**Holocaust inversion, anti-Zionism, and British neo-fascism: the Israel-Palestine conflict and the extreme right in post-war Britain**

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**ABSTRACT:** The British extreme right has always struggled to distance itself from the crimes of the Third Reich, not helped by the high level of Holocaust consciousness in Britain and by the importance of antisemitic conspiracy theory to British neo-fascist ideology. This article charts attempts by British neo-fascist actors to use Holocaust inversion and – by extension – anti-Zionism as a mask for their Nazi sympathies. It shall, first of all, demonstrate how the Israel-Palestine conflict was incorporated into British neo-fascist antisemitic discourse in the 1960s. It shall then use the 1980s National Front as a case study, to illustrate the manner in which the extreme right can use anti-Zionist activism as a tactic aimed at legitimizing its politics and gaining new supporters. The article therefore contributes to the historiographies of antisemitism and anti-Zionism in Britain, as well as to scholarly understandings of neo-fascism.

**KEYWORDS:** antisemitism; anti-Zionism; British fascism; conspiracy theory; Holocaust denial; Holocaust inversion; Israel; neo-fascism; neo-Nazism; Palestine.

Since the Second World War, the extreme right has always had one major obstacle standing (above all others) in its way: the horrors of the Holocaust. Unsurprisingly, then, it has always been common practice amongst neo-fascists to deny that the Holocaust ever happened, or to offer a revisionist view of history that places the blame for the Holocaust far away from the eliminationist aspects of fascist ideology.[[1]](#footnote-1) Orthodox forms of Holocaust revisionism – including the “soft denial” tactics of attributing the Holocaust to extremist Nazis outside of Hitler’s control, or the claim that the death of six million Jews was actually the result of disease – have rarely proved particularly helpful for neo-fascists.[[2]](#footnote-2) In fact, outright Holocaust denial has been a major contributor to the political isolation of the post-war extreme right.

It nonetheless remains important for extreme right movements to disassociate themselves from the crimes of Nazism if they are to gain any real mainstream success. British neo-fascists have found this a particular struggle, partly because of the relatively high level of Holocaust consciousness in Britain since 1945,[[3]](#footnote-3) and partly because British neo-fascist ideology has generally been dominated by antisemitic conspiracy theory. Despite the fact that Holocaust denial has remained a constant on the British extreme right fringe since the early 1940s,[[4]](#footnote-4) British fascists have attempted to find other routes out of their post-Holocaust cul-de-sac. One such route is Holocaust inversion: ‘the portraying of Israel, Israelis and Jews as Nazis’.[[5]](#footnote-5) It is not difficult to see the appeal of this concept for neo-fascists. The notion ‘that Israel behaves against the Palestinians as Germany did to the Jews did in World War II’ does, after all, still have an unmistakeable tinge of Holocaust denial.[[6]](#footnote-6) In fact, to some extent, all examples of neo-facist Holocaust denial since 1948 may also be seen as examples of Holocaust inversion. As Rusi Jaspal notes, the suggestion that the Holocaust is a myth is a strategy intended ‘to delegitimise and dehumanise the Jews and the Jewish state by associating them with deception’, a deception that (to neo-fascists) can be seen as providing the sole justification for ‘the creation of the state of Israel’.[[7]](#footnote-7)

Deeper antisemitic meanings aside, the adoption of Holocaust inversion by neo-fascists has been motivated by the desire to gain increased acceptance amongst the wider population. Generally speaking, the more acceptable face neo-fascism seeks to present through Holocaust inversion is actually nothing more than an attempt at distraction: through the exposure of Zionism as the “real fascism”. The idea here is that either accusations of fascism directed against British neo-fascists will be reconsidered, or – even better – that the anti-Zionist perspective of the neo-fascists will make fascism more appealing. The latter possible outcome is especially significant, as the long-term aim of these strategies is, of course, to totally re-legitimize fascism and – ultimately – radical antisemitism. Moreover, by expressing anti-Zionist views, and by extension implicitly expressing sympathy for the Palestinians, some British neo-fascists have hoped to dislodge the widespread view of the British extreme right as being uniformly racist. As shall be illustrated later, adopting the language of anti-Zionism has also been seen by neo-fascists as having the theoretical advantage of enabling the infiltration of movements on the other side of the political spectrum.

The first half of this article charts the gradual increase in prominence of Holocaust inversion and anti-Zionism on the British extreme right in the years leading up to, and immediately following, the 1967 formation of the National Front (NF). Then a case study examines the manner in which the National Front attempted to tactically exploit the Israel-Palestine conflict in the 1980s, especially during the First Intifada at the end of the decade. Finally, in concluding, it will assess the significance of the roles that Holocaust inversion and tactical anti-Zionism have played for the British extreme right in the post-war era.

**Holocaust inversion, anti-Zionism, and the antisemitic rhetoric of British fascism**

In the aftermath of the Second World War, British fascists were immediately confronted with both the Holocaust and Zionism. These two issues quickly became intertwined, in both an ideological and a practical sense. A major outburst of popular antisemitism in Britain, caused by Zionist paramilitary terrorism in Palestine prior to the British withdrawal of 1948, inevitably saw a brief return to the streets for the crude fascist antisemitic tirades of the 1930s.[[8]](#footnote-8) The establishment of a Jewish state on former British territory also prompted rare early post-war responses by the extreme right to imperial decline.[[9]](#footnote-9) Aside from Sir Oswald Mosley, who supported the idea of Jews being relocated to Palestine as a way of ridding Europe of its remaining Jewish population,[[10]](#footnote-10) British fascists generally portrayed the establishment of Israel as proof of Jewish power. A key figure here was A. K. Chesterton, the former Blackshirt who would become the first chairman of the NF in 1967. He adopted an early form of Holocaust inversion, comparing the massacre at Deir Yassin to the crimes of the Nazis against the Jews as early as 1949.[[11]](#footnote-11) However, his major contribution to British extreme right anti-Zionism was in his role as antisemitic conspiracy theorist. In *The New Unhappy Lords* (1965), he stressed his belief that ‘it is perhaps a realistic appraisal of the situation to see Israel, not merely as an ideal with a strong emotional appeal to Jews, but perhaps even more as an advanced base for the largely Zionist take-over bid for Africa and the whole world’.[[12]](#footnote-12)

This euphemistic implantation of Zionism into the narrative of a Jewish quest for world domination would go on to be highly influential over a new generation of British extreme right activists, many of whom spent time in Chesterton’s anti-decolonisation pressure group, the League of Empire Loyalists (LEL), before joining other organisations (or founding their own). Intriguingly, despite spending time in the LEL, the most notable members of this new generation often spent a period experimenting with more extreme, openly neo-Nazi, positions before adopting the more euphemistic rhetorical approach of Chesterton. John Tyndall epitomized this tendency. Following his spell in the LEL he joined John Bean’s National Labour Party, which then morphed into the 1960s British National Party (BNP). It was here that Tyndall encountered another ex-LEL activist, Colin Jordan, an acolyte of perhaps the most extreme antisemite in the history of British fascism, Arnold Leese. Together with Jordan, Tyndall developed a crude Holocaust inversion-dominated approach to the Israel-Palestine conflict in the early 1960s, an approach that stayed with him for the rest of his career, but which underwent significant modification following the creation of the NF.

Tyndall had already dabbled in an unsophisticated form of Holocaust inversion by the time he met Jordan. In a short piece for the first issue of Bean’s periodical *Combat*, in 1958, he responded to criticism of racialized politics in Britain by the Anglo-Jewish Society – described as ‘our Israeli citizens’ – with a bitter attempt at satire: ‘the only race today that is entitled to the privilege of self-preservation is the Hebrew HERRENVOLK!’[[13]](#footnote-13) Once aligned with Jordan on the extreme wing of the BNP, however, Tyndall began to use anti-Zionist rhetoric – and Holocaust inversion, in particular – more regularly. This was much to the frustration of Bean, who craved an air of respectability for the party.[[14]](#footnote-14) These differing approaches led Jordan and Tyndall in the direction of Holocaust inversion, as a short-lived form of compromise. According to Bean’s autobiography, the pair were determined to use the Eichmann trial as ‘a propaganda issue’ in 1961, a position he opposed on the grounds that ‘the media would accuse [the BNP] of supporting the gassing of Jews’.[[15]](#footnote-15) The agreement reached between the two factions led to Jordan preparing a four-page supplement for the January/February 1961 issue of *Combat*, on the theme of ‘Jews and Atrocities’. Pre-1948 Jewish violence against British colonial forces in Palestine was highlighted, as was the Deir Yassin Massacre. Outright Holocaust denial was also included, as well as the claim that there had been an ‘evil Jewish plan’ to ‘exterminate the Germans’ after World War Two.[[16]](#footnote-16) The idea was that this supplement would allow Jordan to promote the idea that ‘Eichmann was […] a victim of Jewish propaganda’, but without directly appearing to endorse Nazism and the Holocaust.[[17]](#footnote-17) However, as Bean would later admit, the supplement and associated propaganda activities ‘fooled nobody’, especially after Bean and Jordan were arrested, for displaying ‘posters proclaiming that Menachim Begin was wanted for murder’ and ‘that as Eichmann was to be brought to trial then so should Begin’, outside a Jewish commemoration for the Warsaw Uprising in London.[[18]](#footnote-18)

The BNP split in 1962, with a small proportion of the membership (around 15% according to *Combat*) leaving the party and joining Jordan and Tyndall’s spectacularly unambiguous new outfit, the National Socialist Movement (NSM). Even if the Holocaust inversion of 1961’s *Combat* supplement had been prompted in part by Bean’s concern with the BNP’s image, the approach clearly appealed to Jordan and Tyndall. A 1963 issue of the NSM’s periodical, *The National Socialist* (which featured swastikas on its front cover), featured on the front page the headline ‘The Gangster State of Israel: Jewish Crimes Exposed’, alongside some extremely graphic images of dead Palestinian women and children who had been ‘exterminated by the Jews’. The cover also featured the claim that,

Having created and consolidated their state of Israel by means of mass murder, the Jews now plan to make war on their Arab neighbours at an opportune moment in order to steal yet more territory from them and to create an Israeli empire in the Middle East.[[19]](#footnote-19)

In the context of Jordan and Tyndall’s open neo-Nazism in this period, readers could only realistically interpret this rhetoric as attempting to justify the crimes of the Third Reich. Given the unsubtle nature of the pair’s position, it is little wonder that Tyndall failed in attempts to secure funding for NSM anti-Zionist activism from United Arab Republic embassy officials.[[20]](#footnote-20) What was needed, if Holocaust inversion was to prove a successful rhetorical trick for British neo-fascists, was a more euphemistic approach, and Tyndall – at least – would find this in the works of Chesterton.

1967 was a seminal year in the history of the British extreme right, with various organisations – including the BNP and, after a brief exclusion, Tyndall’s post-NSM Greater Britain Movement (GBM) – coming together to form the NF. With Chesterton as its founding chairman, but with many upholders of the Leese ideological tradition as members, it is not difficult to see why the common interpretation of NF ideology has been that of ‘the Leese tradition dressed in Chesterton’s clothing’.[[21]](#footnote-21) NF Holocaust inversion reflected this ideological duality. From 1967 on, the antisemitism of the British neo-fascist mainstream became dependent on Chesterton-esque ‘coded references to “Zionism”’.[[22]](#footnote-22) As Michael Billig noted in his late 1970s study of the NF, the party’s chief periodicals used Zionism to refer to an overarching Jewish conspiracy, but largely endeavoured to present it as innocently referring to the ideology of Jewish nationalism.[[23]](#footnote-23) In other words, the British extreme right maintained its antisemitic worldview but redefined the terms of engagement with it. Timing is important to understanding this in full. 1967 was, after all, a seminal year for the Israel-Palestine conflict, and anti-Zionism, as well as for the British extreme right. As David Cesarani noted, the Six Day War of June 1967 prompted much of the New Left to embrace an anti-Zionism that ‘inevitably reflected Israel’s occupation of territory [in this conflict] and its emergence as a regional superpower’, and which increasingly featured ‘the identification of Zionism as racist and Israel as a colonial settler state’.[[24]](#footnote-24) New Left anti-Zionism thus came, unintentionally, to bear several distinct similarities with the crude Holocaust inversion of the extreme right.

The NF’s discursive tendency towards “anti-Zionism” should be interpreted in this context. From 1967 onwards, the terms “Zionist” and “Zionism” featured consistently in the main neo-fascist periodicals, in an obvious effort to limit references to “Jews”. Tyndall’s own *Spearhead* – the most significant of these periodicals – was the leader of the pack in this regard. In a two-page September 1967 spread bearing the headline ‘Rise of the Israeli Reich’, Tyndall focused on the supposed ‘pro-Zionist’ bias of the media and ‘the Zionist drive for expansion’, as well as on the claim that ‘Israel has […] become a far more highly militarised state than Nazi Germany ever was’.[[25]](#footnote-25) Tyndall now wrote as if demarcating between Zionist and non-Zionist Jews, with the terms “Jewish” and “Jewry” relegated to appearing opposite references to “Arabs”, or in reference to pro-Zionist attitudes from non-Israelis.[[26]](#footnote-26)Aside from the use of two graphic photographs of ‘Victims of Israel’s Blitzkrieg’, the difference in tone from Tyndall’s last major work of Holocaust inversion – in *The National Socialist* – was stark, even if the message was effectively still the same.[[27]](#footnote-27) Tyndall, and *Spearhead*, continued along this route from this point on, soon adopting what has since become a traditional riposte to accusations of antisemitism generated by criticism of Israel: ‘“Anti-Semitism” is simply a political smear-word […] often flung by irresponsible Zionists at anti-Zionists in order to stifle criticism’.[[28]](#footnote-28)

Given the personnel involved, this “anti-Zionist” façade was always going to be limited in its effectiveness. Tyndall celebrated consolidating his position as NF leader in early 1976 by publishing an extraordinarily unsubtle rant on the subject of ‘Jewish [rather than Zionist] power’, in which he expressed the belief that any ‘policy of trying to sweep the Jewish Question under the carpet is neither right nor sensible’.[[29]](#footnote-29) Whilst bursts of overt antisemitism such as this were less common than one might expect, their occasional emergence was enough to make a mockery of the NF’s continued anti-Zionist pretence. It is unlikely to be a coincidence that, two issues later, Martin Webster used his regular *Spearhead* column to re-adjust the NF’s anti-Zionist camouflage, remarkably attempting to position the party’s stance as partly born out of concern for the world’s Jews. Having once again attempted to emphasize that the NF was not antisemitic or anti-Jewish but merely anti-Zionist, Webster claimed that the NF was aligned with anti-Zionist Jews who were ‘fearful of the wrath that might be called down on the heads of **all** [emphasis in original]Jews (Zionist and non-Zionist alike) as a result of the corrupt, manipulative, parasitic and often violent actions of the world Zionist movement’.[[30]](#footnote-30) In the unlikely event that any of the NF’s opponents found this convincing, the following *Spearhead* would have set them right: it featured a positive review of Arthur Butz’s Holocaust denial tome, *The Hoax of the Twentieth Century*.[[31]](#footnote-31)

With Tyndall at the helm, no amount of rhetorical dexterity could make the NF’s anti-Zionism convincing. It was only in the 1980s, after Tyndall’s departure from the party, that the NF would make a fuller commitment to the strategic adoption of anti-Zionism and Holocaust inversion. His career, from 1982 on spent leading a new iteration of the BNP, would remain marked by an inconsistent approach to masking his obsession with the “Jewish Question”.[[32]](#footnote-32)

**Holocaust inversion and anti-Zionist activism: the 1980s National Front**

The 1980s was a significant decade in the history of the British extreme right, with a young generation of radicals – most prominently Nick Griffin, Patrick Harrington, and Derek Holland – gaining increased control over the NF. This culminated in a split in 1986, with the radicals (known as the “political soldiers”) continuing to operate through the Official NF and the traditionalists through the NF Flag Group.[[33]](#footnote-33) The political soldiers were uninterested in electoral politics, considering themselves genuine revolutionaries, and arguing that the route to political success was a ‘Cultural Revolution’ in which the NF would ‘promote the widespread acceptance of [its] ideas in the minds of men’.[[34]](#footnote-34) Engagement with external political campaigns was considered a significant part of this approach, and anti-Zionist campaigning was earmarked as a potentially fruitful tactic from early in the 1980s.

The anti-Zionist discourse of the political soldiers was, from the start, dominated by a brand of explicit (and often extreme) Holocaust inversion. The twelfth issue of the radical journal *Nationalism Today*, for example, featured on its front cover a crudely altered image of Hitler, who was given Ariel Sharon’s face and a Star of David armband. The headline ‘ISRAEL ÜBER ALLES’ completed the effect.[[35]](#footnote-35) Inside, Sharon was described as a ‘former Jewish death squad commander’ who, having led the ‘Israeli army’s “Einsatzgruppe 101”’ was ‘like Begin, no stranger to genocide, having carried out quite a bit personally’.[[36]](#footnote-36) The fifteenth issue of the same journal featured a four-page supplement – penned by Derek Holland – entitled ‘Victory to Palestine’.[[37]](#footnote-37) This supplement was also extremely provocative, containing both open Holocaust denial – ‘a mythical Jewish Holocaust does not justify a horribly real Arab Holocaust’ – and a call for violent action against Israel – ‘ISRAEL MUST BE DESTROYED!’[[38]](#footnote-38)

Crucially, the viciousness of these early 1980s pieces was countered by a more fully rounded anti-Zionist approach. ‘Victory to Palestine’ may have had a clear interest in defending Nazism, but it also made overtures to the wider anti-Zionist movement by adopting the rhetoric shared across the wider Palestinian solidarity movement alongside that of Holocaust inversion. Holland wrote not just of ‘Israeli Imperialism’ but also of ‘support[ing] the cause of Palestinian self-determination’, concluding that ‘it is for the Palestinians, not us, to decide what kind of society they want’.[[39]](#footnote-39) The sentiment here may not have been genuine, but it was intentional. In September 1983 NF activists attended a major Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) rally in London, at the invitation – so *National Front News* claimed – of the organizers.[[40]](#footnote-40) This claim was vociferously denied by PLO and Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) representatives,[[41]](#footnote-41) but whether the NF attended as the result of a rogue invitation or not, the event fulfilled a purpose for the party. As *Searchlight*, the anti-fascist periodical, reported, the NF had distributed copies of ‘Victory to Palestine’ at the rally, printed with funding from Colonel Gadhafi’s Libya, and prompting attempts at striking up a similar relationship with the Ayatollah Khomeini regime in Iran.[[42]](#footnote-42)

The anti-Zionism of the NF radicals was, therefore, more multi-faceted than that of earlier generations. It retained the esoteric purpose of providing an outlet for antisemitism, but its exoteric motivations had expanded. Holocaust inversion was now being used to try and gain a foothold in the wider anti-Zionist movement (on a global, as well as a domestic, level). Moreover, thanks to the radicalisation of small sections of the anti-Zionist left, this had – in itself – become seen as a means of legitimizing the neo-fascist antisemitic worldview, in line with the political soldier “Cultural Revolution” ethic. As Michael Billig highlighted in 1984, some far left anti-Zionists had begun to employ Holocaust inversion in a manner that left them open to comparisons with neo-fascist Holocaust revisionists. This was the case with Tony Greenstein, one of the most prominent far left anti-Zionist activists of the period, who was praised by NF publication *Sussex Front* for his pamphlet, *Antisemitism’s Twin in Jewish Garb*.[[43]](#footnote-43) Directly comparing Greenstein’s pamphlet to the book *Did Six Million Really Die?* (written by one-time *Spearhead* editor Richard Verrall under the pseudonym Richard Harwood), Billig concluded that ‘Harwood’s argument is part of a deliberate attempt to make Nazi ideology appear legitimate and Greenstein is arguing that Zionism makes that same ideology legitimate.’[[44]](#footnote-44)

The 1986 takeover of the NF by the political soldiers prompted renewed attempts at exploiting anti-Zionism for tactical and financial gain. The confluences between the Holocaust inversion rhetoric of the left and right extremes of the anti-Zionist movement, along with the beginning of the first Intifada in December 1987, encouraged the NF to take the prospect of engaging in organized anti-Zionist activity more seriously. The decision of the Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA) to hold its 1988 convention in Jerusalem provided the perfect excuse for the start of a new campaign. In March 1988, in an article that bore the headline ‘Boycott Israel’ and accompanied by a photograph of a placard bearing the slogan ‘Israel: Try Zyklon-B’, *National Front News* called on its readers to boycott both Israeli goods and – more specifically – ABTA.[[45]](#footnote-45) The following month, assumedly inspired by a positive response to the boycott call from activists, *National Front News* placed the Israel-Palestine issue on its front page, also stating that the NF had been involved in the creation of ‘an association of groups and individuals in Britain’ that would be known as the Campaign for Palestinian Rights (CPR).[[46]](#footnote-46) Initially, it was noted, ‘the National Front are to concentrate on a campaign against ABTA’.[[47]](#footnote-47) The lead comment section of the same issue stressed the importance of this activity, arguing that Israeli brutality against Palestinians necessitated ‘that nationalists must become fanatical in their attitude’ towards the CPR.[[48]](#footnote-48) The following issue reported – under the front page headline ‘ABTA Back Zionist Child Killers!’ – that the CPR was having some success through a combination of picketing and calling on members of the public.[[49]](#footnote-49)

In all the coverage of it in NF publications, the CPR was referred to as if it was an independent organisation that merely welcomed NF support. However, in reality, it was an NF front organisation, intended to gain supporters amongst the wider anti-Zionist movement. It was also used in order to build connections with other extreme right organisations, such as the German National Democratic Party, and – again – with the Gadhafi government, via a Palestinian Congress held in Libya, which the NF contacted.[[50]](#footnote-50) The CPR’s approach also betrayed its front status, offering a clear continuation of the Holocaust inversion approach of *National Front News* and *Nationalism Today*. Leaflets were produced bearing the slogan ‘Zionism is Racism’, as well as the visual motif of an interlocking swastika and Star of David.[[51]](#footnote-51) The same symbol had already been used in *National Front News*, in an advert encouraging readers to ‘Become a Friend of the Movement [the NF]’.[[52]](#footnote-52) Another leaflet, entitled ‘Terror Tours’, remarkably reached Paul Madigan, a broadcaster for Melbourne’s 3RRR radio station, who read it out in full live on air.[[53]](#footnote-53) ABTA were impacted by anti-Zionist campaigning, with *National Front News* claiming that ‘well over a thousand’ delegates did not attend the convention in Jerusalem partly as a result of CPR pressure (mostly applied via picketing outside ABTA-affiliated travel agents across the UK).[[54]](#footnote-54) Overall attendance was judged to be around ‘half the usual number’, and major companies such as Cunard’s and Thomas Cook dropped out,[[55]](#footnote-55) although it is unlikely that many of these dropouts were directly attributable to the CPR, given the ongoing turmoil on the West Bank. It is also important to remember that the use of the CPR front meant that the involvement of the NF was not necessarily obvious to those who encountered the anti-ABTA campaign.

Even if the CPR campaign had damaged ABTA, then, it did nothing to change the reputation of the NF. There is no evidence that it resulted in a large number of new recruits for the party. Despite similarities in rhetoric between the NF and some leftist anti-Zionists, the PSC was careful to distance itself from the CPR. *Palestine Solidarity* warned readers that the CPR was an NF front, and emphasized that the antisemitism fuelling the NF’s activities only served to ‘*strengthen* the Israeli state by “proving” the Zionist maxim that Jews cannot escape anti-Semitism other than in a state of their own’.[[56]](#footnote-56) *NF News* responded to this as ‘typical red sectarianism’,[[57]](#footnote-57) which only prompted *Palestine Solidarity* to assert again their belief that the likes of the NF ‘have no place in the solidarity movement and never will have’.[[58]](#footnote-58) The CPR campaign also failed to guarantee continued long-term support from Gadhafi’s Libya, which, having received three NF leaders on a semi-official visit in September 1987, effectively ditched the party by late 1988.[[59]](#footnote-59)

Despite putting a significant amount of effort into campaigning on the Israel-Palestine issue, then, the NF found it impossible to use Holocaust inversion and anti-Zionism as a means to gaining increased support for its ideas. This was indicative of the wider failure of the political soldiers’ “Cultural Revolution”, with the radicals ultimately relinquishing control of the NF moniker in March 1990.

**Holocaust inversion, anti-Zionism and the failure of British neo-fascism**

Despite the theoretical advantages of Holocaust inversion and anti-Zionism, then, the application of these approaches – rhetorically and tactically – has never proved particularly successful for the British extreme right. As the examples gathered together in this article have demonstrated, British neo-fascists have struggled to incorporate the existence of Israel into their worldview without recourse to obvious antisemitic conspiracy theory. Problematically, whilst anti-Zionism has been utilized by the extreme right partly as a means of disguising the true antisemitic meaning of neo-fascist discourses, the use of Holocaust inversion has only served as a reminder of the indelible link with the Nazi genocide that it has been intended to hide. This was no less the case in the 1980s, when the NF attempted to take advantage of the far left’s use of Holocaust inversion to undermine the state of Israel. The neo-fascist brand was already so tainted as to prevent the NF making any significant inroads in this area. It is also worth noting that PLO/PSC opposition to the NF came in spite of the antipathy between sections of the anti-Zionist and anti-fascist movements on the left of British politics.[[60]](#footnote-60) In fact, this divide can itself be summed up via an example of Holocaust inversion: in 1990 the PSC accused *Searchlight* of ignoring ‘the rise of the fascist-Right in Israel’.[[61]](#footnote-61)

The resistance to neo-fascist infiltration from the wider anti-Zionist movement is, then, indicative of a sustained anti-fascist consensus on the political left, one that has patched over divisions on the issue of the Israel-Palestine conflict. More than that, however, it demonstrates the profound ineffectiveness of anti-Zionism as a rhetorical mode for neo-fascists. Holocaust inversion has, much like Holocaust denial, only further isolated British neo-fascists. Things changed on the extreme right of British politics in 1999. Nick Griffin, once a political soldier, was elected to lead the Tyndall-founded BNP on a platform of modernization inspired by the French Front National. The tactics of Tyndall, who – in his 1988 book *The Eleventh Hour* – had called for the removal of ‘the cancer of Israel from the Middle East region’,[[62]](#footnote-62) were consigned to the past. Griffin even included ‘Zionism’ amongst a list of subjects that activists should ignore ‘when it comes to influencing the public’.[[63]](#footnote-63) Whilst, at its core, the BNP remained a fundamentally neo-fascist and antisemitic organization, Griffin oversaw a switch in public focus for the party – as self-stylized ‘defenders of the west’ – towards the battle against ‘Militant Islam’.[[64]](#footnote-64)

This exoteric change should not be interpreted as rendering irrelevant the continued presence of radical antisemitism at the core of much neo-fascist ideology. It is imperative to remember that the supposed “new antisemitism” associated with the far left, cited by David Cesarani as having emerged out of the collapse of the Israel-Palestine peace process and the arrival of fundamentalist Islamic terrorism in the West (blamed – in some quarters – upon the support of western states for Israel), ‘evinces continuity with traditional anti-Jewish and anti-Zionist themes’.[[65]](#footnote-65) In the increasingly chaotic context of the early twenty-first century, marked by a notable resurgence of nativist politics, any normalisation of such themes – even when motivated by legitimate criticism of Israel – may yet provide new avenues for the extreme right to use Holocaust inversion and anti-Zionism to their advantage.

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6. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
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11. Ibid., 124. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
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