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STATE OF THE ART

Lebensraum's Tropical Turn

White Nationalists' (Almost) Caribbean Home

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Abstract

In 1981 the ATF, FBI, and U.S. Customs Service agents arrested a group of American and Canadian White nationalists as they were on their way to overthrow the government of Dominica. Although seemingly improbable, the event is important because it illustrates the hegemonic nature of the relationship between the United States and Caribbean countries and, also, the globalization of White nationalist violence. In this paper I show that extant theory on White nationalism can be used to explain the White nationalist plot. In particular, I invoke the concept of *Lebensraum* and the fact that White nationalists espouse multiple objectives—in addition to racism—to explain their intent to subvert a Black country and to live there.

Keywords: Communism; Dominica; Lebensraum; Racism; Strategic Violence; White Nationalism

Introduction

On April 27, 1981, agents of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the U.S. Customs Service arrested ten American and Canadian White nationalists as they set sail on a charter boat from New Orleans. The boat had been hired by one of the men, a member of the Ku Klux Klan, to ferry the White nationalists to Dominica in the southeastern Caribbean. Aboard the boat, the federal agents found a large cache of handguns, high powered rifles, shotguns, dynamite, a rubber dinghy, military fatigue clothing, and large Nazi and Confederate flags. After their arrest, the men were charged with violating the Neutrality Act, which forbids assaults by Americans on peaceful nations. At their trial, it emerged that the men had plotted with former Dominican Prime Minister Patrick John and members of the Dominica Defense Force (DDF) to overthrow the then current Dominican Prime Minister, Eugenia Charles (*United States v. Black* 1982). Although the improbability of this venture caused observers, likening it to the failed CIA Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba, to dub the White nationalists' adventure "the Bayou of Pigs" (the plotters called it Operation Red Dog), the plotters were deadly serious in their intention to subvert the Dominican government (Malvaney 2018; Meditz et al., 1989; *United States v. Black* 1982). Paralleling the New Orleans arrests, the Dominican police also detained the plotters' local Canadian female accomplice and her apparent rescuer, the woman's Canadian paramour (Lauder 2017).[1] Extending this series of arrests, the Ontario Provincial Police also apprehended two other Canadians who were implicated in the plot (Baker 1994). These arrests in Canada, Dominica, and the United States were

part of a violent ongoing political struggle in Dominica that—in addition to coup plotters, Patrick John, and his DDF supporters—also revolved around a group of outcaste Rastafarians, the Dreads (Baker 1994; Bell 2008; Phillips 2002; Thomas 1981; *Time* 1981).

These facts raise the important question: Why would White nationalists, who hate Blacks and are intent on building a White homeland in the United States, align themselves with Black plotters in a violent coup on a Caribbean Island thousands of miles from the United States? On the surface, this entanglement seems improbable and at odds with what analysts of White nationalists know about their intentions and activities. But examining the motives of the Operation Red Dog plotters within a broader historical and theoretical context offers insight into this puzzle. If their coup was successful, the plotters hoped to create a fiefdom in Dominica, consisting of grants of land, a small army, an airport, and a business empire revolving around exclusive control of banking, illegal drugs, gambling, and tourism (BBC 1988; Bell 2008; Gane-McCalla 2012; Maingot 2003; Malvaney 2018; Thomas 1981; *United States v. Black* 1982).

In this paper, I argue that contrary to appearances, Operation Red Dog may be viewed as consistent with historical American hegemonic behavior in the Caribbean, and an extension of principles that theorists of White nationalist groups have derived from studying these groups. As participants in a social movement, White nationalists strategize to attain multiple goals, the most basic of which is the disruption of society to create a White homeland (Bhatia 2004; Bickford and Clabough, 2019; Flint 2004; Perry and Blazak, 2010; Soufan Center 2020). In the process, they (especially politically oriented White nationalists) must engage with the state, and this involves, during different periods, both conflict (e.g., the notion of lone wolf terrorism) and co-operation (Berlet and Vysotsky, 2006; Blee 2005; Southern Poverty Law Center 2011). Despite their intentionality, they cannot attain all their goals at once and must make choices. The literature shows that in addition to strategizing, White nationalists are also opportunistic, which means that some may also be motivated to pursue unforeseen possibilities that seem plausible given a particular constellation of forces at a particular point in time (Blee and Creasap, 2010). Pursuit of these new possibilities may cause White nationalists to act in ways that seemingly contradict their core ideological beliefs. I proceed in this paper by presenting an overview of Dominica and framing White nationalism theoretically. I then place Operation Red Dog in historical context before going on to apply relevant theoretical principles to the plotters' interaction with Dominica. I end the paper by discussing the conspiracy's implications for future research.

The Dominican Background

Located in the Eastern Caribbean (between Guadeloupe to the north and Martinique to the south), Dominica lies approximately 2300 miles from the United States, as the crow flies. This very small island (290 square miles; population just over 71,000) was, until 1978, a British colony. Like many other West Indian countries, independence has meant insertion into a system of global capitalism that has reinscribed economic dependency. Among other things, this results in high rates of out-migration of Dominicans seeking opportunities elsewhere (IOM 2020). Another Dominican problem, also typically Caribbean, is historical reliance on agriculture (particularly bananas) and tourism (which is burgeoning in Dominica) (Nelson 2013). All this means that, overall, the island is poor. In 2020 its gross domestic product per capita stood at $6,527. In comparison, nearby St. Kitts and Nevis registered a GDP per capita of $17,436 (The World Bank 2021). Despite these low numbers, the United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Index, which incorporates measures of longevity, education, and a country's Gross National Income per capita, ranked Dominica as having a "high human development" in 2019. This translated to a ranking of 94 out of 189 countries (UNDP 2020).

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Statistics such as these, while informative, do not do justice to Dominica's complex social dynamics, which are informed by its history of multi-state colonialism, plantation agriculture, slavery, racism and class consciousness, authoritarianism, and political corruption. The Carib people were already living on the island when Columbus claimed it for Spain in 1493, but by 1642 France had firmly imprinted itself on Dominican soil. French ownership proved short-lived since Britain annexed the island in 1763, resulting in a society characterized by a mixture of French and British culture and institutions (e.g., French patois, the use of standard English, the prominence of the Roman Catholic Church, and British legal institutions) (Baker 1994). The island's rugged topography favored the development of coastal settlements (notably Roseau, the capital) but hindered easy communication between them and interior villages. According to historian Gordon K. Lewis (1968), this rural/urban divide has shaped "the history of an oppressed peasant proprietary class fighting to maintain its precarious existence within a hostile environment" (p.150).

Race and class relations, rooted in plantation slavery and its aftermath, shaped this environment even more profoundly. Like many other British West Indian societies (see, for example, Philip D. Curtin's *Two Jamaicas* (1970)), these relations came to revolve around a tiny and dominant White elite, a mixed-race ("Colored" or "Brown") middle stratum, and a large base of Blacks (Baker 1994; Riviere 1981).[2] Former slaves, Black Dominicans developed into the peasant class after slavery's abolition in 1833 and prized a spirit of self-sufficiency they had displayed even during slavery. Maroons, runaway slaves who had taken to the hills, epitomized this spirit. In the post-emancipation period, Black Dominicans exerted pressure on White plantation owners who could no longer take the availability of Black labor for granted. As the White elite's relative power declined, that of the Brown middle segment rose. Patrick L. Baker (1994) notes that estate ownership tended to shift into their hands but, just as importantly, as they increasingly dominated the skilled trades, they became an urban and political force. They vied with the White elite for dominance, despising Black Dominicans as racial and class inferiors and positing themselves as the only true Dominicans.

These attitudes of superiority continued to inform social relations as Dominica gradually transformed into a post-colonial state in the late twentieth century, but by the 1970s rising Black consciousness had come to the fore. Driven by a cadre of educated young Black Dominicans, who were influenced by both Rastafarianism and the American Black Power movement, and against a background of limited economic opportunities, these Dominicans severely criticized the colonial Dominican state and capitalism (Baker 1994; Riviere 1981). This so-called "Movement for a New Dominica" also incorporated more radical elements who completely rejected polite Dominican society. These "Dreads," like the Maroons before them, took to the hills in the face of persistent persecution but were not, uniformly, the criminals the authorities made them out to be. Violent actions characterized only a fringe element within the Dreads, whereas most were peaceful counter-culture individuals and political activists (Paravisini-Gebert 1996; van Dijk 1998).

Nevertheless, murders committed by this fringe element colored societal perceptions of the Dreads, and prominent politicians used widespread fear of the group to amass power. Patrick John, who became Dominica's Prime Minister in 1974, is noteworthy in this respect. His passage of the Prohibited and Unlawful Societies and Associations Act in that year forbade punishment of anyone who killed a Dread. The ensuing "reign of terror" (Campbell 1980, p.47) against the group led to the police killing twenty-one Dreads (Baker 1994; Campbell 1980; Paravisini-Gebert 1996; Phillips 2002; Rogozinski 2002; van Dijk 1998). Increasingly authoritarian and implicated in several shady deals (see below), John also attempted to quash local criticism of his actions, and he prohibited visitors to the island he regarded as provoking dissent. Nevertheless, anti-John sentiment increased, and in 1979 he used the army, which, under John, had become politicized and loyal to him, to quell a

mass rally protesting his policies. This resulted in several deaths, and the general strike that followed forced John to resign as Prime Minister (Baker 1994; Paravisini-Gebert 1996; Phillips 2002; Savarin 1979).

Eugenia Charles won the subsequent general election in 1980 by a landslide. This victory angered the DDF and spurred Patrick John to plot with American and Canadian White nationalists to help him regain power.[3] In December 1980, Prime Minister Charles attempted to pass legislation to court martial rebellious members of the army, and they responded by attempting a coup. The coup plotters were arrested but while in jail a DDF officer inadvertently revealed the Patrick John-White nationalist plot. He had passed on a note, which was intercepted, urging the White nationalists to proceed with the invasion of the island. As a result, Patrick John was also arrested and imprisoned, which prompted a second coup attempt by the DDF to free him (Meditz et al., 1989; Phillips 2002, 2008). In 1983, six of the local coup plotters were sentenced to hang. Patrick John, however, after a long series of legal maneuvers, was sentenced to twelve years in prison in 1985 but was released in 1990. Ultimately, he and several of the other local coup plotters were pardoned for their crimes (Baker 1994; Bell 2008; Phillips 2002; Rogozinski 1994; Thomas 1981).

White Nationalism in Theory

Although, in the past, researchers explained adherence to White nationalist beliefs in terms of individual psychological pathology (e.g., Adorno 1950; Ezekiel 2001), modern day scholars are more apt to characterize such individuals as belonging to a social movement (Berlet and Vysotsky, 2006; Blee 2017; Blee and Creasap, 2010; Caren et al., 2012; Flint 2004). Disagreement exists over whether social movements are best described as arising from societal grievances (Gurr 1970), should be analyzed in terms of resource mobilization (Johnston and Klandermans, 1995, McCarthy and Zald, 1977, Obershall 1973), or are manifesting a new phase (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, Melucci 1981, Offe 1985). Acknowledging these disputes, David A. Snow and colleagues (2004) have sought to take a broad view of social movements by defining them as, "collectivities acting with some degree of organization and continuity outside of institutional or organizational channels for the purpose of challenging or defending extant authority, whether it is institutionally or culturally based, in the group, organization, society, culture or world order of which they are a part" (p. 11).

Generally speaking, this definition fits White nationalists because though they are fragmented (see below), they also act in an organized manner. They manifest this organization in events ranging from the private (e.g., cross burnings) to public meetings meant to garner widespread attention. The 2017 riot by White nationalists in Charlottesville, Virginia, is a noteworthy example of the latter since, in it, organizers explicitly sought to "unite the right" by building bridges between the many sub-groups of White nationalists in attendance at the event (Bell 2019; Heaphy 2017; Peters and Besley, 2017). The Ku Klux Klan, especially, demonstrates the longevity of White nationalism in the United States, the group having been formed in 1865, shortly after the ending of the Civil War (Hamm 2009). Although, as argued below, at times the KKK and other White nationalists have had access to the state (e.g., controversially, during the four years of the Trump administration), they have largely operated outside of institutional channels (Bell 2019; Blee et al., 2007; Guerrero 2020; Hamm 2009; Srikantiah and Sinnar, 2019). As such, their goal is both to preserve "White" culture (e.g., defense of Civil War monuments), which they perceive as being under attack, and to disrupt American society. They believe that the latter is dominated by Jews and "corrupted" by inferior non-Whites or "mud people." White nationalists intend to provoke a race war that will "cleanse" the country of this corruption by eliminating these groups to establish a homogeneous White nation (Berry 2017;

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Bickford and Clabough, 2019; Blee et al., 2007; Hale 2013; Michael 2009; Ostendorf 2002; Perliger 2012).

The Ku Klux Klan exhibited this melding of racist ideology and territorial ambition from its very origins as an anti-Black, pro-slavery terrorist organization. As Klansters lynched African Americans and their allies, they sought to re-create a South characterized by unfettered White supremacy and free from liberal social and political influences (Bickford and Clabough, 2019; Hamm 2009; Southern Poverty Law Center 2011; Wade 1987). Eugenics and the mass migration of Jews and Catholics from Central, Southern, and Eastern Europe strongly influenced the formation of the second Klan in 1915 (Berry 2017; Largent 2002). Widely influential, eugenics valorized Anglo-Saxon Protestants as the epitome of "Whiteness," while casting suspicion on the racial credentials of the new immigrants. Consequently, eugenicists advocated for the sterilization of racial and class "inferiors" and for restrictions on immigration from non-Western European countries (Engs 2014; Grant 1916; Pavuk 2014; Shipman 1994). In addition to Central, Southern, and Eastern Europeans, these restrictions significantly impacted Asian immigrants. Meanwhile, Jim Crow legislation and practices kept African Americans and Mexican Americans firmly separated from the White mainstream and subordinated to White dominance (Haney-Lopez 1998; Ngai 1999; Spickard 2007).

Taken together, these various racist policies enforced the vision of a racially exclusive nation and were strongly supported by the Klan (Spickard 2007). In the decades since World War II, Nazism has increasingly influenced the diversifying White nationalist movement, abetting adherents' pre-existing preoccupation with controlling racially defined territory. Of particular importance is that American White nationalists have adopted aspects of *Lebensraum* (or living space) and *Autarky*. Associated with the Nazi political geographer and journalist, Karl Haushofer, *Lebensraum* called for Germany to guarantee ample space and resources for its people to flourish. *Autarky*, a closely related concept, called for guarantees of economic and national self-sufficiency (Herwig 2008; Klinke and Bassin, 2018). In the United States, White nationalists often tout *Lebensraum*-like ideas (Michael 2009; Perliger 2012). Examples include such popular slogans as "Blood and Soil," "You will not replace us"[4] (a White nationalist reaction to the fear of dark-skinned and Jewish immigrants), and, especially, the so-called "Fourteen words": "We must secure the existence of our people and a future for White children" (Herwig 2008; Michael 2009).

Theoretically, White nationalists could secure this future in a homogenous White nation in several ways, and *Lebensraum* and *Autarky* may be directed inwardly or outwardly. That is, with an inward focus on the United States, they could attempt to: 1) seal the borders to prevent the entrance of non-Whites, 2) carve up the country in apartheid-like fashion by assigning different racial and ethnic groups to different territories, 3) expel all non-Whites from the country, and 4) destroy all non-Whites. Not just fantasy, these White nationalist desires are embedded in policies the American government has enacted in the past. For instance, as noted, turn-of-the-twentieth century immigration policy could be read as an attempt to exclude racial "inferiors" from the "White" nation, which eugenicists defined in terms of Anglo-Saxonism (Grant 1916; Ngai 1999; Spickard 2007). The sequestration of Native Americans on reservations and African Americans in inner-cities has, at times, created apartheid-like conditions for both of those groups (Massey and Denton, 1993; Rothstein 2017; Woodard 2018). At different periods in American history, the U.S. government has deported, en masse, Mexicans and other Latinos (Mize 2016), and it has committed genocide against some Native American tribes (Chalk and Jonassohn, 1990).

Some modern-day White nationalists are actively planning to implement aspects of these historical U.S. government policies (Gibson 1994). For instance, Barbara Perry and

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Randy Blazak (2010) show how White nationalists plan to carve up the United States into mutually exclusive racial and ethnic territories. The extreme Northwest (e.g., states such as Idaho and Washington) would be reserved for Whites, Native Americans would be restricted to New Mexico, Mexicans would be housed in Southern California, Hawaii would contain all Asians, African Americans would be restricted to the deep South (but South Florida would house Cubans), Jews would be restricted to Manhattan and Long Island, and French Canadians would be confined to the northeastern New England states.

During World War II, however, the Nazis interpreted *Lebensraum* and *Autarky* externally, as the conquest and colonization of territory in Russia (Barnes and Minka, 2013). This they attempted, using a brutal combination of ethnic cleansing and genocide (Hilberg 1990). Similarly, some American White nationalists advocate genocide and adopt a transnational view of White territorial domination, arguing that the creation of a racially homogeneous United States is only a steppingstone to their hegemonic control of other parts of the world. *Blood in the Face*, the well-known 1991 documentary examining White nationalism, offers good examples of this point of view (Bohlen et al., 1991). The growing interconnectedness of White nationalists on the internet is salient to this vision of a global "White sphere" (Blee 2004; Perry and Olsson, 2009). Chillingly, White nationalist terrorism also reflects this global vision. For instance, extremist Afrikaners increasingly look to compatriots in the United States to help stem the rise of Black rule in South Africa (Pogue 2019). Similarly, in 2019, Brenton Tarrant, an Australian White nationalist, murdered fifty-one Muslims in Christchurch, New Zealand, and admitted that he had imitated Anders Breivik, a Norwegian White nationalist who murdered eighty-seven people in 2011 (Fuhrmans and Grundberg, 2011; Seierstad 2019; Soufan Center 2019).

Varieties of White Nationalists and Their Relationship with the State

Despite this vison of a burgeoning global White space, it is the prospect of a homogenous White America that animates many White nationalists. This tends to unite them across the board, but sub-groups of White nationalists emphasize different elements of movement ideology, and they also vary on tactics. Using this as a point of departure, Chip Berlet and Stanislav Vysotsky (2006) argue the existence of three broad categories of White nationalists, revolving around political organizing, religion, and youth culture. This typology brings order to the White nationalist landscape, but it is also problematic because of the high degree of overlap between these groups in the real world.

Political White nationalist groups (e.g., The National Alliance, The Order, Volksfront, and White Aryan Resistance) consider themselves to be direct descendants of the Nazis and valorize fascism. As such, they are strongly authoritarian, prize the nation over the individual, and equate it with White superiority. Ideologically, these groups are strongly anti-communist, but they also display strong antipathy toward the notion of a democratic, multicultural America. These views can bring them into violent conflict with the American government. For instance, in the early 1980s, Robert Mathews, co-founder of The Order, sought to establish a White ethno-state by declaring war on the federal government. Subsequently, the group embarked on a crime spree of murder, armored car heists, bank robbery, and counterfeiting. In 1984 Mathews was cornered in a house on Whidbey Island, Washington, by FBI agents, and was incinerated when the house caught fire (Gibson 1994; Michael 2009; Wright 2007).

According to Berlet and Vysotsky, religious White nationalists share some of the traits of their political compatriots but root their core ideology and violent actions in mysticism. As examples, Berlet and Vysotsky cite Christian Identity, the Creativity Movement, and followers of Odinism, and Wotanism. They could also have added, for instance, The Order of the 9 Angles (O9A), the notably extremist Neo-Nazi-Satanist hate group (HOPE not

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hate 2020). Considering the Ku Klux Klan, however, demonstrates the fuzzy borders between religious and political White nationalist groups, because the Klan, having woven its mythmaking around the cross, claims to be a Christian organization (Berry 2017; Stephens 2017). But the Klan is also a notably political and violent group. The same blurring of boundaries characterizes skinheads who, according to Berlet and Vysotsky, fall into the youth culture category. Like the Klan, skinheads also hate minorities, but they are more apt to commit random acts of extreme street violence. They have also been shaped by a particular youth culture that has its origins in the intermingling of West Indian immigrants in the UK and English working-class culture (Hamm 2009; O'Shea 2018). According to Berlet and Vysotsky, adherents to various forms of hate metal music also fall into the White nationalist youth culture category.

Despite the obvious overlap between different types of White nationalists, they differ significantly in their modus operandi. According to Kathleen M. Blee (2005), some groups (e.g., skinheads) employ *narrative* violence to attain their ends. In this type of violence, enemies are ill defined, and violence is both more random and meant primarily to solidify in-group bonds. In contrast, other White nationalists employ *strategic* violence, which is predicated on the identification and destruction of distinct enemies. Political White nationalists fall within the latter camp since, to achieve the wholescale societal transformation they desire, they typically target the state as *the* enemy preventing the realization of a homogeneous White nation.

Blee argues, however, that antagonism between political White nationalists and the American government has varied over time. She shows how the first Ku Klux Klan directed terrorism against African Americans with the strategic goal of destroying the Reconstructionist state and resurrecting White supremacy. In the early twentieth century, the second Ku Klux Klan changed tactics and aligned itself with the American government to oppress an expanded array of racial and culture enemies. Often, this violence depended on mob rule, was more narrative in nature, and used the state as a vehicle to enact and sustain it. As mentioned previously, contemporary White nationalists have reversed course sharply, claiming that a Jewish-dominated Zionist Occupation Government (ZOG) controls the United States. Consequently, White nationalists regard themselves as existing in a state of war with the federal government (Michael 2009; Ostendorf 2002; Perliger 2012; Reitman 2018).

The "American Mediterranean" as "Bayou of Pigs" Context

Viewed broadly, and despite demeaning references to it as "the Bayou of Pigs," the failed White nationalist plot to overthrow the Dominican government fits within well-worn historical patterns. Specifically, the United States has a history of imperialistic nation building in the circum-Caribbean that has involved a mix of state-directed (most typically) and private-led efforts. The Operation Red Dog coup plotters fit, especially, within the latter tradition.

As one leg of the triangular slave trade, North America, the Caribbean, and Central and South America constituted "the Americas," which early-on involved the integration of economies, as manifested in the circulation of goods, provisions, and people (Fraser 1990). Nevertheless, citizens of what developed into the United States viewed themselves as racially superior and the natural leaders of other peoples and societies in the circum-Caribbean. For instance, in *American Mediterranean*, Matthew Pratt Guterl (2008) shows how the slaveholding American South, especially, faced with the demise of a lifestyle based on human bondage, exhibited a "lust" for Caribbean territory they imagined would sustain and expand slavery. As they saw it, the great planters of the South were the "impending lord and master of the warm blue waters of the American Mediterranean" (pp. 48-49).

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Importantly, U.S. government policy, guided by the Monroe Doctrine and Manifest Destiny, concurred with and framed these beliefs, leading to a long series of interventions in the circum-Caribbean (Captain and Jones, 2017; Flint 2004; Gilderhaus 2006; Pastor 1994; Williams 1984; Williams 2017). These include repeated attempts between 1865 and 1871 to annex the Dominican Republic; the establishment of a customs receivership on that island in 1907 under the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine; the occupation of the country by U.S. troops between 1915 and 1924; the occupation of Haiti from 1915 until 1934; the colonization of Panama in the early twentieth century, with special emphasis on the control of the Panama Canal; and the establishment of U.S. hegemony over Puerto Rico following the Spanish-American War in 1898. In the post-WWII period, the desire to restrict the expansion of communism on America's doorstep came to dominate American foreign policy regarding the Caribbean. This led to the Bay of Pigs attempted invasion of Cuba in 1961 and the invasion of Grenada in 1983 (Dookhan 1985; Maingot 1989; Rogozinski 1994; Williams 1984).

Cuba, and especially Grenada, are important in analyzing the motives of the Operation Red Dog plotters because American fears of expanding communism in the Caribbean intersected with White nationalist ideology on those two islands. These plotters, per Berlet and Vysotsky's (2006) typology, were political White nationalists, and anti-communism served as a primary motivator for their adventure (Bell 2008; Malvaney 2018). Writers such as Kathleen Belew (2018) and James William Gibson (1994) have shown the strong links between the Vietnam War, anti-communism, and the growth of the modern American White nationalist movement. They argue that many White Vietnam War veterans, disillusioned with the war's outcome and convinced that communism remained a threat both abroad and in the United States, gravitated to a warrior culture that melded love of guns, machismo, and a conspiratorial threat narrative positing the extinction of the "White race" by Jews, "mud people", and liberals. This combustible combination metastasized into anti-establishment attitudes and an increasingly violent White nationalist movement.[5]

It turns out that some of the Operation Red Dog plotters were Vietnam War veterans and, initially, they had targeted the island of Grenada, not Dominica, for "invasion" (*United States v. Black* 1982). Grenada had turned communist in 1979 when the People's Revolutionary Government, led by Maurice Bishop, overthrew the government of Prime Minister Eric Gairy. Although such coups were unusual in the English-speaking Caribbean, which is mostly composed of parliamentary democracies, Grenada represented the second bona fide communist regime in the Caribbean and rang alarm bells in Washington (Meditz et al., 1989). Eventually, with encouragement from Eugenia Charles[6] (and several other Caribbean leaders), the situation, as noted, led the United States to invade the island in 1983 (BBC 1988; Ramphal 2014).

The Operation Red Dog plotters, apparently motivated by anti-communist zeal, came to the same conclusion two years before the U.S. government did but changed their minds because Grenada was too heavily defended. They believed that overthrowing the government of Dominica would be easier (Bell 2008). George Malvaney, one of the coup plotters who served time in prison for the conspiracy, has given an insider's view of this decision-making process. In his autobiography, *Cups Up: How I Organized a Klavern, Plotted a Coup, Survived Prison, Graduated College, Fought Polluters, and Started a Business*, he makes the following observation:

> In 1980, while I was arguing with ignorant Klansmen, my new friend and mentor, Dannie Hawkins, was discussing a much bigger event. Some White supremacy groups were secretly planning to take over a small Caribbean country and install a right-wing, anti-Soviet government. I knew nothing about this at the time. Dannie had been

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> recruited by Mike Perdue, a former marine from Texas who had collaborated with members of pro-Aryan groups in the United States and Canada—including high-ups in the Klan, Don Black, and Wolfgang Droege—on a plan to overthrow the government of the tiny island of Dominica. They had first thought about taking over Grenada but decided that Dominica would make an easier target. It had been hit by a hurricane in 1979 and was having a variety of problems, including some caused by a Rastafarian group, the Dreads. Perdue and his co-conspirators figured the government of the current Prime Minister, Eugenia Charles, was ripe for overthrow, and they planned to restore the former Prime Minister, Patrick John, to power. In return they would receive business concessions (Malvaney 2018, p. 51).

Essentially, the Operation Red Dog plotters were mercenaries, a type of group that is not unknown in Caribbean history (Belew 2018; Bell 2008; *New York Times* 1981; Phillips 2002). According to Thomas K. Adams (1999), traditional mercenaries are private groups who sell their military expertise to foreign governments for money. Typically, this means that the mercenaries constitute an actual fighting force. Adams distinguishes between such groups and modern-day vertically integrated mercenary-corporations that provide a full range of military systems, which may or may not include an actual fighting force, to foreign governments.

Traditional mercenaries such as those involved in Operation Red Dog were the latest in a line of private American groups that have sought to influence the internal affairs of Caribbean countries. For instance, between 1824 and 1861, private American groups made three attempts to establish colonies of former slaves in Haiti. Similarly, privately funded groups made at least three attempts between 1849 and 1851 to overthrow the Spanish government in Cuba (Dookhan 1985). These groups operated with the tacit approval of the American government, the most famous of these collaborations being the Bay of Pigs operation in 1961. The Operation Red Dog plotters in 1981 differed from these previous efforts in being completely independent of American government support. In fact, their plot constituted a true conspiracy.

The Dominica-Operation Red Dog Mercenaries Problem

This point brings us back to the problem of how to conceptualize the relationship between the White nationalist coup plotters and the Dominican state and society. Judging from their active adherence to White nationalist ideals (e.g., they had Confederate and Nazi flags in their possession when they were arrested), the plotters were committed racists. Yet they intended their relationship with Dominica to be more than merely clientelistic. Instead, they planned to settle down on this island composed primarily of Black people. They would have seriously considered living in Dominica only if the rewards were high.

Like other writers (e.g., Berger 2020; Bhatt 2021; Blee 2005; Reitman 2018), I argue that White nationalists often embrace chaos as a means of actualizing their goals.[7] Recall that in the United States, politically oriented White nationalists have alternated between supporting the federal government and fighting it. The latter describes their current posture, as they launch rhetorical and actual terroristic attacks against ZOG. In Dominica, as mercenaries, the White nationalist coup plotters encountered a very chaotic situation and a weak state.[8] They opportunistically embraced this chaos, hoping to attain, through *strategic* violence, the toppling of government. American-based White nationalists had mostly only fantasized about a similar outcome in the U.S. until they attacked the Capitol on January 6, 2021 (Darby 2021; Givhan 2021; Malvaney 2018; Tavernese and Rosenberg, 2021;

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Wells et al., 2021). The Operation Red Dog coup plotters intended for Dominica what American White nationalists hope to achieve in the United States.

Although the overthrow of ZOG and the creation of a homogeneous White nation are the primary goals of many White nationalists, in fact, they have several goals. Importantly, as noted, they are also anti-communist, and they hanker after power and wealth. Furthermore, they are flexible in the means they employ to obtain their objectives. One way of explaining the White nationalists' willingness to involve themselves in Dominica is that they downplayed their long-term goal of creating a homogeneous White nation, and their antipathy toward Blacks, in favor of the immediate opportunity that presented itself to amass power and wealth. Federal prosecutors concluded as much in their case against Don Black[9] and Joe D. Hawkins, two of the Operation Red Dog operatives, when they argued that, essentially, the plot was a money-making scheme (*United States v. Black* 1982). Also supporting this conclusion is the fact that the plotters brought American and Canadian organized crime figures, who hoped to capitalize on illegal activities in Dominica, into the conspiracy (Bell 2008; Lauder 2017).

White nationalists' behavior in other situations illustrates their flexibility in attaining their multifarious goals. For instance, the violent White supremacist prison gang, the Aryan Brotherhood, is known not only for its extreme racism but also for the group's control of various lucrative criminal enterprises (Plunkert 2009). The former Ku Klux Klan leader, David Duke,[10] is an example of the pursuit of a White ethno-state through alternative means. Eschewing cross burnings, in the 1980s Duke established the National Association for the Advancement of White People and decided to run for elected office. He won the election and became a delegate in the Louisiana House of Representatives (Perliger 2012; Perry 2000). Some have argued that the Alt-Right is another example of White nationalist mainstreaming as an alternative means of attaining political power. That group retains the core beliefs of more violent White nationalists but hides these views beneath a cloak of civility (Atkinson 2018; Bhatt 2021; Hodge and Hallgrimsdottir, 2020).

Despite the globalist pretentions of some American White nationalists, it is farfetched to imagine that the Operation Red Dog plotters could have facilitated the mass migration of Whites into Dominica, thereby completely displacing the island's Black residents. In this sense, classical *Lebensraum*, which entails full-blown White settler colonialism, would not have worked. Instead, they hoped to achieve a modified form of *Lebensraum* in which large sections of the choicest land on this small island, along with the island's economy, would be controlled by the coup plotters. That is, they intended to create a lucrative White nationalist outpost on the island in which economic gain matched, or exceeded, pure racial ideology in importance (Belew 2018; Bell 2008; Maingot 2003; Malvaney 2018; *New York Times* 1981; Thomas 1981). Their desire for power and wealth, and the constraints imposed by Caribbean geopolitics, pushed the coup plotters to embrace a spatial solution that recalled American White nationalists who propose the carving up of the U.S. into racial and ethnic enclaves (Perry and Blazak, 2010). In terms of our previous discussion, this Dominican solution was a hybrid form of *Lebensraum* and *Autarky* since, in the American context, spatial ethno-racial vivisection is inward-looking, but imposing themselves on another country meant that the White nationalists were also practicing a type of outward-looking settler colonialism. Specifically, playing a dominant role in the island's economy would have entailed Dominicans' submission to the White nationalists (Bell 2008; Gane-McCalla 2012; *New York Times* 1981).

Clearly, this state of affairs, pregnant with bitter memories of White domination over Blacks, would have been intolerable to ordinary Dominicans. But the creation of a White nationalist enclave in Dominica was a plausible outcome had the coup plotters successfully overthrown the Eugenia Charles government because of Patrick John's past behavior. His authoritarianism gave the White nationalists the unexpected opportunity to intervene in

the social and political chaos that John, himself, had initiated. One of the reasons for his ouster from power in 1980, in the first place, is that John had a penchant for making deals with global pariahs. For instance, he was implicated in a plot with the arms dealer, Sidney Burnett-Alleyne, to funnel South African money into Dominica to build an oil refinery to help the apartheid regime evade international sanctions (Allfrey 1979; Baker 1994; BBC 1988; Maingot 2003; Savarin 1979; Thomas 1981; *Time* 1981). This was an explosive charge in the 1970s West Indies which abhorred apartheid (Allfrey 1979; Bell 2008; Levi 1990). Moreover, like the White nationalist mercenaries, Burnett-Alleyne had also plotted to overthrow the Barbadian government (Bell 2008; Meditz et al., 1989). In another deal, John had also promised to give one-third of Dominica's arable land, which was to be taken from small farmers, to an American corporation to create a freeport. The terms of the deal called for the Americans to completely control the freeport, which would have comprised its own autonomous entity within Dominica (Baker 1994; Maingot 2003; Thomas 1981).

This pattern of dealing with renegades and shady foreigners helps explain John's comfort with plotting with American and Canadian White supremacists to topple the Eugenia Charles government. He was willing to extend them the same economic favors and high degree of autonomy he had promised previous foreign interlopers. Prior to the coup, John formalized these considerations in a contract he signed with Michael Perdue, Operation Red Dog's lead organizer. In it, Nortic Enterprises, the company set up by Perdue to oversee the White nationalists' business interests in post-Eugenia Charles Dominica, was promised $50,000 to complete the coup and 2.5 percent of an expected $80,000,000 development loan that was to come from foreign governments. The company was to be exempted from all taxes, duties, and levies and could repatriate funds without restrictions. Moreover, the contract called for the company to build an airport and to develop and oversee the Dominican tourism industry. Furthermore, Michael Perdue was charged with training and supervising a 200-man defense force that was to serve as a Praetorian Guard for Patrick John (Bell 2008; *New York Times* 1981).[11] These terms provided the White nationalists exceptional latitude in the creation and operation of a small but lucrative military and economic fiefdom, which mixed legal and illegal activities. The latter included drug manufacturing and dealing,[12] gambling, money laundering, and passport fraud.[13] (Bell 2008; Gane-McCalla 2012; Maingot 2003; *New York Times* 1981; Phillips 2002).

Discussion

On the surface, the attempted invasion, in 1981, of Dominica by a group of White nationalists seems inexplicable. These groups typically confine themselves to countries with large White populations, and Black majorities constitute the population of most Caribbean countries. Seemingly, therefore, there is little in the Caribbean that would interest White nationalists, but the Operation Red Dog coup plotters were heirs to a tradition of American manipulation of Caribbean nations. They illustrate that the region remains the American Mediterranean. Critiquing this notion, political scientist, Robert Pastor (1994), likens U.S. involvement in the Caribbean to a whirlpool, characterized by periods of intense concern followed by long periods of neglect. Typically, concern arises when the U.S. perceives a threat to its influence in the region. If this is true, the U.S. will likely intensify its engagement with the Caribbean in coming years as China broadens its regional economic and political footprint (Bernal 2015; Erikson 2005). But private groups will also continue interfering in the domestic affairs of Caribbean countries. An example of this, which parallels Operation Red Dog, was the plot, aborted by the FBI on July 7, 1986, by American mercenaries to overthrow the government of Suriname (Kennedy 1986;

Shenon 1986). More recently, in July 2021, Colombian and American mercenaries, some with Haitian roots, assassinated the president of Haiti (Diaz 2021).

From another perspective, Operation Red Dog also illustrates that hate groups are becoming increasingly globalized. On this point, it is noteworthy that the mercenaries consisted of a multi-national group of Americans and Canadians who were operating across three countries and thousands of miles. Furthermore, that these avowed racists plotted to overthrow the government of a foreign country populated by Black people really caught the attention of observers. Recalling images of the Caribbean's history of economic and racial subordination at the hands of imperialistic powers, the plot revealed that at least some White nationalists were willing to export their violence beyond American and Canadian shores. Since 1981, when the ATF, FBI, and U.S. Customs agents aborted Operation Red Dog, an early example of transnational White nationalist violence, such violence has only increased and is expected to do so for the foreseeable future (Soufan Center 2019). Nevertheless, more research is needed to clarify the relationship between White nationalists and foreign states. Past research has tended to focus on the White nationalist/government relationship within certain countries. The question is whether the same dynamics are at work when White nationalists in one country interact, especially over a sustained period, with governments in other countries. The present article has assumed that the relationship between American White nationalists and the U.S. government is an appropriate template for analyzing the dynamics between the Operation Red Dog plotters and Dominica. It could be, however, that further research will show different patterns of behavior when White nationalists pursue their agenda across borders and must deal with foreign governments.

The nature of this agenda constitutes a second question that calls for further research. As noted, the White nationalist movement is fragmented, with different groups emphasizing different interests, but they also overlap and agree on certain basic principles. One is the superiority of people of European ancestry, and the second is a desire to overthrow multiracial democracies to replace them with authoritarian homogeneous White states. As argued, however, White nationalists have other goals as well and, overall, they show flexibility in attaining their goals. One conclusion to be drawn from the Operation Red Dog plotters' interaction with Dominica is that they were willing to subordinate their long-term goal of creating a homogeneous White America to more realizable objectives, in the presence of the right circumstances. Future research should focus on studying, systematically, White nationalists' hierarchy of goals and their flexibility in pursuing these goals.

CONCLUSION

Operation Red Dog was part of a deadly series of plots that unfolded in Dominica in the late 1970s and early 1980s. This involved two attempted coups, several murders, and the arrest of a former prime minister and commanders of the Dominica Defense Force (Bell 2008; Phillips 2002). That the White nationalist side of the coup fell apart owes more to their ham handedness in organizing essential aspects of the plot, rather than to lack of seriousness and time, money, and material invested in the coup. Specifically, after the original captain of the White nationalists' boat to Dominica backed out of the plot, Mike Perdue attempted to hire another who, sensing trouble, contacted the ATF. That agency subsequently inserted three informers among the coup plotters, which meant that on April 27, 1981, when the White nationalists set sail for Dominica, they walked into a trap that had been set for them by American law enforcement. Moreover, a month before the voyage to Dominica, one of the White nationalists, seeking notoriety, had informed a Toronto disk jockey of the coup. The disk jockey then contacted both the Ontario Provincial Police and Eugenia Charles. Thus, the coup's main target in

Dominica and American and Canadian law enforcement officials were aware of the coup long before the White nationalists set sail from New Orleans (Bell 2008; Bridges 1994; Lauder 2017). It turns out that Eugenia Charles was far from a hapless victim of the White nationalists, but actively worked to subvert them.

Despite these fatal breaches in secrecy, the White nationalists still represented a clear and present danger to Dominica. That they were utterly committed to toppling Eugenia Charles' government and establishing their criminal enterprise on the island is seen in the fact that they decided to proceed with the coup even after learning of Patrick John's arrest. They had already heavily surveilled the island, signed a contract with John, convinced White nationalist fellow travelers and Mafia kingpins to invest hundreds of thousands of dollars in the coup, established a company to manage their Dominican enterprises, chartered a boat, and stockpiled it with weapons (Bridges 1994; Lauder 2017; *New York Times* 1981; *United States v. Black* 1982). Even though their actual voyage to Dominica was doomed to fail, as far as they were concerned, they were on their way to a new El Dorado. Ordinarily, this denouement would have been impossible for White supremacists on a Black island, but social and political chaos in Dominica and Patrick John's behavior rendered the impossible plausible. The mercenaries had probably not abandoned their desire for a pure White homeland, but they were willing to settle for an exclusive, powerful, and wealthy White enclave on an island outpost in the Caribbean.

Notes

[1] In his analysis of Operation Red Dog, Matthew Lauder (2017) shows that the apprehension of this Canadian woman was only the tip of the iceberg since, in fact, several White nationalist figures flew in and out of Dominica while conducting extensive surveillance on the island in preparation for their coup.

[2] M.G. Smith's (1974) famous plural society thesis is built on this basic model, but Bill Riviere (1981), for instance, shows that Dominican society's social structure can be conceptualized in even more complex terms.

[3] Testimony in the federal government's case against Stephen Don Black and Joe D. Hawkins, two of the Operation Red Dog operatives, indicates that Michael Perdue, the leader of Operation Red Dog, initiated contact with Patrick John in the spring of 1979. Perdue proposed to use Dominica as a jumping off point for a group of mercenaries to overthrow the communist government of Grenada. He later modified this plan to overthrow the government of Dominica instead (*United States v. Black* 1982). Phillips (2002, p.72) argues that Perdue had worked in Dominica's timber industry in the years before Operation Red Dog. This increases the likelihood that Perdue and John knew each other.

[4] Although the term "You will not replace us" is associated most closely with the French writer Renaud Camus (Williams 2017), it is consistent with the spirit of Lebensraum.

[5] See, also, Laura Smith (2021).

[6] As noted below, Eugenia Charles also had foreknowledge of the planned invasion of Dominica by the White nationalists but allowed it to play out, to a point, in co-operation with U.S. law enforcement, to entrap the plotters.

[7] Commentators on the White nationalist movement (e.g., Alter 2021; Ball and Dagger, 1997; Berger 2020; Gibson 1994) usually point to *The Turner Diaries* as providing the template (or "Bible") for the use of strategic violence and chaos as a means of overthrowing the state and establishing a homogeneous White nation.

[8] Environmental devastation and deaths stemming from back-to-back category 5 hurricanes were integral to the state of crisis gripping Dominica around the time of the attempted invasion by the White nationalists. In 1979, Hurricane David, and in 1980, Hurricane Allen, ravaged the island and killed scores of people. Dion E. Phillips (2002) argues that the prospect of cashing in on the felled trees was one factor motivating Michael Perdue to pursue the coup against the Eugenia Charles government.

[9] Black went on to create Stormfront, the most popular neo-Nazi website.

[10] Testimony in *United States v. Stephen Don Black and Joe D. Hawkins* indicates that David Duke played a pivotal role in the plot to overthrow Eugenia Charles. He conspired with Michael Perdue from the outset of the plot and used his connections, as a leader in the White nationalist movement, to introduce White nationalists from Canada and the United States to each other. Despite this, the U.S. government decided not to formally bring charges against Duke (Bridges 1994; *United States v. Black* 1982).

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[11] This detail recalls the activities of the Dominican Defense Force which, especially during the late 1970s and early 1980s, behaved as if it owed its allegiance to Prime Minister John, rather than to the Dominican nation. See, for example, Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert (1996) and Phillips (2002).

[12] In *United States v. Stephen Don Black and Joe D. Hawkins* it is claimed that Wolfgang Droege, the Canadian White nationalist co-conspirator with Black, Hawkins and others, initiated the idea of using Dominica as a base for the manufacturing of cocaine (*United States v. Black* 1982).

[13] Dominica is one of several countries in the world that operates a citizenship for investment program. For a starting fee of $100,000 US, foreigners can obtain Dominican citizenship with no language, age, educational, or interview requirements (Dominica Citizenship by Investment). While the program is legal, Stewart Bell argues that the White nationalists intended to abuse the system for criminal purposes. Speaking of the plotters' plans for Dominica, he states: "They could build casinos. They could cut down the trees and sell them off. They could sell drugs and guns. They could print themselves diplomatic passports and commit crimes around the world with immunity. Who was going to stop them? They would be their own sovereign, criminal nation, a crooks' paradise" (2008, p. 59).

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