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Abstract: Unsurprisingly, most scholarship on the English Defence League (EDL) focuses on the Islamophobic nature of the group's politics. This has found that, while the group presents a more moderate, public-facing image, the EDL's backstage discourse is a far less nuanced brand of Islamophobia or cultural racism (Allen 2011: Kassimeris and Jackson 2014). A more fundamental area of EDL ideology has been left unexamined, however: what notion of 'England' is the EDL trying to 'defend'? Using content analysis of EDL speeches, interviews and online discourse, this article examines how the EDL articulates, represents, and uses English national identity within its discourse and politics. It finds that, while EDL online discourse conforms to a politics of exclusion, the notion of 'England' that it is trying to 'defend' is far more mainstream than we would otherwise expect. As this article concludes, however, any attempt to mainstream the EDL's appeal is limited by its association with violent extremism.

<u>Introduction</u>

The English Defence League (EDL) emerged as a response to radical Islamist protest in June 2009 and quickly spread to other towns and cities across the UK. Calling itself a 'human rights organisation', the group aimed to 'protect the inalienable rights of all people to protest against radical Islam's encroachment into the lives of non-Muslims.'(EDL Mission Statement) Using a unique blend of ultra-nationalism and anti-Muslim politics, the EDL was able to harness social media with potent effect – recruiting between 25,000 and 30,000 Facebook supporters in its first two years as a group (Bartlett and Littler 2011: 4). Its main *modus operandi* has, however, been largely offline: organising over 50 high-profile and disruptive demonstrations in towns and cities across the UK (Goodwin 2014: 2). This has led to hundreds of arrests and millions of pounds of public money being spent in what has become a 'significant public order challenge' in recent years (Thomas et al 2015: 68).

This new anti-Islamic form of protest has not gone unnoticed. Since 2010, there has been a burgeoning academic literature that has tried to explore the social and political origins of the English Defence League (Copsey 2010; Garland and Treadwell 2010; Jackson 2011; Alessio and Meredith 2014). Moreover, the attitudinal and demographic profiles of EDL activists have been mapped (Bartlett and Littler 2011; Goodwin 2013; Treadwell and Garland 2011) and the organisational limits and difficulties of the group have been charted (Jackson 2011; Busher 2013a). Furthermore, there have also been attempts to apply social movement theory to explain the group's specific form of grassroots organisation and its (limited) trajectory - with its main cycle of protest fizzling out at the end of 2011 due to splintering and infighting (Jackson 2011; Busher 2013a; Busher 2015).

One of the most fascinating debates within the literature has, however, been the extent to which the EDL's ideas and rhetoric are 'Islamophobic' (Allen 2011; Kassimeris and Jackson 2014). This has found that, while there exists a more moderate, public-facing rhetoric that opposes 'Islamic extremism', the group's backstage discourse is far less nuanced brand of Islamophobia and cultural racism

(Allen 2011; Jackson 2011; Kassimeris and Jackson 2014). Moreover, it has been found that EDL rhetoric and discourse use a 'form of order' that poses positive aspects of the English 'in group' against the evil, Muslim 'out group' – thus implying that Englishness and English national identity merely plays a functional role in EDL ideology and discourse (Allen 2011).

This paper challenges this notion. Using content analysis of the EDL's online literature as well as speeches and interviews with the EDL leadership, this article will examine how Englishness and English national identity is substantively articulated, represented, and used within the EDL's discourse and politics. It will interrogate such pertinent questions as: what is distinctive about the EDL's conception of Englishness and England as a nation? How is 'England' represented and what themes or attributes are associated with it? And, how does the EDL negotiate the difficult relationship between what is 'English' and what is 'British'?

In order to do this, we will first look at the current studies on Englishness and what they have to say about the EDL's notion and sources of Englishness. Then we will discuss the question of whether there is a fixed EDL notion of Englishness and the methodological challenges this poses. Finally, we will look at the themes associated with Englishness in EDL discourse and ideology. To conclude, we will argue that, while there is not a fixed or explicit notion of 'England' that the EDL is trying to 'defend', it borrows themes far more akin to more mainstream and British notions of national identity. In our conclusion, we will discuss why this is the case.

<u>English Defence League Ideology: Islamophobia and the role of English national identity</u>

One major pre-occupation of EDL studies has been to examine the role of Islamophobia in the rise and rhetoric of the EDL. *The* debut examination of '…whether the EDL can rightly be described as 'Islamophobic'' (p.280) was penned in 2011 by Chris Allen. Though he explicitly recognises that there is '…little real evidence … to suggest that the EDL is either a direct product of the BNP' or any other far right organisation (p. 285), Allen asserts that EDL emergence can be seen as

part of the 'very same 'growing wave of public hostility to Islam'' that was fanned by Nick Griffin from the early to late 2000's (p. 283).

This is not to say that the EDL has not co-opted the BNP's tactics for its own anti-Islamic ends. An example which Allen uses to posit this continuity is the EDL's use of LGBT and ethnic minority groups (p.289). Allen points to the BNP's exploitation of 'intra-Asian tensions' through a 2001/2002 recording with Sikh's and Hindu's (p. 288) as similar to the EDL's use of 'special interest divisions'. Known as 'the enemy of my enemy is my friend' tactic, it is an attempt to simultaneously bring to bear other nebulous grievances with the scapegoat Muslim community whilst also disavowing accusations from the mainstream that the EDL is a 'Nazi', 'racist' or 'fascist' organisation.

More substantively, and striking at the heart of his main Islamophobic consideration in his article, Allen asserts that the EDL's ideological differentiation between Islam and Islamism is in reality 'far less' sophisticated than the group claims (p.292). Using a mixture of his own work (2010) and Clarke's (2003) psycho-analysis of racism, Allen defines Islamophobia as not purely confined to 'anti-Muslim … expressions, attitudes and hostilities' but also 'systems of thought and meaning, manifested in signifiers and symbols that influence, impact on and inform the social consensus about the Other' (p. 290).

This more expansive definition allows Allen to argue that the EDL's ideology promotes an increasingly popular but dangerous social consensus, in which an intractable psychological 'form of order' exists. This demarcates the Muslim 'Other' as a non-constituent part of English national 'identity', 'besieging the 'patriotic people' of the English nation' (p.291). He concludes that this promotion of an anti-Muslim social consensus is what is key to understanding the lineage and rhetoric of the EDL as being '….clearly Islamophobic.' (p.294)

The second text to engage with the question of the function and role of anti-Muslim sentiment within EDL ideology and discourse can also be found in Paul Jackson's (2011) thorough and authoritative report on the group. In contrast to Chris Allen's article, Jackson argues that the EDL's ideology and 'public facing' rhetoric places it

within a broader European trend of the 'New Far Right' (p.5). After analysing the EDL's mission statement, Jackson asserts that the EDL's viewing of Islam as essentially 'anti-modern' and 'barbaric' (p.12), its 'slippage' between Islamic extremism and moderate Muslim communities (ibid), as well as its use of 'us' and 'them' revised in entirely cultural terms (ibid) suggest an Islamophobic discourse.

Moreover, Jackson draws a further, useful distinction between the 'front-stage' rhetoric of the EDL's official website to the more anti-Muslim, 'back-stage' EDL grassroots blog sites. For example, posts on the news section of the EDL website at least 'attempt to make distinctions between 'moderate Muslims and what is usually termed 'radical Islam'.' (p.36) This is in comparison to English Defence League Extra and Casuals United blogs, where 'Anti-Muslim discussions typically characterise the Islamic faith as a whole as inherently violent and threatening' (p.37) and do not rely on the 'more careful tenor' of the EDL's official website. (p.39)

The third text to deal substantively with Islamophobic elements of the EDL's ideology and rhetoric was written by George Kassimeris and Leonie Jackson in 2014. Their article aims to '…determine the central tenets of the group's ideological representation of Muslims and analyse the claim that they are not racist.' (p.2) Conducting a sophisticated predicate analysis of 86 articles on the news section of the EDL website, they find three 'consistently recurring narratives' in EDL discourse (p.6):

The first is that 'Muslims are uniquely problematic' (ibid). For example, Kassimeris and Jackson identify that the most common activities associated with Muslims were 'extremism and terrorism; however Muslims were also associated with violence more broadly.' (p.7) The second was the 'problematic nature of 'Islamic Ideology'' (p.9) In the case of child-grooming in Rochdale and the West Midlands, for example, the EDL argued that the sexual exploitation of young (white) girls could be traced to Islamic scripture…' (ibid). The third and final narrative identified by Kassimeris and Jackson was around the theme that Muslims are 'responsible for reforming their religion.' (ibid) This takes the view that 'Muslim leaders have failed to undermine extremist ideas from an Islamic perspective' (p.10). According to the authors, the

EDL therefore chooses 'to accept the rhetoric of 'extremist groups' as representative…' of UK Muslims as a whole (p.11).

More pertinently for our study, Kassimeris and Jackson (2014) do devote two paragraphs to EDL representations of national identity. Kassimeris and Jackson (2014) argue that the role of English national identity is part of the group's rhetorical strategy of 'positive-self and negative-other representation' (p.11). Again, we see the identity politics of 'us' and 'them'. The EDL consciously aligns itself with 'British tolerance and convivial values', while 'Muslims who rejected the EDL could therefore be labelled 'extremist', since rejecting the group was a rejection of the [liberal] values it claimed to embody.' (p.12)

To conclude their article, Kassimeris and Jackson suggest that, while EDL's online discourse 'does not biologically racialise the threat from Islam', it still '…uses a more sophisticated discourse of culture to mark Islam out as a sociological, rather than biological, impediment to assimilation.' (p.3) By pointing out the use of positive self and negative other representations (p.11) and denials (such as "I'm not racist, but…") (p.13), this leads them to argue that the EDL employs 'a culturally racist discourse of Islamophobia' (p.14) that is a 'symptom' of the increasingly socially acceptable discourse of 'problematic' Muslims (p.15).

<u>Towards a Deeper Sociological Understanding of the EDL? 'New' Englishness and the rise of the EDL</u>

Anti-Muslim sentiment, however, is an important but not sole part of EDL support and rhetoric. The instrumental focus on English identity as a contingent 'othering' construct by the extant literature on EDL ideology has stifled a more substantive engagement with how the EDL's brand of ultra-patriotism is represented in its rhetoric and rise. After all, while the main reason to join the EDL is because of 'opposition to Islam or Islamism' (Bartlett and Littler 2011: 6), the second reason EDL activists give is due to a 'love of England, commitment to preserving traditional national and cultural values, and belief in representing the interests of 'real' countrymen' (ibid: 27).

This is not to say that English identity is front and centre in the ideas and appeals of the EDL. It is clearly contingent. It is to say, however, that the origins of EDL support is wider than vehemence towards Islam and hinges on a sense of belonging draped in the colours of St. George's. In this sense, the rise of the EDL can be seen not just as a corollary to rising anti-Muslim sentiment, but part of a broader, more nuanced set of sociological factors that have seen an increase in national identity mass awareness over the past two and a half decades.

Fortunately for this study, there has been plenty of debate over the past few years about when, how and in what sense this has come about and contemporary interpretations of this 'new' English identity. In his 2007 book on the *Politics of Englishness*, Arthur Aughey suggests 1996, 'somewhere between New Year and football's Euro 96', as the 'annus mirabilis' in which 'The English had come out of the national closet and declared a patriotic love that could now speaks its name' (p.1). This saw the flying of English flags and, finally, during Euro 2004, flags 'everywhere.' (p.4)

Moreover, in Aughey's (2007) book, he distinguishes between two contemporary elite interpretations of Englishness. The first is a new progressive form promoted by the likes of Billy Bragg and Jon Cruddas MP. This 'herald[s the current emerging Englishness as one of] multi-culturalism, egalitarianism, democracy, radicalism, internationalism…, cooperation, modernism and openness to other cultures.' (p.105) The task of radicals is to 'make sure' that the England that emerges is 'progressive, inclusive, and representative of what the (progressive) people the English, in their diversity, *had now become*.' (p.107) Britishness in this sense is negatively associated with a past traditionalism and the colonial and institutional arrangements of empire rather than a modern nation with liberal values.

Aughey contrasts this with another competing Conservative vision of Englishness. This assumes that 'conservative instincts on immigration, patriotism and national culture continue… to reflect the public mood' (p.137); that there has been 'a contemptuous repression' of Englishness; and a critique of multiculturalism 'as an officially imposed ideology which [has] threatened the necessary 'critical mass of

sameness' that made what it was.' (p.138) Britishness and Englishness are here historically elided. Britishness is not just a 'series of legal and political agreements between different nations' and commonwealth territories, (p.183) '…the Englishness of Britain and the Britishness of England are bound up intimately together in a way that, for example, England is not bound up with Europe.' (p.184)

Some could assert that Aughey, however, never quite lands a blow on what has caused this recent rise in patriotism. He is also imprecise as to the different currents of thought within the two competing interpretations of Englishness he presents. A more thorough-going and scientific account of the recent rise in Englishness is found in Michael Kenny's (2014b) book *The Politics of English Nationhood.* In it, Kenny argues '…that the language and sentiments associated with resurgent ideas of Englishness have a more complex [sociological and demographic] causes than [as a result of Scottish and Welsh] devolution [in the late 1990's].' (p.2) In Kenny's case, the recent rise in Englishness was the 'response' to and not the cause of increasing English self-awareness. (p.27) More specifically, this awakening was as a result of a:

> 'contingent interaction between the waning of established ideas in Britain and the emergence of new pressures and uncertainties generated by changes in the international economy, and the dislocation associated with Britain's rapid transformation to a post-industrial economy during the 1980's…' (p.28)

He backs this up with a chapter devoted to reviewing mass opinion. Kenny argues that, since 2007 in particular, '…a number of different polls…have generated results which appear to indicate…a growing correlation between those who identify most strongly as English and attitudes on various issues associated with the governance of the union.' (p.87) Again, like Aughey, Kenny identifies two mainstream and another more peripheral set of 'leading narrative forms' or 'national understandings.' These will help shape how we classify the peculiar sense of England the EDL is defending. It will also help us diagnose where the EDL's sense of Englishness fits it into the wider debate on English national identity. We will also use Kenny's different notions

to critically contrast and highlight the tensions in EDL conceptions of national identity in different arenas.

The first form of national understanding, Kenny argues, is a 'conservative-traditional' one, (ibid: 139) or '…a distinct, everyday kind of conservative Englishness' (Kenny 2014b: 117). This is 'underpinned by the enduring myth that the spirit of England lies in its rural past'; it 'takes a broadly tolerant stance towards those from other cultural backgrounds'; and 'holds to an intuitive sense of fairness'. (ibid) It does, however, have diversity-phobic implications. Its focus on a 're-imagined notion of yester year' risks airbrushing ethnic minorities, women, and the working-classes out of its idyllic English pastoralism (Kenny 2014b: 123).

The second contemporary form of national understanding is labelled by Kenny as a 'liberal-modern'. (2014a: 139) This is 'associated with various attempts to promote a modern, liberal vision of a multicultural England' (ibid) and encompasses '…a disparate body of ideas and endeavours that seek to reframe England in liberal terms' (2014b: 124). Kenny identifies two types. The first constructs 'a multicultural sense of national belonging…reflective of the realities of life in many cities', whilst the second is more a 'mix of patriotic and radical ideas which lay at the heart of the development of English socialism in the nineteenth century. (p.128)

Highly pertinent to our study, Kenny cites a combination of processes that emerged in the 2000's that have 'laid down [a third] populist-cum-nationalist sentiment within which an appeal to English culture and interest was central.' (p.93) It was seeded by a:

> 'combination of gathering economic uncertainty, the decline of living standards experienced by middle and lower income groups from 2004 onwards, and the growing disillusion with a Labour government that was widely perceived as unsympathetic to the people's culture…'(ibid)

This third and final form of national understanding, Kenny argues, is therefore attached to this trend of 'rising, hard-edged sense of populist-nationalism', harboured among the white, working-classes and championed by the likes of the

EDL, the English Democrats and the UK Independence Party (p.117). This 'frames the political system and the post-devolution constitution as alien impositions' (Kenny 2014a: 138), with '…national culture and traditions of the people…being deliberately marginalized by a political establishment' (Kenny 2014a: 118). This distant elite is seen to reinforce the 'political correctness orthodoxy' and 'views expressions of English pride as inherently suspect.' (ibid)

To conclude then, contrary to the implication that a space was opened up to the appeals of the EDL by the post-9/11 anti-Muslim security agenda, we can see that there is evidence to suggest that a longer sociological process of white, working class marginalisation and resentment has lent credence to the EDL's populist-nationalist brand of national understanding. In the next section, however, it will be shown that the EDL's own peculiar brand of national understanding, though conforming to populist nationalism, is more hybrid in reality and incorporates liberal and conservative understandings. This is combined with anti-establishment themes and a heavy layer of grievance centred on working class marginalisation.

Hybridity and Mainstreaming: EDL Representations of Englishness

Nowhere is this hybridity most evident than in the EDL's mission statement. Point four, entitled 'Respecting tradition', states that the aim of the EDL is to promote 'the traditions and culture of England while at the same time being open to embrace the best that other cultures can offer.' (EDL Mission Statement: 2014) This elision of conservative and liberal forms of national understanding continues, but also rests in tension with each other throughout this part of the EDL's mission statement. For example, while the EDL is eager to point out that it is 'keen to support from people of all races, all faiths, all political persuasions, and all lifestyle choices', the EDL insists that the 'The onus should always be on foreign cultures to adapt and integrate.' Soon, however, the reason for the more conservative elements of the EDL's aim to 'respect tradition' becomes clear. The EDL's commitment to 'ensure the continuity of our culture and its institutions' is in order to oppose 'creeping Islamisation …'

The mission statement also exhibits a hybridity between procedural forms of national belonging and more vibrant cultural markers. Its frequent reference to 'our institutions' evokes a more sterile Whiggish sense of national identity that lifts up the UK as a Parliamentary democracy, while its appeal to 'our culture' and 'our country' denote a thicker sense of national belonging. Moreover, a key and potent symbol of Britishness is used: the UK army. The EDL believe: 'Our armed forces stand up and risk their lives every day in order to protect our culture and democratic way of life.'

The EDL's peculiar, hybrid sense of Englishness can also be found on the EDL's 'Frequently Asked Question' webpage (EDL FAQ's: 2014). Here, under the section 'What do we believe in?', the EDL states that 'our country has done a great deal to safeguard and champion individual rights and freedoms, and that this is something of which we should be immensely proud.' This again reflects a conservative conception of national understanding, reaching into the past and abroad. Meanwhile, its mention of concepts of 'rights and freedoms' invoke a liberal understanding of national identity. The EDL here again use the UK army as a potent symbol of Britishness. The EDL 'believe[s] that our service personnel deserve our respect for the sacrifices that they are willing to make in defence of our country.'

This official, 'front-facing' discourse can be contrasted with the EDL's more 'internal-facing' rhetoric. Contrary to Jackson (2011), I will argue here that the news section of the EDL's website is an example of this, with articles playing on more nationalist-populist themes of national understanding. One of these is the favourable treatment of Muslims by the authorities. In a ranting article, reflecting on Baroness Warsi's 2011 observation that Islamophobia has passed the 'dinner table test', EDL blogger, David Greenfield, suggests that instead of Islamophobia, 'Muslim anglophobia' is the 'last acceptable form of bigotry' (EDL News: July 2011). Citing a host of opinion polls that claim to show Muslim contempt for Westerners, the author suggests that 'natives' inability to express anti-Muslim sentiment demonstrates the favourable treatment of Muslims against by the UK authorities. Greenfield concludes his diatribe by suggesting that this official form of 'Anglophobia' will end with the

British teenager of tomorrow being named Mohammed, taking inspiration from the Koran and not the Magna Carta, toppling Winston Churchill and Oliver Cromwell as national heroes and using video games to practice killing British soldiers.

This underlying grievance is then developed in a series of video posts celebrating St. George's day and an impending march. In a video marking St. George's day (Carlisle Angle 2012), a recurring theme is the idea that there has been an active suppression of patriotic pride and symbols in mainstream society and politics. For example, a banner below the video encourages viewers not to 'hide your flag away' while a newspaper headline suggests that England is 'too scared to fly the flag' (EDL News April 2012). The video is accompanied by a folk song whose lyrics suggest that those who wish to fly the flag are being told to 'shut up and sit down.' The video ends by telling views to 'join together, fly your flag, for St. George, Elizabeth and England.'

In addition to this, we see the recurring hybridity of national understandings used in EDL discourse. For example, the text that accompany the article on the EDL website states that the English flag represents liberal themes that the EDL likes to identify itself with, namely 'freedom, democracy and traditional English tolerance' (Ibid). This is, however, juxtaposed with a statement that the St. George's cross 'reflects a heritage of which we should be immensely proud.' (Ibid) Such an allusion to tradition again conjures up a Conservative sense of national understanding that believes in continuity with the past instead a radical reassertion of modern values.

Another video posted to mark St. George's day 2013 is also interesting viewing. In it the major theme again is the official suppression of forms of nationalistic pride. The text in the video protests that there is 'still no change, still no St. George's bank holiday for the English', it instructs viewers to 'celebrate' and be glad that you are 'British by birth, English by the grace of God'(EDL News, 23 April 2013). A banner at the bottom tells viewers not to 'hide your flag away'. The video is accompanied by a rock song with the lyrics 'keep St. George in my heart, keep me English' to the tune of the Christian hymn 'Give me joy in my heart'. The song ends by demanding authorities to 'give us back our St. George's day'.

A final more recent video, while not developing this specific sense of grievance, marks a move away from hybridity towards a more Conservative sense of national understanding. In a post before the EDL's February 2014 Slough demonstration, entitled 'This is my England', this longer video represents England as a land represented by rolling English pastures, country pubs, cottages, aristocratic houses, churches, as well as the royal family (EDL News, 27th January 2014). The video is accompanied by another folk song whose lyrics include the lines 'This is my England, this is my land…This is my freedom, this is what I am.'

Leading us back to the contingent nature of English national identity in EDL discourse, however, this imagery of English pastoralism and rural architecture is really only used as a device of 'othering' Islam. For example, this more Conservative conception of English identity is not so subtly juxtaposed with pictures of extreme Islamist demonstrations that include EDL *bête noir*, Anjem Choudary and a female protestor carrying the sign 'Democracy Go To Hell'. This is therefore not so much the conservative turn in the EDL's representation of Englishness as it first appears but a diversity-phobic conception of nationhood that hopes to airbrush out Minarets, Mosques and Muslim centres.

To conclude then, having conducted a sustained content analysis of EDL 'front-facing' and 'internal-facing' discourse on Englishness, it becomes apparent that EDL representations of Englishness are much more nuanced than the nationalist-populism with which the group has become associated in the academic literature on Englishness. While the EDL's internal-facing discourse betrays a key national-populist trope of authorities stifling public expressions of nationalistic pride, the EDL's Mission Statement and FAQ's demonstrate that the EDL's peculiar sense of Englishness is based on a more mainstream conservative-liberal hybrid. What is, however, not so surprising is the reason and use of Englishness: 'othering' the UK's indigenous Muslim population.

Conclusion

This article set out to interrogate a fundamental question, namely: what notion of 'England' is the EDL 'defending'? While a vibrant scholarship has emerged around questions of Islamophobia, English identity has only been a minor consideration when researchers have looked upon the EDL's identity politics. Moreover, little attention has been devoted to seeing how the EDL's unique form of Englishness contributes to wider debates in UK politics and society and whether this gives us a new perspective on the potential drivers and contributory factors for the group itself.

What this article has found is striking. Taking insights from the 'new' Englishness literature, we can view the ideological lineage of the EDL -- not merely part of a more recent increase in anti-Muslim sentiment - but also within a broader set of sociological processes that have been fuelling the rise of the radical right in the UK. They appear similar to a 'left behind' group of voters identified in a recent study on the rise of the UK Independence Party, whose radically Eurosceptic, nationalistic, anti-immigrant and populist values isolate them from the mainstream electorate and the serving political elite (Ford and Goodwin 2014). The EDL can therefore be seen as part of a broader rise of nationalist-populism and this particular brand of national understanding.

Contrary to Kenny's (2014a) analysis and expectations, however, the EDL's peculiar sense of Englishness (as represented in its rhetoric) is not a pure version of this populist-nationalism. While the internal facing rhetoric of the group does exhibit themes of working-class grievance identified by Kenny, it also plays to liberal and Conservative versions - with the implicit function of 'othering' UK Muslims still evident. Moreover, in official front-facing statements, populist-nationalist understandings of nationhood are almost absent, with a hybrid of Conservative and liberal notions taking the fore. The 'England' the EDL is 'defending' therefore may derive its roots in sentiment around the marginalisation of the UK's white working classes, but has also spread to more mainstream liberal and Conservative versions.

This suggests that the EDL is not just a 'rag tag bunch' of anti-Muslim or anti-Establishment discontents. Such (aforementioned) hybridity may therefore mark a broader effort to 'mainstream' its message. As Jackson (2011) states, however, any

attempts to do this are limited. Like its predecessor, the National Front, the EDL is 'indelibly associated with violence and extremism' (p.62); the EDL is bound up in a 'limited range of [localised] supporters' (p. 63); and unable to rise to 'a level where it can influence the political agenda' (p.67). Like the BNP, the EDL is, therefore, in 'no position to successfully rebrand and reorganise' (p. 62). Left unable to achieve its goals, it is unlikely to extend its reach beyond its core national populist supporters - therefore remaining in stasis and decline.

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