A Radical Right-Wing Failure in Canada: The People's Party in the 2019 Federal Election

Charles Buck

Department of Political Science, College of Social and Applied Human Sciences, University of Guelph, Guelph, ON Canada. Faculty supervisor: Dr. Edward A. Koning.

For correspondence, please email: charlesbuck1998@outlook.com.

Abstract

This article is a quantitative investigation into why Maxime Bernier's People's Party of Canada (PPC), a radical right-wing party (RRP), failed to succeed in the 2019 Canadian federal election. Canada has not witnessed the electoral breakthrough of such a party. I argue the failure of the PPC was the result of a mixture of the stabilization of immigrant inflows and the softening of anti-immigrant sentiment. More favourable conditions for the PPC, including extensive media coverage and increasing support for populist and mildly authoritarian sentiment, may have been necessary, but were not sufficient to allow for an RRP breakthrough. RRP are unlikely to succeed in Canada as long as the immigration rate remains predictable and Canadians continue to hold favourable views towards immigrants.

Keywords: radical right-wing, far-right, anti-immigration, populism, Canadian politics, People's Party of Canada

Introduction

The electoral support of radical right-wing parties (RRPs)¹ has risen dramatically over the last few decades.² This trend is particularly acute in Western Europe. So far, Canada has been one of the few industrialized liberal democracies that has not seen the establishment of a successful RRP.³ Following his resignation from the Conservative Party of Canada, Maxime Bernier formed the People's Party of Canada (PPC), a party that seems to resemble an RRP. Many spectators, media outlets, and government bodies took this fledgling party seriously, such as the Leaders' Debates Commission, who invited Bernier to debate the other five leaders of Canada's major parties. The party nominated candidates in 93% of Canada's ridings and set up electoral district associations in all but one of them (Elections Canada, 2019; PPC: Our Candidates, 2019). The party also boasted of its tens of thousands of party members and its well over a million dollars in fundraising (Bernier, 2019a, p. 6; Bernier, 2019d, p. 2; Taghva, 2019). Yet, the PPC performed poorly in

2019, winning zero seats and taking only 1.64% of the popular vote. Why did it fail in Canada's 2019 election, in contrast to so many RRP in Europe, and despite the anticipation of so many political observers? My research will answer this question by investigating the viability of RRP in Canada in general, and Bernier's People's Party and its failure in the 2019 federal election in particular.

This paper has found that the PPC is an RRP because of its radical, nativist, populist, and mildly authoritarian ideology. Essential to RRP success elsewhere, changes in the immigration rate and anti-immigrant sentiment have both contributed to decreasing demand for the PPC in 2019. In recent years, immigration to Canada has slowly increased. Yet, as a proportion of the total Canadian population, immigration levels have not been particularly high, at least relative to historical standards. Furthermore, the change in immigration has remained stable. Generations ago, the immigration rate fluctuated wildly from year to year. Since the

¹ These parties have been labelled a wide variety of terms. For this investigation, I will consistently label this party family as radical right-wing.

² For example, see Adams, 2017, pp. 17-41 for a good overview of this trend.

³ There is some disagreement over whether the Reform Party of Canada and the Canadian Reform Conservative Alliance qualified as RRP. However, most academics seem

to agree that they are better described as right-wing parties that ran on mild anti-multicultural, anti-immigrant, and populist platforms (see Dobbin, 1991, pp. 135-136, 168-170; Flanagan, 2009, pp. x, 15, 32-33, 68-69, 125, 197-199; Gidengil et al., 2001, p. 509; Gordon et al., 2019, p. 4; Koning, 2019, pp. 62, 136-139; Nevitte et al., 1998; Norris, 2005, pp. 70-71; Trebilcock, 2019, p. 843)

late 1980s, these fluctuations have levelled off. In conjunction, anti-immigrant sentiment in Canada has softened since the 1990s. Canadians are now more pro-immigrant than they were several decades ago. As a result of these trends, 2019 has seen little demand for the nativist ideology of the PPC. In summary, the PPC, an RRP, failed in 2019 because of modern shifts concerning immigration, dampening the demand for the PPC.

This project and its results have filled a geographical and empirical gap in the literature by performing a contemporary and quantitative study of variables that could explain the failure of the PPC in Canada. Below, the rise of the PPC is briefly chronicled and the party's platform and Bernier's speeches are analysed to determine whether it is an RRP. The expansive body of research into RRP success is discussed and used to compare the experiences of European RRP with that of the PPC. From that review, a quantitative analysis, exploring whether the conditions in Canada in 2019 were ripe for RRP success, finalizes the analysis. This last section shows that several variables both helped and hindered the PPC. Holistically, these variables combined to prevent the PPC from breaking through in Canada.

The People's Party of Canada

The 2017 Conservative leadership contest saw Maxime Bernier, a Member of Parliament (MP) from Beauce, Quebec, place a close second, winning 49.05% of the points in the last round. Following disagreements with his Conservative colleagues, Bernier was demoted from his role as critic of Innovation, Science, and Economic Development Canada by Conservative leader Andrew Scheer on June 12, 2018 (The Canadian Press, 2018a). Conflict continued on August 12 when Bernier posted six controversial tweets concerning the state of multiculturalism and diversity in Canada. The tweets were widely attacked, including by Bernier's Conservative colleagues (The Canadian Press, 2018b). On August 23, Bernier held a press conference in which he announced his departure from the Conservative Party because he considered it "too intellectually and morally corrupt to be reformed." According to him, under Scheer's leadership, the party had "all but abandoned its core conservative principles" (Bernier, 2018a). Instead, he formed a new party, unveiled on September 14 as the People's Party of Canada, that would base its ideology on the principles of "Individual Freedom, Personal Responsibility, Fairness and Respect" (Bernier 2018b). The PPC's first real test was contesting the 2019 Canadian federal election.

For all intents and purposes, Bernier's party can be considered an RRP. Bernier himself has noted the similarities between the PPC and the many RRP experiencing success in other Western countries (Bernier, 2019a, pp. 5-7; Bernier, 2019c, p. 2; Bernier, 2019d, p. 1). A close examination of the party's 2019 platform and Bernier's speeches supports this comparison. Despite the diversity and elasticity that defines the party group, all RRP are characterized by four central principles: radicalism, nativism, authoritarianism, and populism. Below, the party's platform and Bernier's speeches

are qualitatively examined to determine if these four principles are present within the PPC.

First, the PPC advocates fundamental change to the existing system to such an extent that it can be labelled a radical party. Its strategy for most policies it disagrees with is outright abolition or significant reform over gradual, piecemeal change, even in policy fields considered untouchable or deeply embedded. This is true regarding supply management, climate change, equalization payments, healthcare, foreign development aid, Canada Post, the telecommunications and air travel sectors, Indigenous affairs, taxation, gun control, multiculturalism, and immigration (Bernier, 2018c; PPC: Aboriginal Issues, 2019; PPC: Canadian Identity, 2019; PPC: Economy, 2019; PPC: Equalization, 2019; PPC: Firearms, 2019; PPC: Foreign Policy, 2019; PPC: Global Warming and Environment, 2019; PPC: Health Care, 2019; PPC: Immigration, 2019; PPC: Public Finance, 2019; PPC: Refugees, 2019; PPC: Supply Management, 2019). Many of the party's proposed changes would disregard Canada's current constitutional, international, and social commitments. Relative to other parties in Canada, the PPC is certainly radical for its advocacy of sweeping and profound changes to the status quo. Bernier admits as much when he calls the Conservatives centrists and identifies the PPC as the only truly right-wing party (Bernier, 2018c). Therefore, there is clear evidence the PPC is a radical party.

Second, the PPC's views towards foreign policy, immigration, refugees, and multiculturalism make it a nativist party. Bernier is hostile to internationalism. He is highly skeptical of the United Nations, chastises foreign influence in Canada, and wants to cut foreign aid, pull out of overseas conflicts, and withdraw from international agreements (Bernier, 2018c; Bernier, 2019b; PPC: Foreign Policy, 2019; PPC: Pipelines, 2019). His sole goal on the international stage is to focus on the security and prosperity of Canadians. Moreover, Bernier is highly critical of refugees and immigrants, wanting to cut annual inflows, toughen security measures, and emphasize integration by teaching Canadian history and culture (Bernier, 2018c; Bernier, 2019b; PPC: Foreign Policy, 2019; PPC: Immigration, 2019; PPC: Refugees, 2019). Bernier portrays multiculturalism as an extreme "cult," and wants to repeal the Multiculturalism Act and eliminate funding for multiculturalism (PPC: Canadian Identity, 2019). A PPC government, he says, would instead forge a common sense of belonging by preserving Western civilization and its supposedly superior values (Bernier, 2019b). Although not explicitly biologically racist, the PPC supports implicit nativist policies concerning foreign policy, immigrants, refugees, and multiculturalism. Therefore, the PPC is a nativist party.

Third, although the PPC holds some authoritarian stances, it does not share all the positions we usually associate

with authoritarianism.⁴ Of the more authoritarian positions it does hold, the party moderates explicit authoritarianism and does not afford those positions a conspicuous role in its platform. The party supports tough-on-crime measures, some socially conservative viewpoints, and economically anti-egalitarian policies, as well as having a modest reverence for national symbols and authority (PPC: Economy, 2019; PPC: Firearms, 2019; PPC: Freedom of Expression, 2019; PPC: Public Finance, 2019; PPC: Veterans, 2019). Yet, the platform does not disparage the independent media, judiciary, or government institutions nor does it advocate centralizing power. In fact, Bernier pledges to uphold Canada's Constitution and decentralize the federation. In all, the PPC, while certainly not moderately or strongly authoritarian, perhaps possesses the seeds of a mildly authoritarian party.

The PPC's strongest connection with the RRP programme is its populist outlook. Throughout its platform, the party dichotomizes society into the people and a small, privileged elite. On the issues of supply management, corporate subsidies, immigration, multiculturalism, climate change, interprovincial trade, and firearms, the party deploys a populist lens (Bernier, 2018a; Bernier, 2018b; Bernier, 2018c; Bernier, 2019b; PPC: Firearms, 2019; PPC: Global Warming, 2019; PPC: Internal Trade, 2019; PPC: Supply Management, 2019). Therefore, the PPC is a populist party. Putting the PPC's platform together, I can conclude that the party is an RRP because of its strong radical, nativist, and populist views and its tepid authoritarian ones.

Literature Review

The existing literature concerned with the electoral success of RRPs is vast. Variables that can be quantitatively tested here and that are relevant to the success of the PPC in Canada include (1) the level of immigration and asylum seeking, (2) media coverage, and (3) support for anti-immigration, populism, and authoritarianism.

To start, the level of immigration and the intake of asylum seekers has been widely studied by RRP researchers. How people react to higher numbers of immigrants has led to opposing theories. The ethnic competition thesis states that competition for resources and increasing heterogeneity will heighten xenophobic fears and result in increased feelings of ethno-national identity in the native population. In contrast, the contact theory argues that higher rates of immigration will lead to greater levels of contact between natives and foreign-born individuals, and that this contact will develop understanding and goodwill between the two and subsequently decrease xenophobia. The literature is decidedly mixed. Several studies support the ethnic competition thesis (Arzheimer, 2009; Arzheimer, 2018; Davis & Deole, 2017; Dinas et al., 2019; Georgiadou et al., 2018; Kestila & Soderlund, 2007; Knigge, 1998; Lubbers et al., 2002; Lubbers & Scheepers, 2000; Rooduijn, 2015; Rydgren, 2007) while

several others support the contact theory (Ambrose & Mudde, 2015; Amengay & Stockemer, 2019; Givens, 2005; Goerres et al., 2018; Kitschelt & McGann, 1995; Stockemer, 2017).

A closer look at measurements helps explain these mixed results. While some theorists use the proportion of newcomers in their analysis of RRP success (for example Lubbers et al., 2002), others have looked at the rate of immigration (for example Georgiadou et al., 2018). The majority of studies that support the ethnic competition thesis use the immigration rate to operationalize this variable. Indeed, existing literature seems to suggest that a sudden increase in migration accompanied by extensive media coverage can bolster xenophobia and RRPs considerably (Georgiadou et al., 2018; Hopkins, 2010; Lubbers & Scheepers, 2000; Rydgren, 2018).

Another aspect of measurement that helps us understand these mixed findings is the origin of immigrants. Indeed, immigrants that are distinct from the majority population on religious and ethnic grounds receive more criticism from RRP supporters (Georres et al., 2018, p. 251; Rydgren, 2008, pp. 745-746). Researchers that distinguish between non-Western and Western migrants supported the ethnic competition thesis (Coffe et al., 2007; De Vos & Deurloo, 1999; Dinas et al., 2019; Kestila & Soderlund, 2007; Lubbers et al., 2002). For example, both De Vos and Deurloo (1999) and Coffe et al. (2007) found that increases in immigration from Maghreb countries or Turkey increased RRP support while immigration from other countries had no effect.

A second variable relevant to the success of the PPC involves the mass media, who play an essential role within the political system, acting as gatekeepers and taking part in agenda-setting, framing, and priming of political issues. The media can make issues important to RRPs, such as immigration, more salient to the voting public by increasing its coverage. Analogously, diminished focus on socio-economic issues should deplete salience of issues unfavourable to RRPs (Rovny, 2013; Rydgren, 2002; Rydgren, 2018). Moreover, by covering RRPs and their leaders, the media legitimizes them and also makes them more visible to the electorate. This is especially true now, given that sensational controversies, especially ones with a personal dimension to them, are becoming increasingly defined as newsworthy (Golder, 2016; Muis & Immerzeel, 2017). This trend uniquely bolsters RRP media coverage because those parties are seen as more controversial by journalists and usually grant their leaders a conspicuous central role (Golder, 2016, p. 488; Muis & Immerzeel, 2017, p. 914; Rydgren, 2018). All research examined here indicates that a media which covers RRPs, both by making certain issues more salient and by increasing the legitimacy and visibility of RRPs, helps RRPs succeed (Arzheimer, 2009; Arzheimer, 2018; Backes & Mudde, 2000; Berning, 2019; Boomgaarden & Vliegenthart, 2007; Muis & Immerzeel, 2017; Murphy &

⁴ Various scholars use authoritarian to mean socio-cultural inequality, an emphasis on 'law-and-order' and family

values, and deference to authority within a rigid hierarchy (See for example Mudde, 2010; Rydgren, 2018).

Devine, 2018; Kriesi et al., 2006; Rydgren, 2002; Rydgren, 2007; Rydgren, 2018; Spies, 2013; Startin, 2014).

The final class of explanations for the success of the PPC consists of individual-level attitudinal hypotheses that draw attention to the positions and opinions that influence voters' decisions to support RRP. It is important to note that many scholars doubt whether individual-level, demand-side variables help explain RRP success in the aggregate. In much of Europe, the demand is already widespread. What really determines successes and failures, according to these scholars, is the ability of these parties to meet this omnipresent demand of the electorate (Carter, 2005; Givens, 2005; Mudde, 2010). Nonetheless, it is likely these variables increase the appetite for RRP and at least play some role in explaining their success.

The first of these is attitudes towards diversity, immigrants, and minorities. Some scholars believe individuals hold negative views towards immigration because of the crisis of identity that has encapsulated the postmodern nation-state. Globalization, international organizations, multiculturalism, and mass migration have threatened the integrity of the nation-state with which individuals identify (Lubbers & Coenders, 2017, p. 100). In response to this loss of national identity, people may turn to nationalism, popular xenophobia, racism, and ethno-pluralism (Rydgren, 2007, p. 251). A vast majority of research supports this reasoning (Ambrose & Mudde, 2015; Arzheimer, 2008; Arzheimer, 2018; Arzheimer & Berning, 2019; Bélanger & Aarts, 2006; Betz, 1994; Daigle et al., 2019; Davis et al., 2019; Gidron & Hall, 2019; Goerres et al., 2018; Halikiopoulou & Vlandas, 2019; Ignazi, 1992; Ivarsflaten, 2005; Ivarsflaten, 2008; Lubbers & Coenders, 2017; Lubbers et al., 2002; Minkenberg, 2000; Muis & Immerzeel, 2017; Nevitte et al., 1998; Rooduijn, 2015; Rovny & Polk, 2019; Rydgren, 2002; Rydgren, 2007; Rydgren, 2008; Van Der Brug et al., 2005; Zhirkov, 2014). A few studies find no link (Besco & Tolley, 2019; Kitschelt & McGann, 1995; Oesch, 2008; Turnbull-Dugarte, 2019), while Stockemer et al. (2018) finds mixed results. One potential caveat is that nationalistic attitudes do not always correlate with out-group hostility (Lubbers & Coenders, 2017, p. 101). This is especially significant in Canada, a country whose nationalism usually takes the form of a civic as opposed to an ethnic kind (Breton, 1988; Johnston et al., 2010; Igartua, 2006).

Another commonly tested set of attitudinal views is whether those holding less trust and satisfaction towards democracy, mainstream parties, politicians, international organizations, and societies are more likely to support RRP. This strand argues that political discontent has created a voter base open to anti-establishment and anti-system messages (Rydgren, 2007, p. 251). Those dissatisfied with and distrustful of the political system, and the society it operates in, should be more attracted to the populist message espoused by RRP. A substantial number of studies support this explanation (Arzheimer, 2009; Bélanger & Aarts, 2006; Berning & Ziller, 2017; Betz, 1994; Ellinas, 2014; Gidengil, 2001; Gidron & Hall, 2019; Goerres et al., 2018; Ignazi, 1992; Ivarsflaten, 2005; Knigge, 1998; Kriesi et al., 2006; Lubbers

& Coenders, 2017; Lubbers et al., 2002; Lubbers & Scheepers, 2000; Minkenberg, 2000; Nevitte et al., 1998; Rooduijn, 2015; Rydgren, 2002; Rydgren, 2007; Zhirkov, 2014). There are also a few studies that do not find a link between distrust/dissatisfaction and RRP support (Arzheimer, 2008; Ivarsflaten, 2008; Muis & Immerzeel, 2017; Oesch, 2008; Stockemer et al., 2018; Turnbull-Dugarte, 2019). This contradiction in the literature is the result of at least three factors. One is the complex relationship between belief and action (Rydgren, 2007, pp. 251-252). Voting preferences are not often consistent or clear-cut. This is demonstrated in qualitative research that shows that dissatisfied or disconnected individuals must also realize there is an RRP that they can trust and vote for. Dissatisfaction or distrust may be an important aspect of RRP support, but it is not sufficient alone to explain voting behaviour (Stockemer et al., 2018, pp. 583-584). Second, Zhirkov (2014, p. 294) argues that RRP voters are satisfied with their country's current political and economic institutions but are distrustful of the politicians and parties that are supposed to protect them. Third, some individuals are dissatisfied with the political system because of the success of RRP themselves (Rooduijn et al., 2016).

The last of these attitudinal hypotheses is views toward authoritarianism. As with nativism, if authoritarianism is an important element of an RRP's ideology, then individuals who hold similarly authoritarian views are more likely to vote for RRP because RRP are more in line with their ideological convictions. While Kitschelt and McGann (1995) find conflicting results, most studies support this hypothesis (Ignazi, 1992; Lubbers & Coenders, 2017; Lubbers & Scheepers, 2000; Muis & Immerzeel, 2017; Nevitte et al., 1998; Rooduijn, 2015).

Methodology

To investigate immigration levels, I relied upon data from Statistics Canada on the number of immigrants since 1881 (Government of Canada, 2017a) and the number of immigrants from each continent since 1971 (Government of Canada, 2017b). This allowed me to measure the percentage of foreign-born in the Canadian population, the annual fluctuation in that percentage, and the proportion of immigrants coming to Canada from non-Western regions.

To investigate media coverage of the PPC, I gathered monthly counts of Canadian newspaper articles from the *Globe and Mail*, the *Toronto Star*, and the *National Post* containing the terms "People's Party of Canada," "People's Party," or "Maxime Bernier" from October 2018, when polling for the PPC began, to October 2019 through the research tool Factiva. This same news article search was done for Canada's other major national parties including the Liberal, Conservative, New Democratic, and Green parties. I then compared the coverage of these parties with their average monthly support in Nanos opinion polls. To investigate media coverage of immigration, I searched for newspaper articles from the three outlets listed above containing the terms *migratio**, *immigratio**, *migran**, *immigran**, *refug**, or

asylum from 1997 (the date at which data for all three newspapers begins on Factiva) to October 2019 and compared that number to the total article count for the three newspapers.

To investigate support for anti-immigration, populism, and authoritarianism, I used a variety of questions from fifteen waves of Environics Institute's Focus Canada survey, covering 1993 to 2019, and six waves of the Latin American Public Opinion Project's Americas Barometer survey for Canada which covers 2006 to 2016/17.

Fertile Ground for RRP Success?

Did the characteristics that help other RRP also aid the PPC in Canada's 2019 federal election? This section will first review immigration levels, then turn to media coverage of both the issue of immigration and the PPC, and finally investigate nativist, populist, and authoritarian public opinion in Canada.

Immigration Levels

Figure 1 shows the immigration rate, calculated as the number of new annual migrants per one thousand Canadians, to Canada from 1867 to 2021.⁵ **Figure 2** shows the percentage of Western and non-Western immigrants in Canada from 1971 to 2031.⁶ Two general observations can be made about Figure 1. First and most significantly, both the rate of immigration and the fluctuation in that rate have gradually become more stable and predictable since 1946. Before then, Canada's immigration was characterized by periods of sharp increases followed by similarly sharp declines. The best example of this pattern occurred between 1900 and 1915 when Canada saw a dramatic increase to its immigration rate followed by an equally dramatic decline. Although there has been instability since 1947, such volatility has increasingly levelled out, especially since 1987. The second general observation is that by 1987 and continuing into the present day, the pattern identified above levelled off, resulting in minimal changes to the immigration rate. When it has slowly risen or fallen, this change has not been dramatic.

At the same time, two observations suggest favourable trends for the PPC. One of them is that, in the last few decades, the immigration rate has increased by 50%. This is due to the Trudeau government's decision to increase the annual number of immigrants accepted to 350,000 by 2021 (The Canadian Press, 2018c). However, this uptick has occurred gradually, as the rate of change over this period shows. Another observation is that, as Figure 2 demonstrates, a higher percentage of immigrants have originated from non-Western countries since the second half of the twentieth

century. It is, therefore, appropriate to note that the immigrants coming to Canada are increasingly non-white, non-Christian, and non-Western. This fact, according to the literature review, should have benefitted the PPC. Conversely, the stigmatization of immigrants based on their assumed non-compatibility with Canadian culture is not a new idea. Many white, Christian, and Western immigrants have been ostracized as well.⁷ Figure 2's significance is, therefore, debatable. Based on these statistics, the picture regarding immigration is mixed. Although the rate of immigration and the fluctuation in that rate in contemporary Canada has not increased significantly, a closer look at the data shows that, over the last two decades, the total number of immigrants has grown substantially. Moreover, although the last fifty years have seen a gradual increase in the proportion of non-Western immigrants, otherizing newcomers, regardless of their race, religion, or place of origin, is no novelty. Nevertheless, compared to historical levels, immigration is not strikingly higher. Based on this data alone, conditions are not better in 2019 than in previous years for an RRP to succeed.

Media Coverage of the PPC and Immigration Issues

Figures 3 and **4** display the degree of media coverage the PPC received as a proportion of both their place in the polls and in relation to the other five main parties from October 2018 to October 2019. **Figure 5** charts the attention paid to the issue of immigration by the media from 1997 to 2019. Three principal observations can be made about these graphs. First, as Figures 3 and 4 show, the PPC benefited from a disproportionately high level of media coverage. In both graphs, in every single month, the PPC received more attention from the media than one would expect, given their place in the polls. The media paid more attention to the PPC, per 1% polling average, than any of the mainstream parties. This phenomenon was particularly acute leading up to, and during, the 2019 campaign period in the months of August, September, and October of 2019. Presumably, Canadians paid the most attention to political parties during this period. The graphs show that between October of 2018 and June of 2019, the PPC only marginally benefited from an overrepresentation of coverage in the media, while the last three months before the election saw their coverage explode, both in the number of articles mentioning the PPC and Bernier and as a percentage of total news articles covering the political parties. While the other main parties saw only a twofold increase, starting during the last two months of the campaign, the PPC benefited from coverage eleven times greater, and this trend started earlier, during the final three months of the campaign. By October, for every 1% in the polls, the PPC received 249 more articles than

⁵ Numbers for the years after 2019 are projections.

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⁷ See for example Woodsworth (1909) who demonizes Mormons (pp. 65-71), Doukhobors (pp. 100-101), Lithuanians (p. 102), Slovaks (p. 109), Ruthenians (pp. 109-112), Poles (pp. 114-115), the peoples of the Balkans (p. 122),

Italians (pp. 133-134), the peoples of the Levant (pp. 138-139), the Chinese (p. 144), Indians (p. 154), Japanese (pp. 154-155), Africans (p. 158), and Indigenous peoples (pp. 159-160). Also see Stanger-Ross and Schmidtke (2019) and Conrad (2012, pp. 117-119, 172-174).

the other major parties. Clearly, the PPC was given the coverage it required to succeed as the coverage it received was significantly more than any other party relative to its place in the polls.

Regarding Figure 5, although the frequency of coverage of immigration issues in the media remained relatively stable between 1997 and 2013, there has been a gradual increase since 2008. This trend increased significantly between 2013 and 2017. Throughout Trudeau's first mandate, the media spent about twice as much time covering immigration as it did between 1997 and 2014. Although in recent years, coverage has decreased slightly, overall, the Canadian media paid far more attention to immigration in the last few years than it did previously. In summary, these three observations point towards a media that paid attention to the PPC and its issues in 2019. Relative to its level of estimated support and compared to other parties, the PPC has received a disproportionate amount of attention by the media. Additionally, newspapers paid more attention to immigration in 2019 than in the past. This should have made the anti-immigrant message of the PPC more salient to the voting public. Therefore, by all standards, 2019 offered a media environment the PPC benefited from.

Anti-immigrant, Populist, and Authoritarian Public Opinion

Figure 6 illustrates respondents' views concerning immigration from 1993 to 2019. Three general observations stand out. First and most importantly, the data shows a rapid softening of anti-immigrant sentiment between 1993 and 2003. For all three propositions, Canadians became noticeably more pro-immigrant by the turn of the century. A closer look at the data⁸ shows this drop in support for anti-immigrant positions was most acute for those who strongly held those views. Those with milder anti-immigrant positions either dropped only slightly or moderately. Second, and most relevant to this particular investigation, anti-immigrant sentiment has remained relatively stable since 2003 for two of the questions asked. Although some amount of volatility occurs, there does not seem to be a consistent or substantial change in the proportion of pro- or anti-immigrant attitudes over the last two decades for those questions. In contrast, the assertion that many people claiming to be refugees are not real refugees shows a slow decline all the way to 2019. Third, expanded categories of these questions⁹ show that pro-immigrant sentiment has intensified over the last few years. The proportion of respondents who strongly disagree that many people claiming to be refugees are not real refugees has consistently increased since 2012 and has more than doubled from its pre-2015 levels. Since 2015, there is a steady increase in the proportion of those who strongly disagree that too many immigrants do not adopt Canadian values. By 2019, this proportion has more than doubled its 2012 levels. As a result,

there is not just a decrease in anti-immigrant sentiment over the years covered, but also a rising intensity in pro-immigrant stances among Canadians throughout the last few years. Overall, the survey data in Figure 6 show that a decreasing number of Canadians hold anti-immigrant sentiment. Not only has opposition towards immigrants and refugees decreased and levelled off since 2003, but additionally, the proportion of those who strongly support immigrants and refugees has increased over the recent past as well. Therefore, 2019 was not more favourable to an RRP than previously.

Moving on to populist sentiment, two general observations can be made regarding Figure 7. First and most significantly, populist sentiment is more widespread now than it was in 2006. Every line reveals a pattern whereby the proportion of those who are either somewhat or very distrustful/dissatisfied rises from 2006 to 2010, then begins to fall again in 2014 and/or 2016/17. Despite this fall over the last few years, Figure 7 shows a higher proportion of populist feelings in 2016/17 than in 2006. Second, the proportion of respondents who indicate that they are very trusting of/satisfied with Canada's political system and society saw a noticeable decrease between 2008 and 2010. Following this drop, the proportion either remained stable or recovered slightly. Despite this stagnation or recovery in recent years, enthusiasm for Canada's political system and society has overall waned between 2006 and 2016/17, and populist sentiment seems to have grown over this time period. This suggests that the time for an RRP breakthrough seemed riper in 2019 than it did a little over a decade ago.

Figure 8 reveals three general observations about authoritarian sentiment in Canada. First, support for shutting down Parliament was at its highest in the earlier waves of 2006 and 2008. Every subsequent survey since then shows support for such extreme authoritarian actions is lower. Second, the proportion of those who do not personally respect or want others to respect Canada's democracy and political institutions, has increased overall between 2006 and 2016/17. More moderate authoritarian sentiment is at its lowest levels of support in 2006, rises between 2006 and 2010, peaks between 2010 and 2014, and declines following that peak to 2016/17. Although there has been an easing of moderate authoritarian sentiment in recent years, it still seems more widespread now than it was in 2006. Third, among those who respect or want others to respect Canada's democracy and political institutions, there is a moderating of views throughout the various waves. The 2006 and 2008 waves see the greatest number of strong supporters of democracy and political institutions while later waves see those supporters moderate their positions. From these observations, Canadians hold mixed views about authoritarianism. Support for more subtle authoritarian positions concerning democracy and political institutions is higher now than it was in 2006 and Canadians are less enthusiastic towards democracy and political institutions than they were in 2006. Still, Figure 8

⁸ This data is not shown but can be made available upon request.

⁹ This data is not shown but can be made available upon request.

illustrates that the more extreme authoritarian measure of shutting down Parliament is not as popular as it once was. From this mixed result, it appears an RRP would have seen a modest increase in support in 2019 than in 2006 as long as it did not back extreme authoritarian measures.

All in all, the findings are decidedly mixed. On the one hand, support for diversity, immigrants, and minorities is higher than ever. In contemporary Canada, fewer people hold nativist beliefs than they did previously. On the other hand, an increasing number of Canadians are distrustful/dissatisfied with democracy, mainstream parties, politicians, international organizations, and society. This means there is more of a populist sentiment now in Canada relative to 2006. Finally, an increasing number of Canadians hold authoritarian views. Therefore, authoritarian sentiment has risen in Canada since 2006. It is germane to note that individuals are not mobilized to vote for RRP by these three attitudes equally, with anti-immigrant attitudes being the most influential of the three (Arzheimer, 2008; Ivarsflaten, 2008; Rooduijn, 2015). I therefore conclude that based on public opinion, 2019 did not offer a particularly opportune time for the PPC to succeed.

Conclusion

This work has contributed to the timely debate relating to the rise of RRP and Canada's alleged exceptionalism in this regard. Unlike so many other Western countries, Canada has thwarted radical right-wing overtures into the political system. Come election night on October 21, 2019, the PPC, whose platform and speeches of its leader reveal it to be an RRP, lost its only seat and its vote total fell short of expectations, at a minuscule 1.64%. Why did the PPC fail in its inaugural debut?

This paper has found that 2019 was not a particularly auspicious year for an RRP to succeed in Canada. While the media did prominently cover both the PPC and immigration issues, and an increasing number of Canadians hold populist and mildly authoritarian sentiments, the rate of immigration to Canada and the fluctuation in that rate have not increased, and Canadians do not increasingly harbour anti-immigrant views. Bernier and the PPC were either premature or overestimated the support for their movement among Canadians. Anti-immigration is the *raison d'être* of most RRP and usually plays a pivotal role in motivating RRP voters. Parties can better exploit these sentiments when the change in the immigration rate fluctuates rapidly. Crucially, and unfortunately for Bernier, this did not occur in Canada throughout the last several decades. Therefore, I suspect that the PPC failed because of a lack of growing support for anti-immigrant policies in Canada. Interestingly, the PPC cannot

place the blame on a lack of media attention. They garnered significantly greater attention than their polling numbers warranted. Bernier was also controversially invited to both the official French and English leaders' debate. Hence, Canadians were exposed to RRP views but were not swayed due to their lack of demand for such opinions.

The value of this paper within the broader discussion of RRP is twofold. First and most obviously, investigating whether the conditions that have led to RRP success in Europe exist here in Canada will help strategists, politicians, voters, political scientists, and others to understand and predict the electoral fortunes of the PPC. This is especially pertinent now, given that the RRP party family is the fastest-growing party group in Europe (Mudde, 2007) and is rapidly expanding its reach into other areas of the globe (Anderson, 2019; Fleming & Mondon, 2018; Higuchi, 2018; Leal, 2017; Parker, 2018; Perliger & Pedahzur, 2018).

Second, the vast majority of studies on the success (or lack thereof) of RRP focus—for understandable reasons—on Western European countries. There are only a few that study Eastern Europe and the United States and even fewer that examine Canada (for Canada, see Adams, 2017; Ambrose & Mudde, 2015; Gordon et al., 2019; for Eastern Europe, see Bustikova, 2014; Dinas et al., 2019; Shafir, 2000; for the United States, see Cox & Durham, 2000; Davis et al., 2019; Minkenberg, 2000). The handful of Canadian studies related to RRP success are either qualitative in nature (Adams, 2017; Ambrose & Mudde, 2015; Ryan, 2016; Trebilcock, 2019), use outdated datasets (Bilodeau et al., 2012; Gidengil et al., 2001; Nevitte et al., 1998), or do not systematically examine a wide variety of variables that determine RRP success (Adams, 2017; Ambrose & Mudde, 2015; Besco & Tolley, 2019; Bilodeau et al., 2012; Gidengil et al., 2001; Gordon et al., 2019; Trebilcock, 2019). Most of these studies focus on issues connected with RRP but do not categorically ask why RRP have not emerged in Canada or whether they will in the future.¹⁰

This is surprising given that some authors suggest there is ample potential for RRP growth in Canada (Ambrose & Mudde, 2015; Betz, 1994, pp. 22-23; Kitschelt, 2007). Additionally, several scholars argue that one weakness of the research into RRP is an overemphasis on countries where RRP are already successful (Alonso & Kaltwasser, 2015, p. 39; Rydgren, 2002, p. 28; Rydgren, 2007, p. 257). Uncommon are studies that attempt to explain why RRP are not successful,¹¹ though such studies could be equally enlightening by explaining how such parties operate and the mechanisms through which they succeed (Ambrose & Mudde, 2015, p. 217). This study has, therefore, filled a geographical and empirical gap in the literature by providing a novel,

(2017), Ambrose and Mudde (2015), and Gordon et al. (2019) address the lack of RRP success in Canada.

¹¹ A few exceptions include Alonso and Kaltwasser (2015), Backes and Mudde (2000), O'Malley (2008), Rydgren (2002), and Van Holsteyn and Mudde (2000).

¹⁰ Besco and Tolley (2019) and Trebilcock (2019) write about the popularity of multiculturalism, tolerance, and immigration in Canada, Bilodeau et al. (2012) look at sentiment towards immigrants and racial minorities at the provincial level, while Gidengil et al. (2001) and Nevitte et al. (1998) investigate the Reform Party of Canada. Only Adams

systematic, longitudinal, and quantitative analysis of RRP failure in Canada.

A concluding thought is that the defeat of the PPC in 2019 should not encourage complacency in the adversaries of the radical right. It may well be premature to signal the PPC's defeat, given that other fledgling parties in Canada, including the Green and Reform parties, grew into serious political movements only after successive election contests. Even if the PPC disbands, others will rise, as has happened already with the Maverick Party, formerly Wexit Alberta. A cursory reading of its platform suggests it is even more right-wing (Maverick Party: Mission Statement, 2020). The results should not reassure Canadians that the radical right is incongruous with Canada. Many laypeople and academics alike, most recently in Germany and Spain, have made that mistake by underestimating and dismissing RRP, to their peril. Canadians would do well to heed these warnings. A sudden increase in immigration could lead to an RRP breakthrough in the future. Progressives insist that the above change would benefit Canada. They should be careful what they wish for, as this change would also have unintended consequences, such as precipitating the rise of the radical right.

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