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White Males, Populism and the CAF: A Perspective

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WHITE MALES, POPULISM AND THE CAF – A PERSPECTIVE

After weeks of protests snarling downtown Ottawa and blockading border crossings, nearly two-thirds of Canadians have lost faith in the ability of the country to maintain peace, order and good government…

- Maru Group Public Opinion Poll, Feb 2022.

INTRODUCTION

Adolf Hitler was a populist leader. Tommy Douglas was too. Donald Trump is certainly a right wing populist as was Preston Manning. They each believed in their individual causes, saw themselves as torch bearers for their ideologies and felt validated in pursuing their objectives using the ways and means made available to them. The difference is two of the four are most known for divisiveness, hatred and xenophobia; while the others are known for consensus building, broad inclusivity and positive change in the lives of their constituents. In light of these two oppositional perspectives generating from one descriptor, it is interesting to tackle the question of populism in Canada today.

Viewed through the lens of recent and high profile populist activities both here in Canada and the United States this paper will attempt to achieve three things. First it will place populism within the spectrum of political and philosophical thought. The intent is to define the parameters of populism, develop a working understanding of the causes and effects of populism in Canadian political discourse, and seek to determine linkages to activism and extremism as a logical extension of populist philosophy. Second, in light of recent populist actions including the "Freedom Convoy", the "anti-vaxx" movement, and the involvement of Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) members and veterans with them, this paper will examine populist linkages among serving members, the veteran community and alternative and fringe groups. The intent is to determine if linkages exist and if populism-related threats to the CAF require a review of how

members are attracted, trained and retained. Finally this paper will look at digitally-mediated communications with a view to explaining how social media platforms enable populist movements to take root, grow and flourish. The Ottawa "Freedom Convoy", the US insurrection of 6 January, the "anti-vaxx" movement and other populist actors relied heavily on the internet and social media for mobilization, coordination and execution of their efforts so it is worth exploring especially in the context of the role of modern mainstream media and populist activism and extremism.

In order to achieve a thoughtful and thorough exploration, this paper relies on a variety of sources. These include primary sources including foundational documents such as Strong Secure Engaged – Canada's Defence Policy, legislation including the *National Defence Act* and *The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, government reports, including the recently released Minister of National Defence Advisory Panel on Systemic Racism and Discrimination, and polling and survey data from public and private organizations. The research also includes secondary sources including peer reviewed journals, academic papers, media reports, website content, research findings, blogs, social media posts, and podcasts. The European Union has spent significant effort studying the rise of European populism through their Populism and Civil Engagement (PaCE) project. Their results to date offer a range of theoretical data that can be applied to the North American experience as comparative and complimentary to the examination here.

It is this papers contention that populism and populist thought can be a constructive force for change in a democracy, however it is also an entry point, facilitated by the internet and social media, for the more disruptive elements in society to attract and enable impressionable followers.

These follower groups represent a large swathe of the population, including CAF members, veterans and their families.

DISCUSSION

What is Populism?

Any exploration must start with a basic understanding of the terms in use. According to the dictionary definitions populism "is a political doctrine or philosophy that proposes that the rights and powers of ordinary people are exploited by a privileged elite, and supports their struggle to overcome this." Alternately, democracy "is rule by the people, especially as a form of government; either directly or through elected representatives."[1] Canada has a history of populist political influence dating back to Louis Riel and his fight for Metis land and identity rights, twentieth century right-wing populist parties included the Social Credit Party, Créditistes, and Reform Party/Canadian Alliance and left-wing groups such as United Farmers of Alberta, and the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation. Populism continues to be a factor in Canadian political culture; one only needs to look at the Peoples Party of Canada, the United Conservative Party or the Wildrose Independence Party of Alberta for current examples. Regardless of where a particular party or person sits on the political spectrum, all populists claim to speak on behalf of ordinary people who have been let down in some way by an elite establishment. [2]

Populist groups characteristically use harmful and divisive rhetoric to reinforce popular and polarizing "alternative" narratives to create willing believers who are encouraged to take part in ideological activism that often lead to extremist behaviors. In Canada, we have seen this

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[1]   Populism vs Democracy - What's the difference? | WikiDiff
[2]   https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/populism

populist-to-activist-to-extremist morphing on display most recently during the "Freedom Convoy" border protests. For example, Alberta RCMP apprehended activists near the Coutts border crossing who were in possession of a cache of firearms and ammunition and were allegedly intent on using these weapons against law enforcement.[3] The aforementioned narratives are well described within the PaCE study of populism; defining the combination of populism and narrative creation "as patterns of interpretations assigning the people and the elite to stereotypical roles and composing events to a dramatic plot."[4] In recent times the COVID-19 epidemic has laid bare the populist schism within Canada, and throughout much of the western world, with regards to vaccination uptake and mandates. As a result of conspiracy theories, alternative narratives and leadership failures at the highest levels, a secondary epidemic of mistrust in government has taken hold enabled and emboldened by loud voices and persistent mis- and dis-information-based narratives in the public sphere. Finally, activism and extremism are used throughout this paper and are defined respectively as action of using vigorous campaigning to bring about political or social change, and action of advocating illegal, violent, or other extreme activity.

According to a report out of Stanford University, the populist playbook includes three main threats – the erosion of formal institutions, the divisive vision of who belongs and does not belong in the polity, and the undermining of informal democratic norms. Democracies become illiberal, and then stop functioning as democracies altogether, as would-be autocrats demonize the opposition as illegitimate or enemies of the state, undermine the independence of the courts,

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3   https://calgary.ctvnews.ca/alberta-rcmp-arrest-13-people-at-coutts-border-blockade-seize-weapons-1.5780676

4   https://popandce.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/PaCE_D3.1_Definition-and-operationalisation-of-populist-narratives.pdf

and attack independent media.[5] The February 2022 "Freedom Convoy" in Ottawa bore the hallmarks of a populist extremist activity. Ostensibly about the perceived overreach of the federal government with regards to cross border vaccine mandates the protest started out as a demonstration by truckers to try and force the federal Liberals to remove this vaccine requirement. However, in the lead up to the event the Canadian Security Intelligence Service warned that "extremists may attempt to seize the opportunity of public protest" and certain groups and individuals holding violent anti-authority and anti-government views had joined the convoy "promising civil war, attacks on politicians, and a Canadian version of the Jan. 6 insurrection in Washington."[6] According to populist leader Pat King the point of occupying Ottawa was to "terrorize our politicians — their houses, their locations." He publicly stated that someday someone would make the Prime Minister "catch a bullet" and other members of Parliament would be "done in." Another known extremist group made pronouncements that the convoy protests would be bigger than Oka and the October Crisis, and yet another group livestreamed that "violence in some way, shape, or form is the only way these people are going to respond." [7] This makes clear that populism and populist ideologies have taken root in Canada. How and why will be expanded upon in the following sections.

What is the attraction?

Next we will look at some causal theories of populism. A great deal of the literature boils down to "us" versus "them" scenarios. "One of the distinctive patterns of populist discourse is its focus on dividing 'us' from 'them' by relying on various strategies of 'othering'. Indeed,

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[5]   Grzymala-Busse, Anna et al. Global Populisms and Their Challenges, Stanford University, 2020.

[6]   Ibid.

[7]   Ibid.

populism appears to diametrically oppose an 'in-group' with some dangerous 'other', thereby creating a pervasive schism in society between "the pure people" and "the corrupt elite."[8] The elites are seen as those in control: politicians, big technology, and the wealthy 1%. On the other are the disenfranchised - minimum wage earners, rural populations, blue collar workers, and poorly educated people who are susceptible to the rhetoric supplied by the "alt "communities. These disenfranchised don't believe their government are working in their interests and don't trust what they say or do, in fact less than half (43%) of Canadians view government leaders as trustworthy.[9] As a result many populist groups believe the government should either be reformed or replaced. This is where populism veers off into activism or extremism.

As a political philosophy populism makes some sense. After all, class, ethnic or labour exploitation is never good for the long term health of the state nor its political structures, witness the French, American and Russian Revolutions where populist actions brought down and replaced entrenched governing arrangements. In Canada we are seeing more alternative groups being established as outlet for populist rhetoric and rallying places for like-minded individuals.[10] These rally points manifest themselves in a number of ways. In the United States and Canada this has taken the form of fringe political parties such as the Maverick Party, Canada Unity, and the Ontario Party, armed extremist militias such as the Proud Boys, Diagalon, the Base and the Oath keepers, or cause-related groups such as the Occupy!, Metoo, and Black Lives Matter movements.

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[8]   Liddiard, Patrick, Wilson Center "Is Populism Really a Problem for Democracy?")

[9]   Edelman Trust Barometer 2022.
[10]   Institute for Strategic Dialogue, 2020. An-Online-Environmental-Scan-of-Right-wing-Extremism-in-Canada-ISD

On the other side of the equation peaceful populism can be a force for good in a democracy and can create positive change. It gives a voice to the underrepresented and marginalized in a society. There are many examples in Canada in which populist movements, either left or right leaning, provided progressive impetus for far reaching national policies and programs. In one example, the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) a western-Canada populist party ushered in important social welfare measures at the provincial level, including Medicare, that later formed the national social safety net. In another, the Parti Quebecois peacefully worked towards greater recognition for Quebec's place as a distinct society within Canada. Using the tools of democracy the movement conducted a binding referendum to decide if separation from Canada was in the interest of the population, and despite a narrow defeat the results were accepted as legitimate. Ultimately the sovereigntist efforts lead to the election to Parliament of the Bloc Quebecois who for a time formed the official opposition in the House of Commons.

But why and how?

The European Union's PaCE project offers a number theories of causality. While too numerous to cover in detail here, among them the project suggests problems with *social integration* are widespread among individuals with perceptions of low and declining social status, who feel they are "pushed to the fringes of their national community and are deprived of the roles and respect normally accorded full members."[11] PaCE further proposes the following causal path, for primarily white, individuals experiencing social integration issues leading towards support for populist action:

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[11]   European Union. Populism and Civil Engagement (PaCE) project, "Causal Mechanisms of Populism", 2020. p. 39-41.

1. Low and declining social status

2. Feeling of social marginalization

3. Alienation from mainstream parties

4. Increased chance of support for radical - left populist and nativist - parties.

They also propose the idea of *nostalgic deprivation,* described as the decrease in subjective social, political, and economic status over time as a driver of individual action. Finally, the PaCE researchers identified the surge of leftist identity politics in particular as the primary source of nationalist populist backlash of groups feeling threatened by the liberal agenda of multicultural diversity." These theories are supported by the work of Jared Wesley and Rissa Reist, who offer a complimentary theory to explain the populist motivations behind many participants in the trucker convoy namely: *status loss, tribalism and loser's consent.*[12] A perceived *loss of status* among members of a dominant societal group, namely working-class white men, is operationalized by populist rhetoric and narrative that stoke fears of governmental abandonment necessitating action to make their countries "great again." As witnessed during the Trump presidency, this language encourages "nostalgia for an idealized version of the past that is significantly less inclusive than today in terms of gender, race, and ethnicity."[13] This status-threat is related to *tribalism*, which combines in-group loyalty with fear of "the other." This approach identifies opponents as not simply adversaries to be defeated in democratic contests, but rather enemies to be eliminated from the political sphere altogether. Tribalist leaders consider themselves the "good guys" and opponents are "traitors" simply for expressing opposing views. Lastly, they see opponents as illegitimate so their political victories will be rejected and

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[12]   Wesley, Jared Reist, Rissa. Policy Options, 2022. "Three deep-seated drivers of the convoy, and what we can do about them."

[13]   Ibid.

challenged as not having received the *losers consent*. In this situation political violence is no longer seen as taboo among supporters of the losing political party.[14]

The role of main stream and social media

Populists are also very mistrustful of the mainstream media (MSM). Research has indicated that while some Americans trust individual, generally local, news sources they do not trust the media industry overall. In Canada, according to the 2022 Edelman Trust Barometer around two thirds of Canadians believe journalists and reporters (61%) are purposely trying to mislead them, with government not far behind (58%)[15]. In Canada, no single information source is trusted as a source of general news and information, with trust in traditional media at 57%, followed by search engines at 49%, owned media at 31% and social media at only 21%. Further, 71% of Canadians are concerned about fake news being used as a weapon.[16]

There are a number of reasons for this mistrust. MSM are viewed as controlled by the elites, by implication the information they provide to Canadians is designed to meet the structural objectives of governments and big corporations, not the average person. This has been evident since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. A very large anti-vaccination movement has been successful at spreading misinformation and disinformation across Internet platforms such as Facebook, Reddit, Twitter, 4chan, Gab Telegram and Yello. These efforts are in direct opposition to what these activists believe is untrustworthy information coming from the big pharmaceutical companies via mainstream media with the explicit approval of the government. Consistent use of social media has enabled myriad conspiracy theories to take hold

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[14]   Ibid.
[15]   Edelman Trust Barometer, 2022.
[16]   Ibid.

and allowed specific narratives to take the place of reasonable, fact based and science based information.

Populist organizations find common cause via the Internet wherein they create communities of interest and association with like-minded people to the exclusion of contrary voices and opinions. The danger is these types of online associations enable confirmation bias, also known as an echo chamber effect in which your ideologies are repeated back to you in the most positive of ways, further reinforcing and normalizing your values and biases. Further evidence from Edelman Canada supports this notion with nearly 6 in 10 Canadians saying people are incapable of having constructive and civil debates about issues they disagree on.

Academic studies suggest social media is corrosive to trust in governments, news media, and people and institutions in general. Social scientists Philipp Lorenz-Spreen and Lisa Oswald, conclude "the large majority of reported associations between digital media use and trust appear to be detrimental for democracy."[17] On balance they say, social media amplifies political polarization; foments populism, especially right-wing populism; and is associated with the spread of misinformation."[18] This has occurred to such an extent we are observing situations in which information emanating from "elitist" sources is considered suspect adding to the deeply held mistrust that populist activists already hold. Again, the data supports this. According to Edelman Canada survey results, institutional trust in Canada has either stayed the same or dropped since 2020. Trust for Non-governmental Organizations sits at 55%, business at 54%, government at 53% (down six points) and media at 52% (down two points).

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[17]   Margetts, Helen. Rethinking Democracy with Social Media, 2018.
[18]   Ibid.

The internet and digital technology has been a considerable asset to activist groups with the ubiquitous modern smartphone as a great equalizer. Social medias' low barriers to entry[19] and the ease with which supporters can access social media, create accounts and coordinate group efforts is often cited as the reasons why these tools are considered a "Liberation Technology"[20] a phrase coined during the internet-enabled Arab Spring uprisings in 2011. The ability of social media to more easily facilitate connections among activists, lower coordination and communication costs, get feedback on protest platforms, and raise funds, allows individuals to "hack" protests.[21] Lastly, an important aspect of social media according to researchers is the strategic interaction and constant adaptation as each side shifts its communication technology and tactics.[22] The ability to close down one account and open another, switch from one application to the other and get around social media gatekeeper policies has been successfully utilized my

As evidenced in Ottawa, "the protest teemed with outstretched arms wielding cellphones, broadcasting live [to social media]."[23] Protestors and their supporters had their own 24-hour news network created by occupiers, for occupiers.[24] The creation of *information symmetry* between opposition groups and the traditional information gatekeepers has enabled activists to achieve greater visibility for their causes via near real-time distribution of important events and achievements, as well as keeping mainstream media to account by recording media

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[19]   Zeitzoff, Thomas. "How Social Media Is Changing Conflict," Journal of Conflict Resolution, 2017.

[20]   Diamond.Larry. "Liberation Technology," Commencement Day Remarks, Communication Department, Stanford University, June 16, 2013.

[21]   Berkowitz, Joe. 2017. "This is What a Creative Hackathon for Resisting Trump Looks Like." Fast Company, March 2017.

[22]   Ibid.

[23]   Was it really about vaccine mandates - or something darker? The inside story of the convoy protests The Toronto Star (Online), Toronto: Torstar Syndication Services, a Division of Toronto Star Newspapers Limited. Mar 19, 2022.

[24]   Ibid.

interactions.[25] A noticeable feature of the "Freedom Convoy" was the efforts by protestors to video MSM reporting efforts, harass journalists, and call out main stream media for their "fake news" tactics of framing and agenda setting.[26] The same was observed during the January 6th insurrection where mainstream media were regularly swarmed, harassed or even attacked by violent protesters intent on disrupting news gathering activities. In some instances camera equipment was damaged.[27] Ironically, Canadian broadcasters devoted a significant amount of live air-time for feeds and interviews from the Ottawa protest areas throughout the entire period of occupation. This allowed ample opportunity for protestors to share their messages, unfiltered and unedited to a nationwide audience in primetime. Despite this, activists still accused the media of broadcasting fake news.

CAF members and veterans

In Canada membership in extremist groups is growing, has become increasingly covert, and due to technological advances such as encryption methods present challenges in detecting members.[28] It would appear from recent political and social unrest that serving military and veterans represent an important sub-set within the populist/IMVE universe. These communities often play a significant role in supporting populist and activist organizations as either founders or members. Populist driven extremism aimed at the recruitment of military-trained members has been recognized as an issue across many jurisdictions including in Europe and Australia. In North America there has been documented cases of cross-pollination between white nationalists

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25   Ibid. Zeitoff.
26   https://ca.news.yahoo.com/canadian-freedom-convoy-protesters-shout-022137556.html accessed 24 April 2022.
27   https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/06/business/media/media-murder-capitol-building.html accessed 25 April 2022.
28   Canada, Minister of National Defence Advisory Panel on Systemic Racism and Discrimination – Final Report – January 2022

and other far-right organizations on both sides of the Canada-US border[29]. In Canada extremist

groups openly advertise on social media that their membership includes former and active

military personnel. One of Quebec's more well-known right wing groups, La Meute, was

founded by two former military members who invite others to join them. They also encourage

prospective members to gain reserve training so that they can bring 'skills' back to the

movement.[30] In fact right and left wing organizations encourage former military to join them and

three obvious reasons stand out. First, legitimacy - military members are generally trusted and

held in high regard by Canadians. Their association may lend credibility to an organization.

Second, the nature of military service, including its colonial-rooted culture and traditions, attract

a certain personality with political points of view that rest further from the center. Finally,

military personnel are well trained, disciplined, good at working in teams, and experienced in the

application and use of tactics and weapons. In the US it is well understood that domestic

extremist groups have designed exploitative recruitment campaigns and tactics that prey on

disenfranchised people by promising to fill the void left by the government.[31]

Retirement or release from military service also permits veterans to air opinions about

service life, policy changes and personal grievances without constraints formerly imposed by the

organization. Consistent among activist veterans is the theme of entitlement to protest without

opposition simply for the act of having served in the CAF. This sense of entitlement reinforces

the idea of elevated status veterans feel they deserve. When this status is downgraded or

contested through criticism, "politically correct" changes to the military culture in which they

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[29]   Thorne, Stephen J. "The threat of domestic extremism" Legion Magazine, November 17, 2021.
[30]   https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/An-Online-Environmental-Scan-of-Right-wing-Extremism-in-Canada-ISD.pdf
[31]   https://www.newsweek.com/veteran-groups-our-community-has-extremism-problem-1576672

were acculturated, or challenges their perceived contributions to Canadian society (freedom and security) veterans take to social media to remonstrate and wax nostalgic about the way it was "in their day."

PERSPECTIVE

No quick fix.

The CAF is aware of the effects of populism not only internationally but here at home. *Strong, Secure Engaged* addresses populist threats to democracy and the world order. It describes the violent extremism that is an outcome of unchecked populism as "a global scourge that can undermine civil society and destabilize entire regions,"[32] and promises Canada will respond with unwavering strength. The CAF further recognizes that social media and smart technology have transformed every aspect of daily life, conferring great benefits on the people it connects, worldwide but simultaneously fostered new vulnerabilities, which we are called to address."[33] The challenge will be how to address the issue in such a way so as to not completely alienate the primary, and largest, pool of existing and potential members.

It would appear that because of the current CAF demographic that white, male service members may feel as though they are the target for any and all perceived shortcomings within the organization relating to gender and racial issues. The authors of the Ministers Advisory Report have recognized this pitfall, stating, "it is important to understand that these observations do not diminish the value and contributions of white men within DND/CAF."[34] True or not, over time this can create resentments that will influence individuals thinking as they are constantly

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[32]   Canada. *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy,* 2017. Pg 49.
[33]   Ibid.
[34]   Canada. Minister of National Defence Advisory Panel on Systemic Racism and Discrimination – Final Report – January 2022.

feeling marginalized or "othered" as a group. Studies in Europe bear this out indicating numerous reasons for the rise in populism and ideologically motivated violent extremism, noting that "adherence to a range of grievances against certain social groups tends to be at the core of extremist ideologies."[35] Put bluntly, a group that held the privileged position for so long takes offence to being criticized and vilified and will seek targets for their vitriol.

Mitigating the impacts of populist and white male privilege influence within the CAF requires population-wide cultural change. We need to better educate our entire population, and by extension those who may be interested in military service, about the roles, responsibilities and obligations inherent with citizenship and service to Canada. This will not be an easy feat. As we have seen, the CAF is still primarily composed of white males - a natural outcome of overall Canadian demographics. That said the Canadian Armed Forces must take great efforts to ensure that the organization is representative not just of Canadian demographics, but Canadian values and belief systems irrespective of race or gender identification. It is worth noting that according to the Edelman report employers are considered the most trusted and the most believable source of information for workers. At a time of diminished institutional trust, employers sit at 76% trusted - well ahead of national government, traditional media and social media, indicating that *the relationship between employer and employee is incredibly important.*[36]

The Minister of National Defence continues to acknowledge that dismantling Canada's white supremacy groups must involve both a review and elimination of discriminatory structures including laws and policies, and a concurrent increase in the representation of racialized people.[37] This a laudable goal but rather ambitious in its expectations; especially if the time

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[35]   Ibid.
[36]   Edelman Trust Barometer 2022
[37]   Op. Cit. Minister of National Defence Advisory Panel, 2022

horizon for achievement is anything less than generational. An observation from the Ministers

Advisory Panel report states;

> National Defence…is a microcosm of Canadian society. As such, inequities and discriminatory practices seen in wider Canadian society are also present within the Defence Team.[38]

Herein lies one of the more significant obstacles. The CAF does not recruit members until

they are 17-18 years old. By that point due to parental and peer group socialization, educational,

pop-cultural, social and socio-economic influences, most values and ideological leanings are

nearly fully developed and are part of the individual's character and personality[39]. The ability to

"undo" nearly two decades of social and cultural programming, cognitive development and

lived-experience influences is a herculean task, especially within an organization not well suited,

mandated or resourced to it. Consider too that effecting cognitive and behavioral change among

a passively resistant group that "involves [members] feeling uncomfortable and amenable to

being stretched emotionally,"[40] presupposes a level of emotional awareness and intellectual

maturity that owing to "ignorance, poor education, and a narrow view of the traditional

ideological spectrum"[41] may not be resident within the CAF population most in need of these

changes. Moreover, efforts to transform the organization by "artificially increasing the

representation of women…and racialized people"[42] plays perfectly into the populist narratives of

anti-white discrimination, status loss and marginalization. This in turn can reinforce feelings of

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[38]   Op. Cit. Minister of National Defence Advisory Panel, 2022
[39]   Massey, Morris. http://changingminds.org/explanations/values/values_development.htm
[40]   Ibid. Minister of National Defence Advisory Panel, 2022
[41]   Ibid.
[42]   Ibid.

mistrust, fear and anger among disenfranchised actors, create animosity towards the CAF, the Government, and perceived "favoured" groups.

CONCLUSION

By all accounts populism and populist ideologies are on the rise. Decades of political and social division and discord have found an outlet in populist views and extremist activity. Mistrust across institutions is creating an abrasive society in which rational discourse is the exception rather than the norm. Canadians are increasingly looking outside of traditional structures for support and community. They see the current structures – government, media, and corporations - as elitist and anti-citizen. As a microcosm of society, the CAF is not immune to the rhetoric and promises of a return to better times – whatever that means. As a result, populist and extremist thinking has become entrenched within the CAF to the detriment of the organization and the nation. Serving members, civilian employees and veterans alike have aligned themselves with organizations that promote hate, violence and insurrection and more and more often we are seeing examples of these emboldened groups take greater and greater liberties with democracy – the violent US capitol hill insurrection, the occupation of Ottawa by the "Freedom Convoy", the protests at Canada-US border crossings. The entry of internet enabled social media and its capacity to inform, motivate, influence, condemn and confuse has altered the media landscape around the world. Even just a short time ago the level of integration and coordination would have been unheard of. Low barriers to entry and ease of use have made the smartphone one of the primary weapons of choice for the populist community. They have leveled the media playing field to the point where protest or activist activities can be live-streamed around the world, reinforcing populist messaging, and emboldening others to act.

Racism, sexism, and intolerance run counter to Canadian values and have no place within society writ large nor the nation's armed services specifically. With the release of the Minister's Advisory Report on Systemic Racism and Discrimination and its recommendations the CAF has been provided a tool that not only confirms what we already knew, but digs further into the issues to derive a concrete plan to rid the CAF of its "scourge". A daunting task no doubt but one that must be undertaken for the longevity and health of the institution. While that work continues each member of the CAF must remain vigilant, flexible of mind and rigid of resolve.

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