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Warriors of the Blood: The crisis of lone-wolf domestic terrorism by pseudo-religious white supremacist extremists

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The most heinous acts of far right-wing, lone wolf, autonomous cell leaderless resistance, and ethno-religious terrorism in history were committed by two Ásatrúar when casualties inflicted by an individual act of violence are accounted for.¹ In 2011, Norwegian Anders Breivik, a White Supremacist Extremist, achieved the highest death toll for a lone wolf attack in Oslo and Utøya, Norway. In 2019, Australian Brenton Tarrant, another White Supremacist Extremist, achieved the second highest death toll for a lone wolf attack across multiple locations in Christchurch, New Zealand, after being inspired by Breivik's actions. The core relevance for Critical Terrorism Studies (CTS) is that both these individuals are religious followers of Ásatrú.² This means that White Supremacist Extremist Ásatrúar have now formally joined Christians, Judaists, Hindus, Islamists, and Sikhs in perpetrating multiple acts of ideological ethno-religious terrorism. The question for scholars of CTS is whether this constitutes a new wave of ethno-religious terrorism. My conclusion is that whether White Supremacist Extremist Ásatrúar has begotten a new wave of terrorism is yet to be determined – but the evidence is compelling enough that the fact Ásatrúar are willing to engage in terrorism is a serious cause of concern for law enforcement, national security and intelligence apparatuses, and most certainly for CTS academics.

Since the 1980s, White Supremacist Extremist (WSE) violence has become a socio-political, ethno-religious, and now, national security dilemma throughout the majority of the Western World, especially within the United States (US).³ Moreover, during the 1980s and 1990s, an ideological and politico-religious conversion occurred for many WSE movements away from Christianity to a modern neo-pagan religion known as Ásatrú.⁴ The name

¹ I would like to thank Professor John Squires for his excellent tutelage of *Terror and Religion* during my undergraduate studies, where my academic inspiration for ethno-religious and ideological terrorism research was initiated, especially pertaining to White Supremacist Extremism intermixed with religious Ásatrú.

² Ásatrú is the Icelandic spelling, whilst Ásatru is the Norwegian – I utilise the Icelandic spelling.

³ Throughout this article, WSE will be used to refer to both the movement – Extremism – and the individuals within a movement – Extremist(s).

⁴ Ásatrúar themselves prefer heathen to pagan because of the derogative connotation of Christianity throughout history. Stefanie von Schnurbein, *Norse Revival: Transformations of Germanic Neopaganism* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 9-11; Mathias E. Nygaard, "The use of history in

Ásatrú is an Icelandic term meaning ‘faith in the *Æsir*’ – that is, the Viking-Age gods of Scandinavia that many would be familiar with, such as Thor and Odin – and it denotes a variety of modern religious beliefs and practices whose adherents claim are historically accurate reconstructions of the beliefs and practices of such ancestral communities from a millennium earlier.

This transformation for WSE occurred because of Robert Matthews’ protégée, David Lane. They were both members of the *Brüders Schweigen*, the Aryan Brotherhood’s elite guerilla unit during the early to mid-1980s.⁵ It is the legacy of Lane, whose reinterpretation of *völkisch* ideology.⁶ Intermixed with modern Odinism, which is also a non-racialised variant of Ásatrú, that began this devolution from traditional Christianity for WSE movements, groups, gangs, and individuals (if religious) towards what I label as *völkisch* Ásatrú.⁷

In the context of Critical Terrorism Studies (CTS), I would classify Breivik and Tarrant as leaderless resistance terrorists. They achieved “an act undertaken through individual initiative” that was “more a mark of despair than a revolutionary strategy.”⁸ Moreover, they were initially labelled Christian fundamentalists (if religion was even considered as a motivating factor for their actions), when in fact, both should be classed as *völkisch* Ásatrúar. Breivik openly professed to be a WSE Odinist and claimed to have never been a Christian.⁹ Tarrant stated that his WSE was inspired by Breivik’s actions and Lane’s ideological preachings.¹⁰ Both those claims are examined at the end of this article. However, for these reasons, I classify them as WSE Ásatrúar, or more specifically, Odinists.¹¹

Norwegian Asatru: ‘a religion with homework.’ *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, no. 2 (2022), 318.

⁵ Matthews died in a shootout with Federal authorities at his Whidbey Island hideout north of Seattle after an FBI informant gave him up. Mattias Gardell, *Gods of the Blood: The Pagan Revival and White Separatism* (Durham: Duke University Press, dukeupress.edu, 2003), 55, 193, 198; Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, 4th ed. rev. (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017), 184, 216.

⁶ Which essentially begot occultist Nazism, as will be explored later.

⁷ *Völkisch* means folkish. Within Ásatrú groups, this is code for white Europeans (or their descendants) only.

⁸ Jeffrey Kaplan, “Leaderless Resistance,” *Terrorism and Political Violence*, no. 3 (1997): 80, 90.

⁹ Kristin Engh Førde, “Norse gods in a crusade for Europe,” *Kilden*, 7 February 2012, kjonnsforskning.no; Silje Rognsvåg, “Breivik thinks Jesus is “pathetic”,” *Dagen*, 19 November 2015, Dagen.no.

¹⁰ Kristy Champion, “Australian right wing extremist ideology: exploring narratives of nostalgia and nemesis,” *Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism*, no. 3 (2019b): 209, 214; Peter Lentini, “The Australian Far-Right: An International Comparison of Fringe and Conventional Politics,” in *The Far-Right in Contemporary Australia*, eds Mario Peucker & Debra Smith (Singapore: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2019), 42-44.

¹¹ A subset within Ásatrú, ‘Odinists’ refers to those who only worship or are interested in Odin, often in a hypermasculine context. This is ironic, given that the actual early medieval evidence for Odin points to a deity with transgressive and transgender tendencies.

It is important to note that the majority of Ásatrúar exists in non-racialised groups and communities, and this analysis relates to the violent words and actions of a small minority of this religious group. In the same way that the words and actions of Christian, Muslim, or Hindu terrorists are not representative of their majority, we should similarly keep in mind that the actions of these *völkisch* Ásatrú are not a reflection of all Ásatrúar.

Within this essay, I will first analyse the origins of Ásatrú from within esoterica, mysticism, and occultism, followed by the evolution of Christian Identity politics, which is generally understood as the primary source of modern WSE. I will then shift my focus to CTS through an examination of David C. Rapoport's Four Waves of Modern Terrorism model, a recent critique by Chris Millington, and the Cosmic War theory of Mark Juergensmeyer. With this theoretical grounding examined, I then discuss WSE domestic terrorism in the US since the 1980s for its relevance to the development of *völkisch* Ásatrú violence and the actions of Breivik and Tarrant.

Ásatrú, *völkisch*, and occultist Nazism

The modern revival of Scandinavian and Germanic paganism or heathenry, henceforth referred to as Ásatrú, is relevant because it was Lane's inspiration to re-invent *Wotanism* of the nineteenth century, itself a reconstruction of imagined Germanic and Nordic beliefs with little actual connection to ancient and medieval practices, that one finds the origins of Odinism Breivik and Tarrant are associated with. What follows is a historical analysis of the *völkisch* movement, which is a highly relevant context regarding modern Ásatrúar having its roots intermixed with *völkisch* ideology.

As the socio-political and ethno-religious ideologies of the 1960s hippie era evolved into the 1970s New Age era, dramatic changes occurred within many Western metropolises – the Goddess metaphor evolved within feminism, and the re-emergence of “Wicca, Witchcraft, Heathenism, and Shamanism” remerged under the “broad term of *Celtic Spirituality movements*”¹² to name a few. Nonetheless, the evolution of modern Ásatrú had two distinct phases: a Foundation Era during the 1970s and 1980s in “Iceland, Sweden, Norway, Britain, and the [US]” that coincided with a renewal of “*völkisch* religious [communities] in [then Western] Germany”¹³ during which left- and right-wing ideological schism occurred; and a Consolidation Era during the 1990s and 2000s when such controversies peaked resulting in a process of reformation the anti-racialised groups eventually dominated as they formalised Ásatrú into a

¹² Judy Harrow, “The Contemporary Neo-Pagan Revival,” in *Magical Religion and Modern Witchcraft*, ed. James R. Lewis (New York: State University of New York Press, 1996), 9-10; Jenny Butler, “Druidry in Contemporary Ireland,” in *Modern Paganism in World Cultures: Comparative Perspective* (Oxford: ABC CLIO, 2005), 87.

¹³ von Schnurbein, *Norse Revival*, 54.

modern religion. Simply put, various Western polities sought a form of spirituality that had absolutely nothing to do with Christianity or its rigid social structures and gendered hierarchy.¹⁴ However, this is also when older *völkisch* religious ideologies – like Ariosophy, original Odinism, Western occultism and occultist Nazism, and even Satanism – intermixed right- and left-wing ideological, socio-political, and ethnoreligious attitudes on spirituality and ethnicity within such polities.¹⁵

Psychologist Colin Campbell infamously referred to this as the “cultic milieu” – “the cultural underground of society” intermixing “a bundle of ideas and practices related to other ideas and practices”¹⁶ into one. This evolution represents the ideological, emotional, religious, and political motivations of modern WSE, not just Breivik, Tarrant, or Lane. But why did such divergent and oppositional ideologies intermix?

Stefanie von Schnurbein’s research into the re-emergence of *völkisch* ideology and the (re)evolution of Ásatrú movements since the mid-1980s argued that “Germanic [and Nordic] Neopaganism is [where] alternative, dissident spirituality ... ultra-nationalist, racist, and radical right-wing ideology ... [meet and influence] each other.”¹⁷ As von Schnurbein stated, Ásatrúar is the outcome “of an [active] contributors to” mythologising Germanic and Nordic history through (re)inventing a National Mythology to suit a socio-political ideology, and this has “two points of [crystallisation]”¹⁸ within history: Germanic Romanticism (c. 1800) and *völkisch* ideological nationalism (c. 1910). Contextualisation of this evolution is important to understanding Lane, Breivik, and Tarrant.

The Romantic era infused a concept of Germanic history established by the Renaissance and Enlightenment: that Nordic or Germanic myth is synonymous with various patriotic endeavours from within the literary and religious arts.¹⁹ Thus, when philosopher and theologian Johann Gottfried

¹⁴ For an in-depth analysis, see James R. Lewis ed., *Magical Religion and Modern Witchcraft* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996); Micheal F. Strmiska ed., *Modern Paganism in World Cultures: Comparative Perspective* (Oxford: ABC CLIO, 2005); Jesper Aagaard Petersen ed., *Contemporary Religious Satanism: A Critical Anthology* (London: Routledge, 2009); Kathryn Rountree ed., *Contemporary Pagan and Native Faith Movements in Europe: Colonialist and Nationalist Impulses* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2015); Martina Miechová, *Radical Paganism: Contemporary Heathens in Search of Political Identity*, (Masters Thesis Charles University, Prague, 2019, unpublished).

¹⁵ von Schnurbein, *Norse Revival*, 8, 54-55.

¹⁶ The psychologist Colin Campbell coined the term ‘cultic milieu’ in 1972, quoted in Petersen, “Introduction: Embracing Satan,” 4.

¹⁷ von Schnurbein, *Norse Revival*, 1, 2, 8.

¹⁸ von Schnurbein, *Norse Revival*, 17.

¹⁹ von Schnurbein, *Norse Revival*, 21, 350, 358; Adrian Ivakhiv, “The Revival of Ukrainian Native Faith,” in *Modern Paganism in World Cultures: Comparative Perspective*, ed. Micheal F. Strmiska (Oxford: ABC CLIO, 2005), 215.

Herder (1744–1803) decided to revitalise Germanic poetry through folklore, Herder attributed Norse mythology as *the* authentic source of pre-Christian European historiography.²⁰ Herder's *Volk*, or proper nation, became radicalised as the *völkisch* movement became an alternative religion by 1910; however, its Romantic origins were always ideologically anti-Jewish and anti-Romani because, according to Herder, they never had a defined homeland.²¹

Herder's theories developed after scholar Paul Henri Mallet (1730–1807) first translated Eddic poetry in 1755 from Danish into French and in 1756 published a Celtic and Scandinavian historiography, as both books were translated into German. Hence, Herderian *volksgeist* – spirit of the people or national spirit – entered the psyche of various European polities who sought a national identity centred within a homogenous ethnicity of their own.²² Germanic Romanticism mythologised antiquity as a “holistic unity of [the] natural environment, language and history”²³ personified by rural life and the promotion of racist rhetoric.

The *völkisch* movement's goal of pan-German nationalism spread across Germanic polities after 1871, while *völkisch* ideology led to the creation of the *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*, also known as the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP).²⁴ In 1920, the Treaty of Versailles arguably ensured that the Weimar Republic would fail.²⁵ So, how did this *völkisch*

²⁰ von Schnurbein, *Norse Revival*, 21; Micheal F. Strmiska, “Modern Paganism in World Cultures: Comparative Perspectives,” in *Modern Paganism in World Cultures: Comparative Perspective*, ed. Micheal F. Strmiska (Oxford: ABC CLIO, 2005), 42.

²¹ The concept of European Romani and Sinti (often referred to by their racist moniker Gypsy or Gypsies) not having a “homeland” within Europe is completely spurious; this utterly false narrative remains a racist concept of “Europeanness” to this day. von Schnurbein, *Norse Revival*, 3, 17, 22, 25, 27; see William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany* (New York: Rosetta Books, 1961), 106, for an informative description of Hitler's definition of *Volk*.

²² von Schnurbein, *Norse Revival*, 21-26, 136; Ivakhiv, “The Revival of Ukrainian Native Faith,” 215; Jenny Butler, “Paganism in Ireland: Syncretic Processes, Identity and a Sense of Place,” in *Contemporary Pagan and Native Faith Movements in Europe: Colonialist and Nationalist Impulses*, ed. Kathryn Rountree (Oxford: Berghahn), 197-196, 213; Michael Strmiska & Vilius Rudra Dundzila, “Romuva: Lithuanian Paganism in Lithuania and America,” in *Modern Paganism in World Cultures: Comparative Perspective*, ed. Micheal F. Strmiska (Oxford: ABC CLIO, 2005), 244.

²³ von Schnurbein, *Norse Revival*, 17.

²⁴ The German Empire (1871-1918) won the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871 and reunified Germanic polities after the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire (962 to 1806) separated them into independent states. Additionally, the etymology of 'Nazi' as a shortened derivative is ascribed to a short essay by Joseph Goebbels in 1926, *Der Nazi-Sozi*, see *The Nazi-Sozi*. It was never used again by members of the NSDAP, as National Socialist was their preferred moniker. German exiles used Nazi in English as a derogative term, and it eventually became modern parlance after WWII.

²⁵ For an analysis of Germany's transformation into Nazism, see David F. Crew ed., *Nazism and German Society, 1933-1945* (London: Routledge, 1994); Anson Rabinbach & Sander L.

movement evolve? Nineteenth-century *völkisch* so-called expert Guido von List (1848–1919) infused “occultism, Theosophy, Ariosophy [and] esoteric traditions, paganism, magic, and monist pantheism”²⁶ into *völkisch* ideology whilst simultaneously inventing *Wotanism*, a religion of nature for the pagan commoner, and *Armanism*, an initiatory mystical religion exclusive to the *Armanenschaft*, the elite priests of *Wotanism*. List conceived these ideas from the writings of fellow occultist Helena Petrova Blavatsky (1831–1891), who invented Theosophy, which achieved “an influence far beyond its membership.”²⁷ Conjointly, the former Cistercian monk and friend of List, Jörg Lanz von Liebenfels (1874–1954), invented Theozology, or Aryanised Christianity, which supposedly proved the Old Testament depicts “the gradual degradation of the Aryan race”²⁸ due to centuries of interbreeding with non-Aryans and animals.

The *völkisch* movement sought to Germanise Christianity as portrayed in *völkisch* magus Richard Wagner’s opera *Parsifal*, a mythologised quest for the Holy Grail overtly insinuating a *völkisch* longing for a fictional Aryan Christ – Wagner openly stated his art personified *völkisch* ideology regarding the “religion of the blood.”²⁹ Although the vast majority of the NSDAP were not occultists, Alfred Ernst Rosenberg (1893–1946), who became the NSDAP’s primary propagandist, theorised that Indo-Europeans were the original Aryans, whom Rosenberg made into Caucasians.³⁰ Rosenberg’s theories originated from the English-born racist, so-called philosopher Houston Stewart Chamberlain (1855–1927), who stated, “[w]hoever makes the assertion that Christ was a Jew is either ignorant or insincere ... [Jesus] had not a drop of genuinely Jewish blood in his veins.”³¹ Chamberlain promoted scientific racism for educated elites, as well as marrying Wagner’s biological daughter and becoming a naturalised German, and helped to infuse Herderian rhetoric into

Gilman eds., *The Third Reich Sourcebook* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012); Martina Steber & Bernard Gotto, *Visions of Community in Nazi Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Jane Caplan, *Nazi Germany: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019 [eBook]).

²⁶ Miechová, *Radical Paganism*, 19-20; von Schnurbein, *Norse Revival*, 55, 81-82, 116; Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 24-25. Ariosophy refers to “the esoteric wisdom of the race of Aryans”, see Miechová, *Radical Paganism*, 20.

²⁷ von Schnurbein, *Norse Revival*, 51; Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 21; Miechová, *Radical Paganism*, 20. Theosophy mashed Hinduism, Buddhism, Gnosticism, Masonry, and the development of “scientific racism” together.

²⁸ Miechová, *Radical Paganism*, 21, 22.

²⁹ Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 20, 210.

³⁰ As head of the Reich Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories, Rosenberg – along with Hans Frank, Wilhelm Frick, Julius Streicher, and Fritz Sauckel – was one of only five original NSDAP members to both face trial and be executed at Nuremberg in 1946 for their role in the Holocaust. All others escaped, committed suicide, or died during WWII in combat; Strmiska, “Modern Paganism in World Cultures,” 24.

³¹ Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 20.

völkisch and, thus, NSDAP ideology.³²

Rudolf von Sebottendorff (1875–1945), *Ordenmeister* of the Ariosophic *Germanenorden* in Munich, created the Thule Society in 1918 “to avoid unwanted leftist attention”³³ after the short-lived Communist Republic of Munich was overthrown in 1919.

Liebenfels and List’s ideologies created both the Ariosophic Thule and Edda Societies, the former whose associates on January 5 1919, Anton Drexler (1884–1942) and Karl Harrer (1890–1926), created the *Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* (DAP) along with Rudolf W.R. Hess (1894–1987) and Rosenberg as original members.³⁴ By 1916, the *swastika* had already been the *Germanenorden*’s official emblem, important relevance on the use of occultist Nazism iconography by Brevik and Tarrant, and it transferred over to the DAP via the Thule Society.

On September 16 1919, after an lecture by so called economist Gottfried Feder (1883–1941), *Bildungsoffizier* of the Munich *Reichswehr*, Adolf Hitler, wrote an essay supporting a “‘rational’ [rather than] ‘emotional’” approach to the “irrevocable removal of the Jews” and to the “Jewish Question”³⁵ – the first time Hitler used such wording. The ultra conservative *Reichswehr* viewed all workers’ parties as Communists or Socialists, and Hitler was ordered to infiltrate one that “might be different.”³⁶ Already a supposed central figure of the DAP, Feder was to give a lecture in replacement of the *völkisch* poet Deitrich Eckart, the “spiritual founder of National-Socialism,”³⁷ in the *Leiberzimmer* of the Sternneckbräu beer hall. Afterwards, DAP chairman Anton Drexler invited Hitler to join and within a week received membership no. 555.³⁸ Hitler became the DAP’s propagandist in early 1920, added National-Socialist “to attract the

³²Strmiska, “Modern Paganism in World Cultures,” 25; For the prominence of Houston to pre-1927 Nazism, see von Schnurbein, *Norse Revival*, 29; Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, 121, 123-128; Rabinbach & Gilman, *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, 125, 151, 222, 268, 433, 526, 643, 732

³³ *Ordenmeister* translates as Grand Master. Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 26; Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, 46, 48.

³⁴ Rudolph Hess would go on to be the longest serving and surviving original member of the NSDAP. Rabinbach & Gilman, *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, 3-4, 8-9; Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 22, 23, 25-26, 27; Miechová, *Radical Paganism*, 20, 22.

³⁵ *Bildungsoffizier* means the educational officer or political activity investigator. Feder’s *Manifesto for Breaking the Bondage of Interest* had just been published. Rabinbach & Gilman, *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, 3; Ian Kershaw, *Hitler: A Biography* (London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008 [eBook]), 109.

³⁶ Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, 47; Kershaw, *Hitler: A Biography*, 111.

³⁷ Rabinbach & Gilman, *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, 3; Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, 46-47, 51.

³⁸ In January 1940, Drexler stated in a letter that Hitler later falsified his original member number as no. 7. The original membership cards started at 500 to inflate their numbers. Drexler noted Hitler might be considered *committee* member no. 7, but Drexler never sent the letter. Kershaw, *Hitler: A Biography*, 110-111.

working class for the Aryan cause”³⁹ on April 1 1920, and attained the now NSDAP’s leadership in July 1921. The rest is history.

After the Nazis seized power in 1933, on the personal instructions of Heinrich L. Himmler (1900–1945), the Austrian esoteric occultist, Karl Maria Wiligut (1866–1946), a prominent Ariosophist, became “chair of the department of prehistory” to lead “research [into] Aryan history and culture”⁴⁰ for the *Ahnenerbe* institute. The original *völkisch* movement demanded the “‘reunification’ of all German settlements at the territorial expense of other European States,”⁴¹ which even casual observers of history know mirrors the European theatre of World War II (WWII).⁴² However, the fact is, *völkisch* Ásatrú is *not* the religion of Wagner, von Sebottendorff, Chamberlain, Eckart, or Rosenberg, presenting a historical and religious contradiction. The cultic milieu of *völkisch* Ásatrú has reinterpreted the pan-German ideology of pre-1945.⁴³

There was a “general tendency to conflate [*völkisch*] culture, religion and [concepts of] ethnicity”⁴⁴ with Germanic or Nordic mythology in early Ásatrú groups. Mattias Gardell labelled Ásatrú – meaning true to the gods – a “homemade, self-experienced, and nondogmatic polytheist [pathway]” of reclaiming sacred elements of “man’s physical embodiment”⁴⁵ to nature and spirituality. But WSE Ásatrúar, like Breivik and Tarrant, seek the dark esoteric past of *völkisch* Aryan superiority as Lane did. The post-1945 re-emergence of *völkisch* religion in West Germany was predicated on the nefarious pretext of religious freedom, arguing they were persecuted during Hitlerite Germany.⁴⁶

³⁹ Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, 49, 52; Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 26; Rabinbach & Gilman, *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, 3; Caplan, *Nazi Germany*, 50.

⁴⁰ The *Schutzstaffel* created the *Ahnenerbe*, meaning “something inherited from our forefathers”, on July 1 1935. Miechová, *Radical Paganism*, 22.

⁴¹ Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 19-20; von Schnurbein, *Norse Revival*, 28.

⁴² I would argue the European theatre of WWII begins with Hitlerite Germany's annexation of the Sudetenland, September 1 to October 10 1938, not September 1 1939 with the invasion of Poland. The French, British, and Italians signed the Munich Agreement with Germany on September 29 1938, without consulting Czechoslovakia, later forcing their government to agree. The era of Appeasement remains heavily criticised by modern historians regarding British and French diplomacy during the 1930s – however, the argument they were stalling to sufficiently re-arm has gained academic credence through contemporary research on this period.

⁴³ Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 19; Shannon Webber, “White Supremacy’s Old Gods: The Far Right and Neopaganism,” *The Public Eye* (Winter 2018), 11-16.

⁴⁴ von Schnurbein, *Norse Revival*, 17.

⁴⁵ “Man” refers to the old term for the human species and is a direct quote. Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 152, 157. Kaplan stated Gardell’s fieldwork amongst WSE movements remains unparalleled in CTS scholarship, see Jeffrey Kaplan, *Apocalypse, Revolution and Terrorism: From the Sicari to the American Revolt Against the Modern World* (New York: Routledge, 2019 [eBook]), 106 n. 58.

⁴⁶ von Schnurbein, *Norse Revival*, 2, 4, 17, 48.

Nazism did persecute devout Christians, providing this *völkisch* resurgence with a spurious argument when in fact, *they* were the persecutors. Modern *völkisch* Ásatrúar have mythologised their own reinterpretation of history. It has since evolved again into a twisted combination or cultic milieu for WSE, of which two Ásatrúar have achieved a permanent place in the lexicon of ethno-religious terrorism. In the US, WSE Ásatrú has even tried to claim they are an organic religion of white Americans based on the short-lived Norse settlements c. 1,000 CE in the northeastern regions of North America.⁴⁷

Nonetheless, Lane, Breivik, and Tarrant do embody the original *völkisch* ideology: a common, homogenous, linguistic, cultural heritage with defined, natural territorial borders that disavows racial inter-mixing or inter-breeding as detrimental to the formulation of stable (white) identities.

On an academic note, Gardell stated that “despite the rising tide of paganism in white-racist culture”⁴⁸ since the 1990s, as a scholarly field, it remains understudied, which I do not consider having appreciably changed over the years that followed. Breivik and Tarrant espoused *völkisch* ideology, while *völkisch* Odinism is now considered by many WSE to be the “true religion of the Aryan race.”⁴⁹ This fact should not be ignored within CTS.

Importantly, the concept of an Aryan Christ spread West across the Atlantic quite willingly into the racist mission of Christian Identity in the US after first infecting the British Empire’s sectarianism.⁵⁰

British-Israelism creates Christian Identity

Christian Identity is an “umbrella concept for numerous [WSE] related theologies and ministries”⁵¹ originating from Protestant sectarianism, specifically British-Israelism. Mark Barkun stipulated that Richard Brothers (1757–1824), a retired British naval officer, in the late 1790s had so-called ‘millenarian visions’ of being a descendant of King David.⁵² However, Brothers concept of a British-Israel begot him eleven years locked inside an insane

⁴⁷ Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 209, and see parts of the chapter on “The Pagan Revival,” 146-154; Martyn Whittock, “American Vikings past and present: untangling myth from reality,” *The Historian* (Summer 2024, history.org.uk).

⁴⁸ Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 1.

⁴⁹ Webber, “White Supremacy’s Old Gods,” 12.

⁵⁰ Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 20, 21.

⁵¹ Mattias Gardell, “Black and White Unite in Fight? On the Inter-Action Between Black and White Radical Racialists,” in *The Cultic Milieu: Oppositional Subcultures in the Age of Globalisation*, eds Jeffrey Kaplan & Heléne Lööw (Walnut Creek: Altamira Press, 2002 [eBook]), 238.

⁵² As in the mythical king of ancient Canaanites within the Levant, which is depicted in versions of the Bible.

asylum.⁵³ It would be the illiterate son of an Irish weaver, John Wilson (?–1871), who wrote five volumes of *Lectures on Our Israelite Origins* between 1840 and 1876, which led to the spread of British-Israelism among educated elites. Wilson reinterpreted the New Testament of the Bible as justifying “Aryan superiority, anti-Semitism, and White domination” over the “‘mud-people’ of ‘Asia [and] sub-Saharan Africa.’”⁵⁴

Wilson promoted a mythos that had existed for some time within British sectarianism, that Jesus was actually Aryan not Semitic, akin to *völkisch* ideology. The Biblical exodus, after Rome’s 70 CE destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem, actually, according to Wilson, refers to “blue-eyed Aryans” who arrived “in the British Isles [becoming] Anglo-Saxons” and as “the true Jews”⁵⁵ their racial purity must be preserved. The *völkisch* movement might have created the NSDAP and ensured the outcome of the Holocaust.⁵⁶ However, British-Israelism resulted in Christian Identity politics in the US. William Cameron, Henry Ford’s publicist during the early twentieth century and a devotee of evangelist Gerald L. K. Smith, wrote *The International Jew: The World’s Foremost Problem*, which he credited to Ford, and based on Smith’s preachings about Wilson’s theories.⁵⁷

This produced a WSE chain of events. In 1946, Bertram Comparet, a deputy district attorney in San Diego, and Wesley Swift, a KKK member, founded the WSE Church of Jesus Christ-Christian (CJCC). Bill Gale, a member of the CJCC, started the WSE Christian Defence League in 1960, which evolved into the Posse Comitatus, the Aryan Nations, and the paramilitary Covenant, the Sword and the Arm of the Lord (CSA). Christian Identity minister, Robert Millar, and ex-American Nazi Party member Glen Miller, who were neighbours of the CSA, then built the WSE ranch Elohim City not far from Oklahoma City.⁵⁸

Christian Identity’s interconnectivity with the *völkisch* movement and British-Israelism is crucial to the evolution of WSE ethno-religious ideology and, by extension, Lane’s, Breivik’s, and Tarrant’s *raison d’être*. Gardell articulated the etymology of Identity politics origins within the US as bluntly as it possibly could be:

⁵³ In reality, his mental degradation may have been a result of syphilis. Mark Barkun, *Religion and the Racist Right: The Origins of the Christian Identity Movement*, rev. ed. (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 5-6.

⁵⁴ Barkun, *Religion and the Racist Right*, 6-7; Leonard B. Weinberg & Eliot Assoudeh, “Religion and the Radical Right in American Public Life,” *Religion Compass*, no. 7 (2016): 181.

⁵⁵ Barkun, *Religion and the Racist Right*, 131, 143, 163; Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 38.

⁵⁶ For a comprehensive analysis, see von Schnurbein, *Norse Revival*, 2016; Caplan, *Nazi Germany*, 2019; Crew ed., *Nazism and German Society*, 1994; Steber & Gotto, *Visions of Community in Nazi Germany*, 2014; Rabinbach & Gilman, *The Third Reich Sourcebook*, 2012.

⁵⁷ Mark Juergensmeyer, *Global Rebellion: Religious Challenges to the Secular State, from Christian Militias to al Qaeda* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 189.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

[R]acism pervaded all spheres of organised thought, including [United States] nationalism and religion. Racism was at the heart of the [United States] foundation. [Racism] was not disputed [because it] was truly a way of life, the "natural" order on which civilisation rested. Scientific racism [evolved within] academic circles [and] as part of the conventional Christian denominations, [racism] was a chief principle in the [United States] judicial system, [racism] was the upholder of decent morality and [racism] organised the social space of [United States] society.⁵⁹

Thus, the evolution of WSE stems from Christian Identity politics through British-Israelism and emulates *völkisch* ideology, providing a core ideological context to Lane's, Breivik's, and Tarrant's WSE terrorism.

What is terrorism?

Within CTS, terrorism instigates definitional problems, especially in conjunction with political violence.⁶⁰ During the 1920s and early 1930s, the *International Conferences for the Unification of Penal Law* were the first "organised international legal attempt [at] defining terrorism."⁶¹ In 1937, the League of Nations held the *Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of Terrorism* to codify an international legal framework.⁶² Both attempts failed, and the United Nations (UN) General Assembly and the Security Council have also failed to reach a consensus on a legal definition of terrorism since its inception in 1945.⁶³

The issue for CTS is that the definition of terrorism continuously changes. In 1974, a retired judge of the International Court of Justice declared, "We have cause to regret that a legal concept of terrorism was ever inflicted upon us. The term is imprecise; it is ambiguous; and, above all, it serves no operative legal purpose."⁶⁴ In 1988, CTS scholars could list 109 definitions; since

⁵⁹ Gardell, "Black and White Unite in Fight?", 237-238.

⁶⁰ Alex P. Schmid, "The Definition of Terrorism," in *The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research*, ed. Alex Schmid (Abington, UK: Routledge, 2011); Timothy Shanahan, "The Definition of Terrorism," in *The Routledge Handbook on Critical Terrorism Studies*, ed. Richard Jackson (London: Routledge, 2016); Philip Jenkins, *Images of Terror: what we can and can't know about terrorism* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 2003).

⁶¹ Ben Golder & George Williams, "What is 'Terrorism'? Problems of Legal Definitions," *UNSW Law Journal*, no 2 (2004), 270.

⁶² This occurred after 40 years of Anarchist political assassinations. Schmid, "The Definition of Terrorism," 39; Golder & Williams, "What is 'Terrorism'?" 274 note 26. For an in-depth analysis of the Anarchist era, see Michael Kemp, *Bombs, Bullets and Bread* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2018).

⁶³ Schmid, "The Definition of Terrorism," 5.

⁶⁴ Golder & Williams, "What is 'Terrorism'?" 270-271.

2011, there have been over 250. When prominent CTS scholars were asked to describe terrorism, they produced a 580-word description, which consisted of 12 clauses, indicating the complexity of critically analysing terrorism.⁶⁵ Obviously, the events of September 11, 2001, instigated a massive interest in CTS compared to previous decades. However, there has been a failure by CTS scholars to “distance [themselves] from the vilification”⁶⁶ of the subject matter.

Moreover, Alex P. Schmid contends that unlike in traditional sciences, where a definition is “basically an equation”, terrorism reflects the “political interests and the moral judgements (or lack thereof) of those who do the defining.”⁶⁷ However, Timothy Shanahan contends two divided camps exist within CTS: objectivists, who argue there are epistemological characteristics that demonstrate “terrorism is a real [and] distinct form of political violence”, and subjectivists, who argue terrorism is “entirely within the eye of the beholder”⁶⁸ based on personal opinion of a specific event. This is why I argue that claiming terrorism *automatically* equates to political violence is not undertaking a neutral and critical analysis – and this matters.

First, terrorism is too narrow a concept to automatically be associated with a broad concept like political violence.⁶⁹ Second, terrorism is a loaded term – it is over-utilised as a “pejorative political term of stigmatisation”⁷⁰ by socio-political or ideological opponents. Third, when it is utilised in the pejorative, it arguably becomes “the most politicised term in [modern] political vocabulary” akin to being called a “racist, fascist, or imperialist.”⁷¹ Fourth, the concept of terrorism or terrorist is far too often used to denigrate various acts, irrespective of physical violence occurring.⁷² Lastly, when claiming an act is ethnoreligious

⁶⁵ Shanahan, “The Definition of Terrorism,” 105; Schmid, “The Definition of Terrorism,” 42-44; Golder & Williams, “What is ‘Terrorism’?” 270. For definitions dating back to Maximilien Robespierre’s *la Terruer* (Reign of Terror) during the French Revolution, see Schmid, “The Definition of Terrorism,” 99-148.

⁶⁶ This alludes to Islamist rhetoric in CTS. Ioannis Tellidis, “Terrorism and Peace Studies,” in *The Routledge Handbook on Critical Terrorism Studies*, ed. Richard Jackson (London: Routledge, 2016), 300, 302.

⁶⁷ Schmid, “The Definition of Terrorism,” 39-40.

⁶⁸ Shanahan, “The Definition of Terrorism,” 104.

⁶⁹ For the complexities of ‘political violence’ as a term, see Schmid, “The Definition of Terrorism,” 40, 71, 78; Shanahan, “The Definition of Terrorism,” 105, 108; Jenkins, *Images of Terror*, 3, 27, 37, 78, 128, 131, 149.

⁷⁰ Schmid, “The Definition of Terrorism,” 40, 677, 694.

⁷¹ Schmid, “The Definition of Terrorism,” 40, 94. For analysis on bias in academia see, Gillian Duncan & Alec P. Schmid, “Bibliography of Terrorism,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research*, ed. Alex Schmid (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2011), 466-468; Bradley McAllister & Alex P. Schmid, “Theories of Terrorism,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research*, ed. Alex Schmid (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2011).

⁷² Shanahan, “The Definition of Terrorism,” 106, in reference to “ecoterrorism” and “cyberterrorism” as non-violent forms of terrorism. It is also what non-democratic authoritarians frequently call their opponents.

or ideological, the polity's government is usually the defining agency that commonly holds definitional control.⁷³ An old adage persists, regardless of whether anyone likes it or not: "one person's terrorist is another person's freedom fighter."⁷⁴ Thus, one question for CTS is where the power of definition should rest.

Once those who self-declare themselves to have a right to label what an act of terrorism is – victims of violence, mass and social media, governments, religious leaders, various UN bodies, non-government organisations, and so on – academics are the last bastion of critical analysis regarding the facts, but only *when* CTS scholars "approach the subject from a detached academic point of view."⁷⁵ When trying to determine what constitutes terrorism, whether by WSE or other far-right movements, Kristy Campion and Jacob Zenn have concluded that making such a definitive determination is not so easily reached.⁷⁶ Shanahan, however, has provided what I consider to be a quite sensible and straightforward definition:

Terrorism is the strategically indiscriminate harming or threat of harming members of a target group in order to influence the psychological states of an audience group in ways the perpetrators anticipate may be beneficial to the advancement of their agenda.⁷⁷

I would argue this definition fits Breivik's and Tarrant's actions to the letter.

⁷³ Schmid, "The Definition of Terrorism," 40-41; Shanahan, "The Definition of Terrorism," 103, 105, 109-111.

⁷⁴ Schmid, "The Definition of Terrorism," 19-23; Shanahan, "The Definition of Terrorism," 104; Jenkins, *Images of Terror*, 2003, chapter 2 "Another Man's Freedom Fighter" for a critically complex analysis.

⁷⁵ Schmid, "The Definition of Terrorism," 41.

⁷⁶ Campion, "Australian right wing extremist ideology," 2019b; Kristy Campion, "A 'Lunatic Fringe'? The Persistence of Right Wing Extremism in Australia," *Perspectives on Terrorism*, no. 2 (2019a); Kristy Campion, Mark Nolan, & Nick O'Brien, "Framing the Australian extreme right: proposing a threefold typology with consideration of legislation and listing regulations," *Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism*, no. 3 (2023); Jacob Zenn, "War on terror 2.0: threat inflation and conflation of far-right and white supremacist terrorism after the capitol 'Insurrection'," *Critical Studies in Terrorism*, no. 1 (2023).

⁷⁷ Shanahan, "The Definition of Terrorism," 110.

Rapoport's Religious Terror theory and Four Waves of Modern Terrorism model within Critical Terrorism Studies

The late Rapoport created the first academic course on terrorism in 1969. It "consisted solely of artistic works or memoirs" as he reminisced on the "paucity of academic research"⁷⁸ in 2011.

In 1984, having begun to develop the wave model, Rapoport stated, "[b]efore the nineteenth century, religion provided the only acceptable justifications for terror [which raises] questions about the appropriateness of contemporary definitions."⁷⁹ Rapoport's analysis was of the Hindu Thugs, Islamic Assassins, and Judaist Zealots-Sicarii of ancient history whose violence Rapoport labelled, sacred terror, adding such ideologues "seek different political ends in this world by whatever means of terror they consider most appropriate."⁸⁰ By 2022, this changed to "[b]efore the eighteenth century, religion was the primary motivator of every terror campaign,"⁸¹ and his analysis of sacred terror had replaced the Thugs of Hinduism for the Crusaders of Christianity.

In 1987, Rapoport first referred to three waves of terrorism; between 1999 and 2003, this became four waves of modern terrorism. By 2004, specific timeframes and titles were added: the Anarchist wave, spanning 1870s to 1920s; the Anti-Colonial wave, from 1920s to 1960s; the New Left wave, from 1960s to 1980s; and the Religious wave, from the 1980s to the present day.⁸²

A significant problem with the wave model is that Rapoport ignored Christian and right-wing terrorism and continuously referred to rebel movements as terrorists.⁸³ Rapoport never analysed WSE radical right-wing

⁷⁸ David C. Rapoport, "Introduction," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, no. 4 (1987); Chris Millington, "Bad history: a historian's critique of Rapoport's "four waves of terrorism" model," *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, no. 3 (2024, mmu.ac.uk): 492.

⁷⁹ Rapoport, "Fear and Trembling," 659.

⁸⁰ Rapoport's original articulation of sacred terror is seen in Rapoport's "Fear and Trembling," 1984.

⁸¹ David C. Rapoport, *Waves of Global Terrorism: From 1879 to the Present* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2022), 13.

⁸² For this evolution, see Rapoport, "Introduction," 1987; David C. Rapoport, "Terrorism," in *Encyclopedia of Violence, Peace, and Conflict*, eds Jennifer E Turpin & Lester R. Kurtz (San Diego: Academic Press, 1999); David C. Rapoport, "The Fourth Wave: September 11 2001 in the History of Terrorism," *Current History*, no. 650 (2001); David C. Rapoport, "The Four Waves of Rebel Terror and September 11," in *The New Global Terrorism: Characteristics, Causes, Controls*, ed Charles W. Kegley (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 2003a); David C. Rapoport, *Generations and Waves: The Keys to Understanding Rebel Terror Movements*, UCLA International Institute (2003b), international.ucla.edu; Rapoport, "The Four Waves of Modern Terrorism," 2004; Rapoport, *Waves of Global Terrorism*, 2022; also see Michael Kemp, *Bombs, Bullets and Bread*, 2018.

⁸³ Millington, "Bad history," 490, 496-497; Karen Rasler & William R. Thompson, "Looking for Waves of Terrorism," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, no. 1 (2009): 32; Leonard Weinberg &

Christians – let alone Ásatrú – terrorism during a distinguished career within CTS.⁸⁴ In contrast, some of Rapoport's contemporaries have undertaken extensive research into both topics for decades.⁸⁵ Importantly for CTS, Chris Millington's recently published critique of Rapoport's long-standing wave model concluded that it was never fit for purpose.⁸⁶

Millington's criticism begins with Rapoport's 1984 conclusion to his *Fear and Trembling* article, where they state, "[t]here is no authoritative history of modern terrorism that traces its development from its inception"⁸⁷ in the nineteenth century to modern times – indeed, Rapoport repeated this opinion in 2004, 2013, and again in 2022. Millington's problem is with political scientists not embodying the historian's *modus operandi*, stating "[t]he solution to understanding the history of terrorism is to engage in genuine historical study" and "fine-grained, case-specific research [focused on the] context and nuance" of the subject matter through undertaking "painstaking research into the archival record."⁸⁸ The reality, however, is that most political scientists primarily rely on secondary sources by necessity.

Chris Millington and a critical remodelling of Rapoport's 'Four Waves' model

Breivik and Tarrant might belong to the Religious wave, but a maxim of the Anarchist wave is very appropriate – "terror [is] propaganda of the deed"⁸⁹ – and they certainly provided WSE with propaganda by their deeds. The paramilitary organisations between the 1920s and 1980s, during Rapoport's Anti-Colonial and New Left waves, were not generally religious ideologues;

William Eubank, "An End to the Fourth Wave of Terrorism?" *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, no. 7 (2010): 596. For a somewhat supportive analysis of Rapoport's modelling, see Jeffrey Kaplan, "Terrorism's Five Wave: A Theory, a Conundrum and a Dilemma," *Perspectives on Terrorism*, no. 2 (2008).

⁸⁴ Breivik and Tarrant had undertaken their terrorism prior to Rapoport's passing in early 2024.

⁸⁵ For further analysis, see Mark Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War? Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); Kaplan, "Leaderless Residence," 1997; Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 2003; von Schnurbein, *Norse Revival*, 2016.

⁸⁶ Millington, "Bad history," 489.

⁸⁷ Millington, "Bad history," 492; David C. Rapoport, "Fear and Trembling: Terrorism in Three Religious Traditions," *The American Political Science Review*, no. 3 (1984): 672.

⁸⁸ Millington, "Bad history," 502.

⁸⁹ It is also worded 'by the deed' and is attributed to nineteenth-century socio-political activists Italian Socialist Carlo Pisacane and Russian Anarchist Mikhail Bakunin, see Kemp, *Bombs, Bullets and Bread*, vii. Dynamite had only recently been invented by Alfred Nobel in 1866, and many of the early Anarchists who used it also killed themselves, indicative of the suicide terrorism of Rapoport's 'Religious' wave of terrorism. Russian Anarchist Peter Kropotkin is also given credit, as seen in Rapoport's "Fear and Trembling," 660.

they sought independence from colonialism and championed secular statehood.⁹⁰

Rapoport's wave model stipulates that a political event begins and ends each wave, and Millington's criticism continues because the political event of Rapoport's Anti-Colonial wave was the Treaty of Versailles. After The Great War ended on the Western Front, the victorious *Entente* during the Paris Peace Conference of 1919–1920 imposed individual punitive treaties upon the five defeated Central Powers.⁹¹ Although I will not examine that historiography here, the terms of the treaty imposed upon the Weimar Republic arguably caused World War II in Europe.⁹²

Regardless, controversy continues through labelling the Second Wave as Anti-Colonial. Post-1945 was an era of paramilitary independence movements based on aspirations of independent statehood, and insinuating 1918 to 1939 was an era of terrorism under such conditions remains problematic.⁹³ This is why Millington argues that Rapoport "fit the history to the model" considering that most anti-colonial violence began "*at least twenty-five years* after [Rapoport's] trigger point"⁹⁴ of Versailles. Millington continues, arguing that Rapoport named "the waves after the groups that opposed the status quo. [Thus], the model reinforced traditional, state-centric conceptions of terrorism,

⁹⁰ Rapoport, *The Four Waves of Modern Terrorism*, 52-65; Rasler & Thompson, "Looking for Waves of Terrorism," 28, 30-39, 41; Weinberg & Eubank, "An End to the Fourth Wave of Terrorism?" 595.

⁹¹ Note how peace for the West forgets the Southern and Eastern Fronts of WWI. The Entente included France, Britain, Japan, Russia, and Italy. The US became an 'associated power' in 1917, the year the Russian Revolution and Civil War saw a cessation of hostilities on the Eastern Front. The other treaties were the Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye upon Austria, September 10 1919; the Treaty of Neuilly-sur-Seine upon Bulgaria, November 27 1919; the Treaty of Trianon upon Hungary, June 4 1920; and the Treaty of Sèvres upon the Ottoman Empire, August 10 1920, which was superseded by the Treaty of Lausanne, July 24 1923, upon Türkiye when the Ottoman government collapsed after a civil war and war with Greece, including acts of genocide.

⁹² This begins November 9 1918, after the "November Revolution" in the last month of WWI; it ends March 23 1933, with the onset of Hitlerite Germany. Kaiser Wilhelm II, the last Prussian Hohenzollern monarch, was forced to abdicate and died in exile during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands in 1941 during WWII, ironically. Rapoport, "Four Waves of Modern Terrorism," 53; Erez Manela, "Imagining Woodrow Wilson in Asia: Dreams of East-West Harmony and the Revolt against Empire in 1919," *The American Historical Review*, no. 5 (2006), 1328; Enzo Traverso, *Fire and Blood: The European Civil War, 1914-1945*, trans. David Fernbach (London: Verso, 2006), 5, 9, 50, 57-58; Norman A. Graebner & Edward M. Bennett, *The Versailles Treaty and Its Legacy: The Failure of Wilsonian Vision* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

⁹³ The battles fought within Europe, let alone outside, are too numerous to list. This is a research project I am working on pertaining to the term "inter-war period" that I have serious historical problems with.

⁹⁴ Italics in original, Millington, *Bad history*, 501.

and continues to do so.”⁹⁵ Rapoport, unfortunately, claimed state terrorism eclipsed rebel terrorism only briefly during the 1930s – when most CTS scholars acknowledge states also perpetrate terrorism and likely agree state-sponsored terrorism has always “outweighed that of rebel [terrorism].”⁹⁶

European ethnic minorities, and especially non-European colonial majorities subjected to centuries of extractor or settler colonialism, sought self-determination.⁹⁷ Former colonies of the Central Powers predominantly became French or British League of Nations Mandates, whose indigenous populations would not see their independence until Rapoport’s New Left wave of the 1960s and 1970s. The Irish Free State’s attainment of dominion status in 1922, following a bloody paramilitary War of Independence against centuries of British colonialism, is essentially an exception within pre-World War II Europe.⁹⁸

Furthermore, Millington’s criticism of rigid timeframes is appropriate because it remains problematic for CTS, such as this analysis which is based on Rapoport’s model. Rapoport also lacked a nuanced analysis on certain events, like why the Muslim Brotherhood or the Irish Republican Army (IRA) continued to maintain an influence across successive waves, indicating some of the issues.⁹⁹

Regarding the Third or New Left and the Fourth or Religious waves of terrorism, issues already outlined persist. Thus, I have omitted my analysis due to repetition, other than to state that the label New Left speaks to Millington’s criticism of state-centric ideological arguments, and the Religious wave does not focus on WSE terrorism. Rapoport stated that the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Persia, modern Iran, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan are the political events that beget the continuing Religious wave.

⁹⁵ Millington, *Bad history*, 495.

⁹⁶ This alludes to the *Sturmabteilung* (SA) or “brownshirts” of the NSDAP, who were an official paramilitary wing of the NSDAP. Millington, *Bad history*, 494-495.

⁹⁷ Wilsonian idealism simultaneously inspired and crushed the aspirations of minority ethnic and majority indigenous polities alike, see Rapoport, “The Four Waves of Modern Terrorism,” 52-56. For a comprehensive analysis of colonialism, see Manela, “Imagining Woodrow Wilson in Asia,” 2006; Graebner & Bennett, *The Versailles Treaty and Its Legacy*, 2011; Patrick Wolfe, “Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native,” *Journal of Genocide Research*, no. 4 (2006); David B. Abernethy, *The Dynamics of Global Dominance: European Overseas Empires, 1415-1980* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000); Robert B. Marks, *The Origins of the Modern World: A Global and Environmental Narrative from the Fifteenth to the Twenty-First Century*, 4th rev. ed. (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020).

⁹⁸ Patrick Keatinge, “Ireland and the League of Nations,” *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, no 59 (1970). Other wars occurred in Europe, but my scope does not allow for an analysis of them all.

⁹⁹ Rapoport, “Four Waves of Modern Terrorism,” 55; Manela, “Imagining Woodrow Wilson in Asia,” 1348 note 73; Weinberg & Eubank, “An End to the Fourth Wave of Terrorism,” 594; Sagit Yehoshua, “ Hamas,” in *Routledge Handbook of Terrorism and Counterterrorism*, ed. Andrew Silke (London: Routledge, 2019), 292-297, 300.

Rapoport never analysed Christian terrorism ordinarily, and although the 2022, and final, reiteration of the wave model included a section on the Crusaders, this has very limited usefulness in modern CTS. Back in 1984, Rapoport stated that “materials are not as conveniently available” and opined it “reminds one of the Crusades, an unlimited or total war launched by the Papacy.”¹⁰⁰ In other words, meaning state-sponsored terrorism, illustrating an inconsistency with Rapoport’s original reasoning. Rapoport, though, always stated the wave model was only focused on rebel and not state-sponsored, or right-wing, terrorism.¹⁰¹

However, in the 2022 final reiterations of both his ‘sacred terror’ theory and ‘four waves’ model, Rapoport included the Sons of Liberty and the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) alongside the Crusaders – one overtly WSE group and all Christians who conducted a form of terrorism.¹⁰² Unfortunately, the two have no living memory because they are not modern examples of Christian or right-wing terrorism, and the KKK has barely functioned as an organisation in recent generations.¹⁰³ Nonetheless, it is the concept of waging a Cosmic War that now requires analysis to further understand Breivik and Tarrant as WSE ethno-religious, self-anointed warriors battling the – imagined – enemies of the Aryan race.

Mark Juergensmeyer and Cosmic War Theory

Juergensmeyer summarised Cosmic War theory as a “great encounter between cosmic forces [of] good versus evil, [of] divine truth and falsehood that worldly struggles only mimic.”¹⁰⁴ For example, Christian Identity leader Kerry Noble claimed, “[t]he Lord God is a man of War”, and Osama bin Laden’s 1998 *Fatawa* stated that the US was leading a “war on God, His messenger and Muslims.”¹⁰⁵ For a Cosmic War in a WSE Ásatrú context, one need only look at Lane’s *völkisch* Odinism, where *Ragnarøk* had already occurred – when “Aryan man turned his back on the indigenous Gods of his race.”¹⁰⁶

Moreover, Phillip Jenkins argued that terrorism operates on a logic quite different to other political agendas: to an ethno-religious nationalist or extremist, terrorism is not viewed the same as conventional warfare because

¹⁰⁰ Rapoport, “Fear and Trembling,” 660 note 4.

¹⁰¹ For an analysis of Rapoport’s conversation with Kaplan, see Millington “Bad History,” 500-501.

¹⁰² Rapoport, *Waves of Global Terrorism*, 26-34, 34-43, 43-49, respectively.

¹⁰³ The KKK does still exist but in various fractured groups compared to its late nineteenth-century origins.

¹⁰⁴ Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War?* 155.

¹⁰⁵ Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 127.

¹⁰⁶ Note that *Ragnarøk* is the destruction of the old Gods within early medieval Norse texts; Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 209.

concepts like defeat and victory have very different meanings to non-state actors. His point is that acts of terrorism are not commonly settled in the traditional sense of diplomacy or international relations.¹⁰⁷

Ben Golder and George Williams argued that defining terrorism within a political context is a modern, post-2001 symptom of international relations attempting to produce a legal – that is, a political – definition, which, as Schmid and Shanahan outlined, has consistently failed. Golder and Williams' argument is that ethno-religious terrorism cannot easily be redefined within political concepts, even though it is widely deployed in various legal doctrines.¹⁰⁸

Schmid and Shanahan's analysis of who and what constitutes terrorism is clearly illustrated within the case of Palestinian paramilitary independence movements. Assaf Moghadam's analysis of the organisational goals and motives of Islamist suicide terrorism, as conducted by Hamas or Hezbollah, concluded such actions are an "expression of a political strategy."¹⁰⁹ Hamas and Hezbollah utilise both "religious and political indoctrination" to instil a mixture of "moral, political, and religious justification"¹¹⁰ into their actions.

Furthermore, David Lester, Bijou Yang, and Mark Lindsay remind us that politically motivated killing, where the perpetrator also dies, is not a new phenomenon even in Western polities. However, they argue that Islamic suicide terrorism is rarely politically motivated – it is routinely a personal act between the perpetrator and the victim.¹¹¹ Examples of non-Islamist suicidal tendencies include the Japanese kamikaze pilots of WWII, the Old Testament story of Samson dying while killing the Philistines, and the Anarchist wave, which often involved the use of newly invented dynamite that frequently killed the attacker, whether intentionally or not.

In Rapoport's wave model, such groups operate within the traditional Anti-Colonial and New Left (1950s–1970s) ethos by having a political and paramilitary wing, akin to Sinn Féin and the IRA to this day. Further discussion on suicidal, let alone Islamic or sectarian, violence is not my focus, but these examples illustrate how geopolitical conditions infuse contentious elements of religious context into contemporary discourse within CTS. Although this is not an exhaustive source of examples, they illustrate two facts. Politics is, arguably, a secondary aspect of the ideological aspirations of many ethno-religious movements. However, politics is not easily removed from the ideological motivations of ethno-religious terrorism.

¹⁰⁷ Jenkins, *Images of Terror*, 74.

¹⁰⁸ Golder & Williams, "What is 'Terrorism'?" 270-271.

¹⁰⁹ Assaf Moghadam, "Palestinian Suicide Terrorism in the Second Intifada: Motivations and Organisational Aspects," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, no. 2 (2003): 77.

¹¹⁰ Moghadam, "Palestinian Suicide Terrorism," 85.

¹¹¹ David Lester, Bijou Yang & Mark Lindsay, "Suicide Bombers: Are Psychological Profiles Possible?" *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, no. 4 (2004): 284.

Although Breivik and Tarrant conducted themselves in a very similar manner, they were leaderless resistance terrorists who never had an organised paramilitary structure as support. Rapoport reminds us “[t]he modern terrorist serves political ends to be achieved by human efforts alone, and [they], not God, chooses the most appropriate ends and means.”¹¹²

The Cultic Milieu of White Supremacist Extremism in the USA

An important correlating nexus occurred in the late 1970s when WSE militias began to physically emulate the ethno-religious ideological mythology of neo-Nazi theorist and former writer for the American Nazi Party, William Pierce. In 1978, Pierce published *The Turner Diaries* (under the pseudonym Andrew Macdonald), which has since become ‘the bible’ for WSE right-wing anti-government militia types in the US.¹¹³ Pierce’s fictional Aryan guerillas called the Order to fight an apocalyptic battle and race war against a dictatorial American government and so-called race traitors who are forcibly imposing a secular agenda upon Christian society because they are secretly led by “Jews and liberals.”¹¹⁴

The *Turner Diaries* culmination provides this extremism: the protagonist, Earl Tuner, undertakes a suicide attack in a nuclear armed aircraft against the Pentagon; what is called the Day of Rope in the book, when all non-whites are literally hung in the streets; and Pierce’s American Aryans achieve a nuclear strike upon Palestine-Israel with an Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile.¹¹⁵ In 1984, Pierce founded his own WSE movement, the Cosmotheist Community, based on the *Turner Diaries* ideological premise, such as the Order’s “mission” to restore “Christianity’s ‘spiritual strength’ and ‘health’ [as] ‘bearers of the Faith [in a] Godless world.”¹¹⁶ Pierce denounced Identity movements *per se*, but the correlating rhetoric of each doctrinal framework is not easily missed. Pierce’s WSE mythology literally provides the nucleus for the most devastating act of domestic terrorism in US history and inspired the actions of Matthews, Lane, and others whom Breivik and Tarrant would later emulate.

On April 19, 1995, Timothy James McVeigh and Terry Lynn Nichols achieved the highest death toll for an act of domestic terrorism not conducted by an organised paramilitary movement.¹¹⁷ McVeigh detonated 1,995 kilos “of

¹¹² Rapoport, “Fear and Trembling,” 674.

¹¹³ Jenkins, *Images of Terror*, 75; Martina Miechová, *Radical Paganism: Contemporary Heathens in Search of Political Identity*, (Masters Thesis Charles University, Prague, 2019, unpublished), 36.

¹¹⁴ Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 25, 216; Miechová, *Radical Paganism*, 37.

¹¹⁵ Jenkins, *Images of Terror*, 76.

¹¹⁶ Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 25, 277.

¹¹⁷ The 2001 attacks in New York City and Washington D.C. are not considered “domestic” terrorism, irrelevant to various conspiracy theories that now exist. Juergensmeyer, *Global*

ammonium nitrate fertiliser and fuel oil"¹¹⁸ inside a truck parked outside the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, destroying one third of the structure – it killed 168 adults and 15 children and injured 680 others. McVeigh had sold Pierce's *Turner Diaries* at gun shows for years and always had a copy upon him, and whilst Pierce died in 2002, Pierce publicly denied knowing McVeigh; however, the police investigation confirmed McVeigh had rung Pierce's unlisted number in West Virginia and had a lengthy conversation prior to the bombing.¹¹⁹ The truck bomb was almost exactly like a similar attack Pierce depicted in the *Turner Diaries*.

On July 27, 1996, Eric Robert Rudolph detonated an explosive device at Centennial Park during the Olympic Games in Atlanta, Georgia, killing up to three people and injuring over one hundred. On January 16, 1997, Rudolph bombed the Northside Family Planning Services, Atlanta, with no injuries. On February 21, 1997, Rudolph bombed the Otherside Lounge in Midtown, Atlanta, during a lesbian night-only event, with no fatal injuries. On January 29, 1998, Rudolph bombed the New Woman, All Woman Health Care Clinic in Birmingham, Alabama, killing security officer Robert Sanderson and maiming nurse Emily Lyons. Rudolph stayed on the run until being captured in 2003. On April 13, 2005, Rudolph pleaded guilty to all charges. Rudolph associated with Identity preachers Dan Gayman, since childhood via his mother, and Nord Davis, whom Lane also knew, labelling himself a Soldier at War for the Army of God and subscribed to conspiracy theories about anti-LGBTQI+ and the permissiveness of secular culture being secretly controlled by Jews through atheistic internationalism.¹²⁰

Between 2 and 4 July 1999, Benjamin Nathaniel Smith killed an African American basketball coach and a Korean exchange student. He then wounded nine Orthodox Jews, two African American students, and one Taiwanese student – all with a sniper rifle during a rampage across Illinois and Indiana before shooting himself in a standoff with police.¹²¹ The ideological divergence

Rebellion, 151; Jeffrey Kaplan, *Radical Religion and Violence: Theory and case studies*, Milton Park: Routledge, 2016), 60, 69, 71.

¹¹⁸ Barkun, *Religion and the Racist Right*, 256; Juergensmeyer, *Global Rebellion*, 188; Aaron Winter, "The United States of America: Counterterrorism pre-9/11," *The Routledge Handbook of Counterterrorism*, ed. Andrew Silke (London: Routledge, 2019), 615.

¹¹⁹ Kaplan, *Radical Religion*, 184-185 note 39; Jenkins, *Images of Terror*, 134-137.

¹²⁰ Jenkins, *Images of Terror*, 132-133; Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 24, 183; Juergensmeyer, *Global Rebellion*, 191; Seegmiller, "Radicalised Margins," 515-516, 522; Doug Gross, "Eric Rudolph lays out the arguments that fuelled his two-year bomb attacks," *Associated Press*, April 14, 2005, <https://web.archive.org/>; Olivia B. Waxman, "When Terror Struck the Summer Olympics 20 Years Ago," *Time*, July 27, 2016, <https://time.com/>; Beau Seegmiller, "Radicalised Margins: Eric Rudolph and Religious Violence," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, no. 4 (2007): 515.

¹²¹ Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 170; Juergensmeyer, *Global Rebellion*, 191; Edward Walsh, "Racial Slayer Killed Himself in Struggle," *Washington Post*, July 6 1999.

is that he was a member of the neo-Nazi World Church of the Creator (WCOTC), shunned Identity politics, and denounced modern Christianity, like Pierce and Breivik, while espousing the anti-LGBTQI+ rhetoric of the *Turner Diaries*.¹²² Smith was awarded the Aryan of the Month by the *Nationalist Observer Racial Readers Forum* (NORRF) on August 3, 1999.¹²³

On August 10, 1999, Buford O'Neil Furrow attacked a Jewish centre in Granada Hills, Los Angeles, injuring five people, including three children, then killed a Filipino American postal worker out of frustration.¹²⁴ Furrow had lived at the Aryan Nations compound in Idaho, run by Richard Butler and married Matthews' widow. He was known as "the elder statesman of American hate" who also claimed "Adam's pure blood seed-line"¹²⁵ was being killed off through a global conspiracy. NORRF also awarded Furrow the Aryan of the Month in September 1999.¹²⁶

David Lane and *Wotansvolk*

As has been analysed, WSE traditionally subscribes to Christian Identity politics, which has always been about white supremacy. Since the late 1990s, though, Christian Identity politics has competed with *völkisch* Odinism for WSE ideology. However, such competition relates more to white prison populations in the US compared to anti-government militias, who maintain traditional Identity beliefs.¹²⁷ That said, the WSE transformation away from Christianity towards *völkisch* Odinism can be traced to Lane.¹²⁸ The most comprehensive research into Lane's life is Mattias Gardell's *Gods of the Blood*, published in 2003. What follows is a breakdown of Gardell's and others' research, which was conducted after he embedded himself in various WSE groups and movements.

Lane's transformation towards Ásatrú began when he joined the Aryan Brotherhood, from which he was recruited into Matthews *Brüders Schweigen*, and in September 1983, along with nine other members, participated in a "pagan' initiation ritual" at Matthews "Metaline Falls, Washington, homestead."¹²⁹ The *Brüders Schweigen* was nicknamed the Order in homage to *Turner Diaries*. Although others would help develop this evolution within WSE

¹²² Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 29, 170, 215, 245.

¹²³ Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 94, 361, 402; Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 167, 246.

¹²⁴ Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 24.

¹²⁵ Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 28-29; Juergensmeyer, *Global Rebellion*, 191.

¹²⁶ Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 94, 402; Juergensmeyer, *Global Rebellion*, 186; George Michael, "Right-Wing Terrorism: The strategic dimensions," in *The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism and Counterterrorism*, ed. Andrew Silke (London: Routledge, 2019), p. 108, n. 6.

¹²⁷ Jeffrey Kaplan, "The Reconstruction of the Ásatrú and Odinist Traditions," in *Magic Religion and Modern Witchcraft*, ed. James R. Lewis (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996): 208, 225.

¹²⁸ Kaplan, *Radical Religion*, 67-68

¹²⁹ Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 193; Miechová, *Radical Paganism*, 15.

movements globally, it is Lane who began the replacement of Christianity within the US for WSE. So, who was David Lane and what promoted this conversion into *völkisch* Odinism?

Lane's childhood began as the son of an abusive alcoholic itinerant farmer who was then adopted at the age of five by a fundamentalist Lutheran minister after living in an orphanage for a time.¹³⁰ Due to his upbringing, "Jesus [personified] pure boredom"¹³¹ for Lane, and he developed a conspiracy theory of history from the civil rights movement's mission to end segregation after the assassination of John F. Kennedy.¹³² Lane developed contempt for the US military's involvement in the Vietnam War, stating, "I mean, it's a red-white-and-blue nasty murder machine."¹³³ Lane's disdain for the nationalist right-wing of US politics stems from the conspiracy of a Zionist New World Order, stating the "singular intent of America" is to "exterminate the White race. How can you *be* what destroys you?"¹³⁴

Lane's anti-Zionist rhetoric and Masonic-Zionist conspiracies began when he became involved with the Identity movement of the John Birch Society, which was associated with the CJCC and the Aryan Nations, where he would meet Butler and Matthews. He also joined the Ku Klux Klan, the White Aryan Resistance, and, fatefully, the *Brüders Schweigen*. Lane, as a member of this "elite [unit] within the Aryan Nations", became one of the "most notorious [domestic] terrorists [during] the 1980s"¹³⁵ in the US due to their brutal violence.

Lane's status as a progenitor of *völkisch* Odinism for WSE inside US prisons stems from being a member of *Brüders Schweigen*. They undertook bank robberies in Seattle and Spokane, Washington; armoured car robberies in Seattle and Ukiah, California; and bombed a Synagogue in Boise, Idaho.¹³⁶ The *Brüders Schweigen* also murdered Aryan Nations member Walter West and Jewish radio host Alan Berg.¹³⁷ They even ran a successful money counterfeiting racket.¹³⁸ Lane would eventually be given up by an FBI informant within the *Brüders Schweigen*, Ken Loff, for a five-year prison sentence reduction.¹³⁹ Subsequently, Lane was found guilty of "racketeering,

¹³⁰ Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 191-192.

¹³¹ Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 192.

¹³² US President John Fitzgerald Kennedy was assassinated on November 22, 1963, in Dallas, Texas.

¹³³ Lane quoted in, *Ibid*.

¹³⁴ Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 193.

¹³⁵ Italics in original, Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 191-193; Miechová, *Radical Paganism*, 15; Lentini, "The Australian Far-Right", 26.

¹³⁶ Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 195.

¹³⁷ West was likely murdered as a suspected FBI informant. Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 216; Miechová, *Radical Paganism*, 15.

¹³⁸ Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 198.

¹³⁹ Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 198-199.

conspiracy, and violating the civil rights of Alan Berg (by killing him)”¹⁴⁰ – Lane received 190 years imprisonment.

Lane’s ideological conversion focused on Nordic paganism, specifically Odin of the *Æsir*, which is why Odinism, *Ásatrú*, and *Wotansvolk* are often misconstrued for each other and utilised inconsistently within journalism and scholarship alike, often neglecting the WSE elements. Within prison, Lane founded *Wotansvolk* in September 1995 with help from his wife Katja and fellow WSE *Ásatrúar*, Ron McVan, who jointly developed *Wotansvolk* into a “fully developed religious concept.”¹⁴¹ However, Lane’s vision was more philosophical. In 2001, *Wotansvolk* was officially registered as the Temple of Wotan, and Lane chose the Germanic name for Odin instead of the Scandinavian name because it incorporates the acronym Will of the Aryan Nation (WOTAN) and represented the symbolism of Lane being born on a Wednesday in a town called Woden.¹⁴²

In a connection to the origins of *völkisch* occultist Nazism, von List is considered by McVan to be the “undisputed high priest of Wotanism and Ariosophy.”¹⁴³ Thus, from inside the US prison system, folkish Odinism began replacing Christianity for many WSE. Between 1996 and 2001, the number of Odinists as their stated religion tripled within gangs such as the Aryan Nations, Brotherhood, and National Alliance. Katja administers the *Wotansvolk* webpage and runs a prison outreach program for WSE Odinists, thereby allowing Lane’s *völkisch* Odinism to spread across various WSE networks on a global scale.

Wotansvolk’s infamous 14 word mantra – We must secure the existence of our people and a future for White children – is considered “one of the very few concepts”¹⁴⁴ the various WSE movements accept as a doctrine globally. Moreover, Lane was labelled an “Aryan prisoner of war”, along with other surviving members of the *Brüders Schweigen*, and the “Mandela of the White Revolution”¹⁴⁵ by WSE, and while Lane died in 2007, his legacy continues within WSE.

Gardell, once again, provides the most in-depth perspective on the ideological positions of various WSE after the September 11, 2001, attacks in New York City – and the general reaction was “praise and admiration.”¹⁴⁶ A Creativity Movement adherent praised Osama bin Laden’s messages, stating “The most Americans would kill for is their pizza, beer ... and SUV’s. We have truly evolved into a degenerate state.”¹⁴⁷ The Aryan Nations linked their

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 191; Miechová, *Radical Paganism*, 16.

¹⁴² Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 205; Miechová, *Radical Paganism*, 14-15.

¹⁴³ Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 210.

¹⁴⁴ Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 191, 199.

¹⁴⁵ Ron McVan quoted in Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 199.

¹⁴⁶ Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 324.

¹⁴⁷ Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 325.

website to Hamas' and other Jihadists; printing an interview with Osama bin-Laden by John Miller on their electronic mailing list, the WCOTC stated "[if] American mothers in general [value] the lives of their children, [find] a nationalistic government that will look after their interests and not the interests of the Jews."¹⁴⁸ The American Front published supportive translations of Osama bin Laden and Mu'ammarr al-Qaddafi's speeches after the attacks into English; Mat Hale, head of the WCOTC, blamed the US government for the attacks, stating that the US "foreign policy [is] slavishly pro-Israeli."¹⁴⁹ White Aryan Resistance leader, Tom Metzger, stated "these soldiers were aware that their lives would be sacrificed for their cause. If an Aryan wants an example of 'Victory or Valhalla', look no further."¹⁵⁰ There was, however, some disagreement due to the fact that WSE groups have no coordinated messaging. David Duke and Don Black, both of whom were Grand Wizards of the KKK, openly condemned the Islamist-Jihadist attacks, while one WSE posted "I HATE when non-white sand-niggers commit a massacre on our soil."¹⁵¹

The underlying theme, though, is overwhelmingly anti-Jewish and -Israeli, intermixed with anti-Arab and -Islamic rhetoric, while praising the attacks due to the fact the World Trade Towers were "controlled and owned"¹⁵² by Jewish businesses, alongside praising the fact that both Arabs and Jews also died.

The correlating mindset of White Supremacist Extremists

Returning to Oklahoma City that very same day, a WSE associate of Lane and McVeigh, Richard Wayne Snell, was executed for murdering a pawnshop owner whom Snell believed to be Jewish and an African American police officer after being pulled over for a traffic violation.¹⁵³

McVeigh, Nichols, and Snell were all loosely associated with the Identity politics commune of Elohim City, the Michigan Militia, and the, now defunct, CSA, whom gave Snell refuge in return for their assistance with Matthews' *Brüders Schweigen* in the past. However, somehow, the official investigations

¹⁴⁸ Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 325.

¹⁴⁹ Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 325-326.

¹⁵⁰ Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 325.

¹⁵¹ This is a verbatim quote. I fully acknowledge this section paraphrases or directly quotes Gardell's work. Gardell's citations list websites that no longer exist and are legally blocked by my ISP, ceased being available after 2001 or are only available to Gardell during his research. My research determined no scholars have cited such information independently of Gardell's research. As noted above, Kaplan acknowledged in 2019 that Gardell's fieldwork amongst WSE remains unparalleled. Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 324-325, and 397 notes 1-7.

¹⁵² Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 397 note 8.

¹⁵³ Jenkins, *Images of Terror*, 135; Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 64.

determined these WSE militias and communes “had nothing to do”¹⁵⁴ with these terrorists. Pierce’s narrative about the encroachment of government control was taken seriously by Matthews. Hence, the *Brüders Schweigen* was also known as the Order in homage to Pierce’s fictional guerilla unit.¹⁵⁵ Nonetheless, McVeigh and Nichols executed their attack in retaliation for the Ruby Ridge siege against Randy Weaver in 1992 and the Waco standoff with David Koresh from February 28 to April 19, 1993. Both government operations ended with significant casualties, including family members and children at Ruby Ridge and 82 Branch Davidians plus 4 ATF agents at Waco.¹⁵⁶ McVeigh and Nichols sought revenge for their fellow WSE, nothing else, just like Breivik and Tarrant.

The correlation with all WSE terrorism is they espouse anti-government conspiracy theories too numerous to list; they promote ethno-religious apartheid within their predominantly white settler colonial polities; they are overtly anti-LGBTQI+, anti-feminist, and anti-gender equality; and, they subscribe to the anti-globalisation rhetoric of being controlled by international cabals under the control of the Jews, atheists, and secular institutions which separate religion from state laws. None of these men were disgruntled employees or jilted lovers. This brief historiography underscores how WSE, anti-government, paramilitary domestic terrorism – Matthews, Lane, McVeigh, Nichols, Rudolph, Smith, and Furrow – in the US all stem from Christian extremism, traditionally the only organised religion associated with WSE terrorism.¹⁵⁷ Breivik and Tarrant changed that.

Leonard Weinberg, William Eubank, and Juergensmeyer argue this militia-style paramilitarism is part of the same ideological terrorism as the Cosmic War being waged by Shia and Sunni Islamists or Hindu and Sikh anti-secular nationalists.¹⁵⁸ When assessing the legality of how such groups continue to exist, Weinberg and Assoudeh state the Anti-Defamation League, Southern Poverty Law Centre, and the FBI successfully re-labelled Neo-Nazi, Racist Skinhead, Neo-Confederate, White Nationalist, Anti-LGBTQI+, Anti-Immigrant, Anti-Muslim, and Holocaust Denialists as hate-groups within both

¹⁵⁴ Kaplan & Lööw, *The Cultic Milieu*, 466; Barkun, *Religion and the Radical Right*, 256; Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 64, 128; Juergensmeyer, *Global Rebellion*, 186-188, 191; Jenkins, *Images of Terror*, 135.

¹⁵⁵ Gardell, *Gods of the Blood*, 55, 193-198; Juergensmeyer, *Global Rebellion*, 187.

¹⁵⁶ United States Marshal Service (USMS); Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF); Federal Bureau of Investigations–Hostage Rescue Team (FBI HRT). Jenkins, *Images of Terror*, 70-71; Juergensmeyer, *Global Rebellion*, 186; Kaplan, *Radical Religion*, 59-74; Winter, “The United States of America: Counterterrorism pre-9/11,” 629; Alexander Spencer, “New Versus Old Terrorism,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Critical Terrorism Studies*, ed. Richard Jackson (London: Routledge, 2016), 126.

¹⁵⁷ Weinberg & Assoudeh, “Religion and the Radical Right in American Public Life,” 2016.

¹⁵⁸ Weinberg & Eubank, “An End to the Fourth Wave of Terrorism,” 63-83, 103-125.

public and a governmental discourse.¹⁵⁹ With Trump's re-election, this is now in question.

Jeffrey Kaplan made important conclusions about WSE movements' overall strategic thinking, arguing that Identity politics adherents who embrace the 'leaderless resistance strategy' illustrate a long-standing division associated with far-right ideological activism against a more powerful state apparatus.¹⁶⁰ Kaplan argues that, although WSE Identity politics movements have been associated with millenarian revolutionary violence for decades, these movements generally have short outbursts of violence and, instead, prioritise their withdrawal from society and government oversight.¹⁶¹

With the sole exception of McVeigh and Nichols, who fit somewhere between autonomous cell and lone wolf terrorists, mass-shooting events over the last thirty-plus years, especially within the US, have overshadowed these attacks of the 1990s. Although Rudolph, Smith, and Furrow were WSE and conducted lone-wolf attacks, they were not autonomous cell terrorists. Moreover, terrorist attacks in France, Germany, Sweden, and other European countries since 2001, following the onset of the War on Terror, have been carried out by groups or individuals claiming allegiance to ethno-religious organisations *outside* of Europe. These groups or individuals operate as autonomous cells *within* Europe, including lone wolf attacks. Even though they have achieved death tolls similar to those of McVeigh and Nichols, it does not constitute leaderless resistance terrorism. This is why Breivik and Tarrant maintain their positions as first and second because they are lone wolf, leaderless resistance, autonomous cell terrorists.¹⁶²

The Soldiers of Odin, Anders Breivik, and Brenton Tarrant: WSE Odinites

One example of the global impact Lane's Cosmic War ethos has fostered is the Soldiers of Odin (SoO), created by Mika Ranta, a self-avowed white supremacist and National Socialist with ties to the WSE Finnish Resistance Movement.¹⁶³ The SoO originated in the northern Finnish town of Kemi in October 2015 and grew in popularity throughout Scandinavia. By December 2016, SoO had evolved into a global WSE movement, claiming twenty chapters

¹⁵⁹ Weinberg & Assoudeh, "Religion and the Radical Right in American Public Life," 181-182.

¹⁶⁰ Kaplan, *Radical Religion*, 60.

¹⁶¹ Kaplan, *Radical Religion*, 117.

¹⁶² Jeffrey Kaplan, Heléne Lööv & Leena Malkki eds., *Lone Wolf and Autonomous Cell Terrorism* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 2.

¹⁶³ Yannick Veilleux-Lepage & Emil Archambault, *The Soldiers of Odin: The Global Diffusion of Vigilante Movements*, (self-published, 2017), <https://www.semanticscholar.org/>; Yannick Veilleux-Lepage & Emil Archambault, "Mapping Trans-National Extremist Networks: An Exploratory Study of the Soldiers of Odin's Facebook Network, Using Integrated Social Network Analysis," *Perspectives on Terrorism*, no. 2 (2019).

across Europe, Australia, Canada, and the US.¹⁶⁴ SoO were immediately labelled WSE due to their anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim rhetoric.¹⁶⁵

Importantly, the core difference between the SoO and other WSE movements is that they spread entirely through social media, and the SoO began their Canadian and Australian chapters around March 2016.¹⁶⁶ What separates the SoO from most other WSE is they operate as a paramilitary organisation, undertaking street patrols led by a Sergeant at Arms; they engage in overt vigilantism; and in Canada and Australia, unlike Finland, they also undertake charitable endeavours, such as food collections to feed homeless citizens.¹⁶⁷

This is reminiscent of Hamas and Hezbollah within Palestinian refugee camps since the Nakba. Although the Canadian chapter of the SoO has not been “explicitly ... linked to acts of terrorism,”¹⁶⁸ Canadian members participated in the infamous 2017 Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, when a counter-protester was infamously and intentionally run down and died from her injuries. The Australian chapter is likewise not overtly known to be linked to any terrorist activities, and both the Australian and Canadian chapters remain active.¹⁶⁹

It has been stated that Odinism is arguably “the most significant faith within WSE far-right movements globally.”¹⁷⁰ On July 22, 2011, in Norway, Anders Behring Breivik murdered seventy-seven people. Breivik detonated a van bomb, similar to McVeigh's truck bomb, within Oslo's government district at 15:30, instantly killing eight people and wounding two hundred more, nine of them severely.¹⁷¹ Breivik then drove 19 kilometres to the island of Utøya, where Breivik systematically executed sixty-nine of 564 members of the Norwegian Labour Party (A/Ap) attending their annual political youth camp,

¹⁶⁴ Veilleux-Lepage & Archambault, *The Soldiers of Odin*, 1-2.

¹⁶⁵ Veilleux-Lepage & Archambault, *The Soldiers of Odin*, 3.

¹⁶⁶ Veilleux-Lepage & Archambault, *The Soldiers of Odin*, 4; Mario Peucker and Debra Smith eds., *The Far-Right in Contemporary Australia* (Singapore: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2019).

¹⁶⁷ Veilleux-Lepage & Archambault, “Mapping Trans-National Extremist Networks,” 22, 25, 32; Pamela Nilan, “Far-Right Contestation in Australia: Soldiers of Odin and True Blue Crew,” in *The Far-Right in Contemporary Australia*, eds. Mario Peucker and Debra Smith (Singapore: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2019), 101-125.

¹⁶⁸ Veilleux-Lepage & Archambault, “Mapping Trans-National Extremist Networks,” p. 22, 33.

¹⁶⁹ Lentini, “The Australian Far-Right,” 19, 39.

¹⁷⁰ Lentini, “The Australian Far-Right,” 19, 42-43.

¹⁷¹ Robert Carle, “Anders Breivik and the Death of Free Speech in Norway,” *Society*, vol. 50 (2013): 395-401; Cecilia Leonard, George Adams, James Knoll & Terje Torrisen, “The Case of Anders Behring Breivik – Language of a Lone Terrorist,” *Behavioural Sciences and the Law*, vol. 32 (2014): 408-422; Lars Erik Berntzen & Sveinung Sandberg, “The Collective Nature of Lone Wolf Terrorism: Anders Behring Breivik and the Anti-Islamic Social Movement,” *Terrorism and Political Violence*, no. 5 (2014): 759-779; Cato Hemmingby & Tore Bjorgo, *The Dynamics of a Terrorist Targeting Process: Anders B. Breivik and the July 22 Attacks in Norway* (Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2016).

nearly all of whom were teenagers.¹⁷² Breivik was arrested without incident. Within his manifesto, Breivik stated he was doing “that which the police would like to do but were not allowed to do or were too feeble to carry out.”¹⁷³ On that very day, then A/As Minister for Foreign Affairs, Gro Harlem Brundtland, intended to give a speech, which was later confirmed as a target of opportunity.¹⁷⁴

Breivik was initially labelled a Christian Fundamentalist by the Oslo police chief, and early reports linked him to the Identity politics terrorism of McVeigh instead of the WSE Odinism of Lane.¹⁷⁵ Yet, as mentioned, Breivik stated he is a follower of WSE Odinism. An ideological problem, though, is that this contradicted Breivik’s pseudo-adoption of Christianity’s historical warrior caste’s ethos in his manifesto and initial statements made in court.¹⁷⁶ In keeping with the theme of WSE origins within Identity politics, which intermixed and evolved into WSE Ásatrúar, Breivik participated in right-wing Christian political movements while a member of the Progress Party from 1999 to 2004.¹⁷⁷ Breivik was also an online contributor to the Christian Democratic Party’s *Document.no* and *Norge IDAG*. However, during the police investigation, it became evident that Breivik had failed to ingratiate himself with these movements, apparently due to having an unpleasant personality.¹⁷⁸ Accordingly, Breivik embodies leaderless resistance terrorism attributed to the modern ethos of National-Socialists, Identity politics, and now *völkisch Ásatrú*.¹⁷⁹

Breivik self-associated himself with the ancient Christian militant-religious groups, specifically claiming to be a Justiciar Knight of the Knights Templar. Breivik claimed there was a network of resistance fighters opposed to multiculturalism and cultural Marxism throughout Europe, and that as a member of the Norwegian branch, he was but one of twenty-two other autonomous cells of Templars spread across Europe. However, the Norwegian police investigation stated they found no proof of Templar cells, even though Breivik’s manifesto labelled these networks as Destroyers of Marxism, Defenders of Christendom, and Crusaders, martyrs of the Church. However,

¹⁷² Carle, “Anders Breivik,” 395; Leonard *et al*, “The Case of Anders Behring Breivik,” 410; Hemmingby and Bjorgo, *The Dynamics of a Terrorist*, 2.

¹⁷³ Leonard *et al*, “The Case of Anders Behring Breivik,” 419.

¹⁷⁴ Hemmingby & Bjorgo, *The Dynamics of a Terrorist*, 26-27.

¹⁷⁵ Carle, “Anders Breivik,” 396.

¹⁷⁶ Kaplan, *Radical Religion*, 67-68; Lentini, “The Australian Far-Right,” 21, 33-34; Miechová, *Radical Paganism*, 29.

¹⁷⁷ Carle, “Anders Breivik,” 398-399.

¹⁷⁸ Berntzen & Sandberg, “The Collective Nature of Lone Wolf Terrorism,” 762.

¹⁷⁹ Kaplan, *Apocalypse, Revolution and Terrorism*, 59-60; Miechová, *Radical Paganism*, 8.

Breivik's motivational framing has been assessed by professional psychiatrists as being both diagnostic and prognostic.¹⁸⁰

Illustrating the impact of *völkisch* Odinism and the dogmatic globalised impact of Lane's *Wotansvolk* within WSE ideological terrorism is Australian Brenton Harrison Tarrant. On March 15, 2019, Tarrant live streamed his lone wolf attack on two Mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, via Facebook for over an hour, killing fifty-one people and wounding forty others with an assault rifle and a shotgun.¹⁸¹ As mentioned, Tarrant espoused ethnoreligious solidarity with Breivik, even seeking Breivik's personal blessing from his non-existent Templars.¹⁸² And, importantly for this analysis, Tarrant literally recited the ethos of the Lane's *Wotansvolk*'s 14 words within his manifesto and also listed Oswald Moseley, a British fascist leader, as one of his ideological influences.¹⁸³

While Tarrant is attributed to *völkisch* Odinism by his associations and mentors, his equipment and weapon also portrayed occultist Nazism iconography such as the Black Sun rune and Odin's cross.¹⁸⁴ Breivik also utilised iconography, but of the Norse *Æsir*, by naming his pistol *Mjølfnir* after Thor's hammer and his rifle *Gugnir* after Odin's "spear that always hit the target."¹⁸⁵ Tarrant was suspected of having links to the Australian WSE movement, the United Patriots Front, who disbanded in 2017 to form the more extremist Lads Society.¹⁸⁶ Tarrant's manifesto championed the WSE conspiracy theory of the Great Replacement being imposed upon white people, an ethnostate of cultural purity, and advocated for a fascist style of governance.¹⁸⁷ Tarrant also stated that whiteness means European-ness both

¹⁸⁰ Leonard *et al*, "The Case of Anders Behring Breivik," 2014; Berntzen & Sandberg, "The Collective Nature of Lone Wolf Terrorism," 2014; Hemmingby & Bjorgo, *The Dynamics of a Terrorist*, 2016.

¹⁸¹ Campion, "A 'Lunatic Fringe'?", 13; Lentini, "The Australian Far-Right," 42; "2019 – Operation Deans Targeted Terrorist Attacks, Christchurch, March 15," New Zealand Police, police.govt.nz.

¹⁸² Alexandra McFadden, "Wardens of Civilisation: The Political Ecology of Australian Far-Right Civilisationism," *Antipode*, no. 2 (2023): 548

¹⁸³ Lentini, "The Australian Far-Right," 42; Campion, "A 'Lunatic Fringe'?" 6, 13.

¹⁸⁴ Lentini, "The Australian Far-Right," 43; Lizzie Dearden, "New Zealand attack: How nonsensical white genocide conspiracy theory cited by alleged gunman is spreading poison around the world," *Independent*, March 16 2019, <https://www.independent.co.uk/>.

¹⁸⁵ Izak Krzysztof, "Anders Behring Breivik. A case study of a far-right terrorist - a lone wolf," *Terrorism: studies, analyses, prevention*, no. 2 (2022): 291.

¹⁸⁶ Campion, "Australian right wing extremist ideology," 212; Mark Briskey, "From the Old Guard to the Lads Movement: Hybrid Racism and White Supremacism in Australia," in *Back to the '30s? Recurring Crises of Capitalism, Liberalism, and Democracy*, eds. Jeremy Rayner, Susan Falls, George Souvlis, & Taylor C. Nelms (Palgrave Macmillan, 2022 [eBook]), 354.

¹⁸⁷ Campion, "A 'Lunatic Fringe'?" 13-14; Campion, "Australian right wing extremist ideology," 212, 214; Briskey, "From the Old Guard to the Lads Movement," 351, 358; Lentini, "The Australian Far-Right," 42-43.

culturally and genetically, somehow attributing the Anzac myth to the concept of the “strong white Australian.”¹⁸⁸ Tarrant also supported eco-fascism and restricting ethnicities to geographical locations and utilised the “invasion rhetoric to legitimise”¹⁸⁹ murdering children and unarmed civilians who were not white or of European ethnicity.

Breivik utilised the internet to market his manifesto prior to his attacks and was mistakenly labelled a Christian Fundamentalist initially.¹⁹⁰ Tarrant would follow Breivik’s *modus operandi* by posting his manifesto online prior to his attacks, although Tarrant was not labelled as having any religious affiliations.¹⁹¹ Breivik and Tarrant embraced the WSE ethno-religious ideology of *völkisch* Odinism and overtly espoused a sacred terror and Cosmic War ethos. This is especially evident when one considers that their victims had both a socio-political and a religious contextualisation: they were left-wing youth members of a political party that is supportive of multiculturalism within Norway, and the other victims were Muslim migrants in New Zealand who were peacefully undertaking their normal cultural and religious observances, respectively.

Conclusions

Tarrant and Breivik remain in prison to this day, but alive, unlike their multitude of victims. Although this analysis is pretty condemning of the actions by two Ásatrúar, it cannot be said that Ásatrú is inherently a religion that relies on terrorism to achieve its goals. I would argue it is quite random and unfortunate that two of the most infamous acts of domestic terrorism were undertaken by individuals who claim to adhere ideologically to a variant of Ásatrú, albeit WSE Odinism. The Ásatrú revival since the 1970s does not herald a Fifth wave of terrorism, nor should it be considered as a terrorist-focused ideology. These two individuals should be contrasted against the continued WSE Christian Identity terrorism within the US and Europe, and not Islamist violence, which has continued to be framed inconsistently since 2001 by mainstream media. The overtly biased reporting on the destruction of Palestine and the unnecessary death toll inflicted by Israel on Palestinian civilians after October 7, 2023, by the terrorist group Hamas is a point in case of mainstream

¹⁸⁸ Campion, “Australian right wing extremist ideology,” 214.

¹⁸⁹ Campion, “Australian right wing extremist ideology,” 2017

¹⁹⁰ There are multiple, conflicting narratives regarding Breivik’s supposed Christian fundamentalism. Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 20-29; George Michael, “Counterinsurgency and Lone Wolf Terrorism,” in *Lone Wolf and Autonomous Cell Terrorism*, eds. Jeffrey Kaplan, Heléne Lööw and Leena Malkki (New York: Routledge, 2015), 60-77, endnote 60.

¹⁹¹ Lentini, “The Australian Far-Right,” 2019; Campion, “Australian right wing extremist ideology,” 2019b.

Western media bias on specific topics, something CTS should never encourage or tacitly endorse.

The contemporary era of terrorism and the role of Ásatrúar within the current Religious wave has not – as Gardell rightly stated in 2003 – been examined sufficiently by scholars of CTS, but more so than Ásatrúar in general, WSE is still not front and centre of CTS as it should be considering the recent re-election of Trump to the US Presidency and the significant question-marks hanging over the various WSE Christian affiliations and militia backgrounds of Trump's nominations for political appointment. There is a significant gap in CTS academia that needs to be addressed with comprehensive, contemporary, qualitative, quantitative, and unbiased research, as this brief and multifaceted analysis has attempted to do, and it only scratches the surface of the historiography of WSE terrorism. The truth is, the research for this analysis *relies* upon the very few scholars who analysed the topic of Ásatrúar in the first place, so there are no apologies that regard me.

However, a number of questions require definitive answers. Did Breivik's and Tarrant's ideological goals align with known terrorist organisations? Not really: WSE movements are not well organised in general, although they share numerous conspiracy theories that Breivik and Tarrant acted upon, like very few others have. Is there a Cosmic War element to their actions, as Juergensmeyer defined it?¹⁹² Breivik can be labelled numerous things because clearly, Breivik engaged with Christian Identity politics at some stage: a White Christian Nationalist, even a pseudo-crusader in the anti-Islamic Christian Fundamentalist biblical sense. However, because Breivik labels himself an Odinist, these labels contradict themselves. Tarrant idealised Breivik's actions and Lane's ethos, including their *modus operandi*, but does not have the traditional Christian Identity politics background as far as my research concluded. This makes it harder to classify Tarrant's positionality in CTS. However, I classify him simply as a WSE terrorist at the very least.

Due to their stated and associated ideological goals, both Breivik and Tarrant are arguably WSE adherents of *völkisch* Odinism, a unique but growing far-right-wing WSE ethno-religious movement. This examination has attempted to illustrate the importance of further research into the origins of WSE Ásatrúar, which has been illustrated largely stems from Christian Identity politics that espouse anti-government, anti-globalisation, and anti-multicultural rhetoric. Irrelevant of either Breivik or Tarrant's stated religious views – let alone those of Matthews, Lane, McVeigh, Nichols, Rudolph, Smith, or Furrow – I would agree with Juergensmeyer's assessment of ethno-religious terrorism. That is, the concept of a God is not the primary motivation of ideological terrorism, even for WSE Ásatrúar, because the majority of such ideologues invent their own ethos in order to fulfil some Warrior of the Blood

¹⁹² Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, 117, 128.

fantasy, one that they alone are fighting in some non-existent Cosmic War solely existing within their imaginations.