

A “Lunatic Fringe”? The Persistence of Right Wing Extremism in Australia

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Abstract

Right Wing Extremism (RWE) in Australia is historically persistent and contemporarily well-established. The persistence is not simply the consequence of an Australian-centric white nationalism, but is the result of international and domestic exchanges. This article investigates the persistence and appeal of Australian RWE groups. The first movements emerged in the 1930s against Bolshevik Communism, and quickly established ties with fellow travellers elsewhere in the Western world. While their influence diminished, their sentiment persisted in subcultural networks which also demonstrated international ties. RWE resurged in the 1980s, seeking to stymie pluralism and immigration. Some extremists travelled overseas, and formed connections with international counterparts. Their activities were suppressed by law enforcement, but the sentiment continues to survive in subcultural networks. RWE resurfaced in the decade prior to the 2019 Christchurch attack, largely targeting ethnic Australians and members of the Muslim community. Currently, the RWE threat in Australia is inherently tied to extremist attitudes regarding jihadism, Muslims, and immigration.

Keywords: Australia, right wing extremism, terrorism, fascism, nationalism, Christchurch

Introduction

Right Wing Extremism (RWE) in Australia has demonstrated persistence over the past ninety years, despite its relatively peripheral position on the greater political spectrum. The Australian Security and Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) once placed the extreme right on the “lunatic fringe,” which maintained its relevance by public and provocative acts.[1] Notwithstanding this conceptual positioning, the extreme right in Australia has also demonstrated an ability to engage in meaningful international exchange with counterparts elsewhere in the Western world. This exchange is evident from Australian contacts with international counterparts and networks, personal visits, and literature interchanges. The RWE threat in Australia, therefore, did not evolve in isolation from the global right wing community, but in interactions with it. While international studies on right-wing extremism have expanded exponentially in recent years, local studies into the Australian situation remain scarce.[2]

In the wake of the Christchurch attack, the conversation on Australian RWE has been relatively limited by the studies and data available. This article aims to fill the lacuna in the literature by bridging the gap between Australian security studies and the history of Australia’s extreme right. The intent is to provide a descriptive background and context which can be exploited in further studies and analysis. The findings are twofold: that Australia experiment three periods of RWE activity prior to the Christchurch attack; and secondly, that between activity periods, RWE subsides into subcultural networks. Like international counterparts, Australian movements appear to catalyse in response to urgent threats to their constructed identity.

Initially, groups like the *New Guard*, the *Australia First Movement*, and the *Australian League of Rights* were driven by anti-Semitic, anti-Communist agendas. In time, they subsided into subcultural networks or were relegated to the political fringe. Later, the *National Action* and the *Australian Nationalist Movement* drove another activity surge, arguing that the Australian identity was imperilled by Asian immigration. It subsided due to concentrated police action, although RWE again persisted in subcultural networks. Like elsewhere in the world, RWE in Australia also surged in the last decade, where numerous groups appeared, claiming to be threatened by Islam and Muslim immigration. The potential for violence was realised recently, with the Christchurch attacks in New Zealand, perpetrated by an Australian citizen.

In order to establish this persistence, this research uses the historical method, based on with the investigation of archival documents, specialist literature as well as group manifestos. Because of the occasionally incomplete nature of these records, the full measure of this activity may never actually be known. This makes stringent application of theory and definitions somewhat problematic. Broader definitions were found to be more practical for historical inquiry, hence the exploitation of Berger's discussion on pluralism and exclusion with reference to in-groups and out-groups.[4]

Establishing widely agreed upon operational definitions for RWE ideology is also difficult, with a wide variety of competing definitions offered by scholars. At its most reduced level, Pedazur and Canetti-Nisim argue that the primary feature of RWE is "the ideology of ethnic exclusionism," which provides a clear starting point.[5] Midlarsky provided a contrasting perspective, aligning political extremism with classical definitions on fascism, with its restriction on individual freedoms executed in the name of the collective.[6] Carter and Mudde, in separate studies, established transient parameters around the ideology, describing it as authoritarian, anti-democratic or populist, driven by a exclusionary or nativist nationalism.[7] A universal definition is at this stage unattainable. However, Carter's definition has been the most influential in this research.

Extremism does, as it has been suggested by many authors, exist somewhat on a subjective spectrum, removed from socio-political norms. The leading expert on Australia's extreme right, Andrew Moore, provided insight into the Australian context. He described these right wing groups as often nationalist in character, operating from extreme positions, in which conspiracy—usually embodied by a particular group or establishment—is a central organising tenet, underwritten by contempt or suspicion for parliamentary democracy.[8] This was broadly reflective in the groups in this study.

Finally, the definition for terrorism was provided by Schmid.[9] This definition assists in the delineating between terrorism and extremism. Mares in his Hungarian case study noted that the line between street violence perpetrated by subcultural networks can quickly blur into terrorist violence.[10] Prior to the Christchurch attacks, it could be argued that Australian RWE violence was insufficiently severe to be classified as terrorism, being primarily subversion of democratic process through entryism, street fights, harassment, and property damage.

Conspiracies: Communists and Jews

Mondon recently argued that "Unlike many of its western counterparts, Australia has been spared powerful surges of the extreme right" because of the nature of mainstream policies.[11] Early Australian policies allowed official ethno-exclusivist policies to flourish in the open, rendering extreme right wing parties irrelevant. Mondon compellingly argues this can be traced back well before federation in 1901, driven in part by the Bunyip Aristocracy (a term referring to a growing colonial upper class).[12] Although the roots of ethno-exclusivism run deep in Australia, the emergence of extreme right wing organisations can be traced back only to the interwar period.

World War One and the impact of subsequent policies on global financial markets is well known. The Great Depression, which remains the worst economic crisis in modern history, lasted from 1929 to 1939. Even countries such as Australia, which had not hosted a battle front, suffered. Australia experienced high inflation in 1918 and faced a recession in 1923. The economy had only just begun to recover when it was hit again, this time due to global oversupply reducing wool and wheat prices on which Australia heavily depended. When the US stock market crashed in 1929, Australia's economy went down with it.

It was in this atmosphere of deep financial stress that a movement formed in New South Wales, Australia, called *The Country* by members, and now called the *Old Guard* by historians. This movement, which soon attracted 30,000 members, was deeply concerned about Bolshevik Communist influence in post-WWI

politics.[13] It was averse to publicity, and maintained a clandestine watch on public affairs whilst stockpiling weapons, preparing to intervene should the government collapse. The perceived failure of NSW Labor Premier Jack Lang to prevent economic distress, and his apparent socialist tendencies, saw him labelled a Bolshevik, and subsequently, distrusted by the *Old Guard*. Opposition to Communism is a common element of RWE internationally, with small cells in Hungary surfacing in 1956 with similar agendas.[14] This is also echoed in other parts of Europe and North America.

The *Old Guard* was perhaps too passive for some members. Under Colonel Eric Campbell, a small group of military officers splintered off and formed a new group which was far more Fascist, called the *New Guard* in 1931. Its members organised themselves along military principles, and condemned mainstream politics, perceived disloyalty to the British empire (to which they gave their allegiance foremost), and societal immorality.[15] Early links were established in 1933 between the *New Guard* and Fascist movements in Britain (especially the *British Union of Fascists*), Italy and Germany, when Campbell toured the Old World.

Under Campbell, the *New Guard* advanced a conservative right wing belief system; its members saw their world order was imperilled by the Bolshevik threat and by trade unionism. With unemployment numbers high during the Depression, the *New Guard* formed links with employers' associations (rather than trade unions) to match anti-Communist workers with employment opportunities through a designated bureau. Although the working class was initially a minority in the movement, the *New Guard* soon attracted 36,000 followers.[16]

When labour and left-wing militias formed against them, street fights (of which the Battle of Bankstown was the most prominent) ensued. The *New Guard's* primary tactic was to disrupt trade union and working-class political meetups, which they construed as Communism in action. They engaged in street brawls, as well as tarring and feathering suspected Communists. In 1931, Moore contends that a force of 1,000 Guards attacked left wing meetings in regiments of 200.[17] The violence became so widespread in 1932 that Moore suggests Campbell came close to "mounting a *coup d'état* against the Lang government."[18]

There was also growing support for a formal fascist movement. Admiration for the charisma and leadership of Benito Mussolini, the Italian *duce*, saw Fascist movements gain traction in Australia. This was especially common among the Australian-Italian community, which joined *Fascio* social organisations in Victoria, New South Wales, and Western Australia.[19] *National Socialism*, too, began to attract followers. In 1932, the first *National Socialist* stronghold was established in Adelaide, and strongholds in other capitals soon followed.[20]

Two years later, the *National Socialist German Workers Party* (NSDAP) was formally established in Australia. In 1938, intelligence services believed the *NSDAP* had nearly one hundred members, and that number increased substantially the following year. The main priority of the *NSDAP* was to revive concepts of German identity, and establish international and domestic Germanic communities. Members of the middle class, who were anti-Semitic, anti-Communist, or Fascist, were attracted to the party, due to naivety about its programmes,[21] although intelligence documents suggest subscription to the group was occasionally coerced.[22]

While the Nazi movement in Australia initially grew organically without official assistance from Germany, it was soon administered rather closely by the Third Reich.[23] When Adolf Hitler came to power, all Germans living abroad were declared subject to the Foreign Department, and managed through the *Auslandsorganisation* (Organisation Abroad). This was in pursuit of the *Schicksalsgemeinschaft* (fate community) idea, whereupon Germans living in foreign countries could be used as a "substitute for this State machinery." [24] As a result, a large number of Germans were interned during WWII as security risks.

But it would be overly simplistic to describe early RWE as solely a German initiative. Alexander Rud Mills, a Melbourne lawyer, took a more spiritual approach towards the radical right by forming an Odinist cult. The cult believed that modern Christianity was debased "Jew-worship", and the only way to restore Australia was through a racialist interpretation of Odinism. Without it, the so-called British people would become "a race

of mongrels”.[25] Mills wrote several books, aiming at the restoration of British heroes, holy places, traditions, and ideals in Australia.[26] He was well connected in international Fascist circles, meeting Hitler in the 1930s, and sending him a copy of his book, *Fear shall be in the way*. [27] Elements of his work became significant in U.S neo-Nazi circles in the 1990s due to their exploitation by Else Christensen, demonstrating a two-way exchange with international counterparts.[28]

Mills was a loud supporter of the *Australia First Movement* (AFM). The founders were William J. Miles and Percy R. Stephensen, nationalists who guarded against the encroachment of Imperial Britain in Australia—hence their slogan ‘Australia First’.[29] They established *The Publicist* in 1936, which championed a Fascist agenda, while opposing some (but not all) elements of British influence, Semitism, and democracy. According to Miles, “Our aim is limited to arousing in Australians a positive feeling, a distinctive Australian patriotism of a thoroughly realistic kind”.[30] Despite claims within *The Publicist* that an official movement would be formed only after the end of the Second World War, the short-lived AFM was created in 1941.

An inquiry into the movement found it was characterised by a strong hostility “to the Jewish race”, and its members were “keen advocates of Australian nationalism”.[31] Miles believed a White Australia had to be maintained, Australian-centric nationalism had to be deliberately fostered, and any attempt to reduce Australian autonomy had to be resisted.[32] Aligned with Axis ideology, and with tentative links to Italian Fascists, they sought a political alliance with Japan to secure that autonomy. As a result, some followers were classified as a security threat and were subsequently interned under the *National Security (General) Regulations*, emergency powers enacted to safeguard Australia’s internal stability during wartime. Members in Western Australia were also arrested when they were found possessing conspiratorial plans, which detailed the potentiality of siding with the Japanese in case of a Japanese invasion; sabotaging vulnerable strategic areas; killing prominent Australians; and drafts welcoming the Japanese.[33] AFM diminished rapidly after the Inquiry.

The most significant and lasting of the early groups was the *Australian League of Rights*. The first branch of the *League of Rights* was established by Eric Butler in 1946 in South Australia and Victoria. The main thrust, in line with its slogan of “A Movement of the Australian People Fighting for Individual Freedom with Security”, was pro-British loyalism, right-libertarian in substance, and politically conservative with anti-Communist emphasis.[34] Resentment of bureaucratic control figured in nearly half of their objectives. Eric Butler also energetically pursued a Social Credit agenda, positioning Jews and Jewish financing as the force of centralisation and inequity.[35] Their tactics included political pressure, lobbying, and letters to Members of Parliament.

Also in 1946, Butler published *The International Jew: The Truth about the Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. Although hoax Protocols were common from as early as 1905,[36] Butler had been penning such forgeries since 1937. *The International Jew* proffered one primary contention: that a Zionist super government used its wealth to control the governments of the world.[37] Government submission to this entity, whether conscious or unconscious, was coerced through debt, bonds, and securities. The Jews were portrayed as an existential threat to liberty and personal freedoms, reducing Australia to a slave state.

ALR employed a series of covert strategies for entryism: infiltration, primarily targeting the Liberal Party and the National Party to undermine and replace their core values; elite penetration, whereby they hoped to capture leadership positions in target parties; policy penetration, where they would bloc vote (or branch stack) inside other parties; and agents of influence, where they pressured politicians in target parties.[38] This strategy would be used again in 2018, by the *Lads Society* against the *Young Nationals*. In any event, some of these goals were achieved through the *Voters Policy Association* (VPA), established in 1964. VPAs believed they were “engaged in a life-and-death struggle; that there is raging throughout the world in a highly complex form of warfare in which politics are the most vital aspect.”[39] The VPA formed Action Groups of two to six members to engage in propaganda, recruitment, and political pressure activities.

ASIO was aware of the *ALR* threat, describing it as an anti-Semitic and racist organisation which primarily exerted pressure on conservative political parties.[40] Entryism aside, their activity was largely relegated to rallies, marches, and demonstrations. Although *ALR* did not officially endorse political violence, individual members were assessed to have the predisposition for “low level violence against ethnic targets and at times, politicians and government representatives”.[41] *ALR* was categorised with issue-orientated protest groups, which made it vulnerable to manipulation by pro-violent individuals, although the threat itself was considered negligible.[42]

Subcultural Persistence

In the sixties, RWE activity appeared to be subsiding when, in 1964, Australian customs intercepted parcels from the United States, addressed to Brisbane. The parcels contained stickers emblazoned with ‘Hitler was Right’ and ‘Unite and Fight’; leaflets titled ‘Peace creeps’; Stormtrooper magazines and manuals; and music from Hatennanny Records, the record label established by American neo-Nazi and politician, George Rockwell. While the parcels were released to their owners (there was no provision prohibiting their importation), investigators deduced that the importation had something to do with the *Australian Nationalist Socialist* movement. Close ties to “organisations in the U.S.A., headed by Dean Rockwell and in England by Sir Oswald Mosely and Clifford Jordan” were suspected.[43]

It is suggested here that investigators misspelled some of the names. They may have actually been referring to George Rockwell, a Nazi party leader in the United States, as mentioned above; and Colin Jordan, a National Socialist in the UK. The spelling of Oswald Mosely, of the British Union of Fascists, was both correct and significant: the Christchurch perpetrator would also cite him as a major ideological influence. These parcels demonstrate that, as far as resourcing goes, Australian RWE were reaching out to counterparts in both the USA and the UK during the sixties. This would suggest that Australian extremists, and subsequently their ideology, was increasingly being informed by international developments.

Despite that, the activities of RWE groups appeared to subside into subcultural networks, notwithstanding attempts of journalist Frank Browne to energise them. Browne, much like *AFM*, envisaged Australia as a muscular white nation with a minimalist government and a strong military, with which it would rule the Pacific.[44] Browne managed to establish a political Nazi identity in Australia which, essentially, formed part of the neo-Nazi subculture. This fed into other neo-Nazi groups, such as the *National Australian Workers Party*, formed in 1959 by some of Browne’s acolytes.[45] His influence was minimal, even domestically.

Following the Second World War, the extreme right had the appearance of a spent force.[46] Sporadic attempts to form a neo-Nazi party in Australia throughout the fifties and sixties failed. In the mid-1950s, Arthur Smith, inspired by Browne, tried to form the *Australian National Socialist Party (ANSP)*. Personality clashes between leaders of the movement was a persistent source of weakness. When the organisation was raided in 1964, it was found in possession of explosives, detonators, and other weapons. Smith was jailed for six months for unlawful possession.[47] Smith tried to revamp the party in years between 1966 and 1968, but again, failed.[48]

Pluralism: Immigration and Identity

Australian RWE, despite these failures, was reforming itself, and refocusing its ideology. In 1968, the *National Socialist Party of Australia (NSPA)* formed under the leadership of Edward Cawthorn, Ferenc Molnar, Leslie Ritchie, and John Stewart (on the condition that Arthur Smith resigned).[49] Cawthorn believed that Nazism had to take on an authentic Australian style to retain membership, and reorientated the group’s ideology from typical white supremacy to adopting the Eureka flag as an emblem, while exploiting Henry Lawson’s writings.[50] This was a deliberate choice to localise international concepts of National Socialism within the Australian

context, another style choice which would later be replicated by *Antipodean Resistance* in 2018.

The NSPA contested the Senate elections in 1970s. The candidates in Queensland received as many as 12,000 votes, and netted another 8,000 in New South Wales and 1,800 in Victoria respectively. At the time, ASIO believed that the support for the NSPA was more derived from their anti-Communist stance, rather than strict adherence to their policies.[51] It was a vocal supporter of the Vietnam War, staged counter protests against left wing students, and was rumoured they had a secret 'kill list' of one hundred prominent Australian politicians and businessmen. There were also unsubstantiated claims of a training camp in Emerald, Victoria.[52] ASIO also believed that some members were responsible for incendiary bombs which damaged left-wing businesses in Melbourne. Prosecutions apparently followed, although the suspects were not named.[53]

NSPA ideology made them enemies of left-wing student groups, communists, and Australian Jews. The NSPA advocated an ethno-state, reduced Asian immigration, and relegating Aboriginals to a different state in the Commonwealth.[54] As a result, ASIO believed the NSPA remained "a lunatic fringe extremist political organisation promoting a Nazi-type 'ideology' abhorrent to the population at large, and maintaining its very identity through acts of provocation directed at its main ideological targets—jews [sic], communists and radical left-wing bodies generally." [55] Despite their position on the fringe, it was assessed that the RWE organisations, posed a threat to the community, with one document stating: "These groups have definite ideologies, political causes to fight for, and traditions involving the use of extreme violence. They pose an actual and continuing danger for the staging of political [sic] motivated acts of violence." [56] This threat assessment by ASIO indicates an advanced awareness at the time of the potential of RWE to escalate towards violence. It had not only attracted the attention of the security community, but also the academic community.

Sociologist John J. Ray immersed himself in Australia's Nazi community between 1966 and 1973, noting that "I found this relatively easy to do—provided I paid my tax of an occasional anti-Semitic utterance." [57] He found that it was driven by anti-Zionism and suspicion of a *Zionist Occupation Government (ZOG)*, informed by Aryan mythology and desires for ethno-states, and supported by often-aggressive and exhibitionist young men. These descriptors are not entirely dissimilar to Sprinzak's youth counter culture typology, and Ravndal's subcultural network, both of which highlight nationally-orientated, anti-immigrant, 'skinheads', some drawn together by music or cultural rebellion, and whose members frequently engage in street fights with left-wing opponents.[58]

In 1976, ASIO delivered a seminar which covered the existence of right wing groups which had arisen as a result of the domestic political climate, namely, the Labour Government of Prime Minister Gough Whitlam, which held office from 1972 to 1975. They noted that numerous groups had cropped up, and just as quickly, faded away, demonstrating a swift lifecycle not dissimilar from groups today. Among these groups were *Safari 8*, which engaged in military training the Australian Capital Territory; the *Legion of the Frontiersman of the Commonwealth*, which recruited Vietnam veterans; and the *Australian Youth Coalition*, which threatened violence against government officials. Although no violence ultimately manifested itself, it was believed that "all of these groups are ones which are small, highly dedicated and of considerable danger at the time." [59]

Some Australian extremists found ideological resonance with the American neo-Nazi, William Luther Pierce. Under the penname Andrew MacDonald, Pierce published *The Turner Diaries* in 1978, a book which was to become the bible of right wing extremists.[60] The fictional novel details the experiences of Earl Turner during the early days of an American race revolution. Turner serves the Organisation (and inside it, the Order), which uses terrorism against an unjust US Government because of its submission to the ZOG, strict gun control, and support of civil and sexual liberation movements.

Pluralism (and its alleged watchdog, 'political correctness') is positioned as the primary agents for societal decay, with Pierce articulating a pervasive rejection of the forces of multiculturalism. The novel details a programme of direct action against the US government, incorporating strategic and tactical considerations;

resource acquisition and management; counterintelligence; psychological and propaganda campaigns; and played upon mainstream aversions to paedophilia and rape to demonise the left. The Organisation transitions from terrorism to guerrilla war, ethnic cleansing, nuclear devastation, and finally, global white domination. *The Turner Diaries* did not have much impact until it was picked up by right wing terrorists: David Lane, of *The Order*; and Timothy McVeigh, the Oklahoma City bomber.[61]

Nonetheless, the novel's notion of white peril was similar to the notions espoused by RWE groups in Australia, especially in regard to Asian immigration. The Holt Liberal Government's *Migration Act (1966)* theoretically opened the doors to multicultural immigration in 1966, and in 1973, the Whitlam Labour Government symbolically dropped the White Australia policy, when they removed existing racial clauses from immigration laws. Refugees fleeing the Vietnam War, however, did not really start arriving in Australia until the seventies and eighties. This, in part, drove theories about white peril, endangered by pluralism. Within this environment, RWE opposition to multiculturalism and pluralism simmered.

The previous tolerance for racial exclusivity entrenched in Australian law was being systematically removed. The out-group in the right wing narrative changed: it was no longer personified by the Communist and the Jew; now it was the immigrant. Anti-immigration is a significant theme in international RWE movements, especially European ethno-nationalist groups, in which immigrants are held responsible for economic downturn.[62] Notably, this resonates with German movements in the 1990s, where RWE violence was considered a reaction to immigration, rather than the consequence of eroding social status.[63] Similarly, in Australia, *National Action* is largely believed to have formed in reaction to immigration.

Jim Saleam and Frank Salter established *Australian National Action* (NA) in April 1982, after the successive failures of the *National Resistance Group* (1977), *National Alliance* (1978), *Immigration Control Association* (1981), and the *Progressive Nationalist Party*. [64] It was initially a student-based movement, according to Whitford, which aimed to encourage Australian patriotism and restrict foreign students.[65] Others argue that NA was a reaction to multiculturalism and immigration, although this does not explain their targeting of homosexuals.[66]

NA was a hierarchal and centrally controlled organisation, determined to use direct military action to achieve their goals.[67] This was not unlike the Organisation, described in *The Turner Diaries*. NA believed that Australia was a predominately white European nation, with a cohesive set of values and beliefs. This lifestyle was accordingly imperilled by Asian immigration and foreign ownership of Australian land.[68] Here, multiculturalism, as a force of modernity, was a threat to the idealised the NA life. The NA, according to Saleam, believed that combat was the only way to force political change. It adopted a strategy of "Political Guerrilla Warfare", targeting certain individuals, releasing intimidating and destabilising propaganda, developing counter intelligence, and the use of "soft" violence to indoctrinate members.[69] As a consequence, NA persecuted various racial groups, immigrants, naturalisation ceremonies, and homosexuals. Even the Pitt Street Uniting Church in central Sydney was targeted because of its lesbian reverend, Dorothy McRae-McMahon, and the Church's progressive stance on apartheid, immigration, and sexuality.[70]

In the eighties, international RWE was surging when NA launched a broader intimidation campaign in Sydney, claiming it was "kill and be killed." [71] They stormed the Uniting Church, burned effigies on the reverend's front yard; and harassed members of the gay, lesbian, and migrant communities.[72] They also harassed the *Combined Unions against Racism* (CUAR) organisation, which resulted in NA firebombing a CUAR car in 1984, and they also stormed the Macquarie University campus, allegedly assaulting staff.[73] They were considered responsible for planting a hoax bomb in an Asian restaurant in 1986, and the drive-by shooting of Edwin Funde's (an anti-apartheid campaigner) house in 1989.[74]

Their most significant action was not against their out-group at all, but against the police. NA had a hit list with the New South Wales Special Branch leader's name on it, and NA somehow obtained his address and leaked

it publicly (although no attack is noted).[75] As the eighties progressed, disaffected white males were joining NA based on their already existing white supremacist inclinations, expanding it from a student movement to a subcultural network. NA was eventually subdued through police action, but not before it was connected to Jack van Tongeren.

Jack van Tongeren joined the NA sometime in the mid-1980s, and tried to gain control over the group. He failed in this attempt, splitting from them, and formed the *Australian Nationalist Movement* (ANM), though it is suspected that the two groups remained connected.[76] He formed the ANM in Perth in 1985, and it soon spread to South Australia, Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, and Tasmania. Van Tongeren styled himself as the “supreme leader” of ANM, along with John van Blitterswyk as second-in-command, Russell Willey as third-in-command and treasurer, other members being Christopher Bartle, Wayne van Blitterswyk, Judith Lyons, and Mark Ferguson. ANM tried to model itself on Irish separatists. During the Irish War of Independence, Irish nationalism had two branches: a military and terrorist branch, the Irish Republican Army; and a legitimate political branch, Sinn Fein.

The ANM was to be the political branch, and the *Australian Aryan Army* (AAA) was to be the military and terrorist branch. John van Blitterswyk was the nominal Commander of the AAA, which never moved beyond the conceptual stage.[77] Willey stated that they aimed for a race war, inspired by *The Turner Diaries*. According to a senior leader, “Our ethos was to terrorise the Asian community through any means possible from arson to anything such as murder.... The basic aim was to discourage other Asians immigrating to Australia and it was also intended to terrorise occupants here to such an extent that they would leave the state.”[78]

In order to advance the AAA, the ANM set up a training facility on a farm east of Perth, called Bindoon. The Bindoon Bunker contained a shelter, lookout, and rifle range. It had strategic value as a training ground for members, while van Tongeren’s home was the headquarters of ANM.[79] In lieu of an operational AAA, ANM tried to assume both roles, unaware perhaps that to be effective, they are necessarily mutually exclusive. Van Tongeren registered the *Australian Nationalist Movement* as a legitimate political party in February 1986. [80] Three years later, in February 1989, the ANM contested the seat of Helena in Western Australia, with van Tongeren as candidate. His election platform was based on resisting the “Asianisation of Australia and to Zionist control of Australia.”[81] Van Tongeren attracted 400-500 votes but did not win the seat.

In 1987, ANM plastered 400 posters all around Perth buses, walls, and depots. Perth citizens were shocked to wake up on 7 December, to read posters emblazoned with the words “Asians out or race war”, and “Don’t lose your job to an Asian. Join the ANM. Stop the Invasion.”[82] In an interview, van Tongeren argued that Asians “are steadily outbreeding and dispossessing Australians,” and therefore his actions were justified as “a basic racial instinct – a healthy mechanism to safeguard our race and culture.”[83] This propaganda transitioned to deed in September 1988. On 1 September, ANM firebombed the China City Restaurant in the Perth suburb of Como, causing \$7000 in damage, and the Man Lin restaurant, causing \$100,000 in damage. On 22 November, six weeks after the first attack, the ANM firebombed the Golden House restaurant in Bellevue, causing a further \$45,000 in damage.[84] In response, a group called *Aussies Against Racism* (AAR) formed to combat ANM. They were immediately infiltrated by ANM. On 13 January, AAR member Nicholas Smurthwaite was lured into a parking lot in Kardinya and assaulted by eight people.[85] Most of ANM’s leadership were either charged or implicated.[86]

Despite that, the poster and firebombing campaign continued. One poster claimed: “Media Coverup. Holocaust a lie. Seek the Truth.” On 16 January 1989, the ANM firebombed the Ko Sing in Ferndale, causing \$17,500 in damage. Two days later, they firebombed the Ling Nan restaurant in Murrabooka, and caused \$39,500 in damage. After the January bombings, the ANM turned its attention away from such acts and towards reinforcing its bunker, as prioritised in *The Turner Diaries*. The crime spree began on New Year’s Day 1989. Over the next two months, ANM stole sandbags, radio equipment, electronic scanners, cameras, video recorders, building materials as well as office equipment. As the stolen goods piled up, and ANM was forced to rent a house to

store it all. The worst ANM bombing came on 25 May 1989, when ANM made an explosive device with power gel (commonly used in mining), wrapped in wire. When it exploded, the wire became shrapnel, and was embedded in the ceiling, tables, and walls of Ko Sing. No one was injured, but the explosion caused a further \$50,000 in damage.

By August 1989, ANM had caused over \$1,000,000 in damage. In response, a 36-man force was drawn from the Western Australian Police Force (WAPOL), tasked with Operation Jackhammer. They conducted a covert investigation into ANM which lasted for six weeks. The operation order read: “The task force was created to investigate the movements of the ANM, the primary role and objective was to apprehend these offenders who had been blatantly committing a series of offenses and terrorising the ethnic community.”[87]

Operation Jackhammer received a tipoff about the Thornlie house. Detectives captured John van Blitterswyk and Russell Willey on 4 July, and Willey turned informant, leading police to weapons caches of firearms, detonators, and silencers.

The trial of the ANM leadership commenced after a series of delays, with the judiciary worried about possible prejudice.[88] When the trial did eventually get underway, Van Tongeren used the court room as his grandstand, declaring:

“I convinced my comrades of the justice of our cause and I led the attack. I threw the first Molotov cocktail. I fought the enemy by talking and by posters and I fought the enemy on the streets.... If I die in jail as the people who run the country intend, then I will defy the corrupt legal code until the end. Australia is worth it. Yes, I am unrepentant and I will stay that way. The time has come to fight. Damn your rotten laws. Australia forever.”[89]

On 15 September 1990, a District Court Jury in Perth handed down a guilty verdict on the ANM leadership. The longest sentence, 18 years, went to Jack van Tongeren, who, much like David Lane, spent his prison time writing. He and Simon van Blitterswyck self-published their first book, *The ANM Story: the Pre-Revolutionary Years 1970-1989*, in 1991.

Upon release in 2002, Jack van Tongeren reconnected with his old comrades. They hatched a new plot to advertise van Tongeren’s book through another poster and firebombing campaign.[90] While they were successfully apprehended, the impact of *The ANM Story* is currently unknown, as it represents perhaps the first proper attempt to construct a cogent ideology to serve Australia’s RWE fringe. Presenting himself as a warrior-scholar, van Tongeren details his previous campaign, and also describes his international travels to engage with RWE leaders in the United States and Europe, even visiting holocaust memorials.

The ANM Story offers several conclusions: firstly, that the spirit of rebellion is quintessential to the Australian character, which is derived from Australian bushrangers, ANZAC soldiers (diggers), and the working class (‘Aussie battlers’); secondly, that Australia is a virgin land of European peoples, with spiritualism of the “old gods”; thirdly, the Australian character and way of life is imperilled by Asian immigration, Zionist influence, and foreign ownership of property which was driven by big business and permitted by an illegitimate government. [91]

Subcultural Persistence

While Tongeren was writing away in prison, ASIO continued to watch right wing extremists, and warned in 1995 of an “upsurge in the activities of religious extremists, doomsday cults, neo-Nazi’s, and right-wing militia groups” according to *The Canberra Times*. [92] Suffice to say, RWE sentiment continued to exist on the political—but also the cultural—fringes. Three groups which demonstrate the subcultural network of RWE

during the nineties are the *Women for Aryan Unity*, *Combat 18*, and the *Southern Cross Hammerskins*.

Women for Aryan Unity (WAU14) was established in America in 1990, and soon formed individually-run chapters all around the world, including Australia. Known as the *Women of the Southern Legion*, this WAU14 chapter promotes a racialised worldview, encompassing conservative ideas of womanhood, sisterhood, and motherhood, embedded in pagan spirituality, within a nexus of RWE largely in line with National Socialism. It adopts a National Socialist aesthetic, and Aryan gender roles are perpetuated.[93] While Jack van Tongeren and David Lane are venerated by the *Women of the Southern Legion* (who also distribute their writings), the group does not appear to advocate political change, but exists in the subcultural milieu.

Also established in the 1990s was an Australian-chapter of *Combat 18*, which was originally formed in the United Kingdom. Nicknamed the “Terror Machine” the purpose of *Combat 18* was to establish white-only countries through the violent expulsion of all non-whites, along with the execution of homosexuals and Jews. It soon spread internationally, and established a cell in Western Australia, where it became known as *Blood and Honour* (BnH). On 4 February 2010, two BnH members, Bradley Neil Trappitt and Jacob Marshall Hort, were charged with shooting at a Perth mosque.[94] BnH also plastered playgrounds with anti-Islam stickers in 2015. Since then its presence in Perth has become well-entrenched.[95]

Another RWE import is the *Southern Cross Hammerskins* (SCH). The original *Confederate Hammerskins* were established in 1987 in the United States of America.[96] Also followers of David Lane and his *14 Words* group, SCH is a white supremacist movement which celebrates the Aryan identity while demonstrating hostility to various ethnic out-groups. The Australian chapter, the *Southern Cross Hammerskins*, were likely established sometime in the nineties. They are considered one of Australia’s biggest skinhead groups.[97] It is important to note that while these subcultural networks began internationally, their ideas and beliefs tend to become localised to the Australian context.

One possible reason behind the submersion of RWE sentiment into the relatively overlooked subculture is the tumultuous entry of Pauline Hanson into mainstream Australian politics in 1996.[98] Hanson provided a public, popular platform for the far right with her maiden speech in the federal parliament, where she declared that Australia was being swamped by Asians. Tinning suggests that *One Nation* managed to unite a variety of political fringe elements, and projected a racial representation of the white Australian, the ANZAC soldier, farmers and small businesses, and the male breadwinner.[99] This tied in with existing RWE aversions to multiculturalism, pluralism, and liberation movements. Hanson became the new face of racial nationalism: a nationalism that imagined a white Australian in-group, and defined the out-group as immigrants: initially Asian, and later Muslim.[100]

There were other signs of intolerance. The Cronulla riots in 2005 are another example of growing racial nationalism domestically. In December 2005, a series of violent demonstrations occurred in Cronulla, a beachside suburb in Sydney, by (mostly) white Australians against elements of ethnic communities, including Muslims and Lebanese Australians. Twenty-five people were injured, and sixteen were arrested. Bliuc et al contended that this violence was influenced in part by status dominance, as well as ethnic conflict, in which each group sought to impose its construct of the Australian identity on the other.[101]

Jihadism: Terrorism and Gangs

Later, on her re-entry into politics in 2016, Hanson continuing exhibiting intolerance, this time towards Muslims (and other fringe politicians also echoed this sentiment).[102] Poynting and Briskman made the compelling argument that the vilification of Muslims in Australia by liberal political leaders and commentators has increasingly normalised intolerance, which is cunningly exploited by the radical right.[103] The designation of Muslims as an out-group is by no means an Australian phenomena: Obaidi et al contended that Islamophobic

rhetoric in Europe and the United States of America creates the perception of a symbolic threat to a group's identity, which is associated with calls for expelling immigrants.[104]

In the early 2000s, there was a lull of RWE in Australia, and also in the United States of America for a time. Towards the end of 2009, however, this trend changed, and RWE activity accelerated in the USA due to domestic factors, such as the election of Barack Obama.[105] The United States did not experience this surge alone: RWE also surged in the United Kingdom and Europe, with an increasing focus on Muslim immigration and jihadism. Anders Breivik's Oslo attacks in July 2011 served as an example of RWE positioning itself against jihadism in the name of white supremacy. Breivik's manifesto, according to Gardell, demonstrates a combination of Islamophobic tradition, conservative white nationalism, and antifeminism.[106]

Australia joined the international community during this activity period. In 2009, the English *Defence League* (EDL) was established by Tommy Robinson (and others) in the United Kingdom. Their members claimed to stand for English rights and democracy whilst simultaneously arguing that British society was imperilled by Muslims and jihadist terrorism. Once again, extremism proved a lucrative import, and that same year, the *Australian Defence League* (ADL) was established by Ralph Cerminara, which modelled itself on the *EDL*. Its Facebook presence demonstrates similar beliefs, opposing Islam in Australia and stalking and harassing members of the Muslim community.[107]

The major movement, however, was *Reclaim Australia* (RA). Founded in January 2015, RA claims to be a patriotic group taking a stand against Islam and domestic terrorism. RA can be understood as being a radical right wing movement which provides the stepping stone into extremism without advocating violence itself. Its activity is limited to rallies and demonstrations, with the occasional brawl or street fight. RA champions an idealised (or fictionalised) Australian way of life, which it believes to be endangered by political correctness, Middle Eastern immigration, and Islam. RA currently has over 100,000 followers on Facebook.[108]

More extreme adherents splintered off RA to form their own organisations, which appeared to be further committed to violence. The *True Blue Crew* (TBC) is a salient example of increasing extremism, through outwardly presenting a concerned citizen persona. The *impressum* on their Facebook page states that: "It is our duty to defend those that want to voice their opinion peacefully, from far left wing thus that make a pass time [*sic*] of violently attacking those of us who hold a different opinion to their own. The *True Blue Crew* will never initiate violence, but will exercise our right to defend ourselves and fellow patriots." [109]

Despite this statement, photos of TBC assaulting left-wing opponents with pipes at rallies remain on the web page. Opposition to the left was nearly as prominent on the site as opposition to Islam. In 2015, TBC member Phillip Galea planned a terrorist attack on the Melbourne *Anarchist Club*, the *Resistance Centre*, and the Trades Hall in Carlton. He was apprehended by police and charged with terrorism offenses in 2016.

Like RWE movements elsewhere in the Western world prone to organisational fractures, members of RA and the ADL splintered off to form the *United Patriots Front* (UPF), under former ADL member, Shermion Burgess. He soon handed leadership to Blair Cottrell, and under Cottrell, the group displayed a similar narrative convergence. The in-group is a loosely defined, amorphous White Australian construct, while the out-group is clearly defined as non-white, an immigrant, and, generally, Muslim (or Jew). This designation plays, consciously or not, on the historical foundations of racial exclusivity in preceding movements and in broader Australian historiography.

UPF disbanded in 2017 to become the *Lads Society*, which appears to be a white nationalist organisation, emphasising brotherhood, community, and the benefits of a garage fight club.[110] In 2018, it appears that it launched a covert infiltration strategy, replicating the one of the *Australian League of Rights* in the sixties – even targeting the same parties. *Lads Society* members and allies joined the *Young Nationals* in NSW, and engaged in branch stacking at the May 2018 conference, pushing an alt-right agenda. As a result of this, a *Society* member

attained a leadership position in the *Young Nationals*. It would appear that the *Lads Society* was joined in this by the *Antipodean Resistance*.^[111]

The *Antipodean Resistance* (AR) identifies outwardly with National Socialism, and engages in propaganda campaigns against the homosexual community, the Jewish community, and left wing groups.^[112] Its website echoes the sentiments of *The Turner Diaries*, where modern promiscuity, interracial coupling, and homosexuality are seen as the sources of societal woe. Their anti-modernist ideology is defensive, where it is suggested that their way of life, values, and security, are imperilled. Much like Lane's *88 Precepts*, the AR place a high value on nature, self-discipline, and racial purity. Its website was shut down by the host, GoDaddy, in December 2018 but persists on the unmoderated chat platform, Gab.

While it is difficult to assess the exact popularity these organisations may have enjoyed, the data available suggests occasional surges in popularity. A 2016 study by Dean, Bell and Vakhitova suggests that while groups such as *SCH* and *BnH* peaked in popularity between 2004 and 2006, new groups such as *Reclaim Australia* (RA) and the *Australian Liberty Alliance* (ALA) were the focus of Google searches between 2015 and 2016.^[113] Dean et al believe this confirms a shift away from traditional supremacy-based RWE, towards a concerned citizen persona.

The concerned citizen guise is not a uniquely Australian manifestation. Co-option and distortion of mainstream ideas is a long-standing RWE tactic in other western countries, in order to recruit the politically marginalised. The most obvious example is *The Turner Diaries*, which sought to capitalise on mainstream repugnance for rape and paedophilia by correlating it directly with minority liberation movements and political correctness gone mad. The shift away from the overt Nazi brand towards a seemingly altruistic façade should be considered both dangerous and subversive.

The present article is not a comprehensive review of RWE-affiliated groups currently operating in Australia. Other groups who contribute to the same ideological nexus in Australia are *Right Wing Resistance* (possibly defunct), *the Proud Boys*, *the Soldiers of Odin*, *Identity Australia*, *the Nationalist Australian Alternative*, *the Australian Traditionalism*, *the Australian Liberty Alliance*,^[114] *the New National Action*, *the Patriotic Youth League*, and the rather inactive *Freeman/Sovereign Citizen movement*.^[115] Some groups, such as the *Nationalist Australian Alternative*, no longer have public pages and have retreated to less moderated platforms like Gab.^[116] This makes assessing the real Australian RWE threat difficult, especially given the capability of RWE groups to promote themselves on social media.

Social media is an enabler for RWE to rally against perceived threats. In January 2019, RWE groups, including the *Lads Society*, staged a rally in St. Kilda against so-called African gangs, making *Sieg Heil* salutes and brandishing an SS helmet.^[117] Their activity was highly publicised in social media, which mandated a heavy police presence and consequently reduced the risk of serious violence. The rallies are demonstrative of the reactive nature of some RWE groups, which further establishes the security challenge posed by Australia's extreme right.

Somewhere within this hive of activity, the Christchurch perpetrator became radicalised. On 15 March 2019, the perpetrator, an Australian citizen, walked into the Al Noor Mosque in Christchurch, New Zealand, and began shooting worshippers. He then drove to a second mosque, firing at pedestrians en route. At the Linwood Islamic Centre, he again fired on worshippers whereupon he fled but was subsequently apprehended by the police. The perpetrator live-streamed the attacks, in which he killed fifty people, and injured fifty more. As the case is still ongoing, it would be premature to tie the perpetrator to any specific group, in Australia or in New Zealand. However, based on the wide dispersal of the perpetrator's manifesto, *The Great Replacement*, two preliminary observations can be made.^[118]

Firstly, he champions a Eurocentric worldview, rather than an Australian-centric worldview, as reflected in his support of Oswald Mosely, the leader of the British Union of Fascists. Australian links to Mosely, as discussed

earlier, were located in 1964, but it is doubtful the perpetrator is aware of them. The graffiti on his weapons suggests immersion in international RWE worldviews. Secondly, the perpetrator ascribed the trigger event as the Ebba Akerlund killing. This may not be genuine, given that the protection of white children from jihadists is not a significant theme in the manifesto, which focuses mainly on the perceived decline of native European people due to, among other issues, immigration, industrialisation, and societal degradation. Ultimately, a comprehensive assessment is only possible when further details of the attacker are made public.

In an earlier iteration of this article, it was proposed that the threat of violence by the extreme right was intrinsically linked to the threat of jihadism in Australia. By labelling themselves defenders against jihadism and the Muslim community, current RWE groups have established a premise for supposedly righteous action. The Christchurch attack has confirmed this, but also demonstrated that the catalyst did not need to be as substantial as a successful jihadist attack in Australia or the West. The perpetrator's view of the supposedly existential threat posed by the designated outgroup was enough for him to justify his attack. Of course, this catalyst for the extreme right has precedent in the 2011 Oslo attacks by A. B. Breivik, an example of an "anti-Islam and -immigration crusade in Europe." [119] It remains to be seen whether the Christchurch attack inspires further copycat attacks elsewhere.

Conclusion

Right wing extremism in Australia is well-established and persistent, with a propensity to surge in popularity. Until recently, adherents perpetuated a narrative which celebrates a racialised construct of Australian identity, an identity supposedly imperilled by the influence of designated out-groups. These out-groups were initially Communists and Jews, but this circle of enemies later expanded to include immigrants and homosexuals, and then Muslims. It is important to note that out-groups tend to become a permanent feature. Contemporary groups frequently espouse hostility to "lefties" and Jews on their Facebook pages, thereby demonstrating target resonance with historical groups, whilst their main agenda is opposition to Islam and Muslim immigrants.

In between activity periods, RWE sentiment retreats back into the political margins to subsist in subcultural networks. While these groups occasionally attempt to engage in the political process, they met with limited success and ultimately only succeeded in keeping the ideas and networks alive. Domestic chapters of international groups, such as the *Southern Cross Hammerskins*, *Blood and Honour*, and *WAU14*, are suggestive of strengthening international ties in subcultural networks. This is important because it establishes historical persistence, and could further illuminate or explain the context behind the well-entrenched positions of contemporary RWE groups in Australia.

It is significant that Australian RWE groups did not, and have never, formed in isolation of the global RWE community. Even in the 1930s, there was an exchange occurring of people and ideas. Before the Christchurch attacks of March 2019, Australia's biggest RWE export may well have been the Odinism of Mills, which, despite having limited impact domestically, achieved significance internationally. In the aftermaths of Christchurch, The Great Replacement may eclipse it. The personal journeys of Australian RWE leaders to foreign RWE hubs, and their literature exchanges, demonstrate actual international connections, as much as their desire for creating a global (white) community – a concept recently championed by the Christchurch perpetrator. It remains to be seen what impact this international exchange will have on the Australian domestic context, with a heightened threat perception following the Christchurch attacks.

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Notes

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[107] White, op.cit.

[108] Reclaim Australia, "Group Page," Facebook. Accessed 20 September, 2018; URL: <https://www.facebook.com/reclaimau/> .

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[110] Alex Mann, "Haircuts and Hate: Inside Australia's Alt-Right," *ABC News* 2018; URL: <http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/backgroundbriefing/haircuts-and-hate:-inside-the-rise-of-australias-alt-right/10365948> .

[111] Ibid.

[112] Antipodean Resistance, "Home," Facebook. Accessed November, 2018; URL: <http://antipodean-resistance.info/>.

[113] Dean, Bell, and Vakhitova, p.136.

[114] According to Nick McTeigue, The Australian Liberty Alliance is the political arm of the Q Society in Australia, about which little is known save that it attempts to commandeer nationalist movement against Islam. See Nick McTeigue. 'Reclaiming Australia: the digital formations of the Australian anti-Islamic nationalist movement. (Master's Thesis, Macquarie University, 2016), p.31.

[115] Australia has had a sovereign movement since the early Guild of the Watchmen of Australia from the inter-war period, but the movement has engaged in no notable activity.

[116] Nationalist Australian Alternative. "Group Page," Facebook. Accessed 5 May 2018; URL: <https://www.facebook.com/Nationalist-Alternative-Australia-611198792321370/> .

[117] This was not the first time. The Cronulla Riots in 2005 are broadly considered to be a series of mob race riots between Lebanese Australians and white Australians.

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[119] Beatrice de Graaf and Eelco Kessels. “Lone Wolves and their Enabling Environment.” *International Centre for Counter-Terrorism—The Hague* (2011); URL: <https://icct.nl/publication/lone-wolves-and-their-enabling-environment/>.