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The Future of Right-Wing Terrorism in Canada

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THE FUTURE OF RIGHT-WING TERRORISM IN CANADA

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INTRODUCTION

Right-wing extremist movements and terrorist networks are interconnected across national boundaries and continents by common beliefs and shared hatreds. Violence, technology, tactics, and rhetoric from one country can quickly move to influence like-minded adherents in other parts of the world. This pattern has been common amongst the extreme right from well before the advent of the Internet. Despite the free exchange of radical ideas and inspiration, right-wing terrorism has manifested differently in different countries and cultural contexts. Though the magnitude and frequency of threats may differ between countries, the catalysts to an unanticipated increase in violence can remain hidden.

There has been a resurgence of right-wing terrorism in both the US and Europe, and Canada may see an upsurge in this threat in the near future. By comparing Canadian right-wing extremists with those abroad, policymakers and public officials can gauge the relative security threat posed by these groups and manage the unique challenges they create. This research provides a general forecast of future violence based on recent changes within associated movements and networks, based in part on incident data established within the Canadian Incident Database (CIDB)—extremism.ca. Though informed by CIDB data, this forecast provides basic scenario analysis of future(s) of right-wing terrorism in Canada, in light of current trends in the US and Europe. The research, therefore, considers alternative possible outcomes without being bound to a simple extrapolation of historical data alone.

The purpose of this paper is to reiterate the potential threat posed by this sector of violent extremists and how that threat is likely to manifest based on trends and other evidence in Canada, the US, and Europe. The following research questions guided this project: What is the range of likely scenarios for future right-wing terrorism in Canada, based on connections to radical movements in the US and Europe? Which factors or actions may mitigate the most likely scenarios? How might the future of Canadian right-wing terrorism be distinct from those of the US and Europe?



A WORKING DEFINITION OF RIGHT-WING TERRORISM

The Canadian Criminal Code identifies a terrorist act to be committed “in whole or in part for a political, religious, or ideological purpose, objective, or cause” with the intention of intimidating the public “...with regard to its security, including its economic security, or compelling a person, a government, or a domestic or an international organization to do or to refrain from doing any act” (Criminal Code, R.S.C. 1985, s. 83.01). Terrorism represents a specific form of violent extremism that is criminal and political in nature.

Right-wing terrorism stems from a complex set of interrelated, and occasionally, conflicting beliefs systems. Right-wing terrorist violence comes from a loose, heterogeneous collection of groups and individuals espousing a wide range of grievances and positions, including: anti-government/individual sovereignty; racism; fascism; white supremacy/white nationalism; anti-Semitism; nativism/anti-immigration; anti-globalization/anti-free trade; anti-abortion; homophobia; anti-taxation; and pro-militia/pro-gun rights stances.¹ Right-wing terrorists may be religious or secular, and there is often conflict amongst various groups within this sphere. The similarities in targets and modus operandi suggest that these actors are best evaluated as a highly complex, yet interconnected community.²

There are several somewhat distinct types of right-wing extremists. One typology defines right-wing extremists thusly:

1. General White Supremacists;
2. Single Issue terrorists fixated with one particular ideological issue, such as taxes or abortion;
3. Neo-Nazis who maintain an anti-Semitic, racist, nationalist, and homophobic ideology;
4. Militia and Patriot Movement members sceptical of the centralized government;
5. Christian Identity adherents that believe Whites are the true “chosen people;” and
6. Sovereign Citizens that hold the Federal government is currently illegitimate.³

Some right-wing extremists overlap these types; skinheads come in many varieties, and the vio-



lent, racist skins float amongst several of these categories. A right-wing extremist may be a member of several different groups simultaneously or in rapid succession, and he or she may opt to act in accordance with a group's agenda or independently.⁴ Not all violence perpetrated by right-wing actors rises to the level of terrorism, but it is important to recognize the lower-level violent extremism that occurs amongst these individuals to provide a full picture of possible future flash points. Indeed, data within the CIDB suggests that frequency and intensity of violent extremist incidents is beginning to surpass that of classically defined terrorist incidents.

RIGHT-WING TERRORISM IN EUROPE

Right-wing extremism is widespread in Europe with both deep historical roots and troubling new sprouting violence. The last decade has seen the most visible cases featured in the media, including the discovery of the National Socialist Underground in Germany or Anders Behring Breivik's attacks in Norway, as well as strings of serial murders of Roma and ethnic minorities in Hungary and Sweden.⁵ The primary ideological drivers for European right-wing terrorism are unemployment, immigration, nativism, anti-Semitism, and anti-Islamic sentiment.⁶

Like Canada, European right-wing terrorists and extremists tend to follow a more secular ideology than those in the United States; however, there are strong ties amongst North American and European organizations and individuals. Unlike North America, some European right-wing organizations are more openly affiliated with registered political parties or operate freely at the local level. Activity can range from death threats and intimidation, vandalism to houses of worship, and even sectioning off of some local areas as no-go zones for ethnic minorities.⁷ Though officially banned in many European countries, these right-wing organizations in some cases act as an escape valve for extremist sentiments amongst the public, preventing an explosion of large-scale anti-immigrant violence and drawing these views into open view.

One example of a radical right-wing organization supporting fascism and white nationalism and opposing multiculturalism is the British Nation Party. It openly decries the "Islamification" of the United Kingdom along with same-sex marriage. Often these types of political parties become spawning grounds for those who seek to carry the rhetoric into direct action. This was the



case with David Copeland, also known as the “London Nail Bomber.” After leaving the British National Party in 1998, Copeland became the regional leader of a small neo-Nazi organization, and he started an improvised bombing campaign, which was inspired by Eric Rudolph’s 1996 Centennial Park bombing at the Olympics in Atlanta, which included a gay night club.⁸ Over a thirteen-day period, Copeland’s 1999 campaign killed three and injured over 100, attacking black, Bangladeshi, and gay community targets. Copeland’s attacks show a direct influence between North America and Europe despite the differences in cultural contexts between the two continents.

Western Europe has seen several other cases of right-wing cells and individuals perpetrating violence at immigrant populations and other targets. In Austria and Germany, Franz Fuchs, an engineer, carried out a bombing campaign from 1993 to 1997 that targeted immigrants and officials working on behalf of them, killing 4 and wounding at least 10. A recluse, Fuchs sought to fight discrimination he perceived against German-Austrians by attacking visible minorities and refugees.⁹ Under the banner of the “Bajuvarian Liberation Army” — which sought unification of Germanic peoples of the upper Danube valley — Fuchs employed over two dozen mail bombs and three pipe bombs.¹⁰ He was ultimately arrested in October 1997 after an explosion removed his hands and one forearm, and he was sentenced to life imprisonment in March 1999. Fuchs represents a model similar in operation to the American Unabomber, and he is sometimes referred to as the “Austrian Unabomber.”

Despite having outlawed Nazi related propaganda and materials, Germany has seen resurgence in right-wing extremism over the last decade, where right-wing extremists have continued to evolve following unification into various fascist, racist, and xenophobic factions.¹¹ Much of Germany’s skinheads and neo-Nazis are concentrated in former East Germany.¹² There is black market in right-wing extremist materials that flows between North America and Europe, as demonstrated by Gerhard Lauck, American leader of a Nebraskan neo-Nazi group who was deported to Germany and tried as a primary supplier of Nazi propaganda in Europe.¹³ The burgeoning neo-Nazi culture in Germany has spurred more sophisticated forms of violence and terrorist campaigns. The most prominent, recent case of right-wing extremist violence in Ger-



many is the Doerner Murder Series, named for the doerner kebabs sold by some of the victims. Known as the Brown Army Faction, this small cell of neo-Nazis was linked to ten murders of Turkish and Greek merchants and a female police officer from 2000 to 2007, along with a dozen bank robberies and a bombing in Cologne in 2004.¹⁴ Two members (Uwe Boehnhardt and Uwe Mundlos) died prior to arrest, and the other two were captured in November 2011. Three of them had previous criminal records from a failed 1998 bombing plot, though they were not kept under surveillance following release.¹⁵

Hungary saw a similar murder campaign against its half-million Roma minority in 2008 and 2009. Three skinheads—Zsolt Peto, Istvan Kiss, and Arpad Kiss—conducted targeted attacks over an 18-month period while Hungary’s government collapsed and the extreme right Jobbik party rose to power.¹⁶ The cell began with a series of non-lethal attacks and slowly escalated them. These attacks killed six people, including a 5-year-old boy, and injured several others. They were apprehended in 2009, and they were jailed for life in January 2016.

Sweden too has seen a violent anti-immigrant campaign aimed at visible minorities. In 2009 and 2010, Peter Mangs carried out 15 shootings in the southern city of Malmö.¹⁷ The shootings targeted visible minorities with darker complexions or a “non-Swedish” appearance. The shooting campaign by Mangs appeared similar to one conducted by “Laser Man” John Ausonius, who killed one and injured ten others in Stockholm and Uppsala in 1991 to 1992. Peter Mangs was arrested in November 2010, and he expressed his strong anti-immigrant sentiments. Neo-Nazism, anti-Semitism, and anti-immigrant sentiments are showing up in Scandinavia in part due to trans-Atlantic exchange of radical right-wing ideas. In Sweden, the White Aryan Resistance (Vitt Arikst Motstand or VAM) shows the linkage to North American right-wing extremists, since it is named directly after the American group and follows a similar philosophy.¹⁸

Norway offers a potent example of mass-casualty right-wing extremist violence in Europe. On July 22, 2011, Anders Behring Breivik, detonated a car bomb near the prime minister’s office in Oslo, killing eight and injuring 30, then he carried out a 90-minute shooting spree at a youth



Labour Party political conference on Utøya Island, killing 69 people and injuring dozens more (more than 60 of the victims were teenagers).¹⁹ The son of a Norwegian diplomat, Breivik was a fundamentalist Christian, belonged to an anti-immigrant/anti-Islamic party, and his manifesto—*2083: A European Declaration of Independence*—was a call for cultural civil war.²⁰ He used his trial to share and justify his radical actions and beliefs. On February 6, 2012, he rationalized his attacks, stating “The attacks on the government headquarters were preventive attacks on traitors to the nation, people committing or planning to commit cultural destruction, including destruction of Norwegian culture and Norwegian ethnicity.”²¹ He eventually received a 21-year prison sentence.

Breivik’s writings indicated that his attacks were a reaction to Norway’s multicultural society, and they were meant to inspire other lone wolves to commit mass-casualty violence, spurring them to employ chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) weapons for follow-on attacks.²² More importantly, Breivik fully intended his for manifesto to live on well beyond the immediate impacts of his violence. In this way, radical right-wing terrorist rhetoric, tactics, and tradecraft become timeless online. The proliferation of extremist content online coupled with easy access to communities advocating violence has only increased the size of the security challenge, suggesting that the threat of right-wing terrorism will not go away in the near future.²³

European groups and lone operators are likely to influence Canadian extremists in demonstrating secular models for conducting attack campaigns, particularly those aimed at immigrants and refugees. Given the rapid rate of immigration into Canada, it is plausible that right-wing extremist violence could flare up along the lines of similarly motivated attacks to those in Europe, though they would lack the robust organizational structure and breeding ground that many European far right parties foment. While both Canada and Europe tend to be less religious than the American right-wing, both still display anti-Islamic sentiments which may blur the distinctions made over whether the attacks are borne of simple xenophobia or an actual clash of civilizations. Indeed, some right-wing extremists seek to set aside trans-Atlantic boundaries in favour of pan-racial unity. For example, the founder of the American Friends of the British National Party (AFBNP) declared “Although we are all nationalists, here today we are only one nationality—



white. It (immigration) is not an American fight or a British fight or a German fight. It is a *white* fight, and we have got to win it.”²⁴ The connections between Canadian and American right-wing terrorists appear even stronger.

RIGHT-WING TERRORISM IN THE UNITED STATES

The United States is no stranger to right-wing terrorism, including large scale attacks. According to the Extremis Crime Database (ECDB), there were over 370 homicides committed by far right-wing extremists in the US from 1990–2010, claiming more than 600 lives.²⁵ Another 25-year study shows that far right-wing extremists (FRE) have killed nearly four times as many people as al-Qaeda and its affiliated movement (AQAM) in the United States after removing two outlier events—the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the Oklahoma City Bombing.²⁶ Some of these homicides have occurred within the right-wing extremist movement itself. Like Canada’s right-wing extremists, the American right-wing is often fratricidal, with frequent infighting, violence, and murders.²⁷ Unlike Europe and Canada, however, American right-wing extremists are more fragmented and heavily influenced by religion, such as Christian fundamentalism.²⁸ This religious streak can lead to more involvement in religious moral debates, such as abortion. Anti-abortion terrorists have resorted to arsons, shootings, and bombings, which have often killed health workers, doctors, and others. This violence can even cross borders. For example, James Charles Kopp, who murdered Dr. Barnett Slepian in New York in October 1998, is believed to have carried out attacks in both the United States and Canada.

The bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in 1995, which killed 168 people, shocked the national conscience and led to a period of intense scrutiny by law enforcement agencies. After the Oklahoma City bombing, several organizations and right-wing leaders sought to shift attention away from antigovernment militias towards non-European immigration to expand the movement’s base and attract recruits.²⁹ There was a calculated effort to convert former members of the Patriot movement that led to growth in the white nationalist and related supremacist organizations.³⁰ This transfer of former Patriots into the ranks of white nationalist groups led to tremendous growth in the number and size of organizations in the late 1990s, which was



also aided and abetted by the growth of the Internet and increased access to white power music.³¹

The attacks of September 11, 2001 offered right-wing extremists an opportunity to re-cast their hateful anti-immigrant and anti-Islamic sentiments speech as patriotic and prudent in light of a dangerous world bent on America's destruction. The US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has noted that right-wing extremists have adopted the issue of immigration as a recruiting tool, and DHS assessed that "rightwing extremist groups' frustration over a perceived lack of government action on illegal immigration has the potential to incite individuals or small groups toward violence."³² Despite its history as a nation of immigrants, American right-wing extremist leaders decry the growth in non-European populations, globalization, and new waves of immigration as a perfect storm against their community.³³

At the national level, there was resurgence in right-wing extremism over the last decade, which has adopted concerns over immigration as a call to action and has been fuelled by the economic downturn. The FBI has identified right-wing extremist groups as the first category of serious domestic terrorist threats, and its investigations targeted groups like the Ku Klux Klan, Church of the Creator, Aryan Nations, National Alliance, and Christian Identity followers.³⁴ The election of the nation's first African-American President also motivated an explosion in the number of hate groups. Having monitored hate groups in the United States for 30 years, the Southern Poverty Law Center saw a ten-year peak reached in 2011 at 1,018 groups followed by a three-year slide to 784 hate groups in 2014, a ten-year low.³⁵ The drop in hate groups appears driven by the stigma of membership in a traditional hate group, law enforcement crackdowns, and more anonymous outlets for expressing racist beliefs on the Internet, such as white power websites like Stormfront which has doubled its membership to 300,000 users since President Obama took office.³⁶

As in Europe, sometimes mainstream politicians and political parties steal the thunder on far-right agenda items from their more radical counterparts. For example, the Southern Poverty Law Center saw the number of groups pushing for forced deportation and physically confronting illegal immigrants plummet from 319 groups in 2010 to just 19 groups in 2014, as more poli-



ticians and state legislatures lobbied for or passed stricter measures against illegal immigration.³⁷ This process has even managed to rise to the highest level of American domestic politics including the 2016 Presidential campaign, where Republican candidate Donald Trump openly discussed building a wall with Mexico and instituting a ban on allowing Muslims into the country. This type of discussion helped motivate David Duke, the former grand wizard of the Ku Klux Klan, to endorse Trump's views on immigration, breaking up "Jewish dominated lobbies and super PACS that are corrupting and controlling American politics," preventing war with Russia, exposing media "lies" and ensuring "that White-Americans are allowed to preserve and promote their heritage and interests just as all other groups are allowed to do."³⁸

American right-wing terrorists often dedicate their violence to martyrs within the movement. Examples include: the North Dakota tax protestor Gordon Kahl; The Order's Robert Mathews; and Randy Weaver's wife and son killed during an armed standoff in Idaho at Ruby Ridge.³⁹ The Branch Davidians of Waco, Texas were held as martyrs by right-wing extremists, including Timothy McVeigh, as well gun rights advocates, anti-government militia groups, and others.⁴⁰ These martyrs help to connect one area that has seen tremendous growth amongst right-wing extremists in the United States and Canada with the potential for future violence—the Sovereign Citizen movement.

THE ROOTS OF THE SOVEREIGN CITIZEN MOVEMENT

Beginning in the early 1970s with a single group—Posse Comitatus—the sovereign citizen movement matured in the 1980s during a serious recession and simultaneous farm crisis that created a pool of potential recruits.⁴¹ Posse Comitatus, which is Latin for "power of the county," was a revolutionary, anti-tax protest group. The group openly advocated eliminating state and federal income taxes, abolition of the power of judicial review by the Federal Judiciary, abolition of the Federal Reserve System, and the restoration of the gold standard. Closer scrutiny of the organization reveals a more revolutionary agenda of replacing the current Federalist system, which the group considers to be "Communist and unconstitutional," with supreme government at the county or even the individual level.⁴² These goals proceed from an eccentric interpretation of the



Posse Comitatus Act of 1878 and a belief in the superiority of the “organic Constitution” consisting only of the original Articles and the first ten Amendments (The Bill of Rights). The group’s ideology proposes the current monetary, fiscal, and banking systems are part of an anti-Christian conspiracy to defraud and enslave ordinary white Christians.⁴³

The Posse Comitatus Act passed in the wake of the American Civil War was intended to bar the federal military from intervening in local police matters. In response to President Grant’s post-Civil War efforts to use troops to guard ballot boxes and prevent election fraud, Congress ordered that such police powers rest only at the county level. Federal troops were barred from enforcing domestic laws. The legal doctrine established by the Posse Comitatus Act has become a hallmark of American democracy, keeping Presidents from sending soldiers, banana republic style, to implement policy or enforce domestic laws. Modern-day Posse adherents, a group of ultra-right wing extremists pervert the Posse Comitatus principle to mean that no citizen is bound to obey any authority higher than that of the county sheriff. Posse members practice a kind of “legal fundamentalism,” insisting on a literal reading of authoritative legal texts and dismissing interpretations of the law as corrupt distortions. Raising the Constitution to a status of near-scriptural infallibility, legal fundamentalists proclaim the government’s actions to be tyrannical and unconstitutional. Terry Nichols, a co-conspirator in the Oklahoma City bombing, practiced this belief system when he declared himself a “sovereign citizen,” thus suggesting he was no longer bound by state and federal laws. Under this status, he refused to be held accountable for any prior debts accrued, and he did not believe he was obligated to pay taxes or required to obtain driving, hunting, and marriage licenses.⁴⁴

The first Posse chapter, called the Sheriff’s Posse Comitatus or Citizens’ Law Enforcement Research Committee, was founded in Portland, Oregon in 1969 by Henry Lamont Beach. In the 1970s, a world food crisis and the resulting foreign demand for US corn, wheat, and soybeans sent crop prices soaring, but by 1981 the bubble had burst. A deep recession, coupled with high inflation and low crop prices, led to a full-fledged farm crisis, resulting in many farm foreclosures. The federal government was cast in role of chief villain behind this calamity. In the minds of many farmers, the federal government’s policies, especially those involving import expan-



sion, subsidy programs, and interest rates, were thought to have destroyed the American way of farming. Farmers lost political clout with the number of farmers dropping by 80 percent between 1960 and 1980, then comprising less than 4 percent of the electorate.⁴⁵ This drastic turn of events led many farmers into the arms of radical right-wing extremism. Gordon Kahl is the best known example of this pattern.

In January of 1983, a North Dakota farmer named Gordon Kahl traveled to Springfield, Colorado where he was joined by more than 250 other farmers in protest of a farm foreclosure sale. Kahl voiced his views: The farmers had done no wrong, but were victims—the victims of a Jewish-led, Communist-supported conspiracy that had infiltrated the US government, the judicial system and law enforcement, and was bent on destroying the Christian Republic that had been established by the Founding Fathers. On February 13, 1983, Gordon Kahl murdered two federal marshals and wounded another four in Medina, North Dakota.⁴⁶ The marshals had come to arrest Kahl for a parole violation in connection with an earlier conviction for non-payment of taxes. For nearly four months, Kahl eluded his pursuers as a fugitive with the help of Posse members scattered throughout rural America. On June 3, 1983, he engaged authorities for the last time from a fortified farmhouse outside of Smithville, Arkansas. Despite his Posse beliefs, Kahl refused to surrender to then Sheriff Gene Matthews, who was fatally-wounded during an exchange.⁴⁷ Kahl was killed after an extended fire fight by a smoke grenade which set off much of the remaining 100,000 rounds in the heavily fortified bunker. Other Posse Comitatus members have been convicted of numerous crimes including threatening the lives of Internal Revenue Service agents and judges and counterfeiting. Posse Comitatus also produced a dangerous splinter group, the Arizona Patriots. Members of this group were indicted in December 1986 for plotting to bomb the IRS regional office in Ogden, Utah.⁴⁸ Members also planned to bomb several targets in Los Angeles including the FBI office, the Simon Weisenthal Center, and two offices of the Jewish Defence League, along with a synagogue in Phoenix. After Posse Comitatus had inspired the formation of similar groups around the country, it began to fade but left behind a movement that has continued to gain new vitality.⁴⁹



SOVEREIGN CITIZENS, FREEMEN-ON-THE-LAND, AND INCREASING VIOLENCE

After the establishment of vigilante common law courts in the 1990s, the Sovereign Citizen movement has witnessed a profound resurgence that is becoming increasingly widespread and diverse across the United States and beyond.⁵⁰ This diversity is surprising given the roots of the movement in racism and anti-Semitism, which attracted many white supremacists in the early 1980s who decried alleged Zionist conspiracies controlling financial institutions and the government.⁵¹ Several of the sovereign citizen founders were unabashed white supremacists, and many of the ones who remain in the movement also follow the racist Christian Identity theology.⁵² Despite this supremacist past, there are now Sovereign Citizens followers within Asian, Hispanic, and native Hawaiian communities, and Moorish Nation sovereigns tend to be young, African-American males.⁵³ Historically, Sovereign Citizens tended to be middle-aged or older with leading figures in their 60s and 70s; however the recent resurgence has refreshed the ranks with new, younger recruits.⁵⁴

The scale and scope of the movement can be difficult to pin down. The Southern Poverty Law Center estimates 100,000 “hard core” American Sovereign Citizens along with 200,000 people involved in less intensive ways with the movement.⁵⁵ The Sovereign Citizen movement lends itself to individuals and small collectives, in that, there is no central leadership and no major organized group members can sign up to join.⁵⁶ The movement is much more de-centralized than the major right-wing extremist ideologies that came before it. The main focus of the sovereign citizen movement is the individual, making it unlike other extreme movements geared towards spawning active operational cells.⁵⁷ The pathway into sovereign citizen subculture is often via seminars or thousands of websites and online videos on the subject.⁵⁸ As a largely virtual community of like-minded individuals, the sovereign citizen movement relies on the Internet for propaganda, recruitment, and funds.⁵⁹ Another area of growth has been from prison converts, which has become a continued source for perpetuating these beliefs and making the movement’s ranks more diverse.⁶⁰ Prison officials have had limited success reducing the growth of this movement in prisons, as inmates attempt to retaliate against judges and prosecutors.⁶¹



Many Sovereign Citizens have no formal connection to any organization, and most Sovereign Citizens do not use violence.⁶² Most commonly they represent a simple nuisance or a difficult customer from which to collect payments. Sovereign Citizens do engage in naturally contentious behaviour and some practice squatters' rights by moving into vacant properties, activating utilities, and filing false documents to confirm their new ownership of the property.⁶³ Once entrenched, they can become difficult to remove and may use force to defend themselves.

Despite the inherently individualistic nature of this ideology, the sovereign citizen belief system now touches a constellation of many anti-government groups, with examples including: the Aware Group; the Moorish Nation; the North Carolina American Republic; Republic of United States of America; Sons of Liberty; Washitaw Nation; and others.⁶⁴ The sovereign citizen movement has exhibited the most rapid growth of membership and activity, including violence, amongst the recent resurgence of anti-government extremist organizations and causes.⁶⁵

The sovereign citizen movement began to appear in British Columbia, Alberta, and Saskatchewan in the late 1990s.⁶⁶ An early example includes a September 30, 1999 assault by Eldon Warman on peace officer Brian Harris during a traffic stop to check his commercial vehicle permit near Revelstoke, British Columbia. During court proceedings, Warman referred to himself as a "sovereign natural citizen of the Anglo-Saxon common law," asserting that "the inalienable personal rights recognized in 1215 and 1225 by King John and forming the subject of the written grants to King John's barons in Magna Carta remain the supreme law to which Sovereign Citizens are subject."⁶⁷

The Sovereign Citizens moved up from US into Canada, appearing as "'constitutionalists,' 'freemen,' and 'state citizens.'"⁶⁸ Sovereign Citizen theories were imported by Canadians exposed to them abroad and exported to Canada by American sovereign citizen gurus.⁶⁹ American David Wynn Miller, who espouses a bizarre syntax for use in court proceedings, held sovereign citizen seminars in Canada until he was banned from the country.⁷⁰ Given exchanges across the border and online, the Canadian sovereign citizen movement has a fairly strong presence in Canada that has experienced a similar resurgence in recent years.⁷¹ Indeed, the exchange of ideas has now



come full circle with Canadian organizations stretching back south into the United States. A sovereign citizen group established in Montreal—the Sovran Nations Embassies of Mother Earth—has spread to the United States with points of contact in California, Hawaii, Arkansas, and Montana, including a branch in Roundup, Montana which housed Montana Freeman in 1995–1996.⁷²

The sovereign citizen movement has existed for decades with a long criminal track record, but it has garnered little media attention.⁷³ There have been several historical examples of sovereign citizen related violence. For example, in 1997, Carl Drega shot dead two officers and two civilians in New Hampshire, and he wounded another three officers before being killed himself.⁷⁴ Also in 1997 in Idaho, Doug and Craig Broderick killed one police officer and wounded another before being killed themselves in a gun battle following a simple traffic stop for failing to signal.⁷⁵ In 2003 in South Carolina, the Bixby family killed two police officers in a land dispute.⁷⁶

The most recent wave of increased sovereign citizen criminal activity began in 2009, following the 2008 recession.⁷⁷ From 2010 to 2014, the US Department of Homeland Security recorded 24 law enforcement investigations into acts and threats of sovereign citizen extremist violence, which involved shootings, assaults, plots to commit violence, and credible violent threats against law enforcement, government personnel, and public officials.⁷⁸ This likely under represents the scale of the threat, since it is difficult to identify the ideological motivation behind some crimes and attacks.⁷⁹

The US Department of Homeland Security defines sovereign citizen extremists (SCE) as:

groups or individuals who facilitate or engage in acts of violence directed at public officials, financial institutions, and government facilities in support of their belief that the legitimacy of US citizenship should be rejected; that almost all forms of established government, authority, and institutions are illegitimate; and that they are immune from federal, state, and local laws.⁸⁰

Sovereign citizen extremist violence has not been limited to any one part of the country, as demonstrated on the map below:



Department of Homeland Security “Intelligence Assessment: Sovereign Citizen” p. 4.

Sovereign Citizens are atypical of most violent extremists with different targeting and tactics. Their attacks are more reactive and often aimed at specific individuals, unlike other domestic terrorists, who focus more on pure symbolism.⁸¹ According to the Department’s analysis, law enforcement officers were targeted in 83 percent (20 of 24) of violent sovereign citizen incidents, and they will likely remain the primary target given their role in physically enforcing laws through direct personal interdictions and confrontations.⁸² The Department assessed violence will occur most frequently during routine police encounters at a suspect’s home, during enforcement stops, and at government offices, and that sovereign citizen violence will remain sporadic, consisting primarily of “unplanned, reactive violence targeting law enforcement officers during active enforcement efforts.”⁸³

There is a greater concern about the growing nexus between sovereign citizen extremists and militia extremists. The Department of Homeland Security defines militia extremists as:

groups or individuals who facilitate or engage in acts of violence directed at federal, state, or local government officials or infrastructure in response to their belief that the government deliberately is stripping Americans of their freedoms and is attempting to establish a totalitarian regime. These individuals consequently oppose many federal and state authorities’ laws and regulations (particularly those related to firearms ownership), and often belong to armed paramilitary



groups. They often conduct paramilitary training designed to violently resist perceived government oppression or to violently overthrow the US Government.⁸⁴

The fear is that more proactive domestic terrorists will combine elements of sovereign citizen ideologies with militia extremism to produce a more violent, antigovernment perspective.⁸⁵ Examples of this crossover between militias and Sovereign Citizens have already been seen in the recent increase in activity. In June 2012, Alaskan militia leader and sovereign citizen Schaeffer Cox, and two others, were convicted for plotting to kill state and federal officials.⁸⁶ Even law enforcement officials themselves have become ensnared in sovereign citizen plots and intrigue. Jan Lindsey, a retired FBI agent from Nevada, pleaded guilty to tax evasion as part of a four-person sovereign citizen group arrested by the FBI in May 2009 for illegal weapons, tax evasion, and money laundering.⁸⁷

Sovereign Citizens have also been associated with terrorism hoaxes, such as the anthrax hoax against the Colorado Department of Revenue by Matthew O'Neill, who pleaded guilty to providing false information related to a terrorism offense in February 2012.⁸⁸ In April 2011, two Sovereign Citizens in Florida, Robert Chapman and John Ridge Emery III, were arrested for giving a judge at the Charlotte County Justice Center an envelope marked "bio-hazard," and they were later charged with the manufacture, possession, delivery, or attempted use or threatened use of a weapon of mass destruction.⁸⁹

US state and local law enforcement organizations have changed their view of the sovereign citizen threat over time. According to a 2006-07 survey of state and local law enforcement agencies, Islamic extremists represented the number one perceived threat within the United States and Sovereign Citizens were ranked as eighth.⁹⁰ A similar survey conducted in 2013-14 showed that law enforcement's top extremist concern was Sovereign Citizens.⁹¹ In that survey, 52 percent of respondents agreed and 34 percent strongly agreed that Sovereign Citizens were a serious terrorist, compared with the 39 percent of respondents who agreed and 28 percent who strongly agreed that Islamic extremists were a serious terrorist threat.⁹²

American Sovereign Citizens are also providing the potential for increased violence in



Canada. For example, US Sovereign Citizen Glenn Winningham Fearn was arrested by the Canadian Border Services Agency at the Coutts border crossing for attempting to bring overcapacity rifle magazines and other weapons into Canada on October 11, 2013. During his trial he claimed that he could have used lethal force against Canadian Customs Officers if arrested unlawfully.⁹³ Likewise, the threat of potential violence from Canadian Sovereign Citizens has also stretched south back into the United States. In June 2010, American customs officials removed Donald Roy Fehr, a Canadian sovereign citizen living in Montana, after he joined the “County Rangers,” threatened a local justice of the peace, and had begun to attend local government meetings wearing a uniform sporting a badge and carrying a holstered pistol.⁹⁴

Sovereign citizen beliefs are now shared by the Freemen-on-the-Land movement.⁹⁵ The Freemen-on-the-Land movement is a Canadian anti-government creation featuring similar right-wing overtones and Christian rhetoric, and it largely parallels the sovereign citizen movement in the United States.⁹⁶ Freemen-on-the-Land tenets focus more on international maritime law and contracts, and this belief system has spread to other common-law jurisdictions like the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand.⁹⁷

In 2011, Freemen-on-the-Land inspired actions appeared in the United Kingdom when a number of protesters espousing Freeman-related concepts attempted to arrest a Merseyside judge, claiming the court was operating under maritime law and that Magna Carta rights had to be maintained.⁹⁸ Some Sovereign Citizens also view the government, law enforcement, and the courts as commercial entities that cannot compel their participation in a contract, and they believe they have unfettered authority to travel “on the land” and avoid paying taxes and fees.⁹⁹ Freemen-on-the-Land believe that they can remove the government’s jurisdiction over them by revoking “contracts” — driver’s license, social security numbers, birth certificates, and other documents.¹⁰⁰

Like the Department of Homeland Security, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service has also noted an increase in the number of anti-government incidents related to Freemen-on-the-Land since 2010.¹⁰¹ Like American Sovereign Citizens, they claim an unrestricted right to possess



and use firearms.¹⁰² Many Canadian Freemen-on-the-Land express the right to defend themselves—including the use of deadly force—if confronted by a State agent, such as a police officer.¹⁰³ An example of this type of Freemen deadly threat came in 2011, when Daren McCormick was arrested on firearm violations as well as uttering threats to police officers, claiming that if a police cruiser appeared on his property he would kill the officers within it.

Open source estimates of the size of the Freemen-on-the-Land community in Canada is 30,000 people.¹⁰⁴ The potential for violence from individual Freemen-on-the-Land within Canada has risen to the point that even utility operators and law societies have begun warning about personal and public safety issues.¹⁰⁵ Though Canadian Freemen-on-the-Land have appeared less violent than American Sovereign Citizens, the similarity in beliefs and behaviour suggest the same possibility for reactive violence and disruptive action.¹⁰⁶ For example, Norman Walter Raddatz, who espoused Freemen-on-the-Land and anti-Semitic beliefs, killed Constable Daniel Woodall and wounded Sergeant Jason Harley while they were serving a warrant for failure to appear in court, firing over 50 bullets from his Edmonton home on June 8, 2015 before being killed himself.¹⁰⁷ Justin Bourque's June 4, 2014 Moncton, New Brunswick ambush of police, which was also motivated by anti-authoritarian and pro-gun beliefs, may also be considered to fit within the spectrum of the Freemen-on-the-Land movement.¹⁰⁸

RIGHT-WING EXTREMISM AND TERRORISM IN CANADA

The Canadian Security Intelligence Service continues to assess that “Canadian domestic extremists are capable of orchestrating serious acts of politically-motivated violence.”¹⁰⁹ At least 100 right-wing extremist groups have been active in Canada in recent years, ranging from small cells to dozens of individuals.¹¹⁰ Despite the number of groups and individuals involved, CSIS officials have maintained that “Right-wing extremist circles appear to be fragmented and primarily pose a threat to public order and not to national security.”¹¹¹ CSIS also suggested that neo-Nazi and white supremacist ideologies remain more on the fringes of Canadian society, noting that the majority of Canadians holding strong racist and anti-immigration views opt for organizing anti-immigration poster campaigns or harass Canadian Aboriginals or visible minorities in place



of committing serious acts of violence.¹¹² There are active right-wing attacks too against targets such as Aboriginal Canadians. For example, on January 13, 2015, an arson attack on the Mamalilikulla-Qwe'Qwa'Sot'Em band's office on Northern Vancouver Island caused \$40,000 in damage and was accompanied by racist graffiti inside the office.¹¹³ This assessment is not necessarily shared at all levels of government. In 2014, a lieutenant from the Sûreté du Québec domestic terrorism division told a parliamentary committee a majority of the provincial service's active files deal with the extreme right.¹¹⁴ Far-right extremists are not always shy in Canada. For example, multiple 2014 municipal elections in Ontario featured candidates like John Beattie, founder of the Canadian Nazi Party.¹¹⁵ Starting in the 1960s, the Canadian Nazi Party garnered significant attention with its outdoor rallies at Allan Gardens in Toronto that drew crowds of close to 5,000 people.¹¹⁶

It is easy to overlook right-wing extremists in Canada given its seeming tranquility compared to the United States. Terrorism researchers have noted that information on this problem is disconnected and highly localized, making for a piecemeal national perspective on the threat posed by right-wing extremists in Canada.¹¹⁷ Cumulative data, however, suggests a significant movement does exist that, though diffuse, may involve more people than previous estimates may suggest.¹¹⁸ In terms of violence in Canada, the torch has passed to the Blood & Honour (Aryan Guard) as the most active and violent group, though the Ku Klux Klan and World Church of the Creator have remained active along with the neo-Nazi skinheads in Quebec.¹¹⁹

According to the Canadian Incident Database, supremacist extremist incidents since 2001 have primarily been concentrated in the province of Alberta (n=20), but have also occurred in Ontario (n=13), British Columbia (n=6), and Quebec (n=5). These incidents typically involve unarmed or armed assaults (n=32), and appear to be isolated and spontaneous incidents targeting individuals with specific racial or religious identities. One exception is a coordinated event on May 22, 2008 where 20 supremacists attacked Kurdish individuals at a café in Edmonton. Incidents recorded in the database show that supremacist incidents typically involve a lone-individual or a small group of three to five individuals (86 percent of all incidents). Only two outlier cases of an incident with 10 people and one with 20 people are recorded in the database. Right-wing



incidents are often conducted by individuals affiliated with white supremacist groups, including the Neo-Nazis (n=7), Aryan Guard (n=6), Blood & Honour (n=3), Western European Bloodlines (n=2) as well as isolated incidents perpetrated on behalf of the Hammer Heads, Northwest Imperative, The White Boy Posse, True White Boys, and Vinland Front Skinheads. Supremacists have perpetrated an average of 3.3 incidents per year, and incidents have been steadily rising from 2003.

Far from the mass casualty incidents seen in the United States and Europe, right-wing terrorism in Canada thus far has been much less lethal and occurs on a smaller scale. Attacks tend to be individualistic rather than collective, with both the perpetrators and the intended targets consisting of a handful of individuals.¹²⁰ Shying away from mass casualty attacks may be due to the less religious character of the ideologies driving terrorism in Canada. Researchers have noted that Canadian religious right-wing extremists in no way resemble the ferocity of their American counterparts and make very little impact.¹²¹ The violence also involves less coordination and sophistication. Canadian right-wing extremist violence often involves infrequent, unplanned, and opportunistic attacks, which differs from the methodical and well-planned terrorism seen abroad.¹²² Still, the individualistic nature of this does not necessarily offer protection against larger scale violence perpetrated by lone wolf terrorists. Even CSIS noted that the July 22, 2011 attacks in Norway are an example of how effective a lone actor can be, particularly with sharing tradecraft with future assailants. Breivik's extensive manifesto provides a detailed how-to guide for planning attacks from research through bomb assembly to execution of the final attack.¹²³

Signals suggest the right-wing terrorist threat is continuing to evolve. There have been increasing intelligence signals that right-wing extremists have joined the Canadian Armed Forces.¹²⁴ Other right-wing extremists have also become or joined forces with violent drug and biker gangs.¹²⁵ These avenues provide new opportunities to increase tactical knowledge, provide access to more powerful weaponry, and develop covert networks with which to conceal activities.



THE FUTURE OF RIGHT-WING TERRORISM IN CANADA

Future analyses are always fraught with challenges. It can be exceedingly difficult to isolate what aspects and major continuing trends from the past and the present should be brought forward into the futures.¹²⁶ Forecasts often cannot predict or overlook the potential for new disruptive technologies and social movements. As noted by futures researcher Dr. Jim Dator (2009):

If “terrorism” dominates concerns now, “terrorism” will also fill the future. If we are worried about “energy” now, then “energy” will be our main worry in the future, most people will feel. But if “terrorism” and “energy” are not current concerns, it will be difficult to get people to imagine it might be important for them to think about them for the futures...and so on.”¹²⁷

While based upon a theoretical model, it is important to recognize the limits of any forecast. There is no single future “out there” that can be accurately identified beforehand, since most estimates are merely a presumption that the current state of affairs will continue.¹²⁸ It is entirely possible that an unforeseen political, social, or economic circumstance could produce a discontinuity amongst these types of fringe actors that dramatically transforms the character of their activities.

Nonetheless, Canada has many of the same basic ingredients that drive right-wing terrorism in both the United States and Europe. However, Canada has yet to experience a similar rise in violence of matching frequency, intensity and scale. The following scenarios offer competing futures which could describe the right-wing terrorism threat environment in Canada in the coming decade:

- I) Right-Wing Terrorism Will Be Episodic;
- II) There Will Be a Large-Scale Right-Wing Terrorist Attack or Series of Attacks;
- III) A Large Attack or Intervention Will Motivate Reciprocal Radicalization of Right-Wing Terrorists; and
- IV) Right-Wing Terrorists Will Be Subsumed into Other Activities.

These four possible futures also follow the Defence Threat Reduction Agency’s Advanced Systems and Concepts Office methodology for examining competing and complementary hypothe-



ses for homeland attack frequency. Not all of these futures are necessarily mutually exclusive.

Future I) Right-Wing Terrorism Will Be Episodic

This scenario represents a status quo future assessment wherein Canadian right-wing terrorism does not coalesce into a major campaign of violence and remains the purview of isolated individuals and groups. In this scenario, Canadian right-wing terrorists do not operationalize their existing connections with American and European organizations to import violence. This represents the future described in public statements by national security intelligence agencies, which presumes Canadian right-wing terrorists lack the capability, intent, sophistication, or organization of their counterparts abroad.

Presuming Canadian right-wing terrorism remains largely a random, small-scale affair, there is arguably little that can be done from a policing and intelligence perspective to guard against it. Canadian terrorism, however, often moves in patterns, and historians have observed distinct periods or waves of right-wing terrorism in Canada. Stanley Barrett designated these periods as: 1) the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s; 2) Pre-World War II (WWII) fascism; 3) Neo-Nazism in the 1960s; and 4) Neo-fascism in the 1970s and 1980s (during which 45 right-wing extremist organizations formed).¹²⁹ Jeffrey Ian Ross described the four waves following WWII as: 1) Edmund Burke Society attacks of the mid-1960s; 2) Western Guard attacks against Communists in the late 1960s; 3) Ku Klux Klan attacks during the mid-1970s and early 1980s; and 4) Skinheads attacks against visible minorities, Jews, and homosexuals.¹³⁰

A fifth wave of right-wing terrorist attacks might reform through the merger of militant anti-immigrant, anti-Islamic, and Freemen-on-the-Land-style adherents. There has been no information to suggest the number of individuals associated with these elements are currently decreasing, at least leaving the potential for an amalgamation to occur, presuming charismatic leadership emerges to galvanize these disparate pockets of discontent.



Future II) There Will Be a Large-Scale Right-Wing Terrorist Attack or Series of Attacks

This scenario represents a future wherein Canadian right-wing terrorists perpetrate (or are perceived to have perpetrated) a mass-casualty event or significant campaign of attacks. This future represents a discontinuity with the past, as Canada has little experience with mass casualty events outside of the Air India bombing. The major factor limiting this scenario is mostly the intent of the organization or individual, since the elements to carry out a large-scale truck or car-bombing or well-armed assault are available in Canada.

A major right-wing attack in Canada would likely have very different impacts than one committed abroad, such as the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing in the United States. Canada's right-wing terrorists are not monitored as closely, and the investigative response could easily be hindered by the lack of domestic terrorism security intelligence due to years of low priority. The likely slowed response could provide a window for escape or a follow-on attack. Indeed, Canadian right-wing terrorists may be emboldened by the lack of a visible police presence.¹³¹

The presumed impotence of Canadian right-wing terrorists is mostly ascribed to their track record of smaller, less sophisticated violence. Though perfectly logical, it is imprudent to presume that pattern will hold simply because it has before. It may be that future terrorists simply lack a role model that has achieved a victory in the cause with which some any of them identify.

A major right-wing attack or series of attacks could produce a backlash against groups associated with these ideas, but this too may add fuel to their beliefs that they are in an existential conflict with other cultures, ethnicities, or against their own government.

Future III) A Large Attack or Intervention Will Motivate Reciprocal Radicalization of Right-Wing Terrorists

This scenario represents a future wherein another group—such as The Islamic State (ISIS) or al-Qaeda—perpetrates an attack within Canada which radicalizes right-wing terrorist cells to form in order to attack targets perceived to be associated with the organization. It is very com-



mon for right-wing groups and individuals to lash out at religious, cultural, and ethnic targets and visible minorities following attacks abroad. This occurred in Canada following the November 13, 2015 attacks in France, as well as following 9/11 attacks in the United States. Given this track record, it is reasonable to posit a major attack within Canada by a group like ISIS could motivate heretofore less active groups to perpetrate a more systematic campaign of “retaliatory” violence.

Conversely, right-wing violence may also be motivated by government actions. There is some history of heavy-handed security interventions into political and land disputes within Canada. It is possible that a dispute aimed at a Freemen-on-the-Land or fringe religious community could become a flashpoint for right-wing terrorism as happened in the United States. For example, the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing was motivated by the botched 1992 attempt to arrest Randy Weaver in Ruby Ridge, which killed his son and pregnant wife; and the 1993 assault and 3-month siege in Waco, which killed 76 men, women, and children in the Branch Davidian compound.

Right-wing violence in Canada is often described as reactionary. As such, it is quite possible the main ingredient missing in producing the more robust movements and activity seen in the United States and Europe is simply the lack of a major attack by another external or homegrown organization or a security operation gone awry. In other words, they haven’t had a significant enough stimulus to prompt a reaction.

Despite their anti-government views, many right-wing extremists display a chauvinism that is activated in the face of foreign threats. A large-scale attack by an externally based threat like ISIS could spur a call for the kinds of attempted purges seen in Europe or targeted killings intended to scare perceived representatives of connected communities by demonstrating they are no longer safe.



Future IV) Right-Wing Terrorists Will Be Subsumed into Other Activities

This scenario represents a future wherein the majority of potential right-wing terrorists choose to lay down arms or become drawn into more simplistic criminal or other pursuits. As organizations mature, it is not unusual to see the original leadership begin to shy away from violence, either in order to avoid prison or to gain other benefits. Competitions often break out over attempts to control the business interests associated with these movements. For example, both Canadian and American supremacist organizations developed significant internal rifts over the profits associated with white power music. Indeed, much of the lethal right-wing violence in the Canada and the United States occurs within the groups.¹³²

While some right-wing terrorists may be consumed through internal strife, others may opt simply to disengage from violence or de-radicalize entirely for any number of social, psychological, or economic factors. Another avenue for right-wing terrorists is enrolment in military service, where they gain access to opportunities to develop their skills and sometimes find others who share their skewed beliefs. The existence of this connection is borne out in research, and found to be present at both the leadership level and in enlisted ranks. Right-wing terrorist organizations are more likely to attract recruits with a history of military service than any other type of domestic terrorist groups over the last 25 years, and in the United States, convicted right-wing extremists disproportionately possess military experience.¹³³

Though right-wing extremists are joining criminal and drug gangs, there still remains a large enough number of groups and individuals involved in the movement to produce attacks. The size of the Freemen-on-the-Land community and its potential for further violence suggests there will continue to be right-wing violence in Canada's future.

Recent political changes suggest those on the far right may have fewer opportunities to vent their political beliefs and may choose to disconnect from society. These types of disconnected individuals and groups are sometimes associated with larger incidents of violence, as they can dehumanize their enemy without the constraints of moderating their beliefs and attacks to make them palatable for a larger group.



ASSESSMENT AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Canada's far-right is undoubtedly distinct from Europe. In Europe, German anti-immigrant parties such as the Alternative for Germany (AfD) are achieving victories in state elections, and mass anti-immigrant rallies are beginning to attract thousands of protesters as Germany has attempted to integrate some 1.1 million migrants who arrived in 2015. Indeed, AfD leader Frauke Petry said Germany should create "border protection installations" and police forces should shoot refugees trying to enter the country illegally.¹³⁴ In Canada, on the other hand, recent integration of refugees from Syria has largely been lauded politically across the political spectrum. A tinge of violence remains however. On January 9, 2016, an unknown man pepper-sprayed a group of 15 newly arrived Syrian refugees amongst a crowd of 100 people gathered outside of the Muslim Association of Canada Centre in Vancouver for a welcoming ceremony.¹³⁵ It is difficult to determine if this incident represents a mere outlier or a bellwether of more anti-Islamic and anti-immigrant attacks to come. Regardless, the future of Canada's right-wing terrorism will be dissimilar from European terrorism, since there are not the political parties and wider communal blocs present to produce and hide violent actors in their midst.

There have been deadly campaigns of anti-immigrant terrorism in Canada's past however. One need only look at the deadly series of arsons and murders of East Indians in the early 1980s in and around Vancouver, which was followed by an improvised explosive device with shrapnel that targeted a Canadian Immigration Centre office in Surrey in 1986. The device was accompanied by a note which opposed Third World immigration into Canada.

Likewise, Canadian right-wing terrorism is not disconnected from events in Europe. Shortly following the ISIS Paris attacks on November 13, 2015 an unknown perpetrator carried out an arson attack on the Masjid Al-Salaam, "Mosque of Peace" of the Kawartha Muslim Religious Association during a birth celebration in Peterborough, Ontario. There were no injuries, but the fire caused more than \$80,000 in damage.¹³⁶ The targets are often not precise. On November 14, 2015, the Kitchener Ram Dham Hindu temple windows were broken by rocks thrown by unknown perpetrators during a prayer vigil for victims of the Paris attacks.



The connections between American and Canadian right-wing terrorists are even stronger, and the future of Canadian right-wing terrorism may look like a less well-armed version of the American movement. Though Canadian right-wing extremists tend to be less religious, it does not mean that a fringe religious community could not take hold. One should not forget Canada's role in developing the prevalent Christian Identity movement, including the introduction of these anti-Semitic ideas to the Ku Klux Klan.¹³⁷ This "theology" has connected a wide variety of right-wing terrorist groups, including Aryan Nations, neo-Nazis, skinheads, and others.¹³⁸

The interplay between Canadian Freeman-on-the-Land and American Sovereign Citizens may encourage attempts to develop autonomous compounds. This is not without precedent. In the 1980s, Terry Long of the Aryan Nations came to Caroline, Alberta to try to develop a training camp.¹³⁹ Terry Long's Alberta Aryan Nations collapsed when a man attacked by skinheads filed a successful lawsuit against the organization. Land disputes or government monitoring of such a compound might produce a large scale standoff or reactionary incident.

The resurgence amongst Sovereign Citizens as a source for anti-government violence and the increasing evidence of cross-border attempts to bring weapons, tactics, and violent individuals into Canada suggest the future of Canadian right-wing terrorism may begin to follow a similar pattern. In the United States, the far right are becoming more vocal and involved in discussions as conservative political candidates make anti-immigrant and anti-Islamic issues appear "mainstream." Indeed, white supremacists are openly attending US Presidential rallies, which have become occasionally violent affairs.

Based on current evidence, which of the scenarios seems most likely? Scenario IV seems least likely, since there still seem to be a sufficient number of far right extremists to continue to commit a relatively steady number of right-wing terrorist and extremist events, according to figures from the Canadian Incident Database. Scenario II seems less likely, since the ingredients for this type of large-scale event have yet to coalesce of their own accord. It must be stressed that this could easily be reversed by a small cell or a lone operator dedicated to wreaking havoc like Timothy McVeigh in Oklahoma City or Anders Breivik in Norway. Scenario I seems more likely



based purely on projections from history into the future. Canada, however, will look much different in the future, based on immigration patterns and economic changes.

Scenario III seems the most likely. This is for a number of factors. First, Canadian right-wing terrorists are often reactionary with their attacks. Second, the technology and tactics for carrying out larger scale attacks are more now readily available and easy to share. Third, as the lethal barriers to individual actors decrease, the probably that one can employ more sophisticated arms and tactics more effectively likely increase. Fourth, the current political changes and upcoming social and demographic shifts are likely to aggravate right-wing terrorists perhaps more than any other ideologically identifiable domestic extremist group in Canada, and as such it is difficult to believe that it will not produce some form of departure from historical violence. Fifth, to the extent that Europe and the United States right-wing movements do connect with Canada, they offer inspiration, resources, tactics, weapons, and human resources, which may increase the opportunities for Canadian groups to expand their scope of activities.

It is suggested that a large-scale attack within Canada would likely prompt a larger response from right-wing actors, as has been the case in the European context. For example, there was a wave of right-wing attacks following the murder and beheading of Lee Rigby on May 22, 2013 in the UK, producing many arsons and bombings of Islamic Centres. Similarly, the greater interchange between Sovereign Citizens, Patriots, and Freemen-on-the-Land could prompt a reactive right-wing standoff in Canada similar to Waco or an attack like the Oklahoma City bombing. Disquieting as it may seem, futures analyses are intended to consider alternative possible outcomes without being bound to a simple extrapolation of historical data alone.

Presuming a more resilient right-wing terrorist organization or movement may be around the corner in Canada's future, which actions may mitigate the threat? What does this mean for those must make tough resource decisions in tracking all threats within Canada?

First, Canadian security agencies should reconsider their public stances on the potential for violence from right-wing terrorists. Given data on attacks in the United States and Canada on terrorism and extremism, there is nothing to suggest that right-wing organizations and lone



wolves are not capable of violence. Indeed, the threat from lone wolves in the United States has been consistent over the last two decades, and it represents a substantial proportion of American attacks.¹⁴⁰ The Department of Homeland Security assessed that “the threat posed by lone wolves and small terrorist cells is more pronounced than in past years,” and that “[W]hite supremacist lone wolves pose the most significant domestic terrorist threat because of their low profile and autonomy—separate from any formalized group—which hampers warning efforts.”¹⁴¹ It remains a mystery why Canada largely continues to discount the domestic threat from lone wolf right-wing terrorists.

Second, Canada should do more to examine right-wing attacks against immigrants and make these communities more resilient. These attacks can prove corrosive over time, and they may represent signals of increasing violence to come. Likewise, previous waves of right-wing violence often began as mere harassment and escalated to lethal arsons and attacks. It remains possible that reciprocal radicalization may also occur, wherein right-wing violence begets the radicalization and formation of immigrant defensive organizations which begets more reactionary violence between the groups. Immigrant communities are particularly vulnerable to attack, and they should be assured of their safety.

Third, Canada should prepare more for standoffs with Freemen-on-the-Land and similar anti-government adherents. The 2015 violent Edmonton episode with Norman Raddatz and the 2014 Moncton attack by Justin Bourque suggest the Freemen-on-the-Land adherents and ideological fellow travelers might be becoming more inclined to act out on their anti-government beliefs. The history of extended standoffs in the United States suggests that some of these tactics may be imported into Canada. Freemen-on-the-Land in Canada may seek to insert themselves into local disputes like American Sovereign Citizens have begun to do, as occurred during the 41-day armed occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in 2016.¹⁴² A similar standoff in Canada could produce a strong backlash of further anti-government attacks, like seen after Ruby Ridge and Waco. As seen with environmentalist encounters too, a standoff can quickly bring in outside influence, financial support, and direction to escalate isolated local issues into national ones.¹⁴³



Fourth, Canada should realize that its multicultural distinctiveness, well-educated population, and progressive, secular political culture act as powerful bulwarks to large scale far right movements like those seen in the United States and Europe. They do not, however, insulate the country completely. Though there is clearly some incongruity between Canadian right-wing terrorist activity and that of Europe and the United States, Canada's right-wing seems ineluctably influenced by events and actors there suggesting vigilance must be maintained in monitoring the interchanges between extremists across the southern border and overseas. The uniqueness of the future of right-wing terrorism in Canada will undoubtedly be effected by the interplay of social, economic, and political adjustments made as the demography shifts with the integration of more immigrants. The far right represent those most poised to desperately struggle against these changes and may take up arms to undermine this growing diversity.

Canada's greatest protection against the scourge of right-wing terrorism will be the continued defence of its democratic ideals and a commitment to stand on guard against all threats, foreign and domestic.



(Endnotes)

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- 49 Anti-Defamation League Lawless Ones p. 3.
- 50 Anti-Defamation League Lawless Ones p. 3.
- 51 Southern Poverty Law Center Sovereign p. 1.



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- 53 Anti-Defamation League Lawless Ones p. 11; Crowell p. 3.
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- 60 Southern Poverty Law Center Sovereign p. 2; Crowell p. 3
- 61 Anti-Defamation League Lawless Ones p. iii.
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