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## The Structure of Canadian Terrorism

Jeffrey Ian Ross

Why has radical right-wing violence been so invisible? Academics have produced endless studies of criminal, political, ethnic, and racist violence. But little emphasis has been put on the radical right's violence, either on its own or as part of the violence that has received more attention. To begin filling this void, we should more closely examine the dimensions of this kind of violence, particularly as they manifest themselves in Canada. Unlike the U.S., Canada is not a bastion of right-wing violence; nevertheless, when it does occur, it shares several important traits with its southern neighbor.

We can distinguish radical right-wing violence by its perpetrators, activities, and targets. Both individuals and groups commit this violence. We can use the terms "right" and "right-wing" to describe the legal activities of conventional conservative groups, ideologues, movements, and political parties.

In contrast, by "radical right-wing," we mean the violent and illegal activities of groups that might otherwise be called: extreme right, fringe right, lunatic right, radical right, racist right, fundamentalist right-wing, anti-Semitic, fascist and neo-fascist, Nazi and neo-Nazi. Their orientation has been variously thought of as conservative, traditional, authoritarian, or preservationist. Thus, their violence and crimes are carried out to pursue those ends. Their targets also provide a limited guide to what motivates their violence.

Membership in radical right-wing groups is permeable. Members of one such group may belong simultaneously to several of them. Some people may follow the agenda of their group but at other times act independently. Many on the radical right have no affiliations, preferring to work alone. When violence occurs, it may have been committed by the group that claims responsibility. But admissions of culpability may simply be posturing or deception. Or the violence may have been the result of radical right-wingers collaborating for a specific purpose (e.g., a series of arsons), only to disband afterwards.

We can classify radical right-wing actions on a scale from nonviolent to violent. Along this continuum, differences among conflict, violence, crime and extremism may be blurred. Nevertheless, we can say that postering, threats, hoaxes, marches, cross burnings, graffiti writing, and disseminating hate propaganda constitute the nonviolent side of the scale while arsons, bombings, assaults, and assassinations comprise the violent side. Radical right violence may be either politically or nonpolitically motivated. Although those committing the violence may not always be consciously aware of the political (i.e., struggle over power) ramifications of their actions, such motives can be nevertheless inferred.

Radical right violence aims at physical and/or symbolic targets viewed as

threats to the radical right. Targets include individuals, their property and the symbols of people who are believed to be communists, feminists, homosexuals, immigrants, leftists, socialists, and racial, ethnic, or religious minorities. In sum, we can recognize right-wing violence by its context; that is the nature of the perpetrators, their activities, and their targets.

How does radical right-wing violence manifest itself in Canada? We can identify several structural factors in Canadian society that cause this violence. First, immediate situational factors can be a source. For example, when leftists engage in protest marches or when homosexuals put on theatrical plays, this may anger right-wingers, who may launch a counterprotest. Tempers may flare, and name calling may turn to violence.

Historical developments and ideological justifications can also be a source of right-wing violence. For example, Franco Farraresi argues that three factors promoted neo-fascism in post war Italy: system blockage in Italian politics, the legacy of earlier fascists, and the offspring of unrepentant fascists. Besides historical circumstances, a well established ideology, presented simplistically to the people, may also generate violence—such as the infamous *Turner Diaries* in the U.S.

Sometimes radical right-wingers are inspired to commit violence by actions taking place elsewhere. They may read, hear, or see violence—largely through media reporting. It may have right-wing overtones that cause them to replicate the violence. Violence seems easy to carry out, it promotes maximum exposure, and sometimes it succeeds in articulating grievances.

Right-wingers also often view the influx of foreigners, new immigrants, and asylum seekers, visible or not, as lowering their earning power or undermining their community. They believe their jobs are threatened by people who will undercut their wages or work under substandard conditions. Alternatively, xenophobia (fear of strangers), can produce right-wing violence. Immigrants and foreigners are unfairly blamed for social ills such as crime, disease, unemployment, urban degeneration, falling standards, and national decline. Predictably, this happens more often in homogenous rather than heterogenous communities.

Economic disruptions, such as depression, inflation, and unemployment can trigger right-wing violence. Seymour Martin Lipsett described fascists as a “middle-class movement representing a protest against both capitalism and socialism, big business and big unions.” People react to the ambiguity of changing times, especially when they feel a relative or absolute decline in their security. The resurgence of the right-wing in core capitalist nations has been a direct response to a work crisis in capitalist accumulation. According to Stanley Barrett, “[t]he right-wing resurgence in recent years is an expression of social and economic problems (some of them linked to a crisis in capitalist accumulation), a reaction against the steady leftward drift of the Western world since the age of enlightenment, an organization of anguish about social change in general.”

Finally, right-wing violence may be caused by threats to people's political power and status. According to Leonard Weinberg:

...during the last decade right-wing politics and aristocratic privilege, a working to undermine such...Originally the threat posed by communism, hardly the end of it. So of the late 1960s and the of women, that sparked

To what extent does violence in Canada compared in Canada compared spawned neither durable violence seen in other draw some greater attention government.

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...during the last decade of the eighteenth and throughout the nineteenth century right-wing politics and rightist thought was essentially a defense of the monarchy, aristocratic privilege, agrarian values, and an established church against those forces working to undermine them: republicanism, liberalism, industrial capitalism and such...Originally the threat to which the Extremist Right has been a reaction was that posed by communism. But although simple anti-communism may be the beginning, it is hardly the end of it. Some evidence even suggests that it may have been the New Left of the late 1960s and the 1970s and the social emancipation it advocated, in particular of women, that sparked the current right-wing revival.

To what extent do these potential causes help produce radical right-wing violence in Canada? To begin with, radical right activity occurs less often in Canada compared to the U.S. and the Western European countries. It has spawned neither durable political parties nor the terrorist groups or levels of violence seen in other societies. Nevertheless, right-wing violence has begun to draw some greater attention from the Canadian public, media, academics, and government.

As is often true elsewhere, the context of radical right violence in Canada is everything. That context includes the following factors: Such violence often results from public demonstrations by radical right-wingers, from protest marches and public gatherings engaged in by possible targets, from key global events, and from urban (rather than rural) events.

Much radical right violence in Canada occurs when the radical right hold a march or rally, or engage in shouting or shoving matches with onlookers, spectators, or counterdemonstrators (i.e., opponents of radical right). Historically, this has involved a series of confrontations where radical right groups such as the Canadian Nazi Party, the Edmund Burke Society, Western Guard, the Ku Klux Klan, Aryan Nations, and Heritage Front commit violence against the N3, the Jewish Defense League, the Communist Party (Marxist-Leninists) of Canada and a host of anti-racist organizations.

The radical right has also used violence to crush a number of peace marches and anti-racist activities, beginning with taunts and then escalating into more serious actions. For example, in May 1972, more than 100 people attending a meeting called "Homosexuals: Myth and Reality" were forced out of Toronto's St. Lawrence Centre's Town Hall by a (now-defunct) Western Guard member and his female companion, who sprayed the audience with anti-personnel gas designed to produce ear, nose and throat irritation.

Certain global developments might also stimulate right-wing violence in Canada, especially when they're perceived to affect the nation's economic prosperity, and the number and composition of its immigrants. From the 1960s through the 1980s, asylum seekers increased from places such as war torn Pakistan, politically unstable Jamaica, and famine-plagued Somalia. These immigrants were common targets for radical right violence.

Compared to the U.S., radical right violence in Canada has been far more urban. In the U.S., this kind of violence seems to come from places such as the rural South. Canada has survivalists and a Farmer's Movement, but unlike their southern neighbors, they've refrained from radical right violent activity. Since most Canadian immigrants settle in the large urban centers, the violence seems pulled in that direction.

A considerable amount of radical right violence in Canada has come, historically, from American Ku Klux Klan members who started organizing north of the border in the early 1920s. Both Canadian and American Klan members committed a series of violent acts (such as arsons and assaults) during the interwar years across Canada. For example, according to Martin Robin, "In late 1922,... a series of incendiary fires in a variety of Catholic institutions, including the Quebec Cathedral and the rest-house of the Gentlemen of Saint Sulpice at Oka, Quebec... brought the Klan again into prominence."

In the last 30 years, much radical right violence occurred while right-wingers were celebrating the birthdays of well-known right-wing leaders such as Hitler and Mussolini, or the deaths of well-known communists such as Brezhnev. Violence seems to be a product of the celebrations.

As in the U.S., the unresolved abortion debate has produced large-scale protests against women's right to have an abortion on demand. This led to the burning of the Women's Bookstore in Toronto, ostensibly to try to burn down the next door abortion clinic. In June 1983, a man attacked Dr. Henry Morgenthaler, who headed that clinic, with garden shears. Morgenthaler, a Jew, was compared to a Nazi concentration camp doctor by some right-wing groups.

The quest to detect, adjudicate, and deport former Nazi war criminals living in Canada led to the creation of the 1985 "Commission of Inquiry on War Criminals." Right-wingers of all dimensions rallied in protest, some of which turned violent.

During the 1930s, the rise of Nazism in Germany, Fascism in Italy, Francoism in Spain, and similar movements in other European countries spilled over into Canada. For example, Adrien Arcand, and his followers and imitators, created several different Nazi and Fascist parties in Canada.

In the summer of 1933, members of Swastika Clubs clashed with young Jews in the Balmy Beach section of Toronto. The most notable violence during this time was the Christie Pits riot in Toronto in August 1933 between Swastika Club members and Jewish youths. A violent confrontation also occurred between Canada Nationalist Party brown-shirts and anti-fascists in June 1934 in Winnipeg. This was followed by several violent incidents at Canadian Nationalist Party meetings. In October 1936, a violent student protest against a scheduled public meeting with a visiting delegation of Spanish Republicans in Montreal led to its cancellation. In October 1937, students aligned with the National Social Christian Party smashed windows of Jewish-owned shops in Montreal. In July 1939, several attacks occurred on Jews and Jewish-owned property in Ste. Agathe, Quebec, a resort town where many Jews vacationed during the summer. These attacks were inspired by Arcand's anti-Semitic summer canvassing in the area.

In the late 1980s, racist Skinheads became increasingly prominent in large Canadian cities. They're connected to punk and hard-core subcultures, and to more established neo-Nazi and white supremacist groups. While resembling their British counterparts, they were motivated originally more by style than ideology. Only in 1989 did their violent activities begin to make headlines.

Canadian radical right wingers also attended Aryan Nations meetings in the late 1980s in Hayden Lake, Idaho. And when Terry Long, the Canadian Aryan

Nations leader proposed violent confrontations

Events abroad are in Canada. For example, in France, similar vandalism occurred in Ontario.

The economic insecurity of right violence. The 1930s in Canada's first race riot. According to Headley, many still in possession of the Shelburne preferred to. They went rampaging belonging to blacks." issues has been often

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Nations leader proposed a training camp for neo-Nazis in Caroline, Alberta, violent confrontations resulted with protesters from the Jewish Defense League.

Events abroad are sometimes followed with copycat violence by right wingers in Canada. For example, shortly after the recent cemetery desecrations in France, similar vandalizations took place in Quebec City and in Gloucester Ontario.

The economic insecurity caused by increased immigration can lead to radical right violence. This has been the case in Canada as far back as 1784 when Canada's first race riot took place in Shelburne and Birchtown, Nova Scotia. According to Headley Tullock, "[h]undreds of recently disbanded white soldiers, many still in possession of their arms, rioted when they found that the rich of Shelburne preferred to hire blacks at wages lower than the white man's wages. They went rampaging through Birchtown, pulling down some twenty houses belonging to blacks." This connection between right-wing violence and labor issues has been often repeated during Canada's history.

Radical right violence also resulted from anti-Asian resentment in British Columbia. In May 1883, for example, a brawl near Lytton, British Columbia between whites and Chinese left nine Chinese beaten unconscious, two of whom later died. In February 1887, Chinese shanties and possessions were destroyed in Vancouver because of anti-Asian sentiments. In September 1907, a race riot occurred in Vancouver during which whites attacked both Japanese and Chinese people.

In February 1930, Klansmen in Oakville, Ontario forcibly removed a white girl from a house where a black man was living. In May 1930, in Lacombe, Alberta, the Klan abducted, tarred and feathered a blacksmith named Fred Doberstein. In February 1933, Klansmen fired on union leaders in Blairmore, Alberta, where a number of mines were located. The mineworkers were largely from Eastern Europe. In March 1937, the Holmes Foundry Strike occurred in Sarnia, Ontario. Besides being Canada's first sit-down strike, the town was occupied by central European (pro-union) men who were violently attacked by Anglo (anti-union) strike breakers.

During the World War II, and post-war period, almost no radical right violence occurred in Canada. The exceptions took place before, during, and following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941 when some Japanese-Canadians and their property were victimized by scattered acts of vandalism.

Individual incidents of radical right violence during the 1960s and 1980s took place between visible immigrant minorities and the dominant white majority. Unlike many European nations, Canada does not have the guest worker situation that has generated many European right-wing organizations. Nevertheless, the number of immigrants coming to Canada will likely continue to increase. These new emigres will be potential targets for new acts of radical right violence.

Economic insecurity was one of things that helped generate the KKK in Canada in the 1920s. Whites felt that nonwhites, Catholics, Jews, and Southern and Eastern Europeans were taking away their jobs. For example, the aforemen-

tioned growth of Skinhead violence in most Canadian cities has often been attributed to their insecurities about employment or underemployment.

Many radical right groups in Canada have tried to enter mainstream politics by running electoral candidates at different government levels. But they have failed at the polls. The Canadian radical right rhetoric stresses economic competition, job losses, or inadequate urban service delivery. These were the causes of most of the twenty-two riots that took place in Toronto between Protestant Orangemen and Irish Catholics from 1867–1892.

During the 1960s, a variety of groups loosely connected to racist, anti-Semitic, and anti-Communist activities were spawned, some out of the ashes of others. This period witnessed anti-black violence, provoked by the KKK, in August 1965 in Amherstburg, Ontario, as well as radical right violence against leftists and students protesting the U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War.

These attacks reacted to the emergence of a New Left in Canada, and to the nation's increasing non-white immigration. During the 1970s, committed right-wingers continued their activities, but they were often accused of committing hate crime. For example, the Western Guard was crippled by arrests during the mid-1970s on bombing, conspiracy, and other charges connected to the promotion of hate literature and the proliferation of recorded, telephone hate-messages.

The KKK also experienced a resurgence beginning in 1972, accompanied by threatening letters and public property destruction. In 1982, many of the Klan's top leaders were imprisoned on a variety of offenses, beginning with various weapons charges.

In the 1980s, several other right-wing issues, individuals, and groups fomented violence. Most salient were the trials of hate mongers, abortion terrorists, and war criminals, and the emergence of the Skinheads and Aryan Nations. The recent trials of James Keegstra on hate crime charges, and Ernest Zundel on distributing hate literature provided extra publicity for the radical right extremists who operate in Canada.

In the foreseeable future, radical right wing violence in Canada will likely continue to have both targets and pretexts. There will be an increase, for example, of "visible" (from a white perspective) immigrants into Canada's cities. Also, the North American Free Trade Agreement, and the general world economic climate, will likely continue undermining the Canadian economy.

Right-wing thinking seems to be growing internationally. It's possible, therefore, that right-wing violence will have increasing ideological support in the next several years. For example, the right-wing dogmas of the U.S., such as the English-only movement, continue to filter their way into Canada. And while conducting trials of suspected World War II Nazis and of hate literature distributors may challenge right-wing ideas on the one hand, they inevitably will also provoke a radical right wing backlash that could promote more violence.

Canadian police and national security agencies have been relatively successful in bringing radical right-wingers to trial in various conspiracy cases involving bombings and murders. Prominent right-wingers have been imprisoned, and some radical right-wing organizations have been undermined. Nevertheless, law

enforcement aims only violence. Such causes do reveal most of it. C problem.

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enforcement aims only at the symptoms not the structural causes of right-wing violence. Such causes cannot explain all right wing violence in Canada but they do reveal most of it. Only a social justice perspective can get to the roots of the problem.

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