escalation will undermine support for the group.
- **1c.** Attempts to build or maintain ties with strategically useful allies who are not supportive of violent escalation.
- **1d.** Identification of political opportunities that favour (re)adoption of non- or less violent strategies of action.
- **1e.** Identification of non- or less violent strategies of action that are perceived to be effective,

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*1 For the purposes of this project, we use the term ‘extremist groups’ to refer to those groups in which a significant proportion of members have shown a willingness to deploy or support illegal strategies of action. We intentionally adopt a broad definition as our aim is to develop a typology with broad applicability across a wide variety of groups. We are aware that this definition might be problematic in non-democratic or narrowly-democratic states where the thresholds of illegality might be very low.*

including identification of ‘sufficient’ levels of violence.

## BRAKE 2

*Construction of moral norms and evaluations that inhibit certain forms of violence and the emotional impulses towards violence (e.g., revenge) (moral logic).*

- **2a.** Articulation and performance of general moral norms and principles that problematise certain forms of violence, require violence to be justified or enable activists to forestall on entering the ‘tunnel of violence’ (e.g., the conception of violence as a tactic of last resort; positioning non-retaliation as a virtue; emphasising values such as mercy and compassion).
- **2b.** Identification of some groups of actors as illegitimate targets for violence.

## BRAKE 3

*Self-identification as a group that is either non-violent or uses only limited forms of violence (logic of ego maintenance).*

- **3a.** Production of group narratives that emphasise non-violence or the limited use of violence either by themselves or by those they claim have inspired their movement.
- **3b.** Disassociation from more violent groups or factions and/or association with less violent groups or factions.
- **3c.** (The threat of) sanctions for activists who advocate or undertake violence beyond the established parameters of the group’s action repertoire, and/or opportunities to achieve intra-group respect and prestige without undertaking or encouraging the use of violence at or beyond the parameters of the group’s action repertoire.
- **3d.** Circulation of limited expectations that they will be involved in greater levels of violence.

## BRAKE 4

*Boundary softening in relation to putative out-groups (e.g., opponents, opponents’ perceived supporters, the general public or state actors) (logic of out-group definition).*

- **4a.** Resistance to generalizations about their opponents.
- **4b.** Identification of segments of the public beyond their previously-imagined support base as potential converts to their cause.
- **4c.** Limited intra-movement pressure to ‘burn-bridges’ with social contacts outside of the movement or outside of the radical flank of the movement.
- **4d.** Expressions of reluctance to conceive of the state security forces as ‘the enemy’.

## BRAKE 5

*Organisational developments that either (a) alter the moral and strategic equations in favour of non- or limited violence, (b) institutionalise less violent collective identities and/or processes of boundary softening, and/or (c) reduce the likelihood of unplanned violence (organisational logic).*

- **5a.** Limited investment in capabilities to escalate violence, and/or development of capabilities to undertake strategies of action that either entail non- or limited violence or more controlled violence.
- **5b.** Foregrounding more modest or intermediate objectives and de-prioritising revolutionary goals.
- **5c.** Construction and maintenance of spaces in which a range of activists that includes and extends beyond the radical flank are able to freely discuss tactics and movement objectives.
- **5d.** Concerns among some group members that violent escalation will compromise their ability to shape the movement’s direction and/or negatively affect their position within it.
- **5e.** Concentration of energy on targeting movement rivals, leading to reduced capability to prosecute campaigns of violence against their external enemies.

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## 1.2 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

While there was considerable cross-case variation in terms of the distribution and effectiveness of the internal brakes – as might be expected given the case studies selected – we were able to develop a typology that, across the three case studies and the wider reference literature, enabled us to describe and categorise the practices through which group members sought to establish and maintain the parameters of their own violence.

There are important limitations with regards to how this typology might be used. Foremost among these, it should be emphasised that the typology cannot be deployed as a straightforward ‘checklist’ with which to make inferences about the risk of violence. This in part is because the (increased) presence of internal brakes within any given case might be open to a number of possible interpretations: it might indicate a limited risk of violent escalation due to extensive intra-movement opposition to such escalation, but it might also indicate that there are increasingly active attempts within the movement to escalate violence, or simply that there are growing intra-movement tensions.

We believe however that this descriptive typology can provide a vocabulary with which researchers and analysts can begin to investigate and better understand important questions about how members of extremist groups contribute to establish and maintain the limits on their own violence. Furthermore, by organising such analysis around the underlying logics on which these brakes work, it can help us to understand how the brakes work, and when and how they might be more likely to fail.

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## 1.3 PROPOSED APPLICATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH

- For academic researchers interested in the dynamics of conflict and political violence, we propose that this descriptive typology can be used to advance and stimulate research into processes of non- or limited escalation. While escalation and de-escalation have received considerable academic attention in recent years, non- or limited escalation has not.

- For security, intelligence and law enforcement practitioners working in areas of risk assessment, we propose that this typology can provide a further tool with which to identify indicators of the propensity towards *and away from* particular forms of violence by specific groups or sub-groups.
- For security, intelligence and law enforcement practitioners undertaking interventions with extremist groups, we propose that this typology can be used to inform assessments of how externally applied counter-measures might interact with, and sometimes undermine, internal brakes.

Building on this typology, we believe that particularly productive avenues for further research and analysis are likely to relate to:

- The conditions under which certain brakes, or configurations of brakes, are more or less likely to be effective.
- How the patterns and functioning of internal brakes are affected by wider conflict dynamics and vice versa e.g., how they affect and how they are affected by interactions between group members and state security services, opposition groups etc.
- How and why the distribution of brakes varies across groups and what, if anything, this tells us about their propensity for violence.
- How the internal brakes on violent escalation operate at different points within waves or cycles of conflict.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

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Why do some ‘extremists’ or ‘extremist groups’<sup>2</sup> choose not to engage in violence, or only in particular forms of violence? Why is it that even in deeply violent groups there are often thresholds of violence that members rarely if ever cross?

Part of the answer will lie in the counter-measures put in place by state and non-state actors, or in other external constraints, that inhibit the opportunities, capabilities and motivation of such groups to deploy violence. Yet the fact that few if any groups carry out as much violence as they are ostensibly capable of (Asal & Rethemeyer, 2008, p. 244),<sup>3</sup> and the fact that there is often considerable within-group variation in terms of members’ engagement in or support for violence (Jaskoski et al., 2017; Knight et al., 2017; Perlinger et al., 2016; Simcox & Dyer, 2013), indicates that in most cases external constraints comprise only part of the answer.

The premise of this project is that another part of the answer lies in what we call the internal brakes on violent escalation: the intra-group mechanisms through which group members themselves inhibit the adoption or diffusion of greater violence by other group members. Such internal brakes are often evident in detailed accounts of decision-making within groups, movements or more diffuse ‘scenes’ that use or flirt with violence, yet they are rarely examined systematically (Bjørgero & Gjelsvik, 2017; Cragin, 2014; Simi & Windisch, 2018).

The aim of this project is to provide the basis for a more systematic understanding of the internal brakes on violent escalation. To do this, we develop a descriptive typology of these internal brakes, drawing on a review of relevant academic literatures and three case studies: the transnational and UK jihadi scene from 2005 to 2016; the British extreme right during the 1990s, and

the animal liberation movement in the UK from the mid-1970s until the early 2000s (See Annexes A-C).

Our intention in developing this typology is not to downplay the importance of countermovements, state actors or the general public in shaping patterns of escalation, de-escalation and non-escalation. It is clear that the political context, the actions of countermovements and security forces, and the actions of a range of publics play a crucial role in shaping the tactical repertoires of extremist groups and of social movements more generally (Crenshaw, 1991; McAdam, 1983; Macklin & Busher, 2015; Matesan, 2018; Oliver & Myers, 2002). Neither is it our intention to dichotomise ‘internal’ and ‘external’ brakes (see discussion of this point in Section 2). What this project does seek to do, however, is provide researchers and analysts with a vocabulary and a set of concepts that they can use to interrogate in a more systematic way how activists themselves contribute to the process of establishing and maintaining limits on their own violence.

We believe that such analysis can have a number of benefits. For security, intelligence and law enforcement practitioners, our hope is that the typology will enable them to form a more complete understanding of the propensity towards and away from particular forms of violence by specific groups or sub-groups, and help them to assess how externally applied counter-measures might interact with, and sometimes undermine, internal brakes.

For researchers and analysts, our hope is that the project will enable the development of formal hypotheses about these ‘internal brakes’ – how they work, where, when, why and at what point in conflict waves – a crucial step in gaining a deeper understanding about the patterns of terrorist or extremist activities. More generally, our hope is that this typology will further encourage and enable researchers, analysts, policy makers and practitioners to engage seriously with the phenomena of non-escalation.

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<sup>2</sup> For the purposes of this project, we use the term ‘extremist groups’ to refer to those groups in which a significant proportion of members have shown a willingness to deploy or support illegal strategies of action. We intentionally adopt a broad definition as our aim is to develop a typology with broad applicability across a wide variety of groups. We are aware that this definition might be problematic in non-democratic or narrowly-democratic states where the thresholds of illegality might be very low.

<sup>3</sup> More generally, violence is scarcer than we often imagine (Chermak, Freilich & Suttmoeller, 2013; LaFree et al., 2010; Simi & Windisch, 2018) and even where violence is undertaken it might only be seen by group members as a temporary strategy (Dudouet, 2012).



The report proceeds as follows: Section 2 defines ‘internal brakes’ for the purposes of this project and sets out in more detail the scope of the project; Section 3 describes the project’s methodology; Section 4 sets out the theoretical basis of the typology; Section 5 presents the typology; and Section 6 contains our conclusions. The three case studies are attached as annexes to the report.

## READ MORE

You can download each of the three annexes individually, along with the Executive Summary.

They can all be found here: [www.crestresearch.ac.uk/internal-brakes](http://www.crestresearch.ac.uk/internal-brakes)



## 2. DEFINITION OF 'INTERNAL BRAKES' AND PROJECT SCOPE

For the purpose of this project, we use 'internal brakes' to refer to the practices through which actors who are recognised as group members seek either: (a) to inhibit directly the adoption or diffusion of more violent tactics by other group members; or (b) foment strategic decisions and (sub)cultural practices the logical consequences of which are to inhibit the adoption or diffusion of more violent tactics. This definition has a number of implications for project focus and scope:

Our analytical focus is primarily on group-level (or sub-group level) processes rather than on individual psychological processes, albeit we recognise that group and individual level processes are deeply intertwined.<sup>4</sup> The principal reason for limiting the scope in this way relates to the issue of observability, which is of importance for the future usability of the typology. Conceiving of brakes as comprising interactions between group members means that in most cases they can be observed, at least in principle, unlike individual psychological inhibitors which, by their very nature, are often more opaque processes.

Patterns of escalation, non-escalation and de-escalation, rather than the adoption of more, or less, extreme ideological positions, comprise the dependent variable. In other words, we are primarily concerned with advancing understanding of 'action pyramid' rather than the 'opinion pyramid' (McCauley & Moskalenko, 2017). While the two processes might often intersect, the relationship between them is more complex than is sometimes implied in policy, public and in some academic discourse, and it is therefore useful to distinguish between the two (Abrahms, 2011; Borum, 2011; McCauley & Moskalenko 2008, 2017).

The role of intra-group interactions in shaping the outer limits of violence is as of much interest to us as how intra-group interactions contribute to reduce the use of violence. Research into how violence 'declines', 'ends', 'subsides' or 'abates' (see Becker, 2017; Crenshaw, 1991; Cronin, 2011; Ross & Gurr, 1989) has provided some of the richest descriptions of internal brakes to date and some of the most promising insights into how they work or fail. The application of internal brakes is however often focused not on achieving de-escalation, but on the less ambitious aim of simply limiting escalation, sometimes even in the interest of sustaining violent campaigns in the long-term.

We understand escalation as a process relative to the existing action repertoire of the group under analysis. Different extremist groups have different outer limits with regards the degrees and styles of violence that they are generally willing to use, and it is quite possible that the gradient of escalation varies depending on the nature of the tactical shift.<sup>5</sup> For example, the relative scarcity of groups willing to deploy lethal force (Asal & Rethemeyer, 2008) would seem to indicate that in general the gradient of escalation – i.e., how easy or difficult it is to go from one level to the next – is greater in the shift from serious physical harm to lethal force than, say, from fist-fights to fights using non-bladed weapons. We conceive of both as escalation, however. Whether different braking mechanisms are used or are more prominent within cases characterised by lower or higher levels of violence is a question for empirical analysis; and whether it is possible to develop a descriptive typology that encompasses the internal brakes applied within groups with differing outer limits on 'acceptable' violence was one of the questions that we set out to explore through this project.

Defining group boundaries is notoriously difficult, particularly in the case of movements characterised by multiple and fluid systems of organisation and which are prone to frequent splintering, as is often the case in extremist movements or scenes. For the purpose of this project, we consider brakes 'internal' when they are applied by any actor within the broadly conceived movement. It is helpful however to think of 'internal' and 'external' in terms of degrees. Interactions within a clique are more 'internal' than interactions between

<sup>4</sup> This is apparent in analyses of individual pathways away from violence (see Bjørge, 2009; Jaskoski et al., 2017; Simi & Windisch, 2018).

<sup>5</sup> It is possible that different forms of violence – e.g., interpersonal violence versus mass casualty attacks – might be associated with quite different social and emotional dynamics (Simi & Windisch, 2018).

actors in different factions of the same social movement<sup>6</sup> organisation, which in turn are more 'internal' than interactions between actors in different groups within the wider movement. Put another way, the extent to which we might consider a brake 'internal' is a function of the extent to which the actor(s) applying the brake, Actor A, is recognised by the actor(s) to whom the brake is being applied, Actor B, as part of their group or movement.<sup>7</sup>

Brakes sometimes fail, partially or entirely. They might even produce escalation dynamics if, for example, they destabilise existing organisational systems. For the purpose of this project our primary focus is on describing the internal brakes that are applied within extremist groups, movements or scenes, rather than assessing their effectiveness. Some discussion of how internal brakes are undermined is included in the case studies, but here the focus is on the processes through which brakes are undermined, rather than on establishing or testing formal hypotheses about the conditions under which specific brakes are most likely to be effective.<sup>8</sup>

We do not include in this analysis developments within the movement culture that appear to limit violence in a way that it overwhelmingly incidental. There is for example some evidence, albeit much of it anecdotal, that patterns of violence are shaped by patterns of drug and alcohol consumption within movements (e.g., Simi & Windisch, 2018). Here, while we would count as an internal brake attempts to reduce alcohol consumption at marches if this was done in order to limit the amount of unplanned confrontation with opponents (e.g., Buser, 2016, p. 113), we would not include as an internal brake a growing predilection within the movement for drugs that tend to reduce appetite for confrontation (unless this shift was being promoted as part of a deliberate strategy to reduce confrontation).

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<sup>6</sup> *The role of infiltrators provides an interesting example of the blurring between 'external' and 'internal'. On the one hand, they are external actors. On the other hand, the fact that they are identified by group members as part of the group means that where they seek directly to inhibit violent escalation their actions function as internal brakes.*

<sup>7</sup> *The role of infiltrators provides an interesting example of the blurring between 'external' and 'internal'. On the one hand, they are external actors. On the other hand, the fact that they are identified by group members as part of the group means that where they seek directly to inhibit violent escalation their actions function as internal brakes.*

<sup>8</sup> *Factors likely to be relevant to such hypotheses have been explored in the literature on the decline of terrorism. Cronin (2009), for instance, describes six scenarios where terrorism ends: loss of leadership; negotiated transition to peaceful politics; transition into other forms of violence and war-fighting; fulfilment of primary objectives; failure of primary objectives, marginalisation, isolation and irrelevance; physical destruction by state forces. One potentially productive avenue of investigation would be to examine how the internal brakes described within this project are applied and play out within Cronin's 'scenarios' and inverse scenarios. Research into individual level processes of de-escalation and non-escalation are also likely to prove relevant to the development of such hypotheses, see e.g., Bjørgo & Horgan (2014); Cragin (2014). The literature on why mass-scale violence has not occurred even when conditions seem ripe or when armed groups dissolve or transform into different forms of political expression is also likely to be relevant for developing such hypotheses, see e.g., Chirot & McCauley (2006); more broadly still on the limits on violence by armed groups and war, see e.g., ICRC (2018).*

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## 3. METHODOLOGY

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The typology presented in this report is based on a review of relevant theoretical and empirical literatures and three case studies. To develop the typology we followed a three-phase process.

In Phase 1 we undertook a survey of the literatures on social movements and contentious politics; terrorism studies; peace studies; and the sociological and psychological processes of violence. Within these literatures we identified publications that deal specifically with the inhibition or non-emergence of violence; that detail how violence ends or declines; and deal with intra-group processes within contexts of escalation, de-escalation and non-escalation. From this literature review, we generated an initial coding framework for the case studies.

In Phase 2, we developed and undertook an initial coding of the three case studies. This was done using the initial coding frame generated in Phase 1. It was also done by coding-up from the case studies i.e., by identifying and seeking to describe practices that could be described as ‘internal brakes’, and using this to critically interrogate the initial framework and generate additional codes.

Phase 3 comprised an iterative process of typology development and refinement. Here, the case studies were used to further interrogate the emergent typology; the emergent typology and comparison across the three case studies were used to shape our interpretation of each case study; and further engagement with the theoretical literature was used to refine categories within the typology. The typology went through fifteen iterations in total.

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### 3.1 CASE SELECTION, DATA AND ANALYSIS

Case study selection was based on a ‘most-different case comparative strategy’ (della Porta, 2013, pp. 25-29), with the groups selected representing a diverse range of ideologies, actors, aims and action repertoires (see below).<sup>9</sup> There were two main reasons for choosing such different cases. First, to enable us to interrogate the broad applicability of the typology. Second, and relating in particular to the selection of case studies with very different levels of violence, we were mindful of calls for research that broadened the variable beyond terroristic forms of violence (Freilich, Chermak, & Gruenewald, 2015), and concerns that ‘theories, derived largely from examples of groups that turned to violence, may tend generally to over-predict violence’ (Karagiannis & McCauley, 2006, p. 324).

**The jihadi case** provides an example of an ostensibly religious movement that promotes and applies lethal violence, albeit some actors within the movement engaged in efforts to manage the parameters of that violence. This case study has two empirical focal points. The first was on how actors within the UK (al-Muhajiroun and a network of friends convicted of planning acts of terrorism in 2016) responded to efforts to expand the scope of violence spearheaded by the so-called Islamic State (IS). While al-Muhajiroun publicly embraced more radical forms of violence, within the network of friends some members began to question the validity and efficacy of tactics displayed by IS. This part of the case study uses secondary academic literature pertaining to al-Muhajiroun in the UK, and court transcripts of private discussions online involving members of the network of friends.

Reflecting the transnational dimensions of the jihadi movement, the second empirical focal point of the case study comprised global debates within the jihadi milieu, with a focus on the al-Qaeda leadership’s efforts to instil caution about violent escalation during this period. This part of the case study is based on public statements (speeches, press releases and other media outreach) from the al-Qaeda leadership between 2001 and 2016, and internal correspondence from within al-

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<sup>9</sup> Several other case studies were considered, including extreme left groups, environmentalist groups, anti-abortion groups, paramilitary groups in Northern Ireland, and the suffragists. All, doubtless, would provide useful insights. We assessed, however, that the three cases selected provided us with a good spread in terms of ideology and in terms of the scale and intensity of violence. They were also case studies for which we either already had or were aware that we could quickly gain access to extensive material with which to develop the case study.

Qaeda's inner circle dating from 2005, when concerns were expressed about the tactical direction taken by IS's predecessor organisation, al-Qaeda in Iraq, and from the period immediately preceding the raid on Usama bin Ladin's compound in Pakistan in May 2011.

**The extreme right case** provides an example of mobilisation around a racial-nationalist ideology where, while there is significant interpersonal violence, lethal violence is rare and the period under analysis is characterised by a significant attempt to shift away from violence towards orthodox political campaigning. The specific empirical focus of the case is on the British National Party (BNP) during the 1990s as it strove to achieve electoral legitimacy whilst simultaneously struggling to contain the actions and growing influence of its own radical flank – Combat 18 (C18) – which the BNP itself had initially formed to defend the party from a direct action campaign against it by Anti-Fascist Action (AFA).

While further escalation did take place within the radical flank, here too there were observable limits on violence, with actions that exceeded established parameters of 'acceptable' violence provoking intra-movement opposition, disillusionment and disengagement. Where higher levels of violence did take place, it was largely directed at targets within the movement and served to reduce the capacity of the group to prosecute violence against opponents.

The extreme right case is based upon a survey of the secondary academic literature, extreme right publications, activist memoirs, journalistic accounts of the groups in question, contemporary newspaper reports, television documentaries, and an interview with an anti-fascist activist (Respondent B1) active during the period. Efforts to secure an interview with a former C18 activist within the project's timeframe proved unsuccessful.

**The animal liberation movement** case focuses on the radical flank of the wider animal rights movement, characterised by their willingness to use illegal forms of direct action in order to advance campaigns for animal rights. This case study provides an example of what might be termed a single issue movement. The evolution of the Animal Liberation Front (ALF) is central to this case study, as are the campaigns carried out under other organisational banners, such as the Animal Rights

Militia and the Justice Department, which entailed escalation beyond established repertoires of action.

What makes this case study interesting for our purposes is the apparent ambivalence of the case. While positioning itself as a non-violent movement and exhorting activists to take all reasonable measures to avoid harm to living beings, members of the movement have still perpetrated acts of violence, including serious property damage and intimidation, which have undoubtedly caused physical and psychological harm to both human and non-human animals. Yet escalation beyond the established tactical repertoire has been rare, even when state repression has significantly inhibited the availability of non- or less violent avenues for action (Ellefsen, 2016; Monaghan, 2013).

The animal liberation case study is based on secondary academic literature, journalistic accounts of the movement, contemporary media reports, television documentaries, activist memoirs, movement publications, and interviews with two former animal liberation activists (Respondents C1 and C2) and an academic expert (Respondent C3).

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### 3.2 TWO IMPORTANT LIMITATIONS AND CHALLENGES

Two important limitations and challenges should be acknowledged. As set out above, the primary focus of this project has been on the development of the descriptive typology of internal brakes on violent escalation, rather than on making a substantial contribution to empirical knowledge and understanding of the case studies in and of themselves. This is reflected in the limited generation of new data e.g., through interviews or analysis of video footage. It is likely however that further interview data and analysis of video footage (or ethnographic observation or social media analysis were there an accessible contemporary case study) would have provided us with more opportunities to explore the application and operation of internal brakes. This is particularly the case in relation to what, in Section 4, we describe as the two inner levels of analysis: analysis of internal brakes during processes of action planning and within the contexts of actions, where our reliance primarily on secondary sources has meant that we have at times had limited material for analysis, and where it

is more difficult at times to distinguish straightforward recollections of events as they played out from attempts at post hoc justification for the courses of action pursued.

A second issue concerns interpretation of the data. Statements by activists in which they distance themselves from violence or encourage fellow activists to limit their use of violence usually play to more than one audience. It is often difficult to discern the primary intentions behind the statements that are made, and indeed the extent to which some statements are intended to be acted on directly by fellow activists at all. Violence might simply be denounced in order to reduce scrutiny from the state security forces, for example.<sup>10</sup>

As noted above, there is also a temporal challenge with regards to interpretation. Actors re-construct and re-narrate past events partly as a function of present and future plans, often infusing their accounts of the past with their current beliefs and interests. How do we ensure, for example, that accounts of past events that describe apparent braking mechanisms are not simply post hoc rationalisations for what has happened, or attempts by activists to position themselves in the present as moral actors? While there is no easy solution to these interpretive challenges, we sought to mitigate them by ensuring that the case studies each span several years, draw on multiple and in most cases triangulated sources, and also sought as far as possible to identify data within each case study that corresponded to decision-making processes themselves, rather than relying only on subsequent explanations of decision-making processes.

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<sup>10</sup> Similar issues arise in analyses of violent escalation. For example, it is often difficult to distinguish expressions of genuine intent to escalate violence from forms of 'institutionalized bluster and threat' (Collins, 2008, p. 348).

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## 4. BUILDING THE TYPOLOGY: THREE BASIC THEORETICAL IDEAS

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Drawing on the literature survey and the case studies, we developed the typology around three basic theoretical ideas: (1) that there are in most cases discernible logics to violence and non- or limited violence; (2) that braking processes can occur at greater or lesser proximity to the potential act of violence; and (3) that doing violence, in particular face-to-face violence, is not something that comes easily to most people.

It is the first of these that is foregrounded in the typology that we present below, providing the underlying structure around which the typology is organised. Nonetheless, the other two basic theoretical ideas also inform the analysis and discussion and, as noted in the conclusion, would appear to have the potential to be developed further to produce a multi-dimensional typology. As such, in this section we elaborate briefly on each of these basic theoretical ideas.

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### 4.1 THE LOGICS OF NON- OR LIMITED VIOLENCE

There are almost always discernible logics in decisions to use or not use, escalate or de-escalate violence. This is not to say that such decisions necessarily look ‘logical’ from the standpoint of an external observer – as Crenshaw (1996, p. 251) points out ‘misperception’ and ‘misconception’ can play as much of a role in decision-making as ‘accurate appreciation of conditions’. Furthermore, the logics of violence and non-violence are unlikely to be consistent, even

within one organisation or campaign. Different actors within an organisation might have different ambitions and interests and might interpret differently the range of political opportunities as they unfold (e.g., della Porta & Tarrow, 1986). The logics of violence will also evolve over the course of the conflict. For example, ‘[a]fter a campaign of terrorism starts, psychological pressures and organizational politics’ might ‘encourage the continuation of violence even if it becomes counterproductive in an instrumental sense’ (Crenshaw 1996, p. 259). What is important for our purposes, however, is that there are discernible logics to the decisions made by actors within extremist groups about which tactics to use. The internal brakes on violent escalation work on these logics.

We identified five intersecting logics.<sup>11</sup>

**Strategic logic** relates to the basic question of ‘what works?’ or ‘how best can we achieve our objectives?’ This is perhaps the most prominent of the four types of logic within the academic literatures on decision-making in radical, extremist or insurgent groups. As several contributors to these literatures point out, the prominence of such logic challenges assumptions sometimes made about the ideologically-driven nature of decision-making in such groups. Dudouet (2012, p. 102), for example, notes that

*Although rebel leaders are often perceived as stubborn and intransigent ideologues, all ‘insider experts’ consulted for this research stressed the rationality of the decision-making process, in which strategic or pragmatic leaders constantly reassess the ends and means of insurgency in the light of an evolving environment.*<sup>12</sup>

**Moral logic** relates to questions about whether it is right to use violence, or particular forms of violence, against specific targets – what Matesan (2018) refers to as the ‘logics of appropriateness’. While much of the research on meso-level processes of the escalation and de-escalation of violence emphasises the strategic

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<sup>11</sup> We take the position that ideology informs, and in turn adapts to, each of these logics, but does not comprise a distinct logic in and of itself. As such, we do not identify a specific internal brake relating to ideology. However, ideology and the way group members frame their struggle can clearly be seen to inform a number of the brakes and sub-brakes described below. We believe that this helps to inhibit over-reliance on a concept, ‘ideology’, which is often made to do a considerable amount of analytical work, and enables us to get closer to understanding the underlying social and psychological processes through which the brakes work. In other words, this is not to exclude ‘ideology’ from the analysis, but rather to include it in a way that we believe does not lead to an overdependence on ideology as an explanatory variable.

<sup>12</sup> Dudouet (2012, 102).

logics that underpin such decisions, research into the experiences of those who have participated, or contemplated participation, in campaigns of violence, make clear that questions of appropriateness are also given considerable consideration.<sup>13</sup> Such considerations can form significant barriers to violence and, where logics of appropriateness are broken, can also form a source of remorse and moral discomfort that might ultimately lead to disengagement with the group or scene in question (M. Collins, 2011; Crenshaw, 1996; Simi & Windisch, 2018).

These moral logics sometimes align with strategic logics, particularly where utilitarian assessments are made about how violence or non-violence might contribute to campaign outcomes. However, moral logics can also contradict strategic logics. Where a group comes to equate more radical strategies of action with greater effectiveness, for example, moral qualms might lead group members to resist the temptation to use such violence even though they perceive it to be strategically expedient. Conversely, where group members continue to believe in the legitimacy of violence but assess that violence has become too costly or that there are non-violent alternatives this might available give rise to situations in which groups ‘disengage from violence behaviourally’ but do not ‘denounce armed action or give up all military capabilities’ (Matesan, 2018, p. 10; see also Clements, 2015).

As might be expected, there is some evidence that internal brakes are more likely to be effective and durable when the strategic and moral logics that underpin them are aligned (Ashour, 2008; Matesan, 2018; Annex B, this report). This idea is also present in Schmid’s (2014) distinction between non-violent and ‘not-yet-violent’ groups.

**The logic of ego maintenance** is one of two logics that relate to the processes of identity construction and negotiation that have been observed to be central to the diagnostic, prognostic and motivational aspects of mobilisation (Benford & Snow, 2000; Blee, 2012, pp. 52-80; Polletta & Jasper, 2001; Snow & Byrd, 2007). The logic of ego-maintenance relates specifically to the

construction and maintenance of in-group identities – to the ‘who are we?’ and ‘who am I?’ questions. Where group members perceive themselves to be part of a group that uses only limited or no violence at that point in time, they are less likely to be drawn to, or even consider, violence even where there appears to be a realistic prospect that violence, can render some form of strategic gain (Busher, 2018; Wolfgang & Ferracuti, 1967). As Asal & Rethermeyer (2008, p. 245) observe, ‘[s]ome organizations choose not to kill’ simply because ‘it does not fit with their view of themselves’. When a group’s behaviour does not align with members’ view of themselves, it is likely that some members will experience feelings of disappointment or disillusionment (e.g., Bjørgo, 2011; M. Collins, 2011). As such, the adoption of tactics from out-with of the group’s established tactical repertoire carries risk for the organisation and for those who instigate the tactical innovation.

Such processes of identity maintenance often coincide with moral logic. In most groups, members construct themselves as good or righteous people struggling for a noble cause (Jasper, 2007). Yet the logics of identity do not always coincide with moral logics in a straightforward way. For example, activists might have no moral objection to the use of a particular tactic, but nonetheless not consider it something that they would do, perhaps as a result of role specification within the wider movement. Identity maintenance might also forestall the requirement for moral reasoning: moral evaluations of certain courses of action become unnecessary when those courses of action are not (seriously) conceived of anyway.

**The logic of out-group definition**, relates to how group members answer the ‘who are they?’ questions. Boundary ‘activation’ – the processes through which social interaction is focused around specific us-against-them narratives – has repeatedly been observed to play a central role in shaping the evolution of conflict (Alimi et al., 2015; della Porta, 2013; Tilly, 2004). Where boundaries are activated and hardened, essentialised us-against-them categories and concomitant feelings of fear and hate can be used to justify and mobilise

<sup>13</sup> Indeed, ‘virtuous violence’ theory (Fiske & Rai, 2015) proposes that most violence is ultimately done for moral reasons i.e., most violence is not due to a ‘breakdown’ of morals but because it becomes, from the perspective of the perpetrator, morally appropriate, even necessary, to enable them to constitute or sustain critical relationships. Of relevance to our project, they also emphasise the importance of emergent group norms in this process: ‘People hurt and kill because they feel that they should; if their own primary reference groups make them feel they shouldn’t be violent, they won’t be’ (Fiske & Rai, 2015, p. 285, emphasis in the original).



violence against those defined as the Other, particularly where the Other can be constructed as an existential threat (Chirot & McCauley, 2006). Conversely, forms of boundary softening, complexification or suppression are likely to inhibit the use of violence (Chirot & McCauley, 2006; Fiske & Rai, 2015; Tilly, 2004; Wimmer, 2013).

Processes of boundary hardening and softening both reflect and shape moral and strategic logics. For example, certain opponents might be identified as possible future allies, and therefore as unsuitable targets for violence, for what are initially strategic reasons. Subsequently however, as the decision not to target these actors is justified to group members the boundaries might be discursively transformed: as well as strategic reasons, those proposing that these hitherto opponents might comprise future allies might also emphasise characteristics that they have in common. In doing so, subsequent decisions not to target those opponents with violence might also work at least partly on moral logics or the 'logics of appropriateness'.

**Organisational logic** refers to processes through which organisational developments condition decision-making. Organisations acquire and generate their own logics which might constrain, channel or otherwise affect the choices of its members (see especially Crenshaw, 1991; Shapiro, 2013). While group members will almost always have some opportunities to pursue alternate strategic pathways,<sup>14</sup> organisations are characterised by at least some degree of path dependency. As organisations, and the individuals that comprise them, plan and undertake actions, they develop relevant capabilities, forge collective identities, and acquire tactical habits and tastes, all of which contribute to make certain future courses of action more or less likely (Blee, 2012, pp. 35-37). For example, as a group invests in developing or maintaining capabilities, they are more likely to conceive of and deploy tactics that utilise those capabilities (Matesan, 2018), and where group protocols state that certain forms of action should not be used within a specific context, they are

less likely to be used even if group members perceive strategic advantages in using those forms of action.

Attention to how organisational developments condition decision-making can enable us to understand how strategic, moral, and identity-based logics can become institutionalised, and also how they can at times seemingly constrain the operation of other logics. A classic example of the latter is provided by Allison's (1969) 'Conceptual models and the "Cuban Missile Crisis"', which sets out how an organisation's rehearsed standard operating procedures can result in inappropriate measures being adopted in non-standard situations.

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## 4.2 THE PROXIMITY OR DISTANCE OF INTERNAL BRAKES TO THE ACT OF VIOLENCE

Internal brakes on violent escalation can be applied at a greater or lesser distance from the potential act of violence. To articulate this idea we draw on, and invert, the idea of the 'structuration of violence' used by Waddington, Jones & Critcher (1989) in their analysis of public disorder and 'flashpoints'. We conceive of the brakes being applied at one of three levels of proximity to the potential act of violence (Figure 1):

A) **The level of campaign planning**, where activists are engaged in more general processes of issue definition, strategy development, positioning, alliance formation, recruitment and management;

B) **The level of action planning**, where activists are taking decisions about targets for a specific action, considering logistics, planning how they will manage the action, deciding whether or not to inform or engage with public authorities about their plans, ruling out certain courses of action and so forth;

C) **The situational level**, during the action, where the activists interact with one another either directly (talking to one another, giving instructions, disciplining

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<sup>14</sup> Even with terrorist groups it can be possible for them to 'maintain their integrity and organizational continuity while abandoning terrorism' (Crenshaw, 1996, p. 250).

one another etc.), or indirectly (communicating with one another symbolically, example setting etc.)

Braking processes can have their ‘origins’ at any of these three levels. We do not conceive of any of the three levels as comprising a ‘primary “location” of causality’ (Malthaner, 2017, p. 9; see also R. Collins, 2008, pp. 360-369). While the plans for a specific action are likely to be shaped by strategic priorities defined by organisational leaders, direct or vicarious experience of action on the ground also impacts in multiple ways upon plans for subsequent actions and campaigns. This might be in the form of tactical lessons learned; moral intuitions that are brought into focus through activists’ experiences during and after the action; reflection on who did and who did not participate or collaborate in the action, and so forth. As Malthaner (2017, p. 8) notes with regards to processes of escalation, ‘preceding confrontations reshape subsequent encounters in a pattern of adaptation resulting from past experiences.’ Indeed, initial motivations might even fade into the background over time as the conflict becomes increasingly focused on elements deeply rooted in the confrontation itself, such as humiliation, attempts to save face, or a desire for revenge (Crenshaw, 1988; Scheff, 1994). This same argument applies to

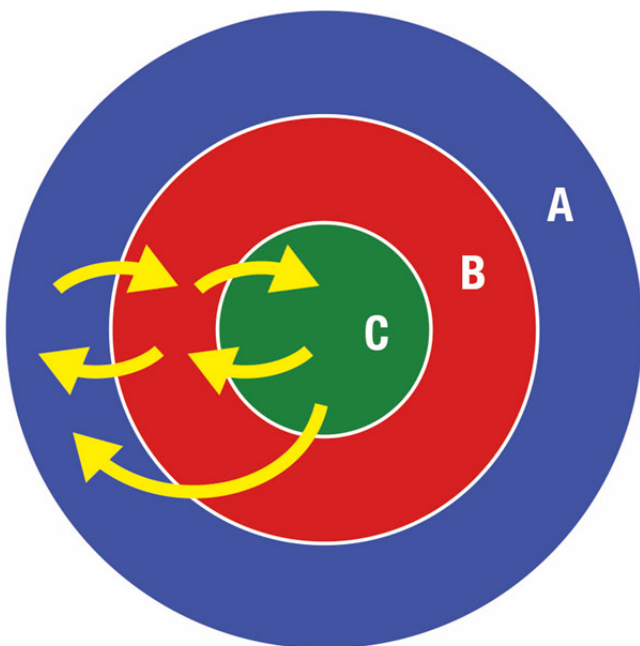
the dynamics of non-escalation, and is represented in Figure 1 through the arrows between the three levels.

As we developed the typology of the internal brakes on violent escalation, we were attentive to these multiple levels of proximity to the potential act of violence in two ways. First, in the case studies we have sought as far as possible to trace how brakes operate across and derive from practices at each of these levels. Second, since existing research that explores the multi-level dynamic of escalation indicates that the situational dynamics of violence can in some cases be ‘independent from (or even conflict [...] with)’ processes at the campaign level (Malthaner, 2017, p. 7), we sought to interrogate how, if at all, the internal brakes on violent escalation manifest and operate differently across these three levels.

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### 4.3 THE UNDERLYING DIFFICULTY OF DOING VIOLENCE

Contrary to a popular assumption, violence is not something that human beings generally find easy to do. Face-to-face violence appears to be particularly difficult to carry out. What Randall Collins (2008) calls ‘confrontational tension and fear’ makes attempts to carry out such violence rare, and often characterised by



#### KEY

- A. Campaign planning
- B. Action planning
- C. Situational level

Arrows indicate how decisions at one level of proximity to the act of violence affect decisions at other levels.

Figure 1. Three levels of proximity to the potential act of violence

incompetence. Those who do carry out violence must find a pathway around such confrontational tension and fear (R. Collins, 2008; Nassauer, 2016).

Similarly, the adoption of lethal force has been observed to require forms of ‘moral disengagement’ that are difficult to achieve and sustain (Bandura, 1986), even in subcultures where inter-personal violence is not only accepted but a source of prestige and sometimes part of the attraction. Simi & Windisch, for example, in their analysis of why individuals within white supremacist subcultures in the USA do not undertake greater violence, observe, ‘[c]ontrary to the common perception that extremists are “crazy” individuals determined to kill as many innocent bystanders as possible, our data suggest extremists struggle with the idea of taking another person’s life’ (2018, p. 14). One striking example from their research illustrates how, even where individuals might ostensibly be prepared for and be at the point of carrying out an attack, such psychological barriers to violence can still manifest:

*I knew this would have been the largest act of its kind in U.S. history. That’s part of why I thought we were supposed to do it, because we knew that it would have an impact. I don’t think I realized how huge until I actually got into the church with the bomb, and saw the people, and saw the damage that could occur. It hadn’t hit me yet. But once it hit me, yeah, it hit me. Being that close, there was no denying my life changed at that point. In my heart, at that point, [my group] died. (Simi & Windisch, 2018, p. 14).*

Recognising how difficult, or at least stressful, it is for humans to do violence to other humans is important as we consider how the internal brakes on violent escalation work. It is likely to be relatively rare to find individuals or groups that find it easy or morally unchallenging to undertake violence, particularly over a sustained period of time, unless there is a moral logic that enables them to construct that violence as appropriate, or even necessary (Fiske & Rai, 2015). As such, while violence might sometimes proceed from an apparent appetite or enthusiasm for violence (e.g., Meadowcroft & Morrow, 2017), we believe, following Randall Collins, that (a) this is most likely to be the case for certain relatively choreographed forms of violence, and (b) often violence might be better understood as

proceeding from the inability of the actors involved to identify a pathway away from violence that would not entail a loss of face (R. Collins, 2008, especially 337-369).

This has important implications because it moves us beyond the standard concepts of ‘intent’ and ‘capability’ usually used in terrorist threat assessments (see e.g., CSIS, 2018; Schuurman & Eijkman, 2015), to also think about the opportunities individuals or groups have to avoid or to exit the ‘tunnel of violence’ (R. Collins, 2013) and what those exit routes might look like.

## 5. A TYPOLOGY OF THE BRAKES ON VIOLENT ESCALATION

Building on Section 4, this section sets out the descriptive typology of internal brakes on violent escalation. The typology is based around five brakes each of which we conceive of as relating primarily to one of the logics of violence or limited violence set out in Section 4.1.

**Table 1. The five internal brakes and associated logics**

| Brake | Description  | Braking logic        |
|-------|--|----------------------|
| 1     | Identification of non- or less violent strategies of action as being as or more effective than more violent alternatives.  | Strategic            |
| 2     | Construction of moral norms and evaluations that inhibit certain forms of violence and the emotional impulses towards violence (e.g., revenge).  | Moral                |
| 3     | Self-identification as a group that is either non-violent or uses only limited forms of violence.  | Ego maintenance      |
| 4     | Boundary softening in relation to putative out-groups (e.g., opponents, opponents' perceived supporters, the general public or state actors).  | Out-group definition |
| 5     | Organisational developments that either (a) alter the moral and strategic equations in favour of non- or limited violence, (b) institutionalise less violent collective identities and/or processes of boundary softening, and/or (c) reduce the likelihood of unplanned violence. | Organisational       |

Each of these brakes is in turn associated with a series of what we describe as sub-brakes. These are summarised in Table 2, and explained in detail below.

**Table 2. The internal brakes on violent escalation and associated sub-brakes**

| <b>Brake 1: Identification of non- or less violent strategies of action as being as or more effective than more violent alternatives.</b> |  |
|---|--|
| Sub-brakes  | 1a. Expressions of scepticism about their ability to beat their opponents in a violent struggle, including concerns that greater militancy will increase backlash or repression from opponents or the state towards them and their supporters. |
|   | 1b. Expressions of concern that violent escalation will undermine support for the group.   |
|   | 1c. Attempts to build or maintain ties with strategically useful allies who are not supportive of violent escalation.  |
|   | 1d. Identification of political opportunities that favour (re)adoption of non- or less violent strategies of action.   |
|   | 1e. Identification of non- or less violent strategies of action that are perceived to be effective, including identification of 'sufficient' levels of violence.   |

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Brake 2. Construction of moral norms and evaluations that inhibit certain forms of violence and the emotional impulses towards violence (e.g., revenge)  |   |
| Sub-brakes   | 2a. Articulation and performance of general moral norms and principles that problematise certain forms of violence, require violence to be justified or enable activists to forestall on entering the ‘tunnel of violence’ (e.g., <i>the conception of violence as a tactic of last resort; positioning non-retaliation as a virtue; emphasising values such as mercy and compassion</i> ). |
|  | 2b. Identification of some groups of actors as illegitimate targets for violence.   |
| <b>Brake 3. Self-identification as a group that is either non-violent or uses only limited forms of violence.</b>  |   |
| Sub-brakes   | 3a. Production of group narratives that emphasise non-violence or the limited use of violence either by themselves or by those they claim have inspired their movement.   |
|  | 3b. Disassociation from more violent groups or factions and/or association with less violent groups or factions.  |
|  | 3c. (The threat of) sanctions for activists who advocate or undertake violence beyond the established parameters of the group’s action repertoire, and/or opportunities to achieve intra-group respect and prestige without undertaking or encouraging the use of violence at or beyond the parameters of the group’s action repertoire.  |
|  | 3d. Circulation of limited expectations that they will be involved in greater levels of violence.   |
| <b>Brake 4. Boundary softening in relation to putative out-groups (e.g., opponents, opponents’ perceived supporters, the general public or state actors)</b>   |   |
| Sub-brakes   | 4a. Resistance to generalizations about their opponents.  |
|  | 4b. Identification of segments of the public beyond their previously-imagined support base as potential converts to their cause.  |
|  | 4c. Limited intra-movement pressure to ‘burn-bridges’ with social contacts outside of the movement or outside of the radical flank of the movement.   |
|  | 4d. Expressions of reluctance to conceive of the state security forces as ‘the enemy’.  |
| <b>Brake 5. Organisational developments that either (a) alter the moral and strategic equations in favour of non- or limited violence, (b) institutionalise less violent collective identities and/or processes of boundary softening, and/or (c) reduce the likelihood of unplanned violence.</b> |   |
| Sub-brakes   | 5a. Limited investment in capabilities to escalate violence, and/or development of capabilities to undertake strategies of action that either entail non- or limited violence or more controlled violence.  |
|  | 5b. Foregrounding more modest or intermediate objectives and de-prioritising revolutionary goals.   |
|  | 5c. Construction and maintenance of spaces in which a range of activists that includes and extends beyond the radical flank are able to freely discuss tactics and movement objectives.   |
|  | 5d. Concerns among some group members that violent escalation will compromise their ability to shape the movement’s direction and/or negatively affect their position within it.  |
|  | 5e. Concentration of energy on targeting movement rivals, leading to reduced capability to prosecute campaigns of violence against their external enemies.  |

## 5.1 BRAKE 1

*Identification of non- or less violent strategies of action as being as or more effective than more violent alternatives.*

Brake 1 works on strategic logics, in which we include considerations both about anticipated campaign/action success and about the potential personal costs of violent escalation. The application of this set of brakes can be about emphasising the effectiveness of less violent strategies of action<sup>15</sup> or emphasising the limited effectiveness and/or potentially high costs of violent escalation. As violence is almost always used alongside other strategies of action, the application of these brakes often relates to concerns about how greater or more widespread violence might undermine the group's ability to effectively carry out other activities and maintain relationships that are perceived to be important to the group's pursuit of its goals (Kruglanski & Fishman, 2009, p. 37). Where this is the case, the idea of violence being 'counter-productive' might be deployed (see examples in each of Annexes A-C).

### Brake 1a

*Expressions of scepticism about their ability to beat their opponents in a violent struggle, including concerns that greater militancy will increase backlash or repression from opponents or the state towards them and their supporters.*

Physical violence is rarely undertaken by people who anticipate that they will lose (R. Collins, 2008).<sup>16</sup> It is perhaps unsurprising therefore that one of the most prominent internal brakes relates to the prospect of losing at violence. This might be expressed in terms of failing to achieve organisational objectives, in terms of the potential personal costs of violent escalation for them as individuals or for their supporters (see Annexes A and C), or as a combination of both. Examples of brake 1a can be found during campaign planning, action planning and at the situational level. For example, former animal liberation activists (Respondents C1 and C2) recalled how activists would often discourage violent escalation during an action by warning fellow

activists that they were 'going to get nicked' or that they were 'going to get us all nicked'.

Scepticism about their ability to 'win' at violence can focus on the apparent capabilities of non-state opponents or on the prospect of state backlash and repression. One of the reasons why a substantial component of the British extreme right moved away from the use of violence in the 1990s was that it became clear that they were less effective at doing violence than their anti-fascist opponents (Annex B). Meanwhile, Simi & Windisch (2018, p. 8) note that one of the reasons why mass casualty violence is often seen as counter-productive by white nationalist activists in the USA is that it will attract 'unwanted attention from law enforcement'. Such perceptions can be based on direct experiences, or vicarious experience as activists seek to draw lessons from the experiences of other groups (e.g., (McCauley 2008, p. 269).

Brake 1a can be temporary. In some cases groups might simply not see themselves as being ready to prosecute an effective campaign of violence. For example, opposition to the use of violence among Irish Republicans during the Irish liberation struggle in the 1880s was based on the view that they were ill-prepared at that time for the backlash that they expected from the British, but did see violent struggle as a potentially viable strategy at some point in the future (Crenshaw, 1996, p. 255). Similar arguments can be found within the jihadi case study in the context of discussions about target prioritisation (Annex A).

### Brake 1b

*Expressions of concern that violent escalation will undermine support for the group.*

While some groups might use violence as a recruiting tool (Ligon et al., 2015; Meadowcroft & Morrow, 2017), this usually works only to attract a relatively small number of militants. Yet most groups also require wider bases of support, at least some of whom are unlikely to support high levels of violence. As the Marxist revolutionary Carlos Marighella (1969, p. 60) observed: 'One of the permanent concerns of the urban

<sup>15</sup> Non-violent campaigns are often more successful than violent campaigns in achieving their political goals (Abrahms, 2006, 2011; Stephan & Chenoweth, 2008; Chenoweth & Schock, 2015)

<sup>16</sup> In some cases groups use violence to provoke a backlash from state actors and/or opponents with the intention of undermining the credibility of those actors in the eyes of the public. In such cases however those seeking to provoke a backlash usually anticipate that they will ultimately triumph.

guerrilla is his identification with popular causes to win public support.’ Emphasising the importance of achieving or sustaining support among these publics can be deployed as a brake on violent escalation, with the adoption of greater violence often presented as being counter-productive in efforts to build such support.

For example, jihadi militants who had been involved in the civil war in Algeria (1991-2002) warned colleagues involved in more recent campaigns of the risk of losing public support through excessively violent tactics (Annex A). Similarly, in Northern Ireland, one Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) commander claimed that the leadership decided against planting car-bombs because the resultant loss of public support would have been ‘a political disaster for the aims of the struggle’ (quoted in Shapiro, 2013, p. 6). As Fiske & Rai (2015, p. 273) argue, ‘more often than not, violence in one relationship undermines or jeopardises most other relationships.’

When the imagined constituencies of potential support overlap with their opponents’ support base, brake 1b might be particularly effective because it disincentivises target widening to the enemies’ support base – something that might serve to inhibit dynamics of ‘cumulative extremism’ or ‘reciprocal radicalisation’ (Carter, 2017). Rosenhaft (1982, cited in Crenshaw, 1996, p. 254), for example, argues that one of the reasons why the German Communist Party did not adopt terrorist strategies in the 1930s was that ‘they also hoped to attract some of the Nazi rank-and-file and feared that the use of terrorism would make this impossible.’ Here brake 1b intersects with brakes 4b and 4a).

Brake 1b is likely to be most effective when public opposition to violence is clearly stated (Matesan, 2018, p. 5; see also Kennedy, 2011). Brake 1b is arguably least likely to be in evidence or effective among groups that ‘have no desire for an earthly constituency’ (Crenshaw, 1988, pp. 15-16). However, it is worth noting that there are likely to be relatively few cases in which there is no desire for an earthly constituency. For example, even in the jihadi case study used in this project – seemingly an example of a group that might have limited interest in achieving an earthly constituency – concerns about

public support were in fact prominent in the strategic thinking of at least some within the al-Qaeda leadership.

### **Brake 1c**

*Attempts to build or maintain ties with strategically useful allies who are not supportive of violent escalation.*

The reasons for pursuing or maintaining these ties might be varied, including tapping in to their resource or support base; achieving a veneer of respectability or using them to protect them politically, militarily or physically from their opponents.<sup>17</sup> The extent to which this brake is effective is likely to depend at least partly on the extent to which the desired ally is willing to tolerate any further escalation of violence.

In some cases, attempts to build such relationships can entail significant displays of commitment to limit or reduce violence. As part of their attempt to build international alliances ‘[t]he ANC even committed itself in 1980 to observe the Geneva Protocol relating to irregular warfare’ (Dudouet 2012, p. 99). Similarly, as part of their efforts to ‘garner support both internally and internationally ... the KLA [Kosovo Liberation Army] issued an internal directive instructing its members to “commit liberation acts with a just character, and not attack socio-cultural monuments, civilian population and subjects of importance for the life of the people”’ (Dudouet 2012, p. 99).

### **Brake 1d**

*Identification of political opportunities that favour (re)adoption of non- or less violent strategies of action.*

Research on the dynamics of political violence indicates that diminished prospects for achieving successes in political arenas encourages the adoption of more violent strategies of action (Alimi et al., 2015, pp. 24-58). Conversely, where activists identify the opening up of political opportunities this can alter the balance of intra-movement strategic and tactical debates in favour of prioritising strategies of action that use non- or limited violence. The animal liberation case study provides a case in point. Here, one of the factors that

<sup>17</sup> For example, one of the reasons why the ANC rejected violence was because of concerns that neighbouring states would deny ANC activists sanctuary if they did not (Howe 1989, 174).

appears to have contributed to a lull in violent action during the late 1990s was the circulation of perceptions within the animal liberation movement that the incoming/new Labour government would be more supportive of the cause of animal rights and would enact legislation to inhibit animal exploitation (Annex C). Similarly, in the early 1990s perception within the extreme right milieu of growing public support for overtly anti-immigration and anti-immigrant positions encouraged and enabled the BNP leadership to shift the focus of the organisation away from a march-and-grow strategy towards concerted electoral campaigning.

While this brake is clearly conditioned by developments external to the group, what is important from the ‘internal brakes’ perspective is the identification or construction of political opportunities by group members – how they ‘frame’ the emergent political opportunities (Benford & Snow, 2000). Brake 1d is identified primarily at the level of campaign planning.

### Brake 1e

*Identification of non- or less violent strategies of action that are perceived to be effective, including identification of ‘sufficient’ levels of violence.*

Activists’ identification of specific non- or less-violent strategies of action as ‘successful’ can serve to build support for such strategies and undermine support for violence (Matesan, 2018). For example, while part of the reason for the BNP’s innovation away from violence was the realisation that they were unable to ‘out-violence’ their anti-fascist opponents, the ability of ‘modernisers’ to build support within the movement was enhanced by the identification of the potential of interventions such as their ‘Rights for Whites’ campaign to exploit perceived political opportunities (Copsey, 2011).

Similarly, in the animal liberation movement in the early 1980s, the perceived effectiveness of mass daytime ‘invasions’ of laboratory, facilities in terms of building public support and intensifying legal and economic pressure on those laboratories quickly spawned similar actions across the country and a brief shift away from clandestine activities. The tactical shift was curtailed

however when such invasions resulted in mass arrests (Nagtzaam, 2017, p. 71).

A variation on this brake is the identification of what are deemed ‘sufficient’ levels of violence in order to achieve their objectives. For example, activists might identify that only a relatively low level of violence is required to disrupt an opponent’s event or to intimidate their opponents, and that incurring the risks of escalation beyond this level is unnecessary (e.g., Annex B). Such logic can contribute to the decision to abandon violence altogether if an organisation accomplishes its goals (Crenshaw, 1996; Cronin, 2011).

We would expect brake 1e to be less likely to be effective the lower the perceived availability of non-violent avenues of dissent. As Piazza (2017, p. 102) observes, strategies of state repression that ‘close off’ such avenues of dissent are often associated with an ‘increase [in] the amount of domestic terrorism a country faces’.<sup>18</sup>

Whereas brake 1d was identified primarily at the campaign planning level, brake 1e is found at all levels of proximity to the potential act of violence.

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## 5.2 BRAKE 2

*Construction of moral norms and evaluations that inhibit certain forms of violence and the emotional impulses towards violence (e.g., revenge).*

Brake 2 and the associated sub-brakes work on moral logics or the ‘logic of appropriateness’ (Matesan, 2018, p. 6). Brake 2 manifests at the campaign and action planning levels and at the situational level. Moral positions might be set out formally in organisational communiqués, but are also produced less formally as group members forge and negotiate emergent group and sub-group norms.

One of the ways in which this brake is evident is through the expression of and reference to emotions, and in particular to what might be referred to as moral emotions (Jasper, 2011). At the levels of campaign planning and action planning, this can include expression of emotions such as shame, guilt and regret

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<sup>18</sup> Some non-violent strategies, such as civil disobedience, might persist in the face of state repression for a time because they work in part by shaming those who undertake the repression, but such strategies are only likely to be effective within particular relational configurations (Fiske and Rai, 2015, pp. 278-281).



relating to previous actions, providing an example of the sort of feedback loops described in Section 4.2.

Norms regarding non-violence or the limited use of violence are often conditional. As Karagiannis & McCauley (2006, p. 328) observe, '[h]istory records few groups with an unconditional commitment to non-violence; most groups will justify violence under some circumstances.' Fiske & Rai (2015, pp. 35-41) argue that in general violence is most often deemed justifiable when it is used for the purposes of defence, punishment and vengeance. The conditionality of these brakes and the potentially malleable nature of the moral reasoning that underpins them, is often made apparent when the strategic (brake 1) and organisational (brake 5) logics become more conducive to violence.

### **Brake 2a**

*Articulation and performance of general moral norms and principles that problematise certain forms of violence, require violence to be justified or enable activists to forestall on entering the 'tunnel of violence' e.g., the conception of violence as a tactic of last resort; positioning non-retaliation as a virtue; emphasising values such as mercy and compassion.*

General moral norms that problematise violence or particular forms of violence are often ostensibly rooted in movement 'ideologies' or 'worldviews', and those who seek to apply such brakes will often make reference to basic ideological precepts. Karagiannis & McCauley (2006) for example describe how prominent actors within Hizb ut-Tahrir in Uzbekistan used theological reasoning to resist the adoption of violence. Similarly, Taylor (1998, p. 2) describes how in radical environmentalist networks, activists' general 'moral perception of the kinship and sacred value of all life' is used to suppress the adoption of violence against persons.

The moral norms are rarely unconditional, however. Indeed, one of the ways in which they often function is by setting out the conditions under which violence would be legitimate. To use the example of Hizb ut-Tahrir in Uzbekistan again, Karagiannis & McCauley note that the theological reasoning used to inhibit the adoption of violence does not prohibit resistance against foreign invaders and entailed that the adoption of violence would be justified if it was ordered by the Caliph. One of the implications of this is that radical

flank actors might seek to demonstrate how the conditions for legitimate violence have already been met. In the animal liberation case, for example, some radical flank actors sought to use forms of just-war theory to justify violent escalation (Annex C), while in the jihadi case study some militants claimed that the emergence of IS and its self-declared caliphate provided the structures through which a just war could legitimately be declared (Annex A).

General moral norms and principles also work by providing ways in which individuals or groups can avoid violence without losing face. For example, in a situation in which non-violence or non-retaliation can be conceived of as a virtue, or as the enactment of some higher principle, not responding to violence with greater violence can be constructed and experienced as a form of moral victory. Restraint might, for example, act as a symbol of movement and individual 'discipline' or might serve as a symbol of their 'dignity' in the face of what activists believe are the efforts of their opponents to humiliate them (Busher, Giurlando & Sullivan, 2018). At the micro- or situational level, this can take the form of practices such as activists telling one another not to 'stoop to the level' of their opponents.

### **Brake 2b**

*Identification of some groups of actors as illegitimate targets for violence.*

The appropriateness or otherwise of violence always depends partly on who the targets are. Even in the cases of seemingly indiscriminate violence, the attackers usually provide some justification for the location and target of the attack. Conversely, some groups of actors might be identified as illegitimate targets for violence. In 2013, for example, the current leader of al-Qaeda went so far as to draft a document titled 'General guidelines for the work of a jihadi' listing particular groups, including relatives of combatants, who could not be targeted (Annex A).

The identification of certain actors as being illegitimate targets can derive from evaluations about their culpability for the supposed problem – as with the concept of 'innocents'. It can also derive from evaluations of whether or not they pose a threat (here brake 2b intersects with brake 2a and notions of mercy and compassion). There might also be categories of actors who are conceived of as being 'off limits' based

on general moral precepts e.g., that one shouldn't attack 'women or children' (see Annex B), established conventions or legal distinction enshrined in international law e.g., prisoners of war, non-combatants etc. Therefore, the particular configuration of groups considered not to be deserving of violence will depend on a combination of ideology and risk analysis.

Where violence is done to what are deemed illegitimate targets, this can be particularly damaging to movement morale and cohesion, and might produce moments of cognitive dissonance that can lead to individual activists or groups of activists disengaging from the group. In the extreme right case study, for example, vicious attacks against women and against non-militant members of opposition movements, or against fellow activists, provoked moral crises among activists (Annex B).

Actors who seek to broaden their targeting will usually seek to develop a justification for doing so. For example, jihadi militants have at various points in time sought to justify seemingly indiscriminate attacks with reference to scriptural evidence that the Prophet's armies used weaponry and tactics that were—in principle—indiscriminate within selected boundaries, such as siege engines, thus setting a legal precedent for their interpretation of modern equivalents; or by presenting civilians as combatants by proxy, by virtue of their status as tax-payers or citizens indirectly supportive of hostile regimes (Annex A).

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### 5.3 BRAKE 3

*Self-identification as a group that is either non-violent or uses only limited forms of violence.*

Brake 3 works through the logics of ego maintenance. As described in Section 4.1, these might overlap with and sometimes combine moral and strategic logics. This is not always the case, however. Groups might not oppose violence in and of itself but at the same time not see themselves as an organisation that undertakes (higher levels of) violence. This might happen, for example, where there are processes of specialisation within the wider movement. Brake 3 might also be used to obviate the need for brakes 1 or 2: it might be less risky, or simply less time-consuming, to say 'we don't do things like that' than it is to open up extensive

conversations about the strategic pros and cons of violent escalation.

While brake 3 is about ego maintenance, it can however still be temporary: a group might not see itself as engaging in violence at a particular point in time, but this need not necessarily preclude it from doing so in the future, under different circumstances. See, for example al-Muhajiroun's eventual dismissal of the 'covenant of security' it purported to respect within the UK (Annex A). Similarly, a group might not identify as a group that uses violence in the present, but still be proud of previous campaigns of violence.

Brake 3 can be found at all three levels of proximity to the potential act of violence. At the campaign planning level it might manifest as formal or quasi-formal statements about the group's identity and core values. At the action-planning level it might manifest as references by group members back to such statements, but also operates more informally through processes of socialisation and the everyday enactment of group identities (especially brakes 3c and 3d).

When brake 3 is internalised, it is likely that group members will not even seriously consider escalating violence (e.g., brake 3d). This is why brake 3 is also closely associated with the fallout that we often observe when there is sudden escalation beyond established repertoires of action. Such events produce crises within activist communities because they undermine, even shatter, their sense of collective identity, provoking in some activists feelings of disillusionment and even disgust. When the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (IS), for instance, undertook large-scale violence against Muslims, based in part on sectarian reasoning and its willingness to 'excommunicate' allegedly insincere believers, this enraged, shocked or confused other jihadi militants, both local and transnational (Annex A).

In each of the case studies, brake 3 comes to particular prominence when activists are seeking to distance themselves from other groups with which they are being compared by opponents, government, the media or within other public discourse.

**Brake 3a**

*Production of group narratives that emphasise non-violence or the limited use of violence either by themselves or by those they claim have inspired their movement.*

There are two basic ways in which activists produce group narratives that emphasise their identity as a group committed to non- or limited forms of violence. The first of these is to emphasise non-violence or restraint in accounts of their own actions. Here, incidents in which activists could have done greater violence, but chose not to, were of particular rhetorical value. For instance al-Zawahiri used his eulogy of his predecessor as leader of al-Qaeda, Usama bin Ladin, to emphasise how merciful the latter had been, sparing the lives of enemy combatants whom he could easily have ambushed (al-Zawahiri, 2011). Similarly, in the animal liberation case, activists' accounts of laboratory raids often emphasised how they had taken care to minimise the risk of harm to human or non-human animals (e.g., Mann, 2007, p. 626). Whilst such accounts are directed partly at external audiences, they also serve movement socialisation processes, shaping emergent ideas about what is 'appropriate' and what is 'good'. Such stories of restraint are likely to circulate both in formal or semi-formal accounts of the movement (memoirs, newsletters, communiqués etc.) and through more informal channels such as movement gossip.

The second way in which activists produce group narratives that emphasise their identity as a group committed to non- or limited forms of violence is by situating their struggle within a longer historical tradition of non- or limited-violence, tracing the lineage of their campaign back to groups or individuals who espoused non-violence or only espoused the use of violence under very specific conditions. In the animal liberation movement, for example, claims and calls to uphold principles of non-violence were often made by invoking figures associated explicitly with non-violence, such as Ghandi and Martin Luther King Jr, as sources of inspiration for the movement (Annex C). Similarly, in the late 1990s and early 2000s Hizb ut-Tahrir in Uzbekistan sought to inhibit activists' adoption of violence by conceiving of their struggle at that time as an imitation of the second phase of the progress of the Prophet Muhammad – the phase of Islamisation – which, according to their particular historic interpretation, precludes the use of violence

unless it is in defence of Muslim lands (Karagiannis & McCauley, 2006, pp. 325-9).

Activists who seek to steer the group towards greater use of violence might challenge such versions of the movement's historical narrative through construction of an alternate narrative based around different historic reference points. For example, within the animal liberation movement, radical flank actors attacked what they saw as their fellow activists' reverence for Ghandi and instead emphasised historical parallels with movements such as the suffragists, who did deploy violence, albeit only within a limited repertoire.

Once group narratives of non-violence or limited violence have been significantly compromised it can be a long and difficult process to reconstruct such narratives. Kaplan (1995, p. 128) describes for instance how the killing of Dr David Gunn in 1993 by Michael Griffin 'made a decisive break with the pro-life rescue movement's 20 year history of non-violent protest against abortion in America. That act opened the floodgates to other violent attacks on doctors, and brought to public notice a violent splinter sect of the larger millenarian subculture dedicated to the "rescue" of the unborn.'

**Brake 3b**

*Disassociation from more violent groups or factions and/or association with less violent groups or factions.*

Association and disassociation with other groups and/or subcultures is a central part of how any group defines and understands itself (Berbrier, 2002). The motivations for such processes often combine strategic and moral considerations. The outcomes however can have significant implications for activists' self-image, particularly as such association and disassociation becomes culturally embedded within group practices (Busher, 2018). By extension, they can also serve as an important brake on violent escalation by in effect committing activists to pursue strategies of action that support their attempts to distance themselves from or approximate themselves to other groups or factions (Chermak, Freilich & Suttmoeller, 2013). This brake is perhaps most apparent where activists define themselves in contrast to other more violent groups or factions. This places pressure on activists to articulate and demonstrate how they are distinct from the group

with which they are disassociating, often through the condemnation of their violence. This is evident in each of the case studies.

Within a group or movement, members of one faction might also disassociate from or threaten to disassociate themselves from other factions that they believe are using or are planning to use greater or new forms of violence. This is most likely to be effective as a brake when it also works on emergent concerns about building and sustaining support (brake 1b) e.g., when those threatening to disassociate themselves from the group might take with them a significant support base.

Processes of association and disassociation can happen gradually as group members find themselves becoming ideologically and strategically aligned with different actors over time. High profile events often provide a focal point for such processes, however. For example, in the aftermath of terrorist attacks, such attacks are often condemned by groups that otherwise share ostensibly similar ideologies and goals. See for example the condemnation of the attacks on New York and Washington of September 11, 2001, by Jalaluddin Patel, then leader of Hizb ut-Tahrir in Great Britain (Karagiannis & McCauley, 2006, p. 235) or the condemnation of Anders Behring Breivik by English Defence League activists in the wake of his attacks (Busher, 2016, pp. 106, 159). While their opponents in particular are liable to question whether such acts of disassociation are made in good faith, they can nonetheless shape activists' understandings of the parameters of legitimate force and serve as important symbols in the subsequent evolution of the group's self-image.

Similarly, processes of association or comparison with groups characterised by less violence can serve to orientate group norms towards less use of violence. Where such association is made with specific groups, Brake 3b overlaps with brake 1c. Group members might also associate with more general or abstract categories. For example, Busher (2016, pp. 113-114) describes how EDL activists' identification as 'ordinary English people' placed an onus on activists to conduct their protests in what they considered to be a respectable manner, and Simi & Windisch (2018, p. 15) describe

how the adoption of mass casualty violence by white nationalist actors was partly inhibited by the disjuncture between their own identification as fundamentally 'normal' people and their perception of mass casualty violence as 'sociopathic'.

### **Brake 3c**

*(The threat of) sanctions for activists who advocate or undertake violence beyond the established parameters of the group's action repertoire, and/or opportunities to achieve intra-group respect and prestige without undertaking or encouraging the use of violence at or beyond the parameters of the group's action repertoire.*

The application of social sanctions<sup>19</sup> and rewards play a fundamental role in shaping understanding of what is and what is not acceptable within a given (set of) social contexts (Mead, 1934). This basic theoretical insight is highly relevant to understanding how the social limits on violence are established and maintained. Where violence is a source of social prestige, individuals are more likely to engage in and make a show of engaging in violence (Fiske & Rai, 2015, p. 285; Jaskoski et al., 2017, p. 11). Conversely, where violence attracts social sanctions, particularly from their peers, individuals are likely to minimise their use of violence.

Sanctioning group members who exceed established parameters of acceptable violence both disincentivises breach of those norms and helps to reinforce those norms – thereby serving to establish and maintain 'codes' of (limited or non-) violence (Copes et al., 2013). Similarly, promoting or demonstrating in other ways respect for individuals who advocate for more moderate tactical approaches can send powerful signals to group members about the value placed on such approaches, and undermine the emergence of a social hierarchy that privileges (higher levels of) violence over other strategies of action.

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<sup>19</sup> E.g., reprimands, demotion, limiting their opportunities for future promotion, questioning their moral fibre, exclusion from future activities or decision-making processes etc.

**Brake 3d**

*Circulation of limited expectations that they will be involved in greater levels of violence.*

People are less likely to undertake violence if they expect to lose; they are more likely to expect to lose if they are ill-prepared for violence; and they are more likely to be ill-prepared for violence if they do not expect violence or do not expect it to exceed certain parameters upheld during previous encounters. Conversely, where people anticipate violence they are more likely to prepare for it and more likely to identify in the actions of others what they perceive to be signs of forthcoming confrontation (Malthaner, 2017).

In the extreme right case, even on the radical flank, there was an expectation that violent confrontation with anti-fascist opponents would involve a ‘tear up’ but nobody would be killed (Lowles, 2014, p. 18). In the animal liberation case this brake can be seen operating in the way that hunt saboteurs anticipated and prepared for different levels of violent confrontation across different local hunts based on previous encounters with hunt supporters and the intra-movement circulation of anecdotes about these encounters.

Brake 3d highlights the importance of feedback loops across different levels of proximity to the potential act of violence. Where group members have only experienced a limited degree of violence in confrontations with opponents and state security forces, they are less likely to expect greater levels of violence at subsequent encounters and are therefore less likely to prepare for greater levels of violence. In doing so they in turn inhibit the range of violence that they are able to perform during their next encounters. It also makes them less likely to perceive in the actions of their opponents or the state security forces signs of greater violence to come. Intra-group conversations also shape expectations about the amount of violence that they are likely to encounter during forthcoming actions, largely as a function of how their plans for those events are developed: e.g., discussions about whether they will seek to provoke greater levels of violence; retaliate if

provoked; how many of them will be attending; who will be attending, and so forth

**5.4 BRAKE 4**

*Boundary softening in relation to putative out-groups (e.g., opponents, opponents’ perceived supporters, the general public or state actors).*

Brake 4 works on the logic of out-group definition. We understand ‘boundary softening’ to comprise the inverse of the processes of boundary activation and boundary hardening, which are often associated with dynamics of radicalisation (Tilly, 2003, 2004). Whereas boundary activation entails the focus of interactions around an increasingly narrow range of us-against-them narratives, boundary softening entails an increasingly complex and nuanced understanding of identity and the breaking down of clear distinctions between ‘us’ and ‘them’ such that, ultimately, ‘there is no clear definition of an “other” that cannot or should not be converted to the cause’ (Asal & Rethemeyer, 2008, p. 248). Boundary softening can leave group members comparatively more open to engagement or dialogue with opponents, state actors and the sections of the public that they might previously have considered only as a pool of latent support for their opponents. Boundary softening might also make them less inclined to target such actors with violence either due to strategic calculations (brake 1) or because it would compromise the logic of appropriateness (brake 2).<sup>20</sup>

Processes of boundary softening might be observed within the strategic or moral debates taking place at campaign or action-planning levels. They might also emerge through activists’ lived experience and their interactions with people outside their group. For example, through their interactions with opponents, activists might come to differentiate between different sets of opponents and/or state actors, and might even come to identify points of common ground between themselves and some of their opponents. As such, brake 4 can emerge at any of the three levels of proximity to the potential act of violence.

<sup>20</sup> While violence is sometimes carried out against the nominal in-group, this is usually done explicitly as punishment as part of the disciplinary process, and those carrying out the violence will usually be at pains to make clear why those on the receiving end of violence constituted, at least temporarily, part of an out-group e.g., of traitors, or of those who had let the group down or put its mission in danger.

### Brake 4a

#### *Resistance to generalizations about their opponents.*

The de-humanization and essentialisation of one's enemies have been identified as important enablers of violence (Leader Maynard & Benesch, 2016; Chirot & McCauley, 2006, pp. 81-87). By resisting generalizations about their opponents, group members can hinder such processes, giving rise to more nuanced assessments about the effectiveness or appropriateness of violence, in turn creating opportunities for the application of brakes 1b, 1c, 1e and, in particular, 2b.

In the jihadi case, for example, al-Qaeda leaders' challenging of straightforward sectarian categorisation of legitimate targets (al-Zawahiri, 2005; Rahman, 2005) created a requirement for further moral and strategic deliberation regarding targeting. In the extreme right case, distinctions made by some activists between far left militants and far left newspaper sellers precipitated a moral crisis for individuals after they attacked some of the latter (Lowles, 2014, p. 69). In the animal liberation movement, resistance to generalization about opponents is institutionalised as part of the ALF Credo.

In some cases activists might even identify potential future allies among their ostensive opponents, thereby further disincentivising violence against those actors or those closely associated with them. Karagannis & McCauley (2006, p. 236), for example, describe how Hizb ut-Tahrir in Uzbekistan 'concentrated its propaganda against President Karimov, while avoiding any extensive criticism against the armed forces' and in doing so ensured that 'a window of opportunity stays open for the group to approach members of the armed forces at a later stage'.

Resisting generalizations about their opponents can also serve to make group members less likely to see their opponents as an existential threat because it makes them less likely to overestimate their opponents' ability to harm them: where one perceives opponents to comprise multiple groups with competing interests and dispositions one is more likely to perceive ways in which they might be undermined or defeated. This can reduce the prevalence and intensity of the type of existential fears within the group that might be used to mobilise violence, and again create opportunities for the application of brakes such as 1e and 2b.

### Brake 4b

#### *Identification of segments of the public beyond their previously-imagined support base as potential converts to their cause.*

Where activists identify segments of the public beyond their established support base as potential supporters, they are less likely to target them with violence. As Asal and Rethemeyer (2008, p. 248) explain, '[i]f members of the general population are viewed as potential converts to the cause ... then the organization will have an incentive to be discriminating in its killing. If there is a clear dividing line between members and "others" ... then ideologically there is no reason to discriminate when killing'.

This brake intersects with brake 1b. As discussed there, it is likely to be particularly effective when there is substantial overlap between the perceived support base of the group and the perceived support base of their opponents. When this is the case, targeting the opponents' supporters would also entail targeting their own potential community of supporters, and so would carry high strategic, and potentially also moral, costs (Stanton, 2015, p. 899), thereby also creating opportunities for the application of brake 2b.

Brake 4b can emerge from activists' assessment of empirical evidence or a priori from the categories through which they conceive of the world and their place within it. The extent to which group members do or do not conceive of sharp boundaries between themselves and the general public is likely to reflect the extent to which they find their views and the interpretive frames through which they understand the world articulated within more nominally mainstream discourses (Asal & Rethemeyer, 2008, p. 248; Kaplan 1995).

In some cases such boundary softening between activists or militants and the 'masses' might also derive from fundamental philosophical principles e.g., about the importance of movements being inclusive or being led by 'the people' (Crenshaw, 1996, p. 252). Where this is the case, a shift towards vanguardism and the formation of militant cells can potentially expose the radical flank leaders to criticism from within the wider movement as they can be construed as failing to uphold the underlying principles of the movement, thereby

creating opportunities for the application of brakes 3 and 2.

#### Brake 4c

*Limited intra-movement pressure to ‘burn-bridges’ with social contacts outside of the movement or outside of the radical flank of the movement.*

In most radical social movements, as with religious movements and sects, it is common for new recruits to loosen social ties with contacts outside the movement to some degree (Bjørge, 1998, 2009; Lofland & Stark, 1965; Wasmund, 1986). The greater the degree of loosening or cutting ties – of ‘burning bridges’ – with contacts external to the group the greater members’ social and emotional dependencies on the group will be. This can facilitate processes of intense socialisation (Bjørge, 2009; Simi & Windisch, 2018, p. 11), increasing the degree to which their interpretation of the world around them will be shaped by the group; reducing personal obligations outside the group that could serve to undermine commitment to the group; and reducing the threat of being apprehended – all of which can favour violent escalation.

Limiting intra-movement pressure to burn bridges can inhibit these processes, curtailing ‘the distorting influences of isolation’ (Ackerman, 2003, p. 145). For example, where group members are not put under pressure to sever external ties they are more likely to be exposed to the opinions and, often, the critiques of the wider communities from which the group draws its support.<sup>21</sup> Knight et al., (2017, p. 8) provide some evidence for the importance of the maintenance of these ties, noting that within their sample ‘[s]ignificantly more V[iolent] E[xtremists] [than non-violent extremists] had deliberately disconnected from certain others.’

Groups are less likely to apply substantial pressure on members to loosen or sever their external ties when they do not identify as being strongly distinct from the broader communities from which they draw their support, or when they do not perceive a substantial infiltration risk.<sup>22</sup>

#### Brake 4d

*Expressions of reluctance to conceive of the state security forces as ‘the enemy’.*

One of the arenas out of which radicalisation dynamics can emerge is the relationships between activists and state security forces (Alimi et al., 2015; Asal, Schulzke & Pate, 2017). Particularly under conditions of significant repression by the state, activists might come to see the state and the state security forces as opponents (della Porta, 1995; Earl & Soule, 2010).

This dynamic can be inhibited where there is an expressed reluctance within the group for such a shift to occur. Such reluctance might relate to strategic logics. Confrontation with state security forces carries substantial risks both in terms of attracting repression (relating to brake 1a) and undermining public support (relating to brake 1b) – in most liberal democracies confrontation with the state security services is likely to result in significant reputational damage among moderates and the general public.

Reluctance to conceive of the state security forces as the enemy might also have ideological roots in some cases. For example, within much of the European extreme right, perception of the security forces as the enemy has been inhibited by perceptions of their underlying structural legitimacy. Even when state security forces are perceived to be acting unfairly, this is sometimes bracketed out by conceiving of individual members as acting out of duty, or even compulsion, rather than ideological conviction (Busher, 2013). Such ideological positions make it broadly inappropriate to target state security forces (brake 2b).

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## 5.5 BRAKE 5

*Organisational developments that either (a) alter the moral and strategic equations in favour of non- or limited violence, (b) institutionalise less violent collective identities and/or processes of boundary softening, and/or (c) reduce the likelihood of unplanned violence.*

<sup>21</sup> Kennedy (2011) highlights how strong ties outside of gang networks can be used to reduce gang violence, and Fiske & Rai (2015, pp. 269-275) also emphasise the importance of ‘cross-cutting ties’ in constraining conflict more generally.

<sup>22</sup> Conversely, bridge-burning is usually particularly intense in clandestine groups (della Porta, 2013).

Brake 5 works on organisational logics. As set out in the title of this brake, it relates to organisational developments that alter moral and/or strategic equations, institutionalise developments pertinent to brakes 3 and 4, or reduce the likelihood of unplanned or uncontrolled violence.

The effectiveness of brakes 5a-5d are all likely to be associated with the effectiveness of organisational leadership. We would expect brakes 5a-5d to be less effective in organisations experiencing 'leadership deficits' (Abrahms & Potter, 2015), or where groups explicitly adopted strategies of leaderless resistance (Chermak et al., 2013).

#### **Brake 5a**

*Limited investment in capabilities to escalate violence, and/or development of capabilities to undertake strategies of action that either entail non- or limited violence or more controlled violence.*

Brake 5a interacts with a number of other brakes. Perhaps most clearly, it works with brake 1e: where groups continue to invest in or seek to enhance their capabilities to undertake non-violent actions or actions that use only limited violence, then those actions are more likely to be carried out effectively, and group members are more likely to perceive themselves capable of carrying out such strategies of action.

Brake 5a can also work with brake 3 and with other elements of brake 1. As highlighted above, violence usually comprises only part of an organisation's tactical repertoire. Continuing to invest in the development of capabilities to undertake non-violent actions or use only limited violence can inhibit shifts towards a group identity in which violence is more prominent. This in turn places pressure on group members to ensure that other areas of activity are not compromised by the violence of radical flank actors, and serves to bolster the position of more tactically moderate actors within the movement (brake 3c). For example, for the ANC the armed struggle was, between 1961 and 1990, conceived of as just one of four 'pillars of struggle', thereby ensuring that the use of targeted violence was not placed above other strategies of action (Dudouet, 2012).

While investment in violent and non-violent capabilities are not necessarily a zero-sum game, in some cases investment in strategies of action requiring non or limited violence does lead the group, whether by design or default, simply not to be 'particularly competent' at practicing violence or escalating it further (Asal & Rethemeyer, 2008, p. 245).

Groups that either seek not to use violence during their actions or who seek to use only limited or controlled violence might also develop capabilities that enable them to manage or control violence. Violence at demonstrations, for example, often occurs when activists suddenly have somebody in front of them that they can inflict violence upon as a result of a perceived vulnerability i.e., the sudden breaking down of a line, someone (an opponent, a police officer) falling down etc. leading people to rush forward and release their tension and apprehension through violence (Nassauer, 2016, p. 515) – an instance of what Randall Collins (2008, 83-133) calls 'forward panic'. Groups might seek to reduce the likelihood of such unplanned violence in a number of ways, including by putting event stewards in place; appointing individuals to liaise with the police before and during the event; monitoring alcohol and drug use among activists; or by training activists not to 'over-react' during periods of provocation (by opponents or state security forces) or panic (e.g., Busher, 2013; Waddington et al., 1989).

In some cases an increased ability to control their violence can entail an apparent paradox: groups can reduce the amount of violence they carry out against civilians or non-combatants by developing capabilities that enable them to carry out more targeted and effective violence against their opponents. In Asal et al's analysis of the impact of technical expertise with regards to improvised explosive devices (IEDs) on patterns of violence carried out the Provisional IRA (PIRA), they find for example that 'technical expertise within a brigade allows for careful IED usage, which significantly minimizes civilian casualties (a specific strategic goal of PIRA) while increasing the ability to kill more high value targets with IEDs' (2015, p. 401).



**Brake 5b**

*Foregrounding more modest or intermediate objectives and de-prioritising revolutionary goals.*

It is clear that revolutionary or ‘anti-system’ goals or frames do not always result in violence. Framing theory suggests however that ‘militant and anti-system frames’ can lend themselves to violent escalation (Karagiannis & McCauley, 2006, p. 324) because they encourage boundary hardening, encourage actors considered part of ‘the system’ to be conceptualised as part of ‘the problem’, and are well suited to the formulation of claims that the ends justify the means (thereby undermining the potential effectiveness of brake 2).

Conversely, the de-prioritisation of revolutionary goals and the foregrounding of more modest or intermediate objectives (reduced migration rather than forced repatriation; improved conditions for farmed animals rather than the complete abolition of animal farming; winning elections; getting a particular mosque/synagogue/laboratory closed down etc) can inhibit violent escalation by, for example, making groups more likely to seek to operate within, even if ultimately aiming to transform, existing legal and political systems (thereby creating opportunities for the application of brake 4d), or making groups more likely to contemplate forging alliances of convenience with other groups with whom they might not previously have collaborated (thereby creating opportunities for the application of Brakes 1b, 1c, 1d, 1e, 3b, 3c, 4a and 4b).<sup>23</sup>

Such foregrounding of more modest or intermediate objectives might be inspired, at least initially, by pragmatic evaluation of the strategic opportunities available, as exemplified by the BNP’s shift towards electoral politics in the 1990s (Annex B). It might also be associated with processes of ideological restructuring. In Nepal, for example, a ‘major ideological shift around 2001’ resulted in Maoists moving from a position of ‘seeking a communist one-party system to embracing competitive multi-party democracy’, which ‘reoriented their programme towards introducing a new constitution, electing a new constituent assembly, and establishing a republic’ (Dudouet, 2012, p. 102).

**Brake 5c**

*Construction and maintenance of spaces in which a range of activists that includes and extends beyond the radical flank are able to freely discuss tactics and movement objectives.*

Spaces such as discussion boards, forums, magazines, meetings etc that enable free and open discussion among a range of activists that includes but extends beyond the radical flank can help to anchor radical flank actors into wider movement cultures. Critically, they can also expose them to reticence within the wider movement about violent escalation. In some cases this can foment the kind of ‘prolific intra-movement debate’ and ‘a culture of discourse’ that, Ackerman (2003, p. 145) argues, ‘can blunt or stall any momentum towards violence within the movement.’

It is likely that this brake will be more effective the greater the extent to which these spaces allow for critical and open discussion of tactics, and the greater the extent to which they attract activists from across the movement (i.e., they do not exclude or only attract activists from the radical flank).

Such spaces might not be created with the objective of inhibiting violent escalation. In the case of the animal liberation movement, for example, Arkangel magazine was established by some of the more tactically radical members of the movement ostensibly as a means of achieving greater cross-movement unity. However, more moderate activists repeatedly used (and were allowed to use) the publication to challenge the adoption of more violent strategies of action and to criticise these tactics when they were deployed. In doing so they helped to maintain group norms that cast such tactics as illegitimate or inappropriate, relating back to aspects of brakes 2 and 3.

We might expect such spaces to be more commonly generated and maintained where activists perceive themselves to have wider constituencies with which to engage, implying potential synergies between this brake and brakes 1b, 4b and 4c.

<sup>23</sup> Such combinations of brakes might have contributed to the pattern of violence observed by Chermak et al., (2013, p. 207) in which ‘Groups that focused on local issues were significantly less likely to be involved in violence compared to groups that had a broader, national agenda’.

#### **Brake 5d**

*Concerns among some group members that violent escalation will compromise their ability to shape the movement's direction and/or negatively affect their position within it.*

Any significant change in action repertoire has the potential to alter intra-movement relations. Movement elites in particular might seek to resist violent escalation if they perceive that escalation is likely to undermine either their position within or their ability to shape the movement (Crenshaw, 1996, pp. 255-257). In the extreme right case study, the BNP leadership identified that their investment in violent capabilities via the initial formation of C18 had not only tarnished their political capital but disrupted their organization and weakened their own ability to control their party. Having belatedly learned this lesson, Tyndall and his lieutenants made no further effort to re-invest in the party's physical capabilities (Annex B).

conflict saps energy and when it gives rise to outbidding dynamics.

#### **Brake 5e**

*Concentration of energy on targeting movement rivals, leading to reduced capability to prosecute campaigns of violence against their external enemies.*

Intra-movement rivalries are a common feature of most movements. In some cases such rivalries can give rise to radicalisation dynamics where competing factions become engaged in processes of outbidding (e.g., De Fazio, 2014). In some cases however they can act as a brake on violent escalation because the concentration of their energies upon internal movement rivals reduces the capacity and commitment of activists to focus their violence and aggression against external enemies (Simi & Windisch, 2018, p. 13).

In the UK context, despite its pretensions as a revolutionary national socialist group, Combat 18 became increasingly consumed by internal feuding and score settling, its violence increasingly directed at internal targets rather than external enemies, leading to a fratricidal murder and the group itself falling apart (Annex B).

One question for future consideration concerns the conditions under which this type of intra-movement

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

The objective of this project was to develop a descriptive typology of the internal brakes on violent escalation, that is, of the mechanisms through which group members seek to establish and maintain limits on their own violence and that of their fellow activists. In particular, we wanted to assess the possibility of developing a typology that can be used across a range of movements grounded in different ideologies and deploying different tactical repertoires, with varying degrees of violence.

We assess that it is possible to develop such a typology. As might be expected, we found that the distribution and prominence of brakes varied both across and within the three primary case studies used to develop and test the typology. For example, in the jihadi case study, concerns about public support (brake 1b) and constructions of morality (brake 2) are particularly prominent. In the extreme right case study, while moral brakes (brake 2) are not absent, here it is the logics of effectiveness (brake 1) that are more in evidence, particularly with regards to the BNP's tactical innovation away from violence. In the case of the animal liberation movement, identification as a group that uses non-violent tactics or only limited forms of violence (brake 3) is more prominent than it is in either of the other case studies, although in the other case studies it is noteworthy that brake 3 comes temporarily to prominence at points when other more tactically extreme groups/individuals emerge from within the wider movements with which they are associated and actors within those groups experience greater pressure to differentiate themselves from more violent groups or factions.

What is important for our purposes however is that (a) even within the radical flanks of the deeply violent jihadi and extreme right movements studied as part of this project (Annexes A and B, respectively), we were able to find instances of group members seeking to set and maintain parameters of 'legitimate' violence, and (b) across the three case studies and across the wider literature surveyed, we were able to identify broadly similar mechanisms being used in attempts to inhibit escalation of violence beyond established parameters.

We found that a viable way of describing and categorising these brakes was to base their description and organisation in the underlying logics on which they operate: strategic logic, moral logic, the logic of ego maintenance, the logic of out-group definition, and organisational logic. We found that structuring the typology in this way offers a number of benefits: (a) it enables us to capture all of the practices that we identified as comprising examples of 'internal brakes' while limiting both the number of and overlap between categories; (b) it encourages a deep analysis of how the brakes work rather than simply describing the practices through which brakes are applied; and (c) in doing so it enables and stimulates analysis of how different brakes interact with one another (both in terms of potential synergies and mutual reinforcement, and in terms of contradiction).

How then might this typology be used to support and strengthen academic and practitioner analyses of the dynamics of violence involving extremist groups?

Deploying this typology is not without its challenges, above and beyond basic issues about access to data. First, it is important to emphasise that this typology should not be treated as a checklist. Rather, careful consideration is required about what the presence and/or prominence of these brakes within any given case study indicates. For example, does evidence of intense application of internal brakes indicate that violent escalation is unlikely to take place, or does it indicate that the action repertoire of the group under analysis is unstable and subject to extensive intra-group contestation, or might it indicate that there is an emergent split taking place within a movement? All of these interpretations would appear to be viable.

Second, and as noted above, it can sometimes be difficult to decipher the intention behind the actions and comments that we might identify as an internal brake. To what extent are they, for example, simply performances of respectability intended to achieve a strategic advantage? To what extent would statements about the use only of limited forms of violence be backed up with sanctions in the case of somebody exceeding those limits? To what extent are the limits placed on violence within one group only put in place because they expect that an ally will do the violence for them? As such, any attempt to explore the internal brakes on violent escalation is likely to require well-

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contextualised analysis of data from multiple sources in order to limit the risk of arriving at the wrong conclusions.

Third, as with any analysis of processes of escalation, de-escalation and non-escalation, it is clear that we must be attentive to potential differences between how decisions are taken in the moment and post hoc rationalisations and justifications. The choice of and weight placed upon data sources should reflect this.

And fourth, it is possible that some of the internal brakes are more likely to be evident in particular forms of communication than others e.g., on more or less closed forums, online or offline etc. It is possible in other words that the type of brakes being applied might partly be a function of the means of communication being employed. This could have significant implications for our ability to carry out cross-case comparisons or to assess how internal brakes within one movement have changed over time and what that actually means in practice, particularly if we do not have access to similar source materials across the different cases/periods.

Each of these issues require careful consideration. Nonetheless, we believe that the descriptive typology set out above can provide a valuable vocabulary with which to undertake more systematic analyses of how actors within groups that engage in the use of illegal and/or violent strategies of action contribute to shape the parameters of their own violence.

For academic researchers interested in the dynamics of conflict and political violence, it would appear to hold considerable potential for advancing and stimulating research into the as yet largely neglected issue of non- or limited escalation or of non- or limited radicalisation.

For security, intelligence and law enforcement practitioners working on risk assessments, it might provide a further tool with which to identify indicators of the propensity towards and away from particular forms of violence by specific groups. And for security, intelligence and law enforcement practitioners undertaking interventions with extremist groups, it might be used to inform assessments of how externally applied counter-measures might interact with, and sometimes undermine, internal brakes.

We believe that the following questions are likely to provide particularly productive avenues of enquiry:

- What are the conditions under which certain brakes, or configurations of brakes, are more or less likely to be effective?
- How are the patterns and functioning of internal brakes affected by wider conflict dynamics and vice versa e.g., how do they affect and how are they affected by interactions between group members and state security services, opposition groups etc.?
- How and why does the distribution of brakes vary across different groups and what, if anything, can this tell us about their propensity for violence?
- How do the internal brakes on violent escalation operate at different points within waves or cycles of conflict.

Finally, there are a number of ways in which the typology itself might be developed going forward. One of the most obvious of these is to develop an additional dimension of the typology relating to the three levels of proximity to the potential act of violence: the campaign planning, action planning and situational levels. This could be used, for example, to facilitate more detailed description and analysis of internal brakes within specific case studies or as a tool to enhance cross-case comparisons.

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# ANNEX A: TRANS-NATIONAL AND BRITISH JIHADI GROUPS FROM 2001 TO 2016



## 1. INTRODUCTION

The contemporary jihadi movement consists of a disparate set of actors who seek to employ what they see as religiously sanctioned lethal violence to defend, protect and promote what is regarded as sacred, to topple an existing order they perceive to be unjust and to replace it with a new social, legal and political construct which in their view reflects what the first generation of believers intended (Wagemakers, 2012; Lahoud, 2005; Hegghammer, 2011).

To many observers this particular realm, epitomised by acts of mass-scale indiscriminate violence and terrorist outfits such as the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (IS), is largely characterised by a seemingly limitless desire to kill, destroy and spread terror. Yet within this movement, there is entrenched disagreement about the

extent, scope and nature of the violence that can and should be employed. Debates rage regarding the overall concentration of political activism more broadly and the interpretation and contemporary implementation of scriptural evidence that is used to legitimise violent means (Brown, 2007, pp. 8-9; Meijer, 2009; Wiktorowicz, 2005).

This case study will explore elements of the transnational discourse and local manifestations of jihadism within the UK, recognising that these are intertwined. The former concentrates on public and (at the time) private output from the leadership of al-Qaeda. This organisation was chosen both because a large amount of data shedding light on its approach to violence is now available and because its leaders have had to confront questions about the appropriate levels of violence during several key junctures during its history, most recently with the rise of IS in Iraq and Syria. The public-facing part of this output stretches back to 2001, when al-Qaeda targeted the US using

hijacked planes. That year, memoirs from the group's deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri, *Knights under the Banner of the Prophet*, leaked to the press. In them, the veteran *jihadi* reflected upon his experiences in Egypt where he had led a militant group before he decided to embrace transnational militancy, expressing regrets about some of the consequences for his violence.

The internal discourse studied also includes letters written by al-Qaeda's inner circle to the leader of its Iraq franchise, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, in 2005 warning him of the consequences of advocating excessive and sectarian slaughter. Zarqawi since developed his group into the organisational and ideological foundations of IS, the tactics of which have provoked debates among British jihadis locally. The remainder of internal documents scrutinised for this study were captured in May 2011 when US special forces stormed Osama bin Ladin's compound in Pakistan. These revealed the al-Qaeda leadership's concerns regarding the tactics by so-called affiliate organisations, including those operating in North Africa, as well as the actions of allied outfits such as groups identifying with the Pakistani Taliban. The letters were since translated and published by the US government.

Actors more specifically associated with the United Kingdom are also scrutinised in order to gauge how more localised groups and cohorts reacted to developments on the global stage, especially the emergence of IS.<sup>24</sup> The UK provides the context for the other case studies scrutinised: the animal liberation movement and the extreme right, but has also seen the evolution of jihadi groups and cohorts involved in violence at home and abroad. These cohorts are both formal and informal. The current case study explores communication among individuals involved in an informal social network who were seeking to plan attacks in the UK, for which they were convicted in 2016. Members of this network discussed the purpose of their activism and their position within a wider milieu, including IS, via the encrypted social networking platform 'Telegram' and these deliberations are examined here.<sup>25</sup>

Whilst this group was actively supporting and participating in dedicated attack planning involving targets in the London area, members nonetheless

expressed some doubts about their participation in political violence and some of the expressions of violent Islamism that they had witnessed. These references are scrutinised below.

The case study also considers the approach of al-Muhajiroun, a radical Islamist collective set up by Omar Bakri Mohammed which existed in different guises between 1996 and 2016, when key members were convicted for promoting terrorism. Al-Muhajiroun has played a prominent role on the UK radical Islamist scene. In relation to internal brakes, however, it is an especially intriguing example since it demonstrates how different types of brakes that appeared to be in place were gradually removed. I explore this element in more detail below.

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<sup>24</sup> For jihadi militancy in particular, an exploration of 'internal brakes' locally requires a broader assessment of transnational debates that have shaped the global discourse, since these are intertwined. Local activism does not exist in isolation of these broader debates.

<sup>25</sup> The transcripts of this correspondence were included in the court papers for their trial and made available following conviction

## 1.1 TIMELINE

Important debates in this case study about the need to resist adoption of greater violence for a variety of reasons have taken place on a global, strategic, stage that have impacted activism more locally. Local actors, in turn, do not exist within their own political or ideological vacuum. They identify with these transnational, movement-centric currents and seek to conform to the framework that they have created. The way to do justice to these debates, therefore, is to incorporate insights from local and global actors.

In order to provide necessary context and chronology in the briefest way possible to such a complex environment, the following figure 2 (below) plots key events relating to these interweaving stories on a timeline.

This sequence includes key milestones in the evolution of al-Qaeda, the proliferation of its affiliate organisations and the emergence of IS. The timeline also pinpoints key events more specific to the UK scene that are relevant to the current case study.

## 2. AL-MUHAJIROUN AND THE REMOVAL OF BRAKES

Al-Muhajiroun (AM) represents a case where a social collective evolved from an indirect association with violent action to unambiguous endorsement of the most extreme forms of terrorist violence. It also represents a case whereby outer-tier members and associates became involved in terrorist activity whilst leadership largely managed to keep its distance and freedom to operate by remaining just within legal boundaries. Whilst organisational manifestations of the grouping, going by a variety of different names, were proscribed on numerous occasions, the collective managed to persist from 1996 till 2016 without key members ever being convicted for their association with terrorist activities. This changed in 2014 when leaders of AM endorsed IS and openly welcomed its authority over others. They were eventually convicted for inviting support for terrorism in 2016. The case of AM thus offers an interesting example worthy of further examination in relation to ways in which brakes *did not* take hold as the movement evolved.

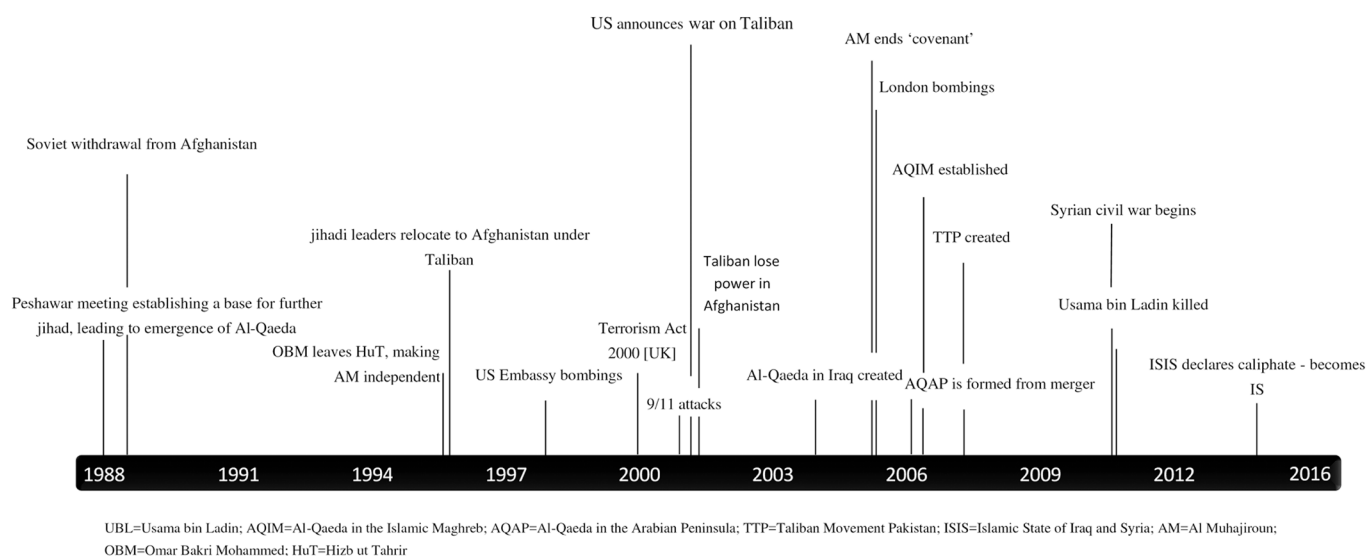


Figure 2. Timeline of key events.

The operating principle of AM was to endorse campaigns of violence within a wider repertoire of radical action and provocation whilst avoiding direct association with those campaigns in order to avoid conviction.

Speaking after the 2016 trial a senior police officer commented:

*These men have stayed just within the law for many years, but there is no-one within the counter-terrorism world that has any doubts of the influence that they have had, the hate they have spread and the people that they have encouraged to join terrorist organisations. Over and over again we have seen people on trial for the most serious offences who have attended lectures or speeches given by these men (BBC, 2016).*

AM was established as an independent group in 1996 after its founder Omar Bakri Mohammed split from the UK chapter of the Islamist umbrella organisation Hizb ut-Tahrir (HuT) which he had led since 1986 (Klausen et al, 2012, p. 38). Under Omar Bakri's leadership, AM assumed a more radical and provocative stance compared to HuT, advocating the creation of an Islamic state through armed uprising. Members underwent rigorous religious training and attended extensive seminars led by Omar Bakri and his aides. They organised provocative demonstrations to court media attention and used their heightened publicity to spread the group's message via proselytising stalls and other outreach efforts. Followers were told to support *jihad* against infidels in Muslim lands and promote lethal violence as part of a broader political toolkit to achieve change (ibid).

Omar Bakri welcomed al-Qaeda's double bomb attack in East Africa in 1998 (Wiktorowicz and Kaltenhaler, 2006, p. 314; Connor, 2005, p. 121) and openly endorsed Osama bin Laden (Connor, 2005, p. 122). After the 9/11 attacks, AM co-sponsored a conference titled 'A towering day in history' at Finsbury Park Mosque and planned a subsequent event celebrating the 'magnificent 19', referring to the perpetrators who carried out the attacks (Wiktorowicz and Kaltenhaler, 2006, p. 303).

Yet AM's mission was still to retain its freedom to provoke without crossing the line where its leaders might risk facing prosecution. Omar Bakri had become a legal resident of the UK in 1993 and applied for citizenship on a number of occasions and clearly had every desire to remain in Britain (Connor, 2005, pp. 121-122). Whilst endorsing violence, therefore, the message the AM leadership communicated to its followers was ambiguous. The option was left open for AM leaders to argue that any association with individuals who identified with the group who had gone on to carry out acts of violence, whilst celebrated, was not a direct result of the group's activism, which had a more multifaceted agenda. There was also at a strategic level absence of investment in violence per se, with emphasis placed on raising the organisation's public profile (ibid). Other 'brakes' on violence could also be discerned at this stage in AM's evolution.

After the outrage caused by its celebration of the 9/11 attacks, AM leaders tried to stave off some of the harshest criticism by promoting the idea that a 'covenant of security' existed between Muslims in Britain and the state whereby the latter's provision of services and a formal right to remain in the country meant that attacks could not be carried out on British soil for those who had entered into such arrangements with the authorities (ibid, pp. 126-127). The idea was ostensibly based on the group's interpretation of scriptural evidence and the Prophet Mohammed's experiences in dealing with non-Muslim tribes in Arabia, and had been employed by jihadists in the UK throughout the 1990s in order to fend off scrutiny that might jeopardise their existence (Peter and Ortega, 2014, p. 173). AM's promotion of the 'covenant' did not equate to a renunciation of violence, which was still welcomed and supported abroad. Rather it articulated the stance that limited targeting would be a more feasible strategy for the time being. This mechanism is captured in the discussion below.

Indeed, by early 2005, and as the pressure on his group mounted, Omar Bakri began covertly and overtly to convey to his supporters his view that the covenant was broken and followers were now in the state of war with the UK. As Connor argues, (2005, p. 127), the fact that Omar Bakri no longer had an official organisation to protect, he abandoned the pragmatism of his covenant theory in favour of a more radical position. Omar Bakri left for Lebanon following the 7 July London bombings

in 2005 and British authorities prevented him from re-entering the UK. AM limped on under different aliases, which were quickly proscribed by the Home Secretary, yet managed to maintain the organising principles of the original group. Anjem Choudary, Omar Bakri's disciple and a trained lawyer, largely took over as leader of this collective and excelled at attracting media attention both in the UK and the USA through stunts and pronouncements that were largely focused on the envisaged establishment of an Islamic state (Kenney et al, 2013; Klausen et al, 2012). Yet rhetoric aside, including some thinly veiled if carefully articulated endorsements of violence, he never committed the group to any concrete measures to achieve this goal.

This meant that any government attempts to proscribe various organisational manifestations of the collective were based on this rhetorical and provocative dimension of its output, rather than any more tangible association with violence. In November 2011, for instance, the Home Secretary ordered a ban on 'Muslims Against Crusaders', one iteration of the AM cohort, due to its supposed plans to organise a protest during Armistice Day commemorations. (Klausen et al, 2012, p. 50).

AM's cautious approach to political violence, whereby they promoted and celebrated attacks while ensuring that this did not threaten the ability of leadership to operate, makes it all the more intriguing that group leaders, including Choudary, decided after a meeting in June 2014 to declare their allegiance to IS (which then referred to itself as the 'Islamic State'). Such overt recognition of one of the most notorious terrorist organisations of the time would undoubtedly risk far greater legal sanction, including through existing legislation concerning support for terrorist organisations, than the group had faced thus far.

This begs the question, why were these caveats on the use of violence abandoned? There is no clear answer to this question, but three key interrelated factors seem particularly relevant.

First, the decision came at the time when scores of people, including AM followers, had already pledged their allegiance to IS and travelled to Syria (BBC, 2013; BBC, 2017). AM's central message had always been to strive towards a hypothetical creation of an Islamic State. Now that many of its potential followers, radicals in the UK, had found an entity that had put

these thoughts into practice, the AM leaders risked losing what little appeal, reach and purpose they had left.

Second, researchers have always described AM as a multi-layered entity with several concentric circles of membership, with an inner core of dedicated followers and an outer layer of individuals inspired by some of its teachings (Kenney et al, 2013; Wiktorowicz and Kaltenhaler, 2006). With the establishment of IS's 'caliphate' and the fact that numerous individuals had 'migrated' (*al-muhajiroun* in Arabic refers to the migrants who left Mecca for Medina with the Prophet Mohammed) from the UK to Syria and Iraq, the inner circle within AM risked being overtaken by an outer circle ready to observe far greater commitment to a cause that the inner circle purported to promote.

Third, given that the AM's leadership modus operandi consisted largely of courting controversy to attract attention in the press, perhaps the rise of IS and the attention it received in the world's media had made attracting headlines and media coverage through street demonstrations and publicity stunts harder to accomplish.

The emergence of IS thus created a predicament for AM and its leadership. Choudary and other key figures in the group may well have decided that the least bad option amid this new reality was to risk crossing legal boundaries by endorsing the terrorist organisation, perhaps hoping that some notoriety and capacity to be heard would be retained following release from prison after the likely convictions that awaited them.

## 3. INTERNAL BRAKES IN TRANS-NATIONAL AND BRITISH JIHADI GROUPS

### 3.1 BRAKE 1

*Identification of non- or less violent strategies of action as being as or more effective than more violent alternatives.*

Most of the brakes uncovered in material reviewed for the Islamist case study related in some way to strategic logics. This is partly due to the nature of data examined, which consisted to a large degree of senior leadership communication, public and private, about ways in which to shape the movement. But this prevalence of strategic issues also reflected the prominence of key debates within this milieu about the organisation of Islamist militancy more broadly. In this regard, questions were asked about ways in which to ensure militancy remained sustainable, about ways in which target prioritisation reflected strategic interests, and how the wider support of identified constituencies could be encouraged and retained.

#### Brake 1a

*Expressions of scepticism about their ability to beat their opponents in a violent struggle, including concerns that greater militancy will increase backlash or repression from opponents or the state towards them and their supporters.*

Al-Qaeda's leaders frequently alluded to the need to provoke an overreaction from its adversaries in order to rally support for armed confrontation against them. Such provocation was seen as part of its strategy. Yet at the same time, a delicate balance needed to exist between tactics that attracted the right sort of attention, without risking the operational viability of the organisation.

Al-Qaeda's leaders spoke of strategic boundaries that needed to be respected in order to retain a level of fluidity and flexibility that that was needed for survival. This, in part, reflected their own experiences as leaders of al-Qaeda and other militant groups. Bin Ladin and other senior leaders, for example, came under considerable criticism for having overstepped the mark with the 9/11 attacks which prompted a war in Afghanistan that removed its safe haven (Lia, 2009).

These same leaders, in turn, later admonished the head of their Iraq franchise for expanding operations to Jordan, where his attacks resulted in a major government crackdown on Islamist groups in that country (and provoked a public outrage, see brake 1b) (Rahman, 2005).

Questions about the effectiveness of particular forms of violence sometimes involved efforts to resist a backlash from opponents that would adversely affect the interests of the movement. Al-Qaeda's internal documentation revealed how leaders warned affiliates to refrain from escalating violence until they were prepared to deal with the consequences. Writing to his deputy in Yemen, bin Laden cautioned al-Qaeda's affiliate in the region that "blood should not be shed unless we have evidence to show that the elements of success to establish the Islamic State [concept, not group]" (bin Laden, 2010b). This more cautionary approach to state-building differentiates al-Qaeda from IS which ignored warnings about expanding and solidifying and the inevitable response such manoeuvres would provoke.

Whilst these discussions were mostly concentrated in the outer circle of our framework, some of this correspondence could be placed closer to the middle, action planning, circle as specific advice was handed down to regional commanders in the Middle East and North Africa to ensure actions were in proportion with affiliates' ability to deal with their consequences (Abu Yahya, 2009).

Target prioritisation also featured at this strategic level. Al-Qaeda spearheaded a policy that involved cutting off the "head of the snake" (al-Zawahiri, 2014). Bin Ladin laid out this strategic emphasis in a letter to one of his deputies using a different analogy:

*The Ummah's enemies today are like a wicked tree. The trunk of this tree is the US.*

*The diameter of this trunk is 50 centimetres. The branches of this tree are many and vary in size. The branches include NATO and many other organizations in the area. We want to bring this tree down by sawing it while our abilities and energy are limited. Our correct way to bring it down is to focus our saw on its American trunk. If we focus at the depth of the American trunk until we reach 30 centimetres, and then the opportunity presents itself for us to saw the British branch, we should not do so, as long as we have the ability to saw the American trunk. This would be distracting to our efforts and energy. If sawing continued into the depth of the American trunk until it falls, the rest will fall. (Bin Laden, 2010a).*

Describing these strategic emphases as internally imposed limitations on the use of violence is perhaps inaccurate, but they nonetheless constitute efforts to channel force in particular ways in order to maximise its impact, thus avoiding a certain list of targets.

On the UK scene, AM's promotion of a 'covenant of security' may be seen in a similar way. This strategy was not underpinned by any moral concerns—indeed violence against a variety of targets was still celebrated abroad—but rather an effort to secure operational freedom for the group.

### **Brake 1b**

***Expressions of concern that violent escalation will undermine support for the group.***

Sustaining public support for revolutionary change emerged as a central and prominent theme in the current case study. This involved concerns about acknowledging the parameters of violent action that appeared acceptable to perceived constituents, both as a general principle and as an imperative learnt from past mistakes.

Leaders of al-Qaeda made several references to the importance of public opinion and their fear that certain tactics and types of violence might alienate key members of those publics whose support would be needed to sustain campaigns of militancy. There was acute realisation, especially in more recent public

output, that some aligned militant groups had far exceeded what was considered appropriate form of resistance. "We would like to advise our brothers that in order to succeed any armed opposition must mobilise public support. Experience has shown that without this support combat does not turn into victory or success", Ayman al-Zawahiri warned in a statement aired in April 2014 (As-Sahab, 2014).

A decade earlier, he tried to caution Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, then leader of al-Qaeda's franchise in Iraq, against alienating the public by pursuing a campaign of sectarian targeting. Support from the masses was the "strongest weapon" the militants could wield, Zawahiri argued, and any action that they did not "understand or approve" would thus need to be avoided (al-Zawahiri, 2005a). Another al-Qaeda commander issued a similar warning to Zarqawi, reflecting upon his experience from the civil war in Algeria:

*Ask me whatever you like about Algeria between 1994 and 1995, when [the movement] was at the height of its power and capabilities, and was on the verge of taking over the government. [...]. However, they destroyed themselves with their own hands, with their lack of reason, delusions, their ignoring of people, their alienation of them through oppression, deviance, and severity, coupled with a lack of kindness, sympathy, and friendliness. Their enemy did not defeat them, but rather they defeated themselves, were consumed and fell. (Rahman, 2005).*

Following a coordinated suicide bomb attack targeting hotels in Amman, Jordan, in November 2005 which Zarqawi ordered, Rahman (a.k.a. `Atiyatullah al-Libi) wrote to Zarqawi, urging him to refrain from such violence, not out of moral outrage but out of concern that the widespread public condemnation that resulted would jeopardise the movement's ability to operate and become entrenched in the region (Rahman, 2005). Whilst the hotels were frequented by westerners, the attackers killed mostly Muslims, including scores of Jordanians attending a wedding party. People gathered in the streets following the attacks, chanting "burn in hell, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi!" and the public outrage led to the adoption of far more stringent counterterrorism policies within Jordan (BBC, 2005).



Zarqawi's movement, as noted, eventually morphed into IS following outbreak of civil war in Syria. Several jihadi leaders have subsequently made similar analogies with loss of support for militants in Algeria, predicting the ultimate implosion of IS as their grassroots following evaporates due to the group's violent excess.

There have been other efforts to learn from past mistakes and feed these lessons back to affect the trajectory of the movement. Zawahiri reflected in his 2001 memoirs how his militant outfit in Egypt suffered widespread condemnation when it carried out an attack targeting an official which resulted in the death of a young girl who attended a nearby school (al-Zawahiri, 2001). Strategists' concerns about limiting 'collateral damage' thus feature in this discourse too. Seized documents from bin Ladin's Pakistan compound revealed how reflections from past mistakes were fed to the senior command which was concerned that botched targeting by affiliates was harming the appeal of their 'brand' (see e.g., Abu Basir, 2010).

Al-Qaeda's existence stretches back to the end of the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan. The attitude of senior leaders towards violence has thus evolved over a considerable length of time, resulting in further lessons being drawn to shape the movement. Encouragement for further or escalated violence has, in some cases been replaced with cautionary advice instead.

In 2004, for instance, Zawahiri published a book titled *The Scent of Paradise*, extolling the virtues of suicide bombings, which he called 'martyrdom operations'. Nine years later, after a deluge of suicide bombings had resulted in scores of civilian deaths, especially in Muslim countries, Zawahiri published a second edition of his book with a new introduction where he wrote:

*this increase in martyrdom operations has been accompanied by some deviation and exaggeration which must be corrected and admitted to; some of the operations were undertaken under circumstances that did not justify sacrifice of the life of a Jihadist martyr; at times there were no precautions taken to try and protect innocent lives and at other times the target was the wrong one or at other times it was not in the general interest to undertake such an operation either due to the bigger damage it would have caused*

*or because the general public would not understand its reasons and so they would not sympathise with the Jihadists which is our greatest victory (al-Zawahiri, 2013a).*

Here, concern about public acceptance (brake 1b) is combined with moral norms about the moral limits of violence in terms of appropriate targeting (brake 2b). Zawahiri's hope was that these cautionary lessons would help generate a framework for militancy that would respect the perceived limits of the constituency's appetite for violence, thus ensuring the sustainability of the revolutionary movement. These concerns are primarily focused on 'what works' rather than 'what is inherently right', though these moral considerations (brake 2) certainly influence the former too.

### **Brake 1c**

*Attempts to build or maintain ties with strategically useful allies who are not supportive of violent escalation.*

No examples identified in this case study.

### **Brake 1d**

*Identification of political opportunities that favour (re)adoption of non- or less violent strategies of action.*

No examples identified in this case study.

### **Brake 1e**

*Identification of non- or less violent strategies of actions that are perceived to be effective, including identification of 'sufficient' levels of violence.*

Jihadi leaders' attitudes towards non- or less violent campaigns, especially protests and street demonstrations have varied in the discourse assessed for this case study. Zawahiri, for instance, appeared on occasion to mock those who flocked to the streets to protest, rather than taking up arms. "Reform will never be realized through endless talk and chatter about the corruptions of America, or through hoarse shouting at demonstrations", he noted in his first interview with al-Qaeda's premier propaganda outlet, As-Sahab (Zawahiri, 2005b). Later, though, he called on all Muslims to "exploit all methods of popular protest, like

demonstrations, sit-ins, strikes, refusing to pay taxes, preventing cooperation with the security forces, refusing to provide the Crusaders with fuel, hitting traders who supply the Crusader forces, boycotting Crusader and Jewish products, and other ways of popular protest” (Zawahiri, 2006). During and following the Arab Spring uprisings in the Middle East, moreover, such calls for participation in public demonstrations became even more explicit, though they did not translate into organisational shifts or reprioritisation within al-Qaeda itself.

Bin Ladin, similarly called on citizens of Saudi Arabia to “stage public demonstrations and exercise civil disobedience until the overthrow of the traitorous governments” (bin Ladin, 2002). Al-Muhajiroun, as noted, recognised the value of street demonstrations and static protests too and even suggested these would bring rewards similar to those granted to warriors in battle.

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## 3.2 BRAKE 2

*Construction of moral norms and evaluations that inhibit (certain forms of) violence and the emotional impulses towards violence (e.g., revenge).*

Moral restrictions and inhibitions on the escalation of violence were threads running throughout the material studied for this case. These were often woven together with other mechanisms that emerged and are delineated here, especially strategic concerns about the limits of public acceptance of violent means and the risk of provoking moral outrage within the constituency through badly executed or excessive violence (see above on brake 1b) that might, in turn, harden the state’s response (brake 1a). Debates about ‘just’ violence and targeting in particular separated groups like al-Qaeda from even more extreme organisations such as IS. Al-Qaeda’s leaders made the case that targeting people due to their essence of being—such as the fact that they were Shia Muslims—was inherently wrong.

Targeting had to be limited to particular actions perceived as hostile, though these could be stretched to include payment of taxes in the West, or working for government departments in Muslim-majority countries. Closer to action planning, in turn, doubts emerged among movement members about IS and its

graphic display of violence and beheadings, which appeared to provoke shock and revulsion.

### Brake 2a

*Articulation and performance of general moral norms and principles that problematise certain forms of violence, require violence to be justified or enable activists to forestall on entering the ‘tunnel of violence’ (e.g., the conception of violence as a tactic of last resort; positioning non-retaliation as a virtue; emphasising values such as mercy and compassion).*

Actors on both the campaign planning and attack planning stages of our analytical schema (Figure 1 in main body of the report) raised concerns about what was ‘right’ and morally correct without specific reference to any practical constraints that might emerge as a result of breaching moral codes. On the outer, campaign-planning level, these were frequently dressed in religious language and concerned the need to respect sharia law as a fundamental source of the movement’s legitimacy. In this regard, moral inhibitions were closely related to the group’s self-description of its mode of activism (see brake 3 in the next section). Concerns voiced closer to attack planning revealed more personal doubt about the paths chosen and the type of activism that would ultimately be accepted within the moral framework adopted.

At the level of campaign planning, detailed communiqués were released denoting, effectively, the ‘laws of war’ that needed to be respected and the consequences, including compensation, if those laws were violated (bin Laden, 2007). Zawahiri addressed the topic in several statements, most notably and explicitly in 2013 when he issued his ‘General guidelines for the work of a jihadi’. Here he warned that certain forms of targeting were prohibited with reference to his interpretation of scripture. Following the logic of reciprocity, a prominent emotion used to legitimise killings in al-Qaeda’s discourse, violence, Zawahiri argued, would thus be limited to those groups whose participation—however remotely—in acts of aggression against perceived constituencies could be established (see brake 2b).

Acts of terrorism, in turn, were presented as reactionary and defensive. People could not be wantonly killed simply by association with ideas or religious sects, irrespective of how erroneous they might be seen to be. Whilst the alleged heresy of the Shia, Sufis, Christians, Hindus and others ought, in Zawahiri's mind, to be challenged, these groups could not be subjected to indiscriminate violence simply because of the way they chose to worship. Only those who were "engaged in the fight" could be targeted, Zawahiri argued (Zawahiri, 2013b). This approach is radically different from the position adopted by IS and its followers where sectarian and confessional targeting, encased in dehumanising justificatory rhetoric, is openly promoted and practiced.

Internal documents, by extension, reveal the al-Qaeda leadership's concern that affiliates and allies were not operating within the boundaries of permissible combat (unknown author, unknown date). In a letter to a sub-commander from 2010, for instance, bin Laden, expressed his objection to the fact that Faysal Shahzad, who attempted to detonate a car bomb in Times Square that same year, had proceeded with attack planning despite being granted US citizenship. His oath of allegiance to the United States meant that he had accepted and entered into a covenant with his host country which he was not permitted to break. "We do not want the Mujahidin to be accused of breaking a covenant", bin Laden warned (Bin Laden, 2010c).

Closer to the action planning scope of our analysis, where members of a UK cohort involved in attack planning conversed on Telegram, specific concerns emerged about jihadi militants who were seen to have gone 'too far' and breached moral codes which these individuals felt needed to be respected. At one point a member warned that the beheadings carried out by IS in Iraq and Syria were "completely contradictory to the Sunnah", the way of the Prophet. Beheading people "in this crazy manner" and "parading them" was not normal. "Having little kids hold their heads is not normal", "taking pictures with [their] heads isn't normal", he exclaimed. Other members of the group conceded: "Yeah beheading needs to be addressed", one of them commented (HM Courts and Tribunals Service, 2016).

As a result of IS's excess, therefore, there was doubt about its legitimacy within this group. Some pointed out that scholars, including those who identified with

the jihadi militants, disapproved of the group and its declaration of a 'Caliphate'. Others suggested that its leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, was not the universal commander of Muslims that he purported to have become.

### **Brake 2b**

#### *Identification of some groups of actors as illegitimate targets for violence.*

As moral reasons were given for proportionality in infliction of violence and legitimacy featured strongly in activist self-depictions (brake 2), the logical extension of these arguments was delineating groups that were seen as having limited culpability for the grievances that were being addressed.

Internal documents from the Abbottabad compound, for instance, revealed how the al-Qaeda leadership was keen to protect those westerners who had expressed sympathy with the group's cause and warned other jihadi militants to ensure they would not be targeted (bin Laden, 2011).

Zawahiri's 'General Guidelines', cited above, set out moralistic reasons for discriminate violence and identified swathes of people, divided by sect, religion, nationality and other criteria, who, it was argued, could not be targeted without reference to specific actions, since their association with legitimate targets was too peripheral or the degree to which they could be held accountable was too remote. This, we should be clear, has not been a static topic as far as al-Qaeda's discourse is concerned. Zawahiri and others within the group's leadership, expended considerable effort to justify an expansion in targeting that included vast swathes of the public, including tax payers in the West, who in turn were killed in indiscriminate attacks which the leadership orchestrated and sponsored.

Latterly, however, the focus, partly with the rise of IS, has been on limiting violence and identifying groups of people who cannot or should not be targeted. Much rests on notions of intent. Sectarianism, as noted, did not dictate al-Qaeda's targeting principles, for example. There was concern, at the campaign planning level of our analysis, of the 'innocent'—both Muslim (in-group) and non-Muslim (out-group)—and regret about 'collateral' damage, as noted above, was referenced

and revisited in the public discourse to shape the future trajectory of the movement.

Similar caveats shaped both public and private correspondence from the al-Qaeda leadership, where effort was made to direct local campaigns of violence spearheaded by affiliates and allies. “Beware of killing innocent people”, bin Ladin warned in a statement addressed to militants in Iraq in 2004 (bin Ladin, 2004b). Similar concerns had been voiced internally and communicated within the movement, as letters captured from bin Ladin’s compound later revealed, especially concerning the targeting of Muslims—irrespective of sect or denomination—in Afghanistan and Pakistan by forces identifying with the Taliban (bin Ladin, 2010d).

In a few public statements, meanwhile, especially during the polarising rhetoric surrounding the invasion of Iraq in 2003, al-Qaeda sought to make it clear that not all governments were culpable for the in-group’s grievance. In October 2004, for instance, bin Ladin issued a statement titled ‘Letter to the Americans’ where he dismissed George W. Bush’s charge that al-Qaeda was against freedom and universally recognised notions of liberty. If this was the case, bin Ladin asked, why did al-Qaeda not attack Sweden, a neutral country? (bin Ladin, 2004a). The point, again, was that culpability could be traced to specific harmful actions of targets, not their essence of being.

### 3.3 BRAKE 3

***Self-identification as a group that is either non-violent or uses only limited forms of violence.***

Identity logics incorporated both elements of strategic and moral logics in the way in which group members sought to present themselves and their activism. Combatants were presented as merciful or respectful of codes of conducts, such as covenants of security, whilst rewards for alternative (non-violent) forms of activism were recognised. At the same time, some activists sought to distance themselves from or criticise actors who were seen to have displayed excessive violence that could not be justified.

#### **Brake 3a**

***Production of group narratives that emphasise non-violence or the limited use of violence either by themselves or by those they claim have inspired their movement.***

As noted above, legitimacy and proportionality (including notions of reciprocity) was key to the way in which al-Qaeda’s leaders could present their group as occupying the moral high ground, leading an uprising against forces that were fundamentally unjust and immoral. Such justifications were also central in their public outreach efforts, ‘selling’ their mode of combat to the perceived constituents.

This projection of al-Qaeda operatives as morally superior actors uncovered some implicit brakes to violent escalation as a result, especially through reflections and accounts about the movement’s activism that were articulated to illustrate the permissible scope of combat.

In his eulogy for bin Ladin, for instance, Zawahiri reflected how his predecessor as leader of al-Qaeda had apparently respected a ceasefire with enemy forces seeking to occupy the Tora Bora mountain range in Afghanistan, and even ordered his men to desist from exploiting opportunities to ambush the enemy when they presented themselves.

*Osama bin Ladin (may God have compassion on him) cared about complying with what he agreed to. In Tora Bora, after agreeing to ceasefire, about a hundred of the hypocrites fell in[to] the ambush of the mujahidin. He just needed to order the mujahidin to open fire on them and kill them, but Sheikh Osama bin Ladin ordered his brothers to let them out of the ambush and to not shoot a single bullet. After agreeing to a ceasefire, some of the mujahidin attacked the hypocrite’s position and took some spoils. The Sheikh [Osama] ordered them to return what they took (Zawahiri, 2011a).*

#### **Brake 3b**

***Disassociation from more violent groups or factions and/or association with less violent groups or factions.***

The excesses displayed by Zarqawi's Iraqi franchise, as noted above, caused such concern within al-Qaeda's leadership circles that they reached out to him both publicly and privately, seeking to convince him to rein in his violence, especially in terms of sectarian targeting. Captured documents from the Abbottabad compound also revealed bin Ladin's concern about his group's association with networks such as the Pakistani Taliban who had orchestrated indiscriminate attacks against civilians in Pakistan.

With the rise of IS, Zawahiri and others, moreover, have condemned the former as a splinter organisation that displayed excessive violence that was not in proportion or responsive to the nature of the threat they were facing.

At a more local level, closer to involvement in nascent acts of violence, we see in the Telegram debates among the UK youths, that there was discomfort about the excesses of IS, as noted above, which provoked discussion about groups that were more justified in their actions, as I discuss in more detail in the section on allies, below.

### Brake 3c

*(The threat of) sanctions for activists who advocate or undertake violence beyond the established parameters of the group's action repertoire, and/or opportunities to achieve intra-group respect and prestige without undertaking or encouraging the use of violence at or beyond the parameters of the group's action repertoire.*

In terms of prestige positions, AM leaders celebrated 'jihad of the tongue', i.e., proselytising, and 'jihad of the sword', meaning violence, as part of its activism and encouraged—even demanded of—followers to become involved in such activities. Crucially, they argued that individuals who supported militant campaigns at home, either vocally or financially, would reap the same rewards as those who travelled abroad to fight, as discussed. Street protests, it was argued, were also part of this armed struggle since they served to demoralise the enemy (see brake 1e) (Mohammed, no date). Furthermore, followers were invited to "motivate people for the jihad verbally and through the internet" and appreciate such communicative acts as part of the

broader activist experience (In Connor, 2005: 123). In terms of sanctions, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, as noted above, was reprimanded on repeated occasions for his sectarian killings and large-scale bomb attacks that resulted in Muslim deaths, both since these were inherently wrong (moral logics) and counterproductive (strategic logics).

### Brake 3d

*Circulation of limited expectations that they will be involved in greater levels of violence.*

No examples identified in this case study.

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## 3.4 BRAKE 4

*Boundary softening in relation to putative out-groups (e.g., opponents, opponents' perceived supporters, the general public or state actors).*

Logics of identity concerning relations with external actors were much less prominent in the material studied than identity logics concerned with ego maintenance. Still, efforts at the level of campaign planning within al-Qaeda especially, were made to define and redefine non-Muslim populations as non-hostile entities and even, in some cases, as potential allies.

### Brake 4a

*Resistance to generalizations about their opponents.*

Sectarianism offers an example of al-Qaeda's outlook being far less based on generalizations and notions of alleged inherent qualities compared to the stance adopted by IS and its followers. Shia Muslims in al-Qaeda's rhetoric, are—holistically—depicted as ignorant and misguided, whilst justifications for their targeting are based on more tangible acts which in turn justify a response in kind.

Given al-Qaeda's preference for presenting violence in defensive terms, as a *reaction* to a set of circumstances and processes put in place by adversaries, whilst their approach to state building and societal creation has at least some elements of inclusivity, dehumanising references are not nearly as common in its rhetorical output compared to other jihadi actors more aligned

with IS and its thinking.<sup>26</sup> References to adversaries, as noted above, have not been static in al-Qaeda's discourse over time, and perhaps bear closer resemblance to a spectrum rather than clear or stable characterisations.

References to Christians are especially ambiguous. Whilst Zawahiri has condemned vast swathes of Coptic Egyptians and even though al-Qaeda has repeatedly denounced the Pope and other Christian figures, some references to followers of the Christian faith describe misguided human beings, rather than inherently impure, subhuman or polluting beings, which means they are not seen as priority targets. References to other faiths in this discourse, meanwhile, especially Judaism, are invariably derogatory in the extreme. In an extensive essay, published in 2008 as a rebuttal of a former Egyptian militant's criticism of al-Qaeda, Zawahiri for instance accepted that not all Christians were equal, and that some had resisted an alleged alliance between Jews and Crusaders, whilst seeking to mend relationships among Arabs (Zawahiri, 2008). Zawahiri reiterated this point in several statements addressing Egyptians in the aftermath of the 'Arab Spring' uprisings that spread from Tunisia in late 2010 and again as leader of al-Qaeda after the rise of IS, which has embarked on a far more widespread campaign against Arabs whose religious interpretations differ from their own (Zawahiri, 2011b).

#### Brake 4b

*Identification of segments of the public beyond their previously-imagined support base as potential converts to their cause.*

Despite its self-depiction as a vanguard fighting on behalf of religious believers, al-Qaeda's public communiqués have also appealed to the "world's weak and oppressed", irrespective of faith, and also, on occasions, contained explicit invitations to Islam, thus presenting conversion as part of their benchmark of success (Zawahiri, 2007). This reflected the ideals and myths of ancient Muslim military campaigns, which al-Qaeda and other contemporary jihadists purported to recreate. Moral boundaries of legitimate combat, therefore, were inherently tied to the groups' self-identification.

#### Brake 4c

*Limited intra-movement pressure to 'burn-bridges' with social contacts outside of the movement or outside of the radical flank of the movement.*

No examples identified in this case study.

#### Brake 4d

*Expressions of reluctance to conceive of the state security forces as 'the enemy'.*

No examples identified in this case study.

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### 3.5 BRAKE 5

*Organisational developments that either (a) alter the moral and strategic equations in favour of non- or limited violence, (b) institutionalise less violent collective identities and/or processes of boundary softening, and/or (c) reduce the likelihood of unplanned violence.*

Fairly little evidence concerning organisational logics was found in the material studied, with the exception of examples at the action planning stage whereby individuals came to the realisation that their preparedness for violent activism—ideological as much as physical—was insufficient or needed to be addressed.

#### Brake 5a

*Limited investment in capabilities to escalate violence, and/or development of capabilities to undertake strategies of action that either entail non- or limited violence or more controlled violence.*

Limited capabilities emerged particularly on the second—action planning—circle of our inquiry. Two themes from the Telegram chat group conversations in this regard seemed particularly relevant: one concerned an ambiguity about roles and how activism could be channelled and fulfilled, and the other concerned general lack of preparation for violent activism.

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<sup>26</sup> Zarqawi, IS' ideological forefather, for instance, was far more explicit in his calls to target Shia Muslims in Iraq directly, referring to them in derogatory terms, than al-Qaeda's leaders. Zawahiri, then deputy commander of al-Qaeda, admonished his erstwhile subordinate in Iraq for this prioritisation, warning him that wholesale targeting of Shia communities in Iraq was both counterproductive and lacking in historical precedent, an essential marker of the apparent legitimacy of contemporary Islamist militant campaigns that were presented as following the Prophet's example. See Zawahiri (2005).

The former is related to muddled conceptualisations of ‘fighter’ put forward by AM and similar organisations, where, at times, it was suggested that those who protested, or voiced support for activism online or through other channels of communication, were militants in their own right, and could even reap similar esoteric rewards (see brake 3c). In the Telegram group, one key member, as mentioned above, claimed that he had pledged allegiance to the leader of IS, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. He did not, however, associate any immediate obligations with this role and claimed he could continue his studies as long as they fell within what was sanctioned by IS. As this group of youths inched closer to putting their plans in action to carry out acts of violence on the streets of London, doubts emerged among members about their knowledge and preparation. One member complained that they had talked about jihad so much they had neglected other aspects of their faith and failed to gain a more comprehensive understanding of their religion. Gaining knowledge, it was felt, would be a prerequisite to further involvement in activist roles, in order for these efforts to remain sincere.

Lack of capabilities, of course, can greatly limit the impact of violence and inhibit its escalation, even if key participants are willing to do so. It is hard to trace al-Qaeda’s relative inaction on the global stage in recent years to any particular causal elements, though lack of resources, networks and other capabilities would seem to have played a role.

On a more granular level, moreover, we see resource deficits playing out in different ways. Whilst jihadists have demonstrated how easy it is to carry out a violent attack, using knives or vehicles for example, the Telegram conversations reveal concern about less tangible capabilities, including cognitive dimensions whereby insufficient preparedness includes a lack of understanding of the theological context of battle. Gaining such knowledge is seen as a sign of commitment, and by extension, of having the right intentions before participating in violence.

### **Brake 5b**

*Foregrounding more modest or intermediate objectives and de-prioritising revolutionary goals.*

No examples identified in this case study.

### **Brake 5c**

*Construction and maintenance of spaces in which a range of activists that includes and extends beyond the radical flank are able to freely discuss tactics and movement objectives.*

No examples identified in this case study.

### **Brake 5d**

*Concerns among some group members that violent escalation will compromise their ability to shape the direction of the movement and/or negatively affect their position within the movement.*

No examples identified in this case study.

### **Brake 5e**

*Concentration of energy on targeting movement rivals, leading to reduced capability to prosecute campaigns of violence against their external enemies.*

Internal quarrelling, debates, even admonishment of members of the in-group featured in the examples cited above. Whilst in these cases, this may not have amounted to debilitating feuds that ultimately sapped any capacity for violence, or directed it inwards, such dynamics clearly exist within the wider jihadi universe. The dramatic rift on a strategic level between al-Qaeda and IS, the latter emerging as an autonomous entity after splitting from al-Qaeda, has sent shockwaves throughout this universe, with sympathisers and fans online expressing confused loyalties, debating merits of both camps or calling for unity among fighting ‘vanguards’. These sentiments all featured on the Telegram chat logs analysed here.

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## 4. SUMMARY

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This case study incorporated transnational actors seeking to develop or sustain campaigns of jihadi militancy globally, as well as local actors—both established and informal—who operated within the UK.

These two geographic perspectives were combined because the debates, doubts and approaches to violence within this ideological context are intertwined: local actors respond to developments within the transnational jihadi movement which in turn seeks to adapt to new local realities.

The most significant development within this milieu in recent years is undoubtedly the emergence of IS as a terrorist entity fighting in local wars in Syria and Iraq as well as sponsoring militant campaigns and attacks abroad. IS has displayed and promoted a level of violence that exceeds the established norms of this radical flank: both in terms of the breadth of targeting, based on sectarian justifications and large-scale denunciation of Muslims, and the nature of the tactics employed.

This rise of a new and more aggressive terrorist entity has provoked different reactions among other players in this field with implications for our understanding of internal brakes.

This case study has illustrated how al-Muhajiroun, traditionally cautious in its promotion of militancy, became more overt in its support for terrorism and embraced IS and its methods, whilst IS's competitor on the global stage, al-Qaeda, emphasised the need for restraint and to respect limitations on the use of force, for strategic and moral reasons.

We also catch a glimpse of the impact the rise of IS has had on the grassroots through examination of private discussions within an informal network of British youths seeking to become involved in violence.

Whilst some members of this group expressed their support for IS others recoiled when they viewed some of their more graphic media content and expressed

their dismay that violent tactics had been used against individuals they deemed innocent.

The rise of IS thus serves as an illustrative example of the way in which new developments within a particular radical flank can play out differently among actors with respect to attitudes towards violence, including prospects of its enhanced or diminished scope.



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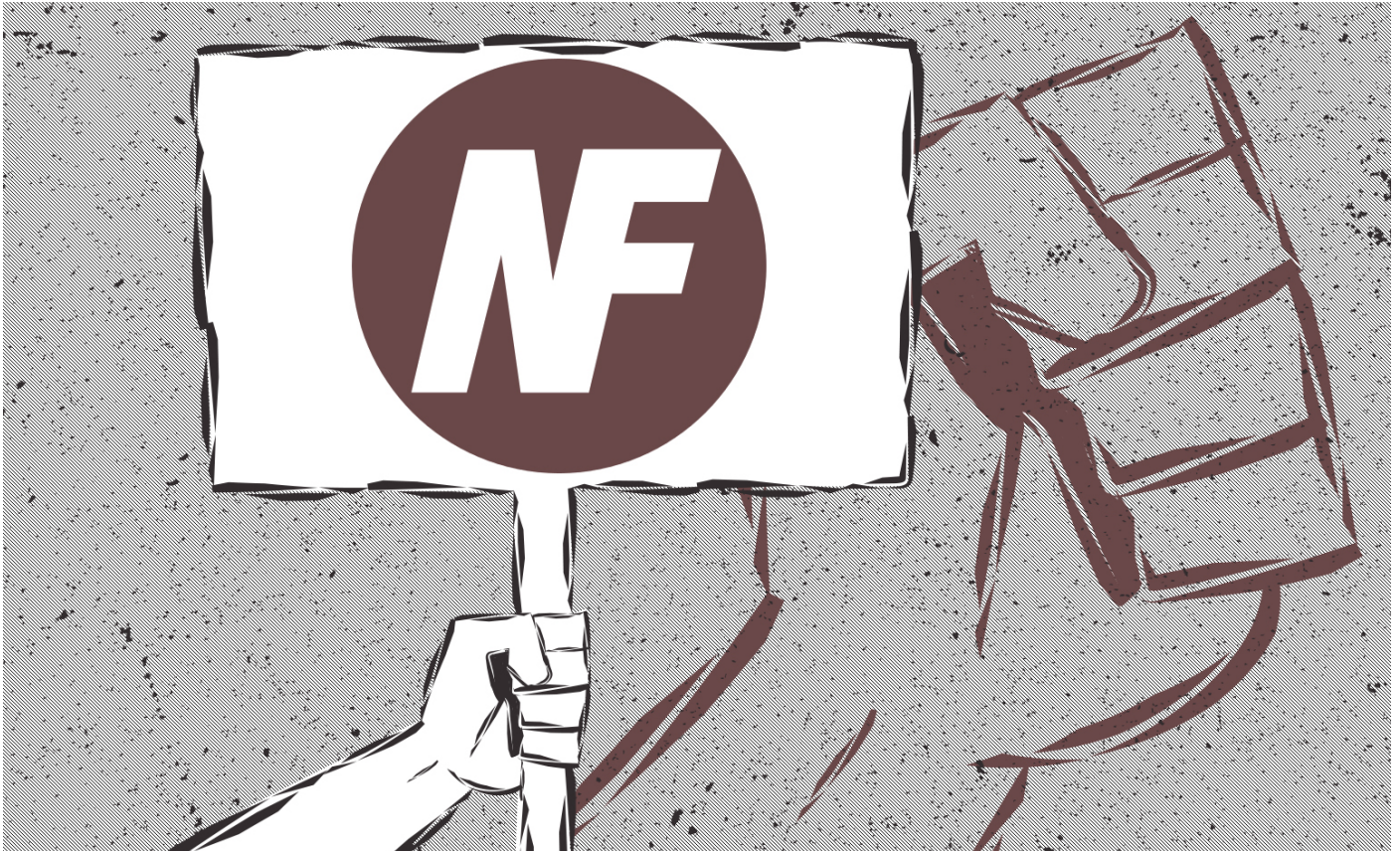
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# ANNEX B:

## THE BRITISH EXTREME RIGHT IN THE 1990S



### 1. INTRODUCTION

Following its disastrous showing in the 1979 general election, the National Front (NF), the principal engine of anti-immigration agitation during the 1970s, collapsed, imploding amidst personal recrimination and factional struggle. NF chairman, John Tyndall, a hard line national socialist activist demanded autocratic control from the party's National Directorate as the only means of arresting the party's ongoing disintegration. When the National Directorate refused, Tyndall resigned in high dudgeon and in April 1982 founded the British National Party (BNP), a small national socialist organization that styled itself as the last bastion of racial rectitude in a profane and culturally decadent world. Tyndall ruled the BNP as his personal fiefdom in accordance with the strictures of the *führerprinzip*. Following the NF's strategy, the BNP staged numerous provocative marches designed

to win both publicity, recruits, and ultimately power, with the aim of replacing democratic government with authoritarian dictatorship. In reality, however, for the majority of the 1980s the BNP was a marginal group, operating more as a 'street gang' than a fully-fledged political party. Tyndall's authority as leader rested, in part at least, upon his political past as a racial revolutionary, his activities during the 1960s earning him convictions for paramilitary activity and firearms offences as well as assaulting a police officer, the latter particularly jarring for him given his subsequent efforts to cultivate a more orthodox 'patriotic' demeanour.

The extreme right was not the only ideological tendency to undergo a political transformation after 1979. Following the collapse of the NF, the Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party (SWP) took the decision to wind-down the Anti-Nazi League (ANL). It also undertook to decommission the 'squads' – cadres of activists whom it had utilized to defend ANL activities from attack. Superfluous to its newly emergent political

priorities, the SWP expelled numerous ‘squadists’ from the party altogether (Renton, 2006, pp. 169-173). Without a political home, many of these, predominantly working class, activists banded together to found a new group in late 1981, Red Action (RA). These activists represented a section of the SWP ‘who refused to accept that electoral performance was the only indices by which to measure fascist activity or success, and who therefore advocated a more proactive response to fascists, most of whom were intent on returning to a strategy of street level rebellion’ (Hayes, 2014, p. 230). Initially RA had been content to confront extreme right activists on a ‘pragmatic basis’. This changed in June 1984, however, after a contingent of skinheads attacked an open-air concert in Jubilee Gardens organized by the Labour-controlled Greater London Council to protest Conservative cuts and unemployment. Thereafter, RA began developing its own ‘mobile combat unit’ that moved beyond defending left-wing events and meetings to undertake offensive violence against the extreme right (Hayes, 2014, p. 231).

The following year, on 28 July 1985, RA became one of the core components of Anti-Fascist Action (AFA), a broader alliance of militant and moderate left-wing groups who coalesced around the principal of opposing a resurgent extreme right-wing street movement. Tensions between the “liberal” and “militant” wings of the organization led to the group splitting in 1989. It was relaunched shortly thereafter by several ideologically disparate left-wing and anarchist groups, all unified by a single objective: militant physical and ideological opposition to the extreme right (Hayes, 2014, pp. 237-38).

From 1985 onwards, AFA and the extreme right activists were embroiled in numerous violent encounters at a variety of venues up and down the country for over a decade. Initially, AFA had attacked skinheads associated with the remnants of the NF before moving to target the Blood & Honour nazi music network through a series of violent confrontations at the rendezvous points for its gigs in Hyde Park (May 1989) and at Waterloo Station (September 1992). AFA activists also targeted shops in central London that served as outlets for extreme right-wing merchandise, which further undermined the network’s capacity to function.

Despite a repertoire of violence that could include the use of bottles, bats, iron bars, chains, and CS gas, against their opponents, anti-fascist activists and extreme right activists generally demurred from upgrading to guns, though C18 reportedly used firearms to threaten and intimidate internal rivals. Use of knives was a more notable feature of extreme right violence, anti-fascist activists highlighted. The choice of weapons, which helped enshrine the ‘normal’ and indeed expected parameters of violence, was underpinned both by moral objections to killing and political calculations as to the level of violence required to close down an extreme right meeting or march, which stopped short of lethality.

These concerns, combined with conceptions of activist risk (i.e., arrest and imprisonment), and the internalization of developments in the legislative and policing environment which severely limited ‘casual’ opportunities to engage in lethal violence, served to inhibit lethality.

There were outliers where actions exceeded these norms. Persons unknown firebombed the home of Leicestershire BNP organizer John Peacock in 1989.<sup>27</sup> In November 1990, a crude explosive device was sent to an AFA meeting in Whitechapel (Birchall, 2010, p. 209). During 1992 unknown perpetrators committed arson attacks against several left-wing premises in London (i.e., the Morning Star offices in April and May) and the West Midlands (i.e., the Democratic Left in August and the Sandwell Unemployment and Community Resource Centre in November). However, these remained relatively isolated events and did not give rise to sustained campaigns of violence marked by tactical escalation.

For numerous reasons, in the midst of this ongoing pattern of violent interaction, leading BNP organisers began questioning the utility of violence as a strategy for advancing their political aims. In 1990 the BNP had begun to concentrate its limited resources on its nascent ‘Rights for Whites’ campaign in London’s east End – a slogan adopted by the NF in the 1970s but used by the BNP ‘to neutralize the Nazi “smear” through local contact and thereby establish the BNP as a legitimate defender of local white residents’ (Copsey, 2008, p. 57). The launch of the ‘Rights for Whites’

<sup>27</sup> *Spearhead*, May 1989.

campaign dovetailed with a series of promising local election results in Tower Hamlets during the course of that year which culminated, ultimately, with the party winning a local council seat on the Isle of Dogs in September 1993.

Such results engendered a transformation in how the BNP practiced politics. Following an encouraging 20% of the poll in a local by-election in Millwall, and reflecting the evolving reality on the ground, Tyndall issued a memorandum to party organisers stressing the need for a new (community-orientated) approach that would enable the BNP to distance itself from 'street-gang politics' and 'stake its claim in the serious political arena'. AFA responded to this by focusing increasingly upon countering BNP activities leading to an intensification of violent street conflict. The political progress of the BNP in London's east End also led the SWP to relaunch the ANL whilst another group, the Anti-Racist Alliance, also emerged during this period. AFA perceived that these groups aimed simply to 'protest' rather than 'stop' the extreme right. Its response, argues Copsey, 'was to differentiate itself from this competition by further emphasizing its physical mettle' (Copsey, 2011, p. 128).

AFA's ongoing campaign led the BNP to upgrade its own tactical response to AFA's assault upon the group. In late 1992 the BNP formed its own 'Steward's Group' to protect its meetings and leadership as well as to meet the anti-fascist challenge offensively too. Those who comprised the BNP Stewards' Group soon adopted the name Combat 18 (C18), its numerology signifying their ideological proclivities: 1 = A. 8 = 8. AH = Adolf Hitler. Initially at least C18 was controlled by the BNP through their Chief Steward Derek Beackon, a malleable figure dependent for direction upon the local BNP leadership. C18 quickly began operating autonomously of the BNP, however. Its emergence coincided with a 'crisis of authority' in Tyndall's leadership. Following the 'false dawn' of the BNP electoral victory on the Isle of Dogs – the seat was lost several months later – younger militants in particular, whose hopes had perhaps been raised by the initial victory, became disillusioned with Tyndall's leadership, some rejecting 'politics' as a waste of time. This added to the allure of C18, which was styling itself as a revolutionary vanguard preparing for an inevitable 'race war'.

C18's emergence, and its subsequent history, implies a weakening or undermining of the internal brakes on violent escalation amongst a section of extreme right activists during this period. As the two groups began pulling apart BNP leaders made overtures to C18, hoping to restore their control over the party's wayward progeny. Increasingly, however, local BNP organisers identified C18's violent activities as detrimental to the party's electoral ambitions, and to the party itself, which was beginning to hemorrhage younger activists to C18. Tensions increased as C18 abrogated to itself the right to 'punish' several key BNP organisers associated with the party's increasingly influential 'modernizing' faction for a range of perceived transgressions. As the breach widened, C18 refused to protect the BNP from anti-fascist militants e.g., once, when AFA attacked BNP activists, one militant appealed to C18 activists drinking in a nearby pub for help. 'The BNP can go and fuck themselves,' came the reply, to laughter. 'They said that they didn't need us, well that's fine by us. Fuck off and tell them that' (Lowles, 2014, p. 54).

Ultimately, however, C18's departure from the BNP's direct political orbit helped the party prioritise its electoral strategy, putting it on the path away from violent street conflict. The BNP organisers' conference on 29 January 1994 unveiled a new 'hearts and minds' strategy based upon local community politicking. This strategic reorientation implicitly recognised that the traditional 'march and grow' strategy, predicated upon controlling the streets as a precursor to wielding political power, had not only failed, it had been counterproductive to its political goals. Richard Edmonds, himself recently jailed for violence disorder, counselled activists in the run-up to the local elections that: 'Now that the BNP was enjoying much higher levels of support, it was important to behave in a responsible and restrained manner, to prove that the BNP was a serious political party worthy of electoral support'<sup>28</sup>. This new direction was publicly unveiled at a press conference in April, announcing there would be 'no more marches, meetings, punch-ups.' BNP organizer Tony Lecomber subsequently acknowledged that one of the reasons for abandoning confrontational street politics 'was because it hindered our political progress, and that was the only thing holding our extreme opponents together... not that such brawls were of the party's making, but the party invariably

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<sup>28</sup> *British Nationalist*, March 1994.

got the blame... and it harmed us politically. Which is primarily why the party has left that sorry excuse for politics behind for good.’<sup>29</sup>

There were dissenting voices with regards to this strategy. Even during the midst of the ‘Rights for Whites’ campaign the party newspaper asserted ‘a party like the BNP must first win power on the streets if it is to achieve power at the ballot box’.<sup>30</sup> Tyndall himself, whilst recognizing the political expediency of his party’s new approach, was never really convinced that marches and demonstrations were ‘politically counter-productive’.<sup>31</sup> Future BNP chairman Nick Griffin also lambasted the ‘over-moderation’ of BNP modernisers – whose approach implied a challenge to Tyndall’s authority – and declared that it was more important for the BNP ‘to control the streets of a city than its council chamber’.<sup>32</sup>

Continued clashes between anti-fascists and extreme right militants throughout this period served to obscure the fact that from 1994 onwards the BNP was beginning to de-escalate its violence and to develop a new ostensibly non-violent tactical repertoire. This reflected, in part, a tactical recognition that it could not compete with its opponents on the streets. Indeed, despite efforts by the BNP leadership to pivot away from street confrontation, if anything the violence intensified in the short term since party activities remained the focus for ‘direct action’ anti-fascism. Indeed, AFA continued its unwavering campaign ‘to destroy all semblance of fascist presence in public spaces – pubs, clubs, halls, streets – and to clear fascists out of working class areas’ (Hayes, 2014, p. 238). In April 1994, a parcel bomb sent to the BNP headquarters by persons unknown injured the BNP activist who opened it. That same month its Newnham election candidate lost an eye when AFA attacked him whilst he was out canvassing. The following month anti-fascist activists attacked BNP press officer Michael Newland in his home.<sup>33</sup> The following summer the BNP head of administration had his home raided by a gang of men who stole three computers.<sup>34</sup>

This ongoing campaign of sustained violence against BNP activists had a profound psychological impact upon the extreme right. As one AFA militant observed: ‘By the end of 1994 you could really see the difference. AFA turned their perception of the Left from a laughing stock into a serious and somewhat sinister inevitability’ (Birchall, 2010, p. 309). The impact of being regularly ‘out violence’d’ by AFA left an ‘indelible mark’ (Copsey, 2011, p. 128) and was an important factor in cementing the BNP’s decision to remove itself from the arena of violent contestation. This tactical revision also reflected the party’s strategic understanding of the political opportunity represented by the ‘white backlash’ against ‘multiculturalism’ within ‘white working class’ enclaves, which it believed it could exploit if only it could successfully reposition itself. Removing itself from the immediate sphere of violent political contestation (i.e., street activity) also deprived anti-fascists of the opportunity for direct action against the BNP. ‘This would drain AFA of its lifeblood,’ noted historian Nigel Copsey, ‘while also denying the “controlled media” the opportunity to hold the BNP responsible for violent disorder’ (Copsey, 2011, p. 129).

The decision to recalibrate the party’s political priorities and ergo the tactical repertoire employed to realise these goals did not reap immediate dividends, however. The party had already lost its seat in Tower Hamlets and within four years, its electoral support within the borough had slumped (Copsey, 2008, p. 51). This decline was attributable, at least partly, to the ongoing ructions with C18 which drained the party’s electoral campaign of momentum, undercutting the political dividend that its strategists had believed would accrue to the party if it absented itself from street violence. During the course of 1994, the escalating violence attributed to C18 certainly served to tarnish the rebranding efforts of its political parent. In December 1994, Gerry Gable, editor of the anti-fascist Searchlight magazine, received a letter bomb. The following month C18 activists firebombed the home of an ANL activist in Gravesend, Kent. Police raids on the homes of several C18 militants that month led them to seize bomb-making manuals, instruction books for snipers,

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<sup>29</sup> *Spearhead*, December 1997.

<sup>30</sup> *British Nationalist*, January 1993.

<sup>31</sup> *Spearhead*, September 1999.

<sup>32</sup> *Spearhead*, February 1996.

<sup>33</sup> *Spearhead*, May 1994 and *Spearhead*, June 1994.

<sup>34</sup> *Spearhead*, August 1995.

and documents highlighting the group's surveillance of targets including journalists who had worked on a World in Action expose of its activities. It is impossible to know how serious the intentions of this group were but police raids ended the possibility for action.

In seeking to counter C18's influence amongst the BNP rank-and-file, Tyndall had to tread a fine line between his own desire for political legitimacy and alienating those younger militants who provided the party with its physical muscle. Having failed to negotiate the group's return to the fold Tyndall attempted to reassert his authority, and therefore apply a brake on the milieu's drift towards violent escalation, by proscribing C18 in December 1995. In practice, however, Tyndall encountered difficulties enforcing his writ. Many BNP activists simply ignored the prohibition, reflecting a crisis in Tyndall's authority.

After physically demarcating the boundaries between the two groups, Tyndall turned to re-establishing his own authority and the party's hardline ideological reputation. C18's militant example had tarnished both. In doing so, Tyndall again had to tread the tightrope between excusing violence and simultaneously restraining its possibility. The challenge and promise of reconciling these two countervailing tendencies, militancy and moderation, was particularly evident during the 1995 BNP annual rally. Tyndall's guest speaker, invited for his symbolic value, was William Pierce, leader of the National Alliance (NA) the most prominent national socialist group in the United States. Pierce was infamous as the author of *The Turner Diaries*, a fictionalized account of revolutionary race war that had inspired numerous militants on their path to committing acts of racial violence and terrorism. Importantly, however, Tyndall sought to co-opt Pierce's status not his strategies, which he did not believe were applicable in a British context.

Though C18 enjoyed an exaggerated reputation regarding its capabilities, the group's violent 'revolutionary' potential dissipated, reflecting its immersion in other conflicts beyond the purely political. Having sought to build bridges with Loyalist paramilitaries, C18 leaders quickly lost their initial interest in the Northern Irish conflict, activists focusing more on football violence. Several leading C18 figures became consumed by settling scores with anti-racist football fans at Chelsea and, thereafter, with internal

rivals who objected to its takeover of the profitable Blood & Honour nazi music network. Increasingly entrained upon its internal rather than external opponents, internal power struggles consumed C18. Indeed, when Will Browning's faction of C18 embarked upon a terrorist campaign, which involved a Danish activist sending a series of letter bombs to England, several of the devices were sent to internal rivals or racial targets rather than political enemies like AFA. Acrimonious personal, political, and tactical disputes reached their murderous denouement in 1997 when the C18 leader, Charlie Sargent and another activist Martin Cross, killed a fellow member, Chris Castle, a close friend of Sargent's factional rival, Will Browning. Rather than leading to a spiral of violence, however, the 'moral shock' that the murder generated within the milieu served as a brake upon further violence as seasoned activists, disillusioned by the experience, walked away from the endeavor causing it to break-up.

The most obvious example of the internal brakes upon violence appearing to fail occurred two years later. In April 1999 David Copeland, a former BNP member who had drifted out of the party and into the National Socialist Movement (NSM), a group that had evolved from C18, embarked upon a terrorist campaign in central London. For thirteen days, between 17 and 30 April, Copeland conducted a nail bomb campaign against London's black, Asian, and LGBT communities in Brixton, Brick Lane and Soho. His final attack upon the Admiral Duncan pub in Soho killed three people including a pregnant woman and her unborn child. Copeland had hoped that his terrorist campaign would trigger a 'race war' that would propel the BNP to victory.

That Copeland acted alone signals his isolation from some of the broader moral and strategic norms that predominated within the milieu. Though he had been a part of the wider 'movement' Copeland was more of an isolated outlier rather than an integrated insider and was out-of-step with BNP electoral strategy even whilst he perceived his actions to be aiding it. Even those on the movement's militant flank ideologically attuned to Copeland's racist, insurrectionary fantasy made no effort to emulate his violence. In fact, several of its leading ideologues condemned Copeland's violence, albeit for a variety of different moral and tactical reasons than those activists aligned with the BNP. Rather than



offering a defiant justification for Copeland's terrorism even the NSM, which had given rhetorical support for the type of action he had undertaken, disbanded shortly after the moment police identified him as a suspect.

Whilst the radical flank of the movement often acted to frustrate the application of internal brakes upon violence that the BNP were attempting to apply in order to advance their political goals through the ballot box, it also had its own direct and indirect mechanisms for limiting violence, which are discussed in greater detail below. Whilst numerous instances of these internal brakes weakening or failing to be applied successfully can be found, ultimately, the BNP was successful in repositioning itself outside of violent street contestation, though in some respects this appears to have been a result of happenstance rather than cold political calculation. After all, the de-escalation and non-escalation of political violence takes place within a broader relational field that is beyond the scope of this case study to address. That said Tyndall's overarching decision to commit the party to an electoral strategy during the early 1990s leading to its 'modernisation' and, ultimately, to the transformation of its fortunes during the 2000s would not otherwise have been possible had party leaders not attempted to negotiate and apply a range of moral, strategic and tactical limits on violent escalation.

## 2. INTERNAL BRAKES ON VIOLENCE WITHIN THE BRITISH EXTREME RIGHT

### 2.1 BRAKE 1

*Identification of non- or less violent strategies of action as being as or more effective than more violent alternatives.*

#### Brake 1a

*Expressions of scepticism about their ability to beat their opponents in a violent struggle, including concerns that greater militancy will increase backlash or repression from opponents or the state towards them and their supporters.*

Extreme right testimonies frequently recognize that with regards the planning and implementation of violence, they lacked the capacity to out-violence their opponents on the streets. AFA's 'practised caution' and 'fastidious attention to detail' (Birchall, 2010, p. 277) when it came to planning violent actions application of violence outranked that of the extreme right. 'We didn't have the cunning or precision planning and execution of the red hit-squads, who seemed to emerge from the shadows like magicians with large smiles and iron bars,' remarked former NF activist Matthew Collins (2011, p. 42). 'The worst of the lot, total scum. When you bump into them, you know it's a fight for survival,' was how another activist described Red Action (Searchlight, 1993, p. 21).

Other accounts highlight that at the action planning level they lacked the political discipline to do so. C18 leader Steve Sargent highlighted the role of pub-culture as an inhibiting factor with regards the preparedness and professionalisation of political violence. 'We never had spotters, the Reds did but we didn't,' Sargent remarked.

'We always lagged behind in things like intelligence. The Reds were always better at that sort of thing. More to the point, no-one wanted to be out of the pub. Who wants to stand around on a street corner looking for Reds when you could be beering it up' (Lowles, 2014, p. 17). Such observations about how high levels of alcohol use inhibited their ability to undertake more organized violence have a parallel with Simi and Windisch's observation about how drug and alcohol use among white nationalists in the USA has hindered possible transition from street violence towards mass casualty terrorism (as opposed to the role of alcohol as a facilitator of opportunistic, racist violence) (Simi & Windisch, 2018, pp. 10-11).

Such realistic appraisals of their capabilities were partly informed by the fact that some activists simply did not identify as 'revolutionaries', linking to brake 3. Regarding his own party, the NF, one former activist recalled:

*We had a lot of tough talkers, lunatics and hard nuts but we hardly ran large-scale terrorist operations. We took, on the whole, a voyeuristic and occasionally helpful interest in our colleagues' violent terrorism and occasionally the odd idiot got himself caught playing with a gun in his bedroom or back garden, but we were responsible for little more state subversion than perhaps a gang of third division football hooligans. We were criminally inclined pub brawlers and occasional drunken racist attackers, but it was not as if we had organised the Poll Tax riots or London bombing campaigns like some of our opponents on the Left had. Politically, we were little more than a poorly organised pressure valve built around obsessive personality cults. (Collins, 2011, p. 237).*

Some NF activists were also aware that the shrinking size of their organization, which diminished as the fortunes of the BNP and C18 increased, reduced their own capacity for increased violent militancy. 'The NF was no longer big enough, strong enough or capable enough to pull off such stunts... Without even the numbers for a punch up the entire day had been a disaster,' noted the same activist following a failed demonstration in Rochdale in 1989 (Collins, 2011, p.

68). This assessment of the group's capabilities led to a wider recognition that in comparison to the more ideologically militant BNP, the NF lacked even the basic resources 'to go into areas where some minor tensions existed and use them to their advantage' (Collins, 2011, p. 95).

The belief that increased militancy will increase the risk of a backlash or repression from the state towards them or their supporters has also served as a powerful inhibitor on the escalation of extreme right violence. Whilst conspiratorial anti-Semitic politics can have a radicalising impact, they could also act as a brake on action; exerting a dampening effect, tactically, because the paranoia they were capable of producing amongst adherents could cause a paralysing effect upon militant action.

This is observable, for instance, in conspiratorial interpretations of Searchlight. The investigative anti-fascist magazine 'cast a huge shadow over everybody's confidence,' noted Collins. 'Even in meetings attended by very few people there was a suspicion that even among our closet and most trusted comrades one of us was "selling out"' (Collins, 2011, p. 189). Those activists favouring a militant response against the magazine and its staff remained hesitant for fear that 'Mossad' – the Israeli secret service – would institute lethal retaliation against them.<sup>35</sup> On one occasion when C18 leader Will Browning planned to attack Gerry Gable, the Searchlight's editor, with a hammer, he 'didn't have the opportunity to use it as he was convinced that the two men [Gable's minders] were carrying weapons of their own.' Browning's own paranoia appears to have contributed to his inaction on this occasion (Lowles, 2014, p. 142).

Fear of arrest and incarceration also caused C18 activists to self-censor on occasion. Whilst preparing the third issue of Combat 18, an 88-page racist and anti-Semitic tirade containing bomb-making instructions and a hit list providing readers with the names of left-wing activists Will Browning had written 'Kill 'em all' next to them. 'The original draft had included the names and addresses of 300 MPs, something Charlie Sargent had removed in a fit of panic' (Lowles, 2014, p. 121). Similar articulations of risk were evident in the aftermath of a (failed) C18 letter bomb campaign

in 1997 when activists were already feeling the pressure from the authorities. When the C18 leader Will Browning began planning another bombing campaign in 1998, he travelled with another activist to visit Germany to discuss the idea; his fellow activists were 'unhappy' with the idea believing that C18 'had attracted too much attention for them to get away with it. Much better, they argued, to lie low for now. Though unconvinced, Browning was forced to accept' (Lowles, 2014, p. 305).

Even within the radical flank, leading activists understood that violence alone would not win the day, not least because groups like C18 and the NSM lacked the capability to enact an enduring violent campaign, at least for the time-being. David Myatt, a leading 'theoretician' involved in both groups, recorded,

*In article after article, in letter after letter, in discussion after discussion, I warned of the danger and urged people to uphold the values of honour, loyalty and duty. I also urged them to consider that the best way forward was a proper National-Socialist organization and to forget plans and talk of an imminent armed insurrection, for - as I had discovered from practical experience the time was not yet right for such plans: we needed the people first, properly motivated, in their thousands, and we had but dozens. (Myatt, 2013).*

### Brake 1b

***Expressions of concern that violent escalation will undermine support for the group.***

The comparative success of the BNP 'Rights for Whites' campaign from 1990 onwards fed back into the application of brake 1b at the campaign planning level. BNP 'modernisers' were increasingly aware that the party's reputation for violent activism and racist politicking might be detrimental to its future progress, repelling those East End voters who, they recognized, might be receptive to its anti-immigration platform but not the aura of violence and thuggery that surrounded its activities. Aware that its reputation as a violent street gang put a ceiling upon the level of support it might win

<sup>35</sup> Respondent B1, anti-fascist activist expert interview.

at the ballot box the party invested in trying to build what has been called a ‘reputational shield’ (Ivarsflaten, 2006) to insulate it against accusations of racism and violence in order to help it reach out to the wider public. To this end the BNP propaganda handbook, *Spreading the Word*, sought to provide activists with the arguments and skills necessary for persuading the public of the righteousness of its cause, linking to brake 5a, which relates to building capabilities that involve non-violence or limited violence.

### **Brake 1c**

*Attempts to build or maintain ties with strategically useful allies who are not supportive of violent escalation.*

There was only limited evidence of this in the extreme right case study. The NF chairman Ian Anderson – though less so his activists – was keen to build strategically usefully alliances with right-wing conservatives and to do so sought to redefine his party as a more respectable ‘anti-immigration’ party rather than a violent skinhead movement during this period. There is no evidence that this strategy met with any particular success. This aspiration presumably influenced Anderson’s determination to uphold a ‘non-confrontation policy’ so as not to alienate those allies he perceived might find his ‘anti-immigration’ stance appealing but would be repelled by violence. Whilst this served to an extent as a brake upon violent escalation within the NF, the party’s perceived ‘lack of confrontational ambition’ (Collins, 2011, p. 200) displaced a section of its activist base into the movement’s radical flank (i.e., C18), which, by comparison, was uninterested in building links with allies who were less supportive of violent escalation. Both here and with regards the BNP above, the presence of radical flank actors made it difficult to apply brakes because those drawn to violence had an outlet for such actions.

### **Brake 1d**

*Identification of political opportunities that favour (re)adoption of non- or less violent strategies of action.*

During the 1980s, it seemed that political opportunities for the extreme right were decreasing, as immigration slid down the list of ‘salient public concerns’. When Margaret Thatcher gained power in 1979, 16% of the populace considered the issue important. When she was re-elected in 1983 this figure had slumped to just 3% and even when John Major was elected in 1992 the figure had only risen to 5% (Goodwin, 2010, p. 42). Following Margaret Thatcher’s re-election in 1983 extreme right ideologue Colin Jordan perceived that the electoral route to power was no longer an option, and began advocating for the adoption of various forms of leaderless resistance or cellular activity. It is worth noting however that whilst such violent stratagems are common intellectual currency on the extreme right, this does not mean that they will automatically be adopted (Dobratz & Waldner, 2012, pp. 49-66). Indeed, having debated Jordan’s strategies, Tyndall agreed that an electoral route to power was closed, but rejected the adoption of violent anti-State militancy, opting instead to invest in developing the movement, sitting things out until political climate became more favourable.<sup>36</sup>

The 1990s appeared to herald new political opportunities, however. Locally, in London’s East End, the ‘white backlash’ against ‘multiculturalism’ was beginning to suggest to party strategists that there might be a way forward. The pages of *Spearhead* and *British Nationalist*, the BNP ideological journal and the party’s newspaper respectively, actively identified this as representing a political opportunity. A series of promising by-election results in the area reinforced this belief. The BNP’s victory in the Isle of Dogs in Tower Hamlets in September 1993 enshrined within the party’s leadership cadre the idea that the type of electoral politicking implied by its ‘Rights for Whites’ campaign could reap reward, encouraging them to invest party resources in this direction which led away from rather than towards violence.

The adoption of non-violent strategies was a matter of political possibility rather than morality, however. Tyndall rejected the idea of armed insurgency for numerous reasons not least of which was that it would not succeed in Britain (as he knew from prior experience).<sup>37</sup> This did not mean that he rejected violence out of hand. He acknowledged that it could be

<sup>36</sup> *Spearhead*, August 1983.

<sup>37</sup> <http://www.spearhead.com/0209-ib.html> [Accessed 24 January 2012].

valid as a tactic within other national contexts. Indeed, when debating the violent strategies of William Pierce, leader of the National Alliance in the United States, Tyndall denied his strategies were applicable to Britain but conceded that ‘were I in Dr. Pierce’s shoes I may well favour doing exactly what he is doing’ (Tyndall, 1994).

### Brake 1e

*Identification of non- or less violent strategies of actions that are perceived to be effective, including identification of ‘sufficient’ levels of violence beyond which further escalation is deemed unnecessary.*

The BNP ‘Rights for Whites’ campaign is a case in point and has been discussed in detail above. Initially considerable violence marked the BNP campaign (i.e., Weavers Field) but as the strategy began to win electoral support and its potential became evident – not least through increased votes and membership enquiries – party activists internalised the need to move away from violence, forcing their political opponents to follow suit since the former arenas for political contestation were being curtailed. Whilst the detail of this strategy is beyond the scope of this case study, its overarching impact contributed to a further de-escalation of violent street conflict. However, it might also be noted that Derek Beackon’s election in September 1993 only provided the BNP with a model of ‘success’ that acted as a brake on violent escalation within the milieu for a short period of time. When Beackon lost his seat the following year a growing number of activists drifted into C18, which rejected public support as a measure of ‘success’.

Anti-fascists and the extreme right alike also made political calculations, underpinned by moral objections to killing and personal codes of honour as well as the ‘routine’ nature of street fighting itself, that the escalation of violence to greater levels was simply unnecessary when it came to closing down an opponents’ march or meeting. Quite simply this was achievable without resort to lethal methods.

## 2.2 BRAKE 2

*Construction of moral norms and evaluations that inhibit certain forms of violence and the emotional impulses towards violence (e.g., revenge).*

### Brake 2a

*Articulation and performance of general moral norms and principles that problematise certain forms of violence, require violence to be justified or enable activists to forestall on entering the ‘tunnel of violence’ (e.g., the conception of violence as a tactic of last resort; positioning non-retaliation as a virtue; emphasising values such as mercy and compassion).*

Moral norms mitigating against the application of greater levels of violence, or the use of a particular form of violence, emerged throughout the case study. Studies of extreme right-wing violence have highlighted that many activists adhered to a broad set of moral ‘norms’ and ‘codes’ that dictated their targets, choice of weapons, and the level of violence that was either warranted and indeed justified. As Simi and Windisch (2018) have highlighted elsewhere, the general moral norms and principles that problematised certain forms of violence are similar to those governing bar room brawling or fighting on football terrace, both of which extreme right activists are familiar with.<sup>38</sup> Memoirs and journalistic accounts of extreme right violence highlight that even the most violent activists functioned in accordance with personal moral codes, however erratic these sometimes were. One NF organizer with a reputation for violence was described as, ‘the sort of bloke who would help an old lady across the road, turn the corner and punch somebody else to the ground’ (Collins, 2011, p. 40). Similarly, one leading C18 activist was observed to possess ‘a rigid, though unconventional, sense of honour’ (Lowles, 2014, p. 51).

These moral injunctions against a certain form of violent escalation or the manner in which it was carried out was evident in reaction of Tony Williams, leader of the National Socialist Movement, to the London nail bomb attacks in April 1999 which were, it transpired, carried out by one of its activists, David Copeland.

<sup>38</sup> Copes, Hochstetler & Forsyth (2003, pp. 761-794) elaborate upon ‘a code of violence as part of a system of order and honor as articulated by a network of White, working-class males in a southern U.S. city who participate in bar fights.’ Their findings suggest ‘the code these men use prohibits predatory violence, puts exclusive limitations on situations that warrant violence, and constrains the level of violence in a fight.’

Williams, who quickly dissolved his group, intimated that Copeland's terrorist campaign was "un-Aryan" (and hence dishonourable) because of the manner in which Copeland had undertaken his indiscriminate terrorist campaign, embarked upon without warning and with no accompanying list of demands (Lowles & McLagan, 2000, p. 221). Thus, even when brakes fail, the subsequent reaction to their failure feeds back into the moral prohibitions of certain forms of violence (i.e., that an action was wrong) and such events become part of a process through which barriers and boundaries are reasserted to uphold the original prohibition. This links in part to brake 3 and notions of group identity (i.e., 'we don't do things like that') – though if Copeland's victims had been perceived to be 'guilty' then such statements might have been different. Sections of C18 certainly valorised his actions regardless.

Indeed, brake 2a was most clearly observable on occasions where it was breached, during and after violent encounters or attacks which activists perceived to have gone too far, often, though not always, in the heat of the moment (i.e., in the inner circle of analysis). Recording his involvement in football violence one extreme right activist recalled, 'At one point, I was fighting two Millwall blokes when one of our mob stuck a screwdriver into the cheek of one of them. Fuck that; I didn't mind having a punch-up, but this was over the top' (Portinari, 2016, pp. 25-26).

### Brake 2b

#### *Identification of some groups of actors as illegitimate targets for violence.*

Whilst caution should be exercised regarding the uncritical acceptance of self-justificatory narratives by extreme right activists, which position themselves as moral political actors whilst distancing themselves from racist thuggery, there is nonetheless a category of extreme right actor who, despite their ideologically enshrined racism, did not regard ethnic minorities as legitimate targets for violence in most circumstances. Whilst reviled and dehumanized in equal measure, ideologically, immigrants and ethnic minority communities during the 1990s were regarded by groups like the BNP as the largely unconscious tools of a wider Jewish-controlled plot to undermine the racial fibre of white European nations. In this sense, they were a second order target. The real enemy were the Jews and the liberal/left establishment.

At the campaign planning level of analysis, this was reflected in the criticisms by national socialist ideologues of David Copeland's 1999 bombing campaign. Colin Jordan for instance objected to the 'wanton barbarity' of Copeland's actions for several reasons. Foremost was his argument that Copeland had targeted an 'innocent' category of people (i.e., the general public) who had limited culpability for the problems he believed to be ranged against race and nation:

*Had Copeland directed his attention to some prime culprits of the system of genocide and repression, and focused his punishment on them alone, one could certainly have felt that they had brought it on themselves by their wickedness against our race and nation, and in what amounts to a war waged by them against us had been fairly and properly punished. As it has been with this misdirected mayhem, prime culprits had gone unscathed, and we have been damaged along with Copeland's victims. Altogether a bad business.'* (Frost, 2014, p. 311).

This identification of legitimate and illegitimate targets can also be seen within action planning and situational levels. There is evidence that a minority of activists divided their racial and political opponents into different categories, some more deserving of violence than others. BNP activist Tim Hepple recalled witnessing an attack on a mixed race couple unfortunate enough to pass too close to forty BNP activists following an anti-racist demonstration in the area. Whilst this attack 'nearly made me sick on the spot' because it was both 'unnecessary and unprovoked' Hepple displayed no such aversion when recalling a 'vicious beating' doled out to a left-wing activist he and his colleagues caught tearing down BNP posters.

*I didn't feel much emotion. It was just another attack in many ways and did not, for me at least, have the connotations or unprovoked qualities of Thomson's attack on the black and white couple I related earlier. It struck me on the way home that night that I had become quite immune to violence, particularly against left-wingers. I was in no way prepared to attack ethnic minorities for any reason, and all the attacks I got involved in were against brain dead*

*Marxists like the SWP who need to have some tactical sense knocked into them.*  
(*Searchlight*, 1993, pp. 21).

For other activists the type of left-wing activist targeted for violence also made a difference. Eddie Whicker, an NF activist involved with C18 activities was never 'entirely comfortable' with the level of violence the group employed, despite his own reputation for violence. 'After participating in the attack on left-wing paper sellers on Brick Lane, he threw up down a side alley.' This emotionally and physically visceral reaction to the level of violence used against a target (i.e., left-wing paper sellers rather than AFA militants) who were unable to defend themselves 'went too far' Whicker later told a fellow activist (Lowles, 2014, p. 69).

Within the moral vocabulary of the extreme right, attacks on women were also constructed as beyond the pale since they conflicted with basic paradigms about what constituted manhood and masculinity, though observance of such norms was uneven, to say the least. The impact of breaching this moral 'norm' can be seen clearly in the individual reactions of Matthew Collins who took part in a BNP-organised attack upon a community meeting at Welling Library, south London, in June 1989, which hospitalized seventeen people, the majority women. For Collins, an NF activist who joined the BNP attack, the event was pivotal. 'Afterwards I agreed with [NF organizer Terry] Blackham that we would never mention what happened in Welling Library that night'. 'It physically shook him, which, with hindsight, I find hard to believe. At the time, however, I thought we were both going to be sick immediately after we left the library...' (Collins, 2011, p. 51).

The emotional impact of participating in such an action engendered a complex feedback loop for Collins, affecting his subsequent trajectory as a committed extreme right militant. Participation in the assault caused a deep sense of shame that conflicted with his self-identity (thus linking this brake to brake 3): 'I was a fucking coward to have done such a thing,' he added upon further reflection. 'I began to realise that this was what race wars were about, the innocent attacked and their dignity destroyed. If my mother had known, she would have disowned me on the spot.' In his case, these feelings did not dissipate. 'Still Welling Library played on my mind... Did we really attack a meeting of women

and gleefully report and celebrate it?' Guilt contributed to propelling Collins out of the movement and led him to cooperate with the anti-fascist *Searchlight* magazine against his former colleagues. Whilst feelings of shame, guilt, and remorse, fed back into Collins subsequent behaviour, the moral brakes that had begun to assert themselves following the Welling Library attack were not applicable to all forms of violent conduct. Writing of one subsequent violent encounter, Collins recalled 'Sure I had days where I was wracked with guilt and self-pity, but this is what I did and this is what I was part of. I know it was wrong, but there really didn't seem to be anything else and my head was buzzing with the thrill of being a pimply politician for one half of my day and part of a vicious gang of thugs the next' (Collins, 2011, pp. 55, 75, 151, 155 and 175-176). The latter comment also highlights how moral brakes on violence are undermined: violence can simply be too exciting to give up, at least in the short term.

Whilst attack planning did not preclude escalating their violent repertoires to encompass arson attacks against their opponents, within the moment of action moral norms often sharply reasserted themselves when it became apparent that their activities might result in the death of someone unconnected to their political grievance. Recalling his involvement on a recce of a building they regarded as a front for Irish Republicanism, one activist noted that until that point no one had contemplated that people might be living above the offices. When they did suddenly saw someone in one of the rooms above the building:

*You could have cut the atmosphere with a knife and there was clearly a great deal of unease among everyone. This was definitely not what had been on the agenda and anger had very nearly led to the potential murder of an innocent woman and her family... If nothing else, it gave people time to consider the consequences of what their actions could potentially lead to. Bluntly put, it became a case of: if you're going to do a big lump of bird, you might as well make the targets worthwhile ones. (Portinari, 2016, p. 96).*

In the case of C18, the 'moral shock' experienced by members of the core group after the killing of Chris Castle in 1997, which was related in the introduction, was also related to categories of underserving victims

of violence. It was not simply fear for their personal well-being that led activists to drift away from the group. They also believed it to be wrong to be killing people in your own group for ostensibly petty personal reasons.

## 2.3 BRAKE 3

*Self-identification as a group that is either non-violent or uses only limited forms of violence.*

### Brake 3a

*Production of group narratives that emphasise non-violence or the limited use of violence either by themselves or by those they claim have inspired their movement.*

Extremist right wing groups during this period represented a form of pariah politics, marginalized politically and culturally. Given a historical and ideological lineage that traces, ultimately, to the interwar politics of Nazism and Fascism this case study did not uncover widespread narratives of movement histories that connected them to non-violent movements or movements that advocated limited forms of violence or the use of violence as a last resort. Though it is slightly beyond the time frame of this case study, in the early 2000s BNP ideologues began reinventing their political past, highlighting past political models of electoral ‘success’ to justify their current ‘modernisation’ strategies and to disconnect the party from anti-Semitism, racism and violence. In re-narrating their past they sought not only to bolster their quest for political legitimacy but also discredit figures like Tyndall, by then viewed as an unwelcome encumbrance to further electoral progress (Macklin, 2011, pp. 19-37).

Where movement narratives addressed violence directly it was usually to emphasize it as a defensive rather than offensive act. BNP publications almost uniformly characterized acts of violence involving their activists as ‘self-defence’ or in extremis ‘very rare’ instances of unsurprising ‘retaliation’ during the course of an ‘open war’ which had been declared upon the party by anti-fascists (Tyndall, 1998, pp. 486-87). When convicted for violent offences, party publications portrayed this as an injustice. Party narratives also undermined the seriousness of certain convictions. Absent, within BNP propaganda, however, were the types of overt narrative

glorifying violence that characterize the publications and pronouncements of groups like C18.

Where the BNP did attempt to connect its political narratives with movements who disavowed violence was in the evolution of how it expressed its racial ideology, which moved from biologically racist calls for ‘white power’ to embrace white grievance narratives, influenced by cultural arguments for ethno-plurality. The ‘Rights for Whites’ lexicon for instance drew upon a wider constellation of ideas from within the milieu which sought to position the movement as a white advocacy group, no different from the black civil rights movement with all the implications that this comparison implied with regards non-violence. These narratives would evolve in sophistication over the course of the following decade as the party’s electoral position embedded.

### Brake 3b

*Disassociation from more violent groups or factions and/or association with less violent groups or factions.*

Though the BNP had created C18 it quickly became a political liability from which they sought to disassociate themselves. The negative headlines C18 garnered in the media inevitably served to discredit the BNP given the group’s provenance. The principal tool used to disassociate the BNP from C18 was to officially proscribe the group, indicating to members the party’s rank-and-file that the BNP could no longer tolerate its style of violent activism.

Another way in which the BNP – and other groups – sought to define themselves against C18 was through the medium of conspiratorial politics. Despite or perhaps because of its militancy C18 was characterized as an MI5 ‘honey trap’ operation. By positioning C18 in this way, the BNP sought to marginalize the group and discredit it in the eyes of its own activists who might be seduced by its siren call for militant action. They also shifted the responsibility for the violence carried out in its name away from ‘genuine’ extreme right activists and onto the State.

The same strategy for disassociating themselves from the violence of the movement’s radical flank can be seen vis-à-vis the BNP response to David Copeland’s terrorist



campaign. British Nationalist, the BNP newspaper, posited four theories regarding responsibility for the attacks: a so far unknown ‘racist terror group’, a loner ‘racist or otherwise’, Muslim extremists or ‘it was the work of the state itself’. For British Nationalist it was the last explanation that fitted the bill since it tallied with its assertion that its’ chief political rival, C18, ‘was actively sponsored by at least one state agency’. ‘Some readers who might have difficulty accepting that “our” security services might do such a thing,’ claimed British Nationalist, ‘need think on the state involvement of a number of terrorist outrages on the continent and the probable FBI involvement with the Oklahoma bombing in the USA’.<sup>39</sup> In a similar vein Nick Griffin, the future BNP chairman, claimed it was ‘probable’ that MI5, working through a ‘state-sponsored “pseudo-gang”,’ had orchestrated the bombings to derail the party’s European election campaign and to enable them to introduce repressive laws that could be used against the party, and legitimize an increase in the security service budget.<sup>40</sup> Linking back to brake 1a, such conspiracy theories also functioned as a warning against involvement with overtly militant groups, since they were construed by their less tactically radical opponents as being not what they purported to be.

Disillusionment also led individual C18 activists to begin disassociating from violence, particularly in the aftermath of the killing of Chris Castle, prior to exiting the group altogether. One leading C18 activist involved in the group’s letter bomb campaign in 1997 recorded that after being asked to travel to Germany to post more bombs the following year

*I began to take stock of my life and realized that my heart wasn’t in it any more. I also saw the futility in the right wing and particularly how many of the idiots within it. How can you talk about racial superiority when you have the perverts, Satanists and weirdos that are constantly attracted to the right within your ranks? When you’re involved and are totally committed to the conspiracy theories and simplistic way of looking at life, it is easy to forget just what sort of people are involved. There were some decent ordinary people, family types, but there were also the trash. (Searchlight, 2001).*

### Brake 3c

*(The threat of) sanctions for activists who advocate or undertake violence beyond the established parameters of the group’s action repertoire, and/or opportunities to achieve intra-group respect and prestige without undertaking or encouraging the use of violence at or beyond the parameters of the group’s action repertoire.*

BNP guidance to party recruiters noted that those talking the ‘language of violence’ were best kept at ‘arm’s length’ since ‘the people who perform best in these [violent] situations are those who talk least on the subject’ (British National Party, n.d., p. 13). Within the extreme right milieu, respect and prestige, was afforded activists with a proven record of militancy and commitment. BNP leader John Tyndall was a case in point. His authority flowed from his past and present militancy whilst his own personal experience and the ‘mistakes’ of his past meant that his rejection of the strategy of revolutionary violence as futile carried some weight. Tony Lecomber and Eddy Butler, the key BNP ‘modernisers’ also had reputations for ideological and physical militancy which lent a certain gravitas to their efforts to recalibrate the party. The BNP victory in the Isle of Dogs victory in 1993 reinforced their standing within the party, though not across the entire movement, indicated by the fact that C18 subsequently targeted both men, both for personal reasons, and wider perceptions of their political moderation.

Despite being able to apply a range of sanctions against those who breached party edicts, there were very few instances of the party leadership sanctioning its activists for transgressing established parameters, particularly where violence was concerned. ‘Eddy Butler, who had gone home from the attack on the ANL with his hands and face covered in his victims’ blood, was not disciplined by the BNP leadership and was soon afterwards promoted within the BNP to the post of national elections organizer,’ recorded one former activist (Searchlight, 1993, p. 36). Indeed Tyndall dismissed Lecomber’s 1985 conviction under the Explosives Act as ‘foolish’ which he declined to take further action against because the court had already pronounced upon it: ‘He has suffered enough’. He similarly refused to accept, publicly at least, that

<sup>39</sup> British Nationalist, May 1999.

<sup>40</sup> Spearhead, June 1999.

his national organizer, Richard Edmonds, or the other activists convicted with him, were guilty of the act of racial violence for which they were jailed, blaming the actual attack – in which a black man had his face slashed – upon ‘fringe’ elements unconnected with the party (Tyndall, 1998, pp. 495-496).

In this case study, the relative absence of sanctions for violence beyond the parameters of the action repertoire might also reflect the limited authority of movement leaders over the movement. Even after Tyndall officially proscribed C18, many BNP activists simply used both labels as banners of convenience, operating as ‘BNP’ or ‘C18’ depending on the activity in question. ‘We won’t admit to having anything to do with [C18], but at the same time, if our policies don’t work, it’s switched over to them. It’s basically the same people, but with a violent side to it,’ recalled one Scottish BNP activist.<sup>41</sup> Tyndall and his lieutenants were all mindful that many BNP members ‘were keen to align themselves with C18 on a street level while some in the leadership remained national socialists at heart.’ C18 and its political wing, the National Socialist Alliance, were at their ‘peak’ during 1995. Tyndall faced the dilemma that if he applied the brake too firmly (i.e., by expelling BNP activists) he would only strengthen C18 thereby weakening his own political position (Lowles, 2014, pp. 149 and 151).

Whilst there were opportunities for achieving prestige and position within the movement without recourse to extreme violence, albeit based upon a past track record of proven militancy, extreme right subcultures continually privileged certain forms of physical masculinity from which individuals derived ‘respect’ from fellow activists. Such physical authority can serve as a brake or an accelerant on violence depending upon the context, however. Within the NF, Eddy Whicker’s reputation meant that fellow militants sought his view when Matthew Collins’ loyalty to the NF was suspect as a result of his proximity to certain figures within the BNP. This selfsame reputation also accorded Whicker the respect of C18 who relied upon his judgement whilst they pondered Collins’ fate once they suspected, rightly, that he was an informer. Whilst Collins notes Whicker’s role in preventing violence against his person, he was under no illusion that had Whicker known that the accusations against him were true ‘the

one protector I’d had on the far right was possibly the one who would finally give the go-ahead for C18 to do me in’ (Collins, 2011, pp. 62, 289, 293, 295, 296).

### Brake 3d

*Circulation of limited expectations that they will be involved in greater levels of violence.*

In his autobiographical account of life as the NF youth organizer during the early 1980s Joe Pearce recalled the ‘endemic’ level of street violence which ‘seemed to be woven into the very fabric of life for active members of the NF’ (Pearce, 2013, pp. 54-55). Recalling the regularity of its practice and the ‘flashpoints’ at which it would occur, newspaper sales and marches, what can also be inferred from Pearce’s account is the generally predictable nature of when and where violence would take place combined with an expectation of what the activists involved could expect and, perhaps more importantly, what not to expect. Prior experience served to inhibit a serious escalation in future violence. When tactical escalations did occur, for instance with C18’s formation during 1992, the activists involved, initially at least, remained bound by the same collective understanding of the limits of street violence. In brawling with AFA, C18 militants expected a ‘tear-up’ but did not expect anyone to be killed (Lowles, 2014, p. 18).

This weight of expectation led one anti-fascist interviewee to highlight the existence of certain unwritten ‘rules of engagement’ regarding street violence i.e., you might go out to hurt someone but you wouldn’t be going out to kill them or that you wouldn’t attack people at home. These rules depended upon the willingness/unwillingness of local activist cultures or clusters of activists to uphold them, however. In Leeds extreme right activists’ targeted anti-fascist opponents at home, in one instance firing a crossbow bolt through the window. Anti-fascists in London also assaulted BNP treasurer Mike Newland at home too. More often than not, however, AFA targeted property in an attempt to ‘inconvenience’ their opponents i.e., cutting phone wires, slashing car tires and gluing locks in a bid to deter future involvement (Hann & Tilzey, 2003, pp. 148 and 151). Importantly, even these transgressions of the ‘rules of engagement’ did not deviate too far from the broadly conceived parameters of the conflict.

<sup>41</sup> Channel 4, *Dispatches*.

Limited expectations of violence inhibited preparations for greater violence, reflected in the choice of weapons taken to events, connecting here with brake 5a regarding the development of capabilities that focused upon strategies of action that entailed more limited forms of violence. Indeed, although some BNP activists upgraded to arming themselves with hammers and adjustable spanners during the escalating clashes in the East End during the spring of 1992 (Searchlight, 1993, p. 34), they did not countenance a serious escalation in violence by acquiring firearms. This brake undoubtedly reflects an internalization of, and interaction with, a powerful external brake on violent escalation: Britain's restrictive gun laws. These were tightened after the massacres in Hungerford (1987) and Dunblane (1996) making it much harder, though not impossible, for activists to obtain firearms.

These brakes weakened on the radical flank, however, as C18 increasingly exhorted its activists to greater acts of violence, publishing 'hit lists' of opponents alongside exhortations for them to be killed and bomb-making instructions. C18 publications frequently called for 'ethnic cleansing' to restore racial purity alongside atrocity photographs from the Holocaust but also, contemporaneously, the Yugoslavian civil war in which the C18 sided unambiguously with Serbian paramilitaries. Despite this rhetorical violence, C18 failed to invest in its tactical wherewithal, that was rudimentary. Its lack of professionalisation was evident in a subsequent effort by C18 leader Will Browning and his colleagues to firebomb the home of Gerry Gable, editor of Searchlight magazine:

*Arriving at Gable's road in the early hours of the morning, Browning realized that he had forgotten the balaclavas. He decided to continue and the gang went to a nearby garage, bought some plastic bags and cut out eyeholes. They returned to Gable's, where Browning leapt out of the car and lit the device he had made. At that moment, a gust of wind swung the plastic bag round on his head. Unable to see, Browning panicked and hurled the lighted bomb in the general direction of what he thought was the correct house. He pulled the bag from his head only to see the device explode in the next-door neighbor's drive. Even if he had hit the right house it was unlikely to have had the desired*

*effect as Browning had not realized that to cause maximum damage he needed to pack shrapnel into the device. After a huge blast caused by the petrol igniting, the bomb soon fizzled out. (Lowles, 2014, pp. 142-3).*

Even when the group embarked upon a letter bomb campaign in 1997, it did not develop the bombs themselves, outsourcing the task to Danish C18 supporters who shouldered the burden of making and sending the packages themselves albeit at the behest of C18 in London.

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## 2.4 BRAKE 4

*Boundary softening in relation to putative out-groups (e.g., opponents, opponents' perceived supporters, the general public or state actors).*

### Brake 4a

*Resistance to generalizations about their opponents.*

The strategic concerns outlined with regards brake 1b led subsequently to boundary softening. This tactical recalibration of the BNP outlined above also underpinned a de-escalation of party's ideological militancy, at least on the level of public presentation, in order to build an electoral base amongst those elements of the 'white working class' that might support its anti-immigration policies but would balk at its overt biological racism. Toning down this element of its programme led the BNP, ultimately, to drop its symbolically sacrosanct commitment to 'compulsory' repatriation in favour of 'voluntary' repatriation because of the violence that this forced removal of people and their families implied. This reframing of ends and means fed back to action planning; party organisers phased out activities that might associate the party with violence and undermine their electoral ambitions.

That said, this boundary softening was slow to take effect and not readily observable during the 1990s. It would be another decade before it began to embed. During the period in question conspiratorial extreme right wing rhetoric and praxis across the constellation of groupuscules that comprised the milieu routinely dehumanized racial and political opponents as agents

of an ‘evil’ plot in a way that anti-fascist narratives about fighting the ‘fash’ or ‘boneheads’ did not.

The BNP and the NF both did purge their publications of crude racist language, but this was likely primarily because they were aware that its inclusion invited prosecution under the Race Relations Act. C18, meanwhile, was visceral in its racist and anti-Semitic invective, demanding the ‘noose’ for racial and political ‘traitors’ whilst reveling in fantasies of ‘ethnic cleansing’ and ‘race war,’ which left little room for compromise.

Despite their antipathy towards their opponents, extreme right accounts of anti-fascist violence against them occasionally exhibited a grudging respect for their capabilities, which indicated, at least to an extent, that their opponents had not been completely dehumanized. C18 leader Steve Sargent recalled an attack on Red Action activists drinking at a North London pub following a demonstration: ‘I remember that Gary O’Shea just standing there in the pub doorway throwing pool balls. Give him his dues, game geezer’ (Lowles, 2014, p. 18).<sup>42</sup> Whether this had any implications for the level of violence that they were willing to deploy towards them is unclear.

#### Brake 4b

*Identification of segments of the public beyond their previously-imagined support base as potential converts to their cause.*

The extreme right and anti-fascists were both essentially fighting, beyond their immediate support bases, for the hearts and minds of the broader ‘white working class’ who were perceived as potential converts, either to the cause of race and nation or the class struggle against capitalism. This central point of conflict also served to highlight a powerful brake on violent escalation, which was not evident in other contexts. Carter’s study of cumulative extremism in Northern Ireland highlights that one of the ways in which the Republican and Loyalist groups could escalate their conflict, particularly when they were not able to attack one another directly, was to target the support base of their opponents through the targeted or indiscriminate killing of Catholics and Protestants (Carter, 2017, pp.

37-51). In the case of the British extreme right, this was never a strategic option since to wage war on their opponents conceived constituency would be to wage war against oneself and ergo ones’ own sense of identity, which would be politically counterproductive not to mention cognitively dissonant for the groups in question.

#### Brake 4c

*Limited intra-movement pressure to ‘burn-bridges’ with social contacts outside of the movement or outside of the radical flank of the movement.*

The social and cultural ties maintained by individual militants with friends, family and employers, exerted a powerful brake upon involvement with militant, and indeed less militant, extreme right sub-cultures. Groups like the BNP never encouraged its members to ‘go underground’ but rather to serve as beacons of racial rectitude within their own communities which the ‘community action’ component of party activism was meant to entrench. Whilst activists were often dismissive of the ‘sheeple’ (i.e., people behaving like sheep) the BNP’s ‘Rights for Whites’ strategy was paradigmatic of the party’s attempt to mobilise rather than alienate broader public support from the ‘white working class.’ C18 by comparison was contemptuous of the public. Inspired by US ideas of small, racialised communes, C18 supported developing a white racial ‘homeland’ in Essex though there were few takers for the scheme or its underlying rationale of withdrawing from wider society.

The BNP’s pre-natal policies, which encouraged the cultivation and maintenance of (racially appropriate) personal relationships in order to produce future generation of white children was also indicative of a broader desire to engage rather than withdraw from society. Even without external pressure, racist militants often internalized the day-to-day drudgery of earning a living, and remaining employed, as a brake upon certain categories of violent activity. ‘Having concluded with others that a race war would be the only possibility for nationalist survival, I realised that I would do everything I could to make it happen,’ recalled Matthew Collins. ‘However, my job in the civil service was not conducive to revolutionary activity’ (Collins, 2011, p. 38).

<sup>42</sup> Portinari (2016, p. 37) also notes a ‘begrudging respect’ for Red Action based on an appreciation of their capacity for street violence.

**Brake 4d**

*Expressions of reluctance to conceive of the state security forces as ‘the enemy’.*

The criminality of many of its activists aside, a basic patriotic respect for ‘law and order’ including the police and the army was a central tenet of ideological faith. Senior BNP activists worked to prevent violence against the police, albeit sometimes for political and pragmatic reasons. During violence at a march in Bermondsey in 1991, Matthew Collins recalled BNP national organiser Richard Edmonds shouting ‘Don’t throw stones at the police’ though other voices in the mob could be heard shouting ‘Get the police on bikes’ whilst stones and bottles are thrown in their direction, highlighting that control over countervailing tendencies was never complete (Collins, 2011, p. 149).

The effectiveness of such brakes was also compromised at times through claims about political bias within the upper echelons of the police as opposed to regular officers. Tyndall for example regularly criticized the ‘political’ leadership of the Metropolitan Police (Sir Paul Condon coming in for a particular amount of vitriol) with the justification that the higher echelons of the police were ‘playing at politics’ and subverting police ‘impartiality’ which fed into wider narratives of ‘establishment’ subversion (Tyndall, 1998, p. 495).

This brake appears almost non-existent on the radical flank. C18 publications regularly denigrated all police officers as ‘scum’ working for ‘ZOG’ (the Zionist Occupation Government) and therefore paid collaborators of a ‘system’ that they wanted to overthrow through revolution. Such rhetoric could be tempered by personal experience at a micro-level, however. David Myatt, one of the group’s most ardent advocates for revolution found, after being arrested in 1998, that the ‘professional attitude’ and ‘courteous’ manner of the arresting officers and those who subsequently interviewed him ‘made me revise my attitude toward the Police’ (Myatt, 2013). Both the BNP and C18 spoke of the Armed Forces with greater respect than the police.

**2.5 BRAKE 5**

*Organisational developments that either (a) alter the moral and strategic equations in favour of non- or limited violence, (b) institutionalise less violent collective identities and/or processes of boundary softening, and/or (c) reduce the likelihood of unplanned violence.*

**Brake 5a**

*Limited investment in capabilities to escalate violence, and/or development of capabilities to undertake strategies of action that either entail non- or limited violence or more controlled violence.*

Once the ‘Rights for Whites’ campaign began gathering momentum local BNP activists began refining their tactics. ‘By this stage in our development we decided that the unpredictable, noisy and volatile public meetings were a thing of the past,’ stated local organizer Steve Smith. ‘Although they helped us establish our name in Tower Hamlets, they required a great deal of resources and time to organize. More importantly, we had learnt from canvassing feedback as well as from anecdotal evidence that public meetings were becoming, by this time, somewhat counter-productive’ (Lowles, 2014, p. 39). This also implied a tactical shift away from C18, which was now surplus to requirements, an observation that intersected with brake 3d regarding the group’s limited expectations that they would be involved in greater levels of violence, at least in the short term, not least because the group’s own political ambitions also counselled against investing in such capabilities.

The break from the BNP also coincided with C18 losing interest in Northern Ireland, which it viewed as ‘increasingly futile and counter-productive’ (Lowles, 2014, pp. 78 and 81), and focusing instead upon the football hooligan scene, which, curtailed the group developing the sort of ‘revolutionary’ forms of violence that its publications paid lip service to.

Activists also put measures in place to manage levels and styles of violence during actions. In his memoir of his time as a leading AFA activist in Northern England Dave Hann observed that ‘Some of the most dangerous situations came when small groups of fascists and anti-fascists chanced upon each other in back-streets, well away from the police’ (Hann & Tilzey, 2003, p. 223). Both AFA and groups like the BNP generally sought

to avoid such encounters by meticulously planning for violent face-to-face encounters. Being able to control violent situations and to modulate the levels of violence applied during them, depends on the extent to which such groups can control the micro-dynamics of violence that arise from the fears and tensions that accumulate in anticipation of violence conflict. This can result in what Randall Collins calls ‘forward panic’ – those moments in which control is lost and panic sets in which leads activists on either side (including the police) to try and re-establish ‘emotional dominance’ through violence.

To minimize the chance of this happening the BNP and NF both sought to manage, modulate and co-ordinate their violence at marches through the institution of certain individuals as ‘Stewards’ answerable to a ‘Chief Steward’ who is in turn answerable to the party. Those who became stewards were likely a self-selecting cadre of experienced militants who came to the fore through ‘voluntary’ participation in street activism, as was the case with AFA (Hann & Tilzey, 2003, pp. 240-241). To what extent an extreme right trained its stewards regarding how not to react to provocation or, importantly, not ‘over-react’ is unclear though the BNP Activist’s Handbook laid down a series of guidelines for personal conduct indicating that some level of thought had been devoted to the issue. Arrangements to limit or at least control violence appeared more advanced within London BNP than amongst its regional branches where one activist perceived a ‘purpose, determination and planning behind the activities’ which had been absent in West Yorkshire where he was previously active (Searchlight, 1993, p. 22). C18 began life as the BNP ‘Stewards’ Group’ though it quickly moved beyond the party’s control, highlighting the fragile nature of said ‘control’ within the extreme right milieu during this period.

Stewarding and security arrangements were also applied to protect activists out canvassing since any violent confrontations would undermine their ‘non-violent’ electoral strategy. To this end:

*Groups were not to split up, to use their common sense and to stick together in the face of trouble. We were also told not to leaflet houses obviously occupied by non-whites, although it was quite usual to leaflet a house with left-wing posters or stickers in*

*the window... The thing about activities in south London, with which I was involved on a daily or often twice daily basis, was the animal-like territorial nature of activities. Edmonds, Tyler or White would know a “bad street” from a good one, and often, a “bad house” from a good one. (Searchlight, 1993, p. 22)*

Whilst this attention to detail regarding a ‘bad street’ undoubtedly related to an awareness of houses populated by ethnic minorities and therefore not worth canvassing, it also highlights calculations made by senior party activists to avoid knocking on doors where their message was unwelcome which could needlessly provoke, leading to incidents that might spiral beyond their control.

### **Brake 5b**

*Foregrounding more modest or intermediate objectives and de-prioritising revolutionary goals.*

The intermediate political goals of the BNP i.e., local elections, which came to dominate the day-to-day activities of the organisation, served to undermine the strategic logic of violence and neutered the party’s ‘revolutionary’ pretensions in the process. Whilst the BNP continued officially to campaign for its long-term goal of the destruction of liberal democracy and its replacement with a racial state (which it never renounced) in practice this goal was effectively de-prioritised because the party and its activists ploughed their energies into achieving their intermediate goal of electoral representation and public support.

### **Brake 5c**

*Construction and maintenance of spaces in which a range of activists that includes and extends beyond the radical flank are able to freely discuss tactics and movement objectives.*

Despite his centralized control Tyndall developed spaces and forums within the party through which activists could freely discuss tactics, ranging from the annual party rally, which gave activists a role in developing and shaping policy, to contributing to Spearhead, the party’s ideological journal, which Tyndall used as a forum to facilitate discussion. Whilst Tyndall exerted full editorial control (and ownership)

over Spearhead (though occasionally he entrusted editorship of the magazine to reliable lieutenants for long periods) he published articles from a range of sources and authors, not simply those who were BNP members or with whom he agreed tactically or ideologically. Tyndall also tolerated publications like Patriot, set up as a mouthpiece to further the agenda of BNP ‘modernisers’, though they were not initially explicit about their overarching agenda, which was to work for his removal (because his reputation was seen as a drag upon their electoral ambitions).

The key question is whether within the ideological and theoretical spaces provided by such publications radical flank actors were exposed to the views of the wider movement that might have led them to understand that support for more militant action was less than they might have imagined. It is not possible to answer this question based on the available data. However, it might be noted that whilst Tyndall tolerated a measure of ideological heterodoxy, so long as contributions adhered to core racial nationalist principles, he operated a tighter control over the political structure of the party itself, which caused some tension. Tyndall had a close circle of long-standing political comrades, which frustrated newer voices with different strategic views who found that this relatively closed clique hard to influence (Tyndall, 1998, p. 486). He also styled himself as the supreme arbiter of ideology and strategy, meaning that those with tactical differences to those he prescribed, were forced to operate outside the BNP. This made it easier for the BNP to distance itself from the resulting violence of group’s like C18 which it bore some responsibility for cultivating in the first place.

### **Brake 5d**

*Concerns among some group members that violent escalation will compromise their ability to shape the direction of the movement and/or negatively affect their position within the movement.*

Following the debacle with C18, the BNP leadership identified how violence and their investment in violent capabilities had actually disrupted their organization and weakened both their own ability to control their party and tarnished their political capital within the milieu more generally. Having belatedly learned this lesson, Tyndall and his lieutenants made no further effort to re-invest in the party’s physical capabilities,

which in any case had become surplus to its evolving political requirements.

### **Brake 5e**

*Concentration of energy on targeting movement rivals, leading to reduced capability to prosecute campaigns of violence against their external enemies.*

From the outset, C18 appeared more interested in attacking internal rivals within the BNP than with protecting the party from external assault. Whilst the BNP dealt with internal discord politically, C18 sought to resolve such conflicts with violence. This approach manifested itself more widely as the group sought to exert its control over the lucrative Blood & Honour music scene, which magnified internal tensions over money, personal prestige, reputational damage, and tactics, that led to the killing.

The impact of internecine feuding within C18 undoubtedly blunted the movement’s capacity for violence, leading ultimately to its murderous conclusion in 1997 when C18 leader Charlie Sargent killed Chris Castle, a friend of his factional rival, Will Browning. The impact of the killing had a profound impact, because, as Darren Wells, a senior C18 figure in Browning’s faction, suggests, it brought home to even the core C18 group, the consequences of their activism. The psychological impact on the leadership of the group served as a further constraint on external violence as Browning’s focus ‘moved totally to getting retribution for Chris Castle’. Many members drifted out the group as a result ‘because they knew where it was heading... I think it pushed a lot of people away, and a lot of people did think that about Will, they thought he’s bad news to be around.’ ‘I know it sounds awful,’ Wells added, ‘but really Chris dying probably saved lives because that put an end to any plans for race war.’ Wells also highlighted the personal impact of the killing on his own life, leading him ultimately to exit from the scene too (Searchlight, 2001).

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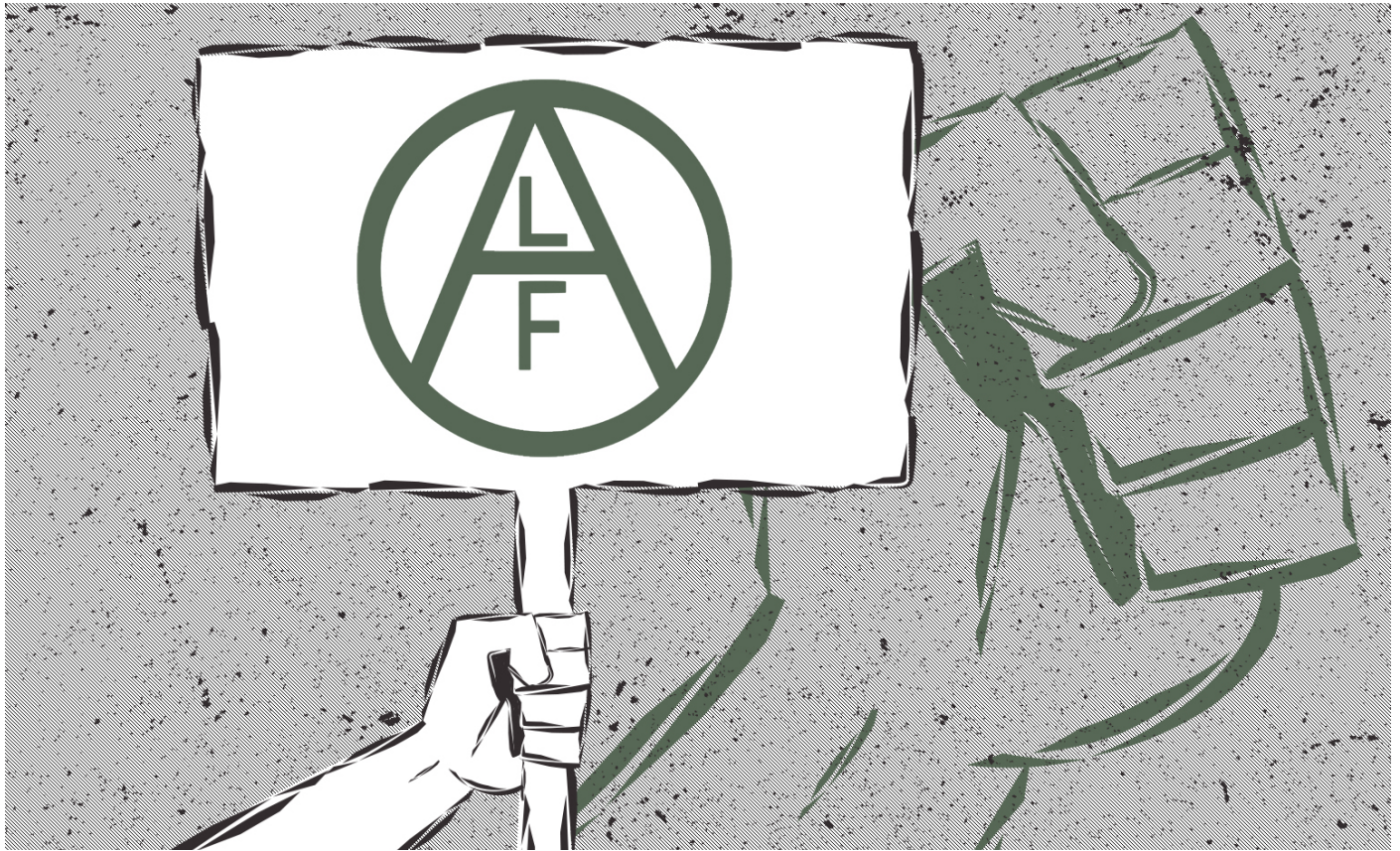
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# ANNEX C: THE ANIMAL LIBERATION MOVEMENT IN THE UK, 1972-EARLY 2000S



## 1. INTRODUCTION

For the purpose of this case study, we consider the Animal Liberation Movement to comprise a sub-section of the wider animal rights movement, characterised by their willingness to use illegal forms of direct action in order to advance campaigns for animal rights, including, but not necessarily limited to, trespass and property damage.

Scholars and activists alike often trace the origins of the animal liberation movement to the formation of the Band of Mercy in 1972 by Ronnie Lee, Cliff Goodman and four others. Lee and Goodman, both previously activists with the Hunt Saboteurs Association (HSA), are said to have formed the Band of Mercy out of frustration both at the slow pace of change and at how the HSA's commitment to non-violence sometimes made hunt saboteurs a soft target for violence from hunt supporters (Nagtzaam, 2017, p. 49). A short campaign

of criminal damage ensued: focused initially on targets associated with fox hunting and seal hunting, it soon also targeted factory farming and animal experimentation (Molland, 2002). The first use of arson took place in 1973 at an animal experimentation laboratory under construction in Milton Keynes (Henshaw, 1989, p. 14). Lee and Goodman were arrested in 1974 for their part in a raid on Oxford Laboratory Animal Colonies, Bicester. On release from prison in 1976, Goodman renounced animal rights activism, but Lee, along with 30 other activists, formed the Animal Liberation Front (ALF). Causing in the region of £250,000 worth of damage to property in their first year of existence (Nagtzaam, 2017, p. 74), the ALF soon made news headlines and has remained one of the most prominent animal liberation groups in the UK and beyond up to the present day.

Throughout most of its history the animal liberation movement has operated through a loosely structured network of prominent individuals, groups and

campaigns. The ALF itself has always operated on a cell-based structure, said to have been inspired by the IRA and a desire to maximise resilience to police disruption (Henshaw, 1989; Liddick, 2013). As such, while there has at times been a centralised public communications team, local groups of activists operate largely under their own steam, providing that they operate within the group's 'Credo'. Indeed, according to that Credo 'Any group of people who are vegetarians or vegans and who carry out actions according to ALF guidelines have the right to regard themselves as part of the ALF.'<sup>1</sup>

There have also been multiple groups alongside the ALF that could be considered part of the animal liberation movement, including the Animal Rights Militia (ARM), Hunt Retribution Squad (HRS), Justice Department (JD) and the various regional Animal Liberation Leagues that briefly gained prominence in the 1980s. The extent to which these ever comprised distinct groups has been subject to debate. As a minimum, there has been significant overlap between them in terms of personnel, and some observers have considered these labels little more than banners of convenience or 'ad hoc acronyms dreamt up for the occasion' (Henshaw, 1989, p. 12). Where new labels have been used to claim more violent actions, such 'groups' have enabled hitherto radical groups, such as the ALF, to position themselves as relative moderates and sustain their claims to eschew the use of physical violence.

Since the latter half of the 1990s, the organisational picture has been further complicated by the emergence of several multi-faceted campaigns against specific entities involved in breeding or storing animals for experimentation, such as the Save the Hill Grove Cats campaign, a campaign to close down Consort Kennels, and the Save the Newchurch Guinea Pigs campaign against Darley Oaks Farm. These campaigns involved a broad spectrum of pro-animal activists, with different tactical appetites, who deployed a variety of more or less legal and more or less violent strategies of action, ranging from information and fundraising stalls, to marches, pickets, lock-ons and liberation raids, through to serious property-damage, harassment

and intimidatory home visits. The successes achieved through these campaigns – several of which achieved their primary objective of closing down the entity that they were mobilising against – inspired some of the most high-profile animal rights campaigns of the early 21st century, such as Stop Primate Experiments at Cambridge (SPEAC), SPEAK (a similar campaign focused on Oxford University), and Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty (SHAC).

Throughout this time, the animal liberation movement has had a complex relationship with wider animal rights and animal welfare movements. On the one hand, relations between the more radical and moderate strands of pro-animal activism have been 'based on a considerable amount of mutual distrust, which sometimes even turns into hostility' (Posłuszna, 2015, p. 68). Activists in both camps frequently accuse one another of undermining the cause and, often, of placing their own personal interests before those of the animals on whose behalf they claim to be campaigning. Whole sections of some of the ALF Supporters Group (ALF SG) Bulletins were given over to identifying 'fifth columnists' (e.g., *ALF SG Bulletin* 13, Oct 1984) while critics of ALF, and of the ALF SG in particular, blamed the rise of what they described as a 'cult of militancy' for undermining efforts to build a mass movement to promote animal rights (Roberts, 1986).

Yet there are also examples of collaboration and mutual recognition across moderate and radical strands of pro-animal activism. During the 1980s, for example, while the established and highly respected British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection (BUAV) criticised some of the property damage carried out under the ALF banner, particularly when it involved targeting individuals, they also made use of video and documentary evidence captured during raids by the Animal Liberation Leagues during their attempts to bring legal action against a number of organisations involved in animal experimentation (Mann, 2007),<sup>2</sup> and even provided office space for ALF and the ALF SG until 1984 (Stallwood, 2004).

There have also been frequent overlaps in personnel between ostensibly more radical and moderate animal

<sup>1</sup> Accessed via [http://www.animalliberationfront.com/ALFront/alf\\_credos.htm](http://www.animalliberationfront.com/ALFront/alf_credos.htm).

<sup>2</sup> Henshaw (1989, p. 165) also argues that groups such as the National Anti-Vivisection Society (NAVS), accepted footage from groups such as the Animal Liberation Leagues and ALF because 'when it came to what the ALF had to offer, even though it had been obtained illegally, the temptations were too great for nice considerations about the ethics of receiving stolen property

rights organisations. There have, for example, been cases of individuals who were on the committee of organisations that officially opposed the use of illegal actions, such as BUAV, the League Against Cruel Sports (LACS), National Anti-Vivisection Society (NAVS) and Animal Aid, while being actively involved in groups deploying more radical strategies of action. For example, Mike Huskisson was for a while a LACS press officer, until his position became publicly untenable when he was caught during a South East Animal Liberation League (SEALL) raid on the Royal College of Surgeons laboratory (Henshaw, 1989, p. 167). It is likely that such overlaps in personnel were partly the product of attempts by some animal liberation activists to gain a voice in, even control of, some of the larger, more established and resource-rich pro-animal organisations, such as BUAV, LACS, NAVS and even the RSPCA (Henshaw, 1989, pp. 156-165).<sup>3</sup> They were also likely a product of more general recognition across the animal liberation movement and among some of the more tactically moderate pro-animal activists that pro-animal activism was more likely to be effective when they adopted a pluralistic approach to their tactical repertoire (Best & Nocella, 2004).

## 1.1 VIOLENT ESCALATION AND NON-ESCALATION WITHIN ANIMAL LIBERATION ACTIVISM

As with most social movements, the tactical repertoire of animal liberation activism has encompassed a wide range of more and less radical activities, evolving over time at least partly in response to changes in their operating environment. In the case of animal liberation activism, such changes have included the

significant upgrading of the security at animal breeding centres and research laboratories, largely as a result of the threat of raids from animal liberation activists, and, more importantly still, significant developments in the legal environment, with several new pieces of legislation being used to criminalise the radical flank of animal rights activism and reduce the range of legal protest methods available.<sup>4,5</sup>

What makes the animal liberation movement an interesting case study with which to explore the internal brakes on violent escalation is that it is open to contrasting interpretations of the effectiveness of these brakes. On the one hand, it could be read as an example of repeated brake failure. The ALF, the foremost animal liberation group, established itself ostensibly as a ‘non-violent campaign’ and has continued to insist on its non-violent credentials. In their Credo they make clear that anybody operating under the ALF banner should take ‘all precautions not to harm any animal (human or otherwise)’.<sup>6</sup> Yet there have been multiple and repeated instances of violent escalation during the history of the ALF and the wider movement. From the outset, there was a rapid escalation from minor property damage and animal rescue to arson, and then in the early 1980s ‘an observable shift’ took place as ALF activists began ‘personalizing’ threats as part of their campaigns of intimidation (Monaghan, 2013, p. 935) – a shift that arguably converted itself into a lasting norm.<sup>7</sup>

In 1982 the ARM sent letter bombs to the leaders of the main political parties. By the mid-1980s ALF activists were using pocket-sized incendiary devices to carry out arson attacks on department stores selling fur, and during the winter of 1985-86 a series of ‘six minor bomb attacks’ on scientists’ homes and four car bombs

3 ‘Flashback: 5 November 1994 – Police called as rival factions clash at anti-vivisection group’s meeting’, *Red Black Green*, 5 November 2017, accessed via <https://network23.org/redblackgreen/2017/11/05/flashback-5-november-1994-police-called-as-rival-factions-clash-at-anti-vivisection-groups-meeting/>

4 This has included the Public Order Act 1986 (especially Section 5, enabling detention of people causing harassment, alarm or distress); the Malicious Communications Act 1988; the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 (especially the offense of aggravated trespass in section 68); the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 (used to establish exclusion zones where activists are unable to protest; to seek civil injunctions against animal rights activists to prevent harassment of employees; and prohibit forms of harassment including abusive communications and defamatory public notices); the Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001 (which extended police powers established under previous legislation); the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 (which enabled, on conviction, the imposition of ASBOs banning individual activists from approaching the premises of or making contact with companies involved in animal experimentation); and the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act 2005 (especially sections 145–149, which prohibit acts or threats intended to cause someone to terminate or not enter into a contract with animal testing facilities). See Monaghan (2013) and Ellefsen (2016) for detailed descriptions of the application of these legal instruments and analysis of how they affected the trajectory of animal rights activism and specific campaigns.

5 Mann (2007, p. 597) argues, ‘campaign adaptations have been necessary to deal with increasingly unreasonable policing. With the police steadily softening the effect of lawful protest by designating ‘protest zones’ and dictating what language and images can be used, tactics have had to change. Step over the protest line to get near enough to be heard and risk arrest. Say something that might be deemed offensive to an animal poisoner within the hearing of a police officer and risk arrest.’

6 Accessed via [http://www.animalliberationfront.com/ALFront/alf\\_credos.htm](http://www.animalliberationfront.com/ALFront/alf_credos.htm)

7 Mann (2007, p. 61) appears to acknowledge this in his observation about the initial use of home visits: ‘At that time, unlike thirty years later, there was little appetite for actions which specifically targeted people’s homes as opposed to the centres of abuse. In stark contrast to today’s environment, vivisectioners were left largely unmolested at home.’

were carried out under the ARM banner (Monaghan, 2013, p. 936). Violence escalated further in April 1986 when ARM adopted a ‘no more warnings’ policy for such attacks, thereby increasing the likelihood of serious injury, or worse (Monaghan, 2013, p. 936).

No fatal attacks were forthcoming. However, in 1989-90 a further escalation occurred when three devices using high explosives were set off: one at the Senate House, Bristol University, one under the car of a veterinary surgeon working at the Porton Down laboratories of the UK Government, and another under the car of a Bristol University scientist (Vines, 1990). The first device was claimed by the previously unheard of Animal Abused Society, and was dismissed by some activists as a ‘false flag’ operation. The second two devices remain unclaimed. Nobody was seriously injured by any of these devices, although a baby in a passing push chair was reported to have received some shrapnel injuries during the last attack. The attacks attracted strong condemnation from within the animal rights movement, including from some within the ALF (Graham, 1990). Even Lee, often an advocate for the more militant tendencies within the movement, intimated that such attacks went beyond the bounds of legitimate action (Lee, 1989).

In spite of the condemnation of such tactics, there was another wave of violent escalation at the radical flank of the movement three years later, this time under the banners both of the ARM and the JD. In October 1993 a package addressed to an individual connected with field sports exploded in a postal sorting office and was subsequently claimed by the JD. They claimed a further 31 attacks in 1993, ‘predominately poster tube and video cassette bombs’ and claimed in the region of 100 attacks during the course of 1994 (Monaghan, 1999, p. 163). This included a series of letter-bombs in June of that year, targeting the live exports industry, one of which exploded in the hands of a secretary at the offices of Stena Sealink, a shipping company, causing minor injuries.<sup>8,9</sup> Unusually within the animal liberation movement, these attacks were accompanied

by public statements about ‘their desire to inflict injury on their targets’ (Mann, 2007, p. 503). Meanwhile, in the summer of 1994 the ARM set off a number of incendiary devices, one of which caused a major fire in Cambridge, and a series of attacks that caused an estimated £3m worth of damage across the Isle of Wight. The ARM attacks were later attributed to Barry Horne.

Outside of these campaigns of violence aimed at damaging the commercial interests of companies identified as responsible for animal abuse, there have been numerous isolated assaults, as well as prolonged campaigns of intimidation. These have included the attacks on Brian Cass, managing director of Huntingdon Life Sciences (HLS) and Andrew Gay, HLS marketing director, outside their homes in February 2001; campaigns depicting specific individuals involved with animal experimentation industry as paedophiles;<sup>10</sup> instances of grave desecration and even, perhaps most notoriously, the removal of the body of Gladys Hammond, mother-in-law of one of the partners at Darley Oaks Farm, from her grave in 2004. While it is clear that support for such activities within the animal liberation movement, and even the ALF itself, has always been far from unanimous (Stallwood, 2004), it has led some observers to argue that the ALF has an ‘almost schizophrenic attitude to violence against humans’ in which they ‘publicly argued against violence against humans while condoning it in many cases as a legitimate tactic’ (Nagtzaam, 2017, p. 63).

On the other hand, the animal liberation movement could be read as an example of remarkably effective internal brakes being applied over a period of more than 40 years. During this time there have been significant upward spirals of political opportunities as the main political parties in the UK and elsewhere have made clear their support for the animal experimentation and meat industries;<sup>11</sup> a substantial escalation of state repression in the form of significantly expanded legal and police powers to disrupt animal rights activism (see above); and several serious provocations by their

<sup>8</sup> ‘Animal protesters send five bombs’, Mary Braid, *The Independent*, 4 June 1994. Accessed via <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/animal-protesters-send-five-bombs-1420284.html>

<sup>9</sup> Gurjeet Aujla was subsequently arrested for the Stena Sealink letter bombs, but was not adjudged to have been responsible for other JD campaigns. ‘Justice Department’, accessed via <http://www.animalliberationfront.com/Philosophy/AbuseLinked/justiced.htm>;

<sup>10</sup> For example, ‘Activists blamed for child sex slur’, BBC News, 7 October 2003, accessed via [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/england/staffordshire/3172766.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/staffordshire/3172766.stm)

<sup>11</sup> As Mann (2007, p. 596) argues, ‘The campaign against HLS galvanised the movement and changed the rules of the game against vivisection. It opened up the fact that the battle against HLS is a war against vivisection between the people and the entire petrochemical/ pharmaceutical/ governmental machine, whose activities are sanctioned, protected, and funded by the State and its various branches, who in turn profits from the power and wealth of those industries.’

opponents (including the deaths of one anti-live-exports campaigner, two hunt saboteurs and another seriously injured in confrontations with hunt supporters). All of these developments could potentially, and at times arguably did, lend themselves to emergent radicalisation dynamics.

Nonetheless, animal liberation activists have never used lethal force, albeit this in some cases appears to have been more a result of good fortune than careful planning.<sup>12</sup> Where violence has escalated, such as with the adoption of arson attacks, care has usually been taken to avoid serious physical injury, for example by using timers so that devices go off outside of business hours when there are unlikely to be people around; checking around and inside of buildings and vehicles for human and non-human animals prior to undertaking arson attacks, and even on occasion aborting actions where they are considered to pose too great a risk of harm (Stallwood, 2004). Certainly, instances of animal liberation activists setting out to cause serious physical harm are outliers, and much of the most bellicose rhetoric – Lee’s advocating for ‘the lightening of violence’ (Henshaw, 1989, p. 100) or his comment that ‘Someday, someone will get a screwdriver in the face’ (Henshaw, 1989, p. 11) – has rarely if ever been matched by their deeds.

Instead, close attention to the history of the animal liberation movement reveals fairly consistent and widespread intra-movement push-back against escalation of violence beyond established repertoires of action. There have only ever been a small number of activists willing to carry out acts of arson (Mann, 2007, p. 508), with many within the movement expressing concern not only that such attacks undermine public support but that they also carry too great a risk of harming humans or other animals (e.g., Webb, 1990). Direct opposition to violent escalation can often be found within the pages of movement-wide publications such as *Arkangel* magazine, and has also taken the form of tactical innovations away from violence. One of the clearest examples of the latter was the formation in the 1980s of the various Animal Liberation Leagues and their adoption of daylight information gathering raids in which activists explicitly eschewed clandestinity and

sought to minimise damage to property (Monaghan, 1999, p. 71) – a shift away from violence that was however curtailed when such actions resulted in the mass arrests of those involved (Nagtzaam, 2017, p. 71). Similarly, opposition to the adoption of personalised targeting was reportedly what led the BUAV to expel the ALF SG from their London offices in May 1984, and the Peace News Collective to expel the ALF SG from their PO Box later in the same year (Stallwood, 2004).

As such, the animal liberation case enables us to explore both how brakes have been applied over four decades, and how some activists at the radical flank of the movement have at various points undermined the effectiveness of these brakes. It also enables us to look at how different brakes combine. Of particular interest here is the way that different brakes at times operate apparently in isolation, almost as trade-offs of one another – for example in Lee’s observation that ‘the only reason the ALF so far has not killed any of the enemy is not a principle position, but rather a matter of tactics’ Nagtzaam (2017, p. 82),<sup>13</sup> or in Best & Nocella’s (2004, p. 57) reflection that the challenge for the ALF concerns ‘how to be as militant and effective as possible without losing the moral high ground, without alienating public support, and without diluting the values of freedom and compassion’. At other times however the moral and strategic logics appear to align with one another, such as for example when moral proscriptions of violence coincide with arguments about how campaigns based on a mass movement are more effective than isolated acts of militancy (e.g., Roberts, 1986).

<sup>12</sup> In Asal & Rethemeyer’s (2008, p. 260) study on the use of lethal force, they also note that ‘Though two environmental/animal rights organizations committed enough attacks to make our list of the fifty most active terrorist organizations in our database, not one of these attacks was lethal’.

<sup>13</sup> It is possible that such statements contain a certain element of bravado and posturing, implying in effect that the only reason they haven’t done more violence is because they have chosen not to, but that that might change, so their opponents ought to be wary.

## 2. INTERNAL BRAKES IN THE ANIMAL LIBERATION MOVEMENT

Throughout its history, there has been limited ostensible organisational control of violent escalation within the movement. The ALF has tended to exert scant direct control over individual cells (Monaghan, 1999, p. 165), and some of the most violent actions have been carried out by people acting largely on their own e.g., Barry Horne's and Gurjeet Aujla's respective 'ARM' and 'JD' bombing campaigns. Yet academic accounts, activist memoirs and documentary evidence indicate a range of internal brakes on violent escalation being applied through activist networks at the levels of campaign planning, action planning and during actions, applied both by some of the more tactically moderate actors and by some situated very much within the radical flank.

### 2.1 BRAKE 1

*Identification of non- or less violent strategies of action as being as or more effective than more violent alternatives.*

Brakes operating on strategic logics are prominent across contexts of campaign planning, action planning and during actions. As noted above, their relationship to moral brakes in particular is somewhat ambivalent. While at times the strategic logics for limiting violence are presented as coinciding with moral logics, at other times moral and strategic logics are presented as being in competition. Lee, for example, argued on occasion that he had no moral qualms about using greater levels of violence, in particular violence against persons, but that he did have concerns that such violence would undermine public support and therefore urged activists

to respect norms regarding the limited use of violence. Each of the five sub-brakes under brake 1 are evident within this case study.

#### Brake 1a

*Expressions of scepticism about their ability to beat their opponents in a violent struggle, including concerns that greater militancy will increase backlash or repression from opponents or the state towards them and their supporters.*

Scepticism about their ability to beat their opponents in a violent struggle was rarely foregrounded by activists, presumably as it was largely taken as a given. After all, in the final analysis their campaign was conceived of in terms of challenging the state-industrial complex. It is nonetheless present and appears to have played an important role in shaping tactical decisions within animal liberation activism. While some radical fringe actors conceived of direct action, including some limited forms of violence (primarily against property) as being a fundamental part of the struggle, there is little indication that even the more radical actors within the radical fringe of the movement conceived of their struggle as one that could be won primarily, let alone solely, through violence. Rather, direct action was almost always conceived of ultimately as part of a wider movement strategy (e.g., Stallwood, 2004). This did not preclude the use of some violence. Some radical flank actors framed their actions as those of a guerrilla campaign, for example. However, such framing in itself generates opportunities to apply brakes on violent escalation due to the emphasis that it places both on notions of maintaining discipline and self-control<sup>14</sup> and on building support within the wider population (see brake 1b).

Concerns about the personal costs of conflict escalation were frequently expressed, with the spectre and prior experience both of state repression and of backlash from opponents used repeatedly to urge caution about loss of discipline and control. During campaign planning, action planning and during actions activists frequently reminded one another about the risks of arrest. This was often expressed through comments about how it wasn't 'worth it' (Respondents C1, C2 and C3), a phrase that

<sup>14</sup> A letter in *Arkangel* magazine from Pippin Took, a contributor, citing Inti Peredo, A Bolivian guerrilla of the 1960s, writes, 'Those who participate in the preparatory stage of a guerrilla movement must have an extra-ordinary capacity for self-control and sacrifice' before going on to talk about the relevance of this (Mann 2007, 352).

## INTERNAL BRAKES IN THE ANIMAL LIBERATION MOVEMENT

### THE INTERNAL BRAKES ON VIOLENT ESCALATION

simultaneously worked on moral logics – with notions of not needing or wanting to ‘stoop’ to the level of their opponents – and on strategic logics through the idea that they were more likely to be able to help animals if they weren’t in prison or under a restraining order. As might be expected, concerns about state repression intensified as activists found themselves and their colleagues facing increasingly severe sentences (Mann, 2007, p. 597).

Concern about backlash from opponents is most apparent in contexts relating to hunt sabbing, where activists experienced the most intense and frequent interpersonal violence through their clashes with hunt supporters, albeit personal accounts of hunt sabotaging indicate considerable regional and local variation in the levels of violence, often a function of the relationships formed between local hunt supporters and local hunt saboteurs (Respondent C1 and C2; Mann, 2007). Such concerns clearly impacted on activists’ actions. Respondent C2 recalled that even where they felt aggrieved about violence that had taken place during previous meets, they and their fellow hunt saboteurs would in general seek to avoid confrontation at subsequent meets rather than pursuing revenge due, at least partly, to a desire not to escalate the violence. Mann also describes how awareness of the consequences of escalation in effect set up a conundrum for some hunt saboteurs, keen to get together with other hunt saboteurs to ‘hit’ hunt supporters with mass disruption as ‘payback’ for previous actions, but at the same time aware that this would likely lead to retribution.

*National hits were big payback for something serious, a show of strength with 200 sabs to say: you hit us we hit you. It didn’t always help, of course, to support these big hits on the local hunt and then leave, because local sabs would later bear the brunt of subsequent retribution. But equally, these raids would have a controlling effect on some hunts. (Mann, 2007, p. 234).*

The way that concerns about backlash from opponents translated into internal brakes is perhaps illustrated most starkly by Mann’s account of the deaths of two young hunt saboteurs, Mike Hill (1991) and Tom Worby (1993). Mike Hill’s death prompted a vigil by activists outside the house of the man who had been driving the vehicle from which Hill fell and died. The vigil turned

into a house-raid that resulted in multiple arrests. Mann claims that Hill’s death ‘instilled a new resolve in the hearts of many to fight that bit harder’ (2007, p. 260). He also argues however that it encouraged activists to fight a bit more ‘cautiously’ in future, something reflected in a change to the words of a popular mantra:

*‘Once upon a time, the popular mantra on marches was:*

*What do we want?*

*Animal liberation!*

*When do we want it?*

*Now!*

*Are we going to fight for it?*

*Yes!*

*Are we going to die for it?*

*Yes!*

*We no longer invite each other to die for it; this has quietly drifted from the chanting since tragic deaths started to happen for real’. (Mann, 2007, p. 260).*

Two years later, when Tom Worby was killed,

*There was, not surprisingly, a mood for revenge, but local sabs asked for calm. They didn’t want a repeat of Dodleston [where Mike Hill had been killed] and to have to take the flak when the dust settled [...] There was no response from anyone to the killing of Tom Worby. (Mann, 2007, p. 265).*

Nonetheless, while the request of local sabs was respected by the wider hunt saboteur community, some activists, including Mann, wondered whether ‘turning the other cheek’ might ‘make us more vulnerable’ (Mann, 2007, p. 265) – indicating that one way in which such brakes might be undermined is through in effect raising questions about the possible unintended consequences of less confrontational approaches.

There are also indications that while concerns about backlash and repression might deter some activists from engaging in violent escalation, that once people had become involved in such practices these concerns became an acknowledged but largely accepted risk:



*'there aren't really that many people who have been prepared to build and plant incendiaries in shops, not even within Animal Liberation Front circles. During the fruitful fur campaign between 1984 and 1987, around 40 in-store devices were placed by only a small number of activists, mostly known to each other... Less technical devices were and have been used much more often, but still not by any great number of people. Put simply, it isn't something a lot of people do and those that do so once then lose the fear, and go on to do most of the work, prepared to continue until the inevitable happens. (Mann, 2007, p. 508).*

Indeed, it is possible that, as Jasper & Nelkin (1992, p. 46) discuss in their account of animal rights activism in the USA, for some activists their willingness to suffer for their cause becomes a source of pride and a sign of their commitment and righteousness. There is little doubt that being arrested acted as a source of prestige for activists in the UK, and through his hunger strikes and the impact that these had on the wider movement, Barry Horne demonstrated that one could still contribute to the cause when imprisoned. In the early 2000s, imprisoned SHAC activists also enjoyed celebrity status within the movement.

What may also have undermined the effects of brake 1a within the animal liberation movement was the support provided to activists who were facing convictions. As Henshaw notes, 'the knowledge that the Front would pay your way if you got caught was encouraging to cell members who were by and large young, otherwise law abiding and not well off' (Henshaw, 1989, p. 139) – although it is unclear whether this continued to be the case once sentences became much more significant.

### **Brake 1b**

#### ***Expressions of concern that violent escalation will undermine support for the group.***

One of the most frequently deployed brakes within the animal liberation movement were expressed concerns about how violent escalation might undermine public

support for their cause.<sup>15</sup> As is often the case in radical social movements, animal liberation activists in some respects distanced themselves from the general public, marking themselves out in ways that emphasised their particular moral worth. Einwohner (2002, p. 257), for example, describes how animal rights activists in the USA, drew distinctions between themselves as members of an 'aware' community and the general 'unaware' public that could be described with terms such as 'the lunkheads', 'those dead heads', 'the meat eaters' or 'slime'. Similarly, Henshaw describes ALF activists that he met showing open 'contempt' for the public (1989, p. 83) and argues that Lee's vision of the ALF contained a 'subtext of exclusivity' (1989, p. 56). Nonetheless, most activists conceived of public support as being fundamental to the success of the movement and the need to build such support was frequently invoked as a reason not to escalate violence (e.g., Roberts, 1986).

Recognition of the need for public support resulted in most activists making distinctions between the types of direct action that they thought were likely to win public sympathy and those that were not (Henshaw, 1989, p. 160). The use of tactics thought likely to undermine public support e.g., bombs and incendiary devices, was usually met with expressions of frustration and anger, particularly from some of the more tactically moderate actors, multiple examples of which can be found in the pages of *Arkangel*.

It seems likely that part of the reason why even militant activists placed value on the importance of public support was that there was an acknowledgement that public support was financially important for the movement. SHAC for example is reported to have raised more than £1m through street collections and street stalls (Nagtzaam, 2017, p. 99).

This brake sometimes failed however, particularly within radical flank groups who became increasingly detached from public opinion. Respondent C3 observed for example that this brake had little purchase among the SHAC leadership as they became increasingly insular. Similarly, Henshaw notes that in 1987 after ALF activists had burned down Debenham's department store in Luton,<sup>16</sup> the ALF's central press office 'issued

<sup>15</sup> Jasper & Nelkin (1992, p. 50) note that within animal rights groups in the USA, concerns about alienating public opinion are a significant factor in their reluctance to condone violence.

<sup>16</sup> The sprinkler system happened to be undergoing repairs on the day that the incendiary device was set off.

a statement saying that [...] he was more interested in stopping the slaughter of animals than in winning over public opinion; he didn't think the activists cared too much about what the public would think' (Henshaw, 1989, p. 111). Yet such arguments appear to have gained little traction outside of the most radical fringes of the movement and, as already noted above, even individuals such as Lee who tended to be supportive of actions that pushed at the boundaries of their tactical repertoire, spoke about the risks associated with alienating the public.

### Brake 1c

*Attempts to build or maintain ties with strategically useful allies who are not supportive of violent escalation.*

As described above, there was considerable overlap in 'membership' across the various groups comprising the animal liberation movement and the wider animal rights movement. It is not clear however that attempting to build or maintain ties with strategically useful allies who are not supportive of violent escalation constituted a significant brake within this movement. It does appear to have been relevant within some of the more moderate groups. Henshaw for example argues that the 'politicos' within the movement

*believed in the ideology of animal rights, the principle that they were parallel and equivalent to human rights; but when it came to the balaclava'd hit squads of the direct action tendency, there was some embarrassment. (Henshaw, 1989, p. 160)*

Such brakes are less evident within the radical flank of the movement.

Where more militant or radical flank activists sought either to influence the direction of the wider movement or access the resources available through some of the larger and more moderate groups, in some cases they in fact sought to take control of those groups,<sup>17</sup> rather than trying to forge alliances, which may have partially short-circuited this brake.

### Brake 1d

*Identification of political opportunities that favour (re)adoption of non- or less violent strategies of action.*

Outside of the calls for hard political lobbying made by people from the more moderate flank of the animal rights movement, such as Kim Stallwood, former director of BUAV and PETA (e.g., Henshaw, 1989, p. 160; Stallwood, 2004), there are limited examples of this brake. This is likely a reflection of the fact that there have been relatively few occasions on which there has been a significant opening up of political opportunities for animal rights activism (Henshaw, 1989, p. 161). Rather, the state and other elite actors have by and large shown repeated commitment to support major industries such as farming and pharmaceuticals, or at least political opportunities for pro-animal activism have tended to be heavily circumscribed and more suited to those with welfarist agendas.

There are however two noteworthy examples in which activists within the animal liberation movement appear to have identified political opportunities and where this has led some within the movement to innovate away from violent escalation. The first of these takes place in early 1980s when the animal liberation leagues sought, through their daytime raids, to capitalise on what they perceived to be a rising tide of public sympathy for pro-animal agendas, and the fact that 'few news editors (or the viewers and the readers they serviced) could resist touching stories featuring the rescue of animals,' particularly if they were provided with 'dramatic picture material' (Henshaw, 1989, pp. 79-80).

The other example takes place in the late 1990s when, Robin Webb, former spokesperson of the ALF, claims, animal liberation-related violence abated amidst hope that the Labour Party would deliver on a number of promises relating to addressing animal abuse and exploitation (Nagtzaam, 2017, pp. 107-8).

### Brake 1e

*Identification of non- or less violent strategies of actions that are perceived to be effective, including identification of 'sufficient' levels of violence.*

17 E.g., 'Flashback: 5 November 1994 – Police called as rival factions clash at anti-vivisection group's meeting', Red Black Green, 5 November 2017, accessed via <https://network23.org/redblackgreen/2017/11/05/flashback-5-november-1994-police-called-as-rival-factions-clash-at-anti-vivisection-groups-meeting/>

Within the animal liberation case study, the idea of ‘sufficient’ levels of violence is more often associated with moral rather than strategic logics. The identification of non- or less violent strategies of action as being effective is however evident. Again, perhaps the clearest example of this relates to the adoption of daytime raids by the animal liberation leagues in the early 1980s – raids in which activists entered in daylight, doing minimum damage to property with the aim only of collecting evidence that could be used to support legal action against the companies that were targeted (Monaghan, 1999, p. 71). A series of successes in the early 1980s – including at University Park Farm (by the Central Animal Liberation League, 1984) and the Royal College of Surgeons (RCS) establishment in Downe, Kent (South East Animal Liberation League, 1984, which resulted in a successful summons against the RCS for inadequate ventilation of cages) – encouraged similar invasions across the country until such raids began to lead to significant numbers of arrests.

## 2.2 BRAKE 2

*Construction of moral norms and evaluations that inhibit certain forms of violence and the emotional impulses towards violence (e.g., revenge).*

While resistance to violent escalation from within the movement is often expressed with reference to perceived strategic shortcomings, ‘efficacy is certainly not the only criterion in choosing particular methods. Equally important for a vast majority of animal rights activists is the moral aspect of the methods used’ (Pośluszna, 2015, p. 74).

The application of these brakes is most apparent at the level of campaign planning, with multiple and repeated expression of moral concerns within movement-wide publications and in the communiqués of the more moderate actors within the movement. However, these brakes are also evident at the level of action planning and in the context of actions themselves, with activists reporting that on more than one occasion actions were ‘aborted’ due to concern either about possible confrontations or to the possibility that the actions would result in physical harm. Mann (2007, p. 58) for example claims that ‘[w]hile fire is seen as the best

option for inflicting maximum damage, many attacks have been aborted where a potential risk of it spreading was identified.’ A similar claim is made by Stallwood (2004).

Where moral brakes seemingly failed, this made some alliances within the wider movement untenable. For example, the Peace News Collective explained the withdrawal of a PO box for the ALF in 1984 on the ground that the ALF’s ‘increasingly and publicly showing a willingness to support acts of intimidation and physical violence to animal abusers’...‘raises difficult questions for pacifists’ (Henshaw, 1989, p. 95).

### Brake 2a

*Articulation and performance of general moral norms and principles that problematise certain forms of violence, require violence to be justified or enable activists to forestall on entering the ‘tunnel of violence’ (e.g., the conception of violence as a tactic of last resort; positioning non-retaliation as a virtue; emphasising values such as mercy and compassion).*

The ALF was initially established as a non-violent organisation, and the concept of non-violence, in particular non-violence towards human and non-human animals, has continued to be invoked to inhibit the adoption of more violent strategies of action. These concepts are discussed at considerable length in movement publications, with particular attention given to the contradictions that arise if a movement supposedly committed to reducing the suffering of all animals, both human and non-human,<sup>18</sup> prosecutes a campaign of violence that itself causes harm and suffering. In 1974, Lee argues that direct action should be ‘limited only by a reverence for life and a hatred of violence’ (Stallwood, 2004, p. 83), and Lee and Gary Treadwell are also reported as writing in *Freedom* magazine, ‘The ALF is not violent in that much care is taken to prevent injury to people and many raids have been called off because of possible confrontation. In any case our aims are for human as well as (other) animal liberation’ (Nagtzaam, 2017, p. 80).

The articulation of general moral principles also operated as a braking mechanism by infusing decisions to avoid confrontation, and in particular to avoid

<sup>18</sup> Respondent C2 emphasised that while as a young person involved in animal rights activism part of the attraction was the excitement of direct action, what gave this meaning was the idea that ‘you were saving lives’.

retaliation, with feelings of moral righteousness, rather than, for example, feelings of shame or humiliation: they enabled non-violence and non-retaliation to be constructed as the brave and noble thing to do. This can be seen, for example, in the decision not to retaliate after the death of Tom Worby, where activists could explain their actions not only in terms of avoiding subsequent state repression, but as a means in effect of elevating themselves morally both above their opponents and above other organisations elsewhere involved in campaigns of violence. Mann, for example, muses about whether the decision not to seek revenge makes them ‘more mature’ than the IRA, although as discussed above, he also wonders whether it makes them ‘more vulnerable’ (Mann, 2007, p. 265).

The effectiveness of general moral norms as a brake on violent escalation has been circumscribed in a number of ways, however (Liddick, 2013). One of these has been through some activists’ adoption of a narrow definition of ‘violence’ as referring only to direct physical violence against human or non-human animals. This has generated considerable ambiguity around the parameters of legitimate force, with property damage and even in some cases campaigns of intimidation, effectively being deemed morally acceptable, enabling some activists to continue to claim the moral high ground despite the use of actions that many people would consider violent. This is epitomised by much of the discussion of violence within Mann’s memoir:

*[L]et me make clear I object so greatly to the use of violence that I joined the ALF. I separate violence against the individual from damage done to inanimate objects. The latter moves me not a jot, the other always will. (Mann, 2007, p. 21).*

It has also meant that, within the radical flank of the movement, this moral brake appears to be more effective with regards to higher levels of violence i.e., physical violence against persons, and indiscriminate violence. As an activist writes in *Snarl! Handbook of the Leeds Animal Liberation Front*,

*Personally speaking, as an activist for some time, I wouldn’t plant a ‘bomb’...on or near any human or animal; no matter how cruel*

*they may be. However, I would be prepared to use a device against empty property. This may sound contradictory, but it’s not. To kill or seriously main [sic] someone seems very contradictory, to me at least. (Cited in Nagtzaam, 2017, p. 81).*

This brake was also undermined through appeals to arguments of necessity: that certain forms of violence are acceptable because they are the only means of achieving their objectives. Throughout the history of the animal liberation movement, actors on its radical flank have tended to equate militancy with effectiveness. During one of its bombing campaigns, for example, the ARM stated in a communiqué – published without comment in the *ALF SG Bulletin* – “Our power is in the two petrol bombings...and the car bombings” (Henshaw, 1989, p. 118). Similarly, the violence deployed by hunt supporters against hunt saboteurs caused some saboteurs to express scepticism about the viability of non-violence. Henshaw (1989, p. 96) for example reports a hunt saboteur who argues, ‘Right now...I’d say that effective hunt sabotage and non-violence look about a million miles apart’.

Claims that the ends justify the means have also been made with reference to historical examples of struggles for liberation that used limited forms of violence to pursue social justice, such as the anti-Apartheid struggle, the suffragists or the anti-slavery struggle (Postuszna, 2015, p. 95). In 1984 Lee, in a contribution to the *ALF SG Bulletin* went so far as to rail against what he described as a ‘half-baked pacifist ideology’<sup>19</sup> on the grounds that it was hindering their ability to bring about the desired change. In their most extreme form, appeals to the underlying utilitarian logic of such arguments have even been used to propose that killing vivisectors could be morally justified,

*‘I don’t think you’d have to kill – assassinate – too many vivisectors before you would see a marked decrease in the amount of vivisection going on. And I think for 5 lives, 10 lives, 15 human lives, we could save a million, 2 million, 10 million nonhuman animals’. (Jerry Vlasak, ALF press officer in the USA, quoted in Postuszna, 2015, p. 95).*

19 *ALF SG Bulletin*, 13

Since no lethal attacks have followed such statements, the intention of making such arguments is unclear. It is possible that they are made, and interpreted by fellow activists, as an indirect means of threatening and intimidating those involved in animal experimentation.

Some activists have also justified the use of limited forms of violence by arguing that their violence pales in comparison to that of their opponents. They point both to the violence meted out against animal liberation activists – e.g., reminders that in the UK context while pro-animal activists have never deployed lethal force two hunt saboteurs and one anti-live-exports campaigner have been killed and one hunt saboteur left with life-long disabilities – and, above all, the massive scale of violence carried out against animals by the meat, dairy, cosmetic and animal experimentation industries. Sometimes the rhetoric of being ‘at war’ is used to make this point. Henshaw (1989, p. 91) for example cites Tim Daley as saying he can ‘support petrol bombing, bombs under cars, and probably shootings at a later stage’ on the grounds that ‘It’s a war.’ As one ARM communiqué argued

*Animal liberation must be part of a wide spectrum of revolutionary change in the structure of society, for British democracy is based on more blood, terror and exploitation than any other country in history. It has a brutal police force whose crimes against people and animals the media will not report, and whose government blatantly supports repressive systems of governments [sic] around the world. (Quoted in Henshaw, 1989, p. 118).*

This enables some forms of violence, especially property damage and animal rescue, to be positioned as a form of ‘extensional self-defense’ (Best, 2008), or even as a moral obligation, on the basis that it might be the only way to prevent or at least reduce the threat of imminent harm (Jasper & Nelkin, 1992, p. 49). Again, references to supposed historic parallels, such as hypothetical conundrums about whether or not to destroy Nazi gas chambers or torture chambers are often used to make these points, particularly in relation to property damage,

*‘There was a bit of tension between the ideology of the daylight big break-ins and the night-time small break-ins in the sense that some people would say, well, if you’re going to all the trouble of getting in there you should at least smash the torture equipment up, and you can imagine the kind of thing you break into a set of dungeons and there’s all the shackles there, do you leave them or do you take them sort of thing, and so you can see where that tension was coming from’ (‘Phil’, quoted in Plows, Wall & Doherty, 2004, p. 212).*

References to the violence of their opponents are also used to explain, if not necessarily to justify, violence emerging out of revenge dynamics. Campaigns are described as becoming deeply personal – activists might themselves have been attacked, or seen friends attacked. When describing how the owner of Hill Grove Farm’s Range Rover was ‘burnt out in front of their house and windows were broken...’ Mann for example observes that ‘too much momentum had gathered to stop what was happening to the business now. It had become personal for too many people’ (Mann, 2007, p. 535). Similarly, major property damage carried out at Regal Rabbits is explained as an act of revenge for an alleged intimidation of female activists by Regal Rabbits security staff (Mann, 2007, pp. 579-86).

Such arguments nonetheless continued to position non-violence as an ideal (albeit, for some, unrealistic) position and violence as a tactic of last resort, placing pressure on activists who did use violence to justify their actions. Furthermore, the arguments undermining non-violence norms tend also to only address limited or specific forms of violence. For example, drawing parallels with the Underground Railroad is used primarily to justify property damage undertaken in the process of liberating animals; while comparisons with those who sought to destroy Nazi concentration camps are used to justify damage to laboratory or farming equipment rather than direct physical violence towards vivisectioners or farmers. No moral arguments were put forward in support of indiscriminate violence, and those that advocated physical harm to their opponents were outliers.

**Brake 2b**

*Identification of some groups of actors as illegitimate targets for violence.*

Brake 2b is most often evident in the extensive debates about the rights and wrongs of arson attacks, where there are widespread expressions of concern about the risks of harming or endangering the life of human and non-human animals. As Robin Webb, an ALF press officer, states,

*In my opinion, arson does not fall under the classification of ‘damage to property’ but rather, actions that endanger life. The ALF is proud of its claim never to have harmed human life but arson has, almost undisputedly, taken life, whether it be a mouse, rat, or spider. One cannot check every nook and cranny of a department store or broiler shed; the presence of a small creature is not as obvious as that of a human and they do not understand fire alarms and emergency exists. (Webb, 1990).*

Even Lee, who at various points extolled the virtues of (limited forms of) violence, later reflected on the problematic nature of claims that arson could be used, providing that buildings were first cleared of animals:

*‘This is clearly untrue. Since every building is home to countless very small animals, e.g., insects, who could not be evacuated to safety and who would therefore be murdered...I think we were naïve to think that animals would not be harmed.’ (Lee, in conversation with Carolyn Bailey, 2010).<sup>20</sup>*

Concerns about harming those who do not deserve to be harmed also informs intra-movement criticism of letter bombing campaigns, with concern frequently expressed that such letters might go off in the hands of postal workers or other innocent parties (Lee, 1989). The concept of ‘innocents’ is also prominent in the intra-movement condemnation of an incendiary attack on a pub in 1995. The pub was attacked with an incendiary device on the grounds that it was being frequented by two individuals playing a significant role in the live

export of animals, but the attack was undertaken at night when the landlord and the landlord’s family were in their flat above the pub.

*‘Tactically and morally in this case, however, the problem was considered by many to be the indiscriminate nature of the action; it wasn’t so much the fact the pub had been frequented by the two exporters, but more that there had been innocent people upstairs at the time of the attack. The targeting of a business over its use by a Hunt or even because of a customer’s attendance has been a legitimate tactic, but not the targeting of innocent tenants. (Mann, 2007, p. 454).*

No similar attacks have taken place in the name of animal rights in the UK subsequently.

This brake appears to have had purchase even within the most radical fringes of the movement. For example, activists operating under the ARM banner emphasised in a communiqué after an attack that their attacks were targeted at “‘the real animal abusers, the vivisectors, huntsmen and slaughterhouse owners’” i.e., they were not indiscriminate and did not target those who might be considered innocent (Henshaw, 1989, p. 68).

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## 2.3 BRAKE 3

*Self-identification as a group that is either non-violent or uses only limited forms of violence.*

As described under brake 2, concepts of and identification as a non-violent movement have shaped the trajectory of the animal liberation movement. It is not therefore surprising that maintenance of these identities was often used as a brake on violent escalation, with the upholding of principles of non- or minimal violence placed at the very core of activists’ sense of who they collectively are – a theme that runs throughout Mann’s memoir,

*the rules are unwritten but the central edict is: don’t use violence or incite others to do so.... We break the rules to end the bloodshed, not to pursue it. (Mann, 2007, p. 22).*

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<sup>20</sup> Lee’s comments here touch on an extensive debate within animal rights movements about the relative weight that should be put on the lives of different animals (see also Jasper & Nelkin, 1992)

Even when actions clearly exceed the established parameters of legitimate action, Mann maintains that movement norms make it unlikely that such strategies of action will proliferate. For example, reflecting on the assault on Brian Cass, Mann states,

*Premeditated violence is a new phenomenon. It is not widespread. It doesn't seem like it ever would be given the track record thus far and the lack of motivation for bloodshed from animal activists. (Mann, 2007, p. 606).*

Observation of brake 3 highlights the difficulty at times of trying to disaggregate moral and strategic logics. Do the efforts of ALF activists to distance themselves from the actions of the ARM (brake 3b) reflect moral or strategic considerations? Are they even made in good faith?<sup>21</sup> Our contention however is that what is important here is that in the act of distancing themselves from the ARM they both signal to other activists the parameters of acceptable strategies of action and acknowledge, and arguably seek to align themselves with wider public mores about the acceptable parameters of direct action and violence (see also Jasper & Nelkin, 1992, p. 49).

The observations here also raise questions about the extent to which dissociation from violence by a specific 'group' does in fact act as a brake on violence, or simply causes it to be carried out under another banner. The many different names under which animal liberation activists could operate was used to protect the reputation of groups who claimed to be relative 'moderates'. Lee even appears to actively encourage such an approach in 1981,

*For tactical reasons I feel that it is best that the ALF retains its current policy on these matters...however there is nothing to stop fresh groups being set up under new names whose policies do not preclude the use of violence towards animal abusers. (Quoted in Henshaw, 1989, p. 58).*

Yet the relative scarcity of physical violence directed at people during the 30 years after Lee's comment

indicates that such braking mechanisms did do more than simply displace the violence.

### Brake 3a

*Production of group narratives that emphasise non-violence or the limited use of violence either by themselves or by those they claim have inspired their movement.*

Animal liberation activists were engaged in ongoing construction of themselves as part of a movement that only uses non- or limited forms of violence – particularly within those strands of the movement where activists sought to distinguish themselves from the most tactically radical elements of the movement. Henshaw (1989, p. 83) talks for example about how those activists involved in the animal liberation leagues 'were keen to present an image of reluctant and fundamentally decent activism; a kind of animals' SAS with all the cool efficiency and none of the nastiness.' This process is most obviously evident in movement publications and memoirs. First-hand accounts of raids by ALF activists frequently include comment, at least in passing, about how they ensured that the risk of physical harm was minimised, particularly in the case for actions where there was a greater risk of harm, such as arson attacks.<sup>22</sup> In several of these accounts activists emphasise the fact that the non- or limited violence was a matter of their choosing. For example, recounting raid on Wickham Laboratories, Mann describes himself and colleagues on the roof observing lab workers;

*Had we been the type of people they say we are, it would have been the easiest thing in the world to inflict some serious GBH on these people as they were doing to others far less capable of defending themselves right in front of our very eyes. (Mann, 2007, p. 626).*

Such accounts must of course be read partly as statements intended to counter accusations from their opponents and critics that they comprise some form of 'extremist' organisation. However, they also serve to culturally embed practices that reduce the risk of harm and contribute to establish moral parameters.

<sup>21</sup> Henshaw, for example, appears to consider that some ALF activists at least distanced themselves from 'groups' such as ARM simply to give themselves a 'degree of respectability' (Henshaw, 1989, p. 58).

<sup>22</sup> See ALF SG Bulletin, 11, Jan 1984, for an account of an incendiary raid on a farm at Amptill in Bedfordshire

The other way that such group narratives were constructed was through the historic figures and movements from which they claimed to draw their inspiration, with famous leaders of non-violent resistance and liberation movements, such as Ghandi and Martin Luther King, particularly prominent. This was sometimes challenged to a greater or lesser degree. Those who advocated the limited use of illegal actions and even violence might, for example, de-emphasise the figures such as Ghandi and Martin Luther King and instead draw parallels with the underground railroad, the activists who sought to liberate prisoners during the Holocaust, the suffragists and the wider civil rights movement: all of whom, it is pointed out, deployed what at the time were illegal methods, and sometimes also violence, in pursuit of higher moral goals (Liddick, 2013). As discussed above, such points of reference nonetheless still only created moral opportunities for highly circumscribed forms of illegal or violent activity. Some on the radical flank argued that animal liberationists should not allow themselves to be inhibited by what, as described above, Lee once described as a 'half-baked pacifist ideology', but such occasional outbursts appear to have done fairly little to shift the broad identification of most activists as part of a movement committed fundamentally to non-violence and the reduction of harm.

### Brake 3b

#### *Disassociation from more violent groups or factions and/or association with less violent groups or factions.*

As early as 1974, a 'local figure' in the HSA in Lee's hometown of Luton

*...offered a reward of £250 for information leading to the identification of the Band of Mercy. The 'area commander' told the press, 'we approve of their ideals, but are opposed to their methods'. (Henshaw, 1989, pp. 15-16).*

Disassociation in the animal liberation movement is made complicated by the chaotic nature of movement structures and the extent to which organisational titles were used as banners of convenience. Disassociation was most evident after incidents had taken place that were deemed to have exceeded established parameters

of acceptable action. For example, activists in groups such as BUAV, LACS and Animal Aid distanced themselves from the ALF when ALF activists adopted their campaign of personal targeting; after the desecration of the grave of the Duke of Beaufort (1984) activists from LACS and the HSA 'roundly condemned the "ghoulish" adventure' (Henshaw, 1989, p. 97) and even 'some of the harder elements of the movement' described it as being 'somewhat excessive' (Henshaw, 1989, p. 99), and ALF activists distanced themselves from 'groups' such as ARM, JD and the Animal Abused Society after their attacks. While disassociation might at times have been undertaken for fairly instrumental reasons (Carnell, 1998) it is likely that such distancing inhibited proliferation of these strategies by marking them as being incompatible with the group identity.

Meanwhile, some of the most radical activists defined their activism in contrast to that of what they considered comprised genuine 'extremist' groups. Prior to the 2000s this tended to entail distinguishing their actions from those of the IRA. Activists operating under the ARM banner, for example, sought to differentiate themselves from the IRA by emphasising that they were not going to undertake 'indiscriminate violence' (Henshaw, 1989, p. 68). After 2000, the comparison point shifted to extreme Islamist groups.

The extent to which disassociation resulted in any change on the ground rather than comprising simply a symbolic distancing is unclear. On some occasions at least however there is evidence that attempts at disassociation did entail efforts to inhibit the organisational influence of more radical factions. When ALF activists undertook an incendiary device campaign, for example, Animal Aid distributed criticism of the ALF to their members in the form of a circular to local groups calling for organisational separation from the ALF.

*'If we are to continue to build on our successes then (we) must exclude from our groups those individuals whose views on campaigning are fundamentally at odds with ours'... 'We believe that the ALF as an organisation has behaved irresponsibly by allowing advocates of premeditated violence to operate within its ranks; by publishing articles advocating violence; and through*



*its constant refusal to issue an outright condemnation of campaigns of violence'. (Quoted in Mann, 2007, p. 180).*

Local Animal Aid groups were then provided a model resolution to be adopted stating that they would sever links with anyone who supported the ALF.

### **Brake 3c**

*(The threat of) sanctions for activists who advocate or undertake violence beyond the established parameters of the group's action repertoire, and/or opportunities to achieve intra-group respect and prestige without undertaking or encouraging the use of violence at or beyond the parameters of the group's action repertoire.*

This sub-brake is less visible within the animal liberation case. This sub-brake is less visible within the animal liberation case. Indeed a number of accounts of the evolution of the movement indicate that leadership positions were often occupied by individuals or small groups of actors with a greater appetite for and record of participation in violence than many of the supporters. Describing the early evolution of the ALF, for example, Henshaw argues,

*By 1981 a new generation of much harder, un sentimental leadership had taken charge of the direction of ALF policy, with the approval of Ronnie Lee. These included figures whose political background lay in anarchism and some whose experience lay in the violent confrontationism of the far right. (Henshaw, 1989, p. 91).*

Similarly, Respondent C3 observed that the SHAC leadership appeared to have a far greater appetite for radical strategies of action than most with the movement.

There is however some evidence that activists whose actions clearly exceed established action repertoires were sanctioned. In most cases this appears to be limited to criticism from co-activists. Such criticisms can often be found in movement publications. Henshaw

notes for example that after one ARM communiqué was published in the *ALF SG Bulletin*,

*there were several dissenting voices to be heard in the Supporters Group Bulletin, accusing the Militia of being "wankers" who were using the animal rights cause as a vehicle for their own ludicrous fantasies. (Henshaw, 1989, p. 122).*

After the arson attack on the White Hart pub, which broke movement protocol by putting at risk the lives of people considered 'innocent', sanctions also included a decision from the ALF supporters group to withhold financial support for those who had carried out the attack.

*The White Hart episode caused a serious dilemma for the ALF SG. For the first time in its history, it was faced with having to deal with an action, which had crossed the defining line between that deemed acceptable and unacceptable under the ALF 'statutes'. A great deal of energy was expended on the debate that followed the attacks and arrests, and the SG members narrowly voted that financial support should not be offered to the defendants, though moral support should. (Mann, 2007, p. 454).*

It is likely that such decisions served to consolidate established parameters of action, and perhaps dissuaded others from pursuing similar courses of action.

### **Brake 3d**

*Circulation of limited expectations that they will be involved in greater levels of violence.*

This brake is not prominent in any of the accounts of animal liberation activism accessed. However, it is unclear whether this is because the brake was relatively unimportant, or whether it reflects the somewhat taken for granted nature of this particular sub-brake. They anticipated violent confrontations with hunt supporters. However, expectations of violence varied depending on the hunts that they were attending, and there was an expectation that these confrontations would usually remain within established levels of violence (Respondents C1 and C2). Activists did not prepare themselves for greater levels of violence.

## 2.4 BRAKE 4

*Boundary softening in relation to putative out-groups (e.g., opponents, opponents' perceived supporters, the general public or state actors).*

One of the ways in which animal liberation activists generated and accentuated moral outrage was through forms of 'boundary making', including the de- or –infra-humanization of some of their opponents – a common mobilisation strategy within social movements. Individuals involved in animal experimentation for example were often portrayed as monsters, akin to the Nazi doctors experimenting on concentration camp inmates; as sick perverts getting their kicks out of making animals suffer; or simply as mercenary profiteers oblivious to the suffering of the animals. Similarly, as described above, activists engaged in boundary hardening with regards to the general public, positioning them as at best unaware and at worst uncaring or even actively colluding in the suffering of animals. Forms of boundary softening were however also apparent and appear to have contributed to support intra- and inter-group brakes on violent escalation.

### Brake 4a

*Resistance to generalizations about their opponents.*

For ALF activists, resistance to generalisations about opponents is at least in principle institutionalised through the ALF Credo that states that one of the commitments of ALF activists is:

*To analyse the ramifications of any proposed action and never apply generalizations (e.g., all 'blank' are evil) when specific information is available.<sup>23</sup>*

Apart from contributing to inhibit the dehumanisation of their opponents, resistance to generalisations also on some occasions appears to have enabled processes of strategic adaptation and attempts to achieve a form of negotiated conflict balance. As already noted above, hunt saboteurs often drew distinctions between more and less violent hunts. By not treating all hunts the same, cases developed over time in which some groups of hunt saboteurs and hunt supporters were able to

interact with one another without violent escalation taking place. Mann for example recalls,

*We had an odd relationship with the Holcombe Hunt. Years of intense pressure by 'antis' had restricted their freedom and the endless encroachment of urbanisation had engulfed the hunt's former territory so that it was closed by Manchester's suburbs to the south, Liverpool to the east and Preston to the north...We knew where they all lived, and they knew it, especially whenever there was any trouble and someone on our side got hurt. In response to a big day of killing, a home visit could be guaranteed; someone's horsebox might get sabotaged or they'd be treated to a Sabbing Special when hundreds would descend on their Saturday get-together and cause havoc! It got to the stage where the thinkers among their ranks began to appreciate the stupidity of trying to beat everyone up, and a situation developed in which it became possible to sab alone or monitor them without fear of attack. I often did and got away with it unscathed. Such was the relationship with the hunt that one or two even went out of their way to be polite and would buy me a drink in the pub at the end of the day. One would even give me the dates of meets if I rang him! He was himself grateful, knowing that although we had his name, phone number and address, he only ever got called occasionally for meet details and at a reasonable hour. He was also respectful and one of the few who never engaged in violence towards us. (Mann, 2007, p. 216).*

While this negotiated conflict balance emerges through what are essentially movement – countermovement interactions, it is enabled by individuals on both sides resisting the temptation to generalise about their opponents.

'De-humanisation' as a concept fits somewhat awkwardly with AL activism given the limited value placed by animal rights activists on human lives and human well-being as opposed to non-human animal well-being. However, the basic idea of not reducing

<sup>23</sup> Accessed via [http://www.animalliberationfront.com/ALFront/alf\\_credo.htm](http://www.animalliberationfront.com/ALFront/alf_credo.htm)

the value of the life of their opponents by placing them within in an inferior ontological category does apply and is prominent within animal liberation activism, being used to highlight the contradiction if, for example, harm is done to animal scientists in the course of a supposed struggle for animal liberation. In the statement from the Peace News Collective in which they explained why they were withdrawing the PO Box from the ALF, they argued:

*'The use of violence to liberate animals is itself a contradiction. At its crudest, humans are animals too, even vivisectioners are animals.'* (Quoted in Henshaw, 1989, p. 95).

#### **Brake 4b**

***Identification of segments of the public beyond their previously-imagined support base as potential converts to their cause.***

While activists are often disparaging of the general public, they are usually constructed as potential supporters for the cause. There are only relatively few sub-groups (animal scientists, butchers, farmers) who are positioned as necessarily comprising opposition groups, and even here these are all categories that individuals could potentially leave. It is the perceived potential support from a broad spectrum of the public that is used to reinforce arguments described under brake 1b about the importance of not alienating the public through the use of violence.

#### **Brake 4c**

***Limited intra-movement pressure to 'burn-bridges' with social contacts outside of the movement or outside of the radical flank of the movement.***

While animal rights comes to dominate the lives of activists, this does not usually entail isolating themselves from the outside world (Postuszna, 2015, p. 89). It is likely that this contributed to inhibit potential small-group processes of radicalisation. Of note, where tactical radicalisation has taken place, it usually appears to have done so within factions or cliques that became increasingly isolated from the wider movement community. Henshaw for example notes that the radical flank actors that he meets tell him,

*We're not organized in the sense that most people would understand it...there's a small group of us and we trust each other implicitly. We don't discuss things on the telephone and we no longer get involved in local animal rights groups.* (Henshaw, 1989, p. 62).

In the early 1990s, both Aujla and Horne operated largely in isolation, and the tactical radicalisation of the SHAC campaign coincided with the SHAC leadership becoming increasingly insular and disconnected from the wider animal rights movement (Respondent C3).

#### **Brake 4d**

***Expressions of reluctance to conceive of the state security forces as 'the enemy'.***

There is scant comment within the animal liberation movement about the legitimate exercise of power by security forces: perhaps to be expected given the anarchist influences within the movement. At least at the radical flank of the movement, the police are identified as part of the state-industrial complex against which they are fighting.

However, there is a consistent reluctance to conceive of them as part of the opposition. It seems likely that this is largely a product of strategic logics, with widespread concerns about increased state repression and declining public support if they target the police directly.

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## **2.5 BRAKE 5**

***Organisational developments that either (a) alter the moral and strategic equations in favour of non- or limited violence, (b) institutionalise less violent collective identities and/or processes of boundary softening, and/or (c) reduce the likelihood of unplanned violence.***

#### **Brake 5a**

***Limited investment in capabilities to escalate violence, and/or development of capabilities to undertake strategies of action that either entail non- or limited violence or more controlled violence.***

The development of capabilities to undertake strategies of action that use non- or limited violence is arguably so ubiquitous within the animal liberation case study

that it becomes almost invisible, since most of the activities undertaken entailed non- or very limited forms of violence. Where the brake is more evident is when there is a concerted tactical shift away from more radical strategies of action, as happened with the rise of the animal liberation leagues in the 1980s. In this case, activists reduced the amount of violence likely to take place by developing techniques to enter laboratories while causing minimal damage and train activists not to carry out violence during the raids. Henshaw for example observes that Tim Johnston, the leader of the Central Animal Liberation League

*was proud of the professionalism of CALL, he said. Stealthy, informed, careful operations had meant few arrests: there was no room for macho displays of reckless violence. 'Units like this train very hard. We're not going to raid places every week in order to prove we exist.'* (Henshaw, 1989, p. 81).

During the planning phase of raids on laboratories and other installations activists sought to identify how they might minimise the risk of confrontations with security guards and other personnel. For example, describing planning for a campaign targeting a chain of chemists, Mann recalls,

*It was decided very early on to focus on the kennels rather than the lab, since the latter posed a greater risk of confrontation with security. As valuable as entering the lab would surely have been, this was to be about rescuing animals and shaming Boots as vivisectors.* (Mann, 2007, p. 277).

Movement publications also provided information about reducing the risk of harm during actions. For example, while *Interviews with Animal Liberation Front Activists* provided information about how to carry out a campaign using incendiary devices, it also provided advice on how to minimise the risk of harm from such actions. Henshaw, for example, notes a passage that states,

*Before a device is placed in a vehicle, two things must be done... Firstly, we check that there is not a driver sleeping overnight in the vehicles, and secondly we catter "Scoot" all around the vehicle. This is a product we get from pet shops that puts off cats and dogs*

*from going under the vehicles.* (Henshaw, 1989, p. 107).

In terms of developing capabilities to limit violence, the obvious example from this case study is the development of timed incendiary devices. While this enabled animal liberation activists to cause considerable property damage, it also enabled them to minimise the risk to human and other animal life.

### Brake 5b

***Foregrounding more modest or intermediate objectives and de-prioritising revolutionary goals.***

As we would expect, tactical escalation was often motivated, or at least justified, through calls for objective widening and the adoption of more revolutionary campaign outlooks. SHAC provide one of the most obvious examples of this. Mann, for example notes,

*The campaign against HLS galvanised the movement and changed the rules of the game against vivisection. It opened up the fact that the battle against HLS is a war against vivisection between the people and the entire petrochemical/ pharmaceutical/ governmental machine, whose activities are sanctioned, protected, and funded by the State and its various branches, who in turn profits from the power and wealth of those industries.* (Mann, 2007, p. 596).

However, within the animal liberation movement there are repeated impulses in the other direction e.g., calls for campaigns around getting changes in the law regarding animal experimentation rather than a total ban on experimentation. These campaigns do not necessarily give up on the longer term goals of an end to animal experiments and the meat trade, but they do mean that strategic equations are tipped more towards forming relationships with lawmakers, building public support etc. It is unclear the extent to which the circulation of such modest or intermediate objectives acted as a brake on radical flank actors.

### Brake 5c

***Construction and maintenance of spaces in which a range of activists that includes and extends beyond the radical flank are able to freely discuss tactics and movement objectives.***

There are multiple forums through which radical flank actors come into contact and engage with activists from beyond the radical flank. In some of these forums, such as within *Arkangel* magazine, the most tactically radical actors face considerable criticism from within the wider movement. The impact of these spaces is difficult to discern, but it is clear that such forums served to expose radical flank activists to a broad spectrum of intra-movement criticism.

### **Brake 5d**

*Concerns among some group members that violent escalation will compromise their ability to shape the direction of the movement and/or negatively affect their position within the movement.*

No examples identified in this case study, although it is possible that such dynamics contributed to efforts by some of the movement moderates to inhibit attempts by groups associated with the ALF to gain greater influence within some of the larger pro-animal organisations.

### **Brake 5e**

*Concentration of energy on targeting movement rivals, leading to reduced capability to prosecute campaigns of violence against their external enemies.*

There is no shortage of internal feuds within the animal liberation movement. Henshaw notes that by 1984 ‘the purest vitriol...seemed reserved for those who the ALF contemptuously referred to as the “enemy within”’ (Henshaw, 1989, p. 99). It is less clear however that this saps activist energy in the way that it did in the extreme right scene (Annex B), or that it acted as a brake on violence.

### 3. TIMELINE

| YEAR | SIGNIFICANT ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS  | SIGNIFICANT TACTICAL DEVELOPMENTS  |
|------|--|--|
| 1972 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Band of Mercy is formed by Ronnie Lee and Cliff Goodman</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Band of Mercy begin campaign of economic sabotage and immobilisation of hunt vehicles</li> </ul>  |
| 1973 |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First Band of Mercy arson attack</li> </ul>   |
| 1974 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lee, Goodman and Robin Howard arrested for a raid on Oxford Laboratory Animal Colonies in Bicester</li> </ul>   |  |
| 1975 |  |  |
| 1976 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lee and 30 others form the ALF</li> </ul>   |  |
| 1977 |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Desecration of John Peel’s grave in Caldbeck, Cumbria, by a group of anti-bloodsports campaigners, including Mike Hutchisson</li> </ul>   |
| 1978 |  |  |
| 1979 |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First laboratory break-in by the American ALF</li> </ul>  |
| 1980 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Northern Animal Liberation League (NALL), the first of several animal liberation leagues (ALLs), is launched</li> <li>People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) formed in the US by Ingrid Newkirk and Alex Pacheco</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First NALL evidence gathering raids</li> <li>First ALF home visit to an employee of a pharmaceutical company: messages are painted on target’s property</li> </ul>  |
| 1981 |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Multiple and coordinated ALF home visits</li> </ul>   |
| 1982 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ALF SG is formed</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nov: ARM sends ‘letter bombs’ to leaders of the main political parties in Britain</li> </ul>  |
| 1983 |  |  |
| 1984 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May: BUAV expel ALF SG from their London offices</li> <li>Sept: Peace News Collective expels ALF SG from their PO Box</li> <li>The ALLs close down after mass arrests; prisoner support schemes set up</li> </ul>                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Multiple largescale (up to 300 people) daylight ‘invasions’ by regional ALLs, generate evidence and attract public support but result in multiple arrests.</li> <li>ALF burn down Aintree grandstand: estimated £100k damage</li> <li>Nov: Mars Bar hoax represents first use of contamination scams</li> <li>Dec: HRS desecrate the grave of the Tenth Duke of Beaufort</li> </ul> |

| YEAR | SIGNIFICANT ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS   | SIGNIFICANT TACTICAL DEVELOPMENTS  |
|------|---|--|
| 1985 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Arrests of national ALF leadership in Sheffield, including Lee</li> <li>Major internal struggle for control of BUAV</li> </ul>                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two scientists have their homes attacked with Molotov cocktails</li> <li>ALF's first use of pocket-sized incendiary devices set off sprinklers in department stores selling fur. Devices timed to go off at night</li> <li>Publication of <i>Interviews with Animal Liberation Front Activists</i>, containing guidance on how to carry out incendiary attacks.</li> <li>ARM claim 6 minor bomb attacks on scientists' homes and vehicles.</li> </ul> |
| 1986 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lee receives 10 year prison sentence</li> <li>ALF offices in Hammersmith are raided and shut down and publication of <i>ALF SG Bulletin</i> is halted</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jan: coordinated car-bomb attacks on 4 animal scientists</li> <li>Apr: a communiqué from ARM after a car-bomb attack, published in the <i>ALF SG Bulletin</i>, announces 'no more warnings' policy.</li> </ul>  |
| 1987 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NAVS staff are replaced as more radical activists gain control of the organisation</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Debenhams department store, Luton, gutted by fire when the sprinkler system happens to be turned off for maintenance at the time of an incendiary attack</li> </ul>   |
| 1988 |   |  |
| 1989 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Arkangel</i> Magazine is launched</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bombing at Bristol University claimed by the Animal Abused Society. The attack is condemned by the ALF</li> <li>BUAV set up Sarah Kite to infiltrate Huntingdon Research Centre</li> </ul>  |
| 1990 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Barry Horne arrested with incendiary devices for the first time. He receives a 3 year sentence</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mike Huskisson and Melody MacDonald Infiltrate National Institute for Medical Research, leading to revocation of Dr. Feldberg's licence</li> <li>June: two car bombs attacks, targeting a veterinary surgeon working at a research defence laboratory and a Bristol University academic</li> </ul>  |
| 1991 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9 Feb: hunt saboteur Mike Hill (18), dies after an altercation with hunt supporters</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More than 100 meat and animal transportation vehicles burnt out over 12-month period</li> </ul>   |
| 1992 |   |  |
| 1993 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3 Apr: hunt saboteur Tom Worby (15) is killed when he falls under the truck of a huntsman. No charges are brought against the driver.</li> </ul>                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Animal rights activists disrupt the Grand National.</li> <li>JD claims 31 attacks, including 13 devices sent by post comprising poster tubes with explosive devices and HIV infected needles.</li> </ul>  |

## TIMELINE

### THE INTERNAL BRAKES ON VIOLENT ESCALATION

| YEAR | SIGNIFICANT ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS  | SIGNIFICANT TACTICAL DEVELOPMENTS  |
|------|--|--|
| 1994 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fighting breaks out at the BUAV EGM between ‘modernisers’ and ‘dissidents’</li> <li>Pre-emptive detention used to avoid disruption of Grand National in response to 1993 disruption</li> <li>Gurjeet Aujla arrested and charged for Stena Sealink campaign.</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>JD claim approx 100 attacks, including posting metal mousetraps fitted with superglued razor blades. Use of secondary targeting, e.g., campaign against Stena Sealink for their role in live animal exports.</li> <li>Multiple incendiary attacks claimed by ARM.</li> </ul>  |
| 1995 |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National campaign against live animal exports, during which Jill Phipps (31) is killed by a truck at Baginton airfield, Coventry.</li> <li>Petrol bombing of White Hart pub in Henfield. The landlord and their family were in the flat above the pub at the time.</li> </ul> |
| 1996 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Barry Horne arrested in possession of incendiary devices in Bristol. Receives a 10-year sentence.</li> <li>Launch of the Consort Beagles campaign, led by Greg Avery and Heather James.</li> </ul>  |  |
| 1997 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Robin Webb (ALF UK press officer) and Simon Russell (ALF SG newsletter editor) convicted for Conspiracy to Incite Criminal Damage, along with prominent figures from the Green Anarchist. The convictions are subsequently overturned.</li> <li>Hill Grove Cat Farm campaign begins</li> <li>Consort Kennels closes in September</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Horne’s first hunger strike, 6 Jan – 9 Feb</li> <li>Horne’s second hunger strike, 11 Aug – 26 Sept</li> <li>ARM threatens to kill 5 vivisectors if Horne dies, and publishes a ‘hit list’</li> </ul>  |
| 1998 |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Horne’s third hunger strike 6 Oct – 13 Dec, accompanied by further death threats against named scientists</li> <li>6000 mink released into the New Forest provokes media furore and public backlash</li> </ul>  |
| 1999 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Save the Shamrock Monkeys (STSM) campaign launched</li> <li>Save the Newchurch Guinea Pigs (SNGP) campaign launched against Darley Oaks Farm</li> <li>SHAC launched, led by Greg Avery and Heather James</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kathleen Brown, wife of Christopher Brown, director of Hill Grove Farm, is ‘accosted while out walking the dog one evening in the woods at the rear of the farm’ (Mann, 2007, p. 536). Hill Grove closes shortly after</li> </ul>   |



| YEAR | SIGNIFICANT ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS   | SIGNIFICANT TACTICAL DEVELOPMENTS  |
|------|---|--|
| 2000 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RSPCA appoint former Shamrock Farm employee Paul West as Assistant Chief Veterinary Officer, provoking outrage from ALF and STSM campaigners</li> <li>Hunt saboteur, Steve Christmas (41), is run down by a hunt supporter. Subsequent raids by hunt saboteurs on hunt kennels result in 18 arrests and a 4-year legal campaign for compensation for Steve Christmas.</li> <li>Close Down Regal Rabbits campaign launched</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feb: bomb threats made against HLS's major shareholders</li> <li>Apr: Phillips and Drew fund management group sell 11% stake in HLS after receiving death threats and hate mail</li> <li>Aug: several HLS workers have their cars firebombed</li> <li>Dec: mass sell-off of HLS shares after <i>The Sunday Telegraph</i> prints a list of shareholders given to it by SHAC</li> </ul>       |
| 2001 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SHAC leaders, Heather James, Greg Avery and Natasha Dallemagne, arrested and receive 12 month sentences</li> <li>David Blenkinsop is sentenced to three years in prison for the attack on Brian Cass.</li> <li>Horne dies 5 Nov 2001 during a hunger strike</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feb: HLS managing director in the UK, Brian Cass, beaten outside his home by three masked men. Andrew Gay, HLS marketing director, is also attacked on his doorstep with a chemical spray to his eyes that left him temporarily blinded.</li> </ul>   |
| 2002 |   |  |
| 2003 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SPEAC campaign prevents construction of primate research centre at Cambridge University</li> </ul>   |  |
| 2004 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SPEAK set up to challenge primate lab in Oxford</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Oct: body of Gladys Hammond, mother-in-law of one of the partners at Darley Oaks Farm, is disinterred</li> </ul>  |
| 2005 |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ALF activists claim responsibility for an arson attack at the home of Phil Blackburn, the corporate controller of GlaxoSmithKline, in Beaconsfield.</li> <li>ALF activists claim responsibility for firebombing a car belonging to an executive of a Canadian Brokerage firm associated with Life Sciences Research (LSR), the name under which HLS had incorporated in the USA.</li> </ul> |
| 2006 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Donald Currie is jailed for 12 years in connection with fire-bombing offenses against HLS customers</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An anonymous group begin a postal and email campaign of intimidation against GlaxoSmithKline's small investors.</li> </ul>  |

| YEAR | SIGNIFICANT ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS   | SIGNIFICANT TACTICAL DEVELOPMENTS |
|------|---|-----------------------------------|
| 2007 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Operation Achilles sees 700 police officers in England, the Netherlands and Belgium arrest 32 prominent SHAC activists.</li> <li>Mel Broughton, co-founder of SPEAK, arrested following the discovery of incendiary devices at Oxford University colleges</li> </ul> |                                   |
| 2008 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seven members of SHAC's senior leadership charged with blackmail. They are sentenced to between 4 and 11 years in January 2009.</li> <li>Close Highgate Farm campaign is launched, including an ALF liberation raid.</li> </ul>                                      |                                   |

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## RESPONDENTS

|               |                               |
|---------------|-------------------------------|
| Respondent C1 | Former animal rights activist |
| Respondent C2 | Former animal rights activist |
| Respondent C3 | Academic expert               |

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