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Floods, Invaders, and Parasites: Immigration Threat Narratives and Right-Wing Populism in the USA, UK and Australia

Jackie Hogan & Kristin Haltinner

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In the last 20 years, industrialised Western nations have witnessed a marked increase in right-wing social movements and political parties. While the origins and agendas of these groups differ in important ways, all arose in a climate of intensifying globalisation. All arose in the context of a widespread embrace of multiculturalism and cultural diversity. And all are keenly focused on the perceived threats posed by immigration. This paper examines immigration threat narratives constructed by four of these groups: the British National Party, the One Nation Party, the Tea Party Patriots, and the Minuteman Civil Defense Corps. Striking similarities in the narratives employed by these groups suggest the emergence of a transnational right-wing populist 'playbook'. The paper further argues that even when the direct electoral impact of such groups is relatively small, they have the potential to substantially reshape broader political discourse and public policy.

Keywords: Culture; Migration; Racism; Right-Wing Populism; Multiculturalism; Nationalism; Threat Narratives; Anti-Immigration; Transnationalism

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In the last 20 years, industrialised Western nations have witnessed a marked increase in right-wing social movements and political parties: the National Front in France, the Danish People's Party, Italy's Northern League, Australia's One Nation Party, Britain's United Kingdom Independence Party and British National Party, and the Tea Party and Minutemen movements in the United States, to name just a few (Curran 2004, Atton 2006, Mughan and Paxton 2006, Mudde 2007). While the origins and agendas of these groups differ in important ways, all arose in a climate of intensifying neoliberal globalisation. All arose in the context of a widespread embrace of multiculturalism and cultural diversity. And all are keenly focused on the perceived threats posed by immigration. This paper examines immigration threat narratives constructed by four of these groups, the British National Party (BNP), the One Nation Party, the Tea Party Patriots (TPP) and the Minuteman Civil Defense Corps (MCDC). We find striking similarities that suggest a cross-fertilisation of ideas and rhetoric between right-wing populist groups across the globe, and the emergence of a transnational right-wing populist 'playbook' which can be successfully adapted and employed in a variety of national settings.

It is crucial at the outset to note that terms such as 'populist' and 'right-wing' suffer from considerable conceptual slippage. While *populist* movements feature a variety of demands and actors, in white-dominated societies they generally mobilise working- and middle-class whites, idealise a nostalgic past, emphasise the importance of private property and individual responsibility, and demonise labour unions and big government (Canovan 1981, p. 292, Berlet and Lyons 2000). Blee and Creasap (2010, p. 270) characterise *right-wing* movements as those which 'focus directly on race/ethnicity and/or promote violence as a primary tactic or goal'. So *right-wing populist* parties and movements are characterised by ethnonationalist, xenophobic and anti-immigrant sentiments; an emphasis on the 'traditional' social order, which usually includes a tough-on-crime stance with severe penalties for those who violate the rules; and the scapegoating of perceived 'freeloaders' including government and intellectual elites and a non-productive welfare-dependent underclass (Mudde 2007).

The cases selected for analysis here include two social movement organisations (the MCDC and TTP in the US) and two political parties (the BNP and the One Nation Party of Australia).[1] We reject the notion of clear boundaries between social movements and political organisations and, instead, take a Weberian approach to understanding the classification of these organisations. Drawing on Weber, we argue that the boundaries between political social movements and political parties are porous. We employ Weber's concept of 'party' to understand all four organisations. Weber argues that 'parties' are collectives who seek to acquire social power by 'influencing social action' (Weber 1978, p. 938). Parties take a variety of forms, from clubs and other voluntary organisations to more formal arms of the state, but they always seek power for whatever group they represent (1978). The four parties analysed here employ organised tactics to increase social, economic, and political power for white working- and middle-class members of society vis-à-vis new immigrants. Furthermore, all have influence on national political decisions and broader socio-cultural

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discourses. While right-wing populist parties and movements may achieve only limited direct electoral impact, such groups have the potential to significantly reshape national politics by nudging public discourses and public policy to the right.

Contexts

As Rydgren (2005) notes, while there is a tendency for analysts to regard new right-wing movements and parties (particularly on the far right) as unique phenomena growing out of specific political, social and economic conditions in each country, there are such clear commonalities between right-wing groups in diverse national contexts that the rise of these groups cannot be explained by local factors alone. Nonetheless, an examination of national contexts is crucial for understanding both the proliferation and the social and political impact of right-wing populist groups around the world. To this end, we begin with a brief review of the emergence of the BNP, the One Nation Party, and the TPP and MCDC movements.

The Rise of the British National Party

To understand the deeper roots of contemporary right-wing populism in Britain, we must consider the reach and the decline of the British Empire. During the Victorian Era, with the Empire at its zenith, Anglocentrism reached full flower in Britain as the nation took up 'the white man's burden' (Kipling 1899) to civilise the 'primitive' races of the world. The subsequent national traumas of World War I and World War II challenged notions of natural white British superiority. In particular, losses to the Turks (conceptualised as an Asian race), the occupation of many of its Asian colonies by Japan, and massive casualties at the hands of Germany (another supposedly civilised, white Christian nation), dealt a blow to ethnonationalist self-conceptions (Hogan 2009, pp. 62–67).

In the decades following World War II, the British Empire disintegrated. First India and Pakistan broke away, then Britain's other Southeast Asian colonies, most of its colonies in Africa, the Caribbean, Central America and the Pacific, and finally Hong Kong. This process of decolonisation brought many former colonial subjects to Britain, leading to considerable increases in both ethnic diversity and inter-ethnic conflict. The first notable clash came with the 1948 arrival of the *Empire Windrush*, a ship carrying some five hundred West Indian immigrants. Their arrival sparked public outrage and panicked rhetoric about an impending invasion of dark-skinned colonials stealing British jobs, increasing crime and violence, and overburdening the welfare system. It is important to note that no such outcry was sparked by issuing work permits to some three hundred *thousand* post-war migrants from Germany, Austria, Italy, and Belgium (Rutherford 1997). Amid mounting paranoia over the perils of non-white immigration, the 1950s saw the emergence of the Keep Britain White movement, the White Defence League, violent anti-black gangs known as the Teddy Boys, and alarmist politicians like Enoch Powell who famously warned that

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continued black immigration would result in 'rivers of blood' running through British streets (Gilroy 1987, Hogan 2009, pp. 67–68).

By the mid-1970s, growing ethnic minority communities within Britain, particularly the Afro-Caribbean and South Asian communities in urban areas, had started to gain mainstream acceptance. However, the British economy was also in decline, and the neoliberal policies implemented by Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government to increase the global competitiveness of British industry, resulted in the loss of one in four of the nation's manufacturing jobs in Thatcher's first term alone, with still more losses resulting from subsequent privatisation and austerity policies (Chakrabortty 2011). It was in this context that Britain's far-right National Front emerged. It gained a following predominantly among younger working-class white men in areas of high unemployment and increasing numbers of black and Asian immigrants (Ford and Goodwin 2010), but with its neo-fascist rhetoric and reputation for violence, it failed to achieve significant electoral success. As Thatcher pushed the Conservative Party increasingly towards the right, she pulled support from the National Front, further weakening the group. And in 1982 National Front leader John Tyndall defected to found the BNP.

The BNP remained a marginal force in British politics until 1999 when Nick Griffin, another former National Front member, successfully challenged Tyndall for leadership of the party. Griffin set about rebranding the BNP to make it more palatable to the electorate. In his 2005 BNP 'manifesto', he still pledged to halt immigration and deport many immigrants and refugees who were already in Britain (Copsey 2007). But instead of framing his arguments in the overt white supremacy of the group's precursors, Griffin justified his policies as a way of protecting the endangered 'indigenous' people of Great Britain – by which he meant whites. Dropping more explicit biologically based racism, presenting the BNP's policies as a defence of an oppressed indigenous culture, and stressing the notion of cultural incompatibility (especially between Christian democratic values and Islam) gave the group new respectability, which translated into unprecedented electoral success. While the group had won only one council seat in the 1990s, by 2003 that rose to 16 seats, and by 2006, it increased further to 46 seats (Wood and Finlay 2008). In 2001, Griffin himself won more than 16% of the vote in his parliamentary district, the largest vote ever won by a far-right party (Renton 2005).

As anti-immigration, anti-asylum and anti-Muslim sentiment gained traction (particularly in the wake of the 2005 London transit system bombings by 'Islamic extremists'), the mainstream political parties seemed to validate BNP concerns by embracing more restrictive policies on immigration and asylum and supporting increased monitoring of Islamic groups within Britain (Renton 2005, Pitcher 2006, Richardson 2008). The rightward shift of the mainstream parties once again pulled votes away from the BNP, and in combination with a number of personal scandals and off-message inflammatory comments by BNP candidates, the party lost its electoral momentum.[2] Nonetheless, as we will observe in other national contexts, the real and lasting impact of this right-wing populist party has been to push both

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mainstream parties and public discourse towards the right, particularly on matters related to immigration and an ethnonationalist conception of the nation.

The Rise of One Nation

Australia has long suffered from what commentators have called an 'invasion complex' (Papastergiadis 2004, Elder 2007). When Australia gained its national independence in 1901, one of the first actions of its new federal parliament was to pass an Immigration Restriction Act to keep out 'undesirable' migrants, particularly the 'Yellow Hordes' of Asia (Mondon 2012). Fears of an Asian invasion only intensified during World War II when the Japanese came perilously close to breaching Australia's borders. After this near-miss, national attention focused on the need to 'populate or perish', that is to people the nation with the 'right' kind of migrants to stave off any future threats from its Asian neighbours. In order to attract enough migrants, the state relaxed conceptions of whiteness to include not only Anglo-Celts and Northern Europeans, but also Southern and Eastern Europeans and even some Middle Eastern groups (Lack and Templeton 1995). While Australia accepted (and indeed courted) these immigrants in the decades following WWII, the state maintained a firmly assimilationist policy. These 'New Australians' might have had darker skin than previous migrants, but they were promised acceptance if they conformed to the norms of 'white Australia'.

This assimilationist policy was challenged in the 1960s and 1970s by a growing Aboriginal rights movement, and a looming refugee crisis created by conflicts in Indochina. As increasing numbers of 'boat people' arrived, the Australian state dropped its assimilationist policies and adopted official multicultural policies aimed at fostering cultural diversity and promoting equal opportunity and civic engagement for minority groups (Lack and Templeton 1995). Although this new embrace of diversity was more strongly associated with the political left, successive governments on both the left and the right framed multiculturalism not only as an appropriate way of managing a diverse population, but also as a pathway towards economic growth. Labor Prime Minister Paul Keating, in particular, promoted foreign investment and trading relationships with Asia, fuelling fears of the 'Asianisation' of Australia (see Blainey 1984).

Under the neoliberal policies of governments from the 1980s onward, the Australian manufacturing and agricultural sectors came into more direct competition with lower wage countries, leading to a loss of Australian manufacturing jobs and a drop in many commodity prices. These changes helped fuel debates about immigration and fears of migrants 'stealing our jobs' (Hogan 2009, pp. 26–32). In 1996, in a climate of backlash against multiculturalism, globalisation and relatively open immigration policies, Keating's left-leaning Labor party lost to John Howard's right-leaning Liberal party. One Liberal politician in particular stood out for her vitriol towards immigrants and Indigenous Australians, whom she saw as demanding special treatment and threatening to destroy Australian culture – Pauline Hanson (Curthoys

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and Johnson 1998, Money 1999, Curran 2004). While the Liberal party eventually disendorsed Hanson, her statements ignited heated national debates about race, immigration and entitlements, and about a perceived ideological gap between 'ordinary' Australians and 'Chardonnay-sipping' political and intellectual elites (Jackman 1998). Riding this wave of discontent, in 1997 Hanson formed the One Nation party, which won a remarkable 23% of the vote in the 1998 Queensland state elections, brought 11 representatives to the legislature, and attracted the support of 12% of the electorate nationally (Gibson *et al.* 2002).

The focus of One Nation rhetoric has shifted somewhat over time (Goot 2005). Nonetheless, its core concerns have been fourfold: protecting Australian workers and small businesspeople from external economic threats; preventing the fragmentation of 'mainstream' Australian culture; eliminating the 'unfair advantages' enjoyed by immigrants and indigenous groups; and defending hard-working 'ordinary' Australians against the out-of-touch 'politically correct' elites and the special interest groups seen to control the government (Curthoys and Johnson 1998, Jackman 1998, Money 1999, Gibson *et al.* 2002, Curran 2004, Mondon 2012). While One Nation's electoral successes were short-lived and the party quickly imploded after 1998 amidst personal scandals and internal disagreements, its lasting impact has been in nudging the mainstream parties, public discourses, and public policy to the right.

This rightward shift is seen perhaps most clearly on issues of immigration and asylum. In Pauline Hanson's maiden speech to Parliament, she famously asserted that Australia was in danger of being 'swamped by Asians', who 'have their own culture and religion, form ghettos and do not assimilate' (Hanson 1996). Although ethnonationalist discourse had been, by tacit agreement, out of bounds in mainstream political debate since the 1970s (Mondon 2012), the dramatic rise of One Nation helped reframe ethnonationalism as a potentially legitimate way of conceptualising the nation. Amidst contentious debates over the arrival of 'boat people' on Australia's shores, John Howard's Liberal party warned of the nation being 'swamped by asylum seekers' (Curran 2004, p. 47, O'Doherty and Augoustinos 2008), a clear echo of Hanson's rhetoric.

As xenophobic fears intensified, even the left-leaning Labor party adopted a similar stance on immigration and asylum, for fear that the electorate would see the party as too soft on border security (Curran 2004). While Labor was returned to government in 2007, it maintained similar hardline policies on asylum seekers to those developed in the wake of One Nation's success. And after the Liberals took back the government in 2013, they redoubled efforts to prevent 'boat people' from entering Australian territory (ABC 2014). While One Nation currently does not hold a single elective office at the state or federal level,[3] the impact of its ethnonationalist, isolationist, and populist rhetoric is readily apparent.

The Rise of the Minuteman Civil Defence Corps and the Tea Party Patriots

An understanding of contemporary right-wing populism in the US necessitates a brief review of American nativism, a powerful guiding principle for diverse social

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movements over the past 150 years (Knobel 1996, Perea 1996). Central to early American nativism was the notion of Manifest Destiny – a belief in the natural superiority of whites and their divinely ordained mission to expand their territory and civilise the ‘heathens’ (Horsman 1981). Throughout the nation’s history, American nativists have aimed to protect ‘true citizens’ from outsiders who are believed to threaten freedom, opportunity, and equality (Bennett 1988, Knobel 1996, Perea 1996). They conceptualise certain racial and ethnic groups as inferior – culturally, intellectually, and morally – and therefore unable to assimilate into American society. They warn that immigrants will take jobs from American citizens, negatively impact the economy, corrupt the voting system, overload social welfare programmes, and dominate educational systems (Feagin 1997). And they seek to return to an imagined golden age before the influx of immigrants and the multicultural ethos (Bennett 1988).

Nativist sentiment has waxed and waned in the US, often in response to economic conditions and security concerns. The Know Nothing party, a group that sought to limit the immigration of Irish Catholics, achieved considerable prominence in the mid-1800s. Despite the ultimate demise of the Know Nothings, nativism continued to form the foundation of fraternal organisations and other social movements, including the Ku Klux Klan, first established in 1865 (Knobel 1996, Wade 1998). Public panic over an influx of Chinese labourers in the West precipitated the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, followed by a similar agreement in 1908 limiting immigration from Japan. Rising isolationist sentiments after the horrors of WWI led to the Immigration Act of 1924, which attempted to keep levels of immigration proportional to the demographic makeup of the US, and prevent an influx of people from Eastern Europe. Mexican nationals were imported as labourers during WWI, but were subsequently deported during the economic recession of the 1930s, then brought in again via the Bracero programme of the 1940s (which ended in 1964), only to be ejected in the 1950s through Operation Wetback, a controversial immigration programme run by General Joseph Swing of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (Gutiérrez 1995, Hernandez 2006, Rumbaut 2008).

The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 (aka the McCarran-Walter Act) ended the prohibition on Asian immigrants, but made it possible to deport suspected communists. The 1965 Immigration and Naturalization Act abolished quotas based on national origin, yet kept them for geographic regions and gave preference to those who had relatives in the US. And, while the 1968 UN Treaty on Refugees diversified US immigration, the 1980s and 1990s saw a number of statutory efforts to limit immigration and crack down on undocumented workers. More recently, the USA PATRIOT Act, passed in the wake of the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks, both reflected and further cemented the image of immigrant Others as threats to the nation.

Since 2006, anti-immigrant organisations tracked by the Southern Poverty Law Centre have more than doubled in number to a height of 319 in 2010 (Beirich 2013). The largest organisation is the MCDC, founded in 2004 as an outgrowth of several earlier groups including the Civil Homeland Defense, the Tombstone Militia, and the Minuteman Project. The goal of today’s MCDC is to secure the

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nation's border against 'the unlawful and unauthorised entry of all individuals, contraband, and foreign military', and to assist the US Border Patrol in 'turning back the tidal wave of people entering our country illegally' (MCDC 2008). The group patrols the US border searching for undocumented migrants. It also lobbies local, state and federal government to enact policies to restrict migrant movement and employment. In 2010, after several Minutemen leaders were indicted for stealing from the group's coffers, the group was officially disbanded and the organisation was taken over by Declaration Alliance, but local chapters continue to operate (Burghart 2012). Many members also joined the TPP (Burghart 2012, Beirich 2013).

The TPP and the larger Tea Party movement arose following the 2008 economic recession and the election of President Obama, when CNBC reporter Rick Santelli called for the formation of a 'Chicago Tea Party' to resist the housing bailout proposed by Obama (CNBC 2009). Santelli demanded that Obama allow citizens to vote on how they wanted tax dollars spent – specifically, whether they wanted to subsidise 'the losers' mortgages' or reward hard-working, self-reliant Americans who 'might have a chance to actually prosper' (CNBC 2009). This early Tea Party call to action was at least implicitly racially coded, in that the primary victims of the crisis were black and Latino citizens.[4] Santelli's message that people in foreclosure had caused the economic crisis and did not deserve assistance resonated with extant right-wing and New Right organisations. These groups helped mobilise the Tea Party movement, with massive financial contributions from billionaires Charles and David Koch, their Americans for Prosperity Foundation, the conservative FreedomWorks organisation, and the help of corporate mass media which largely served to 'mainstream' the Tea Party's activities and messages (Burghart 2012, Disch 2012, Guardino and Snyder 2012).

The TPP's primary goals include promoting government fiscal responsibility, limiting government control, and bolstering free market capitalism (TPP 2011). While members see immigration primarily as a social issue, and therefore not a central pillar of the organisation (Prior 2014), it is nonetheless included among the groups' 'core issues' and 'topline' news items in its official communications (TPP 2014a, 2014b). Nonetheless, race matters to Tea Party activists. Skocpol and Williamson (2012) find that Tea Party activists tend to have more extreme views on race than do other American conservatives and that they view undocumented immigrants as a threat to US society via their illicit and extensive use of social services. The Tea Party thus opposes undocumented migration to the US, seeks to restrict rights for such migrants, and advocates increasing border security (TPP 2014c, 2014i).

The Tea Party movement grew dramatically over its first two years and by 2011 boasted chapters in all 50 states, the Virgin Islands, and Washington DC (TPP 2011). Although it is not a formal political party, the group's political influence is readily observable. In 2010 alone, 45 Tea Party-backed candidates won election to federal seats, prompting Michelle Bachman (R-MN) to establish a Tea Party caucus, and shifting the broader political discourse to the right in the 2012 federal election (Babington 2010, Pickler 2010, Woodward 2010, Perrin *et al.* 2014). This clear

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rightward influence has led many to argue that the Tea Party has become the mainstream right in the US (Jonsson 2010, Saad 2010, Williams 2010).

Immigration Threat Narratives among Right-Wing Populist Groups

While the right-wing populist groups under consideration here are by no means identical in their concerns and proposals, they clearly construct a common perceived enemy. 'Freeloaders' and 'parasites' are squarely in the crosshairs of the BNP, One Nation, the MCDC and the TPP. This includes government and intellectual elites who foist 'political correctness' and 'hoaxes' such as global warming on the public. And it includes a non-productive underclass consisting of the (often racialised) undeserving poor and non-white immigrants. As Betz has noted, 'By far the most important targets of contemporary right-wing radical populist resentment have been immigrants' (1998, p. 6).

The threats of immigration, as perceived by these groups, fall into two broad categories – interest-based threats (economic and security threats) and identity-based threats (principally threats to culture, democracy and 'traditional' ways of life). While space limitations preclude an exhaustive survey of the four groups' immigrant threat narratives, we briefly examine overlapping themes, imagery and rhetorical devices. Our data are drawn from material published on the groups' websites, and in official 'manifestos', press releases, and promotional materials, as well as from 40 in-depth interviews with active members of the MCDC (from 2007 to 2010) and 45 in-depth interviews with active members of the TPP (from 2010 to 2012) (Haltinner 2013).

Economic Threats

> Immigrants take jobs that rightfully belong to native-born citizens. They drive wages down, increase unemployment, increase the cost of living, and overburden public healthcare, education, and welfare systems.

Right-wing populist groups frame immigration as a multifaceted economic threat. Immigration, they argue, depresses wages and increases the cost of living and the tax burden for native-born citizens. According to the BNP's calculations, for instance, 'immigrants have taken up more than 1.64 million of the 1.67 million jobs created [in Britain] since 1997' (BNP 2010, p. 19). Although the BNP does not substantiate these numbers, it does pledge to restore jobs to 'indigenous' Britons by halting immigration and implementing an 'orderly repatriation of past immigrants' to their countries of origin (BNP 2005, pp. 34–35). Likewise, One Nation pledges to enforce a 'zero net immigration' policy to prevent immigrants from 'taking jobs that belong to Australians' (One Nation 2014c). And the TPP asserts that immigration 'places additional strain on an already poor job market' (TPP 2014c). One member of the Minutemen, Jerry, a software engineer from the Mid-Atlantic region, captured this argument quite neatly.

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> [C]ompanies are going to be able to hire fewer people, so there are going to be fewer jobs which is going to exacerbate the already high unemployment rate … Out of these 12 million [undocumented immigrants] the estimate is … that 90% of them or more are below the poverty level. Which means they qualify for food stamps, public assistance, welfare … So, multiply 11 million by, what, 20,000 dollars a year? That's a huge amount of money that the states are going to have to eat. (in Haltinner 2013)

Jerry's comment also highlights the fear among right-wing populists that immigrants increase the economic burden on citizen taxpayers by drawing heavily on public services such as education, healthcare and social welfare programmes (see also One Nation 2014d, BNP 2005, p. 28, TPP 2014d).[5] Immigrants are also said to increase the cost of living for native-borns, particularly the cost of housing. One Nation notes that 'the great Australian dream' of home ownership is now out of reach for many, because 'Australia has a shortage of housing, due to increased immigration' (One Nation 2014a, 2014b). Likewise, the BNP observes that due to 'over 300,000 foreigners [who] have moved into the southeast', ordinary Britons can no longer afford to buy homes of their own (BNP 2005, p. 33). Not only that, but the BNP asserts that excessive immigration has driven up energy costs in Britain, leading to 'up to 40,000 elderly' dying of hypothermia in 2009 alone (BNP 2010, p. 26). It should be noted that this alarming number is not substantiated, and no source is provided for the information.

The dangers of immigration are rendered even more immediate and personal by constructing immigrants as unwelcome guests or even home invaders.

> What we have here is someone coming into your home telling you they like your house better than theirs and they are going to live with you. You have to feed, cloth[e], care [for], and educate them while looking after their needs. Your children now have to share a room and you have to make the dollars stretch further to provide for them. They don't have to work [–] you are providing for them. If you don't give them what they want they will complain and you will be forced to answer why you are so inhumane not to have them live in your home, that you worked hard for. (One Nation 2014e)

Threats to Security

> Immigrants increase violence and property crime, bring diseases, and make the nation more vulnerable to terrorism.

The right-wing populist groups analysed here all construct immigration as a security threat. First, it is worth noting that the proposition that immigration increases crime is often presented as common knowledge, requiring little empirical proof. As the BNP asserts, 'It is an inescapable statistical fact that immigration into Britain increases the crime rate' (BNP 2005, p. 13). Sometimes this crime is envisioned as street violence by 'angry young men in multicultural cities' (BNP 2005, p. 8) or as 'ethnic tensions and crime' that make it necessary for the native-born to 'take back the streets' (One Nation 2014h). The Minutemen assert that, 'The statistics for crimes committed by Illegal Aliens for assault, rape, murder, and traffic related

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deaths and injury caused by drunk Illegal Alien drivers is staggering' (MCDC 2014). And the TPP echoes these sentiments when it cites a 'leaked Department of Homeland Security report' showing that almost one in five immigrants under deportation orders have been convicted of serious crimes including 'assault, theft, murder, identity theft, domestic battery, and obstruction of justice' (TPP 2014e).

Sometimes the security threat to citizens takes the form of the health crises immigrants are said to bring with them. Tuberculosis and AIDS, warns One Nation (2014e). Tuberculosis and AIDS, warns the BNP (2005, p. 28). Tuberculosis, chicken pox, scabies, aggressive strains of influenza, and Ebola, warns the Tea Party (TPP 2014f). And it is not only diseased immigrants who pose a threat, but an incompetent or coldly calculating state that is allowing the diseases to spread to unsuspecting citizens. As the Tea Party notes

> Washington is not only failing to protect our borders – it's failing to protect our citizens from dangerous, communicable diseases […] [U]nder the Obama Administration, sick children and adults flooding our borders […] are not only allowed to stay, but are being sent to undisclosed locations throughout the United States. (TPP 2014f)

Some of the most incendiary language and the most dehumanising, essentialising and hostile imagery is seen in discussions of immigration and the threat of terrorism. Two excerpts from One Nation exemplify such threat discourses at their most extreme.

> [1] Islam is a primitive, seventh century ideology of ignorant violent inbred violence-seeking barbarians […] Australia, wake up before your country becomes like all the other countries who suffer under the violence, intolerance, honour killings, beheadings, paedophilia, abuse of women, abuse of children, cruelty to animals and total dysfunction of Islam and it's [sic] mobs of hate filled vigilantes of death. (One Nation 2014f)

> [2] Muslims were told by Mohammed to marry first cousins (or if your brother dies, marry his daughter, your niece). 1400 years of inbreeding has resulted in widespread birth defects causing 70% of Europe's mentally and physically disabled children to come from just the 5% of the population, the Muslim 5% […]. Is it any wonder they are so easy to lead into wars and violent demonstrations, and to be suicide bombers [?] [T]hey are simply not that bright. (One Nation 2014g)

It must be noted that One Nation backs up these claims with website links and articles from the Heritage Foundation (a conservative US think tank), and from Geert Wilders (member of the right-wing Dutch Party for Freedom), openly borrowing information and rhetorical devices from these sources. Likewise, the BNP notes that 'Recent arrests of cells of Islamic terrorists living in the country plotting mass murder in Britain illustrate the link between illegal immigration and terrorism' (BNP 2005, p. 14). The BNP asserts that 'the historical record shows that Islam is by its very nature incompatible with modern secular western democracy […] [T]here should be absolutely no further immigration from any Muslim countries, as it presents one of the most deadly threats yet to the survival of our nation' (BNP 2010, p. 30).

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Similarly, the MCDC and the TPP construct images of a border teeming not only with violent and diseased illegal immigrants, but with terrorists bent on the destruction of the nation. In 2014, the TPP reported that ISIS operatives had been intercepted trying to cross into the US on its southern border (TPP 2014g). As TPP co-founder Jenny Beth Martin noted, 'Every day brings another example of the disastrous consequences of open borders and amnesty. First, it was a humanitarian wave of crime and disease, now suspected terrorists are being apprehended with who knows how many slipping through' (TPP 2014h). Minutemen, likewise, assert that 'Middle Eastern terrorists […] assisted by international drug cartels' and 'enemy' propagandists such as Al-Jazeera are planning to cross the unsecured US–Mexico border to attack targets within the US (MCDC 2005, 2007). This threat clearly resonates with rank-and-file members of the Minutemen. As Scott, a British-born naturalised US citizen and Minuteman, warns, 'There will be another 9/11 scenario, these people do not give up. The assassins probably will have come across the border from Mexico' (Haltinner 2013). Likewise, Bob, a working-class Floridian Minuteman, observes, 'There are terrorists trying to vaporise us … It may take 5 or … 50 years, but it will happen' (Haltinner 2013).

Threats to Culture

> Immigration and multiculturalism threaten 'traditional,' 'mainstream' or 'indigenous' (white) culture, promote reverse discrimination against the native-born, and increase social divisions.

In addition to raising the spectre of the material threats of immigration, in the US, UK and Australia right-wing populist groups also focus on perceived threats to identity. In so doing, immigration and multiculturalism are often inextricably linked. For the right-wing groups under consideration here, the presence of large numbers of people who are perceived to be markedly different from the dominant white population both disrupts social solidarity and threatens to destroy native-born culture. One Nation pledges to defend the right of Australians to live in a 'cohesive society', characterised by shared values, the English language and a 'Christian way of life […] We don't want or need migrants bringing their problems, laws, culture and opposing religious beliefs on us' (One Nation 2014i). The BNP likewise warns that 'native' (i.e. white) Britons will soon be reduced to minority status 'within our own homeland', and will lose 'our' indigenous 'culture and identity' (BNP 2005, p. 14). And members of the Minutemen, such as Greg, a retired businessman from Arizona, construct illegal immigration as 'an assault on [American] culture' (Haltinner 2013).

In what seems to be an attempt to avoid the appearance of racism, most arguments are carefully colourblind, focusing on irreconcilable cultural differences or the refusal of today's immigrants to assimilate. Government, intellectual and media elites are lambasted for promoting multiculturalism, 'multi-racialism' and the very cultural diversity that is now undermining native culture. 'Multi-racialism' is designed 'to destroy the Australian culture', One Nation asserts, by preventing migrants from 'assimilating

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into Australian society' (One Nation 2014j). One Minuteman, Rick a car salesman from the Midwest, echoes these concerns over immigrants' rejection of American life.

> [B]ack in the day people came here because they wanted to be part of America … They came here and learned the language and learned the culture, without sacrificing their own … [T]hey wanted to be part of America. People aren't coming here today because of that reason. They come here to make money to send home and they still want to be part of wherever they came from. (Haltinner 2013)

Of course, because the US and Australia are settler societies, right-wing populists in these nations must make careful distinctions between the 'good' (assimilated and largely white) immigrants of the past, and the 'bad' (disruptive, non-assimilating, largely non-white) immigrants of today. In nations without a strong settler experience, right-wing groups can take a harder line on immigration because they are less constrained by such considerations. The BNP, for instance, ratchets up the critique of multiculturalism, calling it 'anti-human and even genocidal in practice' (BNP 2005, p. 19). Nonetheless, it still grants at least limited acceptance of certain 'fully integrated' immigrants of European descent who arrived in Britain 'centuries or decades ago' (BNP 2005, pp. 17–18).

As an extension of such concerns, both the BNP and One Nation also contend that immigration and multiculturalism have led to reverse racism, institutionalised forms of discrimination against native-born citizens (BNP 2005, p. 14; One Nation 2014k). Such discrimination, the BNP charges, has made white Britons 'second-class citizens' (BNP 2005, p. 14). Likewise, the Minutemen claim that the state extends extra protections to illegal aliens who commit crimes, while denying citizen victims their right to see justice done (MCDC 2014).

Finally, the right-wing populist groups examined here suggest that immigration and multiculturalism lead to dangerous social divisions, or the 'balkanisation' of their nations. One Nation warns that Australia is becoming an 'ethnically divided nation' which urgently needs to 'promote assimilation, nationalism, loyalty and pride in being an Australian' (One Nation 2014i, 2014j). Likewise, Minuteman Dick, a retired Californian, warns that America

> … will become a bilingual, multilingual state and country … We will have … a lot more conflict with different languages going on … You are balkanizing it. Or you are creating little pockets and neither of which wants to get along with the other one … It's just going to lead to a break up … Diversity divides, it doesn't bring anybody together. (Haltinner 2013)

The BNP voices similar discomfort with diversity, however it advocates a different strategy to avoid 'genocide through integration', the adoption of a policy of ethnic separatism in which each group will 'stick to their own' (2005, p. 20). They warn that failure to maintain the cultural distinctiveness of each ethnic group will transform the world into 'an antheap of rootless coffee-coloured consumerism' (2005, p. 20). This more explicitly racialised rhetoric (evoking genocide, segregation and skin colour) would likely not be as palatable in settler societies such as the US and Australia.

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Discussion

Our discursive analysis of the immigration threat narratives constructed by these groups shows strongly overlapping themes, both in regards to interest threats and to identity threats. To summarise, immigration is said to take jobs from native-borns; increase unemployment; decrease wages; increase the cost of living; increase the burden on taxpayers; increase crime and violence; threaten health; increase vulnerability to terrorism; threaten traditional culture; and increase social divisions. In addition to the explicit immigration threats constructed by these right-wing populist groups, there is considerable overlap between the groups in their treatment of race. There is a clear tendency among the groups to simultaneously both evoke and deny race and racism.

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Evoking and Denying Racism

'Old-fashioned', biological racism is periodically evoked by the groups. The BNP, for instance, describes the 'genetically predetermined' tendency of Western Europeans towards democracy, equality, and individual freedom, and implies that migrants of non-European descent do not share this 'natural-born' trait (BNP 2005, pp. 17–18). One Nation, likewise, claims that 'muslims' (insistently not capitalised) are naturally lacking in intelligence and are more likely to be mentally and physically disabled due to '1400 years of inbreeding' (One Nation 2014g). Members of the MCDC use dehumanising metaphors such as floods, tidal waves, parasites and other animal imagery to describe immigrant populations, and often conflate legal and illegal migrants, Latin American migrants and Arab/Muslim 'terrorists' as a single homogeneous Other. While official TPP sources scrupulously avoid explicitly racist language and imagery, media outlets have documented the display of racist images and slogans at Tea Party events across the US, including portrayals of President Obama as a witchdoctor, as 'Imam Obama', as any number of animals, and as a slave owner who aims to make 'niggars' of the American taxpayer (Campo-Flores 2010, Grim and Johnson 2013). Moreover, survey research indicates that Tea Party members are significantly more likely to support restrictive immigration policies, to include 'whiteness, the ability to speak English well, and native-born status' among the most important factors in being 'fully American', and to believe that President Obama is secretly Muslim (Maxwell and Parent 2012, p. 20).

More frequently, however, these right-wing populist groups eschew explicit biological racism, and frame their arguments in race-neutral or 'colourblind' language. When the BNP emphasises the cultural incompatibility of 'indigenous' (white) British culture with the values of Muslim immigrants, it employs 'subtle racism' (Wood and Finlay 2008). When One Nation problematises the refusal of immigrants to assimilate (rather than their innate deficiencies), the party 'de-racializes' Australian discourses of exclusion (LeCouteur *et al.* 2001; Mughan and Paxton 2006; O'Doherty and Augoustinos 2008). Similarly, Evan, a Tea Party activist from Illinois, asserts that,

'People on the right are mostly colourblind. They do not evaluate a person based on the colour of their skin' (Haltinner 2013). Or, as Minuteman Rick says, 'The whole purpose of the Minuteman Civil Defense Corps is to protect our borders and the sovereignty of the United States. It doesn't matter if someone is Mexican or Guatemalan, or anything like that. It's about the safety of our people and upholding the sovereignty of the United States' (Haltinner 2013). He and his fellow members clearly see their work as operating beyond race and adhering to an ideal of 'colourblindness'.

Discourses of colourblindness suggest that racism is largely a thing of the past, and that any disparities (in health, wealth, education, incarceration, and so on) that exist today between different racial groups are due to individual choices and failings or to the cultural deficiencies of minority populations (Bonilla-Silva 2009, p. 2). This notion of colourblindness emerged alongside deepening neoliberal economic and social ideologies that emphasise universal principles of justice and individual responsibility, and discount oppressive social structures (Guinier and Torres 2002). It has become what Feagin (2010, p. 98) calls the 'white racial frame', which allows people to claim to 'not see race' while continuing to discriminate against people of colour. Despite clearly constructing (non-white) migrants as cultural and racial outsiders, the broader, societal discourse of colourblindness allows the groups discussed here to see the work they do as race-less.

Consistent with colourblind ideology, the right-wing populist groups analysed here employ a number of rhetorical strategies to distance themselves from old-fashioned racism. Appeals to factuality, often through the use of precise (though unsubstantiated) numbers – 1.64 million jobs, 40,000 deaths, 90% of illegal migrants, 70% of all disabled children in Europe – imply objectivity and thus reduce the appearance of racial bias (LeCouteur *et al.* 2001). Likewise 'consensual warranting', that is assertions based on assumed consensus ('as everybody knows', 'it's an undeniable fact', or 'they say'), inoculate claims against charges of racism by appearing to simply report what is common knowledge (Augoustinos *et al.* 1999).

Striking similarities between the narrative themes and rhetorical conventions of these four groups suggest the emergence of a transnational right-wing populist 'playbook' of sorts. Rydgren (2005) has argued that extreme right-wing parties in Europe routinely adopt and adapt rhetorical and other strategies that have proven successful in different national contexts, a process he calls 'rational imitation'. Likewise, Edwards (2012) demonstrates that, following the electoral successes of the National Front in France in the 1980s, the BNP appropriated many of the French party's successful rhetorical strategies: for instance, cloaking even the most ethno-exclusionist policies as efforts to secure the freedom, security, democracy, and ethno-cultural identity of native-born citizens. But as Rydgren points out, adoption of these successful strategies does not guarantee the electoral success or the widespread public impact of such groups. At least two other factors are crucial to success: political opportunity and media access (Rydgren 2005).

In the case of the groups considered here, political opportunities were created by the widespread embrace of neoliberal and multicultural policies by the mainstream

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political parties of the US, UK, and Australia. While it is true that neoliberalism has been associated more strongly with the political right and multiculturalism with the political left, arguably there has been at least tacit (or grudging) acceptance of these value orientations by all major parties in these three nations since the 1980s. Broad overlaps between the major parties (at least in these two policy areas) created an opening for strong dissenting groups to articulate their own defensive, ethnonationalist political vision. Despite, and perhaps because of, the glaring differences between these right-wing populist groups and mainstream political parties, most of these dissenting groups garnered substantial media attention.[6] As Guardino and Snyder (2012) demonstrated, for instance, not only right-leaning media outlets, but a wide cross-section of corporate media outlets helped to 'mainstream' the views of the Tea Party.

The Influence of Right-Wing Populism on Mainstream Politics

Finally, let us consider the impact of right-wing populism on mainstream politics. As we have shown here, while right-wing parties and movements may not achieve great electoral success, their legacy may nonetheless be significant as mainstream political parties adopt their issues, discourses and policies (Curran 2004). Observers have long measured the success of social movements based on the degree to which movement organisations succeed in achieving their stated goals. Social movements however typically have an impact beyond this limited scope (Guigni *et al.* 1999). It is therefore necessary to judge a movement's impact not only on the achievement of an organisation's stated goals, but also on the benefits it attains for its beneficiaries, the recognition and respect it gains, and the degree to which it influences changes in the dominant culture (Gamson 1975; McAdam 1994; Rochon 1998; Guigni *et al.* 1999).

While it is difficult to measure the degree to which any single party or event sways public opinion on complex issues such as immigration, evidence suggests that the right-wing organisations studied here played a role in reshaping public discourse and/or public policy in their respective nations. In Britain, for instance, with the rise of the BNP (and UKIP) in the late 1990s and early 2000s, public opposition to immigration markedly increased, as did the perception that immigration was one of the most serious problems facing the nation (Blinder 2015, pp. 2–4).[7] Likewise, almost a decade after the BNP began its campaign against the 'flood of asylum seekers' entering Britain, a 2013 survey found 84% of Britons erroneously believed that the number of people applying for asylum had increased over the last 10 years (Blinder 2015, p. 9). Security concerns in the wake of the 2005 London Underground bombings no doubt contributed to these shifts in public opinions and perceptions as well.

In Australia, five years after One Nation founder Pauline Hanson asserted that that the nation was in danger of being 'swamped by Asians', the ruling Liberal party instituted restrictive and punitive asylum policies to protect the nation from being 'swamped by asylum seekers' (Curran 2004, p. 47; O'Doherty and Augoustinos 2008). Successive governments, both conservative and left-leaning, have largely

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endorsed and further strengthened these policies, garnering expressions of concern from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (Kerin 2014). And in 2013, conservative Coalition leader Tony Abbott militarised border enforcement in an effort to thwart the arrival of 'boat people' on Australia's shores. 'Operation Sovereign Borders', as it was called, won praise from One Nation leader Jim Savage, who claimed the idea as his own (One Nation 2014m).

Likewise, in the US, the TTP have clearly shaped the master frames employed by broader right-wing organisations (see Benford and Snow 2000). This influence can be seen in the shifting political climate on the right since the movement's formation. Recent scholarship suggests that the TPP has pulled the Republican Party to the right (Bischoff and Malloy 2012), or even that the Tea Party has *become* the Republican base (Foley in Arrillaga 2012). In terms of the Tea Party's impact on broader public opinion, DiMaggio (2011) argues that news reporting on the Tea Party promoted conservative narratives regarding the national health care debate and may have decreased public support for the health care programme. Tea Party influence is also evidenced in recent political campaigns, such as Mitt Romney's 2012 presidential bid which employed 'tea party-friendly positions' (Arrillaga 2012)[8], and in the success of Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker and conservative legislators elsewhere, in kerbing the strength of unions (Greenhouse 2011). At the same time, the MCDC has helped stoke nationalist and anti-immigrant fervour, particularly in the American southwest, leading to the passage of xenophobic legislation at the state level (Murphy 2012).

In conclusion, there are remarkable similarities between the right-wing populist groups analysed here. All emerged out of a combination of neoliberal globalisation and cultural diversity. The embrace of neoliberal and multicultural policies by mainstream political parties on both the left and the right created openings for dissenting movements and parties. All of the groups analysed here also identify immigration as a threat to the prosperity, health and cultural integrity of their respective nations. And all of the groups employ similar metaphors and rhetorical devices – a right-wing populist 'playbook' – to demonise enemy Others (including liberal elites, illegal immigrants, and an unproductive welfare class), and to advance the interests of conservative, white constituencies. Furthermore, despite limited direct electoral success, these right-wing populist groups have had a substantial impact on mainstream political parties, public policies and broader social discourses in their respective nations, by nudging national conversations to the right. Further research is needed to chart the ways the emerging transnational right-wing populist 'playbook' develops over time, and the ways right-wing populist groups adopt and adapt successful strategies to reshape political discourses and practices in a variety of national contexts.

Notes

[1] Some commentators have called the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) 'Britain's Tea Party' (see Montgomerie 2014), and useful parallels can be drawn between UKIP and the TPP. For instance, both are critical of government overreach, although in quite different ways.

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While a central concern of the TPP is limiting the power of the federal government and increasing states' rights, the central concern of UKIP is limiting the influence of the European Union over British affairs. In another significant difference, while the TPP strives to limit 'big government' social welfare programmes, UKIP claims its policies would help preserve and strengthen social welfare programmes such as healthcare, childcare, and public housing for citizens, and rejects the 'back door privatization' of such services (UKIP 2015). Due, in part, to UKIP's quite singular focus on Britain's withdrawal from the EU, we have not included it in our analysis here. Nonetheless, analysis of the group's discourses on immigration is a fruitful avenue of inquiry.

[2] In the May, 2015 national election, the BNP fielded eight parliamentary candidates, none of whom garnered more than one per cent of the vote. Despite its lack of electoral success, the party proclaimed victory for quashing a predicted Labour Party win in the election. 'Even Labour insiders have confirmed that when stepped up in the last few days, the BNP's Punish Labour campaign had a devastating effect … MISSION ACCOMPLISHED!' (BNP 2015).

[3] Amidst speculation about a come-back for One Nation, Pauline Hanson narrowly lost a Queensland state legislature election bid in 2015 (*Brisbane Times* 2015).

[4] While the household wealth of whites has dropped by about 16 per cent since the foreclosure crisis, it has dropped by 53 per cent among blacks and 66 per cent among Latinos (Parker and Schwartztol 2012). Moreover, white wealth levels have rebounded more quickly. The Pew Research Center finds that white household wealth has increased 20 times more than that of blacks and 18 times that of Latinos (Taylor *et al.* 2011).

[5] There are notable differences between American right-wing populist groups, which are typically highly critical of social welfare programmes and view many recipients of such programmes as 'freeloaders', and right-wing populist groups in nations such as the UK, Australia, Italy, and Finland where right-wing populists typically seek to preserve (or even expand) social welfare programmes for citizens. In nations with stronger welfare states, right-wing populists often frame immigration as a threat to necessary and beneficial social support programmes.

[6] Even when media coverage is critical of such groups, the coverage itself helps define the groups as newsworthy. Furthermore, critical and mocking coverage reinforces the right-wing populist claim that they are victimized by arrogant liberal elites.

[7] The number of Britons who believed there were 'too many' immigrants in Britain rose from less than 60 per cent in 1999 to 70 per cent in 2007; and in 2013, 77 per cent believed that immigration should be decreased. More dramatically, the number of Britons who saw immigration as one of the nation's most important issues increased from well under 10 per cent during most of the 1990s to a peak of 46 per cent in 2007, and has continued to remain around 40 per cent.

[8] Donald Trump's embrace of far-right populist and anti-immigrant rhetoric, and his early domination of other Republican candidates in the 2016 Presidential race, further demonstrate the influence the Tea Party has exerted over the GOP.

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