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Unraveling White Supremacist Discourse Within Right-Wing Populist Groups

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Abstract

This thesis aims to provide a comparative focus on Russian and American right wing populist groups who utilize white supremacist discourse in their work. I provide a brief historical background of the history of white supremacy both within the United States and within Russia, along with explaining the differences between democratic and authoritarian regimes in tackling right wing populism. I draw on a multitude of both academic and contemporary sources to argue that right wing populist groups adopt a theory of racial *great replacement* in their discourse, appealing to an existential doomsday of sorts for the white race. In my research, I refer to six hand-picked populist groups, three in the United States and three in Russia, analyzing their official webpages and party manifestoes to better gleam their utilization of white supremacist discourse in attracting new - mostly college-aged, white male - recruits. I expand on this claim to assert that such groups move out of the shadowy fringes of online webpages and social media accounts and into the fore through their adoption by contemporary political parties. In this way, right wing populism transcends both democracy and authoritarianism (despite traditionally being conceptualized as being particularly present in democracies) to become a growing ubiquitous phenomenon with troubling implications for political participation as a whole.

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Chapter 1: An Introduction

This work seeks to investigate the complex inner workings of white supremacist discourse, analyzing how it becomes constructed in the modern era of back-room Internet webpages, and how various groups utilize such rhetoric to their advantage in order to appeal to a growing wider audience of a discontented populace. My aim in this thesis is to therefore analyze the current climate of right-wing populist organizations and make it clear that the usage of such racist discourse speaks to their existence in a larger and more concerning network of global right-wing populism which also benefits from such rhetoric. Although it would certainly be fascinating to analyze right-wing populist rhetoric and its co-opting of white supremacy in states on a global perspective, this thesis serves to provide a comparative case study of how such groups operate in both the United States, a democratic republic with entrenched political institutions, with that of Russia, an authoritarian state who has continued to consolidate more and more power in its executive over the past twenty years of Putin's regime. As such, it will become evident that such right-wing populist groups have become more openly brazen with their recruitment tactics and have the potential to appeal to a much stronger presence in both American and Russian societies than previously thought through their adoption into official party discourse of both the American Republican Party and the United Russia party. Additionally, the concept of "fringe" theory leaps out of the shadows and into official party discourse, providing evidence that right wing populism goes beyond mere authoritarianism and democracy, striking at the very root of rampant distrust in governance.

This thesis analyzes a total of six extremist organizations, three from the United States and three from Russia. In the American context, groups such as the Proud Boys have received considerable notoriety as the most iconic of organizations - specifically in large part due to their

vocal demonstrations during the 2017 Charlottesville protests. The two other United States organizations discussed in this work are: the American Identity Movement (previously known as Identity Evropa) which became prolific among college campuses for their noted practice of distributing white supremacist fliers and on-the-ground recruitment tactics, whereas the Council of Conservative Citizens has maintained a steady presence for decades through its promulgation of white supremacist news memos and regularly updated webpage articles.

While simultaneously discussing three different American organizations, the thesis also analyzes three different Russian organizations which make special use of white supremacist and populist discourse in their advertising. The Russian National Unity movement is unique in its paramilitary presentation, appealing to younger sections of the discontented population through its promises of military training and party manifestos present on their now defunct website. The Movement Against Illegal Immigration is similar in its violent methods, having been banned by the Supreme Court of Russia for its extremist viewpoints and inciting interethnic hatred after engaging in street protests and paramilitary activity. The last Russian organization to be analyzed in this work is also the most active in the state, that of the Nation and Freedom Committee: an ultra-nationalist and populist group who advocates for strong civil protest and robust anti-immigration policies, whose black and gold flag is a ubiquitous symbol of Russian discontent and protest.

This thesis is designed to provide a comparative analysis of white supremacist discourse as it exists in both the United States and Russia, paying close attention to right-wing populist groups such as the ones mentioned above and their intertwined rhetoric. As such, the following questions serve as a contextual framework for the content of this thesis: What is white supremacy and what is its connection to right-wing populism? How is white supremacist

discourse being constructed and propagated in both the United States and Russia? How does official statements through the use of party pamphlets, handbooks, and websites influence current rhetoric? To what extent do the instances of white supremacy in the United States and Russia belong to a growing global network of right-wing populism which looks beyond long-held political systems such as democracy and authoritarianism? I assert that there exists more similarities to white supremacy in the United States and Russia than meet the eye, and that the six comparative case studies posited in this work serve to forward the argument that a global style of performing right wing populism (which greatly subscribes to the idea of a great racial replacement) is gaining a considerable amount of traction despite each state doing it differently in the context of their own respective population and ethnic makeup, which thereby threatens the very existence of democratic inclusion and its institutions itself.

Chapter Two: Defining White Supremacism and its Ties to Right Wing Populism

This work seeks to contextualize how white supremacist discourse is being constructed and propagated within contemporary right-wing populist fringe groups in both the democratic states of the United States and authoritarian regime of Russia. As such, a discussion and therefore definition of key definitional terms such as white supremacy, the construction of whiteness, and right-wing and exclusionary populisms is warranted first as developing a conceptual framework before analyzing how such notions intersect in the current political climate and their subsequent implications for democracy as a whole. This discussion is centered within Omi and Winant's conceptualization of racial formations, a highly centralized form of control which defines societal interactions based upon a racialized hierarchy, and Kathleen Belew's notion of *white power* which undergirds white supremacy. Additionally, the racialized history of both the United States and Russia are discussed to contextualize the contemporary existence of white supremacy in their respective states.

The modern Western definition of race began to emerge within the context of the European Enlightenment during the 17th century. Philosophers began to "base their ideas on the importance of secular reasoning, rationality and scientific study... categorizing the world anew and extending such thinking to the people of the world", arguing that such secular laws therefore governed the world and its inhabitants (Historical Foundations of Race 2021). This would provide the context for later colonization of the Americas and the emergence of the African slave trade, as such laws would evolve to dictate the inherent superiority of white Europeans on a racial ladder which inferiorized both indigenous peoples of the Americas and African slaves.

The racial identity of whiteness first emerged soon after the English's first encounters with indigenous peoples in the early 17th century, whereby they began to contrast themselves

and differentiate “‘races’ of ‘savage’ Indians, ‘subhuman’ Africans, and ‘white’ men” (Historical Foundations of Race 2021). Originally, this term of white manhood would only apply to Anglo-Saxons as they struggled to conceptualize a natural order of inherent laws to categorize the peoples they came into contact with, as inspired by the Enlightenment. This seemingly scientific natural order would later become known as the racial hierarchy, categorizing humans on their non-white appearances and delegating them as savages and subhumans.

As such, this work draws heavily on both Omi and Winant’s definition of race, along with their conceptualization of racial formations. Defined as “a concept which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies”, the American conception of race, though often invoking biological characteristics such as physical phenotypes, is solely a historical and social process in constant evolution (Omi and Winant 2015, 55). Therefore, there is no legitimate biological definition of race, due to the fact that such distinctions separating one group of people from the next are often arbitrary and extremely imprecise (Omi and Winant 2015, 55). The definition of race as developed by Omi and Winant in their analysis of *racial formations* is discussed below. It is precisely through these racial formations that the current racial hierarchy can be understood.

Defining racial formation as “the sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed”, this process of historically situated and ever-evolving *projects* are therefore linked to the concept of hegemony and the manner in which whiteness became the predominant method of categorizing and organizing society (Omi and Winant 2015, 55). These projects seek to simultaneously interpret, represent, and explain the existence of racial dynamics: connecting what race often means symbolically in contemporary discourse with how social structures and lived experience utilizes its meaning (Omi and Winant

2015, 56). Most especially, “to interpret the meaning of race is to frame it social structurally”, a macro-level social process which must be understood through its deeply connected roots to defining society (Omi and Winant 2015, 56). The very concept of whiteness and its inherent white supremacy must therefore be situated within this contemporary social process.

To summarize, the processes by which both whiteness and white supremacy are formed are a result of centuries-long social projects in which the concept of race is created and redefined. This theory of racial formation, as posited by Omi and Winant, “suggests that society is suffused with racial projects, large and small, to which all are subjected. This racial “subjection” is quintessentially ideological... Thus we are inserted in a comprehensively racialized social structure. Race becomes “common sense”- a way of comprehending, explaining, and acting in the world” (Omi and Winant 2015, 60). Therefore, it is simply not possible to discuss race without substantively locating it within this context of sociohistorical change. The United States, respectively, has evolved- and continues to evolve - its own meanings of race through various racial projects over the centuries.

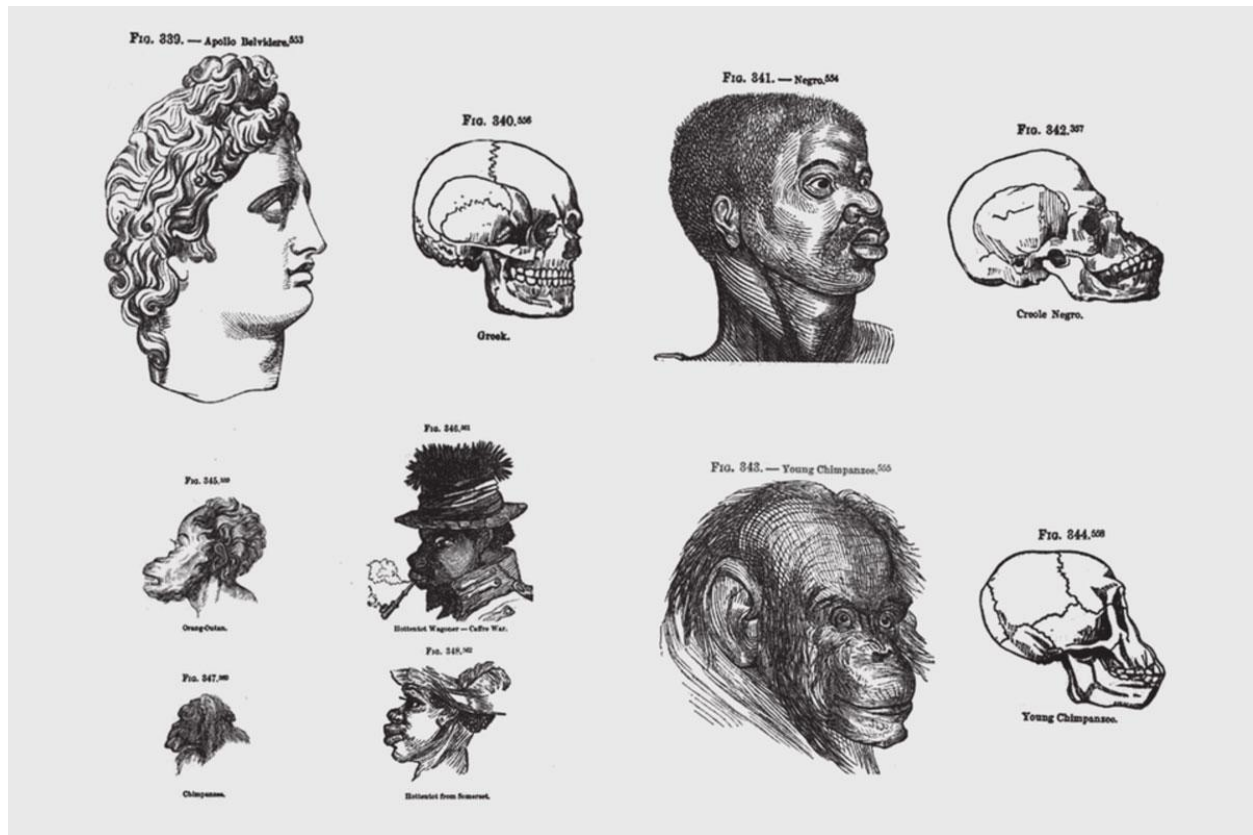
Before discussing the implications of white supremacy, I will be discussing the various racial projects undertaken in both the United States and Russia respectively, in order to arrive at the current meanings of race deployed today. It becomes evident that there exists two distinct forms of conceptualizing race in both states due to their own unique interactions with various ethnic groups: the United States defines race and privilege based on its deep ties to the slave trade, whereas Russia began to categorize otherness based on Slavic identity and an underlying desire to ethnically cleanse indigenous groups who did not fit this narrow ideal to create a one, united “Russian people”. As such, racial rhetoric and conceptualizations of white supremacy, though heavily present in both states, have evolved into something unique for each state.

After the United States declared independence and established its Constitution, revolutionary ideals such as liberty and equality gave way to the “paradox of liberty” (Historical Foundations of Race 2021). How was the deeply entrenched institution of slavery supposed to be justified in a country which had just previously fought for liberty and equality for all? As such, various theories that exemplified the difference between white and nonwhite people were established that helped to justify being “white [as] an identity that designated a privileged, landholding (usually male) status” (Historical Foundations of Race 2021). Excerpts from Thomas Jefferson’s “Notes on the State of Virginia” only help to exemplify this point, as Jefferson pays specific attention to this notion of comparison and racial order, with whiteness reigning superior:

I advance it, therefore, as a suspicion only, that the blacks, whether originally a distinct race, or made distinct by time and circumstance, are inferior to the whites in the endowment both of body and mind ... Comparing them by their faculties of memory, reason, and imagination, it appears to me, that in memory they are equal to the whites; in reason much inferior... and that in imagination they are dull, tasteless, and anomalous. But never yet could I find that a black had uttered a thought above the level of plain narration; never see even an elementary trait, of painting or sculpture. (Historical Foundations of Race 2021)

This notion of comparison of memory, reason, and imagination would help justify the popularity of pseudo-scientific racism of the 19th century, where American scientists and intellectuals began to search for physical differences between racial groups in order to justify this racial hierarchy. Dr. Samuel Morton’s work in measuring skull shapes is especially paramount, in which he argued that the size and shape of Black people’s skulls specifically led to their decreased intelligence as compared to whites and their therefore distinct category of a separate subspecies of human (Historical Foundations of Race 2021). The illustration below is a

contemporary example of such scientific racism, linking Black craniums to that of chimpanzees and orangutans and thereby reducing such populations back to their “animal” origins:



"Types of mankind or ethnological researches, based upon the ancient monuments, paintings, sculptures, and crania of races, and upon their natural, geographical, philological, and biblical history" (Nott, Gliddon, 1854)

Scientific racism, in which white scientists used phenotypical difference to define the white race in direct comparison to other ethnic groups in the United States at the time, would be used to justify the subsequent Supreme Court decisions of *Dred Scott* and *Plessy v Ferguson*. The *Dred Scott* ruling ultimately decided that to be Black was to be noncitizen, according to the Constitution, and therefore fit solely to exist as property to the benefit of their owners. Chief Justice Taney “declared with the full force of the law that to be black in America was to be an ‘inferior being’ with ‘no rights’ which the white man was bound to respect”, and that African

slaves were actually improved by their servitude (Historical Foundations of Race 2021). This landmark case would serve as context for the rest of the nineteenth century and Jim Crow era, further institutionalizing anti-Black sentiment within the American conception of race.

After the abolition of slavery, the next landmark Supreme Court ruling to further entrench the legacy of white supremacy was that of *Plessy v. Ferguson*, where the notions of “separate but equal” and racial segregation were legally affirmed. The Supreme Court ruled that the state of Louisiana was not unreasonable in its decision to provide separate train cars for both Blacks and whites:

We cannot say that a law which authorizes or even requires the separation of the two races in public conveyances is unreasonable, or more obnoxious to the fourteenth amendment than the acts of congress requiring separate schools for colored children in the District of Columbia, the constitutionality of which does not seem to have been questioned, or the corresponding acts of state legislatures (*Plessy v Ferguson*).

Legal segregation would come to define the American social order for decades, until its abolition in the 1950s. At the same time, “the [social] category of white expanded... to include various groups of people such as Italians and Eastern European immigrants”, whilst simultaneously keeping other groups *out* in an effort to restrict access to voting rights and educational opportunities (Historical Foundations of Race 2021). Inclusion into the American fray was closely intertwined to the assimilation of whiteness, thereby keeping Blacks, indigenous peoples, and other people of color locked out. Therefore, it is evident that these various racial projects - ranging from the institution of slavery to its inevitable collapse and replacement by scientific racism in the nineteenth century and the adoption of segregation shortly thereafter - have all uniquely contributed to their own contemporary meanings of race: those in which

whiteness reign supreme, distinctly *other* from every other group in the United States during the time.

Post-Civil Rights era, the 1970s was a period of radical upheaval and economic turmoil as a result of the events of the Vietnam War and the Watergate scandal under the Nixon administration. As a result of widespread distrust in the state and its actors, the white supremacist movement “consolidated and expanded... worried that the arrival of immigrants [due to newly passed legislation which eased immigration] would change the very meaning of American identity” (Belew 2018, 2). Throughout the 80s and early 90s, this movement would mobilize new members from disparate groups around the country, training in violence and paramilitary maneuvers until its ultimate climax with the Oklahoma City bombing of 1995 (Belew 2018, 2). It was precisely because of this growing current of discontent and dissatisfaction among conservatives in the span of these twenty years that allowed for such easy and swift mobilization. Most activists found common ground in the widespread fear that the “government would eradicate the white population through interference with the birth of white children - through interracial marriage, rape, birth control, abortion, and immigration” (Belew 2018, 7). Post-Oklahoma City bombing, the movement subsequently shifted to online forums and private websites, out of the purview of mass media (Belew 2018, 237). The contemporary hierarchical racialized order finds its roots within the consequences of the said bombing, as activists shifted to online modes of disseminating their worldview.

The American conception of race came into existence precisely due to the interactions between Anglo-Saxon pilgrims and the native peoples they first encountered, evolving over time as slavery and servitude became increasingly racialized into a hierarchical racial order which prioritized whites above all else. This has led to a unique conceptualization of race in the United

States greatly informed by such historical developments, one which continues to contextualize social formations to this day. However, this form of conceptualizing and categorizing groups of people does not translate globally. The development of racism in Russia cannot be tied back to an institutional system of racialized anti-Black slavery, precisely because there was none on a similar scale to that of the United States. As such, “the absence of racialized slavery in Russian history, which has long served as the key institution assisting the development of racist theories and practices elsewhere, has forced researchers to look for traces of racism in repressive Soviet population policies and in the intellectual history of Imperial Russia” (Zakharov 2015, 21). The following section of this chapter will thus proceed to analyze how the origins of Russian racism differs significantly from that of the United States, finding root in Imperial Russia’s rhetoric and Soviet repopulation policies which specifically persecuted members of certain ethnic and racial groups in a quest to create a unified Soviet state.

The question of race is often neglected in Russian history and Slavic studies in favor of other social classifications such as class. Therefore, the remaining part of this section will attempt to elucidate this black hole in the literature, conceptualizing how Imperial Russia sought to navigate difference within its territory (and often quite poorly, to that extent) before later describing the aims of the Soviet Union in repopulation policies both domestically and its supposed “anti-racist” policies internationally. The concepts of *Russification* and a protection of one’s homeland are vitally important for understanding this historical thinking of race, which therefore has influenced contemporary rhetoric and understanding of difference and racism.

It is important to highlight that there does not exist a clear definition of what it means to be *Russian*, thereby muddying the waters for this analysis. Merely translating it into English is nebulous, for there exists two different terms both translated into the English word for Russian:

“*russkie*, which means Russians by ethnocultural nationality, and *rossiyane*, which refers to the concept of the civic Russian multiethnic nation” (Zakharov 2015, 8). Despite this, and the fact that explicitly race is almost never the predominant talking point by Russian politicians, the legacies of racist thinking are paramount to the contemporary construction of the Russian state. Therefore, this thinking “continue[s] to inform current conceptions of ethnicity and identities in the post-Soviet state”, influenced by the nation-building efforts of Imperial Russia which first began to parse through ethnic difference to create the concept of Russian and the supposed anti-racist (whilst simultaneously colorblind) measures of the Soviet Union (Zakharov 2015).

The late nineteenth century witnessed the ardent government policy of *Russification*, during which nationalist protests led the government to adopt codified laws which prohibited the use of ethnic minority languages (Astakhova 2021). This policy of *Russification* sought to culturally assimilate non-Russian communities under the flag of pan-Russianism, with non-Russian ethnicities such as Tatars, Poles, Jews, and Ukrainians being witness to “some form of legal and/or cultural discrimination... in particular after 1863” (Weeks 2004, 471). Recognizing “the centrality of Russian culture and in particular the Russian Orthodox religion was paramount, and the concept of diversity... quite lacking”, nineteenth-century Russia conceptualized other cultures and ethnicities in a clear, strict hierarchy of Russian Orthodoxy as the clear winner (Weeks 2004, 471). Meanwhile, religious minorities such as Jews were simply “‘allowed to exist’”; however, the rhetoric surrounding the religion often placed its followers as “‘Asian’, medieval, and backward” (Weeks 2004, 472). As a whole, administrative *Russification* was nearly universal in the later half of the eighteenth century, as the Russian language became enforced in a growing empire spanning westward.

With the demise of the Russian Empire and the creation of the Soviet Union, the newly-formed union saw itself as a collection of numerous states, each with their own respective cultures, religions, and ethnicities. To navigate dozens of multiple identities within the Soviet Union was a daunting task, especially with the goal of making class struggle first and foremost among Soviet officials in the state. Furthermore, it is important to note the *reductionism* employed by Marxist rhetoric during the twentieth century was indirectly complicit in racism which contextualized much of Soviet policy during its era. For many Marxists, “class was a primary analytical and strategic category [where] nothing else was important”, thereby refusing to conceptualize the actual importance of other social relations such as race and gender (Satgar 2019, 9). Class was paramount to the socialist struggle, the one defining feature that spurred on revolution: “racism and even gender oppression were considered aberrations or epiphenomena in the class struggle and would only be resolved after the socialist revolution” (Satgar 2019, 9). In fact, much art from the Soviet Union depict a multiracial society, international brothers of Marxism in arms together dedicated to the class struggle. The most common motif is that of the white Russian, the Black African, and East Asian Chinese working together in a “post-racial” world. An example of an idealized, racially harmonized socialist world is included below, specifically highlighting the brothers in arms:



(Rose).

Therefore, to reduce the Marxist cause to solely focus on issues of class was to ignore the lived importance of racialized and gendered social structures that still widely defined both the Soviet Union and other states around the globe. Race-blind rhetoric and class reductionist policy is still racism, even if there may be no explicit reference to racialized hierarchy.

The following section of this chapter focuses on definitions of explicit racialized hierarchy of white supremacy and whiteness, before delving into a brief explanation of the phenomenon of populism.

Firstly, *white supremacy* can be defined as a:

historically based, institutionally perpetuated system of exploitation and oppression of continents, nations, and peoples of color by white peoples and nations of the European continent, for the purpose of maintaining and defending a system of wealth, power, and privilege. (“What Is White Supremacy?”)

Although the concept is a nebulous term that is often overused in the context of racial studies, the essential components of white supremacy include adhering to a notion of *whiteness* as its own culture which is fundamentally superior to that of other races; its fundamental existence as an institutional *system* of oppression that undergirds various aspects of society rather

than individual acts commonly associated with racism; and its systematic strategy of exclusion and repression of non-white groups. It is therefore essential to analyze how those who subscribe to white supremacist ideals define the concept of whiteness in the context of race, and how they view themselves.

Whiteness and therefore the concept of race primarily exists as a *social norm*, a concept propagated and instilled due to its historical predominance and legitimization over time. As such, “symbolic meaning systems, (e.g. “race” and *whiteness*) define, legitimize, and reproduce themselves across generations”, taking on various legitimized forms over time as rhetoric continues to evolve (Guess 2006, 651). The concept of race does not emerge and define itself from a modern scientific perspective of melanin and hair texture, but rather is informed by the predominant social and cultural values of the time period. Therefore, it is evident that the very concept of race in which whiteness derives itself is “based on socially constructed, but socially, and certainly scientifically, outmoded beliefs about the inherent superiority and inferiority of groups based on racial distinctions” (Guess 2006, 654). By distinctly categorizing various groups based on perceived shared physical characteristics, it becomes much easier to derive a conclusion of an *us* versus *them*, as an “us” constitutes those who share these socially defined characteristics and the “them” are consequently those who do not. It is therefore correct to say that race is a social construction from which whiteness derives its own tenuous definition.

Although the concept of whiteness is often a nebulous term due to its existence outside of this racialized order of inferiority, whiteness is primarily conceptualized by its privileged status as compared to other socially constructed races. Therefore, University of Northern Colorado professor of sociology Clifford Leek’s explanation of whiteness as “a set of practices that function to protect and maintain privilege” remains true as one truly conceptualizes what it

means to be white (Lindner 2018, 44). Whiteness is not a monolith, as evidenced by the fluctuating definitions of who got to be included in the “club” of privilege developed over the centuries. Constantly being made and remade based on current climates, the concept of whiteness used to exclude the Irish, Italian, and Eastern Europeans in an effort to exceptionalize the superiority of Northern and Western Europeans before eventually incorporating all Europeans. As such, no concrete definition of whiteness truly exists due to its existence as a social norm which will continue to evolve over the years: however, a working definition that therefore includes this critical perception of superiority and *otherness* as compared to other “inferior” races is sufficient for this work.

Keeping in mind how whiteness and white supremacy hail the importance of the *other*, of another racial group who distinctly does not fit in and will never be defined as white, it is imperative to recognize how this social creation of white supremacy intertwines itself within political institutions and theories. As such, this work strives to also define the concept of right wing populism as the American and Russian social groups discussed later fall under this wide umbrella category. Most importantly, populism can be conceptualized by its definition of the *people* “... that are the basis for legitimacy [and therefore the legitimate citizens of the state]: Many populist regimes do not include the whole population, but rather a certain ethnic or racial group that are said to be the “true” people” (Fukuyama 2018). Most often, the “true” people as referenced by Fukuyama are those which derive a certain degree of privilege and predominance in its society, such as Hungarian leader Viktor Orban defining Hungarian identity based primarily in its ethnicity and therefore excluding the thousands of non-Hungarians living in the state or Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi touting a certain degree of exclusive Hinduism in his own definition of what it means to be Indian.

Additionally, the style of leadership associated with populism is that of charisma and strongman. In fact, “populist leaders tend to develop a cult of personality around themselves, claiming the mantle of charismatic authority that exists independently of political parties” (Fukuyama 2018). The crucial component of this style of leadership is its supposed desire to work *outside* and independently of the already established political arena, maintaining a strong and intimate relationship with the narrowly-defined “people” against the existing “elite”, or those parties already deeply intertwined within existing political institutions. This “moral vilification of elites and the veneration of ordinary people, who are seen as the sole legitimate source of political power” then targets groups such as politicians, intellectuals, and civil servants working within government, painting discourse against such groups in the view of them having a disproportionate influence on politics in order to benefit themselves (Bonikowski 2017).

This sentiment is particularly dangerous due to its growing threat against democratic institutions such as existing courts and the free press. Such populist groups view these institutions as a personal threat to the will of the “people”, due to their vested interests in serving the “elite”. “Its skepticism toward representative institutions” takes such established bodies of the state such as legislative arenas and judiciary courts and outright dismisses their authority due to being “seen as serving the interests of the elites... in favor of direct contact between leaders and the populace, typically in the form of rallies, referenda, and other plebiscitarian politics” (Bonikowski 2017). Such concentration of power away from representative parties and towards the executive is therefore regarded as the most direct method of enacting the political will of the people, therefore ultimately fulfilling the populist ideal of returning power back to the common folk.

This work will primarily be using Mudde and Kaltwasser's definition of populism moving forward:

a thin-centered ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups, "the pure people" versus "the corrupt elite", and which argues that politics should be an expression of the volonte generale (general will) of the people. (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2012)

What is therefore categorized as the people versus the elite in both Russia and the United States is vital for understanding this work, as it will become evident that such definitions often fall along tenuous racial and ethnic lines. For instance, American right-wing populism has defined the people as rural working-class white citizens, whom have been left behind and delegated as a "silent majority", deferred to the wishes of the minority. In this manner, the 'pure people' of American right-wing populism adopts a distinct racial component tinged by whiteness.

As mentioned earlier, this thesis seeks to specifically focus on *right-wing* populism. Therefore, a distinction between the leftist and right-wing forms of populism are therefore warranted, as populism occurs on both ends of the political spectrum. Populism in Latin America and some portions of Southern Europe such as Greece and Spain tends to primarily be leftist in nature, "having a constituency among the poor and advocating redistributionist social programs that seek to remedy economic inequality" (Fukuyama 2018). While left-wing populism generally does not advocate for the definition of the "people" to narrowly tailor to race and ethnicity (but rather the downtrodden and poor who have been hit hardest by growing economic inequalities over the decades) nor does it advocate for stronger immigration policies to keep the "non-people" out of the state, it does heavily focus on an us versus them mentality of the working class of society against political elites out of touch with the plight of the poor. As such,

left-wing populism can also be conceptualized as *inclusionary*, due to its express purpose of advocating for the plight of the poor and working class (Mudde and Kaltwasser 2012).

More exclusionary forms of populism “often employ more restrictive definitions of the polity, based on ethnic, racial, or religious criteria”, scapegoating minority populations who are often targeted for having worked with the “elite” to fulfill their own goals contrary to that of the “true” people (Bonikowski 2017). Right-wing populism tends to follow this trend of exclusion, basing their rhetoric on ethnic, racial, and anti-immigration stances. Therefore, it does not generally advocate for the wishes of the poor against political elites out of touch as is the case with left-wing populism, but rather championing a working class who views minority populations of the state (often comprised of people of color, or other ethnicities than the one dominant in society) as a threat to the existence of the “true” people themselves. Some contemporary examples of right-wing populist regimes include Viktor Orban’s regime in Hungary and the Law and Justice political party in Poland, whom remains skeptical of the European Union and pronounces a largely white and Catholic state.

As evidenced by the Polish Law and Justice party, many right-wing populist groups inevitably end up combining their own policies of a return to the “people” and distrust of the established political elite with white supremacist discourse, whether intentionally or inadvertently. As such, there exists a complex yet intertwined relationship between the two political ideologies where they both serve to reinforce the saliency and passion of the other, with white supremacist discourse often amplifying the definition of the “people” and providing legitimacy for populist rule of law. This connection between right-wing populism and white supremacy is vital for understanding the rest of this work, as it is precisely through white supremacist rhetoric that exclusionary right-wing populist groups maintain legitimacy and

contextualize the existence of the (most often) white “people” against the existential threat of the elite.

A contemporary example of such an intertwined relationship, of the overt racism associated with white supremacy and exclusionary politics of right-wing populism, took form during the 2016 United States presidential election. Many Republican and independent candidates for office co-opted white supremacist rhetoric and infused it into their own campaign promises, using slogans such as “Make America White Again” and “White Lives Matter” (Anderson 2021). “By privileging survival values to perpetuate racist ideologies”, we can therefore view how reactionary groups on the right perpetuate this rhetoric of *survival*, of appealing to members of the predominant social group in an effort to convince them of their impending extinction and therefore demise of the “people” as droves of “not-people”, members of groups other than the dominant (whether it be people of color, LGBT+ members, or other minority groups), threaten to outnumber the state and revise it in their own image (Anderson 2021). By implying that America has somehow converted into a “non-white” status in the form of “Make America White Again”, such rhetoric serves to argue that the United States has fundamentally changed both demographically and culturally for the worse, and that one should seek to return it to this previous white-majority glory.

However, it is important to note that such groups in the United States and Russia most often exist on the fringe of the political system, therefore being defined as “fringe groups”, or “a group that is on the periphery of a larger organization because its views are more extreme than the majority” (Collins English Dictionary 2020). As such, through its existence as various right wing populist parties which do not hold any semblance of legislative legitimacy through the form of political representation in parliament, these fringe groups do not engage in politics in the

traditional manner. While they may hold rallies and protests in support of their cause, both American groups such as the Proud Boys and the American Identity Movement *and* their Russian cousins the Russian National Unity movement *do not* hold political majority nor have elected officials in their respective parliaments. Despite this, it is vital to recognize that fringe groups often find acceptance and overt support in traditional politics, most notably in the form of the Republican party's inevitable intertwinement with Donald Trump's ties and endorsements of fringe groups, such as during the Charlottesville protests of 2017. As such, white supremacist discourse in this work will mainly be analyzed with this context of grassroots campaign and existence beyond mere fringe rhetoric in mind.

In the context of this work, we will primarily be focusing on the complex relationship between the propagation of white supremacist rhetoric as perpetuated by groups in both the United States and Russia such as the Proud Boys; the Council of Conservative Citizens; the American Identity Movement formerly known as Identity Evropa; the Russian National Unity movement; the Movement Against Illegal Immigration; and the Nation and Freedom Committee, and how these groups exist as a larger and more concerning network of global right-wing populism which threatens to take predominance in continents all over the world due to its seeming ubiquitousness, regardless of the predominant political system of the state. The next chapter will therefore analyze the susceptibilities of both democratic and hybrid regimes to populism itself, defining the key differences in the composition of both systems and crucially noting that neither political system is truly immune from its rhetoric.

Chapter Three: Democracy vs Authoritarianism

In order to contextualize the existence and promulgation of extremist organizations in both the United States and Russia, it is vital to recognize that both states have entirely different political systems and that these political systems play an important role in how populist rhetoric and sentiment is formed within their respective states. While the United States is officially a democratic republic, Russia is a hybrid regime with *some* elements of democracy which are often threatened by the highly concentrated degree of power found in its executive branch. As such, this chapter aims to contextualize the impact of diverging political systems in the presence and popularity of such organizations in both states, recognizing the fact that democracies are often regarded as a “buffer zone” to help prevent radical ideologies often seen in authoritarian regimes. Furthermore, this chapter argues that both democracies and hybrid regimes are especially susceptible to right wing populist ideologies, despite a common sentiment amongst political scientists that democracies are often strong enough to temper such extremism. Democracies must contend with the dangers of pluralism and the collective existential anxiety that may emerge amongst the “people”, whereas hybrid regimes are especially vulnerable to populist ideologies due to the shallow foundations of its institutions designed to *appear* democratic in nature but often failing to safeguard against such threats.

First, it is important to define exactly what democracy *is*, as the term is often nebulous and without clear meaning. For this, I take inspiration from Schumpeter’s definition of the term, in that “the democratic method is that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote” (Schumpeter 1962, 269). Furthermore, social scientist Riker goes further and

posits that “the preservation of democracy is grounded on the existence of constitutional limitations,” where those who wish to erode the system therefore encountering roadblocks in the form of political institutions such as judicial systems and accountability measures designed to remove politicians from office (Pasquino 2005, 11). As such, I consider any regime that has frequent elections whose outcomes are determined by the participation of voters and the robust existence of political institutions *democratic*.

The United States differs from other democratic systems globally due to its entrenched system of federalism which defines democracy itself within the state. As such, political powers are differentially allocated amongst both federal and state governments, with neither maintaining strict dominance over the other (Pasquino 2005, 12). Therefore, the United States’ unique combination of “horizontal *division* of powers and of vertical *limitation* of powers” have led it to maintain a robust system of checks and balances for centuries, where political power is diffused equally amongst various zones of influence in the country yet specifically designed not to allow one aspect of government to maintain predominance over the other (Pasquino 2005, 12). This unique system of federalism has come to define American democracy through its at times convoluted and complicated method of keeping both the state and federal government in check. However, despite this seemingly well-maintained balance of power, populist currents of thought remain ever present within the United States and still threaten to weaken such institutional safeguards of democracy. How does one make sense of a such a paradox, where anti-democratic sentiments of populism and xenophobic white supremacism remain present and continue to gain notoriety in a democratic system such as the United States?

It is often argued that democratic systems act as a “buffer zone” to help prevent radical ideologies from emerging due to the prevalence of political institutions specifically designed to

maintain the status quo, such as robust judiciary and electoral politics. However, drawing on Riedel's conception of populism, I argue that democratic systems are *precisely* vulnerable to populist surges of power because of their inherent existence as a political system intended to draw various groups of society into the fold, and the simultaneous existence of formal institutions such as courts and legislative arenas as fodder for blame (Grzymala-Busse 2020, 3). Formal institutions serve as checks to populist leaders' desire to enact policy, slowing down potential legislation from passing. In this manner, right-wing populism specifically targets courts and legislatures as institutions *against* the will of the people.

Whereas democracy champions the ideal of each group maintaining legitimacy within the system and deserving the opportunity to influence it whether through voting or by other means such as protest, exclusionary forms of right-wing populism do not define each and every group as a member of the "people". Participatory elections are legitimate solely if the narrowly defined group of "people" are given the opportunity to engage in them. As such, witnessing those who are not often considered a part of the "people" - whether it be defined through religious, ethnic, or racial lines - participate robustly in the formation and participation of state politics can lead to "an overall sense of *collective malaise* [or a] widely shared situation of *anxiety*" of those who feel alienated from participating in such politics and express sensations of collective fear about the future of the state, thereby becoming more susceptible to populist currents of thought and are more inclined to participate in such groups (Pasquino 2005, 19). Therefore, when considering democracy as a plurality that aims to include every political group within the decision-making process, "it could be said that democracy is a system that is naturally exposed to the threat of populism. Therefore, populism is *unavoidable* in the democratic process" (Riedel 2017, 296). As various groups vie for power and predominance within the

democratic system, it is inevitable that a shared sensation of anxiety among those in the majority is promulgated as it comes face to face with the prospect of losing its privileged status. This may indeed present a challenge “if there is an attempt to remove populism’s antagonistic other(s) from the institutional space of the state in order to effect ‘popular’ sovereignty and the particular representation of the ‘people’”, thereby effectively shunning the non-“people” out of the decision-making process in an attempt to fully actualize the particular will of the “people” (Robinson and Milne 2017, 414). Despite how unavoidable populism may become as an existential threat, it still remains dangerous, specifically “when populism adopts authoritarian traits, it easily leads to counter-democratic outcomes” as further evidenced in the paragraphs below (Riedel 2017, 296).

Meanwhile, states which do not have such robust democratic safeguards to ensure collective participation within politics such as Russia can find themselves more susceptible to the formation and normalization of populist ideologies. It is precisely because these hybrid regimes do not have these democratic institutions in check to curb populism’s fullest manifestation, such as robust supreme courts and accountability measures against corrupt politicians, that populist ideologies as expressed by political leaders and grassroots organizations are allowed to flourish. Looking at Russia as a case study, it becomes evident that hybrid regimes “can themselves develop populism to explain and justify their democratic shortcomings”, acting as a method of justification for the current regime. (Robinson and Milne 2017, 412). It is therefore essential to define what exactly constitutes a hybrid regime and how they differ from democratic states.

A not insignificant number of states over the past few decades have begun the process of transitioning from authoritarian regimes into a unique form of political system that combines elements of both democratic and non-democratic systems, also frequently labeled as *hybrid*

regimes. Instead of conceptualizing such hybrid regimes as merely poorly functioning democracies which have not fully transitioned, it is perhaps more apt to view them as a newly emerged form of engaging in authoritarianism where elements of both systems still remain. As such, three arenas to help maintain the legitimacy of such hybrid regimes exist and are often thoroughly exploited by the executive, that of the “the electoral arena, the executive and legislative arena, and the judicial arena” (Ekman 2009, 8).

Electoral politics in hybrid regimes often serve as a fountain of legitimacy for the executive, being frequently held within the state as a method of further exemplifying both the leader’s dominance and popularity among the electorate. As such, “even if tainted by a certain level of manipulation and abuse of state power, for example in the form of uneven media coverage and harassment of opposition candidates”, hybrid regimes take elections seriously as a manner of both maintaining regime legitimacy and stability over time (Ekman 2009, 9).

Additionally, hybrid regimes do indeed contain legislatures, as weak as they may be in enforcing and enacting policy. In fact, “parliaments may be ever so weak, but they can still function as potential platforms for the opposition” (Ekman 2009, 9). As such, hybrid regimes differ from authoritarian ones in the sense that they *do* indeed have some aspects of democratic institutions instilled within the state in order to maintain a sense of legitimacy, such as the existence of parliaments. Even then, these parliaments are so weak that even though they may form potential avenues for opposition politics, the executive is often able to easily deter such groups through media manipulation and frequent elections in which they are almost sure to win.

The last arena often exploited by hybrid regimes is that of the judiciary. Adhering to a weak rule of law, “the government regularly attempts to subordinate the *judiciary*... often done by means of bribery and extortion, and, if possible, by appointing and dismissing judges and

officials” (Ekman 2009, 9). As such, it is evident that such arbiters of law and justice often act as advocates for the current regime, having certain members approved and appointed by the executive. Regularly bypassing the judiciary branch is useful for hybrid regimes to further codify their own policy into law through court rulings and official statements made by supreme courts. Having therefore illustrated how hybrid regimes utilize these three political arenas to their advantage, it is evident how such regimes regularly bypass democratic norms while simultaneously maintaining a facade of democratic institutions such as parliaments and regular elections.

Therefore, a brief definition of a hybrid regime keeping these three arenas in mind is: “political systems that combine regular democratic elections with a number of democratic deficits, such as corruption, lack of press freedom, and poorly working systems of checks and balances between the executive and legislative branches of government” (Ekman 2009, 9). Hybrid regimes are therefore among the most perfect political systems for populism to develop, due to its weak rule of law and disproportionate amount of influence in the executive. Having little influence in the say of both regular elections and the goings-on of parliamentary politics, a return to the “people” can be an attractive choice for both grassroots protest organizations and the executive to exploit.

As seen by the table below, public attitudes in Russia regarding trust in the political system remain abysmally pessimistic. Trust in democratic principles and procedures, political parties, and elections and political participation is dramatically low, with 95% believing that people have little to no influence in what the government does, and 67% believing that having elections regularly has little to no influence on making government do what the ordinary people desire (Ekman 2009, 21). Such political apathy is a strong breeding ground for populism, both in

the form of promises from grassroots organizations who denounce the government as out-of-touch elites *and* from the government itself, whom can use this distrust of democratic institutions to their advantage and rally the populace around the image of a great Russian nation and its people instead.

TABLE 5. *Political Attitudes in Russia, 2003–4 (%)*

<i>Democratic principles and procedures</i>	
Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government. [Agree]	33
In certain situations an authoritarian government can be preferable to a democratic one. [Agree]	38
It doesn't matter to people like me whether we have a democratic or a non-democratic government. [Agree]	29
Satisfaction with the way democracy works.	19
Experts should take major government decisions rather than elected leaders. [Agree]	77
Do you think the president of Russia should have the right to suspend the parliament and introduce presidential rule by decree if he considers this necessary? [Yes]	79
<i>Political parties</i>	
Do you identify with any political party? [No]	92
To what extent do you trust political parties to look after your interests? [No trust]	76
Multiparty elections do more harm than good. [Agree]	52
<i>Elections and political participation</i>	
What do you think people like yourself should do when there is a national election?	
Make every effort to cast your vote.	53
If it is not convenient, no need to vote.	28
No point in voting; doesn't do any good.	19
Do you think that having elections regularly makes government do what ordinary people want? [Not much and none at all]	67
How much influence do you think people like yourself have on what government does? [Little or none]	95

Sources: New Europe Barometer (2004); New Russia Barometer (2003); Pipes (2004). The annual samples comprised approximately 2000 respondents from all over Russia.

(Ekman 2009, 20).

Contextualizing the adoption of official populism in Russia as a result of its 2011-2012 electoral cycle, “the regime was threatened by a counter-hegemonic populist threat from political opposition and social groups that had suffered economic crisis” as numerous social groups

mentioned later in this work such as the Russian National Unity party took to the streets in often violent protest (Robinson and Milne 2017, 413). As such, Russia remains unique due to the fact that *both* the state and this “counter-hegemonic threat” from political opponents utilized populism to its advantage and drum up support. In the case of Putin’s regime, “an official populist frame *based on an essentialized cultural understanding of traditional values* was developed to counter threats to the... regime... serv[ing] to marginalize both liberal and ethno-nationalist opposition” (Robinson and Milne 2017, 413). Specifically, the First Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration from 1999 to 2011, Vladislav Surkov, helped to instill the concept of “sovereign democracy”, that of which “Russia had its own democratic traditions and standards that were different to liberal and pluralist notions of democracy espoused in the West” (Robinson and Milne 2017, 417). Rather than conceptualizing democratic rights and political competition as a healthy functioning of the state, “the irreplaceability of Putin” as the one and only state actor who could help centralize the Russian state and its numerous social factions was tantamount, standing above petty squabble to help maintain Russia’s status as a “great power” on the world stage. Therefore, the centralization of the Russian state by conceptualizing the populace as “our people” was the key to success, despite incredible diversity within the region itself, according to a 2015 speech delivered by Putin:

when we were divided, we faced tragedy, disintegration, disasters, and the suffering of millions of our citizens, and we found ourselves at the mercy of false values, criminal ambitions and national catastrophe. This is why, despite our great diversity, it is essential that we have a sense of ourselves as a united nation. (Robinson and Milne 2017, 422)

Putin thereby utilizes this narrative of great suffering and tragedy in order to persuade that through such pain emerges one unified Russian people: that despite the existence of numerous indigenous ethnic groups such as the Tatars who have their own respective cultural

heritage of tragedy, it still remains essential that one keeps this highly simplified and romanticized image of a united Russian nation close to heart. It is interesting to note that Putin makes specific reference to “false values” and “criminal ambitions”, further amplifying the notion that anything other than the desire to unify the disparate ethnic groups located within Russia into one Russian people is *false* and tantamount to criminality and corruption. Division, according to Putin, is what has led the not yet fully actualized Russian people to strife, tragedy, and catastrophe in the past. It is only when the “people” can fully come together, casting aside already entrenched ethnic and racial differences actualized over centuries of Tzar and later communist rule, that Russia can truly prosper and keep this sense of unity and nation alive.

Having contextualized the historical evolution of racial formations and conceptualizations of the nation in both the United States and Russia, the next chapter analyzes three different Russian populist groups and their contemporary rhetoric.

Chapter Four: Russian Populist Groups and Ethnoracial Discourse

Within any state, there are nonstate actors who work at the grassroots level in order to better achieve their cause. Russia is no exception, despite its existence as a hybrid regime lacking in certain democratic features that would help make a robust grassroots organization exist and form that much easier. As such, organizations such as Russian National Unity, the Movement against Illegal Immigration and the Nation and Freedom Committee have proliferated within the state, organizing in person and online with the advent of social media and websites. This chapter aims to describe the selected groups in detail, providing a rationale for precisely why I selected these three groups and giving a brief overview of their conduct and rhetoric used. My research methodology for this portion of my work include searching for each group's respective official websites, specifically their "About Us" or "Goals" pages where they list their manifestos and policies they wish to act on. It remains important to note that some groups, such as Russian National Unity and the Movement against Illegal Immigration, have not had their websites updated in a substantial number of years, and the former has had their website removed entirely and can only be accessible through the Wayback Machine, a tool used to archive now defunct websites.

First, Russian National Unity will be discussed, from its inception to the height of its popularity and an analysis of the rhetoric subsequently used. I decided to analyze this group primarily due to its often violent and confrontational nature, and the grave offenses caused by a fraction of its members. Not only are members of this group highly militaristic and trained in arms, but a number of them have been convicted for racist attacks. Among the members convicted, "desecration and destruction of grave structures, distribution of leaflets of extremist

content aimed at inciting hatred and enmity, committed in 2005 and 2006 in the Jewish and Muslim parts of the cemetery in the Kalininsky district of the Tver region” were the crimes committed (More than 10 RNE Members 2010). Additionally, Russian National Unity is notorious in Russia for its participation in four racially-based robberies and murders (More than 10 RNE Members Sentenced in Tver to Terms Ranging from Suspended to Life 2010). At the height of its popularity, the group was estimated to have tens of thousands of members, testifying to their once relative ubiquity among the Russian right wing (Research Directorate 2004).

The Russian National Unity group was formed directly after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, a very turbulent era in Russian history which became witness to changes in social behaviors and political arrangements. Alexander Barkashov, whose image is included below, is known and widely celebrated as the group’s founder. It is his charismatic will and centralized position within the organization which is particularly unique, as the organization follows a particular tenet known as “the Alexander Barkashov movement”. They precisely attribute their own successes and mobilizations to him, centralizing all authority and allegiance into one charismatic leader, as seen below from the following quote from the RNU’s history page:

Over the 16 years of its existence, the Russian National Unity movement has gained great fame and popularity. It was founded by Alexander Petrovich Barkashov and, despite all the difficulties, remains its permanent leader. Due to its distinctive features: clearly formulated Ideology, strict discipline and mass propaganda work, RNU attracted the most active part of our people.

It was A.P. Barkashov [who] formulated the tasks for the solution of which he has been mobilizing his Companions with his energy for 16 years. It is he who makes us go forward to our goal, regardless of any obstacles. In fact, it is the core of the Russian National Unity...

Therefore, we are establishing the Alexander Barkashov Movement, in which anyone who believes A.P. Barkashov and shares his Ideology. The New Movement is better suited to our goal - to purify Russia and confront the satanic manifestations of modern

civilization - as well as the principle of our structure - our desire for strict discipline and loyalty to the Leader. (On the Establishment of the Alexander Barkashov Movement)

This strict discipline and loyalty to the leader, in which the members of the organization seek to purify Russia and confront such outside influences (in this case, satanic manifestations of modern civilizations seem to be coded for anything typically out of the traditional Russian cultural pantheon; ranging from homosexuality to issues of race and class), has led to a very strict and rigid conformation to official party rhetoric as well. The next portion of this chapter details the official rhetoric of Russian National Unity, including its stance on immigration and changing worldviews. It should be noted the constant theme of a Russian genocide, and the existential fear that associates itself with protecting Russian cultural values:

Russian people! Our enemy has embarked on the final stage of the destruction of Russia and the Russian people. He is preparing a new package of "reforms" for us. He is enraged by the fact that, despite the complete collapse of the army and industry, rampant crime, depreciation of money, a beggarly salary and a half-starved existence, the Russian people did not agree brother to brother in the civil war.

Only Russian nationalists are the bearers of the national idea and put the interests of the Nation above all else. Only the Russian National Unity will establish a Russian order on the Russian land, which:

- will stop the colonization of Russia,
- will stop the genocide of Russians and Russians anywhere in the world,
- will restore the priority of spiritual values over material ones,
- will protect Russians and Russians anywhere in the world,
- will preserve raw materials for future generations,
- provide jobs, housing, free medical care and free education,
- will solve the most important issue of protection of mothers and children,
- will provide a dignified life and old age for the citizens of Russia". (Russian National Unity)

According to official party doctrine, there are three main tasks the party wishes to complete. These include: "Avoiding the collapse of Russia; Unification of the Russian Nation

by a single National Ideology; [and] [c]reation of an organization with strict discipline from the most active and capable part of the Russian people throughout the territory of Russia” (“What is RNU, What are its Main Tasks?”). Avoiding the collapse of Russia - often coded as undue influence from the liberal West - includes stopping both the colonization and genocide of Russian people globally. This rhetoric is similarly coded across multiple white supremacist populist groups, in which “the people” must band together and defend themselves from an existential and more often than not imminent extinction. As such, members of Russian National Unity extol their historical and cultural pride, using this rhetoric to defend their violent attacks and murders against those considered non-Russian:

We, Russian nationalists, will everywhere defend and uphold the rights and interests of the Russian people. *We love our people and are proud of our ancient history and culture.* We are for normal good-neighborly relations with friendly peoples, but we will not allow anyone to parasitize at our expense! *We respect those peoples who do not kill, rob and do not humiliate the Russians,* but who raised a sword against the Russians will die by the sword!

Historically, *it was the Russian People, thanks to their high spirituality, justice, military power, culture and economic structure,* that became the attracting core around which a multinational state was formed over the centuries. *It was the Russian people with its national character, and not some kind of internationalism and universal values, that was the main attraction and fastening force in the state.* As a result of the deprivation of the Russian people of their natural role in an artificial, forceful way - through revolutions and subsequent genocide - we have chaos in the economy, separatism and the collapse of the state. *It is possible to prevent the coming devastation and civil war and restore order in the country only by returning to the Russian people its historical place and natural role in the state.*

We believe that Russia should be a single state of Russians and Russians. Russians are understood as representatives of the triune Russian People: Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians. (Who Are Russian Nationalists?)

While Russian National Unity displays rhetoric that goes beyond pan-Slavic unity, I specifically chose the next group - the Movement Against Illegal Immigration - precisely for its narrow focus. The Movement Against Illegal Immigration, as implied by its name, is a far-right populist group which proclaims the superiority of the Russian people while simultaneously denouncing further immigration into the state. DPNI, its Cyrillicized acronym and how it shall henceforth be referred to, indeed has a website dedicated to its cause, with the following manifesto having been adopted on July 11, 2009:

1. Citizenship and repatriation of compatriots
2. Border protection and entry into the Russian Federation
3. Stay and residence of foreign citizens on the territory of the Russian Federation
4. Labor immigration
5. Crime of foreign citizens
6. Development of civil society
7. Public control
8. National and cultural policy
9. Demographic policy. (DPNI Program)

It is evident from this manifesto that the Movement Against Illegal Immigration takes high priority in its adoption of *law and order* rhetoric, paying specific attention to citizenry and border protection, along with developing a coherent and stringent national/cultural policy. Delving deeper into the group's manifesto and paying attention to specific sections included within these nine demands reveals the same: a common theme of highly centralized cultural policy strengthened in turn by the existence of robust immigration laws, which highly prioritize the legal protections of ethnic Russians at the expense of non-Russians.

The DPNI calls for a robust national and cultural policy that “prohibit[s] representatives of non-indigenous peoples of the Russian Federation from creating national-cultural associations in the form of national-cultural autonomies” (DPNI Program). By prohibiting non-indigenous peoples (in this case, such as Muslim immigrants from Central Asian states whom do not share the majoritarian Russian Orthodox religion nor identical race) from forming their own like-minded groups where others of the same race and ethnicity could meet, the DNPI effectively wishes to eliminate further freedom of assembly for such peoples. If enacted, such a policy could effectively endanger the rights of non-Russians from freely associating - one of the most important elements of a robust democracy.

Not only does the group advocate for such exclusionary policies - calling for a complete cessation of foreign groups from forming their own associations within the state - but they also simultaneously adopt the same existential fear seen in other supremacist groups: that of a fear of the majority population (in this case, ethnic Russians) becoming the minority, and being overtaken by the “lesser” groups. In fact, the DPNI words this rhetoric in the following way, wishing for “an integral priority of the state's immigration and demographic policy ... to prevent the decline in the share of the state-forming Russian ethnic group in the Russian population” (DPNI Program). As such, the DPNI wishes to maintain the Russian ethnic group's share of the population, preventing its perceived decline against the supposed “onslaught” of non-Russians. One of the highest priorities given in the DPNI's manifesto is that of reproductive protection of the Russian people, outright banning abortions and creating efforts to increase the native birth rate of Russian peoples: “2. Provide strong propaganda support for the campaign to increase the birth rate, as well as to reduce the number of abortions to a minimum. Prohibit artificial termination of pregnancy unjustified by extreme necessity” (DPNI Program). This effort to

simultaneously ban “artificial termination of pregnancies” (a euphemism for and outright refusal to directly say abortion) whilst simultaneously desiring to provide propaganda to increase the native birth rate of the state is an explicit example of the existential fear located squarely within white supremacist discourse. By maintaining direct control over which pregnancies are deemed viable, the Russian population would theoretically see a positive growth trend in the immediate future, and therefore stand as a bulwark against the onslaught of “illegal immigrants” posited by the group, guaranteeing the longevity of the white majority Russian population.

In a similar manner, the DPNI makes special usage of the *law and order* rhetoric mentioned earlier in order to safeguard against this ever-present existential fear of mass Russian extinction. Specifically, the group appeals to broad notions of freedom, justice, and national solidarity in order to convince potential new members of the seemingly ubiquitous nature of such goals: “1.3. Formed on the initiative of the citizens of Russia on July 10, 2002, DPNI, based on the ideology of national solidarity, has as its main goal the preservation of the Russian and other indigenous peoples of Russia, the strengthening of national unity. The movement against illegal immigration is an organization of nationalists, patriots, supporters of the ideals of freedom and justice” (Charter of the Movement Against Illegal Immigration). By framing the movement against illegal immigration as one of patriotic nationalists and “supporters of the ideals of freedom and justice”, the effort is portrayed in a positive light: where such national solidarity will ultimately triumph and protect the Russian people from becoming extinct, or the minority in their own state.

In fact, the DPNI’s charter makes explicit reference to the great replacement theory, capitulating it as a driving force beyond their rhetoric and decision-making processes. The organization maintains that it is precisely this inflow of “illegal and unjustified immigrants” that

are replacing the indigenous populations of Russia (and what is meant by indigenous population, is the Russian Slav): “- To stop the settlement of Russia by illegal and unjustified immigrants, to prevent the replacement of the indigenous population by immigrants. - Deport all illegal immigrants from the territory of Russia. To reduce the number of unjustified immigrants to a minimum. Damage caused (caused) by immigrants to be compensated at their expense” (Charter of the Movement Against Illegal Immigration). The adjective *unjustified* is particularly interesting due to the connotation of *deserving worth*: it is not precisely defined what separates a justified immigrant from that of an unjustified one; however, it is not unreasonable to make an educated assumption that both racial and ethnic categories are especially important to this definition.

Having discussed the main points of the DPNI’s charter, it seems that the group’s policy is rather narrow in its focus. Beyond calling for an extreme halt to any form of immigration, there is no unique policy they put forth in their organization. However, the calls for law and order are ubiquitous enough that it is found in various other right wing populist groups, mentioned both in this work and beyond the scope of this investigation.

The final Russian group discussed in this work is the most active far-right organization located within the state, that of the *Nation and Freedom Committee*, thereby referred to as the KNS. The KNS remains the most active and contemporary group discussed, as compared to the DPNI and the RNU, both of whom simultaneously saw the height of their popularity and influence in the mid and late 2000s. The goals and tasks of the KNS are henceforth listed below:

1. The resignation of Putin and his government, the dissolution of the State Duma, the abolition of anti-people laws, the lustration and conviction of those involved in the crimes of the regime.
2. Formation of a government of people's confidence from the political forces that have actively shown themselves in the fight against the dictatorship, to carry out legislative and constitutional reforms, as well as to bring the country out of the crisis. ...
5. Cancellation of articles 282, 280 of the Criminal Code and other anti-people repressive elements of the legislation. Dissolution or re-profiling of all anti-extremist political investigation structures of the FSB and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. ...
7. Complete rejection of the replacement migration policy. (Goals And Tasks of the Committee)

As such, the KNS touts for a complete overhaul of contemporary Russian politics: calling for the dissolution of the State Duma, the immediate resignation of current President Vladimir Putin, and the “abolition of anti-people laws”, as vague as they are. This aligns strongly with the populist definition mentioned earlier in this work, as the KNS wishes to completely abolish any semblance of the “elite” form of Russian politics and replace it with the ‘people’s rule, or in their words, a government formation created solely out of those who fought for the revolution. Additionally, canceling articles 282 and 280 of the Russian Criminal Code which specifically target hate crimes and “extremist activity” (“1. Actions aimed at the incitement of hatred or enmity, as well as abasement of dignity of a person or a group of persons on the basis of sex, race, nationality, language, origin, attitude to religion” (Article 282 Criminal Code (In English and Russian) 1996)) and dissolving any extremist investigation organizations within the FSB would provide a certain leniency for the group, absolving any members of any potential hate crimes committed.

It is imperative to recognize that rhetoric is extremely important in legitimizing groups’ claims *and* their actions. It is precisely through rhetoric that hate crimes and violence occur, for

actions of prejudice and white supremacy are normalized and *justified* through manifestos and goals such as the ones perpetuated through this chapter. The KNS is extremely cognizant of the power of words, even going so far as to paint its rhetoric as one of active repression:

We cannot say that we consider our people outstanding, extremely valuable for the further development of civilization, that without our people the world will lose something important. We cannot say that our people, living on the land of their ancestors, on the land where their historical state once existed, should be the full owner of this land. We cannot write about groups that threaten our people in one way or another. We cannot call on the Russian people to a radical struggle for their rights, or even simply to unite along national lines. We cannot even collect and publish information about crimes against Russians in the Russian Federation without the risk of being subjected to criminal prosecution. (National Idealism 2017)

It is precisely through this framework - of active repression and intellectual banishment - that the KNS legitimizes its work and calls others to action.

It is interesting to note that the KNS specifically frames this contemporary period of history as uniquely different from those in the past, claiming that the Russian people cannot merely “survive” in the present: “The liberation of Russians from the tyrannical regime is a necessary condition for the physical preservation of our people, since, unlike the difficult historical periods of the past, it cannot simply be ‘survived’ in the conditions of extinction and ethnic replacement by other peoples. This goal cannot be achieved solely by mental efforts and ‘good thoughts’” (National Idealism 2017). Therefore, the KNS actively centers its anti-Putin rhetoric squarely in the same existential fear of the “great replacement” as seen in both the RNU and the DPNI mentioned earlier. It is this precise fear of ethnic and national majority loss that spurs all three organizations into action: “The Russian Nation is doomed to disappear if we don’t stand up for it. If we leave our people in trouble. Our main principle is ‘Everything for the

nation, nothing against the nation', in our actions we are guided by this idea" (National Idealism 2017).

Providing a brief overview of these three Russian groups, it is evident that there exists a shared commonality of existential replacement among all three of them. While each may strive for a different express outcome (the RNU pan-Slavic unity; the DPNI an imminent end to labor immigration; and the KNS an end to the Russian state as ruled by Putin's party United Russia), they all expressly use this precise fear of immigration to their advantage. Although express racial terms are not explicitly mentioned, it is evident that racialized language is coded within these manifestos: fears of the "Russian people" being outnumbered and eventually made extinct by "outsiders" and "immigrants who do not share our culture" remains popular discourse not only within the state itself, but globally as well.

However, what appears to be the strongest sentiment shared by all three groups is the emerging notion of an indigenous Pan-Slavic/Russian identity that defines the self in terms of "other" outsiders. A distinct notion of Westernization - identities of people that inherently go against the *white Orthodox Christian* definition of what it means to be Russian (whether it be corrupt insiders, homosexuals, or any other group "against tradition") - emerges, serving as the antithesis and moral enemy of the Russian national identity. Within this fervent national identity emerges the key concepts of whiteness and white supremacy, refusing to center any immigrant within the state as Russian. The narrow definition of self, as defined as a white Slavic Orthodox Christian, inherently touts its own historical supremacy in the face of what these three populist groups deems as a veritable "onslaught" of immigrants inherently unlike them in terms of ethnicity and religion.

Having discussed case studies in Russia, the next chapter analyzes select right wing groups in the United States, coming to similar conclusions of existential fear and extinction - albeit with a distinctly white supremacist flair that specifically targets anti-Black sentiment.

Chapter Five: Defining American Populist Groups

The previous chapter provided a brief overview of three major populist groups with a shared history within Russia, analyzing how despite their various ultimate goals, they all seemed to be united by a common sentiment of the *great replacement*. This chapter aims to do the same, this time analyzing how the *great replacement* theory spurs three United States groups - the Proud Boys, the American Identity Movement, and the Council of Conservative Citizens- into action. While the Proud Boys and the American Identity Movement share a common group formation and similar recruitment tactics, the Council of Conservative Citizens maintains a long-standing history as a predominant organization touting confederate white power. Despite this difference, this chapter continues to make the claim that what ties all of these groups (both Russian and American) together is their existential fear of their definition of the “true” people being replaced by outside groups (however, in the case of Russia, a distinct anti-Western slant of Slavic supremacy remains dominant as compared to the United States’s pride in Western heritage), thereby providing a concerning trend for the future of international social movements.

Akin to the previous, this chapter will use publicly available manifestos and party documents found on the Internet to parse through its rhetoric, specifically combing for sections in which white supremacist discourse is used, and what that tells us about the nature of these organizations. I will provide contextual historical information about each group, along with specific quotes and screenshots from these contemporary manifestos to provide context about the modern discourse used in such groups. The first group to be discussed is the American Identity Movement (hereby referred to as AIM).

AIM was formally created by Nathan Damigo on the eve of the 2016 United States presidential election. As mentioned earlier, AIM (formerly known as Identity Evropa) “has

always operated with an eye for branding”, distributing flyers and manifestos across over two dozen college campuses with phrases that ring as white existential threats, such as “Our Future Belongs To Us” and “Keep Your Diversity We Want Identity” (Identity Evropa/American Identity Movement). Their #ProjectSiege campaign consists mainly of distributing campus flyers, public demonstrations of “open dialogue”, and a strong presence on social media outlets like Discord. Despite its rough 1,000 member population in 2018, IE/AIM has remained a prominent source of identitarian politics within US discourse, having taken a central role in the 2017 Unite the Right Charlottesville protests and close relationship with prominent white supremacist Richard Spencer.

Damigo has publicly stated that in an effort to make Identity Evropa, as it was branded at the time, ““more explicitly pro-white””, he took inspiration from contemporary European identitarian groups- specifically the French New Right and its “opposition to multiculturalism, paired with its emphasis on European identity and localism, [which] helped [to- inspire a new generation of European far-right activists reacting to increasing non-European immigration in the early 2000s” (Identity Evropa/American Identity Movement). By explicitly branding the organization as one that touts European self-identity, as inspired by the French New Right, AIM situates their discourse within a desire to promote “white ethnic values” rather than explicit racial hatred, “establishing a clear set of talking points and simple phrases and slogans that held, in Damigo’s words, ‘memetic power’” (Identity Evropa/American Identity Movement). However, such discourse still remains an overt expression of white supremacy that situates its bigotry within European pride and heritage rather than slurs.

AIM provides new members with various manifestos and handbooks, detailing the organization’s main tenets and manners in which to better safeguard anonymity in their activism

and protest. In its AIM Member Handbook (v1.2), the organization provides five square principles for its conduct, some of which are mentioned below:

Nationalism - We affirm the validity of borders, walls, and nations defined by shared bonds of commonality. We believe that a nation's leaders should pursue its interests, rather than those of globalist elites.

Identitarianism - We acknowledge that identity plays a central role in human affairs. Identity comes in many forms and is often the source of much social conflict. Like it or not, identity politics are the norm in multicultural societies. We staunchly defend the preservation of America's historical demographics in the face of mass immigration, and are opposed to the demonization of and discrimination against America's white majority...

Populism - We see America's currently ruling elites as hostile to the historical people, culture, and identity of America. Our ultimate goal is thus a shift in the American power structure. So long as we're ruled by hostile individuals and institutions, America will not be made great again. (American Identity Movement)

This manifesto is distributed to both new and established members of the group alike, shared in Discord servers and spread across the Internet. It is evident from these three tenets that AIM provides an exclusionary rhetoric, which champions white European heritage while simultaneously denigrating other races, who actively seek to “demon[ize] of and discrimin[ate] against America's white majority” (American Identity Movement). By “cloak[ing] their White nationalist message in language of identitarian pride in European heritage and soften[ing] it with a polished look”, AIM is able to recruit impressionable and disaffected youth to their cause, masking their rhetoric of great replacement and white extinction under the veil of historical European pride (Joffe 2017).

Perhaps the most notable of current extremist organizations operating within the United States, the Proud Boys was also founded in 2016 by a former member of Vice News, Gavin McInnes: claiming to be “Western chauvinists who refuse to apologize for creating the modern

world’ and... be primarily a libertarian-oriented fraternal drinking club”, in reality, the group has served as a method to “red pill” new recruits and garner attention from conservative-leaning individuals most vulnerable to extremist rhetoric (Kriner and Lewis 2022). “Engaging in politically motivated street fighting to purportedly defend Western society from forces the group views as degenerate and threatening Western values, such as Islam and immigration into the West”, the Proud Boys differs strikingly from AIM in the manner in which it outwardly displays its rhetoric: instead of appealing to disaffected white university-aged youths, the group prides itself on direct physical contact with traditionally leftist-leaning organizations, such as anti-fascist and LGBTQ+ groups (Kriner and Lewis 2022). In fact, its video manifesto directly shows the violence inherent to the organization in the form in which new recruits are physically assaulted as a method of initiation ritual.

It is important to note that the Proud Boys website has since been taken offline by its web host in late 2020 (Chan 2020), and remnants have not resurfaced on the likes of website archives such as the Wayback Machine and Internet Archive. As such, I have resorted to using a “demo reel” of sorts, uploaded to YouTube by its founder in 2016. There is no physical manifesto, nor tangible PDF that I have been able to find that was distributed out to potential recruits. However, this video appears to serve a similar purpose, and its 100,000 views and raving comments section suggest that this demo reel did not go unnoticed.

Before delving into an analysis of the rhetoric and imagery present within the video, I wish to discuss the aspects *outside* of the video which allow us some insight into the Proud Boys itself. Within its description, it is evident that the organization wishes to provide an informal, tolerant air to its potential new recruits. By referring to the group as a “club” and a “frat” where

“fellas can be fellas”, this overt paternalism helps to paint the Proud Boys merely as a drinking club where fellow like-minded men can discuss the merits of Western civilization:

The ProudBoys do not denominate or discriminate by age, race, religion, gender, or sexual orientation — rather it's one's quantity and quality of pride in the valuable aspects of Western culture, along with character that determines reverence. The Proud Boys are supported by facts, inspired by ideals, and committed to working toward greatness...having some fun also never hurts. Call it a club, frat...whatever—it's a space where fellas can be fellas (McInnes 2016).

However, it is this precise “quantity and quality of pride in the valuable aspects [sic] Western culture” that is inherently dangerous: for racial underpinnings of white pride and supremacy are inherent in such discussions (McInnes 2016). By venerating European history and expressing a desire to return to the greatness of the Greeks and Romans, whom according to the Proud Boys *founded civilization itself*, the organization evolves from a mere, innocent fraternity of like-minded men to a group concerned and dedicated to the issue of “white plight”.

Moving onto the actual video itself, it is evident that Gavin McInnes makes clear use of great replacement rhetoric within his narration. He remarks with great emphasis, within the first few seconds of the video, that “You know, that something is going on... and that the West is under siege” along with clips of “riots” and supposed American cities under siege (McInnes 2016). As he speaks, he makes careful note to include scenes from American history that invoke images of pride and military accomplishment: something to *return to* in a modern era devoid of such courage. Shame and sin are a constant theme within the video, where McInnes argues it is this precise shame of being white that stifles, a perpetual punishment for the actions of their ancestors: “They shelter us from pride, and make sure we’re always ashamed of our past... a perpetual penance where we have to pay restitution for our sins” (2016).

McInnes includes the “10 ways to save America”, which I have taken to be the closest thing the Proud Boys provides as a manifesto, having italicized the portions which best fit this work (2016):

1. Abolish prisons
2. Give everybody a gun
3. Legalize drugs
4. *End welfare*
5. *Close the borders*
6. *Outlaw censorship*
7. Venerate the housewife
8. Glorify the entrepreneur
9. *Recognize “west is the best”*
10. Shut down the government.

By completely ending welfare, the Proud Boys plays into the common racial rhetoric of Black people and minority groups “taking advantage of the system”, acting as “welfare queens” whom take advantage of government social policy. Closing the borders most likely refers to disallowing immigrants of color, primarily Hispanic individuals from Latin and South America, from “diluting” the racial makeup of the United States. Outlawing censorship allows such rhetoric from the Proud Boys and other organizations to become commonplace and allowed, normalized as protected free speech. Finally, recognizing that “west is the best” is a common thread among the majority of these organizations: normalizing Western civilization as white/European civilization that stands above the rest. Taken in context with McInnes’ previous comments about the West being under siege, the Proud Boys evolves from a mere drinking fraternity to one which directly touts white supremacist ideals.

The comments section of McInnes’ video provides countless examples of individuals agreeing with and venerating the organization, with comments ranging from: “Puts a lump in my throat. Good stuff.” to “Well done guys! An organization to be proud of!”. With comments

ranging from the video's inception in 2016 to mere weeks ago, it is reasonable to assume that this video attracted new recruits into the organization during its heyday, as evidenced by countless positive affirmations being left in the comments and over one hundred thousand views.

While both AIM and the Proud Boys are both organizations which have originated fairly recently within the last ten years, the final organization to be analyzed has its roots tied deeply to the realm of Confederate pride and white supremacy over its decades of existence: the Council of Conservative Citizens (hereby referred to as the CCC). I specifically chose this group in particular to illustrate the fact that groups which utilize white supremacist rhetoric to its advantage within the United States are not a new phenomenon, and in fact have roots within old Confederate thinking. This group is distinctly different from the previous two mentioned in this chapter due to its deep Southern history and firm newspaper presence, yet all three still utilize racist rhetoric in their dialogue as right-wing populist groups.

The organization evolved out of Citizens Councils of America, whereby groups of white supremacists "... formed throughout the South to defend school segregation after the Supreme Court outlawed the policy in 1954" (Council of Conservative Citizens). At its most powerful, these Citizens Councils composed more than one million members in their loosely-based organizations. Comprised mainly of white men of higher socioeconomic status, these individuals would "generally use their political and financial pull to offset the effects of 'forced integration'" (Council of Conservative Citizens). As the battle for integration continued to make headway through the 1960s and 70s, these councils eventually began to gradually lose members. It was in 1985 that the contemporary CCC was founded, created by its former Midwest field director Gordon Baum. Comprised of local chapters, the CCC continues to attract new members and

propagate discourse through the use of their website and quarterly newsletters,

<https://conservative-headlines.org/>.

The contemporary CCC is most notable for its indirect involvement in Dylann Roof's Charleston church shooting, where the mass shooter had noted coming across the organization's website and having been shocked by the contents he had found: "The first website I came to was the Council of Conservative Citizens, he wrote. 'There were pages upon pages of these brutal black on White murders. I was in disbelief. At this moment I realized that something was very wrong. How could the news be blowing up the Trayvon Martin case while hundreds of these black on White murders got ignored?'" (Graham 2015). With its existence as the largest white supremacist group in the United States, the CCC still remains a force of rhetoric for those who will read and listen, and often serve as the stepping stones for manifestoes such as Dylann Roof's (Graham 2015).

The CCC has adopted what is known as their own respective "Statement of Principles," their own manifesto created by former newsletter editor Samuel Francis. It contains rhetoric nearly identical to that found in both the AIM and Proud Boys, specifically mentions of European pride and existential threats found in the *great replacement*. I have selectively chosen the principles most relevant to our discussion, of which I have listed them below:

(2) We believe the United States is a European country and that Americans are part of the European people. We believe that the United States derives from and is an integral part of European civilization and the European people and that the American people and government should remain European in their composition and character. We therefore oppose the massive immigration of non-European and non-Western peoples into the United States that threatens to transform our nation into a non-European majority in our lifetime. We believe that illegal immigration must be stopped, if necessary by military force and placing troops on our national borders; that illegal aliens must be returned to their own countries; and that legal immigration must be severely restricted or halted through appropriate changes in our laws and policies. We also oppose all efforts to mix the races of mankind, to promote non-white races over the European-American people

through so-called “affirmative action” and similar measures, to destroy or denigrate the European-American heritage, including the heritage of the Southern people, and to force the integration of the races. (Statement of Principles)

Akin to the previous movements, the CCC tout the rhetoric of European greatness, and the existence of the United States as the rightful evolution of Western civilization. We see here an opposition to efforts that “destroy or denigrate the European-American heritage” and anti-immigration discourse which frame immigrants of color as the demise of (specifically) Southern white heritage. This discourse helps to frame the following principle, in which:

(8) Cultural, national, and racial integrity. We support the cultural and national heritage of the United States and the race and civilization of which it is a part, as well as the expression and celebration of the legitimate subcultures and ethnic and regional identities of our people. We oppose all efforts to discredit, “debunk,” denigrate, ridicule, subvert, or express disrespect for that heritage. We believe public monuments and symbols should reflect the real heritage of our people, and not a politically convenient, inaccurate, insulting, or fictitious heritage. (Statement of Principles)

By touting the express importance of cultural, national, and racial integrity, the CCC thereby frames its rhetoric as that of “white pride”, in which its members are championed to celebrate the accomplishments of their own heritage. Precisely because the CCC recognizes the United States to be an exclusively European nation, the “real heritage of our people” is that of whiteness, and therefore any other distinctive non-white heritage groups exist as efforts to discredit or debunk the power of whiteness.

Beyond realm of manifesto, I would like to discuss a specific portion of the CCC website and its rhetoric, specifically because it remains a prominent section of its website that calls significant attention to potential recruits and new members: that of the “black-on-white murder” tab. I maintain that this section is among the strongest examples of *great replacement* theory in

practice, as it specifically draws attention to the exact number of white individuals killed every year by Black individuals, and precisely invokes fear and existential dread at the statistics. The CCC individualizes each case, providing names and pictures of the victims, if applicable. After all, if these upstanding white members of society could be murdered by non-whites, so too, could you. In fact, this portion of the website was the tab specifically cited by previously-mentioned Dylann Roof as an inspiration for his Charleston church shooting.

The CCC provides biweekly “Black Crime Roundups”, in which the president of the organization specifically reports on crimes with Black perpetrators and white victims. I provide a snippet of their rhetoric from their “December 2021 Black Crime Roundup” below. Please be aware the following language is graphic and disturbing, yet it strikes a close similarity to the great replacement theory in its sentiment that you, too, may become a victim of shifting demographic changes- and therefore, you must do what you can to ensure both your own and the white race’s survival in this changing world:

At the end of the film Witness -- starring Harrison Ford and Kelly McGillis -- Harrison Ford is warned by one of the Amish Elders to "be careful out there among them English." The Amish would be far better served to warn their women to "be careful out there among them n*ggers," and adequately arm themselves with one of them "guns-of-the-hand." The previous incidents should be clear and compelling evidence that whites must get as far away from n*ggers as income and geography permit. Leave the n*ggers to gun each other down for no reason at all, but do NOT allow yourself or your family to become their victims. Let the sad lesson of these unsuspecting murder victims be your motivation. (December 2021 Black Crime Roundup 2022)

Therefore, the CCC remains fervent in their foundations of anti-Blackness, serving as the only right wing populist group discussed in this work whose historical background is rooted in the post-Civil Rights era. Noticing how both AIM and the Proud Boys formed during the cusp of

Trump's inauguration in 2016, the CCC is therefore grounded in the same rhetoric of anti-Blackness that its previous antecedent touted. This brand of right-wing populism is notably Confederate in nature, basing its rhetoric off fervent Southern white supremacy of the citizens' councils of the twentieth century. Therefore, the CCC stands unique among the three groups in its anti-Black flair.

To synthesize, the three groups explored within this chapter - although starkly different in terms of their historical background and public appearance - all depend on white supremacist rhetoric to attract new members and maintain a consistent following. While AIM and the Proud Boys are newly formed during the Trump era, aiming to attract white college-aged youths disaffected with the current political landscape, the CCC is notably much more historical in nature. Recognizing these fundamental differences between the three groups allows one to acknowledge the pervasive sentiment of "great replacement" present in each.

This chapter has analyzed the three contemporary groups within the United States that I have selected for their considerable notoriety in both the public consciousness and mass media. Although it seems as if their watershed moments of Charlottesville protests may indeed be over, it is still vital to recognize the fact that these groups still perpetuate such rhetoric and are still actively recruiting new followers despite their dwindling predominance in contemporary anxieties. The next chapter seeks to provide examples of how both American and Russian groups attract new members to their organizations, arguing that a new conception of recruitment theory is warranted to understand such tactics.

Chapter Six: Recruitment Theory and Attracting New Members

After providing a groundwork and brief explanation of the rhetoric used by each populist group discussed in this work, it is imperative to now analyze how contemporary hate speech and hate groups continue to gain traction and recruit new members into their organizations, especially considering the contemporary rhetoric that we live in a “post-racial” world. As such, this chapter focuses on *recruitment theory*, describing how both Russian and American hate groups attempt to lure new (mostly disaffected white male) members through college campus recruitment and paramilitary-style campaigns. It is further revealed that American fringe groups such as the Proud Boys, the American Identity Movement, and the Council of Conservative Citizens rely more on disgruntled *college-educated* white males, appealing to them through the distribution of white supremacist pamphlets and fliers across university campuses, whilst simultaneously using social medias such as Discord and Twitter to appeal to a greater number of people. Meanwhile, the Russian groups discussed in this work employ a somewhat different approach, aiming to recruit its new members through promises of glory and incentives to protect the homeland.

Before further delving into both the American and Russian context, it is imperative to first define *recruitment theory* and what relevance it has to the maintenance of a social group. Traditional Political Science theories have mainly focused on how individuals are introduced and entered into political positions: “a process by which individuals possessing certain personality traits and occupying specified social positions... are screened by political institutions for elective office” (Schwartz 1969, 552). This traditional discourse, of institutional groups existing within political parties selectively screening the next generation in an attempt to find new potential members, I argue, can be further extended beyond the fray of institutional representative politics

and be used to represent a wide number of social groups which depend on recruiting new members to keep the group alive. Traditional recruitment theory makes particular note of the personality traits and individual socioeconomic backgrounds of those seeking office, where “the preferences of the screening institutions (eg, political party recruiters) partially define the recruitment situation, making certain motives and resources more important than others” (Schwartz 1969, 552). I maintain that a similar situation exists in regards to fringe recruitment as well. Rather than political recruiters actively seeking out candidates with a strong motivation and desire to participate in politics, disgruntled and disaffected white males are often sought out by such hate groups in an effort to recruit new members to their own group, appealing to such fears in an effort to spur members into action.

The following section of this chapter analyzes contemporary recruitment efforts present both within the United States and Russia, going into further depth regarding university campus recruitment and online efforts as well. Meanwhile, Russian groups such as Russian National Unity appeal to disaffected white males in a different manner, through promising paramilitary and weapons training. Coming directly from the Russian National Unity’s archived website, it details the exact efforts needed to become a member of the group and how to recruit others as well. I place specific emphasis on the “military-patriotic clubs” below:

In order for any Russian person to make his or her contribution to the liberation of Russia, there are three categories of participation in RNU: Companions - the core, the asset of the organization - people who devote most of their free time to work in the organization and have made a significant contribution to the creation and strengthening of RNU... There are military-patriotic clubs under the RNU, in which young people, under the guidance of experienced instructors, prepare for military service, attending classes in hand-to-hand combat, pistol and rifle shooting, drill exercises, members of military-patriotic clubs assist law enforcement officers in protecting public order. (Join RNU)

Through the efforts of these “companions” and “military-patriotic clubs”, young recruits are guided in military service and arms training under the guise of protecting public order. The third category of volunteers within the organization are those who distribute group literature and provide an information campaign to attract new members:

Supporters are the most numerous category, the social support of RNU. They form a cohort of honest, decent, energetic and business people employed in various areas of social and economic activity. Supporters are people who, for various reasons (age, employment, official position, etc.), cannot systematically carry out assignments. They provide the organization with all possible assistance. Forming RNU cells and subdivisions at the place of work and residence, supporters carry out propaganda and explanatory work among the population of their area - they distribute party literature (newspapers, leaflets, books), tell the truth about the goals and objectives of the organization, break through the information blockade of RNU, help in creating material-technical base (provision of transport, copying and duplicating works, fundraising, etc.). Once or twice a month, supporters attend political classes held for them, where the foundations of the RNU ideology are explained, and an assessment of the current events is given from the standpoint of the Russian National Unity. (Join RNU)

The following further details the efforts taken place in order to “quarantine” new recruits: including the study of political and social theory, distribution of newspapers and leaflets, and most specifically *drill training courses*:

1. As new people come to your organization, you will need to organize "quarantine" courses for them (or, in military terms, "the course of a young soldier"). Newcomers are united in a group of 15 to 30 people for a period of one month. During this month they must understand and realize where and why they came. To this end, during this month, intensive classes are organized for newly joined the organization:
 - Intensive study of the ideological and worldview foundations of the RNU on the basis of a digest (collection of the main articles of the newspaper "Russian Order" and "ABC of the Russian Nationalist"). At the end of the "quarantine", each of its participants must pass an exam based on the materials studied.

- Intensively use the newly entered "quarantine" for agitation and propaganda work: distribution of newspapers, posting leaflets.
- Organize drill training classes, since they need to be brought into a fit state, learn to obey discipline and a team, and most importantly, this gives them the opportunity to feel the strength of a close-knit team, and also gives elementary drill training skills, which will definitely be needed in the future (at least during processions, rallies, not to mention everything else). (Instructions for Organizing the Work of Newly Formed Branches of the RNU)

These intensive classes serve as the onboarding process for new recruits, where they simultaneously learn both the discipline and rank that comes with such drill training exercises, along with the skills necessary to further recruit new members themselves. As such, Russian National Unity was able to recruit disenchanted young white males into their ranks through the promises of protecting the homeland and taking any means necessary, including engaging in paramilitary training, to do so. Below are various images from the Russian National Unity webpage, depicting regular recruitment and training, along with the following caption:

The Russian National Unity (RNE) conducts regular recruiting and sending of volunteers to protect the Russian people in the territory of the former Ukraine. We will equip, train, send. The recruitment is carried out for men over 23 years old who served in the ranks of the armed forces. In order to enroll in volunteers, you need to send a friend request to Alexander Barkashov http://vk.com/ap_barkashov with the postscript "volunteer" or contact the group administrators http://vk.com/rne_mos.



(We Will Come to Kyiv and Lvov).

As pictured above, it is evident from these promotional images the impression that the RNU wishes to give off to new recruits is that of discipline, order, and rank. By standing in a rank and file order, dressed in impressive military garb, and attentively listening to the commands of their superior, the RNU and other groups in Russia appeal to disaffected young white males, offering up a promise of a community to belong to and a sense of purpose and belonging not felt in establishment political groups. As noted previously, new recruits are trained both in the art of military and in political theory, attending classes run by senior members. This helps to create a sense of community and constant learning, creating strong ties between members who then advance to recruit others into the same system.

American recruitment efforts, while simultaneously striving to create this sense of community where disenchanted young white males can participate, are markedly different in the sense that groups such as the American Identity Movement specifically target college-educated males through physical fliers on university campuses.



The previous image is part of Identity Evropa (now rebranded as the American Identity Movement)’s recruitment campaign at Rutgers University. The flier pictures two white males in what appears to be a group, along with the caption “Our Generation, Our Future, Our Last Chance.” Such rhetoric plays into the existential fear of white supremacy mentioned earlier, the fear of a *great replacement* threatening the very existence of whiteness, and therefore the existence of the very last chance to take a stand and prevent such extinction from occurring. The movement took responsibility for the recruitment effort, releasing a

statement which remarked: “Our posters we’re [sic] placed at Rutgers as that university is a public university” (Heyboer 2017). The effort of such flyers, beyond mere recruitment, is “to get white students to question what they are being taught in college... As students then begin to realize that the direction their lectures take them is based upon false assumptions by their instructors, they will begin rejecting the false narratives and begin looking to us for answers” (Heyboer 2017). Naming their recruitment efforts as #ProjectSiege, it is evident from such rhetoric that Identity Evropa wished to radically destroy the very manners of thinking for vulnerable white students, rejecting such doctrines from university and turning to white supremacy for answers.

Other recruitment efforts and flyers dispensed by Identity Evropa not only in New Jersey but across university campuses throughout the country continue to play to this existential fear of replacement. This theme of protection, and a highly romanticized notion of the past, remains strong in both American recruitment efforts and Russian:



(The Face of White Supremacy in 2017, 2017)

By referencing Classical Greece and ancient Rome, Identity Evropa aimed to convince new recruits of their “pure” bloodline and their heritage among antiquity. The two ancient civilizations are often referred to as the “cradle of humanity”, and it is evident that white supremacist groups such as Identity Evropa harken back to this illustrious era to convince potential recruits of their “superior” past. Evidently, the rhetoric employed by Identity Evropa to recruit new members was to simultaneously appeal to the existential fear of a great replacement and convince those of a romanticized white past that must be returned

to. Therefore, there exists a slight difference between the United States and Russia in the manner in which they recruit new members: the groups in the United States play to existential fears of college-educated students on the cusp of radicalism, rather than the glory and education of learning paramilitary techniques and defending the homeland as seen in Russia. Both AIM and the Proud Boys advertise themselves as social groups for like-minded, college-educated white males to gather and discuss the virtues of Western civilization. In this way, the American groups play to existential fears of a great replacement through classic imagery of marble statues and Greek civilization, advertising a home for those who agree. Defense of the homeland is also present in Russian groups - however, the manner in which these groups advertise their defense is much more paramilitary in nature. There is a certain militaristic glory in volunteering for the RNU that is simply not present in AIM nor the Proud Boys, conjuring up images of historical greatness of Russian defenders.

Having learned more about recruitment theory and how both American and Russian groups appeal to young, disillusioned white males by a sense of community, the next chapter of this work aims to provide a deeper comparison between these organizations, analyzing which rhetoric pervades and which remains starkly different, before connecting such groups to the larger overall network of right wing populism that exists internationally.

Chapter Seven: A Comparative Perspective and Looking Abroad

This chapter aims to provide a comparative discussion of both the Russian and American groups, identifying key themes that emerge from this study and what they ultimately inform us about the nature of white supremacy within right wing populist groups.

One of the most obvious similarities drawn through this research is the subscription to the “great replacement” theory which permeates much of the rhetoric of both the Russian and American groups. By conceptualizing the theory as “states that welcom[e] immigration policies - particularly those impacting nonwhite immigrants - are part of a plot designed to undermine or ‘replace’ the political power and culture of white people living in Western countries”, the rhetoric is often apocryphal, painting a life-or-death scenario in which white culture - however it may be defined - is on the verge of sudden and imminent collapse (National Immigration Forum 2021, 1). *All* of the Russian and American groups analyzed in this work have subscribed to this rhetoric in some manner, with the vast majority including at least a portion of their manifesto dedicated to either a restriction of immigration or a complete and utter ban of it. The great replacement serves as a call to action for both new and established members alike: causing paramilitary groups such as Russian National Unity to include weapons training in order to defend Russia against immigration, and American groups such as the Proud Boys to congregate in their own local chapters, discussing like-minded policy and protesting “they will not replace us” to exemplify their claims.

However, it is imperative to recognize that although this rhetoric of great replacement is indeed present in both the Russian and American groups we have discussed, the inherent method of white supremacy is radically different among each of the groups. We must recognize the

international context in which white supremacy permeates in both states, precisely due to the fact that the racial formations in the United States do not inherently equal the ones present in Russia.

We see that the white supremacist discourse in Russia is primarily centered around the nationalist perfect ideal of the Russian nation: a group of Slavs, ranging from Belarus to Ukraine to Russia. Connected by a shared ethnic, cultural, and linguistic tie, right wing populist groups in Russia cling to this romanticized ideal of the Russian nation to justify their rhetoric. In this ideal, Russians, Belurussians, and Ukrainians comprise the ultimate *Russian culture* that must be upheld in the face of Central Asian and Muslim immigrants. We notice all three Russian groups analyzed in this work call for the immediate deportation of immigrants, with some such as the Movement Against Illegal Immigration calling for a complete end to the process altogether. However, it must be emphasized that such white supremacy that exists within Russia is distinctly different than that of the United States: there is no explicit historical anti-Black rhetoric. Instead, such discourse is framed in a way that distinctly places any other ethnic or religious group outside of Slavic Orthodox as the *other*, that are ultimately destroying the essential Russian culture.

On the other hand, anti-Blackness permeates the functioning of white supremacy present in American right wing populist groups. In fact, this manner is incredibly fundamental to how the Council of Conservative Citizens *functions*, generating monthly newsletters discussing the supposed rampant endemic of Black crime targeting white civilians. Although it is vital to note that the Council of Conservative Citizens serves as a distinct wing of right-wing thought that emerged out of the now defunct citizens' councils of the Civil Rights era, anti-blackness still undergirds both the American Identity Movement and the Proud Boys as well. Distinctly because the United States must contend with its long and sordid history of Black slavery within the state

that Russia never did, its right wing populist groups must therefore contend and conceptualize the existence of Black populations within their own worldview.

It must also be noted that the American right wing populist groups are much more *explicit* in their rhetoric, explicitly calling upon specific racial and ethnic groups they believe to be harmful to the very existence of Western society. Contrast this with Russian right wing populist groups, who seem to conceal their rhetoric under appeals to maintaining Russian culture. There are no specific mentions to any explicit racial or ethnic groups other than Slavic Russians within these organizations, possibly due to an already established conception of their own place within society. Instead, the blanket call to “end immigration” seems to be an umbrella term to exclude any non-Slavic peoples within Russia.

Another key similarity between these two states is the idea of these groups on the “fringe” of the mainstream politics. Parties such as the Republican Party in the United States and Putin’s United Russia have adopted partial parts of these marginalized fringe groups’ discourse into their own, with ‘establishment’ political figures legitimizing certain aspects of such discourse into their own speeches. In this way, fringe parties emerge out of shadow networks and into legitimate, established discourse.

An emerging discourse in the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine is a desire to return to a great Slavic state composed of Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine. This is a major component of nationalist discourse within Russia, of a desire to return the state to its former imperial glory with cultural and linguistic reign over its sovereign neighbors. In fact, a now deleted state-run media news organization posted a pre-emptive victory article touting the now-reunited triad. The state-owned RIA-Novosti news agency published an article entitled “The arrival of Russia in a new world”, justifying the current invasion through its rhetoric of “Russia restoring its historical

fullness, gathering the Russian world, the Russian people together... Russians, Belarusians, and Little Russians” (Coleman 2022). A desire to consolidate Slavic states into one grand pan-Russia, as expressed by RIA-Novosti, is a large component of the RNU’s rhetoric, as discussed earlier in their desire to create a firmly united, solely Russian state. In this manner, such policy moves firmly *out* of the sphere of the RNU and into state justification of military intervention.

We can also view the Republican party adopting certain discourses from right wing populist groups into their own official party platform, especially during the Trump presidency. Moreover, in the wake of the 2017 Charlottesville white nationalist march, the legitimization of right wing populist discourse went *beyond* mere regurgitation of talking points and into actualized acceptance of said groups. By affirming that there were “very good people on both sides”, Trump did not outwardly condemn the actions committed by the Proud Boys and AIM during the riots. This refusal to condemn violently shifted the actions of the Proud Boys and AIM squarely out of the fringe, as previously conceptualized, and into the president’s sphere of attention.

Through both of these two examples, it is evident that fringe theory (though useful for understanding certain dynamics) does not tell the entire story when analyzing how right wing populist groups’ discourses are adopted by the state. Therefore, it appears that such rhetoric - whether it be the desire for a unified, ethnically Russian Russia or legitimization of “very good people on both sides” - is more pervasive than mere fringe. Populism, therefore, goes beyond democracy and authoritarianism in its lasting appeal and pervasive adoption by the state. This serves as a worrying development, for exclusionary populisms seek to effectively shun certain groups not classified as the “people” out of the political process entirely.

A macro-level analysis of the right-wing populist phenomenon is therefore warranted. It is important to recognize the connections between individual groups, whether it be in the United States or Russia; however, it is also vital to zoom out from this level of individual analysis and examine the overarching structures that contribute to such a rise in right wing populism. A common phenomenon seeming to emerge is that of a political culture-based argument, in which lack of trust in formal institutions and politicians among citizens serve as a breeding ground for resentment of the system and therefore an emergence of the underlying foundation of right-wing populism. It is often argued that democratic institutions serve as safeguards against populist undercurrents, with populist leaders often attempting to weaken the democratic institutions present in the state. However, as evidenced by the growing emergence of right wing populist groups in Russia, this particular strain of populism is not exclusively tied to democracies themselves. Perhaps going above the realm of institutionalism, lack of political trust and the subsequent emergence of collective apathy is beyond both democracy and authoritarianism.

Although this work is intended to serve as a snapshot of how white supremacist discourse is used to the advantage of right wing groups in two different nations, one a liberal democracy and the other a hybrid regime, it is vital to recognize that such groups do not exist in a vacuum and therefore must be contextualized within the larger international sphere of discourse. Therefore, this chapter serves as a summative conclusion to the discourse that has been mentioned thus far, tying in both United States and Russian groups to the bigger picture of white supremacist discourse that is utilized by right wing populist groups globally, and seeing how such groups all serve as a larger, concerning network of organizations whom continue to gain prevalence and legitimacy within the system. This chapter ends with a warning of how such discourse can - and has been - codified into law, providing brief case studies of states in whom

right wing populist parties have gained considerable attraction and political influence through their adoption of populist rhetoric. Recognizing that such events have not happened in neither the United States nor Russia, it is still vital to keep these case studies as the lasting power that populism provides, with white supremacy undergirding their rhetoric.

Recognizing the fact that the European populist right is primarily focused in their own respective political parties, this distinction must be made from that of the United States and Russia, who primarily are street activists and congregations of people not necessarily elected into politics. This is to recognize that although populism is indeed presented differently within Europe as compared to the two states we have previously studied, their core tenets remain the same, and perhaps even *more* worrying considering that such European parties have the potential for *legislative* sway in their actions due to their legitimacy as actualized parties.

Below, I have included a table regarding the most contemporary European elections and their respective outcomes. I include the appropriate populist party and their respective performances in their most recent elections, as compared to the second most recent elections. This is to serve as a contemporary context for the chapter. Note that although it seems that many of the elections listed seem to see a drop in performance ranging from one to four percentage points, other parties across Europe who have not had recent enough elections (for example, within 2021 and 2022) have seen their polling rates remain at high levels. Currently, both Finland's "Finns Party", Spain's "Vox" party, Italy's "Lega" party are all polling in third place, with Belgium's "Flemish Interest" (a party which blends Flemish independence and anti-immigration rhetoric) in first (Poloni 2022).

Country	Party	2017/2019 result (%)	2021/2 result (%)
Czech Republic	Freedom and Direct Democracy	10.6	9.6
Germany	Alternative for Germany	12.6	10.3
Netherlands	Party for Freedom	13.1	10.8
Norway	Progress Party	15.2	11.7
Portugal	Enough	1.3	7.2

(Nordsieck).

Therefore, it is sufficient to say that right wing populist parties contribute a not insignificant portion of European party politics, with many of them ranging in variable degree of the amount of seats they hold in their respective state's parliaments. In fact, prominent comparative politician Cas Mudde has remarked that "the populist radical right is by far the most successful new party family in postwar Europe", with groups such as Green parties only enjoying predominance in Western Europe (Mudde 2016, 298). However much they may not enjoy considerable status as social democratic and social conservative parties may do within contemporary politics, the rhetoric these right wing populist parties employ precisely takes advantage of the topics other conservative parties simply do not discuss in full.

And precisely what *allows* for these parties' relative success and stability? We can witness an ethno-religious discourse present within these parties, where such right wing populists tout the rejection of incoming (majority) Muslim refugees and migrants "because of their purported anti-democratic beliefs and violent culture", which provide a considerable degree of attraction to potential voters disillusioned with the contemporary process (Mudde 2016, 296).

However, we must recognize that the reasons why voters become attracted to such rhetoric must be contextualized with supply-side factors as well, specifically what right wing populists do to appeal to greater audiences (Mols and Jetten 2020). Specifically, we must recognize that it is precisely their “willingness to resort to radical scare tactics that give these parties a competitive advantage and considerable control over their own popularity and electoral destiny” (Mols and Jetten 2020). And, therefore, we return to the theory of *great replacement* that I have previously argued ties both American and Russian groups together. It is precisely through external societal events (for example, terrorist attacks) that automatically trigger sensations of fear and collective anxiety *and* the framing of “outside” ethnic groups as threats that right wing populist parties garner appeal among voters. Inglehart and Norris have found that the strongest support for right wing populist parties are found among older white male voters lacking advanced education who tout “traditional values” (Inglehart and Norris 2016, 5). It is precisely this *cultural backlash*, of a wish to preserve European culture in the face of predominantly Muslim immigration, that right wing populist parties take advantage of in appealing to voters- specifically, the demographic mentioned above.

It may be relevant to discuss the case of France in context to the greater discussion on European right wing populism, as the state has a substantial right wing populist population in both grassroots citizens’ organizations and established political parties. France’s Front National (FN) party “exemplifies the typical radical right populist organization,” fueling its voter mobilization through anti-immigration rhetoric and opposition to mainstream European Union politics (Ivaldi 2019, 1). One of its most famous performances in recent elections was leader Marine Le Pen’s presidential campaign against current president Emmanuel Macron in 2022, in which the first round of voting placed her a close four percentage points behind the incumbent

(Kirby 2022). Such a close election implies that the FN's lasting influence over French voters remain strong and continues to grow stronger.

Le Pen's presidential campaign exemplifies nativist rhetoric, in which during her previous run in 2017 "she called for 'an immediate moratorium to stop all legal immigration,' arguing that 'mass immigration is not a chance for France, but an oppression and a tragedy'" (Ivaldi 2019, 5). Keeping in line with previous exclusionist rhetoric, she also called for a complete closure of all mosques in France and immediate deportation of "extremist" Muslims. Exemplifying what is known as 'illiberal democracy', the FN criticizes the liberal tenets of pluralism and representative institutions such as constitutional courts: preferring instead for extreme direct democracy through popular referendums. Although the FN conducts its operations as a fringe party who refuses to work with the other mainstream parties, the importance of such illiberal tendencies such as exclusionist rhetoric and denouncement of representative institutions as both a nuisance and potential threat to democracy cannot be understated.

The continued predominance of right wing populist parties in European politics lends a tense relationship with liberal democracy as a whole, and therefore has often been regarded by leading scholars as serving as a worrying development for the continued maintenance of liberal democratic ideals such as constitutional protections for minority groups. Although it is true that most right wing populist parties within Europe operate on the fringe of party politics, preferring to stay within their own niche due to their own distrust for the mainstream, exclusionary rhetoric is precisely dangerous due to its tendency to shut out certain groups of people - often ethnically or racially defined, such as Muslim refugees fleeing Syria or Afghanistan - from the democratic process. Given the fact that numerous states within the European Union have banned the wearing of full-face Islamic veils such as the burqa and niqab (specifically, Germany, Austria, France,

Belgium and most recently Switzerland), the tensions that currently reside within such states presents a worrying picture of what could possibly lie ahead (The Islamic Veil Across Europe 2018). Although banning a style of dress specifically associated with a particular religious and ethnic connotation does not equal entirely shutting out that group from the process of liberal democracy altogether, it *does* make it considerably harder for women who do wear such veils to participate within the process due to a tantamount part of their religious identity having been outlawed.

Globally, we have discussed the great replacement discourse present within grassroots organizations in both Russia and the United States, showing how an existential fear of being replaced spurs on the majority of their populist rhetoric as exhibited in group manifestos (with a distinct desire to save Western civilization in the case of the United States compared to a distinct desire to protect *from* Western influences in Russia), and have now connected that to the sphere of party populism that exists within Europe. Although it is important to recognize that the existence of populism as we have explored over the course of this work exists in a different context than European right wing populism (existing in groups attempting to gain new members through paramilitary and college-age recruitment tactics, as compared to established political parties performing adequately well in official elections), the existence of right wing populism that utilizes this exclusionary great replacement rhetoric is global and widespread. There have been troubling indicators of a tension that exists between right wing populist policy and liberal democracy, as exclusionary policies such as banning Islamic religious garb effectively have the potential to shun sections of the population out of participating in politics.

Looking forward into the future, I anticipate that such a rise in right wing populist rhetoric and party success will not cease, and perhaps even grow stronger as a result of the

prolonged COVID-19 pandemic. Although European populist parties do not enjoy the strongest amount of electoral success as they did during 2016, we can look to contemporary movements such as the truckers' protests in Ottawa as lived examples of rhetoric directly inspired by the strain of the pandemic. Therefore, it is evident that the degree to which right wing populist rhetoric is propagated in the Global North is widespread, and we should not anticipate its rapid demise anytime soon.

Conclusion

A collective malaise and distrust of political institutions - which only serve to propagate their own, invested selfish interests as compared to the truth, authentic will of the people - seems to simultaneously rise above both democratic institutions and authoritarian regimes. Whilst traditionally conceptualized as a political phenomenon affecting backsliding democracies, right-wing populism has therefore solidified itself as a contending force within Russia, an authoritarian regime masquerading itself as semi-democratic. Therefore, perhaps it is more enlightening to conceptualize right-wing populism beyond its effects on democracies in trouble of backsliding, and instead focus on its universal appeal across political systems.

The questions posited in this thesis are vital to the understanding of the current American political climate, as well as providing greater insight into the current Russian invasion of Ukraine. The infusion of right-wing populist discourse into American conservative politics remains pervasive, despite the common presumption of its existence only on the fringe of American politics. Though traditional conservatives may denounce the rhetoric of such groups as the American Identity Movement, the Proud Boys, and the Council of Conservative Citizens, it is evident that the presidency of Donald Trump has ushered in a new era of American politics in which such discourse is openly touted, dismissing core values of conservatism such as individualism and liberty in favor of white supremacy and fervent anti-immigration. On the other hand, the current Russian invasion of Ukraine has allowed traditional desires for reunification of a grand Russian state to return to the forefront, in which Vladimir Putin and state-owned news agencies reiterate a long-since held desire of right wing populist groups for reunification. The trifecta of Russia, Belarus, and “Little Russia” of Ukraine propagates such discourse of a ethnically homogenous great empire, comprised solely of Russians triumphantly

returning to the global sphere of influence. While evident that the topics of policy are radically different for both states, it should be noted this existence of discourse propping distinctly out of its oft-conceptualized fringe and into the mainstream.

As this research draws to a close, many questions yet linger which warrant closer examination and careful thought. Moving forward, how can we reconcile this increasingly inaccurate conception of right-wing populist groups as existing within the fringe, and reconceptualize their existence squarely within mainstream politics? To what extent does this theory of great replacement apply to right wing populist groups located outside of the United States and Europe, and how do they differ in regards to their own respective ethnic and racial groups? What are the long-term implications of such white supremacist discourse located within Russia and the United States? A brief, speculative discussion on the long-term policy implications of right-wing populism is warranted. Recognizing that the presence of populism is above the realm of institutionalism, perhaps cultural or social forces are necessary to blunt the attractiveness of the great replacement theory - such as a radical change in the racial formations which undergird whiteness in contemporary society.

Keeping these questions in mind as we continue to witness the evolution of American politics and the developments of war in Ukraine may therefore allow us to better conceptualize this growing tide of right-wing populism and its exclusionary nature for those *not* deemed the “people” and its infiltration in various political systems beyond mere democracies.

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