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Populism and the quest for political power: the pitfalls to populist electoral success in Canada

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Recent electoral inroads by anti-establishment political parties in Europe and around the world have led to the resurgence of the debate on populism. Within the burgeoning theoretical and analytic interpretations of the surge of populism, competing arguments have been deployed. Economic dislocation and the demographic shift within liberal democratic societies have provided fertile ground for the rise of populism. However, the success of these populist political parties, particularly the radical right populist parties, in utilizing prevailing societal resentment is to a great extent conditional upon a perceived threat to national identity. While the vestiges of political distrust and social and economic indignation can be found in Canadian society, the absence of a historically ingrained strong sense of nationhood, consolidation of multiculturalism, the eclipse of class from national political discourse, and the implausibility of resorting to Anti-Americanism as a mobilizing tactic has made it difficult for both Canadian right and left-populist forces to replicate the success of their international counterparts at the national level.

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Introduction

The politically astounding electoral breakthrough by radical populist political parties in Europe and other parts of the world has reignited the debate on the polarizing propensity of populist political parties and political actors. Polarization is not a relic of extraterrestrial collision that can be dissected and analyzed independently from the growing social, economic, and cultural cleavages within liberal democratic societies. Cultural and socio-economic chasms do not automatically lead to political polarization. Socio-economic cleavages by themselves are empty slots and houses of cards. They only generate demands for radical populist parties and populist actors who in turn appeal to the people and embark on the electrifying political consciousness of those cleavages, hence intensifying political polarization which is perceived as a threat to liberal democratic societies. In this paper, it will be argued that despite the existence of political grievances and socio-economic disgruntlement in Canadian society, the absence of a historically ingrained sense of nationalism, the consolidation of multiculturalism, constraints on class politics, and the inefficacy of resorting to Anti-Americanism as a mobilizing tactic has precluded the electoral success of both the radical left and right-wing populist political forces.

This paper is divided into four parts. Part one reflects on the debate on the concept of populism. Part two discusses the interplay of socio-economic conditions and populism. Part three deals with the historical evolution of populism in Canada. Part four discusses countervailing forces to the success of populism in Canada. Finally, in the conclusion the main themes and findings will be recapitulated.

Populism as a concept

As a popular and contested concept, populism has permeated social science research and political and academic discourse. Depending on the context within which it is invoked, the concept of populism has acquired a chameleon character. Within the emerging exuberant literature on populism, there is no consensus on a single definition of the concept. Richard Hofstadter's paper, *Everyone is Talking About Populism, but No One Can Define It*, presented at a 1967 Conference at the London School of Economics, still reflects the reality of the confusion associated with the use of the term populism in explaining political phenomena (Derbyshire, 2016; also, Deiwiks, 2009). As Noam Gidron and Bart Bonikowski (2013) have pointed out, the challenge of defining populism lies in the use of the term by researchers from different fields to describe political movements, political parties, ideologies, and political leaders across geographical, historical, and ideological contexts. In their comprehensive literature review of populism, Gidron and Bonikowski (2013: pp. 7–13) identify three interrelated interpretations of populism: populism as a thin ideology with a binary vision of society that promises the restoration of the general will in society; populism as a rhetorical discourse that constructs politics as a struggle between the people and the corrupt establishment; and populism as a political strategy employed mainly by an outsider or an unorthodox political leader striving to gain power through anti-establishment appeals and plebiscitarian linkages. By pitting the "people" against the "elite", populism can become a potent political force once it is blended with other ideological orientations such as nationalism, liberalism, and socialism. Since their extensive review, numerous scholars have adopted a broad definition of populism that has made it formidable to grasp what it really is. As Cristobal Rovira Kaltwasser (2018) has pointed out, "the best way to deal with the contested nature of the term populism is to work with a minimal definition" (64). Among the competing definitions, the best minimal definitions are presented by Cas Mudde and Kurt Wayland. Mudde (2004) provides a comprehensive definition that conceptualizes populism as "a thin-centered ideology" that envisages society to be ultimately divided into two "homogenous and antagonistic groups, the pure people and the corrupt elite", where politics should reflect the general will of the people (543). Wayland (2001), on the other hand, offers a minimal definition that refers to populism as a political strategy utilized by political leaders to mobilize unorganized and disgruntled segments of society. While Rovira Kaltwasser favors Mudde's minimal definition, I believe combining these two minimal definitions provides a more encompassing and comprehensive definition of populism. In this paper, Populism is therefore, defined as a divisive discourse intended to restore the general will of society by pitting the people as the oppressed against the corrupt elite (rhetoric adopted by both right and left-wing populist parties) and racial minority groups (utilized by only right-wing populist parties). This definition is also in line with the practical manifestations of the varieties of populism as reflected in the political ascendancy of nativist-nationalistic populism and class-based populism as two ideologically oriented variants of populism in liberal democratic societies (Bugaric, 2019; Mudde, 2016).

Populism cannot be analyzed independently of the socio-economic environment that determines its momentum. It is, therefore, essential to elucidate the correlation between the dire socio-economic conditions and populist political figures who capitalize on those socio-economic cleavages to sharpen their assaults on the establishment or racial minority groups as the enemy of the people.

Populism and socio-economic cleavages

As a political backlash against the establishment, populism tends to resurface during a specific era when dismal socio-economic conditions question the legitimacy of the existing political order. Most of the early populist movements had been inspired by the demands of farmers and to some extent workers who had become victims of the emerging industrial economy in the nineteenth century (Conway, 1978). The social, demographic, and economic transformation accompanying industrialization triggered a tumultuous surge of social discontent which was conducive to facilitating the political coalition between farmers, workers, and urban intellectuals (Penner, 1977).

While the economic deprivation of the 1930s was geared to generate an auspicious atmosphere for the appeal of populist slogans, the spectacular economic prosperity accompanying World War II was conducive to making populist slogans less attractive. Post-war social reconstruction which had been designed to integrate the marginalized population through the deployment of national resources to provide social welfare programs, left no latitude for extremists on both sides of the ideological spectrum to threaten the foundations of liberal democracy (Mudde, 2015). The institutionalization of demand management, which ensured high levels of employment and the expansion of welfare programs under unparalleled economic growth, not only bolstered the position of the established political parties but also eclipsed both right and left extremists' criticisms of the political order from the terrain of political discourse. As one of the significant hallmarks of post-war prosperity in Western societies, the welfare state provided moral ground for the promotion of the ideas of social justice, solidarity, and universalism (Brodie, 1995). In fact, with the ascendancy of the Keynesian paradigm, a period of diminished policy differentiation and the greatest consensus between the governing social-democratic, liberal, and conservative parties began to prevail.

The Keynesian-ushered post-war economic buoyancy was also accompanied by the gradual liberalization of the immigration policy in a significant number of liberal democracies such as the

United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and other European countries. With the return of prosperity to Europe in the 1960s, which led to the decline in levels of migration from Europe, countries such as the US, Canada, and Australia opened their doors to migrants from non-European countries (Akbari and McDonald, 2018). Even West Germany, which had a restrictive immigration policy in place, relaxed its immigration policy at this time leading to the arrival of millions of migrants as guest workers, many of whom went on to gain permanent residency (Hess and Green, 2016). Therefore, post-war economic prosperity was conducive to cushioning and mitigating any serious domestic backlashes to the gradual shift in the ethnic makeup of these countries (Green, 1976).

The economic crisis of the 1970s undermined the foundation of post-war consensus and triggered waves of economic restructuring across liberal democratic societies. The failure of Keynesian demand management to surmount the phenomenon of stagflation provided an auspicious atmosphere for the New Right to launch a successful theoretical raid on the foundation of Keynesianism that had functioned as a springboard for generous and comprehensive social welfare programs (Brodie, 1995). With the ascendancy of neoliberalism, social welfare programs that were installed as palliative measures to deflect the threat of radicalism, came to be perceived by the dominant classes as impediments to capital accumulation (Pierson, 2002). While Keynesian demand management had provided a logical basis for the utilization of the capacities of market forces to combat socio-economic inequalities, the identification of it as an obstacle to economic growth dealt a major blow to Keynesianism. (Whitfield, 2001).

The rising economic insecurity in the 1980s and 1990s was exacerbated and intensified by the financial crisis of 2008 which triggered a global recession. The financial turmoil that erupted in the US became a worldwide phenomenon that impacted all segments of the economy from the financial industry to the industrial sector, to housing, and pension funds. In just the first 10 months of 2008, "private pensions in OECD countries reported US\$4 trillion losses in asset value" (Impavido and Tower, 2009: p. 1). Though the emerging levels of economic hardship varied from country to country, the pernicious social and economic impacts of the crisis left an imprint across nations. To tackle and alleviate the severity of the economic crisis, governments across Western liberal democratic societies had to revive Keynesian stimuli to salvage financial institutions and reduce the severity of the recession. However, almost all governments in liberal democratic societies gradually embarked on reactivating austerity measures which had severe impacts on ordinary people (Best, 2018). Polarization as reflected in economic hardship, curtailing social welfare programs, and the feeling of vulnerability and uncertainty provided fertile ground for populist propensity to flourish (Armingeon and Guthmann, 2014; Bugaric, 2019; Cordero and Simon, 2016; Mudde 2007; Punciman, 2018; Rooduijn, 2018).

The economic crisis, the ensuing fear of vulnerability, and economic deprivation have historically proven to have the potent potential to engender anti-immigrant attitudes among local populations. In their cross-national studies of 22 countries (Kwak and Wallace, 2018) found a positive correlation between experiencing the economic crisis, the financial crash, loss of employment, and perceived immigrant threat. Similarly, in their comprehensive study of the interplay of economic crisis and populism, Algan et al., (2017: p. 309) found that "crisis-driven economic insecurity is a substantial determinant of populism and political distrust" (also Bogliacino and Virginia, 2016).[1] The general polarization as reflected in the decline of the public trust in the political system, political apathy, frustration, indignation, and the fear of a bleak future provided a golden opportunity for unorthodox political parties and political figures with populist inclinations to enter the political scene as the self-declared defenders of the common people.

The rise of neoliberalism and its distributional implications compounded by the financial crisis of 2008 fostered an environment for the prevalence of populist attitudes. However, the social and economic ramifications of growing inequality and economic insecurity did not necessarily determine populism's political orientations. Growing societal tension as manifested in feelings of economic vulnerability and socio-economic grievances generated the demand for populist leaders. As Dani Rodrik (2018) has pointed out, the salience of cleavages and narratives provided by political leaders and political parties shaped the political manifestation of societal grievances. Based on this demand and supply notion of the emergence of populism, several researchers have identified two ideologically driven political manifestations of populism (Rodrik, 2018; Rooduijn and Akkerman, 2017). European right-wing populist parties heavily capitalize on social, ethnic, and cultural cleavages that have propelled these parties to adopt a nativist and nationalist political orientation. By adopting an anti-immigration policy platform, right-wing and nationalist political parties such as Austria's Freedom Party, Alternative for Germany, the Sweden Democrats, the Swiss People's Party, the Fidesz Party in Hungary, The League in Italy, the Independent Party in the UK, Vox in Spain, and the People's Party in Canada have gained significant political momentum which is reflected in their recent electoral stature within their respective countries as well as the European Parliament (Riegert, 2019; Lisi et al., 2019). On the other hand, left-wing populists such as Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren in the United States, Syriza in Greece, and Podemos in Spain mainly highlight economic deprivation and growing income inequality as the basis for mobilizing economically deprived and marginalized people.

Though authoritarian proclivity might be lurking beneath the policy platform of populist political parties and populist political figures, proclaiming to defend the interests of "the people" has been the hallmark of policy declarations of populists from both sides of the ideological spectrum. In other words, populist political parties and populist political actors present themselves as the vanguards of defending the people's sovereignty to restore democracy. Both right and left-wing populists paint themselves as ardent defenders of democracy though they have different conceptions of what it means. Radical right populists emphasize the direct participation of the people in political processes and the political decision-making process. Due to their nativist and nationalistic inclinations, radical right populists' notion of the people excludes immigrants and minorities just as under the Athenian practice of democracy certain groups such as women and slaves had been excluded from political participation. On the other hand, radical leftist populists place heavy accentuation on the notion of a classless society which can also be extrapolated from an interpretation of classical democracy (Macpherson, 1966). Thus, both radical right and left populists challenge liberal democracy for different reasons. The entrenched pluralism and minority rights protection under the aegis of liberal democracy are despised by radical right populists and are perceived as threats to the maintenance of the general will of society. On the other hand, the juxtaposition of political equality and socio-economic inequality prevailing under liberal democracy is the source of frustration for radical leftist populists who strive to advance an equal and classless society. It is based on these distinctions that some authors have used the terms exclusionary and inclusionary populism to characterize radical right and leftist populist political parties respectively (Bugaric, 2019; Mudde, 2007).

Despite their differences, both radical right and left-wing populist political parties and political actors excoriate the existing

Political party	Ideological orientation	Life span	Political position and height of success	Outcomes
The Progressive Party of Canada	Progressive populism	1920 to 1930	*Center-left* The height of success was the 1921 federal election when the party won fifty-eight seats in the House of Commons.	The Liberal Party absorbed some of its members. Other members became part of fringe parties (such as the United Farmers of Alberta, and the United Farmers of Ontario). Some of its radical members joined the CCF. Currently, Parties and organizations associated with Social Credit are fringe parties at the provincial level.
Social Credit Party	Social credit social conservatism populism	1935 to 1990s Provincial branches	*Right-wing* In the 1962 federal election, it won thirty seats. It was successful in forming a government in certain provinces such as Alberta and British Columbia.	
Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF)	Socialism social democracy populism	1932 to 1961 Provincial branches	*Left-wing* In 1943, a national poll found the CCF to be the most popular party. For the first time, its Saskatchewan provincial branch formed a government in 1943.	In 1961, the CCF was transformed into the New Democratic Party (NDP). It has retained its presence in the parliament but has never been able to form the national government. Its provincial branches have been able to form government in certain provinces.
Reform Party	Free market neoconservatism populism	1987 to 2000 No Provincial branches	*Right-wing* The height of political success was in 1993 and 1997 when it gained Official Opposition Status.	In 2000, it changed its name to the Canadian Alliance. In 2003, it merged with the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada and formed the Conservative Party of Canada.
People's Party	Conservatism populism libertarianism	Since 2018 No Provincial branches	*Right-wing, leaning towards the far right*. In the 2021 federal election, it gained 4.9% of the popular vote.	Currently, has no seat in the Parliament.

Table 1 Major nationally oriented populist political parties.

liberal democratic institutions. By capitalizing on the prevailing wave of disgruntlement, indignation, and hopelessness, these ideologically oriented extremist political parties and political leaders have found a propitious environment to embark on challenging the existing political order.

The perceived economic despair and accompanying hostility towards immigrants are two essential conditions that can function as a springboard for populist political parties, particularly radical right populist political parties, to advance their political objectives. However, as can be demonstrated in the Canadian case below, certain intervening cultural and institutional forces can to a great extent decelerate the populist momentum for both radical right and left-populist political forces.

The historical trajectory of populism in Canada

As was pointed out in the previous section of this paper, populism emerged, waned, and resurfaced during a specific era when dismal socio-economic conditions cast doubt on the legitimacy of the existing political order. As a response to socio-economic dislocations and ensuing industrialization in the late eighteenth and early decades of the nineteenth century, populist movements gained momentum in Canada (Conway, 1978). In contrast to the rise of populist-inspired political movements in Europe in the nineteenth century which generally remained marginal, North American populist movements in the nineteenth century were pervasive (Mudde, 2015). Most of these populist movements had been inspired by the demands of farmers and to some extent workers who had become victims of the emerging industrial economy and the social transformation accompanying industrialization.

The origin and the rise of both right and left-wing populism (for the summary of major right and left-wing populist political parties, see Table 1 at the end of this section) in Canada can be traced back to nineteenth century Canada which had been inspired by American radical populists. The first populist movement in Canada emerged from an unsuccessful and short-lived alliance between farmers and workers who had been resentful of the industrial and commercial classes dominating Canadian society. The movement was in fact a reaction to the policy measures of the First National Policy adopted by the MacDonald Conservatives in 1879 (Panizza, 2005). The explicitly protectionist industrial policy was conducive to enhancing the position of the industrial and financial classes in the East. Politicized farmers and workers were under the impression that they had received an insufficient return on their efforts. The main objectives of the first farmer-labor populist movement were to resist the domination of wealth, advance justice for all members of society, and abolish the fraud and extortion of industrial operations that had been permitted by law (Cook, 1984). It was the prevailing conviction of the leading figures of farmers and labor that an alliance between real productive forces committed to economic freedom, cooperation, and democracy could, in the long run, eradicate the forces of privileges, unbridled competition, and monopoly that constituted a menace to the interests of farmers and workers (Cook, 1984).

Because of internal division and the return to economic prosperity in the late nineteenth century, the first protest movement gradually lost its political momentum (Cook, 1984). The economic vicissitudes associated with industrialization had not only blurred the class lines between farmers and workers but had also facilitated the political coalition between farmers, workers, and urban intellectuals (Penner, 1977). The Progressive Party of Farmers in Canada was the main emerging political machine of farmers and workers' discontent and frustration directed at the established political order for failing to address the interests of these marginalized layers within Canadian society. As the political machine of rebellious farmers and farmworkers, the Progressive

Party began to challenge the traditional mode of politics that had mainly been geared to quench the interests of the financial and industrial classes in the East (Avakumuvic, 1978). Despite generating enormous wealth and prosperity, the emerging capitalist social relations produced the paradox of plenty in the midst of misery (Finkel, 2013). In order to reduce the financial pressures on farmers, the political machine of populism in this era called for major reforms in banking, credit lending rules, and breaking down monopoly and freight rates (Conway, 1978). During its second phase in the early decades of twentieth-century Canada, the populist movement made significant political breakthroughs that shocked status-quo political parties. The Progressive Party of Farmers was able to elect 64 MPs across the country in the federal election of 1921 and was catapulted to official opposition status in the House of Commons (Avakumuvic, 1978). However, these populist political movements were either absorbed by the established political parties (most of the MPs from the Progressive Party joined the Liberal Party) or metamorphosed into fringe parties such as the Social Credit Party which gained momentum in certain provinces (Lipset, 1971). While the adverse implications of industrialization and the subsequent decline in the standards of living during the great depression compelled certain organizations of farmers and workers to form a temporary alliance as manifested in the rise of the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) as the political expression of social-democratic populism in 1932, such developments were unable to guarantee a lasting coalition between these two strata. With the return of economic prosperity, the class consciousness of the petite bourgeoisie, particularly of populist farmers, began to shift away from the revolutionary temptation during the economic slump. Populist farmers could not tolerate the revolutionary languages of working-class organizations which in their view was a repudiation of their rugged individualism (Avakumovic, 1978).

The social, economic, and political vicissitudes in the 1980s were conducive to providing fertile ground for the resurgence of populism in Canada which came to leave its imprint on Canadian politics for decades to come (Friesen, 2021). As the political manifestation of right-wing populism in Canada, the Reform Party entered the political scene in 1987 under the leadership of Preston Manning and was successful in accomplishing a spectacular electoral breakthrough in the 1993 Federal election. In 1997, the Reform Party formed the second-largest party caucus standing in the House of Commons and succeeded in gaining the status of Her Majesty's loyal opposition in the House of Commons. Certain social, political, and economic developments contributed to the rise of the Reform Party. The political turmoil associated with two decades of failed constitutional negotiations intended to appease Quebec resharpened Western alienation. A significant number of Conservative voters became disillusioned with the Progressive Conservative Party which had sedulously striven to accommodate Quebec. A growing sense of economic vulnerability among Canadians in the 1980s was to a great extent conducive to making Canadian society less receptive to embracing more immigrants and refugees. These conditions provided an auspicious opportunity for the Reform Party to seize the moment and propagate its populist policy measures (Laycock, 2021; Jakubowski, 2006).

By capitalizing on the prevailing sociopolitical environment of the 1980s and 1990s which was receptive to populist slogans, the Reform Party explicitly called for several major radical political reforms. These reforms ranged from calling for greater fiscal responsibility and lower taxes, to espousing direct democratic measures such as referendum and citizen initiatives, to abolishing the Department of Multiculturalism as well as the concept of "hyphenated Canadianism" (though groups were permitted to preserve their cultural heritage through their own resources), to restricting and subordinating the immigration policy to the exigencies of the Canadian economy (Reform Party, 1993; Reform Party, 1991; Reform Party, 1989).[2]

Obviously, the Reform Party was not successful in restructuring the Canadian Federation along with its populist and ultra-conservative ideological orientation. However, it was instrumental in forcing the governing Liberal government of Jean Chretien to crawl to the right of the center and adopt austerity policy measures intended to reduce spending and allow for the balancing of the budget in the late 1990s. Though the Reform Party was successful in triggering a fundamental alteration in the landscape of party politics as manifested in intensifying Canadians' suspicion of governments, the status-quo political parties, entrenched special interests, and the sociopolitical reality in Canada, that will be discussed later in this paper, exerted pressures on the Reform Party to gradually modify its original policy stance (Laycock, 2021). In order to extend the frontier of its social basis of support beyond Western Canada and hence increase the levels of support in the Eastern part of Canada, the Reform Party embarked on transforming itself into the Canadian Alliance Party in 2000 which finally merged with the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada in 2003 to form the current Conservative Party of Canada. The transformation of the Reform Party and the eventual emergence of the Conservative Party of Canada led to impressive electoral success that enabled the Conservatives to form a national government in 2006. In its quest to expand its social basis of support and hence capture political power at the national level, the Conservative Party gradually moved towards the center of the ideological spectrum. In order to increase its share of votes among ethnic groups in Canada, the Conservative Party gradually moderated its stance on immigration and multiculturalism (Marwah et al., 2013). Consequently, unlike its predecessors, the Conservative Party has not only discarded its rejection of multiculturalism but has also supported a relatively expansive mass immigration policy. By harnessing the political implications of the Sponsorship Scandal that had been haunting the Liberal government, the Conservative Party under Stephen Harper's leadership succeeded in forming a minority government in 2006. Contrary to the expectation of many conservatives, Harper was inclined to run a deficit and resort to a greater level of state intervention in economic activities such as bailing out the auto sector in 2009. Furthermore, under the leadership of Andrew Scheer, the Conservative Party explicitly declared that it would not ban abortion or same-sex marriage. Such policy measures adopted by the Conservative Party were bound to alienate social conservatives and stir up resentment among ardent conservative proponents of neoliberalism who preached for greater fiscal discipline and a restricted level of state intervention in a market economy (Livesey, 2020).

The Conservative Party of Canada's gradual crawl towards the center of the ideological spectrum generated a climate of disappointment for radical figures within its ranks and files. The resurgence of populist propensity within conservative circles was manifested in the resignation of Maxime Bernier, a former Cabinet member of the Conservative Party, who went on to form the People's Party of Canada in 2018. In his political debates, Bernier unequivocally adopted a populist overtone that echoes right-wing populists in Europe.

As a right-wing populist party, the People's Party appears to be committed to reviving some of the policy measures that had been adopted by the Reform Party. The People's Party has declared its intention to eliminate multicultural funding, restrict immigration policy, and put more emphasis on skilled immigrants. It aims to enact a Canada-First foreign policy, roll back all environmental protection commitments made by Canada, adhere to fiscal austerity, and safeguard freedom of expression by restricting the

Table 2 Summary of variables that have contributed to constraining populist electoral success at the national level.

Variables	Description	Its state within the Canadian Context	Effects on populism
Nationalism/National Identity	Belief in common ancestry or ethnicity and holding a subjective feeling of belonging to a nation.	Due to the historical conflict between Canada and Quebec and the institutionalization of multiculturalism, Canada has a fractured nationalism which is reflected in the fragmentation of national identity.	Reduced opportunity for right-wing populist parties to raise the flag of ethnic nationalism as a mobilization tactic.
Multiculturalism	An established policy of encouraging minority ethnocultural groups to retain their customs and traditions.	Has acquired an iconic status and has become part of Canadian identity.	Due to the significance of ethnic votes, Political parties that wish to form a national government must eschew resorting to divisive language. The development of multiculturalism has also closed off an avenue for political backlash against immigration policy.
Class politics	A situation in which ideologically oriented political parties appeal to a specific socio-economic class.	The prolonged conflict between Canada and Quebec has provided legitimate ground for the exigency of maintaining national unity that has in turn been utilized by status-quo parties, particularly the Liberal Party, to circumvent class division, hence forcing both right and left-wing parties to imitate a classless image of Canada.	The latitude for ideologically oriented political parties, particularly the left-wing party, to wage class struggle as a mobilization strategy is restricted.
Anti-Americanism	Historically ingrained sense of antipathy towards America that is fueled by the perceived fear of the American takeover of Canada.	Due to the consolidation of continental economic integration, the decline in the appeal of economic nationalism, and growing support for international trade, anti-Americanism has been on the decline since the 1990s.	For populist political parties, particularly the radical left-wing political party, anti-Americanism as a mobilization strategy has lost its appeal.

definition of hate which it alleges is used to curtail freedom of expression. While it has declared its commitment to promoting democracy and democratic accountability, it has not been vociferous in the adoption of the direct democratic measures that were passionately advocated by the Reform Party. To broaden their electoral appeals, radical right populists in Canada have substituted their criticism of multiculturalism and immigration policy with embracing neoliberal economic policy platforms (Budd, 2021).

During the 2021 federal election campaign, The People's Party capitalized on growing anti-vaccine sentiment and the wave of dissatisfaction over the management of the COVID-19 pandemic. Even though it was shut out of the federal election and failed to capture a single seat in the House of Commons, it nonetheless tripled its share of the popular vote. In the 2021 federal election, the People's Party received 4.94 percent of the popular vote which was a major success as compared to its share of the total popular vote in the 2019 federal election which stood at 1.6 percent. Emboldened by the astonishing increase in the level of support for the People's Party, Bernier asserted that his party would be "the only real conservative option for this country" (Baum, 2021: para 6).

The electoral success of the People's Party during the 2021 federal election has intensified the concern over the threat of right-wing populism in Canada. Some have interpreted the recent electoral success of the People's Party as a warning of the arrival of twenty-first-century populism in Canada (Hastings, 2021; MacLellan, 2021). Given the gradual shift of the Conservative Party of Canada toward the center of the ideological spectrum, it is suggested that the People's Party might succeed in expanding its social basis of support in the future (Hastings, 2021). Such a prediction is predicated on the fact that there is a growing populist attitude among Canadians. In their recent study, Frank Graves and Jeff Smith (2020) found that 34 percent of Canadians hold a populist outlook. These Canadians happened to be mainly older, less educated, working-class Canadians living mainly in the western part of the country. The political sympathies of Canadian populists lie with the Conservative political forces (Graves and Smith, 2020).

It is yet to be seen which direction the Conservative Party of Canada will take under the leadership of Pierre Poilievre who was able to defeat Jean Charest, a moderate and centrist candidate. Throughout his campaign for party leadership in 2022, Poilievre adopted populist language by emphasizing fighting for the "little people" and challenging "established elites" and "gatekeepers" in Ottawa. Despite his fury and combative populist stance that places heavy accentuation on fiscal prudence and small government, he has eschewed attacking immigration policy or capitalizing on racial and ethnic divides. As Eric Kaufmann, an expert on populism, has pointed out, it is a natural proclivity of the populist movement to shift the rhetoric of opposition to the establishment beyond the economic realm to tricky cultural issues which is the hallmark of the People's Party, but it's not happened with Poilievre (cited in Thomson, 2022, para 3).

Populism clearly has roots in Canadian society and Canadian politics. It is not a novel phenomenon. A rise, dwindling, and resurgence have been the hallmarks of populism in Canada. However, there are certain institutional, attitudinal, cultural, and economic variables that have the potential to function as bulwarks against radical populism from both sides of the ideological divide.

Countervailing forces to populism in Canada

Prior to explaining variables that have contributed to the containment and restraining of populism at the national level in Canada (for a summary of these variables, see Table 2 at the end of this section), it is essential to review and assess the impact of institutional variables on the fate of populism. Within the scope of the existing literature on the institutional explanation of

populism, there are two main lines of argument. First, with respect to the rise of Euroscepticism which is being molded into a bitter populism in some European countries, it is argued that the formation of some form of European federalism is the most effective response to contain the tide of Euroscepticism (Heine, 2014). According to this line of thought, a federal Europe can utilize redistribution as a mechanism to alleviate growing socio-economic inequalities in member countries so that the ability of populist parties to capitalize on social and economic resettlement as a ground to mobilize disgruntled Europeans will be undermined (Eagleton, 2017). Reflecting on the rise of populism in the United States, John McGinnis (2018) has suggested that in order to contain populism, American federalism which has become heavily centralized, must return to its classical version where most of the residual powers were reserved for the states. However, this line of reasoning ignores the fact that while in a heavily decentralized federal system, there is less chance for populism at the national level, populism can still gain ground at the sub-national level as is the case in certain Canadian provinces such as Alberta and Quebec (Young, 2022).

The second line of institutional argumentation is the assertion that the form of the electoral method has a significant impact on the electoral prospects for populist parties. It is argued that the proportional representation (PR) system has the potential to not only increase the share of the popular vote but also increase the electoral coalition of populist parties (Becher et al., 2022). Accordingly, the PR system is advantageous to fringe parties such as populist parties on two interrelated grounds. First, under the PR system, supporters of populist parties confidently cast their votes for the party of their choice and are no longer engaged in strategic voting (Downes et al., 2018).[3] Second, the percentage of popular votes acquired by parties is automatically translated into the percentage of seats in parliament. In other words, contrary to the situation under the Single-Member Plurality system or the First-Past-The-Post system (FPTP) where there is no direct relation between the percentage of votes and the percentage of seats, votes cast under the PR system are not wasted. While there is no empirical evidence to substantiate the assertion that the PR system fosters extremism (Carter, 2004), it is undeniable that PR is advantageous to fringe parties. For example, the People's Party of Canada which gained 4.95 percent of the popular vote in the 2021 federal election in Canada without gaining a single seat, would have been able to capture 16 seats if the election had been conducted under the PR system. It is asserted by some analysts that the FPTP electoral system forces political parties to moderate their ideological orientation and become pragmatic (Marwah et al., 2013). However, this assertion needs to be qualified. First, the FPTP electoral method cannot prevent populist forces from gaining power at the provincial level. Second, the FPTP electoral method may not negatively affect unorthodox political parties even at the national level if their social basis of support is concentrated in particular regions. Such is the case with the Reform Party of Canada which despite its anti-immigration and anti-multicultural stance, was able to emerge as a major political force in the 1993 federal election and established itself as the main opposition party in 1997. However, due to its aspiration to capture national power, the Conservative Party of Canada had to move beyond its Western basis and moderate its stance in order to capture ethnic votes in the Eastern part of Canada, particularly in Toronto and Montreal where there is a huge concentration of ethnic groups.

Thus, institutional variables such as the electoral system cannot by themselves explain the failure of populist forces in Canada. The electoral method is just a mechanism that is influenced by the configuration of other non-institutional variables. Institutional settings might be crucial in shaping political games,

however, as Bo Rothstein (1998: p. 306) has pointed out "homo politics cannot be considered as structural -cum- institutional dope". Without taking into consideration the intervening variables such as nationalism, multiculturalism, regional peculiarity, and electoral mobilization strategies, it would be a formidable task to deploy an argument that the electoral system such as the Single-Member Plurality System can by itself deprive populist parties of electoral ascendancy.

As has already been mentioned, the current electoral system in Canada has not prevented populist electoral successes at the provincial level. Also, as was pointed out earlier, when the political basis of support for a populist political party is concentrated in a particular region or certain regions, the FPTP model cannot prevent a populist political party from becoming a major player in Canadian politics. This was the case with the Reform Party which although it did not capture the bridle of the national government, was instrumental in amplifying the voice of the right and the demand for austerity. It was in fact during the presence of the Reform Party in Parliament that the governing Liberal Party crawled to the right side of the ideological spectrum and adopted the most draconian neoliberal policy measures as manifested in downsizing the public sector, curtailing social programs, and slashing federal transfers to provinces (Johnson, 2006: pp. 90–94, see also Prince, 1998–1999). Finally, it would be a tall order for institutionalists to reject a hypothetical argument that in the case of a strong sense of nationalism as the basis for electoral mobilization, the absence of multiculturalism, and the prevalence of regional harmony, a populist political party will not be able to form a national government even under the current electoral system.

Thus, institutional structures cannot be analyzed independently of other variables such as nationalism, multiculturalism, and electoral mobilization strategies which have decisive impacts on electoral outcomes. Populism and nationalism are neither separate nor equivalent. Though they can be analytically distinct, they hinge on "shared foundations of an us-them boundary" (Singh, 2021: p. 285). Nationalism is defined as a discourse revolving around the nation as a sovereign community that exists within a demarcated space and is constructed around member-non-member opposition. Populism, on the other hand, is a discourse structured on the antagonism between people as an oppressed group, and the powerful elite with populists fighting for the people (De Cleen, 2017). Despite being analytically distinct, populism and nationalism have been combined in populist politics.

Within the existing literature on the interplay of populism and nationalism, it has almost become a common assumption that nationalism and populism are complementary (Bonikowski, 2017). The correlation between populism and nationalism is not straight. Therefore, their interplay requires further clarification. Maximilian Filsinger et al. (2021) distinguish between two competing conceptions of nationhood and national identity that have permeated literature on nationalism. Ethnic national identity is built on a strong emphasis on the place of birth, blood, and ancestry. Civic national identity is built on the adherence of individuals to national political institutions, its democratic system, and shared rights-based values. Populism and nationalism are thus to a great extent highly but imperfectly correlated in the speeches of leaders (Jenne et al., 2021: p. 70). As Filsinger et al. (2021) have pointed out, the ethnic conception of nationhood is intimately tied to radical right populism whereas there is a weak relation between civic national identity and populism which is mitigated by socio-economic factors.

Thus, the existence of a strong sense of nationalism and the articulation of threats to national identity is indispensable to the successful campaign of radical right populists to mobilize

economically vulnerable and politically disillusioned people within a given society against elites, immigrants, and visible minorities (Bonikowski, 2017). The presence of ethnically inspired national sentiment that can be channeled into resentment towards those who are perceived to be outsiders, is an effective weapon in the arsenal of radical right populist politicians and political parties. As can be demonstrated, the Canadian conception of nationhood is complicated, ambiguous, and weak. As a frustrated Hugh MacLennan pointed out a long time ago, whether or not Canada has acquired its own unique identity, has become an "everlasting, frustrating, humiliating question" for Canadians (Cited in Baker, 1973: p. 57). Canadian mainstream politicians have historically striven to reinforce a conception of nationhood that is based on civic values and norms. Pierre Elliot Trudeau, the "gladiator" of Canadian politics whose political philosophy has greatly shaped Canadian political culture, believed that Canadian nationalism should not be based on the national and ethnic characteristics of either English or French Canadians. Instead, he argued that Canadian nationalism should be constructed on neutral civic principles and values (Trudeau, 1968). Former Prime Minister, Jean Chretien described Canada as a post-national, bilingual, and multicultural society where diversity has become "a source of comparative advantage and a source of continuing creativity and innovation" (cited in Mobley et al., 2012, p. 307). In his recent interview published in the New York Times, which sparked a major controversy in Canada, the current Prime Minister Justin Trudeau characterized Canada as the first "post-national" state and asserted that "there is no core identity, no mainstream in Canada" (Lawson, 2018).

Due to the absence of or weak national identity in Canada, both Canadian radical right and left populists have encountered formidable difficulty in advancing their political goals and objectives by adopting a radical populist platform. The historical legacy of Canadian dualism as reflected in the continuation of the French and English cultural divide, and the gradual shift in the ethnic make-up of Canada which culminated in cementing multiculturalism as one of its defining features, have to a great extent contributed to the lack of or weak formation of Canadian national identity (Belshaw, 2020). The competing national visions of English-speaking Canadians envisioning Canada as an unhyphenated nation, and French-speaking Canadians viewing Canada as a compact of two nations, gradually came to be superseded by "a national pluralism in which multiculturalism became "a dominating value" (Belshaw, 2020: 12.6).

Pierre Elliot Trudeau was instrumental in the shift from Canadian dualism to multiculturalism. Before his arrival on the political scene and his subsequent ascendancy to the pinnacle of power as Prime Minister in 1968, Trudeau had already developed his philosophical and political ideas of check and balance, and the superiority of individual rights over collectivity as the basis for his vision of the Canadian nation (Trudeau, 1968; see also Whitaker, 1992: pp. 132–159). Under the flag of fighting for a united, rights-based, bilingual, and multicultural Canada, Trudeau embarked on a course of action that was not intended to accommodate Quebec nationalists but rather to decelerate the momentum for Quebec nationalism, hence diminishing the bargaining power of Quebec within the Canadian federation. His vision of Canada was further advanced through the entrenchment of the Charter in the Constitution Act of 1982. It was Trudeau's unwavering conviction that the diffusion and protection of the French language within Canada, which is guaranteed in section 23 of the Charter, would be bound to generate a condition within which "Quebec cannot say it alone stood for French" heritage (Cited in McRoberts, 1991: p. 153).

The entrenchment of the Charter in the Constitution Act of 1982 was based on the assumption that the provision of a set of subjectively inspiring common values such as equality, equity, justice, and freedom could provide the focus for Canadian nationalism which would, in turn, bind Canadians to the Canadian state (Whitaker, 1992; McRoberts, 1991). Trudeau assumed that by basing the sovereignty of the people on a set of values common to all, the Charter would function as a nostrum to foster Canadian national identity and hence strengthen Canadian unity (Russell, 1983). Thus, multiculturalism and the Charter were assumed to reinforce civic identity as opposed to ethnically based national identity. However, the civic base of national identity promoted by mainstream Canadian politicians and political institutions is not shared by Quebec nationalists and Indigenous peoples who have different and competing images of Canada (Kymlicka, 1998). Despite its enchanting attractiveness as an emblem of cultural recognition, multiculturalism has been envisaged by both Quebec nationalists and Indigenous peoples as a deliberate endeavor by Trudeau to relegate them to the status of visible minorities in Canada. Neither Quebec nor the Indigenous peoples have identified themselves as members of ethnic minorities (Cairns, 2001). As collective entities, both Quebec nationalists and Indigenous peoples have rebuffed the paradigm of multiculturalism as an ethnonational reflection of Canadian society (Abu-Laban, 1994). Quebec nationalists have in fact construed multiculturalism as a surreptitious endeavor by Canada to neutralize and eclipse Quebec's binary vision of Canada from the terrain of political discourse (McRoberts, 1991: pp. 27–8).

A recent survey by the Environics Institute for Research (2019) shows that there is no single source of Canadian national identity and there is no consensus on a shared set of values that can bind Canadians together. Furthermore, in addition to the fragmentation of Canadian identity along race, ethnicity, religion, and language, more Canadians identify themselves with their region or province than with the national state. Given the rapid alteration in the ethnic makeup of Canadian society, it is clear why radical right-wing populist political parties have eschewed launching direct political assaults on ethnic minorities and multiculturalism and have instead limited their criticisms to the official provisions of funds allocated to the promotion of multiculturalism. It would be a formidable task and a miracle for any radical right-wing populist political party in Canada to capture national power without receiving a substantial level of support from the first and second-generation immigrants who constitute almost 40% of the Canadian population as of 2011 (Warnica, 2019).

The entrenchment of Canadian multiculturalism that has acquired an iconic status provides an explanation for the lack of significant backlash against immigration policy despite socioeconomic cleavages within the country. Contrary to the most industrialized liberal democratic countries that have encountered a major backlash against immigration, Canada, despite welcoming a high level of immigrants each year, has not faced any such major backlash. As has already been pointed out, there is strong and enduring cross-party support for an expansive immigration policy. Since mainstream political parties must compete for racial minority votes, there is no incentive for the established political parties to raise the flag of anti-immigration. Furthermore, Canadian multiculturalism, which has entrenched itself as one of the defining features of Canadian political culture, has to a great extent closed off an avenue for a significant backlash against immigration policy. As sociologist Jeffrey Reitz (2014) has meticulously asserted "Popular support for multiculturalism as a symbol creates a positive political environment for the development of Canada's expansionist immigration policy and helps immigrants integrate into the economy and society" (108). According to a 2018 survey by the polling company Ipsos which asked Canadians to rank Canadian symbols and values, most surveyed Canadians placed multiculturalism "right next to the national anthem—and just behind their flag" (Thompson, 2018: para 2).[4]

Furthermore, the existence of a fractured nationalism, weak national identity, and a greater level of identification with provinces and regions rather than the national state also explains why populist political parties might be successful in finding a niche political market at the sub-national level which is receptive to their populist ideas (Potter, 2019). It was due to the populist orientation of current Premier Doug Ford who hinged his populist commitment to reassert the interests of people and clip the wings of special interests associated with the political establishment on a neoliberal-driven policy platform that allowed the Ontario Provincial Progressive Conservative Party to gain political power in 2018 (Budd, 2020).

Despite the complexity and ambiguity of Canadian national identity, anti-Americanism is also inscribed into the soul of the Canadian national psyche. As William Baker (1970) has pointed out, as a recurring theme in Canadian history, anti-Americanism "…is one of the solid legs on which the elusive animal, the Canadian identity, stands" (426). Its roots can be traced back to the events before the commencement of the Canadian Confederation in 1867. With the American Revolution against the British Monarchy, the arrival of the United Loyalists in British North American colonies who were fleeing the American Revolution, and the subsequent threat of American expansionism in the early decades of the nineteenth century, anti-Americanism became a part of the Canadian psyche (Baker, 1973). Long before the rise of the Canadian federation, both French and English Canada, despite their historical differences and animosity, were adamant in distinguishing themselves from Americans (Woodfinden, 2019; Underhill, 1960). Due to the perceived American threat to Canada's existence, Canadian survival has been often perceived as surviving the American threat of expansionism (Cullen et al., 1978). It is due to the continuation of the rehearsal of this historical memory that "a salient dimension of Canadian nationalism is indistinguishable from anti-Americanism" (Cullen et al., 1978: p. 105). The inclination of Canadians to identify themselves as being different from Americans is an overriding theme in major comparative studies of political culture in Canada and the United States (Stewart, 1994). During the late nineteenth and a major part of the twentieth centuries, Canadian politicians of different political and ideological brands occasionally utilized the anti-American aspect of Canadian political culture to attract voters (Fulford, 2001).

With a few notable exceptions, right-wing populism in Canada has historically eschewed raising the anti-American flag as a mobilization tactic. As the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party, John Diefenbaker who was the Prime Minister of Canada from 1957 to 1963, had adopted a nationalistic populist stance which was manifested in his antipathy for bilingualism, multiculturalism, and special treatment of Quebec (Story and Sheppard, 1998). With respect to his foreign policy, his refusal to join the Organization of American States (OAS), his retention of Canada's relation with Cuba after the Cuban Revolution, his stance during the Cuban Missile Crisis, and his reluctance to arm American Bomarc missiles with nuclear warheads on Canadian soil, were interpreted by some analysts as a reflection of his anti-American proclivity (Glazov, 2002; Newman, 1963; Nicholson, 1968). On the other hand, Jason Zorbas (2012) has argued that Diefenbaker's foreign policy, and particularly Canada's relation with the United States, was mainly shaped by his nationalism which aspired to retain Canadian autonomy. Diefenbaker's nationalism reflected Red Tory's nationalistic quest to preserve Canada's autonomy in the face of the overwhelming propensity of the United States to turn Canada into a satellite of the American Empire (Staring, 2010; Grant, 1965). As Zorbas has pointed out, Diefenbaker's Red Tory's nationalism should not be construed as anti-Americanism but rather as an endeavor to preserve

Canadian sovereignty. Undoubtedly, Diefenbaker's nationalistic orientation on foreign policy had adversely impacted Canada's relationship with the United States. It is no wonder that Diefenbaker's electoral defeat in the 1963 federal election was interpreted by the then-American ambassador to Canada, Walton Butterworth, as a swing to greater stability and cooperation in Canada-US relations. In his assessment of the 1963 federal election, Ambassador Butterworth predicted that Canada would "be more stable, responsible, sophisticated and generally cooperative than any time since 1958" (Cited in McKercher, 2011, p. 1043).

One may assume that the anti-American ingredient of Canadian nationalism could be harnessed by populist political parties, particularly radical left populism, as a rallying cry to mobilize Canadian voters. It was in fact during the early decades of the second part of the twentieth century that the penetration of American branch plants into the Canadian economy was utilized by left nationalists to put pressure on the government of Pierre Elliot Trudeau to take certain policy measures such as the entertainment with the Third Option and the adoption of the Foreign Direct Investment Review (FIRA) agency to reduce American ownership of leading sectors of the Canadian economy (Marsden, 1997; Blocker, 2021).[5] Resorting to this anti-American strategy to challenge the domination of the Canadian economy by American branch plants in the 1950s to mid-1970s was an effective political mobilization tactic utilized by the radical leftist supporters of the Waffle movement who had been guided by economic nationalism (Blocker, 2021).[6]

Due to the maturation of the continental economic integration, the historically ingrained anti-Americanism that was prevalent during the nineteenth and much of the twentieth century had significantly disappeared by the 1990s (Granatstein, 1996). According to Granatstein, the anti-Americanism which reached its peak during the 1988 general election fought on the free trade agreement with the United States, was the "last gasp" of the anti-Americanism ingredient of Canadian political culture. The gradual eclipse of anti-Americanism from the terrain of Canadian political culture was mainly due to the gradual consolidation of continental economic integration and the weakening position of economic nationalism which had been fueled by the fear of the American takeover of the Canadian economy.[7] Therefore, anti-Americanism purports to be no longer a viable and efficacious option for radical leftist populists in Canada. If the volume of foreign direct investment (FDI) is used as a benchmark to measure the level of economic dependency, then it would be a futile and implausible electoral strategy to invoke the dependency theory to paint Canada as a satellite of the American Empire. Since the 1980s and early 1990s, Canada has become a net outward investor and Canadian businesses have begun to tighten their grip over leading sectors of the Canadian economy. Canadian businesses have begun to extend the scope of capital accumulation beyond national boundaries and Canada has emerged as an "imperial state" in its own right (McNally, 2017). Even during the COVID-19 pandemic which brought about major disruptions in economic activities across the globe, Canadian direct investment abroad surpassed foreign direct investment in Canada and the principal destination of Canadian investment abroad remains to be the United States (Statistic Canada, 2021a, 2021b). As of 2020, "the amount of U.S. FDI [in Canada] totaled USD 422 Billion, a 5 percent increase from the previous year, Canada's FDI stock in the United States totaled USD 570 Billion, a 15 percent increase from the previous year" (U.S. Department of State, 2022).

Given the decline of American ownership of the leading sectors of the Canadian economy, the corresponding increase in outward investment levels by Canadian businesses, and the growing backlash against economic protectionism which is reflected in the

soaring support for globalization and international trade among Canadians, resorting to an anti-Americanpolitical strategy to rally Canadians behind a radical policy platform by leftist populist forces is no longer a viable and efficacious option.[8]

One might argue that left-wing populist forces in Canada can, like their counterparts in other countries, champion progressive social and economic measures to rally socially and economically marginalized layers within Canadian society. However, the latitude for the left to emphasize class politics is constrained. The inveterate conflict between Quebec and Canada and the ongoing regional discontent have thus given legitimacy to the exigency of maintaining national unity which has, in turn, provided an auspicious momentum for the status-quo political parties, particularly the Liberal Party, to evade class cleavages and accentuate the imperatives of maintaining national unity and placating regional imbalances (Bickerton, 2007). Through adopting brokerage politics as a means of electoral mobilization which has continued to remain the dominant mode of party politics in Canada, the Liberal Party has historically been able to coerce both the right and left parties to mitigate their class appeals and hence adopt a classless image of Canada (Horowitz, 1968; Carty, 1988). Furthermore, leftist political forces have historically been outflanked by the ideological maneuverability of the Liberal Party which has adopted and implemented all those socially progressive policy measures advocated by the Canadian left (Finkel, 2013).[9] As Allen Mills has aptly pointed out, the CCF-NDP has historically faced formidable difficulty in distinguishing itself from the Liberal Party when the latter "is on its best behavior" (Mills, 1991:259).

Conclusion

As has been argued throughout this paper, the rise of populism has historically been correlated with socio-economic downturns and ensuing perceived economic vulnerability. Populism resonates in an environment of intense socio-economic grievance which is receptive to divisive populist slogans. Under a climate of economic deprivation and social marginalization, socially and economically deprived individuals develop a predilection to search for the blame for their socio-economic misfortunes. Growing income inequality perceived economic vulnerability, the cultural backlash against immigrants, and the accompanying diminution of public trust in existing political institutions tend to provide fertile ground conducive to generating a magnetic field for populist appeals. The failure of mainstream political parties to surmount the social and economic implications of neoliberal policies has also intensified the populist surge.

Like other Western countries, signs of social and economic indignation, a relatively low level of cultural backlash against immigration policy, and political distrust can also be traced in Canadian society. Furthermore, there is a growing populist outlook among less educated and older Canadians whose political sympathies mainly lie with conservative political forces. While populist forces have been able to make political inroads at the sub-national level, they have not been successful at the national level. The failure of populist forces to make a significant electoral breakthrough at the national level lies in the interaction of institutional, cultural, and attitudinal variables that have the potential to hamper the success of populism at the national level. The absence of a historically ingrained strong sense of nationhood, the political maturity of multiculturalism, the eclipse of class from the terrain of national political discourse, and the decline in the appeal of anti-Americanism have made it a formidable task for both the radical right and left-populist forces to replicate the success of their international counterparts at the national level.

Due to the seismic shift in the ethnic makeup of Canadian society and the concentration of ethnic votes in certain metropolitan centers such as Toronto, Montreal, and British Columbia, no political party can ignore the reality of being attentive to new Canadians if it aims to knock on the doors of political power at the national level. This emerging reality of Canadian society explains why the Conservative Party of Canada unlike its predecessors has tacitly eschewed launching direct attacks on multiculturalism and immigration policy. The existence of a fractured nationalism as manifested in the fragmentation of national identity, has reduced the ability of populist parties to play the card of nationalism to rally Canadians against the threat of outsiders. Furthermore, the consolidation and institutionalization of multiculturalism has closed off an avenue for a significant backlash against immigration policy.

Due to the historical permeation of Canadian national discourse with the exigency of maintaining national unity and regional accommodation, and the perpetuation of a classless image of Canada by the Liberal Party, the latitude for class politics by right and left-wing political forces is constrained. Finally, the anti-American ingredient of Canadian political culture that in the past fueled Canadian nationalism as a mobilizing tool by radical political forces, is no longer an effective strategy that could be utilized by populist forces, particularly left-wing populism, to generate political support. Conditions such as the high level of US ownership of the leading sectors of the Canadian economy which in the early second part of the twentieth century facilitated the ability of radical leftist political forces to harness the anti-American element of Canadian political culture to mobilize Canadians to advance their political objectives have lost their appeal. The gradual continental economic integration, the decline in US ownership of Canadian industry, the ability of Canadian capital to expand its international scale of operation, and growing public support for international trade have all diminished the appeal of economic nationalism that was in the past utilized by radical leftist political forces as an anti-American mobilization tactic.

Data availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this research as no data were generated or analyzed.

Notes

1 Thomas Kurer (2020) has argued that the disadvantages of employment transformation for semiskilled workers and ensuing changes in the social hierarchy, not impoverishment, generate support for right-wing populist political parties. Kurer's argument seems to be plausible. However, it should be noted that changes in social status are corollaries of economic transformation which cannot be analyzed independently from overall economic transformation and economic crisis that engender economic insecurity and economic deprivation.

2 As a well-known populist premier of Alberta from 1935 to 1943, William Eberhart introduced the direct democratic measure of recall but scrapped the principle when his own constituents decided to recall him (Wiseman, 1995: p. 227).

3 Strategic voting refers to a voting situation where the voter is under the impression that their preferred party has no chance of winning the seat, and they therefore, vote for another party that has the chance of defeating the party that they dislike most.

4 The consolidation of multiculturalism as a bulwark against anti-immigration backlash does not mean that there are no conflictual non-economic variables such as religious and cultural values that can provide a demand for populist parties and populist political figures. The ongoing cross-Canada protests against the controversial sex education curriculum that are spearheaded by religious and conservative parents provide strong ammunition for populist forces. However, neither right-wing nor left-wing populist forces can harness this movement to advance their objectives. The

majority of these religious and conservative parents are from visible minority groups who at the same time oppose the anti-immigration orientation of the right-wing populist party in Canada. On the other hand, the left-wing populist forces which have endorsed identity politics and have historically supported the rights of socially marginalized groups, cannot ally themselves with this movement which is depicted by many as an anti-LGBTQ crusade (Mason and Hamilton, 2023).

5 The Third Option which is associated with the policy proposals of Trudeau's administration in the 1970s, referred to a range of choices that were available to Canada. Either maintaining its current relations or intensifying and deepening its relations with the US. However, in order to consolidate Canada's independence and hence diminish Canada's trade dependency on the US, Canada had to diversify its trade relations.

6 A left-leaned radical movement within the NDP in the 1960s and 1970s which identified American control of the Canadian economy as the impending threat to Canadian survival, the Waffle movement which was mainly led by university professors, embraced a socialist and nationalist policy platform aimed at turning Canada into an independent socialist country characterized by substituting US private ownership of Canadian industry with public ownership. The Waffle movement also called for the establishment of an independent Canadian labor movement and endorsed Quebec's self-determination.

7 Kim Richard Nossal (2005) argues that the Canadian leftist nationalist movement has shifted its opposition away from the United States to the global capital, and remaining anti-Americanism in Canadian political culture is mainly directed toward a particular U.S. policy or personality.

8 Based on the most recent survey of Canadian attitudes, "Almost three-quarters of Canadians have a 'very favorable' view of international trade…" (Saunders, 2018).

9 Furthermore, income inequality in Canada is lower than income inequality in many OECD countries (OECD, 2023). This also reduces the ability of populist political forces particularly, the leftist populist forces to wage class politics.

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