Research Project Statement

My project seeks to gain a deeper understanding on the link between policing and the politics behind public assembly, asking *is public order strategy in British policing influenced by politics?* It will focus on demonstrations in the UK since 2010, analysing whether the political persuasion of activists plays a role in police decision-making.

I have chosen this topic due to its provenance in the past decade; the increase in public assembly and protest reflects growing participation in modern political society. Recently, prominent demonstrations such as the Black Lives Matter movement and the ongoing COVID-19 anti-lockdown marches have attracted significant critique of the police's response. The ramifications of such criticism threatens to erode public trust in British policing, thus legitimising concerns raised in this paper.

This project has strong links with the research theme of 'Risk, Evidence and Decision-Making', given the operational nature of policing. Public order strategy with regards to protests relies on risk analysis, specifically the threat of protest spilling into disorder. The operational evidence supporting such risk is a fundamental component in the decision-making process of senior police leaders, who are tasked with preserving law and order in society.

The initial objective of this research paper is to identify potential predisposed bias in public order policing. A secondary objective is that the conclusions made can be useful to police forces across the UK in delivering a fair response to protest.

The paper will predominantly rely on secondary research data such as media reports and police statements to examine the number of arrests and the extent of police involvement in particular protests. Moreover it will also use primary research data by means of surveying police officers and protestors alongside the use of Freedom of Information requests to obtain certain data.

The proposed outcomes this paper discovers will likely revolve around inevitable bias in public order strategy, however it also demonstrate consideration for the importance of pre-assembly intelligence and the track record of particular groups.