People’s Party of Canada: White Supremacy, Settler Colonialism &

the Subalternization of Muslims

Abstract

This paper draws on the American context in relation to Trump’s electoral victory and his Islamophobic remarks in the media to highlight the normalization and re-emergence of white supremacy and the rise of Islamophobia in Canadian political discourse. Islamophobic rhetoric is alarmingly increasing in Canadian politics, often in conjunction with notions of ‘democracy’ and ‘Canadian identity’. This paper focuses on the policies against multiculturalism and censorship promoted by the People’s Party of Canada (PPC) in their attempt to legalize and promote anti-Islam sentiments. PPC party members have engaged in similar digital media tactics as Trump, with its party members promoting anti-Islam rhetoric in their attempt to maintain Canadian identity, upholding settler-colonialism, and subalternizing Muslims.

*Keywords*: Islamophobia, white supremacy, settler colonialism, digital media, multiculturalism

**1. Introduction**

The People’s Party of Canada (PPC) is a federal political party that promotes Canadian nationalism, right-wing ideologies, and rejects the idea of multiculturalism. The policies outlined by the party and the digital actions committed by its party members promote the preservation of “Canadian identity” while ignoring Canada’s colonial history. Moreover, the party promotes the subalternization of ethnic and racial minority groups and legitimizes discrimination. As explicitly stated in their platform, the PPC actively promotes Islamophobia through its aims to create legislation that legalizes criticism and discrimination against Muslims and Islam, under the guise of free speech. Therefore, in this essay, I argue that the People’s Party of Canada (PPC) is a racist-nationalist political party that actively engages in the promotion of settler colonialism and white supremacy by arguing that “Canadian identity” is threatened by multiculturalism. Moreover, I argue that the PPC promotes the subalternization of Muslims in Canada in its attempts to legalize Islamophobia. In doing so, I will argue that the role of digital media is crucial in spreading white-supremist ideologies, while bringing into account both the Canadian political context, as well as the American political context in relation to Donald Trump’s tweets. Lastly, I will conclude by highlighting efforts to suppress the spread of hateful ideologies by a national organization calling for the de-platforming of right-wing parties and personalities from mainstream media.

**2. (Re)Emergence of White Supremacy and the Role of Digital Media**

Trump’s victory in the 2016 American Presidential elections created international discourse regarding right-wing politics, especially in Canada. Right-wing extremism has been present in Canadian history, arguably since the domination of Indigenous land; however, political discourse emerging from the states has enabled Canadians to recognize the rise of right-wing activity within Canada. Far-right activity has been declared a “growing threat nationwide”; however, the lack of policy to counteract radical activity is credited due to the lack of scholarship and analysis within the Canadian context (Scrivens & Perry, 2017, 535). It is important to note that the United States is not to be blamed for the increase of right-wing activity in Canada, but rather our own lengthy neglect and will-full blindness to the phenomenon is the cause for its alarming increase in Canada (Scrivens & Perry, 2017, p. 535). Moreover, racializing signifiers present in political discourse that promote fear and anger towards racialized bodies is what heightened the visibility of right-wing extremism, in both Canada and the United States.

Digital media, specifically Twitter, played a crucial role in the election of Trump as president. Digital media has also been successful in shifting the political direction through attempts to create fearmongering towards Muslims, ‘radical’ Islam, ‘uncontrolled/illegal’ immigration, and terrorism (Schroeder, p. 1-2). Through his series of tweets, Trump is credited for the spreading of hatred and the rise of Islamophobic attacks and white-supremist activity within the United States. According to a report, anti-Muslim hate crimes have doubled since Trump began his presidential campaign (Das, 2019). When a presidential campaign for one of the world’s most ‘powerful’ countries tweets in favour of increasing surveillance amongst Muslims and within mosques, argues that terrorist attacks are “an expression of mainstream Muslim values”, and calls for an outright ban of all Muslims entering the United States, it promotes the subalternization of Muslims on the basis of fear and hate (Klaas, 2019). Thus, the racializing signifiers in Trump’s speeches and media posts, that promote the fear of racialization and label Muslims as ‘terrorists’, paves the way for the ‘re-emergence’ of right-wing extremism and nationalism as an effort to preserve ‘democracy’. On the other hand, the racializing signifiers in Canadian political discourse that frame Indigenous peoples as ‘uncivilized’ and Muslims as a ‘threat’ to democracy, plays a role in the subalternization of racial and ethnic groups in Canada. Likewise, the People’s Party of Canada has shaped and advocated for policy that promotes fear, hatred, and anger towards the aforementioned racialized groups in Canada.

**3. Multiculturalism and the Eradication of Canadian Identity**

The People’s Party of Canada promotes the viewpoint that multiculturalism is a threat to Canadian identity. According to the official People’s Party of Canada’s website, one of the major platforms central to the party’s campaign is the preservation and restoring of ‘Canadian’ identity, values, and culture by repealing the Multiculturalism Act and lowering the intake of immigrants and refugees (People’s Party of Canada, n.d.-a). According to Lentin & Titley, “the rejection of… multiculturalism is in favour of assimilationist integration projects'' and largely driven by nationalism (Lentin & Titley, 2012, p. 134). This notion is directly present in the Canadian-nationalist ideology promoted by the PPC as they argue that Canada must not promote multiculturalism and that immigrants must assimilate to the settler-Canadian culture and adopt a Canadian language as conditions of their immigration (People’s Party of Canada, n.d.-a). Unsurprisingly, those against multiculturalism take the stance that multiculturalism is an ideology that affects social cohesion as members of a given society do not share common values. Alarmingly, this nationalist policy mirrors the settler colonial mindset that justifies the on-going assimilation of Indigenous peoples into the dominant, Eurocentric culture, all while framing Indigeneity as ‘uncivilized’. However, contemporary applications of settler colonialism in politics serves to reproduce that same notion of assimilation, but to a large-scale implementation, including immigrants and refugees. The policy of rejecting multiculturalism to preserve Canadian identity exemplifies a colonizer’s model of the world by highlighting that the colonial Canadian identity is threatened by the promotion of multiculturalism and immigration. In doing so, discourse of ‘Canadian identity’ in mainstream media is promoted with a colonial bias, ultimately portraying the PPC party as a “saviour” for preserving Canadian identity.

**4. Islamophobia and the Subalternization of Canadian Muslims**

The People’s Party of Canada actively promotes the subalternization of Muslims and the legalization of Islamophobia under the guide of ‘freedom of expression’. The party advocates for increasing rights of certain Canadian citizens and protection against censorship; moreover, the party’s platform for “Freedom of Expression” specifically labels the criminalization of hate speech as “censorship” and argues that “some religions” deserve receiving criticism, while bringing into account M-103, a motion that condemns Islamophobia (People’s Party of Canada, n.d.-b). Evidently, the PPC platform specifically targets the condemnation of Islamophobia and targets Canadian Muslims, in particular. In March 2019, Sybil Hogg, a PPC candidate, posted her anti-Islam sentiments to her Twitter account and promoted racialized signifiers that Islam is the only religion “not compatible with democracy” and that the religion “has no place in Canadian society” (CBC News, 2019). Islamophobic sentiments portrayed by politicians, in particular, promote the ‘othering’ of Muslims and legitimize Islamophobia within a given society. As argued by Lentin and Titley, “racial politics of the War on Terror has produced [Muslims as] intolerable subjects” (Lentin & Titley, p. 124). In this case, re-defining Canadian Muslims as ‘intolerable subjects’ promotes the active subalternization of Muslims as they are portrayed and exemplified as a threat to the Canadian democratic practice, as well as the Canadian identity. The PPC attempts to construct a racial symbolic order in which symbols relative to the Muslim identity are grounds for legitimizing racism and the subalternization of Muslims against other Canadians.

**5. Call to De-Platform**

The National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM) is a non-profit organization that protects and advocates for the rights of Canadian Muslims by challenging Islamophobia and racism and advocating for policy changes. Following the 2019 Canadian federal elections, Mustafa Farooq, the executive director of the NCCM, wrote an opinion piece for The Globe and Mail calling for the “radical…‘de-platforming’ [of] far-right personalities and social-media channels that spew hate” (Farooq, 2019). Farooq argues that publicly responding to a party’s Islamophobia and racism would uphold the party and their hate-centered policies in mainstream discourse. Likewise, by essentially refusing to provide the PPC and it’s leader, Maxime Bernier, a platform, the organization was sending a message of “reject[ing] the politics of fear”, a central element to the PPC campaign (Farooq, 2019).

**6. Conclusion**

In conclusion, the re-emergence of right-wing extremism in Canada occurred after the election of Donald Trump as fear mongering tactics and the use of racialized signifiers became normalized in politics. Evidently, the policies put forth by the People’s Party of Canada, such as the revocation of multiculturalism and the legalization of Islamophobia, reflect the rise of white, Canadian nationalism. However, digital media plays a crucial role in spreading fear, anger, and hatred towards racial groups, ultimately promoting right-wing ideology and the subalternization of racial groups, specifically in the case of Canadian and American Muslims and Indigenous peoples. Thus, anti-racist organizations, like the National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM), oppose the rise of Canadian nationalism by calling for the ‘de-platforming’ of right-wing ideologies from mainstream media.

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