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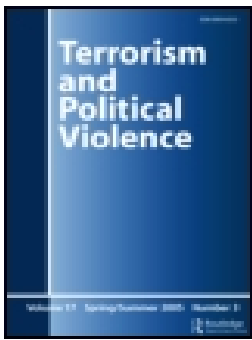
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# Right-Wing Waves: Applying the Four Waves Theory to Transnational and Transhistorical Right-Wing Threat Trends

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## ABSTRACT

The increasing global prominence of right-wing extremism and terrorism has been noted by scholars and government agencies alike. While right-wing terrorism has been documented throughout postwar history, groups have evolved, resulting in diverse materializations of violence perpetrated on behalf of varying ideologies and perceived threats. This paper draws upon Campion's research into Australian right-wing extremism and terrorism, where three ideological threat narratives were identified. The aim of this research was to determine the applicability of Rapoport's 'wave' theory to the international evolution of extreme right-wing activity. In doing so, Campion's framework is utilized and a case study analysis undertaken, investigating anti-communist, anti-immigration and anti-Islamic rhetoric on a transnational and transhistorical basis. It is argued that waves are found internationally, and that Rapoport's model is therefore applicable to the right-wing milieu. The paper concludes that the extreme right is on the cusp of the next wave and discusses trends that may inform those in a position to counteract the forthcoming wave of activity. There remains a need for law enforcement and security agencies to monitor right-wing extremism and terrorism activity to remain attuned to the ever-evolving threat as the next wave manifests.

## KEYWORDS

Anti-communist; Anti-immigration; Anti-Islam; *Rapoport's wave theory*; Right-wing terrorism

## Introduction

The increasingly transnational nature of right-wing extremism and terrorism has been noted by scholars and government agencies alike. While right-wing terrorism has been documented throughout history, groups and ideologies have evolved, resulting in diverse materializations of violence perpetrated on behalf of varying ideologies and perceived threats. A greater understanding of cycles and patterns throughout the history of right-wing extremism and terrorism is necessary to counteract the threat that terrorist and extremist groups may pose in the future as varied manifestations continue to proliferate on an international scale. In an attempt to understand these patterns, Campion's Australian three-phase framework<sup>1</sup> will be applied on an international scale to argue that Rapoport's 'wave' theory<sup>2</sup> can be utilized to describe the evolution of the extreme-right over the past 70 years. Campion proposes three periods of extreme right-wing activity in Australia, informed by perceived threats from Bolshevik communism, pluralism and immigration, and ethnic Australians and the Muslim community. It is hypothesized that the dominant threat perceptions that informed the extreme right in Australia, as identified by Campion, will be observed internationally in response to a varying socio-political context.<sup>3</sup> To investigate this hypothesis, the paper first introduces Campion's research, before employing a case study analysis with a focus on the American and European contexts. Instances of violence and extremism are utilized to demonstrate corresponding dominant threat narratives internationally in applying Rapoport's 'wave' theory. It is argued that following international events which

serve as catalysts, as well as national and international political experiences, much of the extreme right has perpetrated violence in a cyclical fashion in response to the identified perceived threats. The paper also argues that white supremacist, neo-Nazi and anti-Semitic narratives are consistent themes underlying the phases of activity. The paper concludes that the extreme right is on the cusp of the next wave and discusses trends that may inform identification of the evolving perceived threat or threats relevant to the forthcoming wave of right-wing extremism and terrorism.

## Literature review

Over the past few decades, Islamist extremist terrorism has caused the largest number of deaths globally,<sup>4</sup> a focus within the academia on this particular phenomenon is observed, likely as the result of the devastating September 11 attacks.<sup>5</sup> However, a growing transnational threat posed by the extreme right,<sup>6</sup> highlighted by the attack in Christchurch, warrants a greater level of academic investigation to understand and prevent future atrocities. As argued by Rapoport, “[s]tudents of terrorism . . . focus unduly on contemporary events,”<sup>7</sup> which has led to a deficiency in relation to research on the transnational and historical scale of right-wing extremist and terrorist movements. While there is a significant and ever-growing body of research into right-wing terrorism, much of the extant literature relates to a specific era or specific nation; there is seemingly a lack of transhistorical, or transnational analysis. Examples include Koehler, who focuses specifically on Germany, publishing a book in 2017 analyzing right-wing extremism from the Second World War until the discovery of the National Socialist Underground terror cell in 2011.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, Belew’s research focuses specifically on right-wing extremism and terrorism in the United States of America (U.S. A.) post-Vietnam War.<sup>9</sup> Kaplan has studied right-wing extremism in North America where he offers a typology emphasizing the roles of the community within which certain groups are found; his research discusses groups between 1920s Ku Klux Klan (KKK) and the Christian Identity Groups in the early 1990s.<sup>10</sup> Zeskind provides descriptive, first-hand accounts of events across much of that time period.<sup>11</sup> In terms of historical studies of the extreme right, there is an entire series currently compiled of forty-three titles which examine far-right politics and fascism in an historical context.<sup>12</sup> However, the focus of this paper is on the extreme right, distinct from the far-right on the political spectrum in that it may co-exist with democracy. In contrast, Bötticher’s conceptualization argues that the extreme right is inherently anti-democratic, thereby precluding its inclusion in conventional politics.<sup>13</sup> In terms of Australian research, Dean, Bell and Vakhitova provide an overview of the changing narratives since World War II, providing charts related to the ideologies espoused by various groups utilizing online data available in 2016.<sup>14</sup> Campion provides a more comprehensive, descriptive account of Australian right-wing extremist groups throughout a similar time period, using historical data as a basis to identify the threat narratives promulgated throughout three identified phases of activity.<sup>15</sup> Campion’s research is discussed in depth below.

Upon reviewing relevant literature on the historical extreme right, there appears to be a lack of analytical synthesis *across* the different eras of violent political action with consideration of transnational groups, narratives, and events. Of specific relevance to this research, Auger investigated whether the right-wing violence currently occurring on a transnational scale may be equivalent to a ‘fifth wave’ in accordance with Rapoport’s wave concept which is outlined below.<sup>16</sup> Auger’s research is significant and unique in that it attempts to apply Rapoport’s theory to the literature on right-wing extremism and terrorism.

Rapoport’s ‘wave’ theory is one of the most well known in terrorism studies, with many citing his work, and undoubtedly equal numbers of scholars speculating on what the next wave may be.<sup>17</sup> While earlier versions of Rapoport’s work exist, this paper relies upon the most recently published version, which can be found in Horgan and Braddock’s *Terrorism Studies: A Reader*.<sup>18</sup> To test the hypothesis that Rapoport’s ‘waves’ can adequately explain the evolution of right-wing extremism and terrorism throughout its recent history, an understanding of the concept must first be obtained. Rapoport defines a wave as “a cycle of activity in a given time period . . . characterized by expansion and contraction phases.”<sup>19</sup> He emphasizes that each wave of activity is observed internationally, underpinned by common themes, consists of a number of groups, is catalyzed by a (generally) international event, and typically lasts for approximately one generation. Additionally, use of the descriptor “waves” was purposive in order to articulate that there is not necessarily

a definitive start or end point; that each wave is animated by a common issue perceived by various groups, and that waves may overlap and groups persist beyond their initial wave. Rapoport argues that various elements lead to a decline in a wave, including political dispensations, resistance and a generational shift in perspective. Moreover, he argues that tenets may persist throughout each wave; in his research he found that nationalism was a persistent feature of all four waves. Importantly, in an earlier version of his work, Rapoport states that “local aims are common in all waves, but the crucial fact is that other states are simultaneously experiencing similar activities.”<sup>20</sup>

Many are supportive of Rapoport’s theory; for example, Rosenfeld, who found that Rapoport’s model most effectively describes the current data.<sup>21</sup> Rasler and Thompson conducted a study which confirmed heterogeneous, wave-like behavior that conforms to the Rapoport interpretation.<sup>22</sup> However, some suggest that the theory overlooks certain features of terrorism. For example, da Silva argues that the theory fails to encompass eco-terrorism.<sup>23</sup> Additionally, Sitter and Parker argue for a new conceptualization of ‘strains’ as opposed to ‘waves.’<sup>24</sup> Kaplan, who is convinced that Rapoport’s model is sound, provides a critique that the theory fails to account for organizations which began at an international level and broke away from the existing terrorist wave, thereby becoming local terrorist entities.<sup>25</sup> Despite Kaplan’s criticisms, he maintains that his findings do not refute the foundational premise of Rapoport’s theory.<sup>26</sup>

This paper argues that through the case study analysis utilized, Rapoport’s definition and description of a ‘wave’ can be applied on a transnational, transhistorical scale, building on Champion’s identification of narrative themes within the extreme right-wing milieu.

An understanding of the historical context of non-state actor terrorism provides a greater appreciation for future activity.<sup>27</sup> In seeking to identify patterns across international jurisdictions, which may develop a greater appreciation for a theoretical application in other cases, Champion’s findings observed in Australia warrant greater application and testing beyond an exclusively Australian context. Research such as this may provide new insights into the nature of the ideological justification of right-wing extremist and terrorist attacks observed within the extreme right-wing milieu. Moreover, Rapoport contends that governments focus primarily on disabling organizations,<sup>28</sup> which, in the context of the extreme right, becomes problematic as a result of a recent tendency toward the strategic use of lone actors.<sup>29</sup> Understanding the nature of threat narratives promulgated by the extreme right is important in an effort to better protect those that are the targets of their ideology, and potentially develop effective counter-narrative policies and practices.

## Methodology

The objective of this research was to determine whether Rapoport’s ‘wave’ theory can be applied to the transnational, transhistorical evolution of the extreme-right. Throughout the research, three broad threat narratives were uncovered which were found to correspond to Champion’s Australian three-wave framework. Therefore, a subsequent objective was to determine the applicability of Champion’s three phases to the international extreme right-wing milieu. Rapoport’s initial ‘Four Waves’ study was undertaken utilizing observational case studies and prominent trends across various times and locations. Champion’s identification of the three narratives, each expanding and contracting across time, provides an empirical basis upon which to anchor this research. It was hypothesized that similar, if not identical, threat narratives would be observed internationally.

In seeking to test this hypothesis, this research is based upon a case study analysis similarly, though not identically, framed to Rapoport’s initial work. The three selected case studies comprise of the three threat narratives proposed by Champion resultant from her research in Australia. Specifically, the cases are the anti-communist threat narrative, the anti-immigration threat narrative and the anti-Islam threat narrative. While databases such as the Global Terrorism Database or the Terrorism in Western Europe: Event Data (TWEED) can be helpful in providing data for quantitative studies, the specific circumstances surrounding attacks such as motivating ideology or justification for the attack are not recorded. In an attempt to overcome these limitations, a case study analysis will be insightful. While

case study analyses have historically been criticized,<sup>30</sup> the subjective nature of terrorism studies, and more specifically threat narratives, renders this type of research particularly useful in this context.

Additionally, the research aims to provide a descriptive account of corresponding international rhetoric and attacks in an attempt to identify patterns and provide insight for future phases. The selected incidents discussed within each case represent a variety of groups across a number of countries, and in many of the U.S.A. cases, first-hand accounts are available,<sup>31</sup> which will provide a rich basis for analysis. In an effort to contribute to the existing literature, a qualitative, case study analysis focusing on three threat narratives over the past seventy years was undertaken. The analysis identified a number of incidents where a dominant threat narrative was espoused as the ideological justification of right-wing terrorist or extremist attacks. The incidents selected demonstrate that the fluctuating nature and international presence of the varying narratives resembles the ‘wave’ concept championed by Rapoport.<sup>32</sup> Notwithstanding, the author acknowledges that this study is not free of limitations. As will be discussed in the following pages, Campion’s narratives do not encapsulate *all* extreme right-wing threat narratives across time and location, but merely encompass those narratives that, as per Rapoport’s ‘wave’ theory, reflect a noticeable expansion and subsequent contraction internationally.

### Key terms and definitions

An effective analysis of the extreme right and its manifestations relies upon a sound understanding of exactly what constitutes the extreme right and what it, as a movement, aims to achieve. The terrorism studies field abounds with differing definitions of various terms and few, if any, are widely accepted. Terminology utilized in this paper including *right-wing extremism*, and *terrorism* will be defined and explained to clarify the intended meaning.

The term *right-wing extremism* is subject to much debate. Jackson defines right-wing activity as that which “in reaction to perceptions of negative change, aims to revert fundamental features of the political system to some imagined (though not necessarily imaginary) past state.”<sup>33</sup> In contrast, Koehler understands the extreme right to mean “an overlapping web of groups and ideologies based on racially, ethnically or culturally defined superiority of one group and inferiority of all others.”<sup>34</sup> Jackson’s definition raises the important assertion that the nature of right-wing terrorism is inherently reactionary.<sup>35</sup> Additionally, although narrower in scope by stipulating specific grievances, Koehler’s definition touches upon the very premise of the ‘right.’ That is, that this term stems from the French Revolution where those in favor of class equality sat to the king’s left, and those opposing, to the right.<sup>36</sup> While these definitions have made significant contributions to the field, both result in conceptualizations which may not encompass certain acts of right-wing extremism. Carter’s conceptualization is somewhat broader, having considered a number of definitions in an attempt to define right-wing extremism and radicalism.<sup>37</sup> She proposes a minimal definition of right-wing extremism/radicalism as: “an ideology that encompasses authoritarianism, anti-democracy and exclusionary and/or holistic nationalism.”<sup>38</sup> It is important to note that while anti-government rhetoric and action is often a feature of right-wing terrorism,<sup>39</sup> it is not discussed at length in this paper. Anti-government sentiment is observed across all types of terrorism; the government as a target was recently attributed more to left-wing and jihadist terrorists than right-wing,<sup>40</sup> and it is therefore generally excluded from discussions here. It should also be noted at this point that the inherent nature of extreme right-wing beliefs as articulated in Carter’s definition remain prominent throughout the waves discussed within this paper; it is the threat narrative and therefore, target, that changes in a cyclical manner as right-wing extremism and terrorism evolve.

As this paper focuses not just upon right-wing extremism, but also right-wing terrorism, an understanding of the term *terrorism* is necessary. Due to its international nature, Richard English’s conceptualization of terrorism will be utilized. That is,

Terrorism involves heterogeneous violence used or threatened with a political aim; it can involve a variety of acts, of targets, and of actors; it possesses an important psychological dimension, producing terror or fear among a directly threatened group and also a wider implied audience in the hope of maximizing political communication and achievement; it embodies the exerting and implementing of power, and the attempted redressing of power-

relations; it represents a subspecies of warfare, and as such it can form part of a wider campaign of violent and nonviolent attempts at political leverage.<sup>41</sup>

Therefore, right-wing terrorism will be any action fitting the above description of terrorism, where the purpose of the conduct is to advance a cause in accordance with the definition of right-wing extremism outlined above.

## The Australian context

Underpinning this research is Campion's article titled *A 'Lunatic Fringe'? The Persistence of Right-Wing Terrorism in Australia*.<sup>42</sup> The paper is based in empirical and primary source material and demonstrates a three-phase framework applicable to the Australian context of right-wing extremism and terrorism. Campion's research illuminates three phases evident in the Australian right-wing milieu, where groups and actors are "imperilled by . . . designated out-groups"<sup>43</sup> identified as Bolshevik Communism, pluralism and immigration, and finally, ethnic Australians and the Muslim community. The following section will highlight some of the groups and individuals involved in each phase as argued by Campion.

Campion finds that between the 1940s and 1960s, the National Socialist Party of Australia (NSPA) and the Australian League of Rights were the most conspicuous in promoting an anti-communist agenda.<sup>44</sup> The Australian League of Rights were invited to join the World Anti-Communist League comprising of groups from Canada and Britain, but were expelled after their leader proclaimed an international communist conspiracy.<sup>45</sup> During this era, Australian political activities were promoted overseas by the World Union of National Socialists (WUNS), praising the Australian National Socialist Party (ANSP) for covering anti-war demonstrators with red dye.<sup>46</sup> Notwithstanding the apparent benign nature of these groups, the extremist rhetoric was clear and as a result they were, at the time, considered a threat by Australia's domestic intelligence agency.<sup>47</sup>

The shift from anti-communist sentiment toward anti-immigrant sentiment came in the form of the abolition of the White Australia Policy in 1975. Australian extremist right-wing groups Australian Nationalist Movement (ANM), and The Australian League of Rights promulgated acts of violence against immigrant groups. Formed in 1985, the ANM was most active in Perth, Western Australia, posting propaganda in the form of flyers in various locations around the city, emphasizing their anti-immigration beliefs. Statements such as "Asians out or racial war," and "40,000 jobless, 400,000 Asians out!" were observed posted around Perth.<sup>48</sup> The ANM did not stop at racist posters, perpetrating a number of arson attacks on symbolic targets such as Asian restaurants.<sup>49</sup> Campion further describes the final straw for law enforcement as a bomb attack on yet another Asian restaurant, Ko Sing.<sup>50</sup> No one was injured, but the damages amounted to 50,000 USD. The leader of the ANM, Jack Van Tongeren was arrested, charged and convicted of fifty-three offenses. Upon sentencing, the judge remarked that his actions amounted to a "terrorist campaign and . . . a guerrilla war against the public."<sup>51</sup> The increase in acceptance of Vietnamese refugees in the 1970s, along with the recession of the early 1980s enhanced the perception that Asian immigration into Australia posed a threat.<sup>52</sup> These contentious issues were the basis of the creation of legitimate, far-right political party Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party in Australia. The face of the party, Pauline Hanson, expressed concern that Australia was being "swamped by Asians" in her maiden speech upon winning a seat in the House of Representatives.<sup>53</sup> This phase of activity continued until the attacks on September 11, 2001.

Since these attacks, a large increase in incidents of discrimination against Muslims was observed in Australia.<sup>54</sup> In 2016, Pauline Hanson's One Nation party won four seats in the Senate, on this occasion citing Islam as a significant threat to Australian society.<sup>55</sup> Hanson has since infamously walked into the Senate while wearing a burqa in her efforts to have the Islamic attire banned.<sup>56</sup> This rhetoric has also appeared within one of many Australian right-wing extremist groups, the United Patriots Front (UPF). In 2015, the group participated in a demonstration protesting the erection of a mosque in Bendigo, Victoria, with UPF leader Blair Cottrell yelling into a microphone, "you can either be a Muslim OR an Australian; it must be either/or because the two do not co-relate and do not correspond."<sup>57</sup> These examples highlight the

ideology and discourse underpinning right-wing extremism in the current era. But groups like the UPF, including *Lads Society* and *Antipodean Resistance*, have not planned or perpetrated any acts of terrorism. In terms of terrorism, it is lone actors that pose a more significant threat, as is evident in the Christchurch attack. Brenton Tarrant, from Grafton, New South Wales, killed fifty-one Muslims during Friday prayers in Christchurch, New Zealand. His manifesto, published online prior to the attack, asserted that his motivation was “anti-Islamic”<sup>58</sup> and that he wanted “to directly reduce immigration rates to European lands by intimidating and physically removing the invaders themselves.”<sup>59</sup> Although Tarrant cites anti-immigration on a number of occasions, he interchangeably uses the terms immigrant and Muslim, and thus it is argued here that his motivation and ideology is inherently anti-Islamic. Furthermore, he had previously been a vocal supporter of Cottrell and the UPF, and had direct conversations with the leaders, who attempted to recruit him.<sup>60</sup> Additionally, it is made clear that his attack is designed to achieve retribution for those harmed in terrorist attacks perpetrated on behalf of an Islamic extremist ideology.<sup>61</sup> Right-wing terrorism in and from Australia in the current era is transparent in its anti-Islam discourse.

The phases described by Campion in Australia are comparable to the waves observed by Rapoport. There is a distinctive rise and decline of right-wing activity in response to different perceived threats. There are common themes as well as various groups acting within each wave. In seeking to identify the phases of the extreme right using the ‘wave’ notion, an exploration of the prevailing sentiment in America and various European countries follows in an attempt to identify corresponding phases internationally. In considering the international nature of terrorism, it was hypothesized that similar narratives would be observed internationally. Indeed, Campion identified a number of occasions where Australian right-wing extremists and terrorists were communicating with groups internationally throughout all phases.<sup>62</sup> Thus, Campion’s research provides an insightful framework upon which to anchor this study.

## Anti-communism

Waves of terrorist activity are generally catalyzed by international events.<sup>63</sup> Belew contends that the origin of what she terms the “white power” movement in the U.S.A. can be traced back to the “aftermath of the Vietnam War.”<sup>64</sup> Despite this assertion, there is clearly extreme right-wing activity during the war. For example, in 1972, Robert Mathews created a group called Sons of Liberty, and in a propaganda video documented by Hamm, warned that America would be overrun by communists, the government would collapse and in response his group was preparing for guerrilla war.<sup>65</sup> While not a veteran, Mathews was impacted by stories of the Vietnam War causing a disenchantment with the State,<sup>66</sup> and a subsequent determination to take matters into his own hands. While the Sons of Liberty group was never known to commit terrorist acts, members of the KKK certainly were. Generally regarded for its white supremacist views, during this era,<sup>67</sup> the KKK clearly espoused an anti-communist agenda and perpetrated terrorist attacks to that end. The combination of white supremacist and anti-communist views is elucidated in David Duke’s Knights of the Ku Klux Klan’s (KKKK) mass shooting in 1979. Five communist protesters partaking in a rally were shot and killed by Klan members,<sup>68</sup> in what Belew describes as an era where right-wing groups were united by common neo-Nazi and anti-communist sentiment.<sup>69</sup> Prominent right-wing activists at the time, whose legacy continues today, urged followers to continue fighting the Vietnam War upon their return to America. In his 1983 work titled *Essays of a Klansman*, Louis Beam called upon the three million Vietnam veterans in America to rise up against the government, whom he labeled as “traitors,” “criminals” and “bastards.”<sup>70</sup> Beam himself epitomizes the link between white supremacy and the dominant extreme right-wing political discourse throughout the anti-communist wave. Belew contends that a significant change occurred in the U.S.A. extreme right-wing movement in 1983,<sup>71</sup> and it is argued that this observation coincides with a transformation of the dominant political discourse from anti-communism to the next wave: anti-immigration.

Before moving to a discussion of the next wave, it is important to obtain a holistic view of groups espousing anti-communist beliefs in an international context. Complementary to Belew’s U.S.A.-focused research, a number of right-wing extremist groups propagating a dominant anti-communist ideology can be observed internationally between the beginning of the Vietnam War in 1955 and the



mid-1980s. This aligns with Rapoport's 'wave' theory in terms of the similar political discourse observed internationally. Hoffman's note commissioned by the RAND corporation in 1982 typifies the anti-communist ideology held by groups around the world at the time.<sup>72</sup> In Italy, The *Ordine Nuovo* (Italian for "New Order") was one of the predominant fascist groups between the 1960s and 1980s.<sup>73</sup> The *Ordine Nuovo* was described as having strong anti-Semitic, anti-communist views<sup>74</sup> and when they were officially banned in 1973, rebranded as *Ordine Nero* (Black Order). In 1974, the group was responsible for the bombing of a train traveling to Bologna, killing twelve. Following the attack, the group issued the controversial statement, "the Nazi flag . . . still lives for a powerful Nazi Italy."<sup>75</sup> Despite the overt anti-Semitic views, this and subsequent attacks were believed to be in reaction to the communist mayor of the city.<sup>76</sup> Additionally, the Nuclei of Armed Revolutionaries (NAR) were held responsible for at least twenty-five attacks over the limited time that they were active.<sup>77</sup> Examples of terrorist attacks perpetrated by the NAR include the bombing of the Italian Communist Party offices in 1977,<sup>78</sup> and the Bologna train station bombing in 1980 which killed eighty-five.<sup>79</sup> Furthermore, in 1984, both the NAR and *Ordine Nero* collaborated to commit a second bombing of a train headed to Bologna, killing fifteen and injuring 112.<sup>80</sup> The attacks committed by the NAR and *Ordine Nero* were predominantly anti-communist in nature, supporting the argument that the anti-communist wave existed transnationally.

In Germany, where many terrorist attacks between 1950 and 1985 were perpetrated on the basis of anti-Semitic rhetoric and ideology lingering from the Second World War,<sup>81</sup> there were still a number of attacks targeting communist entities. The *Wehrsportgruppe Hengst* (Military Sports Group Hengst) is understood to be the first right-wing extremist entity in Germany.<sup>82</sup> In 1968, the founding member of the group, Bernd Hengst, shot at the German Communist Party office building with a firearm.<sup>83</sup> Three years later, Hengst was arrested for the attack, and located with extensive plans for further acts of terrorism, including attacks on the German Social Democrat Party which, at the time, opposed the right-leaning National Democratic Party of Germany.<sup>84</sup> Furthermore, a group known as the *Europäische Befreiungsfront* (European Liberation Front; EBF) has been described as being formed as a direct response to combat communism.<sup>85</sup> While many EBF group members were arrested in 1970 following an investigation into a planned terrorist attack on critical infrastructure,<sup>86</sup> one member, Ekkehard Weil, avoided arrest and continued promulgating his cause alone. In 1970, Weil shot and injured a Soviet soldier, and in 1979, committed an arson attack on the Socialist Unity Party West Berlin.<sup>87</sup> Both attacks were undoubtedly symbolic, targeting Weil's perceived threat: communism. Following a short stint in jail, Weil escaped, and in the early 1980s bombed Jewish shops and homes.<sup>88</sup> These attacks reinforce not only the notion that an anti-communist ideology existed in extreme right-wing groups around the world during this time period, but also that themes of anti-Semitism, Nazism and white supremacy remained prevalent.

True to Rapoport's theory, political change or unexpected political outcomes can catalyze a decline in the previous wave and precede a new wave. Events such as the end of the Cold War and the collapsing Soviet Union coincided with mass emigration into the U.S.A. and Europe.<sup>89</sup> These globally significant events influenced international political outcomes, and resulted in changes in the animating energy of extreme right-wing groups and individuals.

## Anti-immigration

There is a clear, international, shift in political (and therefore extremist)<sup>90</sup> rhetoric in the late 1970s and early 1980s from anti-communist themes to anti-immigration themes. While some suggest that immigration continues to be a perceived threat to right-wing extremists,<sup>91</sup> it is argued herein that there is a distinction between anti-immigrant sentiment and anti-Muslim or anti-Islam sentiment. In the following section, much of the extremist and terrorist violence and rhetoric discussed is directed toward immigrants of Asian, or other descent, with no regard for their religion.

The transformation toward an anti-immigration agenda in the U.S.A. is noticeable in the Californian KKK, headed by Thomas Metzger, who won the Democratic Primary, vying for a seat in Congress.<sup>92</sup> Although unsuccessful in Congress, his successful campaign in the primary's in 1980 emphasized the threat

of Asian immigration,<sup>93</sup> which, along with Latin American immigration, had been on the rise for a number of years.<sup>94</sup> Metzger's early anti-immigrant tendencies are evident in the California KKK's "Border Watch" group in 1977.<sup>95</sup> The stated purpose of the group was to "stem the tide of illegal immigrants into the United States."<sup>96</sup> It has been proven that a strong nationwide anti-immigrant sentiment had begun to appear both in political and news media rhetoric from 1980 onwards in the U.S.A.<sup>97</sup> The culmination was the enactment of the Immigration Reform and Control Act 1986 which criminalized illegal immigration as well as strengthening border security. This legislation likely consolidated the threat perceived by right-wing extremist groups. This assertion is supported by a quantitative study which examined extreme right-wing victimology between 1990 and 2008, indicating that the main target of extreme right-wing actors during this period, comprising 51 percent, was racial and ethnic minorities.<sup>98</sup> Two years after the enactment of the Immigration Reform legislation, members of a group named East Side White Pride attacked three Ethiopian immigrants, killing one.<sup>99</sup> Links were drawn between the perpetrators of the attacks and Metzger's White Aryan Resistance (WAR); the attack was motivated by racism and by the WAR narrative.<sup>100</sup> While the socio-political context at the national level likely shaped the local manifestation of anti-immigrant informed extremism in the U.S.A., the threat is observed globally through this period.

In Germany, a study by Koehler elucidates the victim groups targeted by right-wing terrorists.<sup>101</sup> Second only to government targets, which Koehler argues is historically a consistent target of right-wing groups, foreigners were the most frequently targeted between 1980 and 1989. A dramatic increase in attacks on foreigners is also documented in the study; specifically, the increase occurred between the periods 1963–1979 (0 percent) and 1980–1989 (36.4 percent).<sup>102</sup> McGowan's study complements this data, descriptively outlining incidents perpetrated against immigrants in Germany during the same time periods.<sup>103</sup> In order to understand the issue taken with immigrants in Germany, a holistic view of government policy provides a contextual background. Following the Second World War, Germany signed agreements with Italy, Spain, Turkey, Morocco and the Yugoslav Republic, enabling immigration from these regions.<sup>104</sup> Then, between 1980 and 1992, the numbers of asylum seekers grew dramatically as a result of the Yugoslav War.<sup>105</sup> An escalation of right-wing extremist and terrorist attacks upon immigrants subsequently occurred. For example, five bombings were perpetrated by the *Deutsche Aktionsgruppe* (German Action Group) in 1980; all but one of which targeted those assisting foreign settlers in Germany.<sup>106</sup> Even with prominent political events such as reunification occurring in Germany in 1991, right-wing extremist groups continued to propagate, recruit, and perpetrate terrorist attacks upon immigrants and asylum seekers as their primary targets. Between 1991 and 1992 there were over 4,000 attacks upon asylum seekers and foreigners by right-wing extremists.<sup>107</sup> While many would be considered hate crimes, or low level, lone actor attacks, many were perpetrated with a political motivation and thus, meet the definition of terrorism provided above. For example, in August 1992, demonstrations were undertaken outside an asylum seeker's home calling for "foreigners out" and "Germany for Germans" before Molotov cocktails were thrown inside.<sup>108</sup> Zeskind's description aptly illuminates the extent of the terror perpetrated by right-wing extremists during this period: "for several moments it seemed as if all Germany would be engulfed in the flames of burning refugee hostels."<sup>109</sup>

The international anti-immigrant ideology and politically motivated violence observed in right-wing extremist rhetoric and attacks between the early 1980s and early 2000s clearly meets Rapoport's definition of a wave. There is an overt, dominant threat narrative energizing the activity which expanded throughout the era. There is similar activity occurring simultaneously on an international scale. The wave continued until the most dramatic catalyst; September 11, 2001.

## Anti-Islam

The attacks on September 11, 2001 served as the international event energizing the next wave of right-wing terrorism. The attacks magnified the out-group perceived by the extreme right; the foundation of the new threat was religion. Al Qaeda subsequently claimed responsibility for the attacks, citing a Salafi interpretation of the Islamic religion as justification.<sup>110</sup> Following these attacks, the extreme right-wing rhetoric slowly transformed, identifying Muslims and Islam as the perceived threat.<sup>111</sup> While some tout

the FBI statistics of hate crimes increasing by 1600 percent after the September 11 attacks,<sup>112</sup> it is conceded in this paper that not all hate crimes meet the definition of terrorism. Notwithstanding, there is still a definitive expansion in activity internationally, particularly in the second decade of the anti-Islam wave. Also notable is a significant difference in the tactics utilized by terrorists in the current wave, with anti-Islam groups differing significantly to their previous-era counterparts.<sup>113</sup> While groups are still seen to form, expand, and decline, consistent with Rapoport's waves theory, they are less likely to plan and commit acts of terrorism themselves. The groups provide the motivation and rhetoric which normalizes an attack; lone actors, linked directly or indirectly to extremist groups, plan and perpetrate it. It is important to note at this point that much of the literature surrounding the current-era right-wing extremists still utilizes the term anti-immigrant. This paper seeks to delineate the difference between violence motivated by anti-immigration in contrast to anti-Islamic rhetoric.

The expansion of the anti-Islam movement in the United Kingdom (UK) is apparent in the creation of new groups such as the English Defense League (EDL). Formed in 2009, the EDL is vocally "against Islamic extremism."<sup>114</sup> Despite their claim of solely taking issue with extremism, Kassimeris and Jackson's study debunks this notion, citing a delineation between a Muslim out-group and non-Muslim in-group as proof of Islamophobia.<sup>115</sup> The EDL's espoused views, along with low-level crimes against both Muslim youths<sup>116</sup> and Islamic prayer halls<sup>117</sup> suggests a confirmation of Kassimeris and Jackson's contention. Additionally, a similar relationship can be observed between the EDL and lone actor terrorism. In June 2017, Darren Osborne hired a van and drove into a crowd of Muslims leaving a Finsbury Park mosque after prayer, killing one and injuring twelve others.<sup>118</sup> It was reported during his trial that he had been in contact with EDL leader Tommy Robinson, as well as engaged with online content from both the EDL and Britain First movements.<sup>119</sup>

A further demonstration of the anti-Islam wave can be seen in the notorious attacks in Norway in 2011. Norwegian man Anders Behring Breivik detonated a car bomb outside a government building killing eight, before traveling to Utøya island dressed as a police officer where he murdered sixty-nine Labor Party youth camp members, most of whom were teenagers.<sup>120</sup> In terms of his tactics, Breivik denounced the connectedness of terrorist groups, and emphasized the importance of conducting attacks alone, in order to maximize efficacy.<sup>121</sup> Therefore, it would have been expected that in contrast to Tarrant and Osborne, no links would be found. On the contrary, despite this emphasis, Gardell's study of the attack indicates that Breivik had around 600 members of the EDL as friends on Facebook, and that many of his British manifesto recipients were members of either the EDL or the British National Party.<sup>122</sup> Furthermore, Breivik had engaged with the extreme right-wing discourse from both extremist groups and political parties including the Norwegian Progress Party and Swedish Democratic Party, referring to, and defending, both widely in his manifesto.<sup>123</sup> In the introductory paragraph of his work, Breivik specifies his perceived threat, "[t]he compendium . . . documents through more than 1000 pages that the fear of Islamization is all but irrational."<sup>124</sup> He is virulently anti-Islam, the very epitome of this wave.

While further groups and individuals whose actions support the notion of a right-wing wave theory exist elsewhere around the globe, it is contended that the few examples highlighted here sufficiently prove that inferences can be drawn, and that Rapoport's 'wave' theory adequately frames the international evolution of right-wing activity.

## Findings and conclusion

While many have attempted to predict what the next wave may be,<sup>125</sup> it is near impossible to preempt a future wave due to the inherently unpredictable nature of any future catalyst.<sup>126</sup> The following provides trends and patterns observed as a result of this study, including a discussion of one of the major differences between Rapoport's waves and the right-wing waves that are contended here.

Firstly, as previously touched upon throughout this paper, there are consistent themes underpinning the right-wing extremist ideology. As identified and discussed, in each era, a number of groups and organizations are observed to form, propagate and act on behalf of the prevailing anti-

communist, anti-immigration or anti-Islam rhetoric. However, groups have also perpetrated attacks purely on behalf of the consistent doctrines of white supremacy, neo-Nazism and/or anti-Semitism. For example, The Order's most prominent attack was the assassination of Jewish radio host Alan Berg.<sup>127</sup> The others on the so-called "kill-list" were showing African Americans in a positive light,<sup>128</sup> illuminating an underlying racist justification for terrorist attacks. The white supremacist vision is further illuminated in Robert Mathews' purchase of a surrogacy program in Portland.<sup>129</sup> Additionally, actors within the groups propagating the anti-communist, anti-immigration or anti-Islam doctrine can also hold the underlying white supremacist, neo-Nazi and/or anti-Semitic views, and still be included in the specified wave. For example, UPF leader Blair Cottrell had previously called for all classrooms to display a photograph of Adolf Hitler, signifying his neo-Nazi views.<sup>130</sup> It is clear that groups and individuals can commit attacks using more than one ideology for justification.<sup>131</sup> Further research could potentially illuminate features of groups that primarily hold an ideology relating to the aforementioned waves, in contrast to groups primarily espousing the underlying views. Many who study the extreme right have created typologies which include White Supremacy as an underpinning doctrine.<sup>132</sup> However, this paper has attempted to *set apart* the cyclical nature of the anti-communist, anti-immigration and anti-Islam waves, in opposition to the constant tenets seen throughout. A corresponding notion can be observed in Rapoport's theory, where he indicates that nationalism is observed throughout all waves.<sup>133</sup> Additionally, as touched upon previously, anti-government attacks are evident throughout the waves analyzed here. Examples include the bombings in Bologna which, as discussed, were presumably perpetrated due to the communist Mayor.<sup>134</sup> While anti-government rhetoric is present throughout the waves, it is argued here that it does not conform to the 'wave' analogy. There is no observable expansion, no increase in group numbers and government entities are more often utilized as a target to increase notoriety rather than defined as a designated enemy. Consequently, this research results in a slightly different application of Rapoport's original conceptualization. It is argued that there are multiple ideologically consistent tenets throughout all the waves. Nonetheless, the perceived threat causes an observable expansion throughout waves, with the creation and subsequent decline of groups on a transnational scale, rendering Rapoport's model applicable to the right-wing milieu.

Secondly, the ideology from each wave lingers. Parker and Sitter have suggested that the wave concept is too simple, and that historical similarities can be observed throughout all waves, across both tactics and ideology.<sup>135</sup> This conclusion can also be drawn across right-wing waves, evident in Tarrant's Facebook comments on the UPF Facebook page stating, "communists will get what they get."<sup>136</sup> Although this was not the primary motivation for Tarrant's attack, the anti-communist notion is still present and confirms the analysis in the previous paragraph: that attacks can be perpetrated using justification of multiple ideologies. Additionally, Breivik blames communism for the current state of the world in his manifesto.<sup>137</sup> It is clear that the anti-immigration and anti-Islam waves are strongly interconnected, with much of the perceived threat originating from multiculturalism and pluralism. However, the anti-immigrant rhetoric is elucidated in Patrick Crusius' manifesto, citing his motivation for the shooting attack as fear of an "Hispanic invasion of Texas."<sup>138</sup> It is worth noting that while Crusius targeted a different class of victims (Hispanics, not Muslims), his attack is closely linked with Tarrant's in terms of the concept of white genocide.<sup>139</sup> It is also important to remember Rapoport's assertion surrounding the commonality of local aims within waves.<sup>140</sup> These observations may denote a trend toward the next wave and should not be discounted when analyzing potential future attacks.

Thirdly, in accordance with Rapoport's assertion that local aims influence right-wing rhetoric and attacks, each threat narrative discussed here is applied and used by extreme right-wing groups and individuals in a nuanced manner. Extreme right-wing actors in the first wave perceived a threat emanating from Communism, manifested through international participation in the Vietnam War. Thus, much of the sentiment is specifically Vietnam related as seen across all examples in this paper. The second threat narrative is applied in a slightly different manner dependent on locality. As evident in the above examples, groups active in Australia within the anti-immigration era tended to focus on

Asians, whereas threat narratives in the U.S.A. also encompassed Hispanics and Latinos. Furthermore, another individualistic feature throughout the waves is the tactics employed by various actors internationally. The examples in this paper illuminate a dependence on weapons availability; the UK is subject to far more stringent firearms legislation than the US, and thus, as seen in the anti-Islam example, extreme right-wing actors in the UK used a vehicle to perpetrate their attack. A more infamous example is that of Tarrant, who indicated that he perpetrated his attack in New Zealand *because* of the ease of access to fully automatic firearms.<sup>141</sup> Despite the nuanced nature of the application of the threat narratives to attacks in varying countries, the periods of activity arguably align with Rapoport's 'wave' theory by conforming to the "common predominant energy."<sup>142</sup>

Fourthly, one of the most important trends observable throughout this study has been that the number of attacks perpetrated on behalf of right-wing ideology tends to accelerate dependent on national and international events. This directly correlates with Rapoport's description of waves in that there is an observable expansion. It further supports assertions about the reactionary nature of right-wing terrorism.<sup>143</sup> As demonstrated in the three waves identified within this paper, the largest number of attacks tend to occur in response to action by their perceived threat. For example, the anti-Islam wave saw a 320 percent increase in right-wing attacks between 2014 and 2018,<sup>144</sup> correlating to the more active years of the Islamic State. The trend is also seen within the anti-immigration and anti-communist waves, with many attacks observed in response to higher levels of immigration, and greater perceived threat from communist government entities. This observation holds serious implications for law enforcement and security agencies; where extremist right-wing activity appears to wane, it will undoubtedly return with a vengeance dependent on oppositional activity and perceived threat.

Finally, there is a key difference in right-wing waves in contrast with Rapoport's waves. As observed within the case studies, right-wing waves typically endure for approximately twenty years. It is suggested that this is a result of changing global political landscapes. Rapoport concedes that the third 'New Left Wave' lasted for approximately twenty-five years, arguing that its decline is intertwined with the end of the Vietnam War, significant international legislative changes and enhanced law enforcement capability.<sup>145</sup> It is argued here that significant global political events including the end of the Vietnam War, collapse of the Soviet Union, and sweeping legislative changes arguably consolidating a perceived threat of extremist Islam following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, fundamentally changed the threat perceived by each wave of the extreme right, causing a decline in the previous wave. Despite this identified difference, Rapoport's model is still applicable to the right-wing milieu. The conceptualization, if anything, has great utility in understanding threat trends beyond its initial application.

In sum, corresponding with Champion's research, there have been three definitive waves of extreme right-wing activity observed internationally, both in discourse and terrorist action. First, the anti-communist wave resulted in right-wing terrorist attacks targeting communist organizations, political members, or as seen in Italy, civilians in transportation hubs. Second, as this wave declined, a new wave of groups targeted immigrants of various nationalities, dependent on the country. Immigrants and asylum seekers were attacked and, in some cases, killed. Finally, the anti-Islam wave was catalyzed by the Al Qaeda attacks in September 2001 and further propelled by the rise of Islamic State in 2014. Attacks have focuses on Muslims, with two of the most lethal attacks perpetrated by lone actors Anders Breivik and Brenton Tarrant in this wave. To provide further analysis of each case, it was found that there exists underlying white supremacist, neo-Nazi, or anti-Semitic tenets in each wave, and there are attacks which rely on a dual-threat justification; there is a change in tactics tending toward a greater use of lone actors; the ideology from each wave lingers; right-wing activity accelerates in reaction to national and international political catalytic events; and that each wave typically lasts for twenty years. The key findings of this research conclude that Rapoport's 'wave' theory adequately frames the cyclical nature of right-wing activity over the past seventy years. Groups and individuals are observed internationally, with similar activities occurring simultaneously. Specifically, this activity is documented on a transhistorical scale across Australia, the U.S.A. and in various European countries. The cusp of the next wave is upon us, with the global coronavirus pandemic a likely catalyst. Right-

wing terrorism is an increasingly dominant and enduring threat to society and must continue to be researched and investigated to ensure appropriate national security and law enforcement responses.’

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

## Notes on contributor

**Amber Hart** is a law enforcement professional with over a decade of experience working across all crime types, including terrorism. For the past two years, she has focused exclusively on counter-terrorism work, with a particular professional concentration on investigating the risk posed by radicalization within a correctional context. Amber holds both a bachelor of policing and a masters of terrorism and security studies; both programs undertaken at Charles Sturt University. She was the recipient of the New South Wales Police Association Award, and conferred Dean’s awards three years running throughout the degrees. Amber is now a PhD student at Victoria University researching the management of radicalized inmates in correctional facilities. Amber’s research interests have recently focused on the threat posed by right-wing extremists and terrorists.

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