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Assessment 1

Abstract

This report aims to examine how the policies and legislation of the UK government influence various activist organizations and groups. Additionally, it seeks to explore whether these organizations are engaging in activism or extremism. First, the report will investigate the relationship between the UK government's policies and activists, considering how these policies have shaped and impacted activist movements. Following this, the report will delve into the nature of various campaigns and movements, questioning whether they represent peaceful and non-violent activism or illegal and violent political actions. Furthermore, the report will explore where the boundary between activism and extremism lies and how government policies may blur or influence this line.

Overview of Government Policy and Legislation

According to Oleg V. O. (2020), the UK's approach to immigration control remained stricter than in many EU countries, and it was particularly tightened due to Brexit, as the government feared a massive influx of low-skilled migrants. Also, according to Sumption, M. (2022) all labor migrants to the UK must have a job offer that meets the skill and salary requirements, and these requirements are lower than those for non-EU citizens under the pre-2021 immigration rules, meaning that the new system represents a liberalization for non-EU citizens. On the other hand, for EU citizens, it significantly reduced the options for legal labor migration (Sumption, M., 2022). In addition, According to the Home Office (2020), in its policy statement from February 2020, it was stated that no route would be provided for low-skilled workers, and it is considered important to move away from reliance on the UK's immigration system.

However, Rolfe, H. *et al.* (2018) state that low-skilled migrants address labor shortages in sectors such as social care and often perform jobs that are considered unattractive by

British people. It can be argued that Restricting immigration is expected to lead to a shortage of labor within the UK. Also, Sumption, M. (2022) states that the end of free movement is expected to cause a labor shortage, at least in the medium term, until the labor market and industry composition are able to adjust.

From these points, it can be argued that the UK has restricted the influx of non-EU citizens and low-skilled migrants, and which has significantly reduced the options for legal labor migration and often leads to labor shortages. However, according to Armstrong *et al.* (2016), while the UK can design immigration policies that allow it to continue benefiting economically from immigration, it may fail to meet public expectations for a more restrictive immigration policy. Therefore, it can be inferred that immigration policies are closely linked to both the labor force and the domestic economy.

Furthermore, regarding refugees, the UK has put forward various policies. Hurstfield, J. (2004) states that employers who hire refugees without the correct documentation are subject to fines, and many employers avoid hiring refugees to mitigate these risks. According to Bloch, A. (2007) also states that according to the Refugee Council's 1999 study, the 1996 Act affected employers' willingness to hire asylum seekers and refugees due to the additional burden and complexity of having to check documentation. These factors suggest that the employment environment for refugees and asylum seekers in the UK might be challenging.

Also, according to Bloch, A. (2007), the introduction of the five-year rule in 2005 granted refugees leave to remain for five years, with a reassessment of their status at the end of that period based on the conditions in their country of origin, thereby removing long-term security for refugees. Stewart, E. and Mulvey, G. (2014) state that the implementation of the five-year strategy on immigration and asylum (Home Office, 2005) is one of the key policy changes in the UK's asylum system. The following year, in 2006, the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act of 2006 strengthened the powers to prosecute employers who hire workers reasonably excluded from the labor market. As a result of this, Morris, L. (2002) and Tyler, I. (2010) state that the provision of permanent protection for refugees has been removed, and overall, the impact of restrictive asylum policies has been to progressively limit and erode the rights of refugees and asylum seekers. Based on the above, it can be said that refugees in the UK are granted temporary protection rather than permanent protection.

In addition, according to Coddington, K. (2018) the UK, which has signed the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees (hereafter, "the Convention"), is increasingly treating refugees in a manner similar to that of non-

signatory countries. Coddington, K. (2018) argues that within the legal framework, the UK is moving towards excluding refugees from protection, driven by the increased flow of refugees and political pressures. Furthermore, the deterioration in the treatment of asylum seekers is seen as a sign of the disintegration of the existing refugee protection system established by the Convention. Even if the number of refugees accepted increases, it is evident that the overall number of refugees being accepted has decreased, leading to insufficient support and resulting in conditions of poverty and homelessness (Coddington, K., 2018). This highlights the ongoing erosion of the system that is supposed to provide proper protection for refugees.

In terms of integration, Rutter, J. *et al.* (2007) state that even after an individual acquires British citizenship, they may still identify as a refugee due to a sense of rejection from the host society. However, as mentioned earlier, refugees are only granted a five-year residence permit. According to an interview by Stewart, E. and Mulvey, G. (2014), many interviewees felt that only citizenship marked the end of their asylum or refugee journey and expressed concerns about the five-year residence permit granted to refugees in the UK. Stewart, E. and Mulvey, G. (2014) argue that due to the transitional status of refugees, integration is difficult, and refugees are unable to plan for the future over an extended period.

According to Boswell, C. (2000), the UK government has adopted a restrictive stance towards immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, introducing measures such as stricter border controls, safe country of origin lists, reductions in social welfare, detention, and narrow interpretations of refugee definitions. These actions reflect a deterrent position, signaling that asylum seekers are not welcome in the UK. Despite this restrictive approach, the New Labour government expressed its intention to make refugees "full and equal citizens" (Home Office, 2002). According to Phillimore, J. (2010), the New Labour government and other stakeholders recognized the importance of funding migrant and refugee community organizations (MRCOs) to support refugee integration. Phillimore, J. (2010) also stated that more recently, the Refugee Integration and Employment Service (RIES) was established to ensure that refugees are integrated as quickly as possible after being granted leave to remain in the UK. However, Favell, A. (1998) points out that integration is often viewed as a process leading to assimilation, and it can be argued that integration is not necessarily the optimal solution.

In addition, according to Levesley, T. (2008) and Kostakopoulou, D. (2010), government efforts to encourage refugees to acquire British citizenship are hindered by practical issues such as costs. Based on the above, although some refugees and asylum seekers consider citizenship as a means of integration, they are only granted a five-year

residence permit, and there is a lack of proactive encouragement to acquire citizenship. Therefore, it can be argued that life in the UK for refugees and asylum seekers is likely to create a sense of alienation and reinforce their identity as refugees.

As mentioned above, the UK adopts a relatively restrictive stance towards refugees and asylum seekers, and it can be said that their protection has become weaker. Furthermore, the process of integrating migrants and refugees may sometimes emphasize their identity as outsiders, or the integration process itself can be viewed as a form of assimilation policy.

Impact on Activist Organisation

According to Hronová, T. (2015), a group that supports the immigration policy of Brexit is UKIP (the United Kingdom Independence Party). UKIP was founded in 1993 as a party with a single mission to remove Britain from the EU, and Hronová, T. (2015) states that UKIP is widely regarded

as the most aggressive, anti-immigrant, and xenophobic among the major political parties in the UK today.

According to Ford and Goodwin (2014), a specific group of voters, the so-called 'left-behind', who are older, usually poorly educated, and working class, feel alienated by the changes in British society, which has become more diverse and multi-ethnic. UKIP has garnered support from this group. Ford and Goodwin (2014) also state that UKIP mobilizes the most socially distinctive electorate in British politics, namely, the blue-collar demographic with little to no educational qualifications, a pessimistic outlook on their economic future, older, white, and male voters, and is considered the party that garners the most working-class support. It is said that UKIP, which has garnered support from groups such as the working class and the "left-behind," has also used scandals to influence its supporters. Ford, R., *et al.* (2012) state that after a wide-ranging scandal over the abuse of expenses by legislators in the House of Commons has happened, it was expected that this event to heighten dissatisfaction with mainstream.

While there are activist groups gaining public support for government immigration restriction policies, including Brexit, there are also organizations engaging in extreme actions that are perceived as undemocratic. According to Busby, M. (2019), during the Brexit campaign, violence was used by a small number of activists in an attempt to achieve their goal by defending an opinion.

This is in line with the EU definition of radicalization as “a phenomenon of people who regard the use of violence as legitimate and/or use violence themselves in order to

achieve their political objectives which undermine the democratic legal order and the fundamental rights on which it is based” (European Union Committee of the Regions, 2016).

Some activist organizations that support refugees are also working to promote employment opportunities for immigrants and refugees. The Refugee Council is known for its various initiatives in this area. According to Koca, B. T. (2021), the Refugee Council (2020) has partnered with Starbucks to run the Starbucks Employment Support Program. This program offers pre-employment training to refugees and provides long-term employment opportunities in Starbucks stores across London (Refugee Council, 2020). Additionally, through the Building Bridges Program, the Refugee Council helps refugee healthcare professionals reconnect with their careers and work within the NHS (Koca, B. T., 2021). Additionally, Koca, B. T. (2021) also explains the discriminatory treatment and institutional differences in the labor market between refugees and asylum seekers. In the UK, asylum seekers are not permitted to participate in the labor market or take up jobs in shortage occupations until their application is approved, whereas refugees are granted the right to work. Activists working on employment support provide job assistance and vocational training for refugees (Koca, B. T., 2021). Furthermore, several initiatives and mentorship programs specifically target female refugees, through which they can identify their employment goals and receive support in searching and applying for jobs, internships, and volunteer positions (Koca, B. T., 2021). Based on these points, although asylum seekers face restrictions and are unable to participate in the labor market, it can be inferred that activist organizations provide various forms of support for refugees who are granted the right to work. This includes assisting them in securing long-term employment and offering opportunities for employment support and vocational training for immigrants and refugees.

According to Pupavac (2008), support for refugees has expanded not only within government agencies but also among non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In addition to dedicated organizations such as the Refugee Council and Refugee Action, other organizations that have recently begun addressing refugee issues have also increased, broadening the scope of support. For example, it is commonly observed that local events, such as school harvest festivals, organize fundraising activities aimed at supporting refugees, and organizations with entirely different objectives, such as the Arts Council, have also become involved in refugee support (Pupavac, V., 2008). Additionally, awareness campaigns for refugees have increased, and Pupavac (2008) highlights the example of Student Action for Refugees (STAR), which began in 1994, as one such

initiative. There have also been various efforts to challenge limited views of refugees. According to Pupavac (2008), cultural initiatives and awareness campaigns aim to depict refugees as talented and skilled individuals, similar to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR) "Gallery of Prominent Refugees," which portrays refugees in a positive light. Events such as Refugee Week, held annually in June since 1998, aim to counter negative stereotypes of refugees and promote positive images of them (Pupavac, V., 2008). Pupavac (2008) also notes that professional media coverage and sympathetic reporting often depict refugees as "vulnerable survivors," with images of suffering women and children, while male refugees are often negatively portrayed as bogus asylum seekers or criminals. Based on this, it can be said that campaigns and events are now being held not to label refugees as social vulnerable or those in need of support, but rather to emphasize that refugees are individuals with talents and skills.

While some argue that the UK's economic policies focus on helping refugees find employment, it has been pointed out that refugee entrepreneurship as a means of economic integration has not received much attention. According to Schmich, M. and Mitra, J. (2023), various forms of support are available for refugee entrepreneurs to start their businesses in the UK. Specifically, Schmich and Mitra (2023) highlight that TERN, an organization supporting refugees to become entrepreneurs, provides funding and organizes investors to support refugee entrepreneurs. Furthermore, once these entrepreneurs successfully repay their loans, they are able to build a good credit history, which can help them secure loans from traditional banks. TERN also points out several challenges faced by refugee entrepreneurs, such as the dispersal of their pre-existing networks (e.g., business connections and supporters), a lack of knowledge about the local market, and the fact that refugees cannot choose their place of residence. These limitations are significant barriers to their entrepreneurial activities (Schmich, M. and Mitra, J., 2023). Therefore, TERN's efforts not only contribute to refugee employment but also support their broader social integration.

Additionally, according to Alidred, P. (2003), No Borders opposes the harsh policies imposed by the UK government on refugees and asylum seekers, such as detention, dispersal, deportation, and deterrence strategies. They advocate for free movement for all people. For example, to raise public awareness about the disliked (and now abandoned) voucher scheme, which allowed supermarkets to keep the change from asylum seekers' food bills, No Borders activists staged pickets at supermarkets. They also engaged in campaigns and published materials criticizing companies profiting from immigration policies, such as Lufthansa and the catering company Sodexo (Alidred, P., 2003). Furthermore, No Borders activists in London, in solidarity with the 2000 IMF and World

Bank meeting, distributed a satirical pamphlet titled Financial Crimes. This pamphlet criticized state policies restricting the movement of migrants and the corporate interests involved in such policies (Alidred, P., 2003). These actions demonstrate how No Borders aimed to raise awareness of the injustices in immigration policies and the profit-driven motives of corporations benefiting from these policies.

Activism or Extremism

Moskalenko and McCauley (2009) define non-violent, legal actions as activism, while considering illegal and violent actions as extremism. Leuprecht, C. *et al.* (2020) define activism as actions aimed at political change through legal and non-violent means, while extremism involves pursuing political goals through illegal and violent methods. Based on these definitions, it can be concluded that activism refers to legal and non-violent political actions, whereas extremism refers to illegal and violent political actions. With these definitions in mind, we will now examine whether the activist organizations in the UK that focus on immigration and refugees engage in activism or extremism.

Let us once again focus on the immigration policy in the UK. As previously mentioned, the UK government primarily aims to limit the influx of non-EU citizens and low-skilled immigrants. Since all labor migrants to the UK must meet specific skill and salary requirements, this often leads to labor shortages within the country. Furthermore, the protection offered to refugees and asylum seekers is not sufficient. Employers who hire them are required to obtain appropriate documentation, which adds an additional burden for employers. Even if the number of accepted refugees increases, the support provided to them remains inadequate, leading to situations of poverty and homelessness. Moreover, refugees are only granted permission to stay for five years, which limits their ability to plan for the long term. Additionally, the integration process for immigrants and refugees is often seen as reinforcing their identity as "outsiders."

Do the movements of activist organizations against the UK's immigration and refugee policies constitute *activism*? During the Brexit campaign, violence was used by some activists in an attempt to achieve their goals, which, according to the EU definition—"a phenomenon of people who regard the use of violence as legitimate and/or use violence themselves to achieve their political objectives, thereby undermining democratic legal order and the fundamental rights on which it is based"—would be classified as *extremism*. This definition aligns with the notion of illegal and violent political actions. On the other hand, other activist groups focusing on immigration and refugees engage in relatively peaceful and non-violent campaigns. Notably, the Refugee Council has

increased employment opportunities for refugees through initiatives like the Starbucks Employment Support Program and vocational training. Additionally, organizations such as TERN support refugee entrepreneurs by providing funding and organizing investors to help refugees start their businesses. These actions are likely driven by the UK's inadequate support for refugees' employment and opportunities. Campaigns like Refugee Week and Student Action for Refugees (STAR) aim to raise awareness about refugees, emphasizing that refugees should not be seen merely as people in need of support but as individuals with skills and talents. These initiatives challenge the "outsider" identity that has been reinforced by the UK's integration policies, aiming to change the image created by the government. Therefore, it can be said that these activities are also inspired by policies and are efforts to change the image of refugees constructed by the government.

According to Moskalenko and McCauley (2009), there is a lack of systematic evidence regarding how peaceful activists transition into violent behavior, as well as those who were engaged in peaceful activities before resorting to violence. However, they also argue that not all activists turn to extremism, and therefore, a simple model suggesting that activists inevitably become extremists is not appropriate. Furthermore, Moskalenko and McCauley (2009) suggest that when extremist groups are not engaging in illegal actions, banning such groups can be seen as an injustice, which in turn strengthens support for these groups and increases the number of individuals who may adopt extremist views. In other words, merely suppressing extremist groups could paradoxically spread their ideology and increase the number of extremists. Additionally, Rip et al. (2012) state that individuals motivated by harmonious ideological passions are capable of promoting their causes, groups, or ideologies in a peaceful and democratic manner in public spaces. On the other hand, individuals with coercive ideological passions are more likely to choose extremism or aggressive actions over peaceful activism. The focus here has been on activist groups related to refugees and immigrants, and it has been observed that many of these groups engage in relatively peaceful and non-violent activism. However, it would be simplistic to immediately conclude that their actions do not constitute extremism just because they do not engage in illegal activities. As Moskalenko and McCauley (2009) argue, banning a group's activities could lead to the emergence of extremists, and activism could potentially evolve into extremism. While it is generally correct to classify the actions of the aforementioned activist groups as non-violent activism, there remains a significant possibility that their actions could lead to the creation of new forms of extremism. Therefore, it seems difficult to make a clear distinction between activism and extremism based solely on the activities of these activist groups.

Conclusion

The UK's immigration policy has become increasingly stringent, especially after Brexit, with heightened regulations on labor migrants and low-skilled migrants. As a result, the employment situation for refugees within the UK can be considered challenging. Moreover, due to the lack of long-term residency permits, refugees are unable to obtain permanent protection and remain under temporary protection. This has led many migrants and refugees into inadequate support systems, poverty, and homelessness. While efforts to support refugee integration are in place, these measures can sometimes highlight refugees' identities as "outsiders," which can be perceived as an assimilation policy.

In response to the UK's strict immigration policies, various activists and campaigns have emerged. Some activists, particularly during the Brexit period, resorted to violence, which can be considered "illegal and violent political action," thereby categorizing such activities as extremist. On the other hand, organizations such as the Refugee Council have created employment opportunities through vocational training and campaigns, and groups supporting refugee entrepreneurs have arisen. These efforts have been influenced by the strict immigration policies and have led to the development of peaceful, non-violent political activism.

However, although activism may engage in lawful and non-violent political action, there is the potential for it to shift towards extremism if the activities are suppressed by the government or inspired by more radical measures. Therefore, it can be argued that activism and extremism are heavily influenced by policies and political activities. The transition from activism to extremism is a real possibility depending on the actions taken by policymakers. Peaceful, lawful, and non-violent activism, to some extent, is closely linked to extremism due to the impact of political decisions.

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