

# A Schema of Right-Wing Extremism in the United States

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Over the past two years, and in the wake of deadly attacks in Charlottesville and Pittsburgh, attention paid to right-wing extremism in the United States has grown. Most of this attention focuses on racist extremism, overlooking other forms of right-wing extremism. This article presents a schema of three main forms of right-wing extremism in the United States in order to more clearly understand the landscape: racist extremism, nativist extremism, and anti-government extremism. Additionally, it describes the two primary subcategories of anti-government extremism: the patriot/militia movement and sovereign citizens. Finally, it discusses whether this schema can be applied to right-wing extremism in non-U.S. contexts.

**Key words:** right-wing extremism, racism, nativism, anti-government

## Introduction

Since the public emergence of the so-called “alt-right” in the United States—seen most dramatically at the “Unite the Right” rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, in August 2017—there has been increasing attention paid to right-wing extremism (RWE) in the United States, particularly racist right-wing extremism.<sup>1</sup> Violent incidents like Robert Bowers’ attack on the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in October 2018; the mosque shooting in Christchurch, New Zealand in March 2019; and the mass shooting at a Walmart in El Paso, Texas in August 2019 have brought still more attention to right-wing extremism.<sup>2</sup> This awareness is long overdue: according to the New America Foundation, between 12 September 2001 and 11 June 2016 (the date before the attack on the Pulse Nightclub in Orlando, Florida), right-wing extremists were responsible for more fatalities in violent attacks within the United States than were any other type of extremists; and the Anti-Defamation League reported that murders committed by extremists in 2018 “were overwhelmingly linked to right-wing extremists”.<sup>3</sup> But while this attention is welcome, the current focus on racist far-right extremism leads to overlooking (or misclassifying) other forms of RWE that also pose a threat to the safety and security of the public (for example, anti-government extremism that disavows racism).<sup>4</sup>

This article argues that there are three primary categories of right-wing extremism in the United States: racist extremism, nativist extremism, and anti-government extremism. While there are substantial overlaps between these categories, treating them as analytically distinct can help analysts, researchers, and policymakers to recognise a wider variety of right-wing extremist activity in the country.

<sup>1</sup> Dara Lind, “Unite the Right, the Violent White Supremacist Rally in Charlottesville, Explained,” *Vox*, August 12, 2017, <https://www.vox.com/2017/8/12/16138246/charlottesville-nazi-rally-right-uva>.

<sup>2</sup> Kellie B. Gormly et al., “Suspect in Pittsburgh Synagogue Shooting Charged with 29 Counts in Deaths of 11 People,” *Washington Post*, October 27, 2018, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2018/10/27/pittsburgh-police-responding-active-shooting-squirrel-hill-area/>; “New Zealand Mosque Shootings Kill 49,” *BBC News*, March 15, 2019, sec. Asia, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-47578798>; Simon Romero, Manny Fernandez, and Mariel Padilla, “Day at a Shopping Center in Texas Turns Deadly,” *The New York Times*, August 3, 2019, sec. U.S., <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/03/us/el-paso-walmart-shooting.html>

<sup>3</sup> Peter Bergen et al., “Terrorism in America After 9/11,” *New America*, accessed January 21, 2019, <https://www.newamerica.org/in-depth/terrorism-in-america/>; Wesley Lowery, Kimberly Kindy, and Andrew Ba Tran, “In the United States, Right-Wing Violence Is on the Rise,” *Washington Post*, accessed January 21, 2019, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/in-the-united-states-right-wing-violence-is-on-the-rise/2018/11/25/61f724a-deb4-11e8-85df-7a6b4d25cfbb\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/in-the-united-states-right-wing-violence-is-on-the-rise/2018/11/25/61f724a-deb4-11e8-85df-7a6b4d25cfbb_story.html); “Murder and Extremism in the United States in 2018” (Anti-Defamation League, January 2019), <https://www.adl.org/murder-and-extremism-2018>

<sup>4</sup> Sam Jackson, “Don’t Assume the Militias at the Charlottesville Rally Were White Supremacists. This Is What They Believe Now.,” *Washington Post*, September 8, 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/09/08/remember-those-militias-at-the-charlottesville-unite-the-right-rally-heres-what-they-believe/>; Leah Sottile, “Bundyville: The Remnant,” accessed August 20, 2019, <https://longreads.com/bundyville/>.

These categories do not cover every single form of right-wing extremism in the United States. There are emerging forms of extremism (such as some forms of male supremacy oriented around a return to “traditional” gender hierarchies)<sup>5</sup> and forms of single-issue RWE (like violent anti-abortion extremism) that do not fit into this schema. And, given the wide range of issues and goals that are advocated for by members of extremist groups, it can be difficult to locate any single group’s position within this schema. Rather than serving as a comprehensive and precise classification tool, this schema is meant to be a heuristic device that helps observers recognise overlooked forms of right-wing extremism in the United States and avoid mistakenly pigeonholing all right-wing extremism into the box labeled “racist”.

Other schemas of RWE have been proposed in the past, including one presented in September 2012 by Arie Perliger and elaborated in a longer report by the same author.<sup>6</sup> Like the schema outlined here, Perliger argued that there are three main categories of RWE, but he defined them somewhat differently: racist extremism (which, in Perliger’s schema, includes nativist extremism), anti-federalism extremism (quite similar to the anti-government extremism described here), and the “fundamentalist trend” of RWE (which Perliger argues includes Christian Identity extremism and anti-abortion extremism, amongst other things). Some of the differences between this schema and Perliger’s categories come down to differences in definitions (e.g. I present racist extremism and nativist extremism as two categories, whereas Perliger presents them as one), and some of the differences can be attributed to changes in the landscape of RWE (e.g. anti-abortion extremism has become less prominent over the past decade).

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<sup>5</sup> Recently, experts have documented the many links between forms of white supremacy (primarily in the form of the “alt-right”) and male supremacy. Arguably, though, some of the most prominent forms of male supremacy (such as the “incels”) are not right-wing but are best understood as their own form of extremism. Special thanks to Ashley Mattheis, Stephanie Lamy, and Brian Hughes for helpful conversations about male supremacy and the far right. Helen Lewis, “To Learn About the Far Right, Start With the ‘Manosphere,’” *The Atlantic*, August 7, 2019, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2019/08/anti-feminism-gateway-far-right/595642/>; Stephanie Russell-Kraft, “The Rise of Male Supremacist Groups,” *The New Republic*, April 4, 2018, <https://newrepublic.com/article/147744/rise-male-supremacist-groups>; Anti-Defamation League, “When Women Are the Enemy: The Intersection of Misogyny and White Supremacy,” Anti-Defamation League, accessed August 20, 2019, <https://www.adl.org/resources/reports/when-women-are-the-enemy-the-intersection-of-misogyny-and-white-supremacy>; Ashley Mattheis, “Understanding Digital Hate Culture,” *Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right* (blog), August 19, 2019, <https://www.radicalrightanalysis.com/2019/08/19/understanding-digital-hate-culture/>.

<sup>6</sup> Arie Perliger, “Identifying Three Trends in Far Right Violence in the United States,” *CTC Sentinel* 5, no. 9 (September 26, 2012), pp. 5–7; Arie Perliger, “Challengers from the Sidelines: Understanding America’s Far-Right” *Combating Terrorism Center at West Point*, November 2012, <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/challengers-from-the-sidelines-understanding-americas-violent-far-right>

It is also worth noting at the outset that all of the variations of RWE in the United States come in forms that are clearly legal, protected by First Amendment rights to free speech, free assembly and association, and even freedom of religion, as well as in forms that are clearly illegal, manifesting in a range of criminal action including premeditated violence. This article is meant to help observers recognise a more diverse range of activity that is best understood as right-wing extremism even where that activity does not violate any laws or include violence.

## Varieties of Right-Wing Extremism

Extremism is a contentious term; elsewhere, I have argued that it can be understood as activity that aims to change fundamental features of a particular political system (or the ideas that motivate such activity).<sup>7</sup> In this article, right-wing extremism refers to activity that, 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>8</sup> In other words, RWE seeks to restore a (perceived) past “golden age”.<sup>9</sup> Different forms of RWE focus on different imagined golden ages—perhaps when white men had more power; perhaps when Christianity was more dominant; perhaps when smaller government was less involved in different facets of daily life. And certainly, not all movements based in political nostalgia are extremist; rather, only movements that seek to change fundamental features of the current political system (such as separation of church and state or the involvement of the government in regulating a wide range of industries) should be understood as extremist. Though many other scholars use alternative definitions of right-wing and right-wing extremism (often centred on race and violence), this definition attempts to distill the principle that underlies the more concrete (but also more contextually specific) definitions used by others.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> This follows the definition of political extremism presented in greater detail in Sam Jackson, “Non-Normative Political Extremism: Reclaiming a Concept’s Analytical Utility,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* Vol. 31, no. 2 (2019), pp. 244–59, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2016.1212599>. For other definitions, see J.M. Berger, *Extremism* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2018); Cas Mudde, “Introduction: Political Extremism - Concepts, Theories and Democratic Responses,” in *Political Extremism*, ed. Cas Mudde, vol. 1 (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2014), xxiii–xxix; Albert Breton et al., eds., *Political Extremism and Rationality* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

<sup>8</sup> In Corey Robin’s language, RWE is “reactionary”. Robin uses that label for the right more broadly, not just for right-wing extremism. Corey Robin, *The Reactionary Mind: Conservatism from Edmund Burke to Sarah Palin* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>9</sup> Andrew R. Murphy, “Longing, Nostalgia, and Golden Age Politics: The American Jeremiad and the Power of the Past,” *Perspectives on Politics* Vol. 7, no. 01 (February 12, 2009), pp. 125–41, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592709090148>; Andrew R. Murphy, “Two American Jeremiads: Traditionalist and Progressive Stories of American Nationhood,” *Politics and Religion* Vol. 1, no. 01 (March 14, 2008), <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1755048308000059>.

<sup>10</sup> For examples of other definitions, see Kathleen M. Blee and Kimberly A. Creasap, “Conservative and Right-Wing Movements,” *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 36, no. 1 (2010), pp. 269–86,

Several examples are perhaps useful at this point. White supremacy is a form of RWE in that it seeks to change the American political system to explicitly consider racial identity in a way that it currently doesn't. Though it is certainly true that racism is endemic in American politics, white supremacists aim to make that form of bigotry more central and explicit. Black nationalism is not a form of RWE in the United States as it does not seek to restore a golden age when black Americans held more power. Likewise, Islamist extremism in the U.S. is not RWE, as it does not seek to restore a (perceived) previous state where political Islam was dominant; Islamist extremism in other contexts (perhaps Turkey, Iran, or Egypt) meets the definition of RWE here to the extent that such extremists want to restore a historical position of political power for Islam.<sup>11</sup> Given the current political context in the United States where the government does not (officially and explicitly) favour any religion over any other religion (or non-religion), Christian theocrats meet the definition of RWE as they seek to restore a (perceived) golden age in which Christianity held political authority in a much more explicit manner.<sup>12</sup>

The definition of extremism used here is not without controversy. Other definitions (particular those that focus on violence or opposition to democratic values) are more concrete and make it easier to identify extremists; however, these definitions have their limitations as well. Those focused on violence obscure the importance of forms of extremism that are not violent and do not call for (proactive) violence but (perhaps unintentionally) build the justification for violence. Those focused on opposition to democratic values obscure forms of political opposition present in non-democracies.<sup>13</sup> The definition of extremism employed in this article is meant to foster comparisons (including less common comparisons) that can provide additional insight into specific instances of extremism. Likewise, the definition of right-wing extremism used here is meant to facilitate deeper understanding of various forms of activity and thought. The category is useful to the extent

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<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.012809.102602>; Martin Durham, *The Christian Right: The Far Right and the Boundaries of American Conservatism* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2000), xii–xiii.

<sup>11</sup> My thanks to several readers for pushing me to think about whether Islamist extremism meets the definition of RWE here.

<sup>12</sup> The degree to which Christianity had political power at earlier points in America's history is a subject of never-ending debate. For this definition, whether the past state that extremists wish to restore actually existed is not important; what matters instead is that the extremists *believe* that past state existed and wish to see the current political conditions (as they understand them) revert back to their imagined golden age.

<sup>13</sup> I explain my approach to defining extremism much more in Jackson, "Non-Normative Political Extremism" particularly 253–256.

that it serves that purpose; it is not intended to be a definitive tool for precisely identifying RWE.

This article focuses on forms of RWE that primarily manifest at the political level rather than the interpersonal level. For example, while some forms of misogyny use violence to pursue a goal of reestablishing “traditional” gender norms and power structures, these forms of extremism often operate at the interpersonal level, with individual extremists targeting other individuals to seek changes in their personal lives or the lives of their friends or comrades. Instead, the forms of extremism under discussion here primarily aim to change society or politics at large. As noted above, these changes may be pursued through legal routes, but they also may be pursued through illegal means. Often, right-wing extremists walk a careful line of legality: for example, not calling for (illegal) proactive violence, but instead calling for (often legal) defensive violence and undertaking activity that is likely to lead to a situation where defensive violence is more likely (as was the case during the Bundy Ranch standoff in 2014, where armed protestors planned for a shootout with federal law enforcement but anticipated that law enforcement would fire the first shot).<sup>14</sup>

## Racist extremism

The form of RWE that receives the most attention is racist extremism. More precisely, this form of extremism is explicitly organised around perceptions of racial identity. The classic examples of RWE—the so-called “alt-right”,<sup>15</sup> the KKK, and neo-Nazis—fall into this category: they organise in defense of a particular understanding of “whiteness” that they believe to be threatened by other racial groups or by multiculturalism and pro-diversity initiatives.<sup>16</sup> Race here is a constructed identity: that is, its definition is based on perceptions and negotiations, it may shift over time, and different understandings of a single racial identity may exist at

<sup>14</sup> Jaime Fuller, “The Long Fight between the Bundys and the Federal Government, from 1989 to Today,” *The Washington Post*, January 4, 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2014/04/15/everything-you-need-to-know-about-the-long-fight-between-cliven-bundy-and-the-federal-government/>.

<sup>15</sup> The “alt-right” has come to refer to a new racist movement that has endeavored to clean up the reputation of white supremacy in the United States. Most famously, self-described members of the alt-right movement gathered in Charlottesville, Virginia, on August 11-12, 2017, where they marched through the streets, chanted racist slogans, and brawled with counter-demonstrators. George Hawley, *Making Sense of the Alt-Right* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017); Lind, “Unite the Right, the Violent White Supremacist Rally in Charlottesville, Explained”; John Daniszewski, “Writing about the ‘Alt-Right,’” AP Definitive Source, November 28, 2016, <https://blog.ap.org/behind-the-news/writing-about-the-alt-right>.

<sup>16</sup> James Aho, *The Politics of Righteousness: Idaho Christian Patriotism* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1990); Michael Barkun, *Religion and the Racist Right: The Origins of the Christian Identity Movement*, Rev. ed (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Kathleen M. Blee, *Inside Organized Racism: Women in the Hate Movement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Martin Durham, *White Rage: The Extreme Right and American Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2007); Hawley, *Making Sense of the Alt-Right*; Leonard Zeskind, *Blood and Politics: The History of the White Nationalist Movement from the Margins to the Mainstream* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 2009); Perlinger, “Identifying Three Trends in Far Right Violence in the United States.”

the same time. For example, white supremacists throughout American history have disagreed about whether Jews are “white”.<sup>17</sup> Thus, the racial enemies identified by racist RWE have varied over time and across different actors.

## Nativist extremism

A closely related form of RWE is nativist extremism.<sup>18</sup> This form of extremism is organised around a reaction against people, organisations, and ideas that are considered foreign. Understandings of what makes something “native” or “foreign” are quite diverse and are often not made explicit, but they center around a sense that “foreign” people, organisations, and ideas are in conflict with that which is native. Ultimately, nativists believe that which is foreign seeks to replace that which is native. Some of the most common themes among nativist RWE movements are opposition to immigration or a subset of immigrants; non-Christian (or non-“Judeo-Christian”) religions, particularly Islam; and political systems that are seen as incompatible with capitalism and democracy, particularly communism. Nativist RWE can be seen in the John Birch Society (most active in the 1960s, though it still exists today), anti-Islam groups (like the contemporary ACT for America), and civilian paramilitary groups (like Arizona Border Recon) that patrol the U.S.-Mexico border with the self-professed goal of deterring illegal immigration—examples that again point out that RWE activity is often constitutionally-protected in the United States.<sup>19</sup>

## Anti-government extremism

The final primary category of RWE in the United States is anti-government extremism.<sup>20</sup> This form of extremism manifests in several different sets of ideas, but the core principle is that the federal government (along with state governments in some cases) is illegitimate and must be resisted by any means necessary.<sup>21</sup> Anti-government extremism contains two main

<sup>17</sup> Kathleen M. Blee and Elizabeth A. Yates, “The Place of Race in Conservative and Far-Right Movements,” *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* Vol. 1, no. 1 (January 2015), p. 131, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2332649214555031>.

<sup>18</sup> David H. Bennett, *The Party of Fear: From Nativist Movements to the New Right in American History*, 2nd ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1995).

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 315–21; Jackson, “Non-Normative Political Extremism,” 9–10; Bill Morlin, “ACT’s Anti-Muslim Message Fertile Ground for Oath Keepers,” Southern Poverty Law Center, June 12, 2017,

<https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2017/06/12/act%E2%80%99s-anti-muslim-message-fertile-ground-oath-keepers>; Harel Shapira, *Waiting for José: The Minutemen’s Pursuit of America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013).

<sup>20</sup> “Antigovernment Movement,” Southern Poverty Law Center, accessed May 24, 2019, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/ideology/antigovernment>;

“Defining Extremism: A Glossary of Anti-Government Extremist Terms, Movements and Philosophies,” Anti-Defamation League, accessed May 24, 2019, <https://www.adl.org/education/resources/glossary-terms/defining-extremism-anti-government>.

<sup>21</sup> Anti-government extremism comes in a range of perspectives, from those that anticipate that the government (perhaps the federal government, perhaps a state government) might one day descend into tyranny to those that view the government now as tyrannical to an extent that demands violent resistance. Michael Barkun, “Violence in the Name of Democracy:

subcategories: sovereign citizens and the patriot/militia movement. Sovereign citizens believe that, as sovereign individuals, they are not bound by the authority of any government.<sup>22</sup> They often use various arcane legal theories to justify this belief: that the Articles of Confederation are still the basis of authority for the federal government, rather than the Constitution; that the Fourteenth Amendment (which guarantees citizenship to all individuals “born or naturalized in the United States”) created an artificial second-class form of citizenship that individuals can opt out of; that filing certain legal documents using very specific language can allow individuals to be free from the jurisdiction of all laws, including requirements for driver’s licenses, state and federal income taxes, and a litany of other laws that allegedly violate the sovereignty of individuals.<sup>23</sup> In 2014, researchers affiliated with the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) surveyed law enforcement officers from across the country, asking whether officers viewed different types of extremists as a “serious terrorist threat”; their results revealed a belief that sovereign citizens pose a greater threat than “Islamic Extremists/Jihadists”, neo-Nazis, or any other category of extremist actor.<sup>24</sup>

The second subcategory of anti-government extremism is the patriot/militia movement. Others refer to this set of ideas and actors as the patriot movement, the militia movement, or the constitutional militia movement; those in the movement also refer to it as the liberty movement or the freedom movement.<sup>25</sup> This movement is motivated by a perception that

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Justifications for Separatism on the Radical Right,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 12, no. 3–4 (2000): 193–208; Mark Pitcavage, “Camouflage and Conspiracy: The Militia Movement From Ruby Ridge to Y2K,” *American Behavioral Scientist* 44, no. 6 (February 1, 2001): 957–81, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00027640121956610>; Michael Barkun, “Purifying the Law: The Legal World of ‘Christian Patriots,’” *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* 1, no. 1 (April 1, 2007): 57–70; Michael Barkun, “Appropriated Martyrs: The Branch Davidians and the Radical Right,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 19, no. 1 (January 2007): 117–24, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546550601054956>; D. J. Mulloy, *American Extremism: History, Politics and the Militia Movement* (New York: Routledge, 2004); Sam Jackson, “Nullification through Armed Civil Disobedience: A Case Study of Strategic Framing in the Patriot/Militia Movement,” *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict*, February 2019, 90–109, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17467586.2018.1563904>.

<sup>22</sup> Matthew Sweeney, “What Is the Sovereign Citizen Movement, What Do They Believe and How Are They Spreading?,” *Radicalisation Research*, June 19, 2018, <https://www.radicalisationresearch.org/guides/sweeney-sovereign-citizen-movement/>; J.M. Berger, “Without Prejudice: What Sovereign Citizens Believe” (GW Program on Extremism, June 2016), <https://extremism.gwu.edu/sites/extremism.gwu.edu/files/downloads/JMB%20Sovereign%20Citizens.pdf>.

<sup>23</sup> Anti-Defamation League, “The Sovereign Citizen Movement,” 2016, <https://www.adl.org/education/resources/reports/the-sovereign-citizen-movement>; Barkun, “Purifying the Law”; Berger, “Without Prejudice: What Sovereign Citizens Believe”;

<sup>24</sup> “U.S. Constitution Amendment XIV” (1868), <https://www.law.cornell.edu/constitution/amendmentxiv>.

<sup>25</sup> Jessica Rivinius, “Sovereign Citizen Movement Perceived as Top Terrorist Threat,” *START*, July 30, 2014, <https://www.start.umd.edu/news/sovereign-citizen-movement-perceived-top-terrorist-threat>; David Carter et al., “Understanding Law Enforcement Intelligence Processes,” Report to the Office of University Programs, Science and Technology Directorate, U.S. Department of Homeland Security (College Park, MD: START, 2014), 7, [https://www.start.umd.edu/pubs/START\\_UnderstandingLawEnforcementIntelligenceProcesses\\_July2014.pdf](https://www.start.umd.edu/pubs/START_UnderstandingLawEnforcementIntelligenceProcesses_July2014.pdf).

<sup>26</sup> Nella Van Dyke and Sarah A. Soule, “Structural Social Change and the Mobilizing Effect of Threat: Explaining Levels of Patriot and Militia Organizing in the United States,” *Social Problems*, Vol. 49, no. 4 (2002), pp. 497–520, <https://doi.org/10.1525/sp.2002.49.4.497>; J.M. Berger, “PATCON: The FBI’s Secret War Against the ‘Patriot’ Movement, and How Infiltration Tactics Relate to Radicalizing Influences” (New America Foundation, May 2012); Steven M. Chermak, *Searching for a Demon: The Media Construction of the Militia Movement* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2002); Robert H. Churchill, *To Shake Their Guns in the Tyrant’s Face: Libertarian Political Violence and the Origins of the Militia Movement* (Ann



the federal government poses the greatest threat to the life, liberty, and happiness of Americans, along with a belief that all true Americans should be preparing themselves for an eventual conflict with the government by learning paramilitary skills; becoming self-sufficient in terms of basic needs like nutrition, medicine, and energy; and finding like-minded neighbors with whom they can stand against any tyrannical force that comes knocking. Supporters of this movement regularly argue that the United States has forsaken the political system created by the Founders and that many of the nation’s problems could be solved by returning to that system.<sup>26</sup>

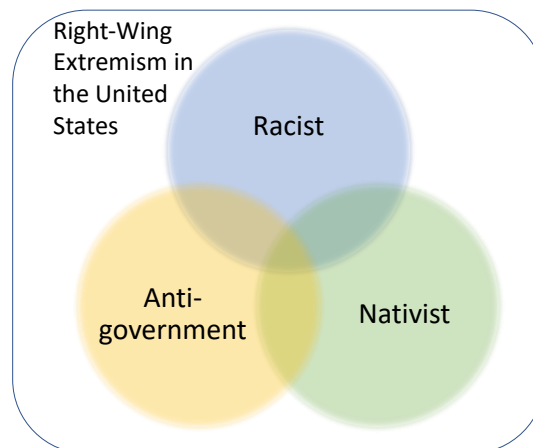


Figure 1

*This figure illustrates the overlap between the different categories of RWE, and it also illustrates that the boundaries of each category are blurry (which can make it hard to determine whether certain cases belong to each category).*

## Blurred Lines

The schema as presented above is relatively neat, but there is substantial overlap between the different categories of right-wing extremism that complicate this depiction (see Figure 1). In fact, it could be argued that nativist extremism and racist extremism are better understood as two subtypes of xenophobic extremism, rather than as discrete primary categories. Indeed, both of these categories operate on the basis of separating insiders from outsiders. Perhaps the primary difference between racist RWE and nativist RWE lies in whether the extremists think that outsiders can “convert” to insider status: in many (though

Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009); Department of Homeland Security, “Domestic Extremism Lexicon,” March 26, 2009; Mulloy, *American Extremism*; Mark Potok, “The Year in Hate and Extremism,” Southern Poverty Law Center, February 15, 2017, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2017/year-hate-and-extremism>.  
<sup>26</sup> Sam Jackson, “‘We Are Patriots’: Uses of National History in Legitimizing Extremism,” *Europe Now*, October 2, 2018, <https://www.europenowjournal.org/2018/10/01/we-are-patriots-uses-of-national-history-in-legitimizing-extremism/>.

not all) forms of nativism, outsiders can reject that which makes them outsiders, adopting the characteristics that would make them insiders.<sup>27</sup>

Consider, for example, extremist understandings of Muslim identity.<sup>28</sup> Some right-wing extremists adopt a seemingly biological understanding of Muslim identity, positing that no Muslim person can ever leave behind their Muslim identity. This understanding leaves no room for a person deemed to be Muslim to ever be recognised as non-Muslim. Other right-wing extremists understand Muslim identity as primarily religious, arguing that the Muslim faith is incompatible with “American values”.<sup>29</sup> This understanding allows Muslim individuals to convert out of this identity that is viewed as problematic, if these individuals reject Islam in a way that those who perceive them as Muslim find credible (for example, see the case of Ayaan Hirsi Ali).<sup>30</sup>

This conceptual overlap between racist and nativist RWE can complicate attempts to precisely place particular actors and incidents. A prime example of this is Robert Bowers, the man who attacked the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh in October 2018. It is clear that Bowers was “motivated by hatred of Jews and immigrants”.<sup>31</sup> Based on his posts on Gab—a social media site that has become a haven for various forms of right-wing extremism, including racist and nativist extremism—it seems that Bowers believed Jews and immigrants were a threat to white people, suggesting his understanding of these categories was inherently racial (and thus fixed); but it is possible that he understood them as non-racial forms of identity that—in principle—are changeable.<sup>32</sup>

That boundaries between racist and nativist forms of extremism are blurred is fairly intuitive; it is logical that different forms of drawing distinctions between who belongs and

<sup>27</sup> Berger, *Extremism*, 30–33.

<sup>28</sup> For a longer discussion of the ideas in this paragraph, see the introduction to Fernando Bravo López, “Towards a Definition of Islamophobia: Approximations of the Early Twentieth Century,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 34, no. 4 (April 2011): 556–73, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2010.528440>.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Tunku Varadarajan, “Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Islam’s Most Eloquent Apostate,” *Wall Street Journal*, April 7, 2017, sec. Opinion, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/ayaan-hirsi-ali-islams-most-eloquent-apostate-1491590469>.

<sup>31</sup> Paula Reed Ward, Rich Lord, and Liz Navratil, “Dozens of Federal, State Charges Filed against Shooting Suspect Robert Bowers,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, October 27, 2018, <https://www.post-gazette.com/news/crime-courts/2018/10/27/squirrel-hill-synagogue-shooting-suspect-pittsburgh-mass-officers-victims-casualties/stories/201810270072>.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.; Rich Lord, Christopher Huffaker, and Liz Navratil, “A High School Dropout and Trucker, Robert Bowers Left Few Footprints — except Online,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, October 29, 2018, <https://www.post-gazette.com/news/crime-courts/2018/10/29/Robert-Bowers-suspect-gunman-Pittsburgh-Tree-of-Life-synagogue-massacre-attack-federal-court/stories/201810290090>; Emma Grey Ellis, “Gab, the Alt-Right’s Very Own Twitter, Is The Ultimate Filter Bubble,” *WIRED*, September 14, 2016, <https://www.wired.com/2016/09/gab-alt-rights-twitter-ultimate-filter-bubble/>.

who does not would manifest in similar ways. If one takes their ideas seriously, overlap between anti-government extremism on the one hand and nativist or racist extremism on the other hand is more surprising. But overlap between these categories does exist, and it is born out of the history of ideas that animate anti-government extremism, some of which were developed by racist and nativist actors.<sup>33</sup>

The foremost example of this is the Posse Comitatus movement—not to be confused with the Posse Comitatus Act that places restrictions on the use of federal military personnel within the United States.<sup>34</sup> Posse Comitatus (Latin for “power of the county”) emerged in the 1970s, with William Potter Gale—a prominent member of the antisemitic Christian Identity religion—playing a critical role in developing and spreading the movement’s ideas. Its supporters believed that the county is the most powerful level of government in the United States, and that “the only valid law enforcing power was the sheriff’s posse”.<sup>35</sup> The movement adopted a number of uncommon political theories. For example, Gale argued that the Articles of Confederation were still in force and that, because of the provisions of that document, a federal income tax and the IRS itself were unconstitutional.<sup>36</sup>

As noted above, Gale did not only advocate for this idea of county supremacy focused on sheriffs. He was also a minister with Christian Identity—a virulently racist and antisemitic form of Christianity—and asserted that Jews were literal descendants of Satan.<sup>37</sup> Members of the Posse Comitatus movement promoted a conspiracy theory that “Jews, Catholics, [and] blacks” were partially responsible for an economic crisis that devastated Midwest farmers in the 1980s.<sup>38</sup>

Today, many of the ideas previously articulated by Posse Comitatus adherents are promoted by anti-government extremists (though often without the explicit racism), and some scholars even directly argue that certain incarnations of anti-government extremism directly

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<sup>33</sup> Jackson, “Don’t Assume the Militias at the Charlottesville Rally Were White Supremacists. This Is What They Believe Now.”; Mulloy, *American Extremism*, 6–9.

<sup>34</sup> Eric V. Larson and John E. Peters, “Appendix D: Overview of the Posse Comitatus Act,” in *Preparing the U.S. Army for Homeland Security: Concepts, Issues, and Options* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2001), [https://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph\\_reports/MR1251.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/MR1251.html).

<sup>35</sup> Barkun, “Purifying the Law,” 62; Barkun, “Violence in the Name of Democracy.” I discuss this set of ideas that Barkun calls “radical localism” in Jackson, “Non-Normative Political Extremism,” 251–52.

<sup>36</sup> Barkun, *Religion and the Racist Right*, 69, 207; Churchill, *To Shake Their Guns in the Tyrant’s Face*, 178–80.

<sup>37</sup> Barkun, *Religion and the Racist Right*, 66–68, 180–82; Barkun, “Purifying the Law,” 65.

<sup>38</sup> Bennett, *The Party of Fear*, 353–54.

developed out of Posse.<sup>39</sup> For example, the contemporary Constitutional Sheriffs and Peace Officers Association (CSPOA) argues that “the county sheriff is the one who can say to the feds, ‘Beyond these bounds you shall not pass.’ This is not only within the scope of the sheriff’s authority; it’s the sheriff’s sworn duty”.<sup>40</sup> The organisation emphasises “State Sovereignty and local autonomy”.<sup>41</sup> These ideas are framed as a defence of individual liberty against tyranny; in practice, CSPOA and others who make similar arguments have encouraged county sheriffs to issue ultimatums to IRS officials and U.S. Marshals, suggesting that they should threaten to use their powers of arrest to prevent the enforcement of federal laws and court orders that CSPOA members view as violating the Constitution.<sup>42</sup> Despite the ideas it shares with Posse Comitatus, CSPOA does not organise around a perceived racial identity and the organisation is not antisemitic. These ideas of radical localism are prevalent within the patriot/militia movement with or without the racism that was baked into the original formulations of radical localism.<sup>43</sup>

In addition to inheriting core ideas from explicitly racist predecessors, anti-government extremists of various flavors engage in activity that suggests affinity with contemporary racist extremists. For example, throughout 2016 and 2017, members of anti-government militia groups acted as de facto security for the so-called “alt-right”.<sup>44</sup> These militia members stressed that they undertook their “security operations” to defend the rights of white supremacists to peaceably assemble and to express their constitutionally protected political beliefs but not in support of those political beliefs; notably, though, they have not undertaken similar activity to protect the First Amendment rights of those widely

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<sup>39</sup> Pitcavage, “Camouflage and Conspiracy: The Militia Movement From Ruby Ridge to Y2K,” pp.959–60; Robert L. Tsai, “The Troubling Sheriffs’ Movement That Joe Arpaio Supports,” *POLITICO Magazine*, September 1, 2017, <http://politi.co/zer3E3M>; Churchill, *To Shake Their Guns in the Tyrant’s Face*, pp.178–80.

<sup>40</sup> CSPOA, “About,” CSPOA - Constitutional Sheriffs and Peace Officers Association, accessed July 28, 2015, <http://cspoa.org/about/>; CSPOA, “Our Leadership,” CSPOA - Constitutional Sheriffs and Peace Officers Association, accessed November 22, 2017, <http://cspoa.org/about/our-leadership/>.

<sup>41</sup> Capitalization in original. CSPOA, “The Sheriff,” CSPOA - Constitutional Sheriffs and Peace Officers Association, accessed July 28, 2015, <http://cspoa.org/about/sheriff-mack/>.

<sup>42</sup> Tom Jackman, “National Sheriffs’ Group, Opposed to Federal Laws on Guns and Taxes, Calls for Defiance,” *Washington Post*, April 28, 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/true-crime/wp/2016/04/28/national-group-of-sheriffs-opposed-to-federal-government-overreach-gains-size-momentum/>; Oath Keepers National, *Oath Keepers Offer of Protection for Embattled Clerk Kim Davis*, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x2Z5e13hZzw>; Ashley Powers, “The Renegade Sheriffs,” *The New Yorker*, April 23, 2018, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/04/30/the-renegade-sheriffs>; Tsai, “The Troubling Sheriffs’ Movement That Joe Arpaio Supports.”

<sup>43</sup> The arcane legal theorizing of Posse Comitatus also has a direct descendant in the sovereign citizen movement, as described above. Jackson, “Non-Normative Political Extremism”; Michael Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy: Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America*, Second Edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), pp. 196–98; Berger, “Without Prejudice: What Sovereign Citizens Believe”; Sweeney, “What Is the Sovereign Citizen Movement, What Do They Believe and How Are They Spreading?”

<sup>44</sup> Casey Michel, “How Militias Became the Private Police for White Supremacists,” *POLITICO Magazine*, August 17, 2017, <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/08/17/white-supremacists-militias-private-police-215498>; Jackson, “Don’t Assume the Militias at the Charlottesville Rally Were White Supremacists. This Is What They Believe Now.”

understood as left-leaning or liberal (such as antifascists, who are depicted by many in the patriot/militia movement as one of the most pressing threats to America and Americans today).

The contemporary overlap between nativist extremism and anti-government extremism is even more pronounced. Much of the patriot/militia movement, for example, is anti-Islam or anti-immigrant (though these individuals more commonly say they are anti-*radical*-Islam or anti-*illegal*-immigrant).<sup>45</sup> For example, the Oath Keepers—one of the most prominent groups in the patriot/militia movement—has supported paramilitary action on the U.S.-Mexico border to stop what they describe as an “invasion” of “illegals”.<sup>46</sup> Sometimes, these two forms of nativist bigotry combine, as in the case of a group of militia members in Kansas who plotted to bomb a mosque and apartment community that had a number of residents who were Somali immigrants.<sup>47</sup> One of the plotters, Patrick Stein, admitted to describing Muslims as “cockroaches”.<sup>48</sup> During a trial that ended with their conviction, prosecutors argued that the men had considered a number of targets before deciding on the mosque and apartments, with the common feature of the potential targets being the support of immigrants.<sup>49</sup>

The overlap between different types of RWE in this schema is not limited to the primary categories. The two subcategories of anti-government extremism (the patriot/militia movement and the sovereign citizen movement) also overlap with each other substantially. A prominent example is Ryan Bundy who, along with his brother Ammon, was a leader of the occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in southeast Oregon in early 2016.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Jackson, “Don’t Assume the Militias at the Charlottesville Rally Were White Supremacists. This Is What They Believe Now.”; Jennifer Williams, “The Oath Keepers, the Far-Right Group Answering Trump’s Call to Watch the Polls, Explained,” *Vox*, November 7, 2016, <http://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2016/11/7/13489640/oath-keepers-donald-trump-voter-fraud-intimidation-rigged>; Shapira, *Waiting for José*.

<sup>46</sup> OathKeepers.org, “Oath Keepers Call to Action: Border Operation,” Oath Keepers, December 4, 2018, <https://oathkeepers.org/2018/12/oath-keepers-call-to-action-border-operation/>.

<sup>47</sup> Roxana Hegeman, “Militia Member Sentenced to 25 Years in Kansas Bomb Plot,” *US News & World Report*, January 25, 2019, <https://www.usnews.com/news/us/articles/2019-01-25/3-militia-members-face-sentencing-in-kansas-bomb-plot>.

<sup>48</sup> Referring to individuals as animals (particularly animals that are deemed unclean or pests) has long been a practice associated with racism. The use of this language here seems to imply that Stein has a racial understanding of Muslim identity, but this alone does not provide decisive evidence about whether his anti-Muslim bigotry is best understood as racism or nativism. On dehumanizing language, see, for example, Susan Benesch et al., “Dangerous Speech: A Practical Guide,” *Dangerous Speech Project*, December 31, 2018, <https://dangerousspeech.org/guide/>.

<sup>49</sup> Mitch Smith, “Kansas Trio Convicted in Plot to Bomb Somali Immigrants,” *The New York Times*, September 10, 2018, sec. U.S., <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/10/us/kansas-militia-somali-trial-verdict.html>.

<sup>50</sup> Rebecca Hersher, “It Was Time To Make A Hard Stand; Closing Arguments Completed In Malheur Trial,” *NPR.org*, October 19, 2016, <http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2016/10/19/498526768/it-was-time-to-make-a-hard-stand-closing-arguments-underway-in-malheur-trial>; Associated Press, “Protesters Led by Cliven Bundy’s Son Occupy a Building at Oregon Wildlife Refuge,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 2, 2016, <http://www.latimes.com/nation/nationnow/la-na-nn-oregon-ranchers-protest-20160102-story.html>. The Bundy family first gained prominence in 2014 during the Bundy Ranch standoff in Bunkerville, Nevada, when the Cliven Bundy (father of Ryan, Ammon, and 12 other children) refused to comply with court

The occupiers argued that the federal government had no authority to control the wildlife refuge, and they claimed that they were rightfully returning the land on which the refuge sat to local control; this argument was based on a reading of the Constitution that was widely deemed incorrect.<sup>51</sup> The occupation fit into a larger narrative common in the patriot/militia movement that the federal government was deliberately making it impossible for Americans in rural western communities to make a living, primarily through government ownership of large portions of the land and through environmental regulations.<sup>52</sup>

Eventually, law enforcement arrested many of the occupiers.<sup>53</sup> Ryan Bundy, along with his brother Ammon, was part of the first group to face trial for their role in the occupation. Throughout the trial, Ryan submitted legal filings littered with sovereign citizen rhetoric: for example, he declared himself “incompetent” and an “idiot”—allegedly technical terms that exempted him from federal law. He also asserted that he was a “man” rather than a “person” or a “human being”—again, referencing sovereign citizen theories that “personhood” is a fictitious legal category, that individuals can declare themselves to not be persons, and that doing so exempts them from the jurisdiction of federal law. Finally, he declared that, though he was under no obligation to participate in the trial, he would be willing to participate if paid \$1 million for his time.<sup>54</sup>

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orders to remove his cattle from federal land. Hundreds of Americans—many heavily armed—travelled to Nevada to support the Bundys, and the BLM decided to cease their action out of concern for the safety of their employees. On the Bundy Ranch standoff, see AP, “Cliven Bundy: ‘The Citizens of America’ Got My Cattle Back in Nevada,” April 13, 2014, <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/nevada-rancher-cliven-bundy-the-citizens-of-america-got-my-cattle-back/>; Ryan Lenz and Mark Potok, “War in the West: The Bundy Ranch Standoff and the American Radical Right” (Southern Poverty Law Center, July 2014); Ken Ritter, “Nevada Rancher Remains Resolute One Year after Standoff,” *The Portland Press Herald*, April 12, 2015, <http://www.pressherald.com/2015/04/12/nevada-rancher-remains-resolute-one-year-after-standoff/>; Grace Wyler, “The Bundy Ranch Standoff Was Only the Beginning for America’s Right-Wing Militias,” *Vice*, April 16, 2014, [https://www.vice.com/en\\_us/article/dpwykw/an-armed-standoff-in-nevada-is-only-the-beginning-for-americas-right-wing-militias](https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/dpwykw/an-armed-standoff-in-nevada-is-only-the-beginning-for-americas-right-wing-militias).

<sup>51</sup> Michael C. Blumm and Olivier Jamin, “The Property Clause and Its Discontents: Lessons from the Malheur Occupation,” *Ecology Law Quarterly* 43 (2016): 781.

<sup>52</sup> Sam Jackson, “Conspiracy Theories in the Patriot/Militia Movement” (GW Program on Extremism, May 2017), p.9, <https://cchs.gwu.edu/sites/cchs.gwu.edu/files/downloads/Jackson%20C%20Conspiracy%20Theories%20Final.pdf>. For an example of this argument, see OathKeepers.org, “Wilderness Corridors: Agenda 21 Under A New Name,” *Oath Keepers* (blog), July 7, 2015, <https://www.oathkeepers.org/wilderness-corridors-agenda-21-under-a-new-name/>.

<sup>53</sup> Carissa Wolf, Mark Berman, and Kevin Sullivan, “Oregon Wildlife Refuge Standoff Ends as Last Four Occupiers Surrender to FBI,” *Washington Post*, February 11, 2016, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/oregon-wildlife-refuge-stand-off-ends-as-last-four-occupiers-surrender-to-fbi/2016/02/11/eb330550-c782-11e5-8965-0607e0e265ce\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/oregon-wildlife-refuge-stand-off-ends-as-last-four-occupiers-surrender-to-fbi/2016/02/11/eb330550-c782-11e5-8965-0607e0e265ce_story.html).

<sup>54</sup> Ryan Haas, “Ryan Bundy Declares Himself ‘Idiot’ Not Subject To US Courts,” Oregon Public Radio, July 28, 2016, <https://www.opb.org/news/series/burns-oregon-standoff-bundy-militia-news-updates/ryan-bundy-incompetent-subject-federal-law/>. For more on the overlap between the Malheur Occupation and the sovereign citizen movement, see Berger, “Without Prejudice: What Sovereign Citizens Believe,” p. 11.

## The International Applicability of the Schema

This article has presented a schema for understanding varieties of right-wing extremism in the United States. But to what extent is this schema helpful in making sense of RWE around the world?

For decades, observers have pointed out that various forms of RWE are global phenomena. Ingo Hasselbach, a former neo-Nazi in East Germany, wrote in 1995 that his movement relied on literature from American neo-Nazi groups.<sup>55</sup> PEGIDA, a contemporary network of right-wing extremists motivated by a perception that Muslims threaten “the West”, has grown from its roots in Germany to form branches throughout Europe and North America.<sup>56</sup> Richard Spencer, one of the most prominent figures in the so-called “alt-right” in the United States, had planned to speak to audiences throughout Europe before he was denied permission to enter Europe’s Schengen Zone for five years in 2017.<sup>57</sup>

Certainly, the international nature of racist and nativist forms of RWE reveals that these two categories are broadly applicable outside of the United States. In some cases, the features of the racist and nativist ideas vary; it would be odd indeed if nativist extremism in the United Kingdom, for example, treated an American identity as the native identity to be defended. But as the example of Ingo Hasselbach demonstrates, there are sometimes explicit connections between groups in the United States and in other countries. Whether there are direct ties between groups in different countries or different groups simply share some common ideas, the categories of racism and nativism can be useful in making sense of RWE around the world.

The usefulness of anti-government extremism as a category in non-U.S. contexts is less straightforward. Many forms of anti-government extremism are closely wed to specific details of American history and politics. The patriot/militia movement often argues that the nation’s founders created an ideal political community that politicians and other enemies of

<sup>55</sup> Ingo Hasselbach, “Extremism: A Global Network,” *New York Times*, April 26, 1995, sec. OP ED.

<sup>56</sup> “Pegida Meets with European Allies in the Czech Republic,” DW.COM, January 23, 2016, <https://www.dw.com/en/pegida-meets-with-european-allies-in-the-czech-republic/a-19000895>; Lars Erik Berntzen and Manès Weisskircher, “Anti-Islamic PEGIDA Beyond Germany: Explaining Differences in Mobilisation,” *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 37, no. 6 (November 2016), pp. 556–73, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07256868.2016.1235021>.

<sup>57</sup> Harriet Alexander, “American White Nationalist Richard Spencer Banned from 26 European Countries,” *The Telegraph*, November 23, 2017, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/11/23/american-white-nationalist-richard-spencer-banned-26-european/>.

the United States have subverted over the years.<sup>58</sup> Sovereign citizens build pseudo-legal theories based on idiosyncratic interpretations of American legal texts.<sup>59</sup>

Yet these forms of RWE too have begun to develop in other countries around the world. Some of these developments share many features in common with related forms of anti-government extremism in the United States but develop ideas based on their own political context. For example, sovereign-citizen-like movements have emerged in Canada (Freemen on the Land), Germany (Reichsbürgers), and the United Kingdom (Lawful Rebellion), typically based on idiosyncratic interpretations of legal documents and political history specific to each country.<sup>60</sup>

Bizarrely enough, distinctly American forms of anti-government extremism have appeared in other countries as well. The Three Percenters movement (often referred to as III% or “Threepers”) presents an interesting example of the global spread of inherently American forms of RWE. The movement—one of the main factions of the larger patriot/militia movement—is a loose coalition of individuals who believe that Americans today must be just as ready to resist tyranny as those who resisted the British and founded the nation in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The name comes from the (unconfirmed) notion that only three percent of the residents of the British colonies in North America took up arms against the British in the American War of Independence. Those in the movement believe that if three percent of Americans today are willing to fight for their rights, tyranny can be defeated again.<sup>61</sup> In the years after the war, Canada became a home to residents of the former colonies who remained loyal to Great Britain. Despite this history, the distinctly American Three Percenters movement has appeared in Canada in recent years.<sup>62</sup> As this example shows, some instances of RWE seem to defy the details of their context, adopting identities and ideas that are depicted as being a historical ideal that should be restored despite being out of place with the relevant national history.

<sup>58</sup> Mulloy, *American Extremism*; Churchill, *To Shake Their Guns in the Tyrant’s Face*.

<sup>59</sup> Berger, “Without Prejudice: What Sovereign Citizens Believe.”

<sup>60</sup> Sweeney, “What Is the Sovereign Citizen Movement, What Do They Believe and How Are They Spreading?”; “The Queen’s Enemies,” *Out of the Ordinary* (BBC Radio 4, February 9, 2018), <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b09qghsc4>; Barbara Perry, David Hoffman, and Ryan Scrivens, “Anti-Authority and Militia Movements in Canada,” *The Journal of Intelligence, Conflict, and Warfare* Vol. 1, no. 3 (January 31, 2019), p.30, <https://doi.org/10.21810/jicw.v1i3.822>.

<sup>61</sup> Jackson, “Nullification through Armed Civil Disobedience.”

<sup>62</sup> Mack Lamoureux, “Inside Canada’s Armed, Anti-Islamic ‘Patriot’ Group,” *Vice*, June 14, 2017, [https://www.vice.com/en\\_us/article/newqwd/the-birth-of-canadas-armed-anti-islamic-patriot-group](https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/newqwd/the-birth-of-canadas-armed-anti-islamic-patriot-group).



## Conclusion

This article has presented a schema for understanding varieties of right-wing extremism in the United States. This schema is meant to be a heuristic device rather than a diagnostic tool. That is, it is meant to encourage observers to recognise a wider range of forms of right-wing extremism, but it is not meant to be a map on which different forms of RWE can be easily and precisely placed. Given this purpose, it likely has some utility for observers of RWE outside of the United States.

Ultimately, RWE is a dynamic category; the factions within it may change shape and relative size over time. New forms of RWE emerge from time to time. Classificatory schemes are always a matter of debate, and other experts on RWE argue for alternative ways of understanding the diversity within right-wing extremism.<sup>63</sup> Debate over these schemes is important; it can play the valuable role of helping experts to recognise as RWE activities that they previously did not consider. I hope that this article and the schema it presents contributes to such debate.

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<sup>63</sup> Durham, *The Christian Right*; Blee and Creasap, "Conservative and Right-Wing Movements"; Mark Pitcavage, "Want a Handy, Simple Visual Guide to U.S. Extreme Right? #oregonstandoff #extremism #militia #terrorism Pic.Twitter.Com/HaYFLJUf4q," Tweet, @egavactip (blog), February 2, 2016, <https://twitter.com/egavactip/status/694640016501379072/photo/1>; Perlinger, "Identifying Three Trends in Far Right Violence in the United States."

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# A Schema of Right-Wing Extremism in the United States

Sam Jackson

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