

# **The International Rise of Far-Right Movements and Its Impact on Canada**

**By:** Carmen Li

**Student ID:** 300215443

**Supervisor:** Dr. Alexandra Gheciu

**Submission Date:** March 16th, 2022



uOttawa

In fulfilment of the requirements for the Major Research Paper (API 6999)

Graduate School of Public and International Affairs

University of Ottawa

## **Abstract**

Radical conservative movements that have gained significant popularity throughout Europe and the United States have put immense pressure on the stability and legitimacy of liberal democratic states and institutions. The conglomeration of far-right groups varies along the spectrum of radical (democratic) to extreme (anti-democratic) to fascist and violent, but all of which share a political sociology under the term ‘New Right’ – and that is their disdain for the liberal international order and desire to redefine conservative politics (whether that be through preserving European ethnocultural identity and opposing immigration, or reasserting white dominance and homogeneity through authoritarianism). This paper explores the various groups, ideologies and political tools used by the far-right to better understand why and how they mobilize in an attempt to weaken liberal societies. Canada is often assumed to be protected from the divisive effects of nationalist populism and disinformation campaigns due to its strong institutions and multicultural identity. However, the rise of the far-right has been festering in Canada for years and the detrimental impact of the pandemic, as well as the government’s political mishaps, have given these groups ample opportunity to embolden and radicalize people. The recent unfolding of the Freedom Convoy in Ottawa transformed from a truckers’ protest challenging public health mandates that took away peoples’ freedoms, to an anti-Trudeau/anti-government occupation calling for the resignation of government officials. The occupation of downtown Ottawa lasted three weeks and ignited protests and border blockades across Canada and throughout the world. The in-depth analysis uncovers the roots of the movement, how it unfolded over the 3-week course and what the responses were from the public, police and government. I also explore its interconnections with the transnational far-right, as well as its implications for Canadian society, security and democracy.

## **Table of Contents**

ABSTRACT.....	2
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	3
INTRODUCTION.....	4
CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS.....	6
METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	8
LITERATURE REVIEW.....	14
<b>Radical Conservative Movements and Ideologies of the New Right</b> .....	14
<b>Populism</b> .....	19
<b>Extremism, Violence and Terrorism</b> .....	25
<b>Tools Used to Radicalize and Mobilize</b> .....	29
CASE STUDY: OTTAWA FREEDOM CONVOY 2022.....	34
<b>The Organizers Behind the Ottawa Freedom Convoy</b> .....	42
<b>Perspectives From On the Ground</b> .....	45
DISCUSSION.....	48
CONCLUSION.....	54
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	55

## INTRODUCTION

The liberal international order has been a pervasive and effective path for the development, progress and stability of democratic nations for nearly a century. It opened up possibilities of international security, trade, cooperation, peace and economic growth, and established human rights, freedoms and the rule of law (Ikenberry, 2018; Barnett & Duvall, 2005). Over the last few decades, the U.S.-led liberal order has been under immense strain by the growth of illiberal international actors and movements such as nationalism, populism, authoritarianism and neo-fascism. International Relations (IR) theorist John Ikenberry (2018) argues that its erosion began at the end of the cold war, when the U.S. became a hegemonic unipolar power and the liberal order lost much of its purpose as a security community against communism. It then became a neoliberalist platform for international trade and capitalism which has significantly increased the wealth gap and brought a host of problems to developing countries such as exploitation, dependency on core states, and armed conflicts (Tickner, 1993). Democracy and globalization have been challenged all around the world due to the ineffective, hypocritical and incomplete imposition of “democratic institutions” from the West – political and cultural coercion has triggered significant backlash due to the neglect of the perspectives and cultures of local communities. Counterhegemonic struggles against Western-backed institutions thus desire “liberation” from the “modern machines of power” (Barnett & Duvall, 2005).

This paper focuses on the rising popularity of radical conservative movements as a counterhegemonic struggle, along with their intellectual critiques and political tools, to shed light on the challenges they pose to liberal democracies. It will also explore the lineages of the far-right in Canada, its connections to the transnational far-right and its impact on Canadian society and politics. Contemporary radical conservative movements throughout the West vary in their demands, discourse and levels of acceptance of liberal and democratic values. What they now

deem as the ‘New Right’ is an umbrella term for movements that seek to challenge the dominant international liberal order and reimagine politics to conserve traditional ethnic European values and communities (De Orellana & Michelsen, 2019). In the face of globalization, white working-class individuals who have felt marginalized and left behind have shown deep admiration and support for populist nationalist leaders like Donald Trump, Viktor Orban and Marine Le Pen, who inspire a reclamation of identity and heritage amidst a struggle against enemies who threaten their survival. Researchers for the Global Right Project and IR scholars, Drolet and Williams (2019) summarize:

What the radical right wants more than anything is to take control of globalisation to build an alternative order in which free-market capitalism thrives but which is firmly anchored in notions of shared civilizational heritage, myths of inherited communities and their traditional sources of authority, and in which the West is redefined accordingly against the cultural and demographic threats from Global Islam and the Global South. (p. 30)

Truth subversion has been as a political weapon for control and domination, and in the context of liberal states, populist leaders have utilized this tactic to sow confusion around what ‘truth’ is and undermine the liberal international order. Facts, reason and scientific consensus have been distorted and falsified by the far-right through conspiracy theories and disinformation in a way that undermines public health, government institutions and academic experts – or in their view, the liberal managerial class (Nazar & Peters, 2021; Drolet & Williams; 2019). These movements have been insidiously influencing Canadians, capitalizing on the many crises brought about by the pandemic to mobilize and radicalize people against authorities. The eruption of an unprecedented anti-mandate occupation in downtown Ottawa was reflective of the growing dissatisfaction with the government and the ideological influence of the far-right on Canadians. This 3-week ‘Freedom Convoy’ that began as a truckers’ protest on January 28, 2022, against public health measures that are negatively impacting peoples’ families, livelihoods and freedoms

unfolded into a perplexing disaster for Canadian politics, security and the economy while dividing the public. It also ignited massive support from far-right politicians, influencers and groups all over the world, collecting millions of dollars in donations and spreading freedom protests internationally. A large proportion of funding from U.S. donors sparked controversy as the intentions behind the convoy indicated a potential sedition, threatening the possibility of foreign interference with Canadian democratic governance. However, the rise of these movements also reflects deeper issues within our current institutions and liberal systems that require us to ask why they are so popular and effective in the first place. The following literature review and case study analysis will explore the international political sociology behind far-right movements and the differentiation between groups and terms to provide a nuanced understanding of what this could mean for Canada and for democracy.

#### CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS

There is a debate about whether or not the *radical right* differs from the *extreme right*, and Sterkenburg (2019) explains that the radical right may be more moderate and, at minimum, comprises of an inclination towards authoritarianism, populism, and homogeneity or sameness of a group. Radicalism opposes the constitution, but extremism is hostile towards it (Sotlar, 2004). Jupskås & Segers (2020) differentiate the two terms through their sentiments toward democracy in that the radical right opposes liberal *aspects* of it, such as minority rights and equality, but still operate within democratic boundaries, whereas the extreme right is “inherently anti-democratic” and, in some cases but not all, promotes the use of violence to achieve its political goals. Ravndal & Bjørge (2018) uses the term *far-right* as a “collective term comprising both (democratic) radicals and (anti-democratic) extremists, who all share three key features: acceptance of social inequality, authoritarianism, and nativism” (p. 6). In the following arguments, this paper will

often refer to the 'far-right' to include both radical and extreme groups since movements generally comprise of a mix of people along the ideological spectrum.

*Nativism*, on the surface, is associated with support for localism, patriotism and preserving a common peoples' shared way of life in response to the inequalities felt from globalization (Riedel, 2020). It can also be described as opposition to foreign influence to protect native-born interests, or a longing for a homogenous state without non-native influence (Ravndal & Bjørge, 2018; Sterkenberg, 2019). *Nationalism*, on the other hand, comprises of support for or loyalty to one's national identity and those who share a common origin, ethnicity or cultural ties. It also comprises of the actions taken by members of a group to seek self-determination (Miscevic, 2020). Riedel (2020), a scholar in European Studies, argues that nationalism is a manifestation of a nativist way of thinking (or that nativism is married to defensive nationalism) which can generate prejudice and discrimination towards members of the out-group, especially when they are perceived as a threat. He argues that the use of the term nativism is a populist tactic that can mask nationalist, illiberal and xenophobic ideologies. In a factbook by the Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) Centre of Excellence on far-right extremism, Sterkenburg (2019) distinguishes ethnic and racial nationalists from cultural nationalists, in which racial (and some ethnic) nationalists believe that the superiority of the white race is being threatened and weakened by Jews, foreigners and a perceived group of elites. Cultural nationalists, by contrast, do not so much believe in the Zionist conspiracy but do oppose immigration, religious minorities and 'Islamization' to preserve their own national culture.

The term *fascism* has been difficult for scholars to define since it does not rest on foundational philosophical positions like socialism, liberalism and conservatism, nor does it have a founding thinker or doctrine. However, in the *The Five Stages of Fascism*, Robert Paxton

(1998) states that fascists despise thought and reason and subordinate it “not to faith, as did the traditional Right, but to the promptings of the blood and historic destiny of the group. Their only moral yardstick is the prowess of the race, of the nation, of the community. They claim legitimacy by no universal standard except a Darwinian triumph of the strongest community” (pp. 4-5). In these instances, mobilizing passions and feelings has taken precedent over thought and propelled these groups to believe in their victimization at the hands of an enemy; therefore justifying any retaliation against this perceived enemy. Fascism is also tied to the integration, unity and superiority of a pure group of people (ultranationalism) with a male authority figure capable of incarnating the group’s destiny. Fascists often refer to themselves as “revolutionaries” and believe in the beauty of willpower and violence in devotion to the success of their ‘Darwinian struggle’. The promise of a ‘radical spiritual-cultural renewal’ helps in their recruitment amongst the public to fight against a corrosive liberalism and the bourgeoisie associated with it (Paxton, 1998). Nazi Germany and the American Ku Klux Klan were examples of fascist movements, but more modern-day neo-Nazi white nationalist groups in North America include the Proud Boys, Blood & Honour and Atomwaffen Division who are now listed as terrorist entities in Canada (Public Safety Canada, 2022; Paxton, 1998).

The *New Right* is a reactionary international movement that challenges liberal norms (such as equality and universalism) and seeks to reimagine conservative and international politics. International relations scholars, De Orellana & Michelsen (2019), discuss its wide-ranging and complex expressions such as through anti-immigration policies, populism, anarcho-capitalist libertarianism, nationalism and fascism. What unites its varying manifestations is the belief that opposing liberal modernity and overturning internationalist norms is essential to liberating the

natural qualities of birth cultures and identities, and reasserting their access to a greater share of global wealth in the face of globalization.

#### METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper is a qualitative analysis of peer-reviewed academic research, journalistic news articles, and statements and written texts from influential thought leaders. The literature review section will provide an overview of radical conservative ideologies, transnational far-right movements, the role of liberal elites and the international liberal order, and the tools and discourse used in the mobilization and radicalization of these movements, particularly during the pandemic. It will then analyze a case study of the recent “Freedom Convoy” in Ottawa and discuss how these international far-right movements have influenced Canada (and vice versa), displaying how deeply intertwined and borderless these groups are throughout the West, how effectively they can mobilize, as well as what it could mean for Canadian democracy. Since this current event is still unfolding during the time of writing, it will be analyzing up-to-date news sources, public statements from political leaders and right-wing influencers, police and government reports, and statistical data from public opinion research polling. News sources are chosen based on minimal bias and high factual reporting as listed in Media Bias/Fact Check’s database (2022). This database rates thousands of media sources and journalists to ensure readers are aware of political biases, potential fake news and reporting credibility. Each news source that was found regarding the convoy was entered into the database to ensure it was within the range of Left-Centre to Right-Centre bias (with ‘Least Biased’ being right in the centre), and high to very high factual reporting. Public statements from political leaders and influencers are found through news sources, videos, government websites, or directly from their social media accounts. Public opinion polls were found in news articles and verified on the polling website for

additional details. A photojournalist for the Globe & Mail offered to speak to me via Zoom about his experience and observations at the border blockade in Coutts, Alberta, and some of his personal statements are included in the case study section in addition to the article he contributed to. After the analysis of the case study, the discussion section will then tie together the literature on radical conservative movements and the Canadian Freedom Convoy to expose *why* these movements are seeking power and *how* they go about undermining democracy and the liberal order.

The theoretical framework guiding the literature review and analysis is grounded in works from the ‘New Right’ (NR) and its critique on the international liberal order in what Abrahamsen et al. (2020) coins as the NR’s own international political sociology (IPS). Without understanding its ideological and theoretical foundations as well as its strategies to gain power and weaken existing institutions, democracies are ill-equipped to confront the New Right effectively. The international political sociology of the NR offers strong critiques of the effects of globalization, liberal institutions and the “New Class” of experts that manage society. This global transformation has decentralized identities, left behind those who will not adapt to liberal norms and looks down upon people who cling to localism, patriotism and traditional values. Similar to leftist critiques about Westernization, Sam Francis (one of the most influential thinkers of the contemporary American far right) argues that “authoritarian rule in the Global South is not a product of ‘underdevelopment’ but a ‘consequence of Western technological, economic and managerial modernization,’ which has alienated managerial regimes from their own culture and populations” (Abrahamsen et al., 2020, p. 98). What differentiates the NR from many other similar critiques of economic globalization (such as Marxism) is the political device of articulating an identifiable enemy and the strategies used to mobilize people against this

concrete enemy, i.e., the new class of liberal managerial elites and anyone who supports and upholds their regime (2020). These tools and strategies will be further examined in the literature review.

In the article '*From critique to reaction: The new right, critical theory and international relations*,' Drolet and Williams (2021) address the philosophies and critical themes of New Right thought that are left out of IR theories, and how its reactionary critiques of liberalism defy the idea that "critical international theory" is intrinsically progressive. Guillaume Faye, an influential thinker associated with the French New Right ('la Nouvelle Droit'), states, "the critical Left is neither reformist, nor revolutionary or conservative: it is a means to reinforcing the system... It passes itself off as being against the system, when it is the system. It passes itself off as being oppressed, when it oppresses." (Drolet & Williams, 2021, p. 32). The New Right's aim is to antagonize, dismantle and in some cases, overthrow the dominant liberal order (and the Left that feeds it) by creating a counter hegemonic order, separate from the dominant cultural apparatus, and one that accommodates traditional communitarian and spiritual values. Sam Francis articulated the weaknesses of liberalism that caused cultural resentment and economic insecurity within white, Christian, industrial working-class Americans to catalyze a counter-hegemonic movement united in identity and ideology; opposition to the regime and disengagement from universalist norms must be transmuted into a new cultural hegemony (2021). In Adler & Drieschova's article on the use of truth subversion as an IR tactic to create epistemological insecurity within the liberal international order (LIO), they refer to Foucauldian and postmodern scholars' conception of knowledge and power, in that knowledge and theory serves the elites, and alternative voices are marginalized to maintain order and power relations in support of the liberal international order (2021). However, they argue that illiberal leaders are using these

critical arguments, not for emancipation, but for an even more repressive order of domination. Essentially, the New Right believes the Left and its critiques have been appropriated and absorbed by the liberal regime, its theories used to maintain the order and serve the elites while conservative voices are silenced, discredited and disdained.

To provide context, the liberal theory of international politics challenged the previously dominant realist assumptions about interstate behavior, in that rather than being driven by power, patterns of state behaviours and preferences can instead lead to an interdependent international system (Moravcsik, 1997). The current liberal international order, led by the U.S., is grounded in values like freedom, equality, individualism, progress, modernity, scientific reason, democracy, free-market principles, globalization and cooperation (Ikenberry, 2018). Built on Enlightenment foundations, liberal internationalism is a way of thinking and responding to modernity that has reformed and organized the international order in an open, progressive, and loosely rules-based way. One in which sovereign states (led by liberal democracies) are incentivized to cooperate for mutual gain, protection, and stability. As Ikenberry (2018) states:

To be inside this liberal hegemonic order was to be positioned inside a set of full-service economic, political and security institutions. It was both a *Gesellschaft*—a ‘society’ defined by formal rules, institutions and governmental ties—and a *Gemeinschaft*—a ‘community’ defined by shared values, beliefs and expectations. Liberal order was a sort of nascent security community—with ‘security’ defined broadly. (p. 17)

The top global contenders challenging the U.S.-based order are China and Russia, and they are quick to point out and take advantage of the contradictions and fragmentations within the liberal order. For example, the U.S. claims to bring peace, security, democracy and human rights to the international arena through their institutional frameworks but participates in illiberal and coercive practices around the world – particularly in the Global South – such as military invasions, support for authoritarian leaders, and exploitative structural adjustment programs and

humanitarian interventions that strip away the dignity and sovereignty of other states (Huang, 2021). China offers alternative norms and structures of global governance that, although follow an authoritarian model, are able to leverage the weaknesses of the liberal order and fill in security and economic gaps that were exacerbated by the pandemic and the Trump presidency (2021). Additionally, Russian-backed social media accounts are known to contribute to disinformation campaigns and election meddling in the West by amplifying divisive content and alt-right messaging, further aggravating the already existing social divides and political discontent (McKay & Tenove, 2021). In response to an increasingly fragmented and contradictory liberal international order, “illiberal” models are becoming more influential in shaping new beliefs and international norms, and global powers aren’t the only ones taking advantage of this.

The rise of far-right populism and contemporary nationalism sweeping through the West poses a serious challenge to both domestic affairs within democracies and to the international order as they aim to dismantle the system from within (Adler & Drieschova, 2021; Abrahamsen et al., 2020). Western states, including Canada, have often miscalculated and underestimated the implications of far-right movements and this paper seeks to understand and communicate its ideologies and deeply rooted anti-liberal views to expose not only what these movements could mean for democracies, but also how these radical movements are symptomatic of a waning system. Canada is not immune to right-wing transnational movements and the pandemic has both exposed already entrenched beliefs and illustrated how effectively they can mobilize and gain support domestically and internationally. For the purpose of this paper, the New Right and radical conservatism (or alt-right in the U.S.) will be used synonymously and will be

considered an international political sociology challenging the very notion of the liberal international order.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **Radical Conservative Movements and Ideologies of the New Right**

Radical conservative movements that have been gaining popularity throughout Western states include Trumpism and paleoconservatism in the U.S., Brexit in the U.K., Identitarians in France, Alternative for Germany (AfD), Fidesz in Hungary, and more extreme movements like neo-Nazism. De Orellana & Michelsen (2019) fit these populist nationalist movements under the ‘New Right’ in that they are all reactionary to liberal internationalism and seek radical leaders who can embody their values and ethnic identities. These movements are often described as anti-feminist, anti-LGBTQ, anti-immigrant and sometimes similar to fascism, however they go beyond the fascist conception of preserving racial superiority by subsuming themselves within a broader identity of birth-culture and ensuring the survival of these identities in the face of civilizational clashes. (2019). It is not entirely accurate to assume these movements are fascist, even though they may echo similar nationalist sentiments, because as Mackel (2010) argues, fascism is inherently totalitarian and anti-democratic, and can only flourish in weak democracies. Far-right political parties with historical links to fascism that accept and operate in a democratic system thus morph into national-populist parties (to be discussed in the next section), such as the transformation of the Movimento Sociale Italiano (MSI) – a neofascist party – into Alleanza Nazionale (AN), a nationalist populist party (2010). However, this does not rule out the possibilities of democracies weakening over time and the further radicalization of political parties and voter populations. For example, Robert Paxton (1998) discusses the five stages of fascism: “(1) the initial creation of fascist movements; (2) their rooting as parties in a political

system; (3) the acquisition of power; (4) the exercise of power; and, finally, in the longer term, (5) radicalization or entropy” (p. 11). However, it is important to reiterate that the New Right covers a wide spectrum of beliefs and manifestations, and not all radical movements call for extremist or violent actions (most do not). As mentioned in the *Concepts and Definitions* section, the radical right remains within the bounds of a democracy whereas the extreme right, such as fascist groups, are anti-democratic (though not all extremists call for violence, either).

In the eyes of Carl Schmitt, an influential conservative thinker who was a member of the German Nazi party, liberalism debases politics and the life of the individual, while avoiding any real meaningful decisions by remaining stuck in debate or procrastinating half-measures. His solution to restoring vitality within the people can only be “by a decision to establish a state properly based in the life of an utterly homogenous people” (Dyzenhaus, 1999, p. 41). Radical conservatives in line with this view see pluralism and diversity as stagnating to society, destroying the soul and purpose of a group of people who share a common cultural and ethnic identity. For example, nationalist populist groups like the American paleoconservatives and their desire for an authoritarian, ‘strong man’ leader who can represent the people and lead them towards a “destiny of knowing who they are, where they came from, and what they can be” is what Trump hinged on which provided him with soaring popularity during his presidency (Drolet & Williams, 2019, pp. 10-11). Restricting immigration, deploying the military to national borders, fanning the flames of a cultural war, and dismantling democratic and liberal policies are some of the legacies of Trump’s presidency.

The paleoconservative movement in the U.S. originated in the 1980s, formed by traditional conservatives who felt dissatisfied about the neo-conservative direction that the Republican establishment was headed (Drolet & Williams, 2019). Pat Buchanan’s “America First” campaign

in 1992 was the initial spark that eventually led to the success of Trump’s “Make America Great Again” campaign in 2016. Their vision is to revitalize and mobilize middle America and the white-working class to break off from their dependency on incumbent elites and recenter traditional American (and Christian) values (2019). Paleoconservatism is largely influenced by Samuel T. Francis’ writings, who states:

They find that no matter which party or candidate they support, no matter what the candidates and parties promise, nothing substantially changes, except for the worse. Although they do the labor that sustains the managerial system, pay the taxes that support it, fight the wars its leaders devise, raise the families and try to pass on the beliefs and habits that enable the regime and the country to exist and survive, what they receive from the regime is never commensurate with what they give it .... They are at once the real victims of the regime and the core or nucleus of American civilization, the Real America, the American Nation. (Drolet & Williams, 2019, p. 25)

In one of his most influential books, *‘Leviathan and Its Enemies’* (released after his death in the early 2000s), Francis (2016) portrays the international order as one run by liberal managerial elites who uses their ideology “to rationalize, identify, and communicate its interests and to integrate mass society under its power” (p. 192). They have shaped and consolidated institutions, economies, states and a global culture around liberal ideologies to which he names managerial humanism and its four main tenets: scientism, progress/meliorism, hedonism and cosmopolitanism. He condemns scientism (knowledge systems like science, statistics, social science, and economics) because they are tools that can be manipulated and used by the managerial elite to manage society. Progress and hedonism have created a society that mistakes the need to accumulate material things or seek individual gratification and pleasure as ways to achieve happiness and advancement, but this obsessive pursuit of desire makes liberal societies fragile and empty, disconnected from real happiness. Additionally, liberalism’s focus on individualism and cosmopolitanism erodes communities, collective identity, and national sovereignty (Francis, 2016; Drolet & Williams, 2019). Its universal cosmopolitan approach is

counterproductive in terms of enhancing diversity – instead, it “flattens the world, divesting diversity of any real substantive content” and “commodifies individuals and cultures”

(Abrahamsen et al., 2020, p. 97). One of liberalism's biggest downfalls, in Francis' view, is its acceptance of – or lack of action towards – opposing ideologies. It uses 'soft managerialism', oftentimes avoiding the use of force and allowing anti-liberal movements to grow within it to respect peoples' individual beliefs; this is essentially causing itself suicide (Francis, 2016).

Liberalism also weakens itself through dislocating economies, allowing the free flow of labour to oversaturate markets, creating its own enemies by delegitimizing anything outside itself, causing underdevelopment and dictatorships in periphery states, and not taking care of its own working class which can lead to uprisings (Drolet & Williams, 2019). In order for their traditional way of life to survive, American paleoconservatives in particular seek the destruction of those who are indifferent to their survival, and to dethrone the authorities who threaten it. As Sam Francis wrote, “the first thing we have to learn about fighting and winning a cultural war is that we are not fighting to ‘conserve’ something; we are fighting to overthrow something” (2019, p. 5).

According to Viktor Orbán (2014), the Prime Minister of Hungary and leader of the populist right-wing party Fidesz, an ‘illiberal democracy’ is one that doesn't necessarily deny foundational values of liberalism, but one that does not organize the state around its ideologies. Orbán's illiberal democracy attempts to combat foreign interests and the influence of the liberal globalist agenda to instead prioritize the conservation of Hungary's Christian heritage, while supposedly maintaining the political structure of a democracy – or as he calls it, a ‘Christian democracy’ (2014). Throughout Europe, civilizationism and identitarian movements (inspired by the French Nouvelle Droit) are widespread within nationalist populist rhetoric and are unified in their attempt to preserve a shared cultural vision under Judeo-Christian civilization (Brubaker,

2017; Zuquete, 2018). They blur the lines between left and right by adapting to secularity, gender equality, gay rights and liberalism while maintaining anti-Islamic or anti-immigration views to protect European identity. Civilizationism, as discussed by Brubaker (2017) (a scholar in sociology, nationalism, immigration and ethnicity), can be seen as a new articulation of nationalism. Some Identitarians, however, try to distance themselves from the word 'nationalism' as it can leave a bad aftertaste and not resonate with mainstream ears. But what European Identitarian movements are centered around is protecting and reclaiming their 'carnal homelands' – or their regional, historical and civilizational identity – from the grips of American-centric Westernization, modernization and globalization, as well as the tyranny of the EU as a liberal institution to re-prioritize the local economy and European culture (Zuquete, 2018). They see diversity as natural but rather than mixing cultures, groups should be kept separate to preserve communitarian values and identities. Civilizationism and identitarian movements attempt to distance themselves from the more extreme views of skinhead Nazis or the racial dimension of the American far-right (i.e., whiteness vs. European) by making claims to a cultural and historical connection to the land in which they are Indigenous to, but the anti-liberal, anti-Islam and anti-immigration rhetoric to protect ethnic and religious identity still remains in synch.

Radical conservatives often view traditional conservatives as part of the problem with regards to the liberal international order that they oppose so deeply. Traditional conservatives emphasize the importance of slowing down progress in order to avoid chaos, maintain stability and preserve institutions and traditions (Viereck, 1950). These are the very institutions that reactionaries and radicals seek to destroy and replace, since they have “degenerated beyond restoration, calling for the creation of new institutions that will command the loyalty of

individuals and bind them together into an organic whole to a far greater extent than existing ones” (Drolet & Williams, 2019, p. 4). Traditional conservatives, on the other hand, seek to be moderate in all things, prioritizing values such as morality, prudence, pragmatism and humanism. They have more in common with liberals than with extremists of the right or left since they prefer gradual political evolution over the chaos brought about by revolution or radical change (Viereck, 1950). However, old-fashioned conservatism cannot offer an alternative to the direction that society is heading as their power comes from resistance and preservation. Radical conservative movements leverage this weakness by inspiring vision and purpose within people that feel disenfranchised, hopeless, lost or anxious about a future not of their making. Because conservatives are being pulled down a path led by liberal ideologies and elites, the New Right and right-wing populist movements have been incredibly successful at filling in this void of hope for those who cannot see themselves fitting into the current world order.

## **Populism**

In comparing Marxian revolutionary thought to the New Right, Drolet and Williams (2021) explain that Marxist motives for collective action are positively connected to universalist norms, while the New Right wants to disengage from universalism and divide and polarize:

The aim is to render centrist political parties and reformist positions irrelevant by radicalizing the terms of public debates and polarizing the electorate around binary oppositions: those who embrace globalization versus those who want to destroy it; “ordinary” voters who want to leave the EU versus arrogant metropolitan elites who want to remain; those who wish to preserve traditional communities and their sources of authority versus those who wish to abolish these arrangements. The strategy is simple, but it has proven incredibly effective over the past decade. So much so that some influential academic studies of contemporary right-wing populism have internalized and reproduced those reductive binaries in their own analytical framework. (p. 37)

Populism is a political approach that appeals to ordinary citizens by pitting them against the corrupt elite classes and creating in-groups and out-groups to evoke strong emotional responses

in their followers (Stecula & Pickup, 2021; Erl, 2020). It is not a strategy exclusive to right-wing politics as there has been leftist and libertarian populists, but in recent years populist messaging has become a prevalent strategy on the right, such as Brazil's president Jair Bolsonaro, Viktor Orban in Hungary, Duterte in the Philippines, the Brexit movement in the U.K., and Donald Trump in the U.S. (2020). As Drolet and Williams (2019) state: "Populism, we are told, is a cry of rage, pain, or resentment rather than a systematic ideological vision. A splenetic response of the 'left-behinds' to the impact of economic globalisation and migration, it represents a form of zombie politics as the losers of the millennium rise up to attack the system that has marginalised them" (p. 16). Erl (2020) classifies forms of populism as having a 'thin-centered ideology', in which there is little ideological grounding but serves political elites to mobilize people against their own interests, versus 'thick' populism which is grounded in ideologies like nativism, neoliberalism or libertarianism. In Canada, the leader of the Peoples' Party of Canada (PPC), Maxime Bernier, utilizes thick ideologies in his rhetoric with a blend of libertarian, nativist and anti-immigrant stances, defending settler colonial heritage and borrowing 'civilizationalist-nationalist' rhetoric from right-wing movements in Europe. Populist leaders often have little in common with their electorate, but their rhetoric and emotive styles can mobilize people into a sense of valor against the wealthy, educated, powerful elite or to oppose outside forces that threaten their identity like globalization, immigrants or political reform (2020). Class is usually the most significant indicator of support for populism and lower education is also associated with such movements. Right-wing parties cater to men and white or native-born working-class people because they feel "excluded culturally and left behind economically and thus, focus their resentment on outsiders" (Erl, 2020, p. 111).

In a study on how populism and conservative media fuels COVID-19 conspiracies, Stecula & Pickup (2021) finds that populist attitudes were evident in both Democrats and Republicans in the U.S. and that populism is a strong predictor of believing in COVID-related conspiracy theories irrespective of partisanship. However, those who consumed more conservative news media were more likely to believe in COVID-19 conspiracies. Since populist rhetoric propagates anti-intellectual and anti-elite sentiments, top-down messaging from experts is unlikely to stick, and the rejection of conspiracies or use of patronizing messages from elites and experts may further entrench those with populist attitudes further into conspiracy theories and misinformation (2021). Some of these conspiracy theories claimed that the virus was a bioweapon from the Chinese, or that Big Pharma is exploiting the pandemic to create harmful vaccines for profit. “The Great Reset” is a conspiracy theory that Alberta Premier Jason Kenney has referred to, and it claims that left-leaning global elites not only used the pandemic to advance their interests but manufactured it to “bring about economic collapse and a communist world government” (Molas, 2022). West, Juneau and Amarasingam (2021) discuss the literature surrounding COVID-19 related conspiracy theories in that they attempt to identify an evil source for ‘nonrandom events’, and that defining an enemy in which to struggle against endows life with purpose. The core of pandemic-related conspiracies is that there was intentionality behind the origin and spread of the virus to serve an elite group of people and enable them to control the population (i.e., via lockdowns, mandates and vaccines), and Donald Trump fed into these conspiracies, spreading misinformation, discrediting public health experts, and acknowledging QAnon (a decentralized anti-elite ideology rooted in unfounded conspiracy theories) material on Twitter (2021). An international comparative psychology study on COVID-19 found that depression as well as higher levels of exposure to information from digital media (as opposed to traditional media) was

associated with greater beliefs in conspiracies and misinformation (De Coninck et al., 2021). Conspiracy beliefs may help people cope with the stress, uncertainty and threats involved in a crisis, while the digital media ecosystem provides a hotbed for mis- and disinformation. Additionally, exposure to information from political actors (as opposed to traditional media) in the U.S., Philippines and Hong Kong was also associated with greater conspiracy theories and misinformation beliefs. The study also stated that the U.S. is a unique case due to its populist rhetoric, highly partisan media coverage and distrust in the media, whereas Canada fit into a category of countries that “seem to be well equipped to face the challenges of the digital information age because they have stable, trusted institutions that enable citizens to obtain independent information and uncover manipulation attempts” (2021, p. 3). Although Canada may be more resilient to such narratives, this does not mean we are immune to populism, far-right ideologies, anti-government sentiments, and other risks associated with conspiratorial thinking.

The Reform Party of Canada from 1987-2000 was a right-wing populist party that later became the Canadian Alliance, and eventually merged with the Progressive Conservatives (PC) to become the Conservative Party of Canada (CPC) in 2003-2004 (Kwak, 2020). The Reform Party reproduced a “politics of resentment” towards the tyranny of the ruling politicians and policymakers in Ottawa, the media, intellectuals who were deemed academic snobs, excessive immigration, and Indigenous claims to sovereignty and land which the party claimed gave them special rights and race-based benefits at the expense of the white majority. They wanted to recenter Canadian and Christian values, a European national culture, traditional family structures, and discontinue funding for ethnic and racial based programs and organizations (2020). They attempted to appear neutral on race and diversity, prioritizing economic policies

and claiming racelessness in Canada where immigrants are free to integrate into Canadian society. However, the party was continuously caught up in scandals and news headlines regarding sexist, homophobic and anti-immigrant outbursts and their association with members of the neo-Nazi Heritage Front. They were still able to displace both the NDP and the PC, winning official opposition in Canadian Parliament in 1997. The public and the media's distaste for their intolerant and extreme views pushed them to transform and rebrand the party, and eventually, the CPC re-articulated the Reform Party's views into more palatable ways, showcasing the success of mainstreaming right-wing populist discourse (Kwak, 2020).

Due to Canada's high levels of immigration and unemployment rates, and historically unstable party system, populist theories on far-right party success would predict it to be a "fertile breeding ground for anti-immigrant mobilization" (Ambrose & Mudd, 2015). However, Canada's strong immigration, multiculturalism and anti-discrimination policies, as well as the deeply embedded collective identity of inclusivity and tolerance has led to the lack of a "homogenous ethnic heritage or nationalism in Canada," which is more evident in Europe and the U.S., making nativist claims unpopular in party politics and forcing populist movements to modify their approach to gain more appeal (Friesen, 2021; Ambrose & Mudd, 2015). However, the softening of racist or exclusionary rhetoric into discourse on Canadian integration and national security, for example, did not stop conservatives from passing legislation that can be considered unconstitutional and punitive like the niqab ban and the S-7 Zero Tolerance for Barbaric Cultural Practices Act (2015) which targeted Muslims (Kwak, 2020). Former Prime Minister Stephen Harper (and leader of the CPC) described Islamism as "the greatest threat to the West" (2020).

In 2017, Maxime Bernier replaced Stephen Harper as leader of the CPC but resigned the next year to form a populist right-wing alternative party called the Peoples' Party of Canada (PPC) (Budd, 2021). The party platform embraced nativist and authoritarian ideologies, opposing excessive immigration, 'radical multiculturalism', climate change policies, participation in global institutions and limits on free speech. They even proposed to build fences along the Canada-U.S. border to crack down on illegal immigration and refugees. Bernier goes beyond the previous approaches of Canadian right-wing populists who prioritized economic nationalism, tax reductions and privatization, by also echoing the nativist discourse from transnational far right movements that have taken hold in Western Europe and the United States (2021). He has accused the Conservatives of "becoming a centrist party that lacked the ideological integrity to authentically represent the views of true Canadian conservatives" and that they have created cultural cleavages in which the PPC attempts to capitalize on, intensifying the discourse on anti-immigration (Budd, 2021, p. 170). During the 2019 federal election, the PPC received less than 2% of the overall national votes but during the pandemic, Bernier's stance against "tyrannical" public health measures and anti-government/anti-Trudeau sentiments likely gained him more popularity in the 2021 election in which they won 840,000 votes (or about 5%) (Dawson, 2021; Elections Canada, 2021). Evan Balgord, executive director of the Canadian Anti-Hate Network, said to CTV News that "the COVID-19 pandemic was a gift" to both the PPC and the far-right, allowing them to infiltrate conspiracy theory spaces and resonate with people who were angry about lockdowns, mandates and government overreach (Somos, 2021). Although the PPC was not able to win seats in the 2021 election, Maxime Bernier's tweet that same day illustrates the kind of freedom-fighting, anti-liberal rhetoric that has gained steam throughout the West: "We

made history today. We more than tripled our total vote. We are the only real opposition party. We will continue to fight against the rise of authoritarianism and for freedom!” (Bernier, 2021).

### **Extremism, Violence and Terrorism**

Right-wing extremism (particularly violent extremism) has become such a concern over the past several years that it was not only ranked as a top global security threat by international security policymakers in 2019, but it surpassed violent Islamic extremist activities (Spence, 2020). In the United States, 67% of terrorist plots and attacks in the first 8 months of 2020 were by white supremacist groups (Gross, 2020). On January 6, 2021, right-wing extremists (encouraged by former President Donald Trump) rioted and stormed the Washington D.C. Capitol Building in an attempt to overthrow the U.S. government, which ended in five deaths, two officer suicides and hundreds of injuries and federal charges (Mendoza & Linderman, 2021). Although extreme right-wing activities and ideologies are not necessarily illegal or violent, it does have the potential to inspire violence and terrorism.

During the pandemic, RWE activity online increased and the most discussed issues on social media platforms were COVID-19, U.S. politics and Canadian politics including frequent discussions of conspiracy theories and misinformation (Hart et al., 2021). Canada is particularly vulnerable to the flow of American populist and extremist ideologies with its tightly bound economic, geographic and political relations in addition to the instantaneous spread of information via technology and social media (Perry, Mirrlees & Scrivens, 2017). Immediately following the U.S. election in 2016, hateful propaganda and vandalism rates rose all over Canada targeting racial and religious minorities; three Jewish sacred spaces, a mosque and a church with a Black minister were vandalized with racist symbols and slurs in Ottawa. Shortly after these

events, a 15-year-old Muslim youth was attacked by white supremacists with baseball bats in Hamilton, Ontario, causing severe bodily and brain injuries (2017). Just a few months later in 2017, a white male – who was a supporter of Donald Trump and far-right French politician, Marine Le Pen – entered an Islamic Centre with a gun in Ste. Foy, Quebec, killing six Muslims and injuring 19 others. This also triggered an additional twenty-nine anti-Muslim hate incidents by Montreal police (online and offline) within three days of the attack (Perry, Mirrlees & Scrivens, 2017). During the first year of the pandemic – caused by what some politicians, including Trump, would call the “Chinese virus” – anti-Asian hate incidents climbed up to 700% higher in some Canadian cities (Bushman, 2022; Ibrahim, 2022). On June 6, 2021, an attacker ran over five pedestrians in London, Ontario – four of which died – and he was charged with four first-degree murder counts, an attempted murder count, as well as a premeditated act of terrorism motivated by hate (Rozdilsky, 2021). The family of five was Muslim and a nine-year old boy was the only survivor (Bell & McDonald, 2021). In Canada, as discussed by Momani & Deschamps (2021), there is less emphasis on survivalism and gun rights as is common with RWE in the U.S., and more focus on ethnic nationalism, “Canadian culture”, xenophobia and anti-government/anti-establishment sentiments.

In ‘An Online Environmental Scan of Right-Wing Extremism in Canada’, Hart et al. (2021) provided a list of ideological subcategories within the spectrum of RWE which included white supremacist, ethnonationalist, anti-Muslim, manosphere and sovereigntist and militia groups. National socialist and neo-Nazi groups fit into the white supremacist category, Canadians Against Sharia Law is an example of counter-jihadists or anti-Muslim category, and the Red Pill Room and A Voice For Men were listed under manosphere for their overt or extreme misogyny. Generation Identity (Identity Canada) was listed as an ethnonationalist group

which is inspired by the French Identitarians and The Great Replacement theory (*‘Le Grand Remplacement’*). This theory believes that ethnic Europeans are being replaced or reverse-colonized by immigrants. Lastly, sovereigntist groups are anti-state, commonly adhere to conspiracy theories, believe in the principles of ‘natural law’, and some may mobilize into militias (Hart et al., 2021). In 2018, some experts said the Three Percenters were the most dangerous group in Canada, which Barbara Perry described as "a far-right 'prepper' militia movement that is actively arming and engaging in paramilitary training" (Hutter, 2018). They were eventually added to Canada’s list of terrorist entities in 2021 (Public Safety Canada, 2022).

Police and military institutions are often supported by conservative and right-wing individuals because of shared ideological and political attitudes. In a report by the Canadian Armed Forces National Counter-Intelligence Unit, it was noted that “the majority of RWE groups profess their goals as loyalty, honour, and defending the ‘Nation’ from outsiders. These qualities closely echo the military traditions, increasing the ease with which current DND/CAF members and veterans are being attracted to such organisations” (Crosby, 2021, p. 360). Some individuals with extremist ideologies are known to join law enforcement or the Canadian Armed Forces in order to gain access to weaponry and military training, while others seek private paramilitary training (2021). Additionally, the distinction between hate crimes and terrorist acts is blurred in Canadian policies, which makes it difficult for security institutions to determine and enforce proper security measures and legal rights and actions (Blackbourn, McGarrity & Roach, 2019).

With regards to state surveillance and counter-terrorism practices, Newell (2021) discusses how these could actually further intensify racism and division within Canadian society rather than bridging racial divides. Considering Canada’s history and status as a settler-colonial

state (along with most Western nations), “the proliferation of hate groups is inevitable in societies built upon racist institutions of white supremacy and settler colonialism” (p. 341). Since 9/11, most Western countries have prioritized their security focus on international Islamic terrorism and foreign fighters, and this focus persists even with the rise of right-wing terrorism and extremism. Sweden, Germany, the UK and Spain have more far-right violence per capita than any other Western European country, and Sweden in particular has become the Nordic hub for “markedly stronger and more resilient extreme-right movements” (Newell, 2021, p. 341).

Comparisons can even be made between Islamic jihadist movements and Christian or right-wing extremist movements. For instance, Perry & Scrivens (2019) draws examples that illustrate their similar distaste for the international liberal order and the decay of traditional and/or religious values:

Both Christian extremists and those inspired by radical forms of Islam, for example, are waging a battle to maintain or restore a social order based on the fundamentals of faith, family and community against a rootless world order of abstract markets, mass politics and a debased sacrilegious ‘tolerance’. (p. 14)

The experience of economic, social and political decline and a loss of influence, power and mobility has fuelled their emergence as well as their hatred towards other groups outside of their identity (Laytouss, 2021). They use similar recruitment and radicalization strategies via digital communications, and some white supremacists even embrace parallel rhetoric, such as declaring a “Christian jihad” after 9/11 (Hoffman, Kayyem & Young, 2021). Adding to that, “The Base” is a racially motivated and violent right-wing extremist group that promotes race wars and the creation of a white ethno-state (Hwang, 2021), meanwhile, the Islamic extremist group “Al Queda” translates into English as “the base” or foundation (Fodden, 2002). Both Islamic and right-wing violent extremists seek strategies of accelerationism, which is to collapse the liberalist (or Western) society and rid it of the enemies they hate so much (Hoffman, Kayyem & Young,

2021). Laytous explains that what sets them apart is “who are the good and bad guys in their dualistic ‘we-against-them’ worldview and self-identity: an ideal world dominated by what is believed the genetically supreme white race in the case of extreme right, or morally supreme Muslims in the case of radical Islam” (2021, p. 4). The comparison is meant to illustrate the effects of not only globalization (or Westernization) on traditional communities and their loss of power and influence, but also the dangers and repercussions of a repressive security approach and control from a ‘liberal agenda’ that may contribute to further radicalizing people who feel unheard and rejected by the dominating regime.

## **Tools Used to Radicalize and Mobilize**

### *Creating Enemies and Delegitimizing Authority*

Carl Schmitt was a German political theorist and prominent member of the Nazi Party. His powerful critiques on liberalism, support for authoritarianism, and politics of making enemies have resurfaced and influenced radical conservative movements (Lewis, 2016). The categories of the ‘friend’ and the ‘enemy’ constitute the most fundamental aspect of politics, and to Schmitt, can be deployed to prepare the way for “a new sovereign order that will thwart liberalism’s struggle for dominance” (Dyzenhaus, 1997, p. 40). The state decides both external and internal enemies, and in the elimination of internal enemies can the collective homogenous group emerge and reenergize the political and social sphere, which liberalism neutralized and depoliticized. To elaborate, Schmitt (1997) says:

The point of the distinction between friend and enemy is to denote the highest possible intensity of a union or separation, of an association or dissociation. It can exist theoretically and practically without at the same time having to bring into play any other distinction like the moral, the aesthetic, or the economic. The political enemy need not be morally evil or aesthetically ugly; he does not have to make an appearance as an economic competitor, and it can even be advantageous to do business with him. However, he is the

other, the stranger. It suffices for his being that he is in some specially intensive sense something existentially different and strange, so that in the extreme case conflicts with him are possible which cannot be decided by some predetermined general norm or by the pronouncement of some 'disinterested' and thus 'unpartisan' third party... Only the participants can settle for themselves the extreme case of conflict; each has to decide for himself whether in the concrete situation the otherness of the stranger signifies the negation of his own way of life so that he has to be fended off and fought in order to preserve the way of life that is existentially appropriate. (pp. 47-48).

The manifestations of these teachings are evident in nationalist populist movements and their attacks on Muslims, both within the state and as international enemies (or 'terrorists') who threaten Western civilization. Trump's rhetoric on 'criminal illegal immigrants' and 'aliens' that are 'invading' the country supported his policies for building a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border, even declaring it a national emergency to increase funding in 2019 (Hall, 2021). In a study on RWE in Canada, Momani and Deschamps (2021) explains how far-right thought leaders often blame their lack of success and inability to get ahead on the political system's restrictions of freedom of expression and how the state favours the left. Their rhetoric commonly focuses on criticizing the left and the necessity for free speech, accusing mainstream media of being corrupt and controlled by Jewish or liberal elites and that multiculturalism causes harm to white people by leading to more inequities (2021). Radical conservative movements deem liberalism as the enemy and this is put into action by delegitimizing liberal elites, experts, scientists, journalists, activists and institutions, and instead placing their trust in far-right alternative sources and authorities. Creating enemies, whether it be liberals, elites, Jews, Muslims or immigrants, is key to preserving traditional ethnocultural values and mobilizing people around a shared homogenous identity (i.e., white Christian Americans), meanwhile populist leaders and radical movements spread fear, distrust and disinformation to delegitimize liberal democratic institutions and mainstream media (Drolet & Williams, 2019; Zuquete, 2018).

## *Disinformation, Conspiracy Theories and Truth Subversion*

*Disinformation* can be described as the deliberate dissemination of false and misleading information, as opposed to *misinformation*, which is creating or sharing information without realizing its wrong or intending to mislead (Bellemare, 2019). *Fake news* can be synonymous with disinformation since content is intentionally and maliciously constructed to manipulate and distort truth and/or attract attention (Butcher, 2019). *Conspiracy theories*, on the other hand, are not always intentional about spreading falsehoods, as it offers alternative facts to help people make sense of a complicated world or challenge peoples' pre-conceived beliefs and constructions of reality (Muirhead & Rosenblum, 2018). However, the rapid spread of conspiratorial thinking during the pandemic has been alarming for many reasons. As Muirhead & Rosenblum (Professors at Dartmouth College and Harvard University, respectively, specializing in democracy, politics and government) discuss, the new conspiracism – 'conspiracy without the theory' – seeks to delegitimize authorities, institutions, and democracy itself while claiming to have ownership over reality. It offers very little evidence for its wildly bizarre claims and thrives off overriding peoples' emotions over logic (2018). A study in 2020 found that 71% of American adults heard of a conspiracy theory that COVID-19 was planned by powerful elites and 20% of them said that it is probably true (Schaeffer, 2020). It is especially in crisis situations that conspiracy theories originate and grow rapidly by providing people with alternative realities to combat rising anxiety, uncertainty, economic insecurity and social instability, while undermining public support for government policies (Nazar & Peters, 2021). Essentially, disinformation, fake news and alternative facts (such as the new conspiracism) prey on emotional reactions, insecurities and societal divisions by providing falsehoods that give readers feelings of hope,

satisfaction, agency, superiority, belonging, sense-making or confirmation bias (Butcher, 2019; Freistein & Gadinger, 2019).

Adler & Drieschova (2021) explore *truth subversion* as a political weapon to overturn the liberal international order. Truth subversion encourages people to believe opinions and emotions over facts and reason while instilling distrust and confusion in what they know to be true and real. They introduce the term *epistemological security* which refers to the trust people feel towards collectively shared knowledge and by creating epistemological *insecurity* via truth subversion, targeted groups can be swayed to a communitarian identity of like-minded feelings and opinions, while social division and polarization between groups can be intensified. Widespread feelings of uncertainty, mistrust and insecurity, and difficulties in communication and international collaboration on what is real and what is not heightens the security dilemma at both a domestic and international level (2021). Populist leaders can use truth subversion as a tactic for political domination, such as through promoting alternative facts and conspiracy theories, and practices like false speak (outright purposeful lying), double speak (blatant contradictions within one's own speech), inflammatory speech (attacks on opponents that enrage the population) and flooding (disseminating so much information that the truth becomes indiscernible). These practices contradict facts, erode reason, create confusion, and deceive the public for personal or political gain. They can also weaken democracies by influencing election outcomes and breaking down trust in government institutions. By creating linguistic relativism, people struggle to get a bearing on reality making it easier to manipulate feelings and divide society into groups with different beliefs, in which communication and cooperation between them becomes increasingly difficult (Adler & Drieschova, 2021).

An example of how the New Right uses truth subversion is through telling stories that appeal to and resonate with people through fantasy and feelings of fulfilment, irrespective of logic or reality. As stated by Freistein & Gadinger (2019), problems can be hidden or removed by “making lies (or alternative facts) irrelevant as long as strong emotions can override them. More precisely, issues presented in the fantasmatic logic can evoke pleasure in their recipients” (p. 223) (i.e., feelings of superiority, agency, a sense of belonging, pleasures of self-pity, collective emotions of anger and indignation, etc.). A fantasy or myth about the future that is often generated by populist leaders is inspiring hope that they can bring back traditional ways of life before globalization, immigration and feminism, when white working- and middle-class men had significantly more power in the public and private sphere, and where women were proud mothers and devoted wives (2019). Additionally, Donald Trump often promoted COVID-19 disinformation to incite mistrust in government officials, health experts and the scientific community (representative of the liberal elite class) by encouraging alternative and outlandish cures for the virus, including the injection of bleach (Adler & Drieschova, 2021).

Harjuniemi (2021), however, argues that fake news and ‘post-truth’ debates stem from inherent contradictions within liberalism itself, such as its attempt at oscillating between free-market approaches and scientific/journalistic expertise in determining truth. Since the 1970s, journalism as a public good has been challenged by commercial pressures and economic interests in which the news market, and now social media sites, compete to prioritize engagement, entertainment, impulse and emotion for profit and politicization, rather than journalism’s original intention of enlightening the public and supporting rational public debates (2021). With the advance of technology, no one has a monopoly over truth, yet anyone can attempt to challenge or influence the production of knowledge and power to serve their own interests. It is no doubt that

we are in a post-truth era in which disinformation comes at us in all directions, putting immense strain on the liberal ‘regime of truth’, threatening democratic stability, and intensifying social and political divides.

#### CASE STUDY: OTTAWA FREEDOM CONVOY 2022

The following case study represents a complex manifestation of how populism, transnational far-right movements, conspiracy theories, and anti-liberal sentiments have intertwined and taken root in Canada. This movement does not represent singular groups, ideologies or political parties and will be examined as thoroughly as possible within the bounds and limitations of this research project. The analysis also attempts to limit biases by exploring left and right leaning political stances as well as genuine concerns of the common people to help illustrate wider systemic issues.

On January 28, 2022, a convoy of truckers protesting cross-border vaccination mandates made their way across Canada to the capital. It was initially in response to the federal government’s requirement for Canadian truckers to be fully vaccinated in order to cross the U.S. border but has evolved into something much more significant (Ottawa Citizen, 2022). Hundreds of trucks have been disrupting and clogging the streets of downtown Ottawa and groups of people, including families and children, joined in on the protest to demand their freedom back and challenge all public health measures related to COVID-19. The trucker convoy evolved into a ‘freedom convoy’ as a potent rallying cry for far-right grievances, not only in Canada, but around the world. Convoys are being planned in all twenty-seven EU countries and some organizers planned to descend on Brussels which houses the EU’s main institutions (Scott, 2022). Many groups and online channels in support of the protests voiced their opposition to violence and symbols of hate and white supremacy, however, anti-government and anti-

establishment rhetoric has been extremely effective in mobilizing people after the devastating effects of the pandemic (2022). During the first few days, peaceful protestors came to Ottawa because they were sick of the vaccine mandates and lockdowns – some refused the vaccine and were put out of work, while others were there to express their discontent for Trudeau and his handling of the pandemic. Attempts at keeping the protest peaceful were over-shadowed in the news by accounts of vitriol hate speech and symbols, “but mostly the protest felt like a very cold street party, punctuated by blaring truck horns” (Scherer, 2022). There were reports of protestors carrying Nazi and Confederate flags (as well as symbols from other hate groups), harassing Ottawa residents, refusing to wear masks in public places, incessantly honking horns from early morning until late into the night, stealing food from homeless shelters, hurling rocks at vehicles and homes, and even defecating and urinating on public and private property (Global News, 2022; Preston, 2022). The protest faced little pushback from law enforcement initially, but the convoy made it clear that they had no intentions of leaving until all government mandates were dropped. Over time, the disturbance to residents and feelings of frustration towards the city’s unpreparedness to handle the situation grew and the capital had to declare a state of emergency (NPR, 2022). Ottawa police ramped up their response due to demonstrators exhibiting “extremely disruptive and unlawful behaviour, which presented risks to public safety and unacceptable distress for Ottawa residents,” and on February 6<sup>th</sup> they issued more than 450 tickets and 97 criminal offence investigations while their hate-motivated crime hotline received over 200 calls (Ottawa Police Service, 2022). Mayor Jim Watson stated that the situation in Ottawa is “the most serious emergency our city has ever faced” (Paas-Lang, 2022). Ontario Premier Doug Ford and many others are now calling it an ‘occupation’ while the Ottawa Police Services Board has referred to it as an ‘insurrection’ (2022).

According to a web survey of 1546 Canadians conducted by Leger between February 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>, 62% of respondents opposed the Freedom Convoy while 32% supported it (Leger, 2022). Another public opinion poll sampling 1000 Canadians conducted by Ipsos between February 8<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> found that 45% of Canadians “may not agree with everything the people who have taken part in the truck protests in Ottawa have said, but their frustration is legitimate and worthy of our sympathy,” while 54% felt that “what the people taking part in the truck protests in Ottawa have said and done is wrong and does not deserve any of our sympathy” (Ipsos, 2022). Additionally, 59% agreed that “the truck protest is mostly a group of anti-vaxxers and bigots intent on causing mayhem and they should not be allowed to protest,” and 55% agreed that “the truck protest is a fundamental attack on our system of democracy” (2022).

A counter-protest event was hosted in Lansdowne park, calling for an end to the ongoing two-week convoy. The event page stated that they too had “serious concerns about how governments have handled the pandemic, but we say no to how the far right is mobilizing discontent,” and that they are saying no to “white supremacy, misogyny, homophobia, transphobia and all other forms of hate that the convoy has directed at residents” (Ottawa Citizen, 2022).

Right-wing politicians and influencers in the U.S. immediately jumped on board to support this movement for freedom and millions of dollars in donations have poured in from all over the world. Former President Donald Trump, Texas senator Ted Cruz, Fox News host Tucker Carlson, and other right-wing leaders have praised the convoy for protesting “the tyranny of Justin Trudeau’s government” (Yun, 2022). Elon Musk even tweeted (then deleted) a meme comparing Justin Trudeau to Adolf Hitler, which received more than 35,000 likes (Reuters, 2022). Ottawa Police Chief, Peter Sloly, described the demonstrators as “highly organized, well-

funded, extremely committed to resisting all attempts to end the demonstrations safely” and that a “significant element from the United States’ was involved in the funding and organization of the trucker’s convoy” raising flags for foreign interference (Scott, 2022). A GoFundMe page that initially raised \$10 million for the convoy to cover food and shelter costs was removed by the site for violating its terms, stating: “We now have evidence from law enforcement that the previously peaceful demonstration has become an occupation, with police reports of violence and other unlawful activity” (Turnbull, 2022). Organizers then moved to a Christian crowdfunding site – GiveSendGo – that quickly raised millions more in donations, aiming for \$16 million. A sample of donations on the platform was counted by CTV News and they found that a total of only 10% of donors declared their location. Of those known donations 53% were from the U.S. and 37% were from Canada (Yun, 2022). Stephanie Carvin, an associate professor and former national security analyst stated, “even when GoFundMe canceled [the payments], it built so much momentum and helped turn it into a symbol of resistance,” and that “crowdfunding tools can serve to extremists, and these platforms should be aware of this” (Villegas & Thebault, 2022). Rallies were held in France, Spain, Australia and New Zealand which ranged from a few hundred to a thousand protestors in attendance, many of which displayed Canadian flags as a nod to Canadian truckers and the Freedom Convoy that started them all. Additionally, an American version of the convoy called “The People’s Convoy” plans to kickstart their protest on March 4<sup>th</sup> and make their way from California to Washington D.C., illustrating a ‘snowball effect’ of online influence and mobilization (Aziz, 2022).

Maxime Bernier, the leader of the Peoples’ Party of Canada encouraged people to join him and thousands of ‘freedom fighters’ in the protest that spread to Montreal, Quebec (Ottawa Citizen, 2022). Additionally, Pierre Poilievre, a conservative Member of Parliament for Carleton,

Ottawa (who also recently announced his bid to run for Prime Minister of Canada) tweeted a photo of himself handing donuts to truckers at the convoy with the caption, “The truckers I’ve met today have been peaceful, kind and patriotic. I’ve not seen anyone dressed up in blackface or other racist costumes. #TruckersNotTrudeau” (Poilievre, 2022). Poilievre is known for his populist ant-liberal rhetoric and avid critiques of Prime Minister Trudeau and Canadian welfare policies. His popularity continues to rise as Erin O’Toole was recently ousted as the Conservative party leader (Aziz, 2022). Candice Bergen, the current interim leader for the Conservative party was sympathetic towards protestors since the beginning, stating that Trudeau was “gaslighting the protesters, who deserve the chance to be heard and be given some respect” (Global News, 2022). But her stance changed in response to the bridge blockades between U.S.-Canada borders with the following statement:

I believe the time has come for you to take down the barricades, stop the disruptive action, and come together. The economy you want to see reopen is hurting. Farmers, manufacturers, small businesses and families are suffering. I believe this is not what you want to do. You came bringing a message. That message has been heard. Conservatives have heard you and we will stand up for you and all Canadians who want to get back to normal life. We will not stop until the mandates have ended. (Levesque, 2022)

These blockades have spread from Ontario to Alberta, Manitoba and British Columbia causing serious disruptions to trade. The Ambassador Bridge in Windsor, Ontario is the most significant route for trade between Canada and the U.S. transporting about \$400 million a day in goods, and the four-day bridge blockade has brought significant delays for shipping and manufacturing, negatively impacting businesses (CTV Windsor, 2022). The supply chain may take several weeks to catch up and return to normal in addition to the long-term strains caused by the pandemic. Many of the protestors said they won’t go unless the Prime Minister resigns, and the Mayor of Windsor was reluctant to use force to remove protestors as not to enflame the situation (2022). On February 13<sup>th</sup>, the police announced they are working to reopen the bridge after

seizing and towing vehicles and making nearly 30 arrests (Yun & Fereirra, 2022). UBC School of Business professor, Werner Antweiler told the Hill Times that this protest – which has shifted to a group of people holding the country and its economy hostage – now meets the definition of sedition (conduct or speech inciting people to rebel against the authority of state) (Horwood, 2022).

Stephanie Carvin (political science professor and former national security analyst) discussed some of the reasons why CSIS and police may be so unprepared to handle the current crisis. After the end of the Cold War in 1986, CSIS supposedly stopped doing ‘counter-subversion’ which was to prevent the overthrow of the government; there just weren’t enough serious threats (Spears, 2022). However, what has happened in Ottawa illustrates a viable counter-subversion movement in which some people explicitly claimed that they wanted to overthrow the government. Additionally, city police are the ones who are currently dealing with the situation and Carvin explains that she’s “not sure they recognized this as an extremist-led event. And as a result, they treated an extremist-led event as a normal political protest and were thoroughly unprepared” (Spears, 2022). Additionally, Erika Chamberlain (2022) discusses how the police could be subject to allegations for uneven or discriminatory enforcement practices since many have brought to light the lack of force used on convoy protestors in comparison to protests in support of Black and Indigenous rights. However, it is very difficult to prove that the reasoning behind a police officer’s misuse of power is based on racial discrimination and is more of a systemic issue to be addressed through public processes (2022). There were also many accounts of police in support of the protests, with photos and videos showing them hugging protestors, handing out food and doing photo ops in addition to their lack of enforcement to shut the protests down (Nash, 2022). As discussed in the literature review, police and military

institutions often attract conservative and right-wing individuals and share common values and beliefs. Lastly, RCMP and CSIS are accustomed to anticipating terrorist attacks committed by lone actors using weapons and violence, rather than thousands of people showing up to occupy the capital with trucks, fireworks, air horns, tents, fire pits, bouncy castles, camp kitchens and saunas (Spears, 2022). There are likely many more factors at play that may have contributed to the failure of the Ottawa police response that are, and will continue to be, under scrutiny and investigation, raising serious questions and concerns about our security institutions.

Another public opinion poll conducted by Maru Public Opinion between February 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> found that 64% of Canadians would approve using Armed Forces to clear out trucks and 53% support the use of force by Ottawa police to remove protestors, including the use of tear gas and other measures (Marchesan, 2022). Support for the truckers fell to 20%, which in a previous poll the week prior found that 32% supported the protest (Leger, 2022). Six in 10 respondents equated the current protests with the U.S. capitol insurrection on January 6, 2021, and 67% believe the truckers are being heavily influenced by foreign interests. Lastly, two-thirds of Canadians polled believe that Canada's democracy is being threatened by the convoy (Marchesan, 2022).

Between February 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>, the Angus Reid Institute conducted a survey of 1622 Canadians and found that 72% believe the convoy has made their point and should go home. Conservatives are more likely to support the protests, though many Conservative politicians have since retracted their support as the protests intensified – a slim majority of conservative voters now support taking action towards the protest and that protecting economic interests is more important than the right to protest. Additionally, more Canadians feel that the political leaders

and police involved in the situation have made things worse rather than better, with Trudeau receiving the most criticism at a 65% disapproval rating (Angus Reid Institute, 2022).

Liberal MP Joël Lightbound spoke out on February 8<sup>th</sup> criticizing the Prime Minister's handling of the pandemic saying that his tone and policies "changed drastically since the last election campaign" and that it went from being a "more positive approach to one that stigmatizes and divides people" who are skeptical of vaccines (Tasker, 2022). He did not agree with the occupation but questioned the usefulness of some of the vaccine mandates and stressed the importance of considering the damage restrictions and lockdowns are doing to Canadians (2022).

On February 14<sup>th</sup>, Trudeau announced the invocation of the *Emergency Measures Act* to restore peace, order and safety, which expanded federal powers to put a stop to the Ottawa occupation, such as removing personal property from a specified area, prohibiting travel, bringing in officers from other provinces, and freezing peoples' bank accounts (Boisvert, 2022; Government of Canada, 1985). This decision triggered intense debates about the necessity and repercussions of passing the Act in that it represented a misuse of power in the face of a situation that doesn't meet the threshold for the Emergencies Act. The Canadian Civil Liberties Association is suing the government, claiming it infringes on Canadians' charter rights and threatens democracy to normalize such an extreme government response (CCLA, 2022). Conservative leader Candice Bergen's stated that the "Emergencies Act was not necessary to clear the blockades, the government already had all the tools they need under current Canadian law," while MP Pierre Poillievre accused Trudeau of amplifying fear and division throughout the pandemic for political gain, replacing peoples' freedom with government power (Major, 2022). The New Democratic Party (NDP) supported the decision to approve the Act with caution as the NDP leader Jagmeet Singh said, "We share the concern of many Canadians that the government

may misuse the powers in the Emergencies Act, so I want to be very clear: We will be watching. We will withdraw our support if, at any point, we feel these powers are being misused” (Major, 2022). On February 23<sup>rd</sup> the Emergencies Act came to an end as the government decided it was no longer necessary, which will be followed by an inquiry to review the government’s decision (Boisvert, 2022).

### **The Organizers Behind the Ottawa Freedom Convoy**

The initial truck convoy was started by Canada Unity – an anti- public health mandate group – and its founder James Bauder calling for the resignation of government officials and an end to the unlawful mandates (Preston, 2022). Canada Unity’s Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) received backlash as some people interpreted it as a document stating their intent to overthrow the government (Parent, 2022), and on February 8<sup>th</sup> they released a notice of formal withdrawal of their MOU stating that Canada Unity no longer reflects the “spirit and intent of the Freedom Convoy Movement 2022” (Canada Unity, 2022). The statement on their website also stated that they do not want any “unintended interpretations to continue” and that their sole desire was to have “a document where Canadians could peacefully express their displeasure with current C19 mandates and express their desire to be free. Canada Unity does not support or encourage any acts which tarnish democratic values held by Canadians” (2022). Though James Bauder remained at the protest until some of the leaders and organizers were eventually arrested. He is now organizing another occupation in Victoria, B.C. on March 14<sup>th</sup>, according to CTV News, where they plan on staying for two to three months (Coyne, 2022).

Tamara Lich and BJ Ditcher have been the central fundraisers and spokespeople for the convoy. Tamara Lich is affiliated with the right-wing Maverick Party, which was formerly called

Wexit Canada (a movement seeking self-determination of Western Canada), and on February 2<sup>nd</sup> a public statement of her resignation was posted by the Maverick Party due to her commitment to remain in Ottawa until restrictions were lifted (Parkhill, 2022). BJ Dichter is a truck driver and podcaster known for his controversial views on the “stench of political Islam” and alt-right conspiracies. Chris Barber was another truck driver and organizer of the convoy who compares COVID-19 mandates to tyranny and North Korea and even shared on social media that he has Confederate flags at home (2022).

Maggie Parkhill (2022) from CTV News also listed four other far-right influencers in charge of convoy operations. Pat King is known for his COVID-19 conspiracies, anti-immigrant statements and racial slurs online and posted videos on social media warning against an endgame of depopulating the Anglo-Saxon or Caucasian race because they have “the strongest bloodlines” (Gilmore, 2022). He also said in a live video on the way to the convoy that “the only way that this is going to be solved is with bullets” (Parkhill, 2022). Tom Quiggin was once a security intelligence expert for the Canadian Centre for Intelligence and Security Studies and provided “protective intelligence” for the convoy. He has become an anti-globalist and follower of conspiracy theories about a totalitarian socialist world order, co-authoring a book on the subject called *‘The New Order of Fear’*. Daniel Bulford and Brian Denison, advisors for the group “Taking Our Freedom Back,” were both police officers but resigned after declining mandated vaccines last year. Daniel Bulford is associated with the group “Mounties for Freedom” which has called upon the Governor General to dissolve Parliament and believes mandates and vaccine passports are crimes against humanity (Parkhill, 2022). Another organizer for the province of Ontario, Jason LaFace, is associated with an anti-immigrant group established in Finland called

“Soldiers of Odin.” He captioned a photo on Facebook stating that Canadian politicians who are not born in Canada are “traitors to our country” (Gilmore, 2022).

The use of social media was fundamental in the amplification and popularity of this movement and a key piece of the conservative toolkit for other right-wing political movements. A video about the convoy was posted on a right-wing platform called Rumble, and a link to this post was shared to the “Freedom Convoy 2022” Facebook page (Broderick, 2022). Pat King also distributed the video and was sharing his livestreams and photos on several Facebook pages and groups; soon hashtags and memes about the convoy started spreading internationally. Ben Shapiro, a conservative commentator, helped get the story on Fox News’ radar by blasting 66 articles about the convoy on The Daily Wire within the first few days. Amaranth Amarasingam, a professor and senior fellow at the International Center for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence, told The Verge, “Fox News has an interesting way of filtering very local events through the prism of its own culture wars, which creates the impression for their followers that they are part of some transnational grassroots uprising” (Broderick, 2022). Additionally, a new Facebook group run by people in the U.S. called “The Peoples’ Convoy - Official” now has 87,000 members, and conspiracy theorists posted a viral video called “2020: What’s the Real Truth” that has become central to online convoy movements (2022). Right-wing disinformation machines have used the pandemic to amplify fear and conspiracy theories online which are now manifesting into powerful transnational movements and posing perplexing threats to security, democracy and truth. Praise about the Freedom Convoy among right-wing leaders and influencers has turned many of the organizers into minor celebrities on the fringes of both the Canadian right and global right and accelerated a local movement into something much more significant.

## **Perspectives From On the Ground**

As the truckers initially made their way to Ottawa, there was a significant amount of support for a movement that was fighting for peoples' right to choose what they put in their bodies, and to challenge the restrictions that have severely impacted families and livelihoods. Both vaccinated and unvaccinated people came together to oppose mandates. A truck driver on his way to Ottawa said to a journalist from the National Post, "most people see the mainstream narrative that everyone is vaccinated and anyone who's not vaccinated is a horrible person, which is not the truth at all" (Parent & Mundie, 2022). However, not only did right-wing extremists capitalize on this movement by bringing their hate symbols and conspiracy theories to protests and online forums, but leaders and organizers of the convoy were associated with QAnon conspiracy theories, COVID-19 skepticism, anti-vax sentiments, and anti-LGBTQI+ and Islamophobic hate groups" (Molas, 2022). Misinformation, disinformation and conspiracy theories were rampant throughout the protests and even amplified by politicians at times to pander to their audiences. In addition to vaccine conspiracy theories and hesitancy, the "Great Reset" conspiracy mentioned in the literature review played a significant role in the protest, claiming that Justin Trudeau is a collaborator and pawn of the World Economic Forum's global reset to establish a global socialist government and subvert the freedoms of conservative people (Nash, 2022). "Fuck Trudeau" signs, flags, stickers and shirts were everywhere at the protests, and so were claims about him being a communist/Marxist dictator and tyrant, both online and offline. Elon Musk wasn't the only one comparing Trudeau to Hitler – a common theme of anti-vaxxers is claiming that Trudeau is taking away their rights and freedoms and scapegoating them as a dangerous and undeserving minority, like Hitler did to the Jews (Molas, 2022). With regards to MPs who amplified the "Great Reset" conspiracy, Tanner Mirlees (a communication and

digital media studies professor) told the Hill Times, “These politicians are public servants, but their role in spreading misinformation and disinformation is doing a serious disservice to the public interest while degrading democracy,” and that they were being opportunistic in their political calculation (Nash, 2022). Additionally, law researchers at Thompson Rivers University emphasised that people were deeply misunderstanding and misinterpreting the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and that legal disinformation was at the heart of the protests (2022).

In a CBC article, Jorge Barrera (2022) explored the role that the Christian faith played for many of the protestors. Christian sermons occurred regularly in the streets downtown, and biblical references on placards were found everywhere, giving the Freedom Convoy an underlying evangelical feel. However, it is unclear how many of the 4000 protestors would consider themselves Christian, and no mainstream Christian organization has publicly or officially expressed their support (at the time of writing) aside from the Christian crowdfunding site, GiveSendGo. Benita Pederson, a grassroots organizer of anti-lockdown rallies told the journalist about her purpose for being there, “I surrendered to our Lord. I said, 'Your will, not mine. I will give everything I have to the freedom movement. My time, my energy, my money, my resources. If necessary, I will surrender my own freedom and even my life.' Because that is what it could come to." Another protestor who lost their job made reference to a scripture in the Old Testament saying, “to me, that is what we are doing [with the vaccine mandates] — we are actively removing a person's ability to feed themselves, to feed their family" (Barrera, 2022). Christianity and conservatism often go hand in hand as it connects to the European roots of many Canadians, and in the context of this convoy, it is evident that the same rhetoric of transnational radical conservative movements – the bombast of freedom, identity, patriotism and preservation of traditional values in the face of liberal tyranny – is echoed in Canada.

A photojournalist for The Globe and Mail (2022) reporting from the border blockade in Coutts, Alberta, corresponded with me to share some of his observations and experiences. Gavin John was careful to note the nuances within movements and not to categorize the people involved as one conglomerated group. He noted that the border blockades were separately organized from the Ottawa Convoy, although part of a similar cause. But organizers and leaders within these smaller movements interpreted it differently. Tamara Lich and other leaders weren't involved in the blockades, there was not much consulting between each blockade and the Ottawa convoy. Marco Van Huigenbos was the organizer for the Coutts blockade and wanted to ensure it remained a peaceful protest – it was a self-contained micro-movement with no communication with the Ottawa convoy. John noted that a majority of the people there were polite and peaceful (maybe agitated at most) and believed that they were doing something noble and righteous. They felt that they weren't being heard by the government and Trudeau characterizing them as a fringe minority did everyone a huge disservice. “We've come to see that the people have no voice and we will continue to be put under constant tyranny if we don't stand up and take back what is rightfully ours,” stated one of the protestors (The Globe & Mail, 2022). However, the RCMP raided a home and two camper trailers in the area, found a cache of weapons and ammunition and arrested 12 people (4 of which were charged with conspiracy to commit murder). Patches with the Diagon symbol on it were also found which is a far-right extremist group in the category of accelerationism – the intent on accelerating a civil war and overturning a corrupt and illegitimate order (Somos, 2022). This event signaled to Van Huigenbos to shut down the protest so that their message didn't get tainted by an unaffiliated extremist group. Aside from the arrests, Gavin John didn't see any other displays of white nationalism and continued to tell me stories of his journalism experiences with Iraqi citizens in the Islamic State, at Indigenous protests and

blockades, and at the Capitol Hill Occupied Protest (CHOP) in Seattle, explaining that he found “the similarities to be striking in any large movement, blockade or occupation, regardless of if it’s left-wing, right-wing or an Islamic group. Because they are trying to be heard. And it’s effective. The blockades are working because they are now being heard” (personal communication, 16 February 2022).

### DISCUSSION

As much as Canadians love to claim an identity of friendly, inclusive, peace lovers who are distinctively not like Americans, with a stable democracy immune from the threats of populism and the like, the impact that the international far-right (particularly U.S. politics, ideologies and funding) has had on Canadians has profoundly exposed itself over the past several weeks. The pandemic that fuelled the Freedom Convoy showed us very clearly that even though these groups have interconnections with and influences upon one another, Canada has had its own home-grown radical conservative movements growing for some time and was finally given a stage and a megaphone to mobilize into something unfathomable at the international scale. Dr. Barbara Perry has stated that previous far-right movements surrounding anti-immigration, anti-globalization, and anti-multiculturalism have shifted “to simply being anti-government,” and that it is important to not make this only about white disenfranchisement (Nash, 2022). Right-wing populist movements are constantly evolving and finding ways to bring their cause to the mainstream, and democratic countries like Canada usually have a distaste for intolerance and anti-multiculturalism, forcing them to adapt their rhetoric.

The anti-mandate convoy that initially began as a movement for truckers to regain their ability to work without compulsory vaccines gained plenty of hype and momentum as it grew into a protest for freedom. The pandemic has been painstakingly difficult to live with and

exhausting to adapt to, while the economic fallout has pushed too many people to the brink. As European countries began lifting restrictions, shifting to the “endemic” phase of COVID-19, and learning to live with the virus, Canada remained hesitant while holding onto restrictions that some have argued are ineffective (Hopper, 2022). The toll that the pandemic has taken on Canadian’s mental health and livelihoods, however, doesn’t mean we get to ignore the scientific evidence to guide safe and effective decision making, epidemiologists argue (Al-Hakim, 2022). The Freedom Convoy sparked protests throughout Canada as people jumped on board to challenge the current public health measures and desperately demand their freedom to return to normal life. Many may not have been aware of, or simply disregarded the extremist roots of the initial convoy and its entrenchment into conspiracy theories and far-right ideologies. As the convoy of trucks and peaceful protesters settled in for the long haul throughout the streets of downtown Ottawa, assembling tents, kitchens, DJ booths, bouncy castles and bonfires, shouting patriotic calls for freedom and honking their horns day and night, Ottawa residents received endless accounts of disturbances, harassment and hate crimes. Ottawa police struggled to keep up with calls of complaints, neglected to keep citizens safe and cozied up to protestors in some instances. The event was unprecedented as it contained a mixture of peaceful, well-intentioned patriots and even children and families living inside trucks, with the occasional fascist enthusiast, hate-inspired attacks on both residents and the homeless, enraged anti-maskers harassing and ripping off peoples’ masks, and anti-state extremists hoping to topple the government. The protests were laced with political, legal and scientific mis- and disinformation and the main leaders and organizers of the convoy are avid conspiracy theorists. Fear about “The Great Reset” conspiracy drove many of the anti-Trudeau and anti-liberal views, comparing him to Hitler, accusing him of being a communist dictator or a pawn of the World Economic Forum’s ‘socialist

global order'. The initial MOU from the anti-mandate group that started it all – Canada Unity – demanded that the Governor General and the Senate drop all federal and provincial COVID-19 restrictions, authorize their group as part of a new committee with the government, and enforce the requests in their MOU or immediately resign (Ling, 2021). The convoy had no intentions of leaving Ottawa until all mandates were dropped and they had hopes of removing Justin Trudeau as PM and dissolving parliament, which gave the impression that there could be attempts to violently overthrow the government. Border blockades also popped up across Canada (separate from the Ottawa convoy) to protest government mandates while blocking hundreds of millions of dollars in international trade and backing up supply chains. On the ground reports of these protests were mostly peaceful and collaborative with the police until a cache of weapons was found and far-right extremists were arrested with the intent to murder.

Meanwhile, politicians bickered endlessly about appropriate solutions on how to handle the enflamed situation and listen to the needs of Canadians. Divisive rhetoric was used by both the left and right, such as Trudeau's stigmatization of 'fringe minorities' and anti-vaxxers, and Conservative leaders' use of populist rhetoric like "fighting for freedom" while amplifying disinformation to delegitimize liberal authorities. The pandemic has allowed the populist movement in Canada to grow, as evident by both the increase in support for Bernier's populist nationalist PPC during the 2021 election, the rise of Pierre Poilievre as a potential candidate for CPC leader and Canadian Prime Minister, as well as the unfolding of the anti-government Ottawa Freedom Convoy.

Creating 'friends' and 'enemies', delegitimizing authority, propagating conspiracies and disinformation, and utilizing truth subversion tactics are some of the political tools used by the far-right and amplified on social media to mobilize, radicalize and sow fear, confusion and

division. By dismantling the very notion of truth and weakening epistemological security – which is “the experience of orderliness and safety that results from people's and institutions’ shared understandings of their common-sense reality” – then liberal norms and institutions can be undermined (Adler & Drieschova, 2021, p. 1). The liberal ‘regime of truth’ is in a crisis as international and domestic actors race to create alternative truths, construct and solidify new norms and identities, and achieve political domination. The success of subversive messaging from populist leaders, conspiracy theories and fake news, however, reflects an even deeper issue within the psyche of the population and their susceptibility to such messages. There is already an existing dissatisfaction with the current order – and in the case of Canada, an extreme dissatisfaction with the government – as well as a multiplicity of opposing belief systems and identities within liberal democracies that can be taken advantage of (especially in moments of crisis) to sow more division. Extreme economic inequalities, immigration and ‘civilizational’ clashes, the negative effects of neoliberalism and globalization, the marginalization of working-class white identities, and the role of racism are central to the New Right’s political sociology, but also aspects of the liberal international order’s very foundation (Adler & Drieschova, 2021; Abrahamsen et al., 2020). Reactionary internationalism is the response of far-right conservative groups throughout the West to regain a sense of power, agency, identity and cultural preservation and/or dominance amidst a rapidly changing and globalizing world that threatens the status of white/European Christian identities. Though their solutions to these issues may be unsettling at the very least, many of their critiques echo critical theories of the left, such as the disastrous effects of neoliberalism and international development on local communities.

The pandemic has brought about immense fear, pain, trauma, sickness and death in addition to the economic destruction and deep social and political divides, though some groups

got hit significantly harder than others. Essential workers and disadvantaged groups are much more exposed to contracting the virus while also having to navigate confusing misinformation campaigns, inequitable working and living conditions, and power imbalances that compromise access to healthcare and income (Plamondon, 2021). Meanwhile, the wealth of the world's ten richest men more than doubled from \$700 Billion to \$1.5 Trillion during the first two years of the pandemic as 160 million more people fell back into poverty (Oxfam, 2022). The United Nations reported that COVID-19 is "reversing decades of progress on poverty, healthcare and education" (Plamondon, 2021). In Canada, job losses skyrocketed, socioeconomic and racial inequalities deepened, healthcare systems were pushed to the brink and the opioid crisis worsened severely, while Canada's top billionaires increased their wealth by \$37 Billion in the first year of the pandemic (Hemingway & Rozworski, 2021). There are certainly countless groups of people who feel disenfranchised by systemic, political, economic and cultural issues, and the far-right gave many of them a vehicle and a platform to express their grievances.

In the context of Canada, our democratic institutions and policies may be much stronger than other counterparts in the West, making us more resilient to populism and extremism (De Coninck et al., 2021), however the Freedom Convoy has exposed what still lays in the depths of our collective psyche, and that we are not immune to the pandemic of hate, disinformation and far-right extremism. The aftermath of the Ottawa occupation still glooms over political debates and brings up many more questions than answers. For example, what role did the government play with its confusing policies and divisive rhetoric in pushing people farther towards the fringes and fueling more anti-government sentiments? To what extent will right-wing extremism be taken more seriously after the event? How can certain threats to democracy (such as the spread of disinformation or extreme ideologies) be approached in such a way that doesn't

stigmatize people for their political leanings or threaten their freedom of speech and expression? Why did the police fail to ensure the safety of Ottawa residents and allow the movement to spiral out of control? Is this reflective of systemic biases within our security institutions? How can institutions, organizations and community programs better improve the livelihoods of people who feel left behind and disenfranchised so that they are not vulnerable to radical movements or feel the need to rely on extreme measures to get their voices heard? And to the IR theorists, is there a better alternative to the liberal international order, or at the very least, what can Canada do to address liberalism's very real and very problematic weaknesses highlighted by both the New Right and the critical left?

These hard-hitting questions are beyond the scope of this paper, but I can only hope they will soon be addressed in future research and policy action to not only help strengthen our democracy but to bring about the kind of healing that our society is in desperate need of. Both the pandemic and the Freedom Convoy have exposed us to our very fractured system in which marginalized and working-class people always have the most to lose, and populist movements know how to capitalize on this by giving the people a voice. It has also highlighted how out of touch 'liberals' and security institutions are with the magnitude and threat of the international far-right, as illustrated by Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland's statement in a press conference "that her government had hoped and thought the far-right movements opposing liberal democracies around the world would not land on Canada's doorstep" (Nash, 2022). Perry & Scrivens (2017) argues that countering radicalization and extremism isn't just the responsibility of law enforcement. Civil society groups, educational institutions, media outlets and community-wide capacity building initiatives are necessary components for preventing radicalization, raising awareness and pushing for support, resources, and social and political change. In order to avoid

the problem of human security becoming yet another approach to biopower and control from a 'liberal agenda', while also not depending on the state to fall short in its unsatisfactory provision of security, collaborative action within communities is a worthy effort to bring about security in a true democratic way (2017).

### CONCLUSION

The Freedom Convoy and border blockades over the past several weeks has unravelled Canadian politics, shaken up its economy and provided a wake-up call to society in many deeply unsettling, but perhaps necessary ways. The reluctance to take far-right movements seriously, the dangerous spread of disinformation, the vast amount of people who feel unheard and disenfranchised, as well as the divisiveness between Canadian politicians are now under the spotlight and reflecting back to us what we deeply need to address. Liberal democracies are under threat by populist, illiberal, authoritarian and nationalist movements that take advantage of the fragilities of the international order and mobilize working- and middle-class people who feel marginalized and dissatisfied. The transnational New Right and domestic right-wing movements continue to adapt to the realities of their society in order to mainstream their cause. Liberal democracies must learn to take these movements more seriously to better understand what kind of threats they pose to the social cohesion, peace and stability of democratic institutions.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abrahamsen, R., Drolet, J.-F., Gheciu, A., Narita, K., Vucetic, S., & Williams, M. (2020). Confronting the International Political Sociology of the New Right. *International Political Sociology*, 14(1), 94–107. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ips/olaa001>
- Adler, E. & Drieschova, A. (2021). The Epistemological Challenge of Truth Subversion to the Liberal International Order. *International Organization*, 75(2) pp. 359-386.
- Al-Hakim, Aya. (9 February 2022). ‘A little nervous’: Experts question politics behind lifting COVID-19 restrictions. *Global News*. Retrieved from: <https://globalnews.ca/news/8607017/covid-restrictions-canada-politics-health/>
- Ambrose, Emma & Cas Mudde. (2015). Canadian Multiculturalism and the Absence of the Far Right. *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 21(2): 213-236. doi: 10.1080/13537113.2015.1032033
- Angus Reid Institute. (14 February 2022). Blockade Backlash: Three-in-four Canadians tell convoy protesters, ‘Go Home Now’. *Angus Reid Institute*. Retrieved from: <https://angusreid.org/trudeau-convoy-trucker-protest-vaccine-mandates-covid-19/>
- Aziz, Saba. (6 February 2022). Poilievre can be a ‘strong’ leader but uniting Tories is a challenge: former minister. *Global News*. Retrieved from: <https://globalnews.ca/news/8598892/conservatives-pierre-poilievre-strong-leader-unite-tories/>
- Aziz, Saba. (9 February 2022). ‘Snowball effect’: Canada’s trucker convoy sparks anti-mandate protests globally. *Global News*. Retrieved from: <https://globalnews.ca/news/8608477/freedom-convoy-worldwide-covid-protests/>
- Barnett, Michael & Raymond Duvall. (2005). Power in International Politics. *International Organization*, 59(1), pp. 39-75.
- Bell, Stewart & Catherine McDonald. London attack suspect charged with terrorism. *Global News*. Retrieved from: <https://globalnews.ca/news/7942926/london-attack-suspect-terrorism/>
- Bellemare, Andrea. (2019). The real 'fake news': how to spot misinformation and disinformation online. *CBC News*. Retrieved from: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/science/fake-news-misinformation-online-1.5196865>
- Bernier, Maxime. (21 September 2021). Maxime Bernier. *Twitter*. Retrieved from: [https://twitter.com/MaximeBernier/status/1440173517979328517?ref\\_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwc](https://twitter.com/MaximeBernier/status/1440173517979328517?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwc)

[amp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1440173517979328517%7Ctwgr%5E%7Ctwcon%5Es1&ref\\_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.ctvnews.ca%2Fpolitics%2Ffederal-election-2021%2Fpcc-leader-maxime-bernier-fails-to-win-seat-but-party-increases-popular-vote-1.5593636](https://www.ctvnews.ca/politics/federal-election-2021/fpc-leader-maxime-bernier-fails-to-win-seat-but-party-increases-popular-vote-1.5593636)

Blackbourn, Jessie, Nicola McGarrity, and Kent Roach. (2019). Understanding and responding to right wing terrorism. *Journal of policing, intelligence and counter terrorism.*, 14(3), pp. 183-190.

Boisvert, Nick. (23 February 2022). Trudeau ends use of Emergencies Act, says 'situation is no longer an emergency'. *CBC News*. Retrieved from: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/trudeau-event-feb23-1.6361847>

Broderick, Ryan. (19 February 2022). How Facebook Twisted Canada's Trucker Convoy Into An International Movement. *The Verge*. Retrieved from: <https://www.theverge.com/2022/2/19/22941291/facebook-canada-trucker-convoy-gofundme-groups-viral-sharing>

Brubaker, Robert. (2017). Between nationalism and civilizationism: The European populist moment in comparative perspective. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 40(8).

Budd, Brian. (2021). Maple-Glazed Populism: Political Opportunity Structures and Right-Wing Populist Ideology in Canada. *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 55(1).

Bushman, Brad. (18 February 2022). Calling the coronavirus the 'Chinese virus' matters – research connects the label with racist bias. *The Conversation*. Retrieved from: <https://theconversation.com/calling-the-coronavirus-the-chinese-virus-matters-research-connects-the-label-with-racist-bias-176437>

Butcher, Paul. (2019). Disinformation and democracy: The home front in the information war. *European Policy Centre*. Retrieved from: [https://www.epc.eu/content/PDF/2019/190130\\_Disinformationdemocracy\\_PB.pdf](https://www.epc.eu/content/PDF/2019/190130_Disinformationdemocracy_PB.pdf)

Canada Unity. (8 February 2022). News Release: Notice of Formal Withdrawal of MOU by Canada Unity. *Canada Unity*. Retrieved from: <https://canada-unity.com/mou/>

CCLA. (15 February 2022). CCLA STATEMENT ON THE EMERGENCIES ACT. Canadian Civil Liberties Association. Retrieved from: <https://ccla.org/press-release/ccla-statement-on-the-emergencies-act/>

Chamberlain, Erika. (9 February 2022). Ottawa police be sued for failing to arrest 'freedom convoy' protesters? *The Conversation*. Retrieved from: <https://theconversation.com/could-ottawa-police-be-sued-for-failing-to-arrest-freedom-convoy-protesters-176430>

Coyne, Todd. (10 March 2022). Convoy opposed to COVID-19 mandates will 'occupy' Victoria for months, says organizer. *CTV News*. Retrieved from: <https://vancouverisland.ctvnews.ca/convoy-opposed-to-covid-19-mandates-will-occupy-victoria-for-months-says-organizer-1.5811210>

Crosby, A. (2021). Policing right-wing extremism in Canada: Threat frames, ideological motivation, and societal implications. *Surveillance & Society*, 19(3), 359-363.

CTV Windsor. (13 February 2022). CTV National News: A financial burden. *CTV News*. Retrieved from: <https://windsor.ctvnews.ca/video?clipId=2379261>

Dawson, Tyler. (21 September 2021). Maxime Bernier's PPC picks up hundreds of thousands of votes, but no seats. *National Post*. Retrieved from: <https://nationalpost.com/news/politics/election-2021/in-a-ballroom-in-saskatoon-peoples-party-supporters-gather-at-2021-election-night-party-without-masks>

De Coninck, D., Frissen T., Matthijs, K. d'Haenens, L., Lits, G., Champagne-Poirier, O., Carignan, M.E., David, M.D., Pignard-Cheynel, N., Salerno, S., & Génereux, M. (April 2021). Beliefs in Conspiracy Theories and Misinformation About COVID-19: Comparative Perspectives on the Role of Anxiety, Depression and Exposure to and Trust in Information. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.646394>

De Orellana, P., & Michelsen, N. (2019). Reactionary Internationalism: The philosophy of the New Right. *Review of International Studies*, 45(5), 748-767. doi:10.1017/S0260210519000159

Drolet & Williams. (2019). America first: Paleoconservatism and the ideological struggle for the American right. *Journal of Political Ideologies*.

Dyzenhaus, David. (1997). Friend and Enemy: Schmitt and the Politics of Law. *Legality and Legitimacy*, Chapter 2.

Elections Canada. (2021). September 20, 2021 General Election National Results. *Elections Canada*. Retrieved from: [https://www.elections.ca/enr/help/national\\_e.htm](https://www.elections.ca/enr/help/national_e.htm)

Erl, C. (2021), The People and The Nation: The "Thick" and the "Thin" of Right-Wing Populism in Canada. *Social Science Quarterly*, 102: 107-124. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ssqu.12889>

Francis, Samuel T. (2016). *Leviathan and Its Enemies*, Chapter 3.

Friesen, Kyle. (2021). Reimagining Populism to Reveal Canada's Right-Wing Populist Zeitgeist. *Inquiries Journal*, 13(1). Retrieved from:

<http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/articles/1860/reimagining-populism-to-reveal-canadas-right-wing-populist-zeitgeist>

Freistein, Kateja & Frank Gadinger. (2019). Populist stories of honest men and proud mothers: A visual narrative analysis. *Review of International Studies*, 46(2): 217–236. Retrieved from:

<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/review-of-international-studies/article/populist-stories-of-honest-men-and-proud-mothers-a-visual-narrative-analysis/59F1AED7CEE355F73EC2ECFF8F6505BC>

Fodden, Giles. (2002). What is the origin of the name al-Qaida? *The Guardian*. Retrieved from:

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2002/aug/24/alqaida.sciencefictionfantasyandhorror>

Gilmore, Rachel. 29 January 2022. Some trucker convoy organizers have history of white nationalism, racism. *Global News*. Retrieved from: <https://globalnews.ca/news/8543281/covid-trucker-convoy-organizers-hate/>

Global News. Remaining trucker convoy protesters won't leave until COVID-19 restrictions ease. *Global News*. Retrieved from: <https://globalnews.ca/news/8585359/trucker-convoy-protesters-ottawa-covid-19-restrictions/>

Government of Canada. (1985). Emergencies Act (R.S.C., 1985, c. 22 (4th Supp.)). *Justice Laws Website*. Retrieved from: <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/e-4.5/page-1.html>

Gross, Jenny. (October 2020). Far-Right Groups Are Behind Most U.S. Terrorist Attacks, Report Finds. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/24/us/domestic-terrorist-groups.html>

Hall, J. (2021). In search of enemies: Donald Trump's populist foreign policy rhetoric. *Politics*, 41(1), 48–63. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263395720935377>

Harjuniemi, T. (2021). Post-truth, fake news and the liberal 'regime of truth' – The double movement between Lippmann and Hayek. *European Journal of Communication*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/026732312111046784>

Hart, Mackenzie, Jacob Davey, Eisha Maharasingam-Shah, Ciaran O'Connor & Aoife Gallagher. (2021). An Online Environmental Scan of Right-wing Extremism in Canada. *Institute for Strategic Dialogue*. Retrieved from: <https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/ISDs-An-Online-Environmental-Scan-of-Right-wing-Extremism-in-Canada.pdf>

Hemingway, Alex & Michal Rozworski. (2021). BC Solutions. *Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives*. Retrieved from: [https://policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/BC%20Office/2021/01/ccpa-bc\\_BC-Solutions\\_FINAL\\_Jan-2021.pdf](https://policyalternatives.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/BC%20Office/2021/01/ccpa-bc_BC-Solutions_FINAL_Jan-2021.pdf)

Hoffman, Bruce, Juliette Kayyem, & Dannagal Young. (February 2021). Transition 2021 Series: Domestic Terrorism Post-Insurrection. *Council on Foreign Relations*. Retrieved from: <https://www.cfr.org/event/transition-2021-series-domestic-terrorism-post-insurrection>

Hopper, Tristan. (31 January 2022). Health officials are hinting at ending COVID restrictions (and not because of the truckers). *National Post*. Retrieved from: <https://nationalpost.com/news/canada/health-officials-are-hinting-at-ending-covid-restrictions-and-its-not-because-of-the-truckers>

Horwood, Matthew. (14 February 2022). 'Disconnected and disempowered': border blockades suggest growing populist threat in Canada, say politicians. *The Hill Times*. Retrieved from: <https://www-hilltimes-com.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/2022/02/14/disconnected-and-disempowered-border-blockades-suggest-growing-populist-threat-in-canada-say-politicos/344135>

Huang, Q. (2021). The Pandemic and the Transformation of Liberal International Order. *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, 26, pp. 1–26. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11366-020-09698-0>

Hunter, Kristy. Three Percenters are Canada's 'most dangerous' extremist group, say some experts. *CBC News*. Retrieved from: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/three-percenters-canada-1.4647199>

Hwang, Grace. (8 July 2021). Examining Extremism: The Base. *Center for Strategic & International Studies*. Retrieved from: <https://www.csis.org/blogs/examining-extremism/examining-extremism-base>

Ibrahim, Erika. (7 January 2022). Anti-Asian racism still experienced within Canada, poll shows. *Global News*. Retrieved from: <https://globalnews.ca/news/8497381/anti-asian-racism-canada-poll/>

Ikenberry, G. John. (2018). The end of liberal international order? *International Affairs*, 94(1), pp. 7–23. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iix241>

Ipsos. (11 February 2022). Nearly Half (46%) of Canadians Say they “May Not Agree with Everything” Trucker Convoy Says or Does, But... *Ipsos*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ipsos.com/en-ca/news-polls/nearly-half-say-they-may-not-agree-with-trucker-convoy>

Jupskås, A.R. and Segers, I.B. (2020). What is right-wing extremism? *C-REX - Center for Research and Extremism*. Retrieved from: <https://www.sv.uio.no/c-rex/english/groups/compendium/what-is-right-wing-extremism.html>

Laytous, Brahim. (May 2021). Rise of the Extreme Right: Background and Similarities between Right-wing and Religious (Islamic) Extremism in Europe. *Brussels International Center*. Retrieved from: <https://www.bic-rhr.com/research/rise-extreme-right-background-and-similarities-between-right-wing-and-religious-islamic>

Leger. (8 February 2022). The Freedom Convoy and Federal Politics. *North American Tracker*. Retrieved from: <https://leger360.com/surveys/legers-north-american-tracker-february-8-2022/>

Lévesque, Catherine. (11 February 2022). 'I'm proud of the truckers,' says Poilievre in lambasting Justin Trudeau's response to protests. *National Post*. Retrieved from: <https://nationalpost.com/news/im-proud-of-the-truckers-says-poilievre-in-lambasting-justin-trudeaus-response-to-protests>

Lewis, David. (25 May 2016). Carl Schmitt: Nazi-era philosopher who wrote blueprint for New Authoritarianism. *The Conversation*. Retrieved from: <https://theconversation.com/carl-schmitt-nazi-era-philosopher-who-wrote-blueprint-for-new-authoritarianism-59835>

Ling, Justin. (2022). *Twitter*. Retrieved from: [https://twitter.com/justin\\_ling/status/1486151067423363072](https://twitter.com/justin_ling/status/1486151067423363072)

Mackel, Katherine A. (2010). Fascism: A Political Ideology of the Past. *Inquiries Journal*, 2(11). Retrieved from: <http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/articles/317/fascism-a-political-ideology-of-the-past>

Major, Darren. (21 February 2022). Emergencies Act passes crucial House of Commons vote with NDP support. *CBC News*. Retrieved from: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/trudeau-emergencies-act-vote-1.6359243>

Marchesan, John. (12 February 2022). Two-thirds of Canadians support military force to end Ottawa protests: poll. *City News*. Retrieved from: <https://toronto.citynews.ca/2022/02/12/two-thirds-of-canadians-support-military-force-to-end-ottawa-protests-poll/>

McKay, S., & Tenove, C. (2021). Disinformation as a Threat to Deliberative Democracy. *Political Research Quarterly*, 74(3), 703–717. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912920938143>

Media Bias Fact Check LLC. (2022). Media Bias/Fact Check. Retrieved from: <https://mediabiasfactcheck.com/>

Mendoza, Martha & Juliet Linderman. (March 2021). Chaos of U.S. Capitol riot that left 5 people dead revealed. *Global News*. Retrieved from: <https://globalnews.ca/news/7678834/chaos-of-u-s-capitol-riot-that-left-5-people-dead-revealed/>

Miscevic, Nenad. (2020). Nationalism. *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Retrieved from: <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2020/entries/nationalism/>

Molas, Bárbara. (14 March 2022). “Victims of the Holocaust”: The ‘Freedom Convoy’ Subreddits as Spaces for Antisemitism and Far-Right Radicalisation. Global Network on Extremism & Technology. Retrieved from: <https://gnet-research.org/2022/03/14/victims-of-the-holocaust-the-freedom-convoy-subreddits-as-spaces-for-antisemitism-and-far-right-radicalisation/>

Momani, B. & Deschamps, R. (2021). Canada’s Right-Wing Extremists: Mapping their Ties, Location, and Ideas. *Journal of Hate Studies*, 17(2), pp.36–46. doi:<http://doi.org/10.33972/jhs.174>

Moravcsik, A. (1997). Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics. *International Organization*, 51(4), 513–553. Retrieved from: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2703498>

Muirhead, Russell & Nancy Rosenblum. (2018). The New Conspiracists. *Dissent*. Retrieved from: <https://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/conspiracy-theories-politics-infowars-threat-democracy>

Nash, Chelsea. (21 February 2022). Politicians downplaying far-right extremism in convoy naive and willfully ignorant, say criminologists. *The Hill Times*. Retrieved from: <https://www-hilltimes-com.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/2022/02/21/politicians-downplaying-far-right-extremism-in-convoy-naive-and-willfully-ignorant-say-criminologists/345240>

Nash, Chelsea. (28 February 2022). Conspiracy theories and disinformation in Canadian politics amped up after 'Freedom Convoy'. *The Hill Times*. Retrieved from: <https://www.hilltimes.com.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/2022/02/28/conspiracy-theories-and-disinformation-in-canadian-politics-amped-up-after-freedom-convoy/346757>

Nazar, Shahin & Toine Peters. (July 2021). Plandemic Revisited: A Product of Planned Disinformation Amplifying the COVID-19 "Infodemic". *Public Health*.

Newell, B. C. (2021). Introduction: Domestic terrorism, white supremacy, and state surveillance. *Surveillance & Society*, 19(3), 338-344.

Orbán, V. (2014). Full text of Viktor Orbán's speech at Băile Tuşnad (Tusnádfürdő). *The Budapest Beacon*. Retrieved from: <https://budapestbeacon.com/full-text-of-viktor-orbans-speech-at-baile-tusnad-tusnadfurdo-of-26-july-2014/>

Ottawa Citizen. (10 February 2022). Trucker convoy: Provincial government goes to court over convoy fundraising; Police say there's a 'concerted effort' to flood 911 line. *Ottawa Citizen*. Retrieved from: <https://ottawacitizen.com/news/local-news/trucker-convoy-day-14-dawns-in-ottawa-key-canada-us-bridge-closed>

Ottawa Police Service. (6 February 2022). 450+ tickets issued since Saturday morning. *Ottawa Police Service*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ottawapolice.ca/Modules/News/index.aspx?fbclid=IwAR04G4qTaKEr8otj5L2GBt2C6rt2jIiAmh6JgKLXnlcJ6pSsDWfeNjp48sg&newsId=0087e6b4-7217-44b3-b17c-124b273da999>

Oxfam. (17th January, 2022). Ten richest men double their fortunes in pandemic while incomes of 99 percent of humanity fall. *Oxfam International*. Retrieved from: <https://www.oxfam.org/en/press-releases/ten-richest-men-double-their-fortunes-pandemic-while-incomes-99-percent-humanity>

Paas-Lang, Christian. (6 February 2022). Ottawa declares state of emergency as police boost enforcement, target protest's fuel supply. *CBC News*. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/convoy-protest-ottawa-sunday-impasse-1.6341548>

Parent, Rachel & Jessica Mundie. (28 January 2022). Meet the truckers: The men and women of the Freedom Convoy 2022. *National Post*. Retrieved from: <https://nationalpost.com/news/canada/meet-the-truckers>

Parent, Rachel. (10 February 2022). Protest organizer: No intent to topple government ... and no plan to leave until COVID mandates lifted. *National Post*. Retrieved from: <https://nationalpost.com/news/politics/protest-organizer-no-intent-to-topple-government-and-no-plan-to-leave-until-covid-mandates-lifted>

Parkhill, Maggie. (10 February 2022). Who is who? A guide to the major players in the trucker convoy protest. *CTV News*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/who-is-who-a-guide-to-the-major-players-in-the-trucker-convoy-protest-1.5776441>

Paxton, R. O. (1998). The Five Stages of Fascism. *The Journal of Modern History*, 70(1), 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.1086/235001>

Perry, B. & R. Scrivens. (2017). Resisting the Right: Countering Right-Wing Extremism in Canada. *Canadian Journal of Criminology & Criminal Justice*.

Perry, B., Mirrlees, T., & Scrivens, R. (2017). The Dangers of Porous Borders: The "Trump Effect" in Canada. *Journal of Hate Studies*, 14(1), 53+.

Perry, B. & Scrivens, R. (2019). Right-Wing Extremism in Canada. *Palgrave Hate Studies*. doi:[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-25169-7\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-25169-7_1)

Plamondon, K. M. (2021). Equity at a time of pandemic. *Health Promotion International*, 37(1). <https://doi.org/10.1093/heapro/daab034>

Poillievre, Pierre. (29 January 2022). *Twitter*. Retrieved from: <https://twitter.com/PierrePoillievre/status/1487483001722318850>

Preston, Kayla. (1 February 2022). ‘Freedom convoy’ rolls through Ottawa encouraging the participation of Canada’s far-right. *The Conversation*. Retrieved from: <https://theconversation.com/freedom-convoy-rolls-through-ottawa-encouraging-the-participation-of-canadas-far-right-175902>

Public Safety Canada. (2022). Currently listed entities. *Government of Canada*. Retrieved from: <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/ntnl-scr/cntr-trrrsm/lstd-ntts/crnt-lstd-ntts-en.aspx#510>

Reuters. (17 February 2022). Elon Musk tweets, then deletes, meme comparing Trudeau to Hitler. *Reuters*. Retrieved from: <https://www.reuters.com/world/elon-musk-tweets-then-deletes-meme-comparing-trudeau-hitler-2022-02-17/>

Riedel, Rafał. (2020). Nativism versus nationalism and populism - bridging the gap. *Central European Papers*, 6, 18-28. doi:10.25142/cep.2018.011.

Rozdilsky, Jack L. (17 June 2021). The terrorism charge filed in the London attack is the first of its kind in Canada. *The Conversation*. Retrieved from: <https://theconversation.com/the-terrorism-charge-filed-in-the-london-attack-is-the-first-of-its-kind-in-canada-162739>

Schaeffer, Katherine. (July 2020). A look at the Americans who believe there is some truth to the conspiracy that Covid-19 was planned. *Pew Research Center*. Retrieved from: <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/07/24/a-look-at-the-americans-who-believe-there-is-some-truth-to-the-conspiracy-theory-that-covid-19-was-planned/>

Scherer, Steve. (29 January 2022). Thousands stage peaceful protest in Ottawa against Canada's vaccine mandates. *Reuters*. Retrieved from: <https://www.reuters.com/world/americas/ottawa-set-massive-protest-against-canadas-vaccine-mandates-2022-01-29/>

Scott, Mark. (6 February 2022). Ottawa truckers' convoy galvanizes far-right worldwide. *Politico*. Retrieved from: <https://www.politico.com/news/2022/02/06/ottawa-truckers-convoy-galvanizes-far-right-worldwide-00006080>

Somos, Christy. (22 September 2021). What the rise of the PPC says about Canada in 2021. *CTV News*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ctvnews.ca/politics/federal-election-2021/what-the-rise-of-the-ppc-says-about-canada-in-2021-1.5596859>

Somos, Christy. (17 February 2022). What is the Diagonal extremist group and what does it want? *CTV News*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/what-is-the-diagonal-extremist-group-and-what-does-it-want-1.5785646>

Sotlar, Andrej. (2004). Some Problems with a Definition and Perception of Extremism within a Society. *Policing in Central and Eastern Europe: Dilemmas of Contemporary Criminal Justice*.

Spears, Tom. (8 February 2022). Why Canadian intelligence agencies never saw the Ottawa trucker blockade coming. *Ottawa Citizen*. Retrieved from: <https://ottawacitizen.com/news/local-news/why-canadian-intelligence-agencies-never-saw-the-freedom-convoy-coming>

Spence, Sean. (2020). Right-wing extremism: The new wave of global terrorism. *The Conversation*. Retrieved from: <https://theconversation.com/right-wing-extremism-the-new-wave-of-global-terrorism-147975>

Stecula, D. A., & Pickup, M. (2021). How populism and conservative media fuel conspiracy beliefs about COVID-19 and what it means for COVID-19 behaviors. *Research & Politics*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2053168021993979>

Sterkenburg, Nikki. (2019). Far-Right Extremism – A Practical Introduction. The *RAN Centre of Excellence*. Retrieved from: [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/default/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation\\_awareness\\_network/ran-papers/docs/ran\\_fre\\_factbook\\_20191205\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/default/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-papers/docs/ran_fre_factbook_20191205_en.pdf)

Tasker, John P. (8 February 2022). Liberal MP Joël Lightbound says his party's COVID policy 'stigmatizes and divides people'. *CBC News*. Retrieved from: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/liberal-mp-politicization-pandemic-1.6343730>

Tenove, C. (2020). Protecting Democracy from Disinformation: Normative Threats and Policy Responses. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 25(3), 517–537. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161220918740>

The Globe and Mail. (15 February 2022). Last border blockade to be dismantled as protesters in Emerson, Man., agree to leave. *The Globe and Mail*. Retrieved from: <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-trucker-blockade-at-coutts-alta-border-crossing-winds-down/>

Tickner, J.A. (1993). Gender in International Relations: Feminist Perspectives on Achieving Global Security. *The Journal of American History*, 108(2). doi:[10.2307/2080425](https://doi.org/10.2307/2080425)

Turnbull, Sarah. (8 February 2022). 'Freedom Convoy' raises millions on new crowdfunding platform. *CTV News*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ctvnews.ca/politics/freedom-convoy-raises-millions-on-new-crowdfunding-platform-1.5772985>

Viereck, Peter. (1950). Heritage Renewed: The Conservative Principles. *Conservatism Revisited*, pp. 29-52.

Villegas, Paulina & Reis Thebault. (7 February 2022). Frozen out of GoFundMe, Canadian protest convoy raises millions on Christian site. *Washington Post*. Retrieved from: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/02/07/canada-protesters-fundraising-platform/>

West, L., Juneau, T., & Amarasingam, A. (Eds.). (2021). Stress Tested: The COVID-19 Pandemic and Canadian National Security. *University of Calgary Press*. <http://hdl.handle.net/1880/114134>

Yun, Tom. (10 February 2022). Canada's 'Freedom Convoy' attracts support from U.S. and around the world. *CTV News*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/canada-s-freedom-convoy-attracts-support-from-u-s-and-around-the-world-1.5776238>

Yun, Tom & Jennifer Ferreira. (13 February 2022). Police working to reopen Ambassador Bridge; up to 30 arrests made. *CTV News*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/police-working-to-reopen-ambassador-bridge-up-to-30-arrests-made-1.5779561>

Zuquete, Jose Pedro. (2018). Identity against Globalism. *The Identitarians: The Movement against Globalism and Islam in Europe*, Ch. 2.