Title: Synthesizing Knowledge on Rising Global Populism

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Key Messages:

1. The search for new forms of communities is happening online today and creating "accelerated pluralism" where ICTs and social media "contributes to the on-going fragmentation of the present system of interest-based group politics and a shift toward a more fluid, issue based group politics with less institutional coherence."[i]

2. Emergent social movements or interest based political groupings are creating echo chambers online that harden positions and make democratic compromise less likely while fuelling populist sentiments.

3. In a world of increasing failed states, raging civil wars and global climate change, we will continue to see an influx of immigrants and refugees who want to come to migrate to the West to build a new life. This will primarily affect Europe and the United States as frontier states, however migration to Canada will also be explained by some of these same push effects.

4. Throughout the West, jobs lost to manufacturing, offshore manufacturing to low cost producers, rising inequality and higher unemployment are all being forecasted to accelerate not reverse.[ii]

5. While we know how to spot populist rhetoric, the state of knowledge is thin on how to guard against it and how to stop it, making it more difficult for policymakers in Canada.

Executive Summary

In recent years, the world has witnessed a wave of populist movements realizing increasing electoral success (often unexpectedly). These movements tend to leverage a romanticized view of the past alongside fearmongering about the future. They can be characterized as possessing "a hostility to representative politics, having a heartland, as lacking core values, as being a reaction to a sense of crisis, as self-limiting, and as chameleonic". Perhaps most important to note is that both economic and cultural factors have given rise to modern day populists. This is a key distinction, given that discourse surrounding the success of recent populist efforts tend to focus on one or the other more intently without giving attention to all interrelated factors in relation to one another. Among some of the often-cited drivers for the recent resurgence and dramatic rise of populism – and of populist rhetoric more generally – have been factors such as globalization (more specifically the globalization backlash), upward trends in economic dislocation and insecurity, a major influx of new immigrants (particularly of visible minorities) stemming from recent global crises, the stoking of nativists' cultural anxieties or fears as a result of the recent immigration influx globally, rising inequality within countries between the wealthiest and most economically disadvantaged citizens, workplace automation and a shifting workplace dynamic toward increased demand for high-skilled labour, and the rising mistrust of governments, the mainstream media, academics, experts, thought leaders, and any individual perceived to be part of the political elite.

What makes populism threatening to democracy is the 'othering' of opposition movements that are meant to compete in the polity under a democracy. This undermines the traditional political process, and the political debate that forms the bedrock of democratic government. Many populist leaders who take to the helm of major parties or mass political

movements describe their supporters as authentic or 'pure' – adding further moral overtones that can vilify and dehumanize the opposition. This makes collaboration amongst those with different political leanings or ideological beliefs inherently difficult, leading to a breakdown of productive bipartisanship when it comes to governing within democratic frameworks. Populist rule has often come replete with the hijacking of institutional structures, embedding clientalism by trading favours and state benefits for its populist base in exchange for continued loyalty, and suppressing civil and liberal society.

Interest based political groupings are creating echo chambers online that harden positions and make democratic compromise less likely while fuelling populist sentiments. When these groupings discuss and debate politics online, they are often only doing so with those who think in the same way or believe the same things, often not engaging with those whose beliefs or political views are at odds with their own. This, of course, is not debate at all, but rather a discussion amongst like-minded people, tending to lead to the reinforcement of a singular view not met with opposition that has been rejected or excluded. Ultimately, the rise of social media and disbursed sources of information makes politicians and public figures more visible for all to see and hence opens the door for profit-seeking media to expose leaders to political scandals. Mainstream media (sometimes known alternatively as legacy media) is no longer able to control the narrative and no longer attached to traditional political parties, editorial boards, or the political establishment as they have been previously.

This change in the structure of the media has contributed to 'cognitive mobilization' and the rise of the 'critical citizen' who is more self-aware of political issues and is not connected to traditional forms of groups like churches or trade unions. These citizens are no longer guided by the entrenched political elite, and are free agents – opting to choose their politics of choice from

a wider spectrum of views in manner not previously seen in electoral politics. The breakdown of the Republican and Democratic parties in the United States where supporters of the Tea Party, from within the Republican Party, and Bernie Sanders, drawing support from the Democratic Party, have created their own sub-movements. It would seem that both the media and government have lost much of their power to shape the terms of debate, affording masses of voters the opportunity to mobilize around issues with a more personal, emotional appeal.

Even though many Western European countries did not vote for populist parties in recent elections, their shares of the popular vote have generally increased over the years and have made notable gains since the 1960s. For instance, despite the fact that Marine Le Pen of France, Wilders of the Netherlands, and the Alternative for Deutschland in Germany did not win in their respective 2017 elections, they all managed to increase their share of the seats in their national parliaments than previous elections, and will thus be important members of the opposition in the future. This is something new, and it would be in error to assume that the Brexit/Trump wins were the last of the populist train in Western electoral politics.

While Canada often celebrates the notion that differences amongst us is a healthy contribution to our multicultural mosaic, there is no ignoring the threat of divisive populism that is sweeping across Western democratic countries and no benefit to be found in being complacent about Canada's prospects for escaping this phenomenon. Throughout the West, jobs lost in manufacturing, offshore manufacturing to low cost producers, rising inequality and higher unemployment are all being forecasted to accelerate rather than reverse. There is no benefit to be reaped from complacency, and it is imperative that Canada be prepared to confront the challenges unleashed by populism.

Contextualizing Populism

There is no universal definition of populism, but there are broad agreements on common characteristics of modern day or contemporary populism. The earliest definition of populism is traced to Shils (1956) [iii], but it is highly contingent on circumstance, having evolved depending on the varying contexts and time periods in which it has emerged – making it more difficult to conceptualize in totality. [iv] Another challenge is that, often times, those that we label as populist do not self-identify in this manner. [v] Moreover, it is almost always used in a pejorative way by academics, and is often only associated with or linked to right-wing, xenophobic parties. [vi] Academics' early writings on populism have historically tended to shy away from defining populism outright, because it is not always clear what populist movements have in common – either ideologically or in form. Further complicating the process of achieving one singular definition or description of this type of non-traditional political movement, drivers of populism can often be very country-specific – highly dependent on individual circumstances and directly related to the unique conditions of a given nation's specific political climate or system of governance. As a result, some leading edited texts on populism include no definition of populism whatsoever given the difficulty of pinning down a universal understanding of what the ideological underpinnings – or the movements themselves – have in common. [vii] However, given the emergence of populism in contemporary political discourse, this understanding – or lack thereof – has evolved over time, with recent academic literature making wide-ranging attempts to effectively conceptualize the term.

Paul Taggart suggests populism has six inherent characteristics, in that populism can be understood as "a hostility to representative politics, having a heartland, as lacking core values, as being a reaction to a sense of crisis, as self-limiting, and as chameleonic". [viii] Cas Mudde

developed this understanding further and noted that it is a 'thin-ideology' divided into 'the pure people' and the 'corrupt elite'.[ix] Jan-Werner Müller defines populism as both anti-elitist and anti-pluralist. Indeed, all of the definitions and conceptualizations of populism that have been explored thus far logically lead to anti-democratic tendencies in politics. In this sense, such movements that espouse these beliefs or adhere to similar ideological frameworks are understandably of great threat to the long-term prospect of Western societies, and the tenants of international cooperation pursued in our liberal internationalist order.

Perhaps most important to note is that both economic and cultural factors have given rise to modern day populists. This is a key distinction, given that discourse surrounding the success of recent populist efforts tend to focus on one or the other more intently without giving attention to all interrelated factors in relation to one another. Among some of the often-cited drivers for the recent resurgence and dramatic rise of populism – and of populist rhetoric more generally – have been factors such as globalization (more specifically the globalization backlash), upward trends in economic dislocation and insecurity, a major influx of new immigrants (particularly of visible minorities) stemming from recent global crises, the stoking of nativists' cultural anxieties or fears as a result of the recent immigration and the global surge of migration, rising inequality within countries between the wealthiest and most economically disadvantaged citizens, workplace automation and a shifting workplace dynamic toward increased demand for high-skilled labour, and the rising mistrust of governments, the mainstream media, academics, experts, thought leaders, and any individual perceived to be part of the political elite.

As has previously been alluded, one need not see these drivers as mutually exclusive, but rather as interdependent and dynamic in how they interact with one another. Inglehart and Norris suggest that populism is both the combination of economic cleavages of haves and have-nots,

combined with the cultural cleavages of traditionalists and progressive cosmopolitans. As is evident when evaluating the vast array of factors contributing to the rise – and contemporary popularity – of populism, the relationships between each of these noted factors can be related to one another.

Taking a more discursive approach, Anup Kumar suggests that populism needs to be seen as a political discursive tool that is 'independent of ideology'.[x] This is, a particularly important concept to consider, despite the intense focus that has been placed on the emergence of populist movements operating on the far right of the political spectrum. While populism has largely been associated with right-wing parties, there has also been a noted emergence of populist rhetoric across the political spectrum – thus pointing to what Kumar asserts is populism operating as a political tool exercised by those who hold various, often highly divergent political leanings and ideological beliefs. In these cases, however, the rhetoric leveraged by those with varied political beliefs may focus more intently on one factor within the populist framework over all others. Consider a singular focus on economic inequality, for instance, or on the stoking of nativist cultural anxiety.

In addition to specific drivers, however, some have argued that the rise of populism has been aided by the broader structural shifts in Western politics that have aided populists' rise. Most prominent among these structural changes is the shift of power away from national governments to other institutions such as the courts, the markets, and international organizations.[xi] Perhaps unsurprisingly, the most vivid shift in power has been in economic terms. This is both the shift of power from government to businesses both domestically and abroad, but also in a shifting power dynamic between Western economies and developing/emerging ones. It is clear that there are more products manufactured in emerging

market economies than ever before – we see this in our everyday lives: for example, the global assembly line has clearly moved offshore; but how has power diffused? Indeed, we are often more skeptical about the diffusion of power and cultural norms. In his insightful book *The End of Power*, Moses Naim discusses how diffusion of political power looks and feels. In essence, power shift is not just from the 'West to the Rest' because of economic realities of globalization, but also 'from presidential palace to public squares' because of social, normative, and political realities of how we communicate and perceive authority. In short, Naim asserts that what we are witnessing is that power is *decaying*. Power will be harder to hold on to and harder to get.[xii] Populism, as some may perceive it, is about returning power to 'the people' – power that is viewed as having been taken from them in the first place.

This shift of power from state to other institutions has also been brought on by structural changes in modern communication with the rise of Information and Communications Technology (ICT). The power of the state has been eroded by ICTs, given that governments are no longer able to monopolize information as they have previously been able to in the past.[xiii] The flip side of this, however, is that citizens no longer believe the state is as omnipotent as it once was. Moreover, ICTs and social media have created new forms of communities, where like-minded people are no longer bound to particular geographical borders or, perhaps more troubling for the study of democracy, to constituencies demarcated by electoral maps as they have traditionally been conceived. The search for new forms of communities is happening online today and creating "accelerated pluralism" where ICTs and social media "contributes to the on-going fragmentation of the present system of interest-based group politics and a shift toward a more fluid, issue based group politics with less institutional coherence."[xiv] In short, individuals and like-minded groups are becoming increasingly siloed from those with beliefs at odds with

their own rather than the traditional party ideologies that has traditionally dominated politics. With lower costs to political mobilization of these new groups, they will be able to create a critical mass when operating outside the confines of traditional groups of parties, professional associations, town halls, and the like. [xv] Consider, for example, the rapid emergence of the Tea Party movement from within the Republican Party in the United States during President Obama's first term in office, and the uptick in coverage and membership they garnered thanks to their reach online.

With the help of social media, these new social movements or interest based political groupings are creating echo chambers online that harden positions and make democratic compromise less likely while fuelling populist sentiments. When these groupings discuss and debate politics online, they are often only doing so with those who think in the same way or believe the same things, often not engaging with those whose beliefs or political views are at odds with their own. This, of course, is not debate at all, but rather a discussion amongst like-minded people, tending to lead to the reinforcement of a singular view not met with opposition that has been rejected or excluded. Such format of discussion and debate within groupings, and the rejection or exclusion of any perspective at odds with their beliefs, means that ideas go unchallenged and cross-grouping collaboration on major political and policy issues becomes more difficult to achieve.

Moreover, the rise of ICTs has contributed to what Cas Mudde notes is today's 'cognitive mobilization' of society. 'Cognitive mobilization' entails:

> the public's ability to process political information has increased, as through the higher levels of education and political sophistication among the electorate; [and,]

> … the cost of acquiring political information has decreased, such as through the expansion of the mass media. Cognitive mobilization thus means that more citizens now possess the political resources and skills that better prepare them to deal with the complexities of politics and reach their own political decisions without reliance of affective, habitual party cues or other surrogates.[xvi]

This is yet another structural change that has assisted in the rise of populist candidates and parties, as well as the populist rhetoric that continues to grip recent political discourse more generally. Mudde notes the 'cognitive mobilization' has meant the rise of the 'critical citizen' who is more self-aware of political issues and is not connected to traditional forms of groups like churches or trade unions. These citizens are no longer guided by the entrenched political elite, and are free agents – opting to choose their politics of choice from a wider spectrum of views in a manner not previously seen in electoral politics. The breakdown of the Republican and Democratic parties in the United States where supporters of the Tea Party, from within the Republican Party, and Bernie Sanders, drawing support from the Democratic Party, have created their own sub-movements. Such departure from traditional party politics that has dominated the United States for so long is emblematic of this critical citizen that no longer accepts the traditions of the two main parties, highlighting a tectonic shift in politics that will continue to have implications for the American electorate for decades to come.

Mainstream media (sometimes known alternatively as legacy media) is no longer able to control the narrative and no longer attached to traditional political parties, editorial boards, or the political establishment as they have been previously. [xvii] In an era of WikiLeaks, social media, and hashtags, the internet tends to have the final say on what is covered or viewed as politically important - often determining what is newsworthy and having a hand in shaping the content of traditional media outlets.[xviii] Consequently, traditional media gatekeepers have seen their power

continually eroded by the emergence of these new media forms. Mudde poignantly adds that the media has also become more sensationalized in an effort to create wider profit margins, with the quality of coverage having diminished, and where scandals dominate coverage – further appealing to populists who distrust their political leaders. [xix] This is but one way that new media has contributed to traditional media, not only guiding the narrative but forcing the hand of these traditional outlets to cover news of interest in a specific manner that is highly divergent from the ways in which news has been reported in the past. Ultimately, the rise of social media and disbursed sources of information makes politicians and public figures more visible for all to see and hence opens the door for profit-seeking media to expose leaders to political scandals.[xx]

Implications of Populism on Democracy

Looking at two of the strongest populist victories in the West, Brexit and Donald Trump, we see that both leveraged a romanticized view of the past alongside fearmongering about the future. In the Brexit debate, the rise of populism was driven in large part due to the geopolitical decline of the British empire, and a mass influx of immigration from the far corners of the world – where nativists assumed that they would be the 'overlords' of the newcomers.[xxi] The British working class have seen London transform into a cosmopolitan city that is increasingly out of reach financially to them, while successful globalized citizens relish in its development and transformation.[xxii] Britain's political right blamed this neoliberal metamorphosis of London on the EU, rather than on the domestic policies enacted by Thatcherites during the 1980s, as well as subsequent pro-market governments such as Tony Blair's 'New Labour' and David Cameron's Conservative government.[xxiii]

Externalizing blame for socioeconomic hardship onto both Brussels and the establishment was key for Brexit campaigners, but romanticizing the past helped rile up the British base to secure support for the Brexit effort. Similarly, in the United States, the golden age of being the premier geo-economic powerhouse in the global economy meant that manufacturing and wealth generation was based in the industrial heartland of the United States which served as the workshop of the world; cities of the Great Lakes region and the Northeast such as Detroit, Pittsburgh, and Cleveland exemplifying economic dynamism. These glory days are now bygone, as rust belts states have seen the decimation of the manufacturing employment which generated broad based economic prosperity. In contrast, some have argued that Canada and Australia do not have "ideas of lost national glory" like those that have permeated American and British culture, and are therefore less susceptible to this type of populism and political disruption.[xxiv]

Trump's populist message was an appeal to the golden age of American hegemony. However, after decades of globalization Washington's power has fallen far from the omnipotence it once exercised, the economic heft of the United States declining relative to large emerging economies such as China which realized rapid 'catch-up growth' from the waning years of the twentieth century to the present moment. Donald Trump's win has marked the beginning of the forward march and successful gains of populists in contemporary western democracies. The most obvious harbinger of Donald Trump's capture of the Republican presidential nomination and subsequent victory in the 2016 presidential election in the United States was the Tea Party wing of the Republican Party. Comprised of a coalition of right-wing media, conservative religious leaders, and business nationalists, the Tea Party movement engaged in heavy use of fearmongering towards President Obama, whom they derided as a Socialist that would usher in totalitarian rule and prevent the free market from operating, strip the

American People of their right to bear arms, and introduce Obamacare – a culmination of big government ethos that would 'unplug grandma' like the days of fascists' 'ruthless cost-effective euthanasia' policies.[xxv]

Berlet suggests that right wing populism in the United States is not new – and indeed, populism is not a new concept – but that it can often be traced to a coalition of organizers that have mobilized alienated people throughout American history, movements that have carried wide-ranging implications. 'Hard-working' Americans of the lower middle class are often the ones mobilized as the productive core, while the wealthy elite – along with immigrants – are regarded as 'parasites' profiting off of their productivity.[xxvi] The Tea Party movement added racial and gender tropes to this binary of productive and unproductive groupings, with the government providing handouts to the later.[xxvii] It should be of no surprise that demographic analysis of populist supporters in Western societies show that they are more likely to be male, older, less educated, more religious, and white than traditional party supporters.[xxviii] This is not to say, however, that populism is unique to parties operating on the right-wing of the political spectrum with sexist, nativist or xenophobic tendencies. As has previously been mentioned, populist candidates and movements tend also to operate outside of traditional party dichotomies, and not all rely on racialized rhetoric and gender tropes to demonize 'the other'. In some instances, populist movements ultimately fixate on a singular aspect or factor associated with populism as the bedrock of their messaging – operating outside of traditional politics, but still able to gain traction due to their populist messaging that appeals to supporters who coalesce around those specific issues.

As Müller notes, many populist leaders who take to the helm of major parties or mass political movements describe their supporters as authentic or 'pure' – adding further moral

overtones that can vilify and dehumanize the opposition. This makes collaboration amongst those with different political leanings or ideological beliefs inherently difficult, leading to a breakdown of productive bipartisanship when it comes to governing within democratic frameworks. The 'true' people are deemed to be homogenous and monolithic and are a community that is "bestowed with the wisdom of the common man".[xxix] Populist movements often extol the virtues of common sense, believing strongly that the objective truth to issues of great economic, social, and political import can be intuitively deduced by the common person, and that claims that these issues are too complex and intricate to be satisfactorily resolved in such a manner and may require a certain degree of specialized knowledge are attempts at deliberate obfuscation and misdirection The rhetoric of populists is to use emotive binaries like 'us against them' or 'patriot and unpatriotic', which is what often leads to its descent into xenophobic, homophobic, Islamophobic, and anti-Semitic tropes.[xxx] The 'glorification of the heartland'[xxxi] adds to this othering of minority communities, along with those ideals that do not fit the traditional attitudes and beliefs that are associated with it.

Some scholars have suggested that populist rhetoric is one of the key building blocks toward the rise of fascism, and therefore, as a result, cannot dismiss the implications such a comparison carries. Peter Fritzsche noted how Nazi Germany similarly used the populist rhetoric of productive middle class citizens and parasitic elites and businesses.[xxxii] Hence, Berlet warns that fascism is a bottom up movement predicated on populist rhetoric.[xxxiii] Populism can also be inherently anti-liberal, though this is not always the case. All forms of opposition, be it the media, politicians, experts, and the like are easily described as the 'enemy of the people', while populists assert themselves to be representing the people's will and their best interests.[xxxiv] What makes populism threatening to democracy is the 'othering' of opposition movements that are

meant to compete in the polity under a democracy. This undermines the traditional political process, and the political debate that forms the bedrock of democratic government – thus the parallels that can be drawn between populism and fascism, given that both exhibit similar characteristics when held in relation to one another.

Democracy can also give rise to the fulfillment of populist ideals. After all, populism relishes the idea of direct democracy that is unmediated by filters of intellectuals, experts, or civil servants, to give voice to 'the people'. This again plays into the notion of giving the power back to the people, whereby the common man can take back his power that has been stripped from him outside forces described as elite and out of touch with civil society at large. The institutional structures of democracy, however, are soon portrayed as the very enemy of populism in these cases.[xxxv] The 'absolute sovereignty of the people' is primary and the functional organs of democracy like courts and legislatures are secondary.[xxxvi] Populism is therefore not the same as liberal or constitutional democracy.[xxxvii] Hence Paul Taggart notes populism is "of the people, but not of the system".[xxxviii] Indeed, this relates back to Mudde's conceptualization of populism as an ideology that emphasizes the schism between the people versus the elite, whereby the elite are perceived or described as corrupt and out of touch with the needs of the people that they are meant to serve. This is largely the case with mistrust of government or business, where they are seen as working against the interest of the people they are meant to benefit.

The use of social media and other direct platforms enabling communication directly with the people – like talk radio or non-traditional media outlets – can help to build a sense of community among the populist base.[xxxix] Again, this speaks to the siloing of political dialogue and lack of discourse undertaken by those with competing political views and different

ideological beliefs. This direct form of communication between the masses and the leaders also allows both to bypass journalists of traditional media who have to comply with journalistic norms and codes of conduct.[xl] This breakdown of traditional media relations, and the siloing that occurs as a result of direct communication that is often leveraged by populist parties and candidates, contributes to a new kind of political dynamic – whereby productive dialogue is difficult to achieve between communities that have become highly polarized.

This is perhaps most dangerous, in that that populist rhetoric asserts its supporters' moral superiority and their authentic voice of the people while denying the value of pluralism that is inherent in a liberal democracy. Consequently, Comaroff suggests that populism naturally gives rise to a demagogue leader that feeds off the masses. This conjures up patriarchal, father-like figures that bypass democratic structures to talk directly, in unfiltered fashion, to their constituents. [xli] Taking a look at the discourse and narrative of the Tea Party movement, Benjamin Schrader similarly found that the movement adopts hyper-masculinity tropes.[xlii] The rise of the Phillipine's Duterte, America's Trump, Turkey's Erdogan can easily fit this mold of the alpha male who is seen as charismatic and yet uncensored from usual social mores. These populist leaders become integrally connected to the movement they have helped to create, speaking directly to their base in a manner such as Schrader suggests.

Margaret Canovan suggests that we ought not to be surprised that populism was born and flourishes in democratic societies. Indeed, the bedrock of a democratic society is the right of its citizens to express their political will come election time when choosing government leadership. Canovan, however, warns that populism – unlike many new social movements that are also anti-establishment – also tend to attack 'opinion-formers' in media and the academy. Populists are not fickle or unprincipled for being anti-globalization in one state and then anti-welfare state in

another, but rather populists are an alternative view to whatever the opinion-formers are advancing – and this naturally differs from one context to the next. [xliii] Hence we can expect populism to rise from both the right and left of the political spectrum. In fact, based on a social media analysis, right wing populists tend to critique the media, whereas left wing populists tend to attack the economic elite; both, however, do so in the 'name of the people'.[xliv] For example, the election saw wide-ranging critiques of the media coming from the Trump campaign – which stood in direct contrast with Bernie Sanders' campaign focus on the vast wealth wielded by the economic elite in the United States. This difference may stem from differing notions of who exactly constitutes 'the elite' of a society, with left wing populists pointing to the plutocrats who control a disproportionate share of wealth, and their right wing counterparts fixating on a cultural elite which hold outsized power over the means of shaping public discourse.

Once in power, populists can continue to govern with the same populist rhetoric, despite what might seem like a contradiction of being an anti-establishment movement whilst within the highest helms of the establishment, as is noted by Müller. What can one expect when under populist reign? Müller notes three things: hijacking institutional structures, embedding clientalism by trading favours and state benefits for its populist base in exchange for continued loyalty, and suppressing civil and liberal society. [xlv] We have already seen the erosion of democratic institutions like the courts, free press, constitution, and parliament in various states ranging from Turkey, to Hungary, and also Venezuela. There is some evidence to suggest that states with more vital and robust institutions beyond the legislature, which were designed and cultivated with the expressed purpose of maintaining a balance of powers within government, may prove more resistant to populist incursions, and so be able to curb the worst excesses of populist movements that take power at the ballot box. It may be too early to tell if the Trump

administration will successfully erode the democratic edifice of the United States. There are plenty of Trump critics who believe that his brief term in office has already eroded some American rights.

The rising power of courts as arbiters of deep normative debates that has divided societies is a natural consequence of democratization. But this has also given rise to 'culture wars', in which populists believe that the courts no longer reflect the will of the people. The fissure between the courts, which tend to be more progressive on social and cultural issues, and the people has become increasingly evident. This creates tensions where political parties campaign on key issues only to claim inability to bring down change thanks to the power of the courts. This has been particularly evident in the United States, where the courts are seen as a check on the power wielded by the government – one branch as a mediator among those who wield executive and legislative power. People are more demanding and, in order to survive politically, governments need to be more responsive to their citizens than ever before. Yet populism decries the power taken away from the people and put into the hands of the courts. [xlvi]

The resilience of Western democracy has fended off these populist pressures against the democratic states, but the previously noted non-Western examples witnessed the ascent of populism a decade prior to the onslaught in the West – some humility is thus needed. Moreover, even though many Western European countries did not vote for populist parties in recent elections, their shares of the popular vote have generally increased over the years and have made notable gains since the 1960s. [xlvii] For instance, despite the fact that Marine Le Pen of France, Wilders of the Netherlands, and the Alternative for Deutschland in Germany did not win in their respective 2017 elections, they all managed to increase their share of the seats in their national parliaments than previous elections, and will thus be important members of the opposition in the

future. This is something new, and it would be in error to assume that the Brexit/Trump wins were the last of the populist train in Western electoral politics. Moreover, all of these movements wins or gains in elections have already had a negative affect on the civility of discourse in their respective countries.

There is also another structural reality that will add global pressure and give fuel to populist rhetoric. In a world of increasing numbers of failed states, raging civil wars and global climate change, we will continue to see an influx of immigrants and refugees who want to migrate to the West in order to build a new life. This will primarily affect Europe and the United States due to their geographic proximity to the sources of the largest migration movements, though migration patterns to Canada will also be affected by some of these same push effects. On the pull side, Canada will also need labour and immigration to support our aging population's expectations of a generous pension, comprehensive healthcare, and wide-ranging social welfare benefit systems. Given Canada's previously mentioned demographic decline, with large portions of the Canadian workforce expected to retire en masse in coming years, sustained flows of immigrants will also prove necessary to ensure the country's continued economic prosperity, to foster economic innovation, and to fulfill the needs for global talent and semi-skilled labour.

Several policy initiatives to increase our intake of new Canadians in light of these considerations are currently under review. The demographic reality of our country is that we need new Canadians to fill our labour and talent pools, and our newly welcomed Canadians will likely want to retain and celebrate their home cultures, religious beliefs, and identities that are increasingly facilitated by globalization and information communication technologies. Western and Canadian identities will change with the continued influx of new immigrants. Given the cultural makeup of Canada, some of the anti-immigrant rhetoric that has become commonplace

among other countries where populism has taken hold will likely not have the same breadth of impact in Canada, given our admitted need for immigration to maintain our economy moving forward.

While this demographic reality and need for increased immigration is often recognized by some Western policymakers and many Canadians, the threat posed by rising global populism taking over many advanced democracies still needs to be considered and better understood. While Canada often celebrates the notion that differences amongst us is a healthy contribution to our multicultural mosaic, there is no ignoring the threat of divisive populism that is sweeping across Western democratic countries and no benefit to be found in being complacent about Canada's prospects for escaping this phenomenon.

While Canada demonstrates characteristics that set us apart from other countries that have seen a rise in the prevalence of populism and populist rhetoric, we have not been immune to the increased incidences of associated hate crimes and terror attacks connected to right-wing, anti-immigrant ideologues. The attack on one Quebec mosque is perhaps the most evident instance of this brand of right-wing, populist violence, however the increase of macroaggressions and racism on our streets is also notable in day to day life. The rise of Rebel media in Canada, clearly funded by Russian interests, to bring a populist narrative into Canada is already making its mark.

Another factor to consider is the potential rise of terrorist activity against soft Western targets. As ISIS enters its death throes and foreign recruited fighters attempt to return home, or those with aspirations of joining ISIS are encouraged to remain in the West to commit their atrocities, the vulnerability of the West to radical Islamist terrorism will be exacerbated. The likely consequence of this would be to aggravate the populist backlash against immigrants and

increase the already rising incidences of hate crimes. Sadly, we have seen this play out in Germany, for example, which was previously welcoming to refugees and immigrants, but is now seeing a surge of radical neo-Nazi activity and Islamophobia after the terrorist attacks in Paris and Brussels. Canada continues to see the rise of both anti-Semitic and Islamophobic attacks on its citizens; sadly this may rise and not diminish thanks to the populist rhetoric online in Canada today.

The volatility of the Canadian and global economy and potential economic malaise forecasted by a number of reputable organizations like the International Monetary Fund could also bring a new source of potential instability and rising populism. Throughout the West, jobs lost in manufacturing, offshore manufacturing to low cost producers, rising inequality and higher unemployment are all being forecasted to accelerate rather than reverse.[xlviii] In Canada, for example, jobs lost in the mining industry or in the oil sands are certain to cause grievances amongst those working in those sectors – particularly given the fact that these lines of work are facing a backlash onto themselves given their environmental implications and the upward trends of environmental awareness taking place around the globe. This type of dynamic tends to resemble the siloing or 'us versus them' mentality that serves as the foundation for populist success and, while this does not definitively mean that a populist campaign will emerge in Canada building on these sentiments, these and other shifting workplace dynamics cannot be ignored.

State of Knowledge: Strengths and Gaps

The strengths in the literature on populism is the ability to unpack and dissect populists' rhetoric. The contribution of political philosophers to the body of literature on populism has been

most striking. The contemporary case studies of populism have also tended to be more focused on Europe, but the literature on Trump and his campaign are slowly starting to percolate into academic journals. Another strength of the state of knowledge is the contribution of media studies to noting how populists have been able to utilize and thrive using social media. Political scientists in comparative politics have also contributed to the literature, but those studying international relations have yet to synthesize how these populists learn or teach each other. The connectors between populists is still unclear.

A key gap in the literature is how to predict or notice the signs of a political system sliding into populism before it is too late. Are there ways to predict where populists can take hold? There is also a real dearth of information on Canada. Yet, there are some sign of this populist sentiment already available on social media channels. Again, rebel media is building its base of Canadian followers with troubling rhetoric and messaging about immigrants, mainstream media, and Canadian politicians.

A sign of a strong society in times of great upheaval, such as the populist insurgencies of today, is a community's resiliency. Resiliency is about tools and resources that communities, individuals, and societies utilize to withstand the negative effects of social dislocation. Of course resiliency is effective when it is bottom up, participatory, and reflective of local circumstances and contexts. A gap in the literature is detailing some of the resiliency tools that have worked in other countries to fend off the negative effects of populism. These are all still to be explored and much work needs to be done.

Knowledge Mobilization

The target research users of the synthesis results are academics, policy professionals, and the wider public including the media. I aim to use my academic, policy, and media networks to present and share my project findings with target users. Policy audiences will benefit from having trusted and verified academic and policy relevant material that has been collected, collated and analyzed.

I will use existing professional networks within government agencies, such as Heritage Canada, Public Safety, the RCMP, and Global Affairs Canada, to request consultative meetings in which research findings will be presented. I have already published a number of op-eds in the Globe and Mail based on initial research of this project and I also look forward to presenting my findings in current affairs magazines such as Walrus and Policy Option which are read by many policymakers. As a frequent media contributor, I also believe that my media profile will be of use to bring astute analysis and awareness of the potential of having populism spread in our country and ways of building resiliency.

Conclusion

Populism has come and gone as a political phenomenon throughout history. But today it seems far more potent than ever before. With the rise of social media and a divisive media landscape that thrives on scandal and othering, it feels like populism is at the doorstep of every democratic country. The known drivers of populism, like social, political and economic dislocation of middle class workers are not going to reverse any time soon. Indeed, the global economy is increasingly seeing less drastic growth and many economists forecast a decrease in productivity in output, particularly with our ageing societies. Yet our media landscape is more open, our

politicians seem increasingly more out of touch, and the global problems that many countries face are likely on the rise. Populism of the right-wing is ever more troubling as it eventually veers into xenophobic, homophobic, and sexist discourse that target the liberal values our modern democracies are built on. We know a great deal about how to spot populist rhetoric, but we know little on how to guard against it and how to stop it.

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