Analyzing the Freedom Convoy Through Demand and Supply-Side Perspectives in Far-Right Literature

by

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Abstract

This thesis explores the Freedom Convoy (FC) movement by connecting it to the extensive literature on the recent far-right phenomenon, including extreme, radical, and populist variants. The FC (January 22nd to February 23rd, 2022) involved a number of Canada-wide protests targeting large cities, smaller communities, border-crossing points with the United States (US), and most importantly, the city of Ottawa, where the protest turned into a nearly month-long occupation. The FC, which differs from typical party-based far-right examples, serves as a unique case of far-right mobilization. Although the FC's connection to the far-right movement has been established through mutual activists and organizations, no comprehensive analysis has previously connected far-right research to the FC. This study will address this gap using far-right literature. Although Eurocentric and party-centered, far-right literature provides valuable insights into protest-based and non-Eurocentric far-right movements, such as the FC. The methodology of this study will thus involve a thematic review of far-right literature, highlighting the importance of studying non-European and protest-based movements within the context of far-right literature. Additionally, this study examines how the FC was shaped by the COVID-19 pandemic and social media.

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Abbreviations

CD	Centre Democrats/Centrum Democraten
CTA	Canadian Trucking Alliance
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease of 2019
ERPs	Extreme Right Parties
EU	European Union
FC	Freedom Convoy
FDI	Foreign direct investment
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NDP	New Democratic Party
RCMP	Royal Canadian Mounted Police
RRWP	Radical right-wing populist
REP	The Republicans/ Die Republikaner
PRRP	Populist Radical Right Parties
UK	United Kingdom
UKIP	United Kingdom Independence Party
UN	United Nations
US	United States
VB	Vlaams Belang

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1.Research Problem

Until not long ago, in 2017, people still considered Canada a successful example of resistance against a right-wing populist breakthrough affecting both sides of the Atlantic, due to its multicultural identity, pro-diversity consensus, and pro-immigration policies (Taub, 2017). Nevertheless, the 2022 Freedom Convoy (FC) protest has shaken this image of Canada's successful resistance against the far-right, as it has demonstrated its capacity to jam the political and economic arteries of the country for nearly a month. This raises important questions concerning the future of Canadian politics, as well as of the far-right as a global political actor. While the FC constitutes an important current example of a successful far-right social mobilization, the link between the extensive far-right literature and this social movement has been missing, as studies concerned with European political parties dominate the far-right literature.

1.2.Background

The re-emergence and rise of far-right politics, including radical, extreme, and right-wing populist parties, movements, and ideas, has been a defining feature of contemporary politics since the mid-1980s. While initially characterized by the gradual and steady entrance of far-right parties into national parliaments in Europe in oppositional positions (Mudde, 2019, p. 25), recent years have witnessed two major developments within the movement. Firstly, there has been a global spread of far-right politics, increasing its influence outside of Europe, across nations from Brazil to India. Secondly, far-right politics has gathered enough momentum to move beyond its traditional 'fringe/oppositional' positions as demonstrated by the improving electoral successes

of the far-right political actors, increasing their vote share, and winning elections. Even in states where these parties have failed to become ruling parties, not only have their electoral performances improved, but the influence of far-right politics has also exceeded these parties' mere electoral success. For instance, their once-fringe notions have become a familiar part of political discussions, such as their reactionary positions against immigrants, elites, the media, and international organizations. Hence, today, as Anievas and Saull (2023, p. 715) state, "The far-right has become a normalized, endemic, and globally pronounced feature of contemporary world politics" constituting a major global political actor.

As the far-right's political influence has spread globally and emerged as one of the main actors in contemporary politics, scholarly interest in comprehending this new phenomenon and the factors leading to these parties and movements' increasing visibility and electoral success has also grown in the last forty years. In fact, according to Mudde (2016, p. 2), there has been a greater volume of work concerning far-right parties than all other political party families combined in this period. Still, while numerous studies have contributed to the understanding of the far-right, Castelli Gattinara (2020) states that the main currents within the study of the far-right remain disproportionately Eurocentric, party-centered, and reliant on externalist methodologies, such as data from the European Social Survey, rather than primary data gathered from insider observation.

1.3.The Freedom Convoy

A recent and still understudied example of a far-right social mobilization occurred in Canada in early 2022. The FC (January 22nd to February 23rd, 2022) involved a number of Canada-wide protests targeting large cities, smaller communities, border-crossing points with the United States

(US), and most importantly, the city of Ottawa, where the protest turned into a nearly month-long occupation. These protests notably impacted the daily lives of countless Canadians and were fittingly described as a 'nationwide insurrection' by Ottawa city councillor Diane Deans (Dean, 2022).

At its peak, it was estimated that there were thousands of protesters, ranging between 5,000 to 18,000 people, (CBC News, 2022a)and hundreds of trucks and personal vehicles in Ottawa (Duffy, 2022) (France24, 2022a). Due to the occupation and its constant honking and disregard for COVID-19 safety, many Ottawa businesses were forced to close (CBC News, 2022b). Furthermore, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and his family needed to relocate to an undisclosed location due to the security concerns caused by the Convoy (Tasker, 2022).

The most substantial protests outside of Ottawa occurred in some of the key border crossings where protestors participated in slow roll protests, such as Emerson, Manitoba (Rouleau, 2023), or blocked borders to traffic, such as Sweetgrass-Coutts Border Crossing and the Ambassador Bridge (Public Safety Canada, 2022). Transport Canada estimated that the interruption to trade caused by the convoy costed $3.9 billion to the Canadian economy (Osman and Fraser, 2022).

The convoy was answered in the form of states of emergency by different levels of government. The first state of emergency was declared by Ottawa Mayor Watson on the 10th day of the occupation on February 6, 2022. The mayor stated this decision "reflects the serious danger and threat to the safety and security of residents posed by the ongoing demonstrations and highlights the need for support from other jurisdictions and levels of government" (Hasberg and Ljunggren, 2022). He accepted that the police force was outnumbered and losing the battle against the protestors (France24, 2022b). Ontario Premier Dough Ford also declared a state of emergency for Ontario on February 11 (Carter, 2022). Following this, by February 13, 2022, the

Ambassador Bridge was opened (Tarnowski et al. 2022). Some protestors were arrested and some vehicles were seized (Tarnowski et al. 2022). Still, the occupation in Ottawa persisted. In order to deal with protests, particularly with the occupation of Ottawa, the Trudeau government invoked the Emergencies Act for the first time since its passing in 1988, on February 14, 2022 (Government of Canada, 2022) and lifted it on February 23, 2022 (Boisvert, 2022). The Emergencies Act gave the government the right to prohibit public assemblies, designate secure places, and order banks to freeze the assets of and ban support for Convoy organizers (Bronskill, 2023).

Over the weekend of February 17 to 20, police began to reclaim Parliament Hill. Protestors were pushed back and the downtown Ottawa streets were cleansed from the blockages. Police forces established checkpoints and closed some downtown streets to traffic to ensure that protestors would not return (CBC News, 2022c). Nearly 200 protestors were arrested (CBC News, 2022c). 389 charges were laid against 103 of the protestors, including top organizers (CBC News, 2022c). 79 vehicles were towed and 36 license plates were seized (CBC News, 2022c). More than 200 bank accounts whose total reached up to CA$8 million were frozen by this emergency power (Zimonjic, 2022).

While the protestors were motivated by various factors, the tipping point that brought the organizers together and helped them to gather such a sizable crowd was the COVID-19 mandates, particularly those affecting truckers, even though a significant portion of the protestors lacked a connection with the trucking industry (Canadian Trucking Alliance, 2022a). Throughout the pandemic, essential workers, including truckers, were not required to comply with regulations imposed on other travelers crossing the US-Canadian border (Prime Minister of Canada Justin Trudeau, 2020) (Canadian Trucking Alliance, 2021). However, starting on

January 15, 2022, in Canada and on January 22, 2022, in the US, these exemptions were lifted, requiring all essential workers to be vaccinated to cross the border (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2021) (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2022).

The backlash against the new mandates on truckers in particular, and the COVID-19 restrictions in general, generated enough momentum to rally and mobilize like-minded individuals who had already gathered in online communities opposing mandates, vaccines, and masks. However, these communities in Canada had also been filled with far-right notions since the onset of the pandemic (PressProgress, 2020), turning COVID-19 into a new ideological battleground for the far-right. In fact, the link between far-right ideology and negative attitudes toward COVID-19 mandates has been a popular topic studied across various countries. For instance, Küppers and Reiser (2022) illustrate that ideology was a crucial driver in shaping people's views on the COVID-19 pandemic, linking COVID-19 skepticism with far-right attitudes based on their study in Thuringia, Germany. Similarly, in his study focusing on the US, Peng (2022) showcases that libertarianism and right-wing authoritarianism affect support for vaccine mandates, vaccine acceptance, and penalizing unvaccinated individuals negatively. Moreover, Winter et al. (2022) claim that COVID-19 conspiracy beliefs and higher vaccine hesitancy are more common among right-wing supporters with low trust in science compared to both left-wing supporters and right-wing supporters with higher trust in science in New Zealand. Finally, based on a content analysis of vaccine-hesitant English tweets, Thelwall et al. (2021) state that nearly 80% of the tweets in their sample articulated right-wing views, apprehension about a deep state, or conspiracy theories.

Thus, in parallel to the articulation of the COVID-19 issue by the far-right, Davies et al., (2023) argue that following the declaration of the COVID-19 pandemic, posting behavior

intensified within right-wing extremist forums, whereas the same is not observed in left-wing or even jihadist forums, based on their segmented regression analyses of extremist forums. Suspicion towards politicians, the media, the international community, and even scientists – which could be described as anti-establishment rhetoric against elites – along with a desire to limit the state's power over what is considered private, as state intervention is seen as a step towards 'communism' or 'tyranny' (Clyde Do Something, 2023), prioritizing freedom over responsibilities, discontent against the government (as well as opposition), propagation of conspiracy theories as an alternative to common sense, nativist and even racist arguments, and overall anti-system tendencies were prevalent in these online spaces.

In Canada, the COVID-19 mandates acted as a catalyst, fueling resentment and uniting far-right voices. These extraordinary measures taken during COVID-19 exacerbated an already brewing tension, materializing this tendency in the FC. Hence, when Brigitte Belton, an unvaccinated Canadian trucker who identifies herself as a "pureblood" due to her vaccination status (Belton, 2021), became active on social media, particularly TikTok, expressing her desire to protest against the new mandates, she quickly found herself connecting with others sharing the same anti-mandates/far-right online space. In her TikTok post on January 2, 2022 (Belton, 2022), she started calling Canadians, both vaccinated and unvaccinated, to protests against 'lookdowns (sic) and overarching government mandates' and 'fight for freedom'. According to Chris Barber, a vaccinated small-sized trucking company owner and a popular far-right 'internet troll', an online communication started between him and Belton on January 7 or 8, during which Belton invited him to join her in her efforts to organize a protest against mandates (CTV News, 2022). Shortly thereafter, several key organizers joined the effort, including James Bauder (Leedham, 2022a), the co-founder of Canada Unity and a known internet conspiracy theorist, Patrick King

(Canadian Anti-Hate Network, 2020) (The Fifth Estate, 2022) , a popular far-right internet personality and activist who participated in Canadian Yellow Vest Protest (also known as United We Roll—a series of protests merging anti-carbon tax sentiments with far-right elements) as well as anti-antiracist protests in Red Deer (Storrie, 2020), and Tamara Lich, an ex-Maverick Party member, and far-right activist who also attended Yellow Vest protest (Crawford, 2022). Many of the organizers were familiar faces in Canadian far-right circles both online and offline prior to the FC (Gilmore, 2022) (Balgord, 2022).

Similar to their online presence, when the protestors met in Ottawa, they voiced their ideas beyond mandates (on truckers). Some wanted the government to resign, as demanded in Canada Unity's (2021) controversial Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) document, which was drafted prior to mandates on truckers and resurfaced during the protests. It was also claimed that some protestors were hoping to initiate a Canadian version of the January 6 riots in Washington (Boutilier and Gilmore, 2022). Thus, as Sabin (2022, p. 748) states, "the convoy's occupation was loosely organized around a wide-ranging set of demands, from ending COVID-19 restrictions to overthrowing the federal government". In addition to the Christian nationalist elements supporting the Convoy (Leedham, 2022b), the guns, armor, and ammunition, which were marked with Islamophobic and white-supremacist symbols, were seized from some protestors who were connected to the extremist organization called Diagolon at the Coutts border crossing, showcased that there were even some fractions planning to use violence within the movement (Kaufmann, 2022). In short, the FC gave us a glimpse into the Canadian far-right both in online and offline spaces.

1.4.Research Question and Rationale of the Study

The central question that this thesis aims to answer is:

What themes exist in the literature on the far right that can help us better understand the Freedom Convoy?

As the FC gave us a glimpse into the Canadian far-right in both online and offline spaces, the objective of this thesis is to contribute to the literature on the FC social movement by linking it to the extensive far-right literature. I argue that the substantial body of work on the far-right including extreme, radical, and populist right variations, which has been a hotspot in political studies since the 1980s, provides a significant toolbox to conceptualize and extend our understanding of the FC. While the FC's connection to the far-right has been established, particularly through the involvement of some key organizers, such as Patrick King, and extremist militia organizations, such as Diagolon, no study has systematically linked the far-right literature to the FC. Thus, I seek to understand the role of different explanations within the far-right literature in relation to the FC movement.

Despite being mainly Eurocentric, party-centered, and dependent on externalist methods, as Castelli Gattinara (2020) argues, the vast literature on the far-right still provides a useful lens to study movements such as the FC. In fact, by linking the FC to the far-right literature, I also aim to emphasize the importance of filling the gap in non-European and non-party-centered studies within far-right studies. Furthermore, as the COVID-19 restrictions and use of social media are an integral part of the FC, this study explores the role of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as social media in far-right social mobilization, aiming to conceptualize them using themes from the far-right literature.

The FC serves as an interesting example of contemporary far-right mobilization, as it diverges from common trends in the far-right literature. Firstly, it is a political protest rather than a political party, an understudied aspect within the far-right literature, which has been mainly party-centered. Secondly, the Canadian far-right has been understudied compared to its European counterpart. The understudied Canadian case is especially interesting due to the country's strong commitment to liberal democracy, multiculturalism, pro-immigration positioning, and dependence on population growth through immigration. Nevertheless, I aim to connect the links between the vast far-right literature with non-European and non-party-centered cases, stressing the importance of approaching the question of the far-right from such an axis as well.

Another aspect contributing to the significance of this study is that, even though it might have been an important turning point for Canadian politics, particularly playing a role in a possible populist turn within the Conservative Party, the FC has not been studied intensively. Thus, there is a gap in the literature helping to conceptualize the FC and locate it in the greater scheme of the rise of the far-right in Canada. Lastly, the role of social media and the COVID-19 pandemic in the success of the movement are also interesting aspects of this topic, as they showcase the contemporary factors affecting far-right mobilization, as well as how new issues have been successfully added to the far-right's ideological battleground.

1.5.Methodology

The purpose of this thesis is to gather insightful explanations about the FC by utilizing extensive studies on the recent far-right phenomenon. To connect the vast literature on the rise of the far-right with the FC, a thematic literature review has been chosen as the methodology. Sentia et al. (2023, p.178) state that "A thematic literature review allows for thematic grouping

that enables the researcher to demonstrate the type of topics important to the research". This method provides a systematic way to identify and examine patterns and trends across studies by organizing existing literature into themes and subthemes.

A thematic literature review involves essential steps. First, the researcher must collect relevant literature that answers the research question. Then, the texts must be carefully analyzed and thematically coded. As an understudied far-right social movement, the connection between the FC and the extensive far-right literature is yet to be established. Utilizing a thematic literature review for this purpose offers advantages as this method helps deepen understanding of the far-right phenomenon, and provides a meaningful thematic framework to approach the FC.

A thematic literature review can be defined as a thematic analysis applied to a specific body of literature in order to conceptualize and categorize it thematically. Braun and Clarke (2006. p.79) define thematic analysis as "a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data". Thus, it constitutes a qualitative and descriptive approach that allows researchers to interpret different aspects of the research issue (Boyatzis, 1988). Maguire and Delahunt (2017, p.3353) argue that "The goal of a thematic analysis is to identify themes, i.e. patterns in the data that are important or interesting, and use these themes to address the research or say something about an issue". Braun and Clarke (2006) highlight the advantages of thematic analysis, including its flexibility, accessibility to researchers, and its ability to effectively condense key aspects of a large dataset and/or provide a detailed and comprehensive description of the data set.

Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that thematic analysis involves six essential steps: familiarizing oneself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. These steps are followed in this

thematic literature review as well. The data sources used for this purpose are primarily scientific journals and books, gathered using the snowballing technique from various databases and search engines. All materials used in the analysis were written in English. The keywords used were "far-right," "right-wing populism," "radical right," and "extreme right." The inclusion criteria were: 1) studies must address the rise of the far-right after the 1980s, and 2) they must come from credible sources. A manual thematic analysis was conducted. Each paper was thoroughly read and analyzed, and key themes were identified. Related ideas were organized together under themes and subthemes.

1.6.Scope and Structure

1.6.1. Scope

Firstly, this study delves into the FC, which is the focal point of this thesis and aims to be conceptually understood through its analysis. Since this thesis focuses on the FC, the scope of the study mainly remains this protest. Secondly, this thesis explores the literature on the recent far-right phenomenon, which began in the 80s and was characterized as the third wave of right-wing extremism by Klaus von Beyme (2013). Later, after the 2000s, it was claimed to enter its fourth wave by Mudde (2019) as far-right has mainstreamed and normalized globally. Thus, the thematic literature review primarily is based on the literature dealing with the far-right after the 80s. While older waves of far-right and the associated literature are important for understanding the development and history of this ideological position, the most relevant literature on the contemporary far-right phenomenon starts from the 80s, establishing the boundaries of the study's scope.

1.6.2. Overview of the Thesis Structure

Following the introduction chapter, this thesis commences with a theory chapter discussing definitional issues surrounding the 'far-right' and its key ideological components, helping to conceptualize both what the far-right is and how the FC can be positioned within this framework. This chapter also details a short introduction to the literature on the far-right. The next two chapters present a thematic literature review of prior research on the rise of the far-right, divided into two main streams: demand-side and supply-side analyses. Demand-side analyses focus on voters' grievances that lead them to support far-right parties and movements, primarily cultural and economic grievances. Supply-side analyses examine factors affecting the capacities of far-right parties and movements to address these demands, including external factors, and internal factors.

The subsequent chapter introduces a thematic literature review of the discussions from the previous chapters, aiming to identify themes in the far-right literature that enhance our understanding of the FC. The analysis chapter is divided into two main parts: the demand and supply sides. The final chapter presents concluding discussions.

Chapter 2: What is Far-Right

The presence of far-right parties and movements dwindled significantly in Europe in the aftermath of the Second World War. Until the mid-1980s, far-right parties struggled to find relevance, with less than 5% of votes in general elections (Halla et al., 2017, p. 1342). Only a handful managed to surpass the vote threshold required for parliamentary seats, such as the Progress Party in Denmark, the Farmers' Party in the Netherlands, and the Defense Union of Shopkeepers and Craftsmen in France (Mudde, 2019, pp. 23-24), but their electoral triumphs proved to be relatively limited. However, the unexpected success of the Front National in the 1984 European elections, where the party gained almost 11% of the votes, is considered to be the start of a new turn in the history of the far-right (Eatwell, 2003; Mayer, 2021, p.17).

Labeled as the "third phase of right-wing extremism" by Klaus von Beyme (2013, p. 21), the re-emergence and rise of the far right started in the mid-80s. It is characterized by the gradual and steady entrance of far-right parties into national parliaments in Europe (Mudde, 2019, p. 25). However, Mudde claims that since the 2000s, the far-right has entered a new stage, its fourth wave, during which these parties have become more normalized and mainstreamed on a global scale (Mudde, 2019, pp. 28-31) as now these parties can win elections, are considered suitable for coalitions, and their ideas are part of mainstream political debates. Beyond the discussions on whether the far-right has entered a new stage in its political life, which is outside the scope of this study, it is clear today that the far-right has become an influential actor in global politics, shaping the course of politics from India to the US.

2.1.Definitional Discussions

With their global expansion, far-right parties and movements have become more diverse than ever, exhibiting a wide range of backgrounds. An essential part of the discussions of the complex reality of these parties and movements is the debate on defining the boundaries of what constitutes “far-right”.

Zaslove (2009, p. 309) points out that defining the far-right is particularly difficult because “unlike traditional political parties, such as Communist, Socialist or Christian Democratic parties, radical, extreme and populist parties do not adhere to a single foundational doctrine, political philosopher or intellectual tradition”. The far-right's absence of a universally shared political philosophy leaves it particularly susceptible to regional and historical variations, contributing to the challenge of precisely defining what constitutes the far-right. For instance, religion may be a significant aspect in the self-definition of some far-right groups, while for others, it may hold limited relevance (Mudde, 2019, p. 46-49). Furthermore, some far-right factions, especially those that are anti-constitutional and support the use of force, can tend to hide their true agendas which can further complicate this definitional problem.

Another aspect complicating the definition of the far-right is the abundance of various labels and definitions within the far-right literature. Since the 80s, there have been many different labels circulating in the literature on the far-right to describe its contemporary nature. As early as 1996, the abundance of different labels and a variety of definitions was described as a ‘war of words’ by Mudde (1996). Since then, new labels and definitions have become more common in response to evolving dynamics within far-right movements and parties. Mayer (2021, p.17-19) delineates three primary definitions in the political science literature to describe the far-right after the 80s: right-wing extremism (eg. Von Beyme, 2013; Falter and Schumann, 1988)

radicalism (eg. Merkl and Weinberg, 1993) and radical right populism (eg. Betz, 1994; Mudde, 2007).

Following the start of the third wave, "right-wing extremism" was the first commonly used label to describe the new far-right phenomenon. The use of this label suggests a tendency to compare the newly emerging far-right with fascism (eg. Stöss, 1988; Ignazi, 1992), which has remained a foundational reference point for extreme far-right ideologies. Extreme right according to Mudde, (2019, p. 16-17) can be differentiated from other variations of the far-right by its anti-democratic quality.

On the other hand, the concept of "radicalism" or "radical right", which was initially used interchangeably with right-wing extremism (eg. Stöss, 1988), began to be used as a separate concept and became popular during the 90s (Mayer, 2021, p.18; Mudde, 2019, p.17). This shift resulted from the need to differentiate the new far-right phenomenon from the classic conceptualization of fascism, primarily because these parties lacked extremism—specifically, the absence of anti-democratic tendencies. Instead, it is described as "illiberal democratic" by Pirro (2023).

Finally, with the increase of populist arguments within the far-right parties at the dawn of the new century (Mudde, 2019, p.26), the latest dominant term for the far-right has been "radical right populism" or "nationalist populism". Mudde defines populism as "a thin-centred ideology" that perceives society as composing of two fundamentally antagonistic and homogeneous groups which are the ordinary people and the corrupted elite, and that pursues a political environment that showcases the general will of ordinary people (Mudde, 2004, p.543; Mudde, 2014, p. 218; Mudde, 2019, p. 18). Pirro (2023, p.106-107) argues that today most radical-right groups are

populist as they praise 'the people' and see them as crucial for any legitimate political objective while blaming 'the elite' for all the world's problems, maintaining an anti-establishment stance.

Mudde claims these three primary definitions illustrate "…changes both within the movement itself and in the scholarly community that studies it" (Mudde, 2019, p.17). The use of different labels, thus, points to the changing nature of these parties, reflecting a tendency from extremist to radical and finally radical populist variations within the far-right over the last forty years. This shift also indicates the development of the academic understanding to conceptualize the new far-right, gradually distancing the new study from the classic conceptualizations of fascism and recognizing the novel qualities associated with the new far-right phenomenon.

While these three definitions do not answer the question of what the far-right is, they illustrate that the far-right is a constellation of smaller sub-groups. Within it, a party family, ranging from extremist groups, such as fascists, to nationalist populist ones. Conceptually, the main definitional cleavages within the far-right party family can also be summarized as extremism vs radicalism, and populism vs non-populism based on these three definitions. However, in the literature, most of these sub-groups are not clearly differentiated from each other. Often different labels, such as extreme right (Arzheimer, 2009; Lubbers et al., 2002), radical right (Rydgren, 2007; Williams, 2006), and populist radical right (Mudde, 2007; Pirro, 2015) are used interchangeably to describe the same political parties and movements. For instance, the French Front National is approached as an extreme right (Golder, 2003), a populist radical right (Evans & Ivaldi, 2020) and a radical right party (Mayer, 2018) by different scholars.

While the use of different labels can point to the changing ideological positioning of such parties over time, it can also stem from the subjective nature of the defining criteria employed by scholars. Labels and the defining criteria accompanying them can change from scholar to scholar

and from time to time. Mudde (2007, p.13) describes this as “the problem of circularity”: scholars need to choose criteria to define different parties after the fact, but they also require criteria beforehand to select the parties they want to define. Furthermore, numerous scholars refrain from engaging in definitional discussions and do not explain the reasoning behind their labeling.

On the other hand, Pirro (2023) offers an alternative approach to the definitional issue. She (2023, p.103) states that “constituent concepts such as ‘extreme right’ or ‘(populist) radical right’ assume that anti-democratic and illiberal-democratic entities remain distinct and operate within separate domain”, but this theoretical differentiation does not reflect the complex reality of the far-right. Pirro (2023) contends that because the prevailing emphasis in studies on (populist) radical and extreme right predominantly revolve around political parties, it fails to see “the far-right as a collective actor made up of multiple parts—some geared towards elections, others towards grassroots mobilisation” (2023, p.103). She claims that within these grassroots movements, illiberal-democratic (radical and populist radical) or anti-democratic (extreme) tendencies, which are supposed to be the main defining criteria among the extreme and radical right, do not stay in distinct domains, which makes “these distinctions untenable” (2023, p.103). Thus, she suggests the use of 'far right', which is a “deliberately generic but fundamentally meaningful concept” (2023, p.103) as an umbrella term.

To avoid this ‘war of words’ and the need to gather these parties and movements under the same label, the use of ‘far right’ has been gaining popularity in recent literature (eg. Golder, 2016; Lucassen and Lubbers, 2012; Mudde, 2019; Halikiopoulou and Vlandas, 2020). Pirro (2023, p.103) defines the term “far-right” as “a generic term used to identify and bring together collective actors located on the right most end of the ideological left-right spectrum”.

Considering the complex nature of the FC movement and its supporters' diverse backgrounds, I will use the concept of "far right" as an overarching term which includes elements from the extreme, radical, and radical-populist right in this thesis.

2.2. Ideology of Far-Right

Golder (2016) states that party families have been defined by their historical roots, transnational links, names, or ideologies, and that the most common way to identify the far-right party family has been by its ideology. However, there is also a lack of consensus regarding the common qualities of far-right ideology. Nevertheless, Carter (2018) points out that scholars who study the far-right agree on two points: "the concept of right-wing extremism/radicalism primarily describes an ideology" and "this ideology is right-wing". Thus, a discussion on the ideology of the far-right must start by understanding what the "right ideology" actually means.

Historically, the left-right political conceptualization is a result of the conflict and polarization between the opposing groups, the supporters of the ancien régime and the supporters of a new system, during the French Revolution (1789-99). The spatial positions of these oppositional groups in the French parliament, the supporters of the hierarchical old system who sat on the right and the supporters of democracy and popular sovereignty who sat on the left, have been used to describe polarized political points.

Mudde (2019, p.17) argues that even though after the Industrial Revolution, the core conflict of the left-right division has been concerned with socio-economic policies such as the market vs. the state, there are alternative ways to see this polarization, such as religious vs. secular or nationalism vs. internationalism. Nevertheless, Bobbio (1996) describes a common ground shared by these different alternatives as their perspective on the issue of equality. Bobbio

(1996, p.67) states that “it is precisely this conflict between fundamental choices which, in my opinion, characterizes so well the opposing camps which for a long time we have been in the habit of calling left and right: on the one hand, people who believe that human beings are more equal than unequal, and on the other, people who believe that we are more unequal than equal”.

Social inequality, arising from factors such as class, ethnicity, race, religion, or gender, is considered by the right as a natural and acceptable aspect of society. This perspective leads them to defend the status quo and prolong this disparity by promoting policies that contribute to inequality while endorsing a non-interventionist stance of the state regarding equality issues (Pirro, 2023, p. 104). On the other hand, the left is essentially driven by its egalitarian drive in which inequality is seen as harmful and unnatural. Therefore, they aim to resolve the issues causing inequalities. Pirro (2023, p.104) states that the left’s “… credo is to remove—also through state intervention—all those barriers that make people unequal, advocating equal rights and opportunities for all”. As a part of the greater right-wing spectrum, the far-right’s main ideological position also favours inequalities among people. Thus, a fundamental aspect of the far-right ideology, which it shares with other right-wing ideologies, is its non-egalitarianism.

In addition to this, there are three defining ideological aspects of the far-right ideology: anti-system view, authoritarianism, and inclusion/exclusion criteria. While populism is not considered to be a part of the minimal definition of far-right ideology, as it has been a common ideological quality among the recent examples of far-right parties and movements, examining the meaning of populism becomes crucial in discussions about far-right ideology.

2.2.1. Anti-System

Mudde (2019, p.18) distinguishes the far-right from the "mainstream right" which encompasses conservatives, liberals, and libertarians, based on the far-right's anti-system view; and its hostile approach to liberal democracy. Ignazi (1992, p. 12) suggests that far-right parties commonly hold anti-system views, such as opposition to parliamentarism and pluralism.

In a similar vein, Pirro (2023, p.104-105) draws a line differentiating the far-right from the moderate right with their perspectives on liberal constitutionalism. She claims that the moderate right's endorsement of liberal constitutionalism, and support for liberal democracy's rules, are not shared by the far right, as far-right parties at the very least show an illiberal democratic character (Pirro, 2023, p.104). Illiberal democratic characteristics of the far-right refer to its tendency to acknowledge and emphasize certain aspects of democracy, such as referendums, while diluting its liberal core. Thus she labels what Mudde defines as "anti-system" as "illiberal democratic" (Pirro, 2023).

The severity of the anti-system position defines two main subgroups of the far-right because, as Pirro states, "while all far-right actors are fundamentally illiberal [i.e. anti-system], not all of them are necessarily anti-democratic" (2023, p.105). The more severe of the two is the extreme right, which rejects democracy *per se* due to its purely elitist and totalitarian worldview. Fascists are the most well-known example of extreme right parties. The parties and movements that fall under the extreme right category rationalize inequalities as deeply fundamental; thus, they reject a political system that recognizes people as equals. Due to the severity of the anti-system component of their ideology and their desire to create an alternative system as well as a 'new man,' extreme right parties and movements can be considered 'revolutionary' (Mudde, 2019, p.18). Because of their strongly anti-system perspective, extreme right movements distinguish themselves from mainstream right parties not only in their goals but also in their

unrestrained utilization of various methods to achieve their objectives – including 'dirty tricks,' subversion, and violence (Merkl & Weinberg, 1997, p. 20). Hence, some fractions of extremist groups are considered illegal in some countries.

The less severe position regarding the anti-system values defines the radical right sub-group within the far-right party family. Golder (2016) explains that radical parties, both at the left and right end of the political spectrum, are fundamentally anti-system. As contemporary radical right parties mainly operate within liberal democracies, the radical right, (and its subgroup populist radical right) rejects some elements of liberal democracy, such as minority rights, universalism, or pluralism. Their anti-system views do not aim to abolish democracy *per se* and their goals compared to ones of the extreme right parties and movements constitute a reformist nature (Mudde, 2019, p.18).

On the other hand, Carter (2018, p.170) argues that both extreme and radical variations of far-right parties are anti-democratic. She divides democracy into two parts: procedures of democracy, such as rules and institutions, and its substance, such as civil liberties, pluralism, etc., and argues that "any opposition to, or rejection or undermining of, the values of democracy, or of the values and the procedures and institutions of democracy renders a party anti-democratic" (Carter, 2018, p.170). As the far-right parties, at the very least, reject some democratic values such as pluralism, she claims that this would be sufficient to deem them anti-democratic. However, this is not a position shared by all scholars, as the differentiation between extreme vs radical right is mainly based on their positions regarding democracy. Nevertheless, even though it may be named differently by different scholars, one of the most fundamental ideological elements of the far-right is its anti-system attitude towards liberal democracy which differentiates it from the mainstream right.

2.2.2. Authoritarianism

The second element of the far-right ideology is the emphasis on authoritarianism (Mudde, 1995; Mudde, 2000; Mudde, 2019; Carter, 2018, Dafnos, 2020). Carter (2018) states that although authoritarianism is not an exclusive part of the far-right ideology, as conservative parties can share such attributes, it still remains a common defining characteristic of far-right parties. And while it is considered to be a part of the ideological core of the far-right, many well-known studies, such as Adorno et al.'s (1950), approach authoritarianism as a personality trait and primarily focus on individuals rather than a component of party ideology. Nevertheless, Carter (2018), drawing on Altemeyer's (1996) work which focuses on personality traits, conceptualizes the authoritarian party ideology of the far right with the same three characteristics offered by him: conventionalism, authoritarian submission, and authoritarian aggression.

Firstly, Carter states that the conventionalist aspect of far-right parties can be observed in their efforts to uphold traditional values (Carter, 2018). As a political ideology directly related to identity, such as a national, ethnic, religious, or racial, the protection of those identities' traditional values constitutes a focal point in the ideology of the far right. Furthermore, as Inglehart and Norris state (2016), in recent years, particularly with the rise of post-materialist identities, a backlash effect against new values further highlights the far-right's fundamental desire to uphold traditional values and structures. Secondly, authoritarian submission can be seen in its focus on order, discipline, and hierarchy (Carter, 2018). Submission to a strong and hierarchical leadership, as well as state structures, is seen as a fundamental step to reinforce traditional and organic qualities of the societies. Finally, authoritarian aggression can be demonstrated through punitive ethical, societal, governmental, and judicial measures against those who challenge traditional norms, such as demands for capital punishment (Carter, 2018).

Thus, the authoritarian aspect of far-right ideology gives clues on both how the state and society are expected to function and be organized. Carter (2018) also argues that as authoritarianism comprises these three characteristics, the particular mix can vary among far-right parties.

Rydgren (2007) argues that authoritarianism focuses on law and order, as well as traditional values, such as the role of family, patriarchy, or hierarchy. Although it is an important aspect of discussions on authoritarianism, the emphasis on law and order is not unique to the far right alone as the mainstream right also supports it (Mudde, 1995, p.216). However, Mudde (2019, p.36) states that "Authoritarians see almost all "problems," including drug addiction or perceived sexual deviancy, as essentially law-and-order issues which can only be countered by a tough punitive approach and prevented by reintroducing "moral" or "traditional" education in schools". Thus, their quest for establishing law and order can extend beyond mainstream right and may include a demand for strict punishment and a strong police force (Mudde, 1995, p.216). As law and order are considered to be fundamentally important, obtaining them through extreme measures, such as torture, may be deemed acceptable. Furthermore, law enforcement can be considered an ally, and far-right parties and movements adopt a positive attitude towards the police force, such as the Blue Lives Matter movement.

2.2.3. Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria: Nationalism, Nativism, Racism, Xenophobia

In addition to the anti-system view and authoritarianism, the last key element of the far-right ideology is directly related to the questions regarding the source of identity and inequality, which can be termed as "the inclusion/exclusion criteria'". As stated earlier, the common ideological characteristic shared by all branches of the right is their non-egalitarian worldview. However, as Pirro (2023, p.104) states "The far right—unlike the moderate right—is *radically*

exclusionary as far as the general principle of egalitarianism is concerned". Far-right parties and movements go beyond the mainstream right, whose connection to identity is weaker and which are mainly concerned with inequality and the status quo based on class.

There is a high diversity within far-right parties and movements regarding the issue of the inclusion/exclusion criteria. Far-right groups may define the source of their identity as a combination of racism, elitism, nativism, nationalism, religion, xenophobia, and so on. This lengthy list complicates the process of deciding which of these ideological elements are common components shared by all far-right parties. Some of these elements can be deeply rooted in the history of specific parties and movements and may not be shared by other parties within the far-right party family. As scholars disagree on which one of these inclusion/exclusion criteria is common among the far-right parties, there are alternative views offered by them.

In his 1995 study, Mudde analyses 26 definitions of the right-wing extremist ideology described in the literature to identify the most commonly mentioned ideological features of right-wing extremism (Mudde, 1995). Mudde claims that five commonly mentioned core points of the right-wing extremist ideology are nationalism, racism, xenophobia, anti-democracy, and a strong emphasis on the state (1995, p. 206). These five core points define three inclusion/exclusion criteria: nationalism, racism, and xenophobia.

Mudde provides an operational definition of nationalism describing it as a political doctrine that declares the alignment of the political entity, the state, with the cultural entity, the nation (Mudde, 1995, p.209). By utilizing Koch's (1991) definitions of internal homogenisation and external exclusiveness Mudde separates different forms of nationalist political programmes. Internal homogenisation refers to the idea that only the X-nation should live within State X borders, while external exclusiveness means that State X should have all people from the X

nation within its borders (Koch, 1991, p. 31). Mudde (1995) argues that the far-right parties can support either version of nationalism. Nationalism is overall commonly considered to be a part of far-right ideology (Carter, 2018; Dafnos, 2020; Eatwell, 2000).

In his conceptualization of racism, Mudde includes both classic and new racism as they both stress "natural and permanent differences between groups of people" (Mudde, 1995, p, 211). He defines "classic" or "old racism" as "the belief in natural and hereditary differences between races, with the central belief that one race is superior to the others" (1995, p.211). On the other hand, he states the new racism, which has been gaining momentum since the 80s, is different from classic racism due to its focus on culture instead of race and its lack of focus on racial superiority (Mudde, 1995, p, 211). Instead, the new racist arguments deal with the independent and separate development of cultures, which requires minimal mixing of inter-cultures (Mudde, 1995, p, 211). The new racism is sometimes described as ethnopluralism. Golder (2016, p.480) states that "proponents of ethnopluralism claim to celebrate cultural differences and argue that these differences must be protected from things like mass migration, cultural imperialism, and one-worldism". However, as Mudde's (1995) study was mainly on extreme parties, racism, particularly the classic version, is not very likely to be included as a minimal definition for contemporary far-right parties.

The final ideological core point of the far-right in Mudde's study is xenophobia. This can be defined as hostility or fear against foreign ethnic groups (Mudde, 1995, p, 212). Mudde claims that xenophobia is related to ethnocentrism (Mudde, 1995, p, 212). The far-right parties mixing nationalism with xenophobia are also described as nativist (Mudde, 2019). Nativism views non-national elements, such as other races, ethnicities, religious groups, etc., as inherently dangerous for the nation, and therefore only native groups must be part of the nation.

While Mudde defines five ideological core features of right-wing extremism, he also stresses that there is no objective consensus on what combination of these is required to be defined as right-wing extreme (p.218). He points out that there can be three different approaches to this question (p.218). Firstly, there is a qualitative approach in which not all five of the key aspects of the far-right ideology are equally important (p.218). Thus, constituting just one, such as being anti-system, can satisfy the criteria to be a far-right movement if being anti-system is decided to be given qualitative importance. Secondly, there is a quantitative approach in which all aspects have the same weight (p.218). Nevertheless, it is still uncertain what number of the core ideological features satisfy the criteria to be considered far-right (p.218-219). Lastly, there is a hybrid approach in which previous approaches are mixed (p.219).

Carter (2018) analyses influential scholars' definitions in recent years in order to update Mudde's 1995 study (Mudde, 1995, p. 206) and determine the common ideological characteristics of the far-right parties. She argues that populism should be added to Mudde's list as it is one of the most mentioned concepts in explaining these parties recently (p.175). However, as her goal is to provide a minimal definition, she summarizes "While the parties' authoritarianism, their anti-democracy, and their exclusionary and/or holistic nationalism should all be considered defining properties of right-wing extremism/radicalism and should thus form the basis of a minimal definition of the concept, xenophobia, racism and populism are accompanying characteristics." (Carter, 2018, p. 175). Eatwell (2000, p. 413) describes what she calls "holistic nationalism" as stressing "…conversation, expulsion or worse of the 'Other' and the defence of a traditional conception of community". On the other hand, exclusionary nationalism aims to exclude other nations and thus it does not focus on conversation. Instead, it stresses excluding foreigners from state and state services, which is described as welfare-

chauvinism. Furthermore, Carter predicts that "… as time goes by, through new arrivals or the 'modernization' of existing parties (e.g. the 'dédiabolisation' of the French Front National), we are likely to see an increased preponderance of specific types of right-wing extremist/radical party, namely those that embrace exclusionary rather than holistic nationalism, that do not (openly) reject the procedures of democracy, and that frame their discourse and policies in populist terms" (Carter E. , 2018, p. 176).

Even though there are different ideas about what the inclusion/exclusion criteria common among the far-right parties are, all point to the fact that far-right parties are deeply connected to an identity. Their ideology inherently includes a cultural aspect, revolving around a traditional/national/xenophobic/nativist/religious identity, depending on the particular party. As culture, identity, and traditional values are a part of their ideology, these parties may be expected to respond more directly to culture-related crises and issues. Furthermore, a shift of the political axis from economic to cultural, as argued by Inglehart and Norris (2017), would likely increase the salience of far-right concerns.

2.2.4. Populism: A New Ideological Direction?

While populism is not considered to be a part of the minimal definition of the far-right party family, it has been one of the key features of contemporary far-right parties with the rise of radical populist parties and political actors in recent years. As populism becomes the dominant defining feature of the contemporary far-right ideology, discussing what populism means gains importance in the conversations about the far-right ideology.

Mudde (2004, p. 543) defines populism as "an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, ' the pure people ' versus '

the corrupt elite', and which argues that politics should be an expression of the volonté générale (general will) of the people". As an ideology to position itself with the people, populism is in conflict with inherently elitist nature of the extreme right. On the other hand, it also contradicts pluralism because populism does not regard the differences among individuals and approaches them as a compact unity called "the people."

Populism has an overly simplistic perception of social reality composing friends, the people, whose merit originates from their ordinariness, their common sense, and foes, the elite, whose corruption originates from their status. Populism wants to empower people, but it is not a revolutionary ideology. Instead, it aims to increase the direct involvement of people in politics through referendums and other means, which can conflict with the procedural nature of liberal democracies. Furthermore, populism's, particularly the radical right-wing populism's, perception of people disregards the minority and individual rights and constitutes an illiberal democratic nature.

Populism does not constitute an extensive philosophical worldview. In fact, due to this lacking such a worldview, it can be considered a strategy, instead of a complete ideology which can be utilized by both left and right parties. Mudde (2004, p.544) describes populism as a "thin centered ideology…[which] can be combined with different (thin and full) other ideologies, including communism, ecologism, nationalism or socialism".

The radical right-wing variation of populism combines its dual worldview with some inclusion/exclusion criteria, such as nationalism, religion, racism, nativism, and/or xenophobia. It positions elites, "the established political parties, intellectuals, the economic upper class, and the media" (Golder, 2016, p. 479) as well as immigrants, minorities, international institutions,

refugees, etc. to the camp that they are opposed to. In right-wing populism, the conceptualization of the people can be the natives, ethnic majority groups, etc.

2.3.Literature Review on The Rise of the Far Right

The vast literature on the rise of the far-right since the 80s can be categorized into two main groups: demand-side and supply-side studies. While the demand side deals with grievances leading voters to select far-right parties, the supply side focuses on internal and external factors affecting political parties' capacity to answer these demands. In this context, voters embody the demand aspect of political competition, whereas parties define the supply dimension.

Both demand-side and supply-side studies conceptualize the rise of the far-right mainly based on the electoral performances of the political parties. As a result, quantitative analysis of electoral data and surveys dominates recent literature on the rise of the far-right. Furthermore, many of these studies are based in Europe. The predominance of European far-right studies in the pre-1980s far-right literature stemmed from the historical realities of classic fascism and Nazism. More recently, the dominance of European studies can be attributed to two additional dynamics. Firstly, as the upsurge of the far-right in the 1980s started in Europe, scholarly attention shifted accordingly. Secondly, European states, being multiparty democracies, provide a proper environment for non-central parties, such as far-right ones, to emerge and challenge the central ones.

However, this does not mean that bipartisan systems, such as the US, are closed to the effects of the far-right, as seen with the Tea Party movement. In such systems, the center-right adopts more far-right characteristics in its ideological positioning. Particularly following Trump's

victory and the Brexit movement, far-right studies have also started focusing on new political actors and regions outside of continental Europe in recent years.

The demand side centers on voters and addresses the factors generating demand for such parties. In essence, the demand side delves into the grievances of voters that lead them to opt for far-right parties. The initial body of literature regarding the success of far-right movements primarily focused on explanations rooted in demand-side dynamics. On the demand side, there are two major perspectives on the rise of the far right: economic and cultural grievances. Mudde (2007, p. 202) states that "the supply-side translates demand into practical party politics". The supply side concentrates on the perspective of political parties and aims to discover internal and external factors affecting why some far-right parties are able to answer and even induce demands more successfully than others. This is a newer aspect in explaining the rise of the far-right. On the supply side, there are external factors, such as election rules, the role of media, and existing party competition, as well as internal factors, such as the role of party organization and leadership as well as a party's ideological positioning.

Koopmans et al. (2005, p. 181) assert that the demand and supply-side analyses constitute competing theoretical perspectives, providing alternative ways to explain the rise of the far-right: "one that focuses on grievances and ethnic competition, and the other that stresses opportunities and institutional frameworks". Nonetheless, other scholars, such as Golder (2016), consider these analyses as complementary theories rather than mutually exclusive alternatives. In fact, Mols and Jetten (2020) stress the importance of the interplay between the demand and supply sides since they interact and strengthen one another. They argue that supply can catalyze demand further by political techniques such as ideological framing and alarmist narratives (Mols and Jetten, 2020).

Positioning the demand and supply-side perspectives as mutually exclusive overlooks the interdependence and interaction inherent between them as defining a distinct division between a party's voters and the party itself is primarily a methodological simplification to navigate social reality. As expected, the methodological boundaries between the demand and supply sides blur in some discussions. For instance, political opportunities created by the ideological convergence of other political actors, which is an external factor affecting the supply-side, result in new representational demands in voters that can be answered by the far-right, melting both demand and supply-side arguments in the same pot.

2.4. Conclusion

This chapter discussed the theoretical background of the far-right by introducing definitional debates and the ideological components of far-right movements. It summarized the various labels used in the literature on the far-right since the 1980s and explained how these labels reflect the development of the study of the far-right phenomenon and the decades-long progress of this political movement. It proposed using "far-right" as an umbrella term encompassing extreme, radical, and radical populist right variations within this political spectrum. Furthermore, it defined anti-system, authoritarianism, and exclusion/inclusion criteria such as nationalism, nativism, racism, and xenophobia as components of the minimal definition of far-right ideology. Additionally, this chapter highlighted the importance of populism in the most recent manifestations of the far-right, as populism has become a new ideological direction among far-right parties and movements. Finally, the chapter introduces two main branches within the literature on the rise of the far-right: demand-side and supply-side explanations. In the following two chapters, these branches will be examined through a thematic literature review.

Chapter 3: The Demand Side

Demand-side explanations delve into the "grievances" that motivate people to support far-right parties and movements. These studies seek to understand which socio-economic problems create a fertile ground for voters to lean towards these parties. The *a priori* assumption of these studies is that far-right parties and movements generally have limited reach and insufficient electoral success despite their presence in societies under ordinary conditions (Golder, 2016, p. 482). Mudde (2010, p. 1167-1168) refers to this as a "normal pathology thesis" and explains it as "Short and simple, the thesis holds that the radical right constitutes a pathology in (post-war) western society and its success can only be explained by 'extreme conditions' (i.e. 'crisis')". Thus, the demand side analysis essentially argues that the far-right support stems from changing and (sometimes only perceived as) deteriorating conditions, prompting voters to incline toward far-right parties over other political parties. Therefore, socio-economic grievances can induce 'protest voting', and/or far-right parties can be considered viable options for tackling these issues among voters.

The demand side arguments can be divided into two main streams: cultural and economic grievances. These two grievances in the literature can appear as competing explanations. As Mols and Jetten (2020, p.3) explain "Although demand-side researchers will acknowledge that these explanations are not mutually exclusive, in practice research tends to be motivated by eagerness to identify which of these "competing variables" best explains PRRP (Populist Radical Right Parties) voting".

Studies comparing cultural and economic grievances, particularly on issues such as immigration, usually conclude that one type of grievance, most commonly the cultural one, is more decisive than the other (eg. Sniderman et al. 2004; Chandler and Tsai, 2001). For instance,

Hainmueller and Hopkins (2014) state that arguments grounded in political economy, which explain immigration attitudes to the economic circumstances of individuals, are not as empirically robust as those linking immigration attitudes to cultural impact. Thus, there are some scholars such as Inglehart and Norris (2016, 2017), Lubbers and Güveli (2007) and Lucassen and Lubbers (2012), who argue cultural grievance is the primary driver for far-right demand, while economic arguments are secondary at most.

Nevertheless, the success of cultural grievance arguments in explaining far-right party support, particularly in individual-level analysis, can be attributed to the role of culture and identity in the far-right's ideological framework. Far-right ideology, rooted in authoritarianism (in the sense of aiming to protect traditional structures), nationalism, nativism, xenophobia and even racism, inherently revolves around 'cultural/identity-based' themes. Thus, particularly in individual-level surveys, the association between respondents' cultural concerns can be more directly established with the support for far-right parties as these cultural concerns are a fundamental part of these parties' ideology. Since it would be logical to expect environmental concerns among Green voters, observing cultural dynamics among far-right voters would also be expected.

Lucassen and Lubbers (2012, p.551) state "Far-right-wing parties have become the issue owners of the protection of national identity against foreign influences— primarily against threats from minorities. On the other hand, far-right-wing parties are not regarded as issue owners of fighting unemployment and other related economic issues…We therefore expect voters to favor a far-right-wing party more when they perceive threats from migrants on the cultural domain than when they perceive these threats on the economic domain".

The observation regarding economic concerns not being a key ideological feature of the far-right is correct. However, this does not necessarily mean that economic grievances arguments are not conclusive, or they are merely secondary explanations. Economic grievances studies moving beyond individual-level data are particularly more successful as they can showcase links between economic factors, such as trade-shocks or new technologies and far-right votes. Moreover, Halikiopoulou and Vlandas (2020, p.428) stress the importance of economic explanations in the rise of far-right and state:

> "While cultural concerns are a *stronger predictor* of far right party voting behaviour in a statistical sense, *this does not automatically mean that they matter more* for far right party success in substantive terms. What determines far right party success is the ability to mobilize a coalition of interests between core voters, that is, those primarily concerned with the cultural impact of immigration, and as large a subset as possible of peripheral voters, that is, the often numerically larger group of voters who are primarily concerned with the economic impact of immigration. This coalition is important for far right parties to extend their mobilization capacity beyond their core support base and thus make significant electoral gains."

Instead of approaching cultural and economic grievances arguments as competing variables, it is fundamental to recognize these two explanations together. As Halikiopoulou and Vlandas (2020) argue, these two grievances can explain far-right votes in different circles. In addition, Gidron and Hall (2020) stress the importance of combining these arguments, as both economic and cultural factors intensify voters' feeling of being 'left behind' and incline them toward populist 'anti-system' parties. In this thesis, we will consider both arguments as complementary rather than conflicting variables.

3.1. Cultural Grievances

The first demand-side perspective explains the demand for far-right parties as a result of cultural grievances. Studies rooted in this explanation view the issue of the rise of the far-right as

a result of culturally motivated voting. There are two main and interconnected categories within the cultural grievances argument: (i) cultural anxiety, caused by foreign cultures, institutions, or ideas, and (ii) cultural backlash against the new progressive cultural values after the 'Silent Revolution' (Inglehart, 1977). Cultural anxiety mainly deals with the fear of losing one's own culture because of foreign cultures, institutions, and ideas. Cultural backlash, on the other hand, can be defined as a reactionary demand created against a wave of progressive cultural ideas.

While these two categories can be divided theoretically, they are empirically harder to differentiate. For example, both the fear of losing one's culture and the cultural backlash against multiculturalism would manifest as increasing nationalism and anti-immigration sentiments. Thus, the issue of immigration emerges as a natural suspect of cultural anxiety and an intensifying factor for a cultural backlash.

Since far-right party ideologies revolve around cultural and identity-related themes, a connection with cultural cleavages fits clearly with what these parties stand for. Studies, particularly those relying on individual-level data, can show a strong effect of cultural grievances on far-right support. For instance, Lubbers and Coenders's (2017) study shows a direct link between far-right demand and nationalistic attitudes, as might be expected. However, studies that specifically measure the impact of individual drivers of cultural grievances, such as immigration, Euroscepticism, refugees, etc., on far-right electoral success, if the cultural element is not directly added to the research design, may establish a correlation that could also be influenced by economic concerns.

3.1.1. Cultural Anxiety

Cultural anxiety can arise from a real or perceived threat and/or clash between the cultural identity of insiders and outsider groups, ideas, or institutions, which causes insiders to feel threatened by the culture of outsiders. Golder (2016, p. 485) argues that academics who connect far-right achievements with cultural grievances often do this within the framework of social identity theory. He states that "social identity theory assumes that individuals have a natural tendency to associate with similar individuals and that an inherent desire for self-esteem causes people to perceive their ingroup as superior to outgroup" (Golder, 2016, p.485). As far-right ideology mainly relies on nationalist /racist/ethnopluralist/xenophobic inclusion/exclusion criteria, it is inherently identity-based and cultural. Hence, the sense of cultural anxiety is considered to be the essential driver for voters to select far-right parties as these parties are inherently interested in the protection of such identities.

The natural suspect of the cultural anxiety thesis is immigrants. They are considered to be the key driver of cultural anxiety due to a so-called clash between newcomers and the local culture(s). This clash leads local people to feel threatened, as they believe their local culture is negatively affected by the immigrants' culture. Thus, these voters gravitate towards far-right parties. This is a fitting explanation as far-right political parties are defined as anti-immigrant parties (eg. van der Brug & Fennema, 2007, p. 474).

Anti-immigration attitudes and support for the far-right has been well-established in the literature. Ivarsflaten (2008) argues that based on her study in Western Europe, right-wing populist parties only show electoral success when they mobilize displeasure on immigrants. Similarly, Rydgren (2008) claims that immigration scepticism is a determining factor in voting for radical right parties in Europe. By using panel data on presidential elections in France from

1988 to 2017, Edo et al. (2019), show that focusing on issues of immigration, particularly from non-Western countries, is increasing votes for far-right candidates.

Whether the size of the immigrant community has an effect on the far-right party support is another aspect that scholars have been discussing. The rising levels of immigration and the size of immigrant communities have been associated with rising demand for far-right parties (Knigge 1998). For instance, Lubbers and Scheepers (2001) state that the popularity of far-right parties in Germany increased during the periods with higher numbers of asylum seekers, based on their multi-level logistic regression study utilizing monthly survey results from 1989 to 1998. Kenny and Miller (2022), also find an increase in far-right votes in the places with increasing asylum seekers in the UK (United Kingdom). Lubbers and Scheepers (2002, p.140) also state that "in regions with higher level of immigrants the level of out-group unfavourability is not higher, although the people in these regions are more inclined to vote for the *Front National*".

On the other hand, other studies show that there is no correlation between the size of the immigrant community and the demand for far-right party votes. To answer whether the real number of immigrants in a region or negative perceptions against immigrants affect the far-right vote, Stockemer (2016) combines European Social Survey data regarding respondents' perceptions of immigrants with macro-level data regarding the immigrant proportions across 200 European regions. He concludes that negative individual perceptions of immigrants are positively associated with far-right support while the number of immigrants is not (Stockemer, 2016). In contrast to both claims, Bustikova's (2014) study, which is based on Eastern Europe, shows that the far-right parties are more successful in nations with fewer ethnic minority populations.

Cultural anxiety against the supranational and international entities is also considered an important factor affecting the electoral success of the far-right parties. Voters' attitudes toward the European Union (EU) and Euroscepticism are the most studied topics of the related literature. McLaren (2002) argues that attitudes towards the EU integration are largely influenced by a sense of cultural threat against other cultures. Thus, since the EU can be perceived as a source of cultural anxiety, the far-right parties can emerge as an alternative to protect the cultural values of the nation against this supranational body. Similarly, Lubbers's (2008) study in which he discusses the 2005 Dutch referendum on the European Constitution shows that the 61.5% vote for 'no' was mostly driven by the EU being perceived as a cultural threat against Dutch culture. Moreover, he adds that the EU's perceived association with ethnic minorities was another determinant in its being considered culturally threatening (Lubbers, 2008).

As some segments of society feel cultural anxiety or alienated by the values of the EU and its 'culture', they can be inclined to vote for the far-right parties. For instance, Santana et al. (2020), in their study analysing the far-right party votes in Central and Eastern Europe, conclude that Euroscepticisim constitute an important factor affecting the far-right votes in all states they analysed, while nativism's effect changes from state to state. Furthermore, based on their multilevel modelling using data from 18 European countries from 2002 to 2008, Werts et al. (2013) conclude that Eurospecticism helps to explain far-right party success. Finally, Vasilopoulou and Zur (2022) argue that the issue of salience for European integration is more important for far-right parties' electoral success than immigration based on their studies utilizing data from the Chapel Hill Expert Survey and the European Election Studies for 12 West European countries.

In short, the cultural anxiety argument points that feelings of cultural insecurity within an in-group, which arises from an out-group dynamic, can substantially drive the demand for far-right politics. The anxiety may be induced by various factors, including but not limited to, immigrants and international organizations. These elements can evoke in-group out-group dynamics within some segments of the voters, increasing their demand for far-right.

3.1.2. Cultural Backlash

The second cultural cleavage is cultural backlash. It is based on the argument that there has been a cultural value change in advanced capitalist societies, which has altered politics by politicizing culture and values. This has the effect of decreasing old class affiliations and ultimately introducing a new political axis that transcends the traditional class-based economic definitions of left and right. This cultural transformation was famously termed “the silent revolution” by Inglehart (1971, 1977). However, this silent revolution has faced reactions against it. Famously described as ‘the silent counter-revolution” by Ignazi (1992) and articulated as “the cultural backlash thesis” by Inglehart and Norris (2016), these perspectives acknowledge that this cultural transformation has been followed by a reactionary response, leading to increased demand for far-right parties. Carreras et al. (2019, 1400) define cultural backlash as a “reaction against these value changes, which is characterized by opposing values and attitudes, such as xenophobia, ethnocentrism, nationalism, anti-elite stances, and a generalized "sense of loss".

Inglehart (1977; 2006) claims that in advanced industrial societies, thanks to exceptional existential security — both physically and economically — achieved through factors such as “the economic miracles of the postwar era and the emergence of the welfare state” (2006, p.68), people’s political concerns have shifted to new topics. Individuals raised in this existential

security have prioritized and politicized different aspects of life beyond means of just survival (Inglehart, 1977; 2006). Similar to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Inglehart (1977, p.22) argues that "Once an individual has attained physical and economic security he may begin to pursue other, nonmaterial goals". This has led to an intergenerational shift in values from materialist priorities, which emphasize "economic and physical security", to post-materialist values centred around "individual free choice and self-expression" (Norris and Inglehart, 2019, p.32).

Knutsen (1990, p.86) explains Inglehart's conceptualization of materialist and post-materialist as:

> "The term "materialism" … incorporates both economic materialist values, such as "economic growth" and "economic stability," and authoritarian and conformity values, while the term "postmaterialism" incorporates typical "green" or nonmaterial values, such as "environmental protection" and less emphasis on money and economic rewards, as well as libertarian values related to broader, more direct forms of participation, equal rights for all cultural and racial groups, and openness to new forms of moral"

This value shift from material to post-material concerns defines a new political cleavage, a new political axis beyond the classic left-right axis. Inglehart and Norris (2016, p.24) state that "The growing salience of progressive values in society has generated the gradual emergence of a new Cultural cleavage in party competition that has undermined the post-war party systems. Today, many of the most heated conflicts are cultural".

The rise of a cultural, value-based political axis causes demand for new parties, such as the Greens, to emerge and classic class-based issues and social class voting to decrease (Inglehart, 2006). Inglehart and Norris (2016, p. 14) state that "As post-materialists gradually became more numerous in the population, they brought new issues into politics, leading to a declining emphasis on social class and economic redistribution, and growing party polarization based around cultural issues and social identities". Thus, while the rise of post-materialists changes the base for the left parties by leading to a decline in class-based voting but increasing a

middle-class base for them (if the left adapts to their post-material demands), the shift from materialist to post-materialist values has also introduced a new polarization along fault-lines between opposing political views, centred around cultural and value-oriented issues instead of class.

Inglehart (2006) argues that as time progresses, the insecure/materialist older generations are replaced by those who support post-materialist ideas, which is called the "birth cohort effect" by Inglehart and Norris (2017). Inglehart and Welzel (2005) compare the numbers of materialists and post-materialists across six nations between 1970 and 2000 and conclude that while in 1970 the number of materialists was four times larger than that of post-materialists, by 2000 post-materialists outnumbered materialists. Inglehart (2006) further suggests that the effect of the silent revolution extends beyond typical life-cycle effects as post-materialist individuals do not become materialist as they age. Thus, if the advanced capitalist countries maintain their existential security, the post-materialist values would be expected to be permanent. In fact, Inglehart states "the principal evolutionary drift is the result of structural changes taking place in advanced industrial societies and is unlikely to be changed unless there are major alterations in the very nature of those societies" (Inglehart, p.4, 1977). However, the support for post-materialist values is still conditional to period effects. For instance, a decrease in existential security due to economic downturns makes the population less post-materialist (Inglehart and Norris, 2017).

If the advanced capitalist societies have gone through a progressive shift in values, why has the far-right been gaining support? Norris and Inglehart (2019, p.44) answer this question with the third law of Newtonian physics stating, "For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction". In fact, Inglehart (1997, p.244) argues that from the very beginning, the emergence of

post-materialist arguments has elicited negative reactions, such as the rising working-class support for De Gaulle following the French student protests in 1968. In essence, with their cultural backlash thesis, Norris and Inglehart claim that post-materialist progressive ideas have stimulated conservative reactions in some segments of society, such as older and poorly educated white men, resenting these new values and feeling that "they are being marginalized within their own countries" (Inglehart and Norris, 2016, p.29).

Inglehart and Norris's cultural backlash thesis (2016; 2017; 2019) argues that while the rise of post-materialist values has transformed societies by politicizing new issues, these new ideas and demands also have created various tensions. They state (Inglehart and Norris, 2016, p.3) that cultural backlash has occurred "especially among the older generation, white men, and less educated sectors, who sense decline and actively reject the rising tide of progressive values, resent the displacement of familiar traditional norms, and provide a pool of supporters potentially vulnerable to populist appeals." Thus, the progressive post-materialist values of younger, highly educated and urbanized people and some segments of society with stronger ties to traditional values, such as older, less educated and rural people have started clashing. As they state, "When a large segment of the population comes to feel they no longer are living in the country in which they grew up, society is in danger of cultural backlash" (Norris and Inglehart, 2019, p.460). For instance, Norris and Inglehart (2019, p.35) argue that "For many older people, same-sex marriage, women in leadership roles, multicultural diversity in cities, and, in the US, an African-American President were disorienting departures from the norms they had known since childhood; they felt they had become strangers in their own land".

Furthermore, Inglehart and Norris (2016) claim that the cultural backlash has been further intensified by immigration, minorities, political correctness, and multiculturalism as these groups

and notions have intensified the sense of alienation, resentment and anxiety. They state, “Rapid cultural change, immigration, and economic conditions have triggered an authoritarian reflex among those that feel most threatened by these changes – emphasizing the importance of maintaining collective security by enforcing conformity with traditional mores, a united front against outsiders, and loyalty to strong leaders” (Norris and Inglehart, 2019, p.453). As a result, some segments of society with stronger traditional ties resist the cultural change initiated by the silent revolution and gravitate toward far-right parties.

Inglehart and Norris (2017) argue that the cultural backlash has been further catalyzed by worsening economic conditions. They claim, “Cultural backlash largely explains why specific people vote for xenophobic parties—but declining economic and physical security helps explain why these parties are much stronger today than they were 30 years ago” (Inglehart and Norris, 2017, p.447). They posit that security serves as the driving force behind post-materialist ideas (Inglehart and Norris, 2016; 2017; Norris and Inglehart, 2019). When existential security is high, it is expected to observe less cultural backlash because a greater number of people would feel secure. Conversely, as existential security decreases, materialist ideas, such as xenophobia or the demand for an authoritarian leader, gain momentum, thereby intensifying cultural backlash. Inglehart and Norris (2017, p.447) state that “Both survey data and historical evidence indicate that xenophobia increases in times of insecurity”. In fact, Inglehart and Norris (2017, p.444) argue that “Postmaterialism eventually became its own grave digger… the new non-economic issues introduced by Postmaterialists overshadowed the classic Left-Right economic issues, drawing attention away from redistribution to cultural issues, further paving the way for rising inequality” and thus intensifying a backlash against itself.

On the other hand, Ignazi (1992) offers an alternative explanation for the demand for the far-right parties after the 1980s. By answering Inglehart's (1977) predominantly progressive interpretation of changing political cleavages favoring new left movements, Ignazi argues that as non-materialism spreads, 'new politics' emerges from both the left and right (Ignazi, 1992. Ignazi states both "the Greens and the ERPs [Extreme Right Parties] are, respectively, the legitimate and the unwanted children of the New Politics; as the Greens come out of the silent revolution, the ERPs derive from a reaction to it, a sort of 'silent counter-revolution'" (Ignazi, 1992, p.6). Instead of seeing the cause of the rise of far-right as increasing materialistic/fundamentalist backlash, Ignazi sees neoconservatism as a key element in the new far-right success and states that "The main future of neo-conservatism, in fact, lies in presenting itself to the mass public as a non-materialistic answer to the agenda of the New Politics" (Ignazi, 1992, p.19).

Still, both the silent counter-revolution and cultural backlash theses suggest that as post-materialist demands have politicized the culture and values, an opposing center to its progressive notions has been formed reflecting 'traditional' or 'neo-conservative' (Ignazi, 1992) culture and values. As post-materialist values have triggered reactionary arguments, demands, and identities, the resentment and anger against these new values have resulted in a 'culture war' between the progressive and traditional positions. Voters who feel culturally alienated from this new set of values introduced with the 'silent revolution' support far-right parties as they idealize the old, traditional, and 'pure' cultural values. In fact, as the silent revolution has brought a reaction, it has managed to become the main political cleavage separating opposing views. This cultural conflict has been the focal point of political polarization in recent years.

While many studies dealing with cultural grievances can be associated with the cultural backlash thesis, there is also a smaller literature particularly focusing on the effect of a cultural reaction against post-materialist values. Inglehart and Norris (2016) compare their cultural backlash thesis as well as economic grievances arguments by analysing different surveys including the European Social Survey and the 2014 Chapel Hill Expert Survey, and conclude that cultural attitudes, such as anti-immigration notions, distrust in global and national governance, authoritarian values, and self-placement in left-right ideological spectrum consistently correlated with the far-right support. Furthermore, their study shows that the support for far-right is stronger among individuals who are older, male, with lower levels of education, belonging to ethnic majority groups, religious, and supporting traditional values as the cultural backlash thesis suggests. Off 's (2023) study analyzing the 2014 and 2018 Swedish elections shows that increasing issue salience on gender triggered a cultural backlash, which resulted in increasing voting for the far-right. Hobolt's (2016) study based on campaign and survey data shows that leaving the EU was especially prevalent among individuals with lower levels of education, lower income, older age, and those who voiced apprehensions regarding immigration and multiculturalism. Finally, supporting Inglehart and Norris's (2017; Norris and Inglehart, 2019) idea on the effect of economic grievances on cultural backlash, Carreras et al. (2019) claim that in the economically depressed areas in the UK, anti-immigrant and Eurosceptic views are more likely to develop, which in turn explains the leave vote in Brexit. They built their study based on economic and electoral data from 380 districts at the local level, along with data from the British Election Study panel spanning from 2014 to 2017, they suggest even though individual-level models are able to show more stable coefficients for cultural backlash effects, both culture and economy play a role in Brexit (Carreras et al., 2019).

3.2. Economic Grievances

The second demand-side perspective on the rise of the far-right is based on economic grievances. The argument on economic grievances mostly aligns with the economic voting hypothesis, which posits that economic conditions are pivotal in shaping the voting patterns of individuals. Thus, the focus is on understanding how the economy shapes the decision of voters. Essentially, the economic voting notion correlates a continuation of successful electoral performance with good economic performance for the incumbent political parties. On the other hand, when the economic performance is poor, economically marginalized segments of the population who can react to their individual concerns or overall national performance are expected to gravitate towards different parties that appear, at the very least, to be in harmony with their optimal economic interests.

There are different yet interconnected arguments about economic grievances that explain the voters' demand for far-right as a result of increasing economic insecurities (stemming from various factors such as), negative effects of globalization, (particularly trade shocks), immigration, economic crisis, technological changes as well as the state of the welfare states. Economic grievances arguments follow that the economic well-being (both real and/or perceived) of some segments of society has been affected negatively by such variables, resulting in their gravitation toward far-right parties.

3.2.1. Economic Insecurity

The economic insecurity argument can be considered as an overarching explanation as other economic factors such as economic crisis or automation can enhance both real or perceived senses of economic insecurity. Margalit (2019, p.152) states that "While different causal factors

are cited, they generally share a similar storyline: a certain development, such as globalization, technological progress, or the financial crisis, has transformed labor markets and generated widespread dislocation and economic insecurity" which in return reflects as support for the far-right parties. Increasing economic inequality (Proaño et al., 2022; Zagórski et al., 2021) unemployment (Jackman and Volpert, 1996; Arzheimer, 2009), competition (in the form of trade, (Milner, 2021) as well as with immigrants (Rydgren and Ruth, 2011), higher automation (Kurer and Palier, 2019; Caselli et al., 2021) and reduced social security mechanisms (Vlandas and Halikiopoulio, 2022), can contribute to a sense of uncertainty about future which fosters resentment against political elites and helps to accumulate support for far-right parties.

While it is claimed to be one of the main drivers to vote for the far-right parties, there is no consensus on the meaning of the term, or how it should be measured. On the one hand, this concept can add a psychological aspect to the economic grievances discussions as it can stress voters' perceptions of security, anxiety, and (relative) deprivation. Thus, economic insecurity can be defined beyond the observable, quantitative nature of the issue of security which is otherwise mainly associated with employment status/security, income levels, or debt. Polacko et al. (2024) define this aspect as 'subjective insecurity' and utilize self-reported survey results (such as self-assessing the likelihood of losing one's job instead of using unemployment data) to understand the relationship between economic insecurity and (radical) right-wing voting. In fact, Sipma et al.'s (2023) study comparing the effects of real and perceived insecurity based on obtaining permanent employment among working-class respondents concludes that far-right voting correlates with perceived insecurity while real insecurity causes working-class respondents to support radical left.

On the other hand, some scholars approach economic insecurity as a concept which can be directly measured by an objective quantitative element, which is described as 'objective insecurity' by Polacko et al. (2024**)**. For instance, based on their study on Europe, Algan et al. (2017) use rising unemployment as a determiner of economic insecurity and establish a clear connection between unemployment and far-right party support in Europe. Similarly, Vlandas and Halikiopoulou (2019) utilize unemployment to define economic insecurity and discuss the role of welfare system protections to minimize the effects of insecurity on the rise of the far-right. Moreover, in their study based on large-scale panel datasets from Germany and the UK as well as American survey data prior to the 2016 elections, Bossert et al. (2019, p.19) utilize changes in income to determine economic insecurity and reveal that with increasing economic insecurity, voters' support for right-wing parties increases.

Vlandas and Halikiopoulou (2019, p.6) argue that the most economically insecure groups are the ones "on the social periphery most likely to be structurally affected by economic decline such as blue-collar workers, those in manual employment and unskilled workers who compete the most with immigrants for similar positions" as well as "certain labour market insiders and middle-class groups whose socio-economic status has declined and who perceive their position has worsened in comparison either with their own past or with another social group". However, some scholars, such as Mols and Jetten (2020), reduce the question of economic insecurity to a merely working-class problem, as this class is expected to face more economic hardship and reject the importance of economic insecurity argument when the far-right support originated from the middle classes.

Nevertheless, the concept of economic insecurity does not imply a direct relationship with any class affiliation. In the last four decades, many people, including not only the working

class but also the middle class, have experienced economic anxiety and hardship stemming from changing and primarily worsening material conditions, as well as the fear of being 'left behind' compared to the exponentially growing wealth of the top 1%. Kurer (2020) argues that the perception of relative economic disadvantage in the middle classes influences these groups to vote for conservative and nationalist populist right parties. Thus, economic insecurity can go beyond working and underclasses. Moreover, there are studies comparing the role of working-class and middle-class support in far-right success. For example, Antonucci et al., (2017) state that the Brexit movement had more robust support exists among middle-class voters compared to working-class voters.

3.2.2. Globalization

A substantial portion of the studies focusing on economic grievances at least implicitly associate the rise in demand for far-right parties with the critical unfolding of the globalization process. Kriesi et al. (2006) argue that globalization or denationalization leads to a change in the political cleavages. As a process of creating a new set of winners and losers, globalization defines new fault lines and interests, which go beyond the mainstream parties. Kriesi et al. (2006, p.922) state that "losers of the globalization process to seek to protect themselves through protectionist measures and through an emphasis on the maintenance of national boundaries and independence". Therefore, against both cultural and economic effects of globalization, far-right can become an important option for globalization losers as these parties "have spearheaded the nationalist reaction to economic (neoliberal reform of the economy including delocalisation, liberalisation of financial markets, and privatisation), cultural (immigration), and political

(European integration, internationalisation of politics) processes of denationalisation" (Kriesi, 2014, p.369).

Rodrik (2018) states that as globalization progresses, there is a likelihood of triggering a political backlash. He states that "Globalization drove multiple, partially overlapping wedges in society: between capital and labor, skilled and unskilled workers, employers and employees, globally mobile professionals and local producers, industries/regions with comparative advantage and those without, cities and the countryside, cosmopolitans versus communitarians, elites and ordinary people" (Rodrik, 2018, p.23).

One main stream in studies dealing with the effects of globalization on the increasing demand the far-right focus on trade shocks/exposure. Rodrik (2018) argues that increasing trade liberalization inevitably creates losers, such as low skilled workers, with significant redistributive implications. Furthermore, he contends that with the advancement of globalization in the form of decreasing trade barriers, "the redistributive effects of liberalization get larger and tend to swamp the net gains" (Rodrik, 2018. p.15). Consequently, trade becomes an issue of redistribution instead of expanding the overall economic gains. Thus, globalization, particularly in its advanced stages, creates a system with low growth, high inequality, and unavoidable losers who can demand far right parties which Rodrik (2018) argues to be one of the main drivers of the increasing political conflict.

There are numerous studies connecting trade shocks to the rise in demand for far right parties. Dippel et al.'s (2022) study on Germany shows that exposure to imports from low-wage countries correlates with heightened support for far-right parties, whereas increased exports have the opposite effect. Their study supports that trade exposure particularly affects the voting patterns of low-skilled manufacturing workers as they are more susceptible to the impacts of

import-related changes in the labour market (Dippel et al., 2022). Malgouyres (2017) analyses the effect of trade-shocks, particularly imports from low-wage countries, on the presidential election votes of the French National Front between 1995 and 2012. Her study correlates trade shocks, notably imports from low-wage nations, and the far-right's electoral success (Malgouyres, 2017). Swank and Betz's (2003) study based on Western European national electoral data from 16 states between the early 80s to late 90s affirms that the electoral achievements of the far-right parties are influenced by globalization, characterized by increasing trade, capital movements and migration.

Milner (2021) also approaches the effect of globalization on the rise of the far-right with a broader perspective. In addition to trade, her study includes two other main drivers of globalization, capital (FDI [Foreign direct investment]) and labour (migration) flows, and the effect of the 2008 financial crisis on these drivers. She implements a regional scale across 15 Western Europe countries from 1990 to 2018 in addition to an individual-level study through the European Social Surveys. Her study demonstrates that trade shocks from low-wage countries significantly increase far-right support. In contrast, FDI and immigration do not showcase an impact on the far-right. Finally, the financial crisis intensifies the effect of trade on far-right support as following the crisis, trade shocks reduced support for left parties (Milner, 2021).

Trade with China has been a focal point in the discussions regarding the effect of trade on far-right support. Studying election results in various US congressional districts, Autor et al. (2016) argue that Chinese trade shocks had an intensifying effect on political polarization, causing districts affected by such shocks to move further right or left views. Barone and Kreuter (2021) show that the import competition from China and trade globalization results in support for far-right parties as well as higher invalid and absent votes by analyzing Italian national

parliamentary voting trends from nearly 8,000 municipalities between 1992 and 2013. Colantone & Stanig's (2016) analysis of Brexit shows that districts with higher Chinese import penetration voted for leaving the EU more. In another study, Colantone and Stanig (2018) examine how Chinese import shocks influence elections across 15 Western European nations and discover that sudden increases in imports alter voters' sociotropic tendencies, resulting in greater backing for far-right parties. Ballard-Rosa et al., (2022) argue that economic decline in the US results in historically dominant groups supporting more authoritarian tendencies as their study finds that people residing in comparatively diverse areas, where local job markets were significantly impacted by Chinese imports, tend to hold more authoritarian beliefs and were more inclined to vote for Donald Trump in the 2016 US presidential election. Caselli et al. (2020) investigate the effects of globalization on electoral results by analysing Italian electoral dynamics between 1994 and 2008. They utilize import competition intensity with China and the presence of immigrants to measure the effect of globalization and their results show that both of these help Italian far-right parties' electoral success (Caselli et al., 2020).

3.2.3. Immigration

In addition to its central role in discussions of cultural grievances, immigration also plays a significant role in the literature on economic grievances. Golder explains (2016, p.483) that according to Campbell's (1965) realistic conflict theory, during economic scarcity, social groups with conflicting economic interests may perceive other groups as the cause of their economic problems. With increased immigration, competition (both locally and internationally), and the decline of local industries due to globalization, some, particularly those experiencing economic scarcity more directly, view immigrants as a threat or even the primary reason for the

deterioration of their economic well-being**.** Scheve and Slaughter's (2001) study supports this notion. Using individual-level data from the US, they show how particularly low-skilled workers in the US are more likely to support limiting immigration (Scheve and Slaughter, 2001). Similarly, Dancygier and Donnerlly (2012) conduct a sectoral analysis of European workers' perceptions on immigrants based on survey data from 2002 to 2009 and conclude that individuals working in expanding industries are more inclined to favour immigration compared to those in declining sectors. By redirecting economic disappointments and insecurities towards other social groups, some turn to far-right parties. Golder (2016, p. 483) argues that these parties "can exploit these economic grievances by linking immigrants and minorities to economic hardship through slogans such as "Eliminate Unemployment: Stop Immigration"".

In contrast to the cultural interpretations of immigration, the core dynamic in the economic interpretation involves economic scarcity leading to ethnic competition. Rydgren and Ruth (2011, p. 209) state that "according to the ethnic competition thesis, voters turn to the radical right-wing populist parties because they want to reduce competition from immigrants over scarce resources such as in the labor market, housing, welfare benefits, and even the marriage market". Based on this thesis, they argue that there must be a positive relationship between the size of immigrant communities and the far-right electoral support (Rydgren and Ruth, 2011). By analyzing electoral support in different Swedish municipalities, they conclude that the electoral success of The Sweden Democrats can be attributed to the ethnic competition hypothesis, as the proportion of immigrants correlates and electoral support for the party (Rydgren and Ruth, 2011). This result is in line with earlier studies associating the number of immigrants and asylum seekers with far-right electoral support (Knigge, 1998; Swank and Betz, 2003).

Halla et al. (2017) state that immigration positively affects far-right party support. Their study on the Freedom Party of Austria reveals that far-right voters worry about competition for the labour market and public services as well as neighborhood quality following immigration. Some scholars point to the fact that immigration by itself does not lead to a far-right upsurge. Only when it is accompanied by worsening material conditions, immigration causes far-right electoral success. For instance, Tomberg et al., (2021) argue that while economy functions normally, immigration increases support for both left and right ends of the political spectrum, when the economic conditions, such as unemployment rate and disposable income, worsen, increasing numbers of asylum seekers results in improvement of the far-right parties only. Halikiopoulou and Vlandas (2020, p.445) stress the dual nature of the anti-immigration issue and state that their findings "confirm that the far right parties that are more likely to be electorally successful are those able to mobilize a 'winning anti-immigrant coalition' which consists of both the vast majority of the few core supporters who care strongly about the cultural impact of immigration and a subset of the numerically larger group of voters who care strongly about the economic impact of immigration".

3.2.4. 2008 Global Economic Crisis

In addition to studies concentrating on globalization and its various aspects, such as trade shocks or immigration, and economic crisis, the 2008–2009 global financial crisis in particular has been another discussion point on the rise of demand for far-right parties. In their study of the systematic financial crisis between 1870 and 2014 in 20 advanced economies, Funke et al. (2016) find that the electoral demand of the far-right parties has been influenced positively

following the systematic financial crisis, even though normal recessions or macro-shocks do not increase the support for the far-right.

Hobolt and Tilley (2016) argue that in the aftermath of the Eurozone crisis, many voters across Europe preferred challenger parties, including both far-right and left alternatives, instead of traditional parties favoring austerity and European integration. Based on their analysis from aggregate-level and individual-level survey data from 17 Western European EU members, they state that by voting for challenger parties, voters punish the government as well as the opposition and make their decisions regarding whom to vote for based on their preferences on immigration, austerity and EU integration (Hobolt and Tilley, 2016). Gyöngyösi and Verner (2022)'s study shows that during the financial crisis, the households that are exposed to foreign currency loans results in noticeable support in far-right parties as they examine the case of Hungary following the 2008 financial crisis.

3.2.5. New Technologies

Technological changes, particularly in the form of increasing automation have also been associated with far-right electoral support. With the advancement of technology, labor markets have been changing. Particularly workers who have routinizable occupations are at the risk of being replaced by these new technologies (Grigoli et al., 2020). Additionally, increasing trade and import competition with low-wage countries further incentivizes rapid technological change, as demonstrated in Bloom et al.'s (2016) study focusing on the effects of competition with China on European industries. Given that these technological changes are occurring concurrently with trade shocks, increasing outsourcing, and intensifying local competition with immigrants, job

losses related to technology are more likely to result in longer-lasting unemployment and/or higher downward income pressures.

Anelli et al. (2021) analyze the effect of increased use of industrial automation on voting in 13 countries from Western Europe between 1999 and 2015. Similar to the discussions on globalization, they also argue that automation processes create winners and losers as "automation leads to skill-biased changes in job opportunities, associated with rising income inequality" (Anelli et al., 2021, p.1). Their study demonstrates that exposure to automation leads to higher support for the far-right parties, both regionally and individually (Anelli et al., 2021). Im et al. (2019) examine how the automation risk affects voting preferences in 11 West European states by using individual-level data. Their study shows that voters who are threatened by automation and are struggling economically are more likely to support the far-right parties (Im et al., 2019). Milner (2021) argues that both the voters in the areas with more robust automation and voters whose jobs are more vulnerable to automation tend to support far-right parties. Caselli et al. (2021) employ a spatial perspective to examine the impact of global influences, in the form of trade, immigration, and robotization, on the rising support for far-right parties and the 5 Star Movement, along with decreased voter turnout in the years 2001, 2008, and 2013. Their study shows that between 2008 and 2013, robotization positively affected far-right electoral support.

3.2.6. Welfare Policies

As globalization creates new sets of winners and losers, the role of welfare state in reducing these negative effects and thus changing the demand for far-right parties has also emerged as a fundamental question. Swank and Betz (2003, p.224) state that "In the post-World War II era, the welfare state has been regarded as an integral feature of embedded liberalism: in

the most open economies, encompassing networks of social protections have buffered workers from the vicissitudes of liberalized international markets and, thus, promoted economic and political stability". Therefore, the potential negative consequences of liberalized markets and the buffering effects of welfare policies on these consequences are not new notions theorized following globalization. As globalization leads to political backlash due to its distributive conflicts, questions regarding the effects of welfare policies naturally arise. In general, welfare policies are expected to control this backlash by addressing insecurities and mitigating the negative economic effects of market liberalization.

There are several examples demonstrating the role of welfare policies on the demand for far-right parties. In their empirical analysis using data from 16 European national elections between 1981 and 1998, Swank and Betz (2003) argue that globalization's effect on far-right electoral success is significantly influenced by welfare state structures as the universal welfare state helps to balance globalization's effect for far-right demand. Their study shows that while increased immigration positively affects far-right support, this impact is least pronounced in countries with universal welfare states (Swank and Betz, 2003). On the other hand, they state that "where national systems of social protection are comprehensive, generous and employment-oriented, rises in trade openness and capital mobility do not contribute to support for RRWP (radical right wing populist) parties; where welfare programme structure is occupationally based or liberal in character, increases in trans-national market flows are associated with moderate shifts in support to the new far right" (Swank and Betz, 2003, p.239). Thus, they differentiate between a universalistic welfare state with more extensive and employment-oriented programs and a liberal welfare state, showing that globalization's effects on the far-right are better balanced with a universal welfare state (Swank and Betz, 2003).

Based on their analysis merging the European Social Survey from 2002 to 2014 and national-level social policy data focusing on vulnerable groups, such as the unemployed, pensioners, temporary workers, etc., Vlandas and Halikiopoulou (2022) examine the effect of welfare policies on these groups' far-right voting. First, they differentiate welfare policies as compensatory spending policies, which offer insurance by lowering the expenses associated with a realized risk (such as unemployment payments) and protective regulatory policies, which aim to minimize or prevent the risk (such as minimum wage) (Vlandas and Halikiopoulou, 2022). Their results show that both compensatory spending policies and protective regulatory policies reduce the likelihood of these vulnerable groups like the unemployed, pensioners, and temporary workers to support far-right parties (Vlandas and Halikiopoulou, 2022). In another study in which they conduct an extensive analysis of 14 Western and 10 Eastern European countries Vlandas and Halikiopoulou (2019) conclude that unemployment can affect far-right support positively only when unemployment benefit replacement rates are low. Moreover, the lack of welfare spending can also be associated with far-right support as Fetzer (2019) `s study showcases. In his study gathering data from various election in the UK, Fetzer (2019) establishes a positive relationship between welfare cuts resulting from austerity measures and the UKIP's electoral support as well as the Brexit movement. In contrast to the previous studies, Milner (2021) argues that social compensations do not help to decrease the support for the far-right, if the voters have been affected by trade shocks as her study could not associate unemployment benefits with decreasing far-right support following import shocks.

3.3.Conclusion

In short, demand side explanations delve into the socio-economic grievances that drive voters to support far-right parties. These explanations can be divided into two main categories: cultural and economic grievances. While sometimes these two grievances seem to be competing as there can be attempts to determine which is the stronger predictor of far-right voting, cultural and economic grievances should be seen as complementary rather than competing explanations for far-right support.

Cultural grievances explain the increasing demand for the far-right as a result of cultural tensions within societies. The literature on cultural grievances presents two main arguments. First, the demand for far-right is driven by cultural anxiety, which arises from in-group out-group dynamics fueled by fears of foreign cultures, institutions, or ideas eroding one's own culture. Cultural anxiety arguments are mainly linked to social identity theory (Golder, 2016), which suggests that people are inclined to support their groups over others. Thus, immigrants, and other factors that reinforce in-group versus out-group dynamics are often central to cultural anxiety arguments. Second, this demand is linked to a cultural backlash against the rise of new progressive values. Carreras et al. (2019) define cultural backlash as a reaction characterized by opposing values such as xenophobia, nationalism, anti-elite stances, and a generalized sense of loss. Both cultural anxiety and backlash can influence the demand for the far-right parties, as far-right ideology is deeply rooted in cultural identities, emphasizing nationalism, traditional values, and order.

The demand-side explanations approaching the rise of far-right from economic grievances perspective align with the economic voting hypothesis, arguing economic conditions significantly impact voters' preferences. There are several and interrelated factors contributing to these economic grievances, including economic insecurity, globalization (particularly in the form

of the trade shocks), immigration, economic crisis, technological changes and the state of the welfare systems. All factors follow a similar logic: economic deterioration both in real terms, such as income loss, and in perceived terms, such as the feeling of being disadvantaged or left behind, contribute voters to lean towards far-right politics.

As both cultural and economic grievances arguments point, the demand for the far-right parties and movements seemingly shaped by cultural and/or economic crisis. Cultural grievances often manifest as fear of identity loss, in and out-group dynamics, perceived threats to traditional values and anti-elite sentiments, while economic grievances are fueled by real or perceived economic disadvantages of certain segments of the societies. In Chapter 5, the applicability of these arguments to the FC will be explored in greater depth.

Chapter 4: The Supply Side

The supply-side explanations on the rise of far-right parties are a relatively new edition to the literature (Carter 2005; Norris 2005; Van der Brug et al. 2005). As Klandermans (2017, p.329) argues "even a strong demand would not generate a strong movement if strong and effective organizations do not supply opportunities to participate". Thus, supply-side explanations aim to answer what type of factors affect the success of these parties in meeting these demands.

The supply side is also particularly useful in explaining the variations between states regarding far-right support, which the demand side often fails to account for (Van der Brug et al. 2005; Mudde, 2010, p.1168). These studies can show why and how different states have different levels of far-right party success when their public demands for such parties are on similar levels. Mudde (2007) distinguishes external and internal supply-side factors. As the name implies, external factors deal with elements outside of the far-right political parties themselves, such as institutional and political opportunities as well as the role of the media. On the other hand, internal factors focus on the far-right political party as an agent capable of changing its success through its internal qualities such as its ideology, organization, and leadership**.**

4.1.External Factors

Mudde (2007, p. 232) explains external factors as those not inherent to the far-right parties. Thus, they deal with elements outside of the party which can affect the electoral performance of the far-right. These external elements constitute 'political opportunity structures'. Arzheimer and Carter (2006, p.422) define these structures as level of "openness or accessibility of a political system for would-be political entrepreneurs". The concept of the political opportunity structure originates from the new social movements literature (Arzheimer & Carter, 2006; Mudde, 2007)

and is a more recent addition to studies dealing with the far right (Rydgren 2005; Kitschelt &McGann 1995).

There are many elements affecting far-right political opportunity structures. When these factors are present in favour of creating an external political opportunity, far-right parties can obtain more votes. Political opportunity structures can be divided into three main categories: (i) institutional opportunities, (ii) political opportunities, and (iii) the role of the media.

4.1.1. Institutional Opportunities

Institutional framework studies aim to explore the effects caused by the institutional composition of countries on far-right political parties. They mainly focus on how different electoral systems and rules affect the electoral performances of far-right parties. Frequently, empirical studies yield divergent conclusions regarding the impact of these systems and rules on the far-right's electoral success.

For instance, Carter's research (2002, 2004) demonstrates that electoral systems do not significantly influence the success of far-right parties. In her 2002 study on far-right voting in West European countries, Carter (2002) concludes that the electoral system does not have an effect on how far-right parties perform and states, "although there is no doubt that proportional systems make life easier for small parties such as those of the extreme right, neither the district magnitude, nor the electoral formula, nor even the proportionality profile of the different systems as a whole helps account for the differing levels of success these parties have experienced in the period since 1979" (Carter, 2002, p.138). In her 2004 study, she also finds a similar result and declares that the electoral systems including the proportional ones cannot explain the far-right's electoral success in the West European countries (Carter, 2004). Van der Brug et al. (2005,

p.549) who aim to enhance Carter's (2002) study implementing a multivariate model, also have not found evidence that proportionality is helpful for the far-right parties' electoral success.

However, in their study, Arzheimer & Carter (2006) found the disproportionality, the representation in a legislative body not accurately reflecting vote proportion accurately, of the electoral system is important in explaining the uneven success of the Western European far-right parties. They claim that disproportionality has a positive effect on far-right parties' electoral results (Arzheimer and Carter, 2006). On the other hand, Jackman and Volpert (1996) suggest that high electoral thresholds affect support for far-right parties negatively, based on their studies examining the effects of electoral and party systems on the far-right parties in sixteen West European countries using 103 election results.

Other institutional aspects, such as federalism or laws also have been studied by scholars. For instance, Eatwell (2017, p. 546) argues that federal systems can offer an opportunity for the far-right to be represented locally by giving the example of Haider, who has been most successful locally. However, Mudde (2007, p.236) reminds that there are federal states with limited far-right electoral success, such as Germany and Spain while there are unitary systems, such as France and Romania, with successful far-right parties. Eatwell (2017, p.546) also reminds that the far-right parties can be banned or legitimized according to national laws.

Both the electoral system and other institutional aspects have contrasting results regarding the effects of the institutional framework on the far-right's success. This could be a result of biased sample selection due to factors such as the subjective definition issue. On the other hand, Mudde (2007, p.237) argues that electoral systems and other institutional aspects of politics are not determining in electoral success but "they provide them (the far-right parties) with electoral and political opportunities". Thus, they are "important building blocks of the

larger political opportunity structures within which populist radical right parties function" (Mudde, 2007, p.237).

Another thing to note here is that many of the intuitional framework explanations are not unique to the far-right. In other words, if the institutional structuring of a state such as its low electoral threshold or proportionality constitutes a political opportunity, this opportunity cannot be limited to only the parties within the far-right family. In fact, theoretically, it would be expected that this opportunity is shared between other new parties and the far-right ones.

4.1.2. Political Opportunities

Political opportunities deal with the factors affecting the competition between political parties. A key element affecting the performance of far-right parties is inevitably related to the performance of other parties, particularly moderate ones, as all of these parties compete against each other. Van der Brug et al. (2005, p.546) also name these opportunities "electoral opportunity structure".

With the switch from industrial to post-industrial society, political cleavages have moved from old issues such as class to new ones such as identity and environment. As political cleavages have shifted from an economic-centered to a value and culture-centered axis, new demands arise from society. These new demands create an important political opportunity for far-right parties. This resulted in a decrease in voting based on class and party affiliation, heightened political alienation in specific population segments, and diminished confidence in the political elite (Golder, 2016 p.488). Furthermore, Betz (1994, p.35) states that this change "opens up new opportunities for new parties if they are able to monopolize a new issue and thus find a niche in the new space of postindustrial politics and if the established parties are unable or

unwilling to compete with them on this issue". When the new issues are not answered by the established parties, these unanswered demands can constitute an opportunity for far-right parties. Rydgren (2004) calls this "emergence of niches" and states that the far-right parties answer the demand created by the new socio-cultural cleavage dimension with their ethno-nationalist and xenophobic policies.

Rydgren (2005) identifies voters' party identification with established parties as a crucial factor for the success of far-right parties (p.418). He contends that for far-right parties to achieve long-term success, it is essential that voters do not strongly identify with existing political entities (Rydgren, 2005, p.418). Consequently, Rydgren (2005) links the success of far-right parties to a transformative process he terms "dealignment/realignment," wherein old party affiliations are supplanted by new ones, particularly those aligned with the far-right.

One argument that can explain this process is ideological convergence between the established parties. Many scholars (eg. Norris, 2005; Mudde, 2007; Betz, 1994) connect the success of far-right parties to closing ideological boundaries between the center-right and center-left. This explanation offers that in recent years, the center-right and left parties have become ideologically similar to each other, which has resulted in voters to distance themselves from them, and connect with the far-right alternatives instead. Furthermore, Golder (2016, p.486-487) argues that as convergence diminishes the political nature of the primary (economic) policy dimension, voters tend to shift their support to parties that engage in competition based on alternative policy dimensions, such as the far-right. Thus, a policy space opened by the process of convergence can be filled by the far-right parties. Kitschelt and McGann (1995) state:

> …the opportunities for extreme-rightist mobilization depend on the convergence between left and moderate right parties. If the distance between these parties is relatively small, political entrepreneurs have a chance to create a successful electoral coalition with a right-authoritarian agenda. Where 'partocracy' in a country's political economy system

> prevails, such entrepreneurs should be able to broaden their electorate beyond the right-authoritarian core through populist anti-statist messages and actually build a very strong 'cross-class' alliance against the established parties. (1995, p. 53)

Carter (2005, p.141) also correlates the success of the far-right parties to the closer ideological distance between the center-right and center-left parties. She states that high levels of convergence are associated with higher scores from the far-right parties while low levels of convergence are connected to lower ones (Carter, 2005, p.141). Van der Brug et al. (2005, p.561) also argue that the ideological position of the largest mainstream competitor is important for the far-right party's success. Abedi (2002, p.570) stresses the importance of convergence and states that "not necessarily only the collapse of the center parties, but also the 'overcrowding' of the center" helps the far-right parties electorally.

There are also scholars who challenge the convergence thesis. For instance, Bustikova (2014, p.1756) finds no evidence of ideological convergence in the success of far-right parties. The most well-known example is Ignazi (1992), who connected the rise of the far-right, which he called the "silent counter-revolution" to polarization of politics. According to him: "At the cultural level, the neoconservative mood has legitimized a series of 'right-wing' themes which were previously almost banned from political debate, pushing the 'conservative' parties to the right. This in turn has enlarged the political space and provoked an increased polarization; in this process of outbidding, the more extreme right parties have succeeded" Ignazi (1992, p.25).

Another important element in the political opportunity structure is issue salience and issue ownership. Mudde (2007, p.243) states that "… the most important effect of the behavior of the mainstream parties is often on the salience of the issue: increasing confrontation over an issue, without finding a solution, augments the salience of an issue". Mudde argues that if far-right parties can establish issue ownership, the issue salience profits them (Mudde, 2007, p.243).

He states, “when a populist radical right party is able to persuade voters that it is better suited to “handle” an issue than the other parties, the increased salience of that issue will profit the populist radical right party” (Mudde, 2007, p.241-242). Golder (2016, p.487) argues that far-right parties can perform better when they are perceived to obtain issue ownership and when these issues have issue salience. He also claims that both issue salience and issue ownership can be manipulated by mainstream parties as they can adopt dismissive, accommodative, or adversarial positions (Golder, 2016). For instance, Berman (2021) explains that when a novel and potentially politically significant issue, such as immigration, gains attraction, to limit the issue ownership of the far-right parties over immigration, mainstream parties can become accommodative and adapt similar arguments on immigration.

4.1.3. The role of the media

The media’s role is the last external factor. While this literature is relatively small, the media’s role in the rise of the far-right parties has attracted attention from scholars as “the idea that the modern mass media have a strong and malign effect on many aspects of social and political life is widely and strongly held” (Newton, 2006, p.209).

The media provides needed exposure for smaller parties, including those on the far-right, thus serving as a crucial political opportunity for them. These media-related opportunities are described as “discursive opportunities” by Koopmans and Olzak (2004). They present the concept to “denote those opportunities and constraints that become publicly visible and that can thereby affect mobilization” (Koopmans and Olzak, 2004, p. 201). Ellinas (2010) points out the organizational gains which can be provided by the media coverage. He states that due to their smaller size, far-right parties “tend to lack the organizational capacity to recruit and to mobilize

potential voters and the funds to publicize their messages to national publics." This is a gap that can be bridged through media coverage (Ellinas, 2010, p.7). Furthermore, Kitschelt and McGann (1995) stress the importance of the media by giving the example of the French National Front. They argue that emerging political entrepreneurs flourish when there are weaknesses in the system and unforeseen opportunities in elections, but their success hinges on the mass media acting as a catalyst to spread their messages (Kitschelt and McGann, 1995, p.130).

The coverage of the far-right issues, such as crime or immigration, and the figures, such as their leaders, by the media affects these parties positively helping in the issue salience for the far-right parties (Mudde, 2007, 248-249). Walgrave and de Swert (2004, p.495-496), find that the coverage of the issues of immigration and crime by the Belgian media has been associated with the success of the Vlaams Blok while they have not been able to prove casualization. Boomgaarden and Vliegenthart (2007) also show that the coverage of immigration issues by the Dutch media positively affects the far-right party support. In their analysis, Vliegenthart et al. (2012, p.332) validate that the media attention directed towards the far-right parties influences their public support levels in five out of the six parties scrutinized, and in the case of two out of the six, the visibility of leaders in the media also holds significance for the levels of support. Lubbers and Scheepers (2001, p.443) find increasing far-right support following higher media coverage and state that "the number of articles on the extreme right-wing in the month before the polls led to increased support for these parties" in their study based on Germany. In their study on Pim Fortuyn in the Netherlands, Koopmans and Muis (2009) conclude that the visibility and consonance (expressions of endorsement) in the media significantly influenced the public's support for Fortuyn.

Mudde (2007) claims that because the media represent many different ideological positions, it is hard to generalize their effect on far-right parties. He calls the media both a friend and foe that push the (salience of) key arguments while simultaneously criticize these parties (Mudde, 2007, p.253). However, the literature focusing on the negative effects of the media coverage on the far-right is not extensive. One example of such studies is Koopmans and Muis's 2009 work on the electoral success of Pim Fortuyn in the Netherlands. In this study, they find that dissonance (negative attitudes towards the far-right by the media) does not affect the polls (Koopmans and Muis, 2009). Thus with the lack of negative effect caused by dissonance, they argue that "negative reactions may have been counterproductive because criticism might have encouraged other actors to stick up for Fortuyn (thereby increasing the amount of consonance) and journalists to present further messages by Fortuyn more prominently (increasing visibility)" (Koopmans and Muis, 2009, p.655). In contrast, Muis (2015)'s study on the Dutch far-right party Center Democrats, concludes that dissonance has eroded the far-right support. On the other hand, Golder (2016, p.487-488) states that regardless of the media's positive or negative attitudes to the far-right parties, the coverage of them increases the issue salience and thus it is beneficial to these parties. In fact, Vliegenthart et al. (2012, p.333) claim that instead of negative media attention, providing minimal media attention and implementing cordon sanitarie constantly could be a better strategy, if media actors are against the far-right.

4.2. Internal Factors

The other focus of the supply-side literature is internal factors (Carter, 2005; Golder, 2016; Goodwin, 2006; Mudde, 2007; Muis and Immerzeel, 2017). These explanations focus on the internal structure of far-right parties and how different components of these parties play a role in

their electoral success. There are three main internal factors affecting the success of far-right parties: (i) ideology, (ii) leadership, and (iii) organization.

4.2.1. Ideology

Moving beyond the notion that voting for far-right parties is primarily a protest against the political elite (e.g. Betz, 1994; Fennema, 1997), some scholars argue that the ideology of far-right parties plays a pivotal role in determining their success (Kitschelt and McGann, 1995; Cole, 2005; Van der Brug et al., 2000). According to the role of the ideology thesis, these parties shape their destiny by actively engaging in competition with other political entities and garnering support through the dissemination of their ideological principles.

Numerous analyses have explored the characteristics of far-right ideologies that often lead to success. One commonly agreed upon point is that, particularly with the predominance of the populist fractions within the far-right parties, having a moderate ideology is foundational to their success (e.g. Golder,2003; Hainsworth, 2000; Taggart, 1995; Ignazi 1992). In other words, extremist far-right parties are expected to be electorally weak. However, Mudde (2007, p.258) cautions that the relationship between electoral success and moderate far-right ideology may not necessarily indicate a correct hypothesis, as authors rarely provide reasoning for the party classification systems they adopt. As an illustration, Mudde highlights the case of the Belgian VB (Vlaams Belang), which is classified as extreme right by Ignazi (1992) and as welfare chauvinist by Kitschelt and McGann (1995) (Mudde, 2007, p.258-259). Furthermore, he stresses that there are a few unsuccessful examples of moderate far-right parties such as the German REP or the Dutch CD (Mudde, 2007, p. 259).

An important contribution to the role of ideology in the success of the far-right parties is Kitschelt and McGann's 1995 study. In their research, they argue that in addition to the demand-side and external factors, far-right party success is a result of a "winning formula" (Kitschelt and McGann, 1995). They describe this winning formula for the far-right parties as "Only if they choose economic free market appeals that are combined with authoritarian and ethnocentric and even racist messages will they attract a broad audience" (Kitschelt and McGann, 1995, p. viii) as this formula merges blue-collar voters with authoritarian tendencies and middle-class voters with free-market expectations. Thus, a winning far-right ideology merges neoliberal, pro-market, exclusionist, and authoritarian arguments. However, Mudde (2007, p.258) points out that this definition of "winning formula" is a better fit for neoconservatism than an attempt to classify the far-right after the 80s. In fact, he argues that Kitschelt and McGann's winning formula definition could be used to explain Thatcher or Reagan (Mudde, 2007, p.258).

The later works of both Kitschelt (2004) and McGann and Kitschelt (2005) also show that they changed their stance regarding the neoliberal nature of the far-right ideology while keeping the rest of the winning formula intact. McGann and Kitschelt (2005, p.149) explain their new view on the economic aspect of the far-right ideology as "to be somewhat on the right on average in regard to economic policy, but less so than the established conservative [neoliberal] parties". Kitschelt (2004, p.8) accepts that his earlier study failed to recognize the emergence of authoritarian fractions within the working class who support economic resource distribution over neoliberalism, due to the fact that this trend became more noticeable in the 1990s, whereas his empirical study only covered up to 1990. Thus he points out a change in ideology within the far-right parties after the 1990s. He further explains this change as that:

> But the constituencies of such parties (far-right) are internally divided over the extent to which they should embrace economically rightist market-liberal agendas. The parties'

> petty bourgeois supporters are much more enthusiastic about market liberalization than their young, male, working class followers. This internal conflict is exacerbated by accelerating socio-economic change and the strategic repositioning of social democrats in the 1990s. With social democrats becoming moderate white-collar libertarian and economically centrist parties, the reservoir of low-skill workers available to the socio-cultural appeals of right-authoritarian parties has grown. As a consequence, right-authoritarian parties sometimes attempted to tone down their market liberal rhetoric so as not to alienate potential working class constituencies (Kitschelt, 2004, p.10).

Therefore, Kitschelt (2004) interprets the change in the far-right ideology as a strategic response, characterized by opportunism, to fill the policy space opened up by the rivals by bringing their petty bourgeois and working-class bases together.

Today, there are many scholars who exclude neoliberalism from this winning formula (Betz, 2003; De Lange, 2007; Eger and Valdez, 2015). In parallel with Kitschelt's 2004 study, De Lange (2007, p. 416-417), also argues that since the 1990s, the winning formula has changed and many established far-right parties have shifted to a more centrist economic position while keeping their intense authoritarianism to extend their votes. In her comparative study, de Lange, (2007) shows that the French National Rally, the Flemish Block, and the Dutch Lijst Pim Fortuyn all have moved to an economic position that is closer to the center, in other words, less neoliberal, while keeping their authoritarianism intact. Betz (2003, p.205) argues that "differentialist nativism and comprehensive protectionism" are behind the success of the far-right. Furthermore, Eger and Valdez (2015) argue that since the mid-1990s, the contemporary far-right parties have abandoned 'right-wing economics', i.e. neoliberalism, as seen in the examples such parties in Sweden, Germany, and Denmark who support 'welfare chauvinism' and campaign for "protecting national welfare states and social programs by reducing immigration and immigrants' access to benefits" (p.116). On the other hand, according to Rovny (2013, p.19-20), the far-right parties obscure their ideological positions regarding their economic

stance in order to sustain support from different classes. Instead of common economic ideas, the voters respond to the far-right's non-economic issue interests (Rovny, 2013, p.19-20).

Mudde (2007) points out, another important point regarding the role of ideology is how this ideology is spread through propaganda. With increasing internet use, particularly with social media's increasing popularity, there can be many new opportunities for the propaganda of far-right ideology. As a new aspect of internal factors affecting far-right party success, the role of social media has been understudied. Still, there are some examples dealing with the impact of the social media on the far-right party's success. Bachryj-Krzywaźnia and Pacześniak (2021) argue that utilizing social media as a platform for party propaganda has a positive effect on the Vlaam Blok's success. Similarly, Kasekamp et al. (2019) associate the increasing visibility of the Estonian populist radical right party named the Conservative People's Party of Estonia with its substantial engagement with social media**.**

4.2.2. Organization

In addition to ideology, party organization is another main argument of the studies focusing on the internal factors explaining the supply of far-right parties. Similar to the party ideology, the organization component shapes the extent to which far-right parties are able to exploit political opportunity structures. Thus, this argument points to the fact that far-right parties are political actors whose electoral performances depend on the internal aspects of these parties.

In her study focusing on party performances in Post-communist Europe, Tavits (2012, p. 94-95) argues that the organizational strength of a party is contingent upon the scale of its membership and activists, its organizational extensiveness represented by its network of local

branches, and the level of professionalism within its central organization. Membership and activists (Tavits, 2012, p.85) can help a party by bringing their votes, by helping to understand public opinion better, and by helping parties to campaign. Moreover, establishing a network of local branches not only enables parties to actively engage in local politics, gaining valuable experience and testing campaign tactics applicable on a national scale, but it also boosts visibility (Tavits, 2012, p.85-86). This increased visibility contributes to building partisan attachments by persuading voters. Finally, having professional staff helps parties to represent themselves as more competent, organized and united as well as party staff to be more committed and accountable (Tavits, 2012, p.85-86).

Art's 2011 study is one of the most well-known works regarding the role of party organization on far-right party success. He (2011, p.20) defines "party organization" as a concept that consists of "size, cohesion, and competence" and argues that it affects the electoral performance of the far-right parties substantially. The size deals with the number of members and activists that are supporting the party or movement. Art (2011, p. 34) claims that even though political parties increasingly rely on the media and public relations professionals, the number of party activists still matters for electoral performance. For instance, members can spread the party's message and increase votes via canvassing (Gerber and Green, 2000) A larger activist base means a better opportunity to reach potential voters (Art, 2011, p.35). Art stresses the importance of a larger member base, claiming that it can be used to address the challenge of candidate selection, which he identifies as a hurdle for far-right parties (2011, p.35). Furthermore, a larger activist base means that the party can afford to be pickier when deciding who will be located in important positions (Art, 2011, p.35).

Regarding the issue of cohesion, Art (2011, p.35-36) maintains that a party's degree of cohesion (such as possibilities of internal conflicts or splinter groups), whether the party has many opportunists (careerist politicians whose loyalties to the party questionable) and a division between the extreme and moderate groups (who are likely to have conflicts) within the party are critical for the far-right parties (Art, 2011, p. 36-37). Finally, Art (2011, p.37) argues that whether voters think that a far-right party is competent or not determines how they vote. Thus, factors affecting this image, such as political experience, can be important (Art, 2011, p.37).

In addition to Art, Carter's (2005, p.98-100) cross-national analysis revealed that well-organized and well-led far-right parties are substantially more successful than badly organized and led counterparts. In fact, according to her study, party organization and leadership explains almost 50% of the variation in the electoral performance of far-right parties (Carter,2005, p.98-100). Moreover, De Lange and Art (2011) argue that sustainable electoral success for far-right parties requires a strong organization with the correct personnel and powerful internal leadership. Thus, having a strong organization is more effective in the persistence of the far-right parties than their breakthrough (Mudde, 2007). Norris (2005, p.263) states that parties with "effective organizations – building up financial campaign resources, institutionalizing party rules, encouraging internal party discipline and cohesion, and fostering a grassroots base" have a better chance to persist both in favorable and unfavorable electoral periods.

Nevertheless, the role of the organizational strength argument has a problematic nature in explaining the rise of far-right parties because organizational strength can be a result of these parties' electoral success. Muis and Immerzeel (2017, p. 916) argue that the increase in membership and enhancement of an organization frequently follow success, rather than preceding it. Ellinas (2009, p.219) argues that instances like those in France show that the growth

of the organization could be a consequence rather than the catalyst for the success of a party, particularly in the initial phases of its development.

4.2.3. Leadership

The leadership, or 'charismatic leadership', argument is the last internal factor explaining the far-right party success. According to this argument, leaders' attributes, such as their charisma or being a strong leader, have a role in the electoral success of the far-right parties. Lubbers et al. (2002, p.371) contend that far-right parties with charismatic leaders, established organizations and an engaged cadre, such as the French Front National or the Italian Lega Nord, achieve better electoral success than parties with no such internal qualities. Bin and Yi (2015) defend that the Sweden Democrats had a turning point after 2005 thanks to their changing leadership which helped to build a new party image separated from the Neo-Nazi image. Bachryj-Krzywaźnia and Pacześniak (2021) argue that changing leadership after electoral defeat has a positive effect on the Vlaam Blok's success.

Similar to the organizational strength argument, this explanation also has a problematic nature due to the fact that it can be a result of success as much as it can result in success. Whether far-right leaders win due to their charisma or leadership qualities or they are perceived as charismatic or good leaders due to the fact that they win is not certain. Van der Brug et al. (2005, p.567) criticize Lubbers et al. (2002) by stating that their explanation of the role of charismatic leadership suffers from circularity.

4.3.Conclusion

In short, supply-side theories explore the internal and external factors that affect far-right parties' success in meeting public demand. External factors, as explained by Mudde (2007), are elements outside of far-right parties that can impact far-right parties' electoral performance. There are three main external factors, which are institutional opportunities, political opportunities, and the role of the media. Firstly, institutional opportunities focus on how a country's institutional framework, such as its electoral systems, federalism and laws, affects far-right political parties' electoral success. There is no consensus on the effect of the electoral systems on far-right parties' election results. Secondly, political opportunities refer to the factors influencing competition among political parties, particularly how the performance of far-right parties is affected by moderate parties. Changing political cleavages from class-based to identity-based, party dealignmnet and realignment, ideological convergence as well as political polarization between the center-right and left, and the issue salience and ownership of far-right parties and their competitors constitute the most fundamental political opportunities for the electoral success of far-right parties. Finally, the media can increase the far-right's exposure and enhance the visibility of its leaders as well as the salience of its political issues, such as crime or immigration, which in turn positively impacts the far-right.

Internal factors, on the other hand, focus on the party's internal qualities, such as ideology, organization, and leadership, which can contribute to its electoral success. Firstly, according to the role of ideology argument, far-right parties' ideological positioning affects their electoral performance as more moderate parties which merge centrist economic positions with strong authoritarianist tendencies have gained more electoral success in recent years. Nevertheless, while ideology can be a determinant factor for far-right parties, the role of propaganda, particularly through social media recently, should not be overlooked. Secondly,

party organization plays a crucial role through factors such as its membership and activist size, the extensiveness of local branches, professionalism, cohesion, and competence. Finally, leadership, particularly the existence of a leader with strong charisma can contribute to far-right parties' performance.

Overall, the supply-side analysis offers an fundamental perspective for understanding the rise of far-right in recent years. These arguments are particularly useful for explaining the varied performance of far-right parties. Nevertheless, given their focus on political parties as the primary unit of analysis, supply-side arguments may not be fully applicable to the context of social movements. Still, the insights obtained through the in-depth analysis of the supply-side arguments, with minor mortifications, would provide a useful framework for extending our understanding for far-right social movements, such as the FC. In the following chapter, the key concepts discussed here will be applied to the FC in greater detail.

Chapter 5: Utilizing Demand and Supply Side Analyses to Understand the Freedom Convoy

The literature on the current far-right phenomenon shows that there are two main branches for approaching its rise: the demand and supply-side. Both approaches conceptualize the success of the far-right based on electoral performance and therefore deal with political parties and voters.

Demand-side studies focus on the complaints that drive voters to seek far-right politics. A further thematic analysis on the demand side-analysis reveals that the demand for these parties and movements is driven by cultural and economic grievances. On the one hand, cultural anxieties and backlash emerge as the two main sub-themes within cultural grievances. On the other hand, economic insecurities, the negative effects of globalization, immigration, economic crisis, technological changes, and the state of the welfare state emerge as sub-themes within the economic grievances theme.

In supply-side analysis, the key themes revolve around external and internal factors that influence far-right parties' ability to generate and meet demand, based on a thematic review of the far-right literature. There are three sub-themes within external factors: the institutional and the political opportunities, as well as the role of the media. On the internal side, there are three sub-themes as well: ideology, organization, and leadership. In this chapter, the FC is examined using these themes and sub-themes to conceptualize the Convoy and explain this event by utilizing the extensive literature on the far-right.

5.1.The Demand-side Analysis

The arguments on the demand side delve into the “grievances” that drive people to endorse far-right political parties and movements. They aim to explain which socioeconomic issues

create a fertile ground for voters to lean towards such politics. The underlying assumption is that for far-right politics to be attractive to voters, there needs to be changing or perceived deteriorating conditions —such as some sort of "crisis"— that prompts voters to lean toward far-right options instead of other political parties. Grievances rooted in the culture and the economy are two key explanations emerging from the demand-side analysis.

5.1.1. Cultural Grievances

The thematic analysis shows that cultural grievances among voters are a substantial driver determining the demand for far-right parties and movements. There are two interconnected subthemes within the cultural grievances arguments: (i) cultural anxiety, triggered by in and out-group dynamics and fear of losing one's culture, and (ii) cultural backlash, a reaction against progressive cultural changes "characterized by opposing values and attitudes such as xenophobia, ethnocentrism, nationalism, anti-elite sentiments, and a generalized sense of loss" (Carreras et al., 2019, p. 1400). Both cultural anxieties and cultural backlash translate into a rising demand for the far-right. While these two categories can be theoretically different, they are hard to distinguish in practice. For example, progressive values can also catalyze fear of losing one's culture as it can reinforce an in-group out-group dynamic.

Cultural grievances, manifested in the form of cultural anxieties and cultural backlash, can be directly associated with far-right support, as the ideological position of these movements and parties revolves around a cultural point. Authoritarian tendencies, like traditional, patriarchal, and hierarchical views of society, along with group dynamics based on inclusion/exclusion, such as nationalism or nativism, add a cultural dimension to far-right ideology. Furthermore, as populist tendencies have dominated the current far-right phenomenon,

dialectical positioning of ‘the elite’ and ‘the people’ defines another cultural battleground for the far-right. This polarization is closely tied to differing cultural identities, further fueling the far-right's ideological conflict.

Hence, the effect of cultural grievances is naturally expected to be one of the main drivers for the support for the FC movement. Yet, establishing such a link can be more indirect than initially expected. As the convoy presented itself as a trucker-centered COVID-19 restriction protest, its cultural aspect is harder to notice at first glance. However, the underlying messages of the protest showed what they were against was not simply a certain type of public policy. Behind the movement was a growing cultural grievance which reflected broader cultural anxieties and a backlash against perceived societal issues.

The FC demonstrates that the threat of COVID-19 and the extraordinary measures required to combat it have catalyzed a sense of cultural anxiety and backlash among some Canadians. As a unique and life-threatening crisis, the pandemic was expected to intensify anxiety, increase the desire to make sense of the unknown and lead to criticism and blame of authorities—even the search for scapegoats. Esses and Hamilton (2021) state: “COVID-19 has created a landscape characterized by fear, uncertainty, and a feeling of lack of control. In addition to real threats posed to people’s health and to national and global economies, pandemics cause more general feelings of fear and threat”

The sense of threat and anxiety creates an ideal environment for amplifying cultural grievances and shaping the demand for the far-right. In fact, considering Inglehart and Norris’s (2017) observations about existential security and support for the far-right, it is expected that we should see a relationship between decreasing existential security due to the pandemic and increasing cultural grievances. Balmas et al. (2022) argue that the anxiety associated with the

COVID-19 pandemic intensified already existing inter-group hostility. Similarly, Özcan (2023) claims that the pandemic's uncertainties and setbacks have exposed animosity in many societies, which frequently targets people who are categorized as "other." For example, Guo and Guo (2021) argue that following the start of the pandemic, racism and xenophobia against the Asian Canadians, particularly those of Chinese descent, increased significantly. Liu (2021) also reports that anti-Asian hate crimes surged by 717 percent between 2019 and 2020 in Vancouver.

Considering that previous cross-cultural research from 23 countries showed Canadians reported some of the highest anxiety levels during the first wave of the COVID-19 lockdown (Burkova et al. 2022), it should be expected that, for some Canadians, the sense of threat created by the pandemic merged with and intensified existing cultural grievances and strengthened in-group/out-group divisions. There are indicators showing that the pandemic has become a battlefield for cultural anxieties and cultural backlash, which materialized in the FC.

One of the most prominent is the framing of the FC as a national struggle to protect Canada and its citizens from perceived threats with a strong us (in-group)/them(out-group) dichotomy. The sense of a cultural warfare, where the battle was seen as one to defend Canadian values and freedoms against what was perceived as the tyranny of pseudo-Canadian elements and other external threats. These elements included elites such as mainstream politicians, the media, and even international actors, such as the WHO or ‘globalists’, who were accused of promoting a "new world order" that threatened the nation's sovereignty and cultural identity (as well as usual suspects such as Muslims, Jews or other immigrant groups for some FC supporters). By portraying these individuals and organizations as disconnected from the everyday Canadian, the FC positioned the movement as a revolt against an unjust system threatening the very existence of Canada and Canadians. This narrative, deeply intertwined with

cultural fears, portrayed the movement as a hero defending Canadian values, from both internal and external elements.

The name “Freedom Convoy” itself suggests resistance against perceived existential threats that contradict the Canadian way of life. Many supporters saw the movement as part of a larger cultural and ideological struggle to restore Canada's identity, autonomy, and traditional values from forces they felt were undermining them, rather than solely opposing public health policies. For instance, a Facebook comment on a post dated January 15, 2022, just a couple of days before the first protests started, states: “Thank you for standing up for the freedom that our veterans fought and paid for with their lives and are still fighting for! We need to take Canada back before it’s too late!" (Freedom Convoy 2022, 2022a). Another Facebook comment stated that “Canadians desperately need help to regain their freedom and rights that are being taken from them by a tyrannical and dictatorial PM. I have an abundance of faith in our truckers. They will show up in record numbers and help Canadians regain their lost freedoms and rights” (Freedom Convoy 2022, 2022a).

The idea of representing Canadians and fighting for the nation's sovereignty is also evident in Canada Unity’s controversial Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) (Canada Unity, 2021). Canada Unity (2021, p.1) presented itself as the voice of the entire nation in this document, designating the principal players as "THE PEOPLE OF CANADA," "THE SENATE OF CANADA," and "THE GOVERNOR GENERAL OF CANADA." By doing so, the movement claimed to speak on behalf of the Canadian population, portraying its cause as not merely a protest but a constitutional mission aimed at restoring and defending the rights and liberties of Canadians. Furthermore, the symbolic weight of the Canadian flag in both online and offline spaces was clearly visible, reinforcing the message that the demonstrations were in

response to a national threat. For instance, Freedom Convoy 2022 (2022b) Facebook page which has 253k likes and 358k followers, uses a profile picture with a maple leaf and two eagle feathers, a Native American symbol (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Freedom Convoy 2022 Facebook Page Profile Picture

Note. From Freedom Convoy 2022 Facebook Page (https://www.facebook.com/share/1GB8tyHoNo/)

Another aspect adding a cultural anxiety and cultural backlash element to the FC is the role of conspiracy-based perspectives on the COVID-19 pandemic. These perspectives not only intensify the rejection of mainstream values but also reinforce the social identity of FC supporters, solidifying their opposition to established norms. Thus, they functioned as another frontline in the in-group out-group dynamic while also focusing on anti-establishment rhetoric. This can be considered as a materialization of both cultural anxiety and backlash.

As shown in the previous studies, conspiracy theories are more common among people who are anxious (Grzesiak-Feldman, 2013) and those who feel powerless (Abalakina-Paap et al., 1999). Conspiracy theories also serve as a catalyst in in-group and out-group dynamics, as they can be a defining characteristic of social identity while increasing intergroup tensions. Douglas (2021, p.273) states, "Conspiracy theories give people an "other" to blame for their predicament and may therefore perform a system-justifying function, deflecting blame from dysfunctional societal problems and instead blaming a few "bad apples"—an outgroup—for the ills of society". Thus, in addition to attracting individuals who feel anxious and powerless, conspiracy theories also serve as a key marker of social identity.

Even though it has always been a part of some far-right supporters' narratives on social reality, particularly since the onsets of the pandemic, conspiracy theories have gained value within far-right political circles. This is because the anxiety and the lack of power caused by the pandemic, as well as the desire to make sense of the unknown, have been quickly associated with the already existing sense of cultural anxiety and cultural backlash. Previous studies have shown the connection between COVID-19 conspiracies and right-wing ideology (Alper et al., 2021; Uscinski et al., 2020).

In addition to their function as a defining feature of a social identity, the alternative realities created by various conspiracy theories serve as a channel to showcase the rejection of the common-sense of the progressive culture political elite. Thus, by definition, they present a counter-hegemonic character. This counter-hegemonic quality arises in opposition to prevailing progressive values and narratives, which generally mold social norms and public debate. On the other hand, the validity of the scientific knowledge regarding the pandemic and how the media chooses to report the pandemic related information were culturally backlashed through

conspiracy-based interpretations of the social reality. In these interpretations of the social reality, not only the very existence of the COVID-19 pandemic but also the validity and motivation of the science, media, international community, mainstream politicians, and (national) outsiders, such as Muslims or Asians, have been challenged. Even the international collaboration needed to tackle the virus has been added to the concerns about establishing a tyrannical/communist new world order.

The "Vaccines as Reset" narrative suggests that COVID-19 was intentionally orchestrated by the elite to undermine nationalism and nation-states and to radically transform existing economic and political systems, paving the way for an elite-led revolution against the general population, while the "Vaccines as Control" narrative revolves around the belief that COVID-19 vaccines are a tool to exert excessive control over individuals by governments and global elite (McNeil-Willson, 2022). While both of these narratives are usually combined with each other, it is possible to observe both among the FC supporters with concerns such as tyranny, communism, reset, globalist, and new world order.

For instance, a Facebook comment supporting this narrative from Freedom Convoy 2022 page from January 15, 2022, exemplifies this mindset: “Funny, a memory from a 18 months ago popped up - when we initially believed this was ACTUALLY about our health. Now Canadians are more awake than they’ve ever been. The brave will ALWAYS stand behind you, and that’s a promise.” (Freedom Convoy 2022, 2022c). Another comment from the same day claims echoes these sentiments, claiming, “his [Trudeau’s] resignation will change nothing. Every political party is on board with this (Greens, NDP [New Democratic Party], Conservatives) except for the People’s party. And every UN [United Nations] country is on board with this takedown (reset). We need to overthrow the whole government and system. Stop the tyranny of all medical orders,

all mandates across the whole country. We don't need Trudeau's permission to do that. We just need our population to wake up and listen to the truckers, stop vaccinating, and open all the your businesses. (Well except for the big businesses who are part of the corporate wolves)" (Freedom Convoy 2022, 2022c). A comment from January 31, 2022 states" "i'm sure I'm not the first one to say this, but they don't want talks... they are FORCING US TO DO WHAT THEY WANT so that they can usher in the Great Reset... not a conspiracy theory at all... it's a conspiracy, but it's NO THEORY. They don't care what we think or want... they are doing what THEY are told by the world leaders" (Freedom Convoy 2022, 2022d). Another comment from the same day asserts "World Economic Forum puppet under Klaus Schwab/New World Order. A total embarrassment for Canada." (Freedom Convoy 2022, 2022d).

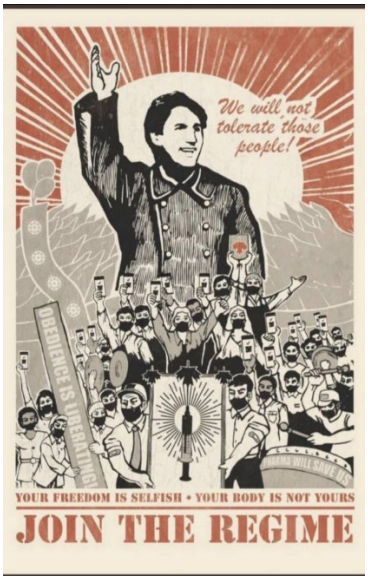
Justin Trudeau is an inevitable focus of such conspiracy-themed perspectives. A Facebook comment from the Freedom Convoy 2022 page under a post dated January 31, 2022 states "Stay strong, we are all behind you and are praying that with time they will see that the majority of Canada is behind you and not his communist mandates." (Freedom Convoy 2022,

2022d). A second comment asserts, “He is a Globalist who doesn’t care about Canadians (Freedom Convoy 2022, 2022d).”

There were also memes portraying Justin Trudeau as a communist tyrannical leader and an Orwellian thought police from 1984 (see Figure 2 and Figure 3) posted on the Freedom Convoy 2022 Facebook page (Freedom Convoy 2022, 2022e; Freedom Convoy 2022, 2022f).

Figure 2

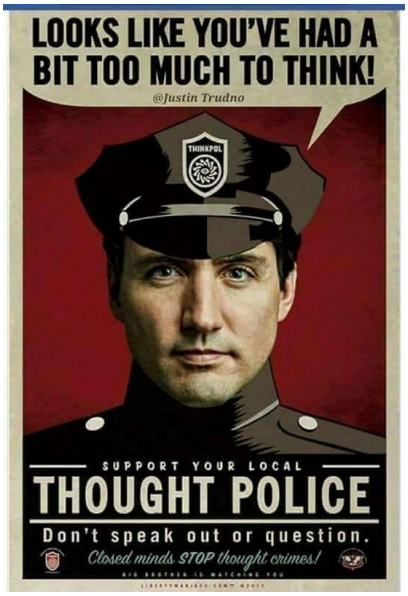
Trudeau Portrayed as an Authoritarian Leader



Note. From Freedom Convoy 2022 Facebook Page (https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1095120617720725&set=p.1095120617720725&type=3)

Figure 3

Trudeau Portrayed as a Thought Police



Note. From Freedom Convoy 2022 Facebook Page (https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1286188708523050&set=p.1286188708523050&type=3)

These remarks demonstrate how cultural anxieties and cultural backlash affected the demand for the FC. Increasing anxiety, sense of the lack of power and desire to make sense caused by the pandemic intensified the in and out-group dynamics and reactionary positions against the out-group. Hence the FC emerged as a national issue against an existential threat against the Canadian identity for the supporters of the FC, surpassing the borders of a public health policy. Furthermore, conspiracy theories among the FC supporters functioned as both a means to backlash against the 'others' common sense and reinforcing the sense of social identity among themselves.

5.1.2. Economic Grievances

The literature on the far-right shows that economic grievances are a driving factor in voters increasing demand for the far-right parties and movements. The demand for far-right policies among voters can be explained by a variety of distinct, but mostly related, factors about economic grievances, such as the negative effects of economic insecurity, globalization, immigration, economic crisis, new technologies, or declining welfare state protections. Arguments based on economic grievances follow the economic voting theory and contend that these factors have adversely impacted the economic well-being of certain groups in society, leading to their inclination towards far-right political organizations.

The COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly impacted the global economy. It has disrupted supply chains, production, and international trade, resulting in unemployment, declining income, and triggering an economic crisis. In response, states have been compelled to adopt more active roles through welfare policies and business protections. The pandemic has also encouraged new work practices, such as remote work, and catalyzed automation while increasing already existing inequalities.

Furthermore, the negative economic impact of the pandemic has surpassed developing nations, affecting developed nations in a similar way as well. Prior studies have shown that the COVID-19 pandemic has substantially affected food security, as it disrupted employment incomes even in developed countries such as Canada and the U.S., (Men and Tarasuk, 2021; Niles, et al., 2020). Bianchi el at. (2023) estimate that in the U.S., pandemic-related unemployment, which is 2 to 5 times greater than an ordinary unemployment shock, is likely to result in a substantial escalation in mortality rates while reducing life expectancy.

As the pandemic greatly affected both the real and perceived economic well-being of some segments of society, it is expected that it would catalyze the demand for the FC. The sense of economic insecurity is the main element that can be observed in the FC movement. The literature on the economic insecurity argument suggests that both real and perceived economic insecurities can cause voters to support far-right political ideology. The economic insecurity concept gives a psychological quality to the discussions as it defines a perspective in which voters' anxieties and relative deprivations are recognized. As et al., (2021) argue the COVID-19 pandemic increases feelings of economic insecurity. The negative effect of the pandemic on economic security is reflected in the increasing demand for the FC.

The main driver of economic insecurity is considered to be unemployment or loss of income. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, unemployment and underemployment have become a reality for countless people. According to the International Labour Organization (2021), in 2020, compared to 2019, 114 million jobs were lost globally. Furthermore, compared to the first quarter of 2019, the world saw an 8.8% reduction in total working hours, which approximates 225 million full-time jobs (International Labour Organization, 2021). International Labour Organization (2020) also estimates that the pandemic significantly affected the labor market by not only decreasing the number of jobs but also the quality of work, such as declining wages and social protections.

With the catalyzing effect of the pandemic on unemployment, an increasing sense of economic insecurity was directly reflected in the demand for the FC. As the COVID-19 pandemic led to widespread job losses and reduced income, economic insecurities were exacerbated among many Canadians. Lemieux et al. (2020) stated that COVID-19 led to a 32 percent decrease in total weekly work hours for workers aged 20 to 64, along with a 15 percent

reduction in employment levels in Canada. As the literature on the far-right suggest, increasing unemployment and economic insecurity is expected to result in increasing demand for far-right parties and movements. When one considers the position of the truckers in the FC movement, the central role of unemployment and economic insecurities becomes clear. The idea for the convoy was ignited by the new mandates imposed on truckers, which would inevitably impact the employment status of unvaccinated truckers. The convoy attracted many people who felt threatened by rising unemployment or lost their jobs during the pandemic due to mandates and/or pandemic-related policies. For instance, a Facebook comment from the Freedom Convoy 2022 pages written on January 31, 2022 states:

> I am someone who has 3 shots but have a medical exception for a mask the health services to not comply with my doctors note among other places. I am unable to work and lost 30 percent of my wage because I cannot wear a mask. It is the federal level of government that put a mandate on preventing me from working. It is not fair for any Canadian to be discriminated by our own government. (Freedom Convoy 2022, 2022g)

Another comment from February 2, 2022 states: "Thank you Tamara!! I am a healthcare worker who went from hero to zero, so I am extremely grateful." (Freedom Convoy 2022, 2022h)

The literature also shows that another aspect affecting the sense of economic insecurity is the (relative) deprivation among the voters. As such, inequality can be a factor affecting economic insecurity. One of the pandemic's impacts on work was the change in how work could be conducted. As remote working became the new reality for workers in "the knowledge economy (e.g., professions; tech fields)" (Blustein and Guarino, 2020, p.704), these work-related shifts highlighted the significant inequalities that persist between those who had the option to work from home and those who lost their jobs or had to risk infection to remain employed. For instance, Gallacher and Hossain (2020) state that Canadian workers with jobs with less chance for remote work experienced higher unemployment. This shift emphasized the unequal

opportunities and economic privileges that exist in the labor market. As the increasing inequalities intensify the sense of (relative) deprivation, the support for the far-right, particularly among the low and middle classes who are feeling left-behind is expected, which resulted in the support for the FC. Again, the visibility of the truckers and other essential service workers who could not practice remote work showcases this sense of relative deprivation.

Income and changes in income can also be a measurement tool to analyze economic insecurities. By examining the effect of changes in income Bossert et al. (2019) conclude that voter support for far-right parties increased with economic insecurities. Aktaş (2023) argues that estimates at both national and global levels indicate that one of the pandemic's most notable impacts has been the increase in income inequality. According to the International Labour Organization (2022) in Canada and the US, before the pandemic, real wage growth approximated between 0 and 1 percent, but in 2020, as unemployment increased, particularly among the low-wage workers, the average real wage growth expanded to 4.3%. Nevertheless, by 2022, the real wage growth declined to -3.2% due to the return of the low-wage workers and increasing inflation causing erosion in real wages (International Labour Organization, 2022). Both declining income and increasing inflation are likely to increase the sense of economic insecurity, which could increase the demand for the FC movement.

The role of economic grievances, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, played a pivotal part in driving the demand for the FC. The pandemic’s sudden and severe economic disruptions created economic insecurity. Particularly the effect of economic insecurities catalyzed by unemployment, inequalities, and declining incomes increase the demand for the FC.

5.2.The Supply-side Analysis

The literature on supply-side explanations concentrates on identifying the factors that influence the success of far-right parties in responding to public demand. There are two sorts of supply-side factors in the current far-right literature: (i) internal, and (ii) external. External factors refer to elements outside the far-right parties, such as institutional opportunities, political opportunities and the role of the media. Conversely, internal factors focus on the traits of the far-right parties themselves, such as their ideology, organization, and leadership, all of which can have an impact on their level of success.

5.2.1. External Factors

External factors are outside forces affecting the far-right parties' ability to meet demand. These outside components are referred to as "political opportunity structures." These structures are shaped by a variety of circumstances which increase the likelihood that far-right parties will receive votes when those elements are favorable. Three primary categories are commonly used to classify political opportunity structures: institutional opportunities, political opportunities, and the media's role.

The thematic analysis of the supply side literature reveals that studies on institutional framework seek to investigate the positive and/or negative effects that a country's institutional makeup may have on far-right political parties. The main focus of these studies is analyzing how various electoral systems and rules, such as proportionality, disproportionality, or legal thresholds impact the electoral performance of far-right parties. Nevertheless, empirical research often produces divergent conclusions regarding the influence of these systems and rules on the performance of the far-right.

While the literature on institutional opportunities provides important insights on the factors that may affect the far-right parties' electoral success these discussions do not provide a framework which would be fully applicable to a social movement such as the FC. For instance, the rules and procedures of different electoral systems, such as legal thresholds or proportionality, do not constitute an institutional opportunity for the FC, as it is not a political party.

Nevertheless, similar to Eatwell's (2017) point on being legally allowed to provide a fundamental institutional opportunity to far-right parties, one could argue that laws legitimizing protests like the FC constitute a basic institutional opportunity for the FC movement. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982) defines the rights to peaceful assembly, freedom of expression, and freedom of association. Thus, at least initially, the FC demonstrations were legally allowed, which inevitably affected the existence, duration, and success of the movement. Nevertheless, the legality of the movement became an issue with prolonged blockades and disruptions, leading the Emergencies Act to be invoked by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on February 14, 2022. In order to answer the concerns on the legality of invoking the Emergencies Act, an inquiry was conducted, which found the government was justified in invoking the Emergencies Act to suppress the protests (Tasker, 2023). Nevertheless, a later decision made by the Federal Court determined that the Trudeau government's decision to invoke the Emergencies Act during the FC protest was a violation of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Canadian Frontline Nurses v. Canada (Attorney General), 2024).

Another institutional opportunity for the FC movement is described as the 'failure of federalism" by Rolueau (2023). He argues that in a federal system, governments must cooperate beyond politics to handle urgent threats, but this cooperation was lacking in January and

February 2022 (Rolueau, 2023). Sabin (2022) also points out that the policing in Ottawa reflected a failure of multilevel political actors instead of collaboration among them. The vulnerability of the federal system, which requires high levels of cooperation and collaboration among various levels of government to manage crises like the FC, creates an institutional opportunity that can be exploited by such movements. Because of the fragmented responsibilities and lack of a cohesive reaction, FC organizers and supporters had more opportunities to extend their protests' duration, which inevitably affected the overall success of these protests.

The second external factor is political opportunity. The focus of political opportunities is the political variable affecting party competition. The literature on political opportunities shows that there can be many factors affecting the far-right parties' electoral success. With the emergence of the new socio-cultural divides, parties who are able to tackle these new issues, such as the far-right parties, increase their electoral success as voters dealing with their old parties and realign with the new ones (Rydgren, 2005). Furthermore, the success of far-right parties has been associated with both the ideological convergence and polarization of other political parties. The issue ownership and salience are other key political opportunities helping far-right parties' electoral success. If far-right parties can establish an issue ownership, i.e. they can create the perception that they can resolve the issue better than their competitors, the rising salience of the issue will help the far-right party (Mudde, 2007). Furthermore, how other parties react to the issue's salience and ownership by a far-right party can affect that party's political opportunities, as other parties may adopt dismissive, accommodating, or confrontational positions, ultimately influencing the level of support that far-right parties receive. (Golder, 2016).

The FC movement, like other examples of contemporary far-right parties and movements, can also be interpreted as a result of new socio-cultural cleavages within political parties and movements. This aligns with the concept of 'new politics,' which emphasizes culture and values over traditional class-based issues. In recent decades, issues such as identity and values have become the focus of politics, moving away from the classical left-right political spectrum that is heavily influenced by class and economic interests. This shift has facilitated a dealignment from traditional class-based parties, which could not adapt to this new political cleavage and a realignment with newer parties who could supply socio-cultural politics. Thus, this change has created an ideal environment for the rise of nationalist, traditionalist, populist, and authoritarian politics of the far-right parties and movements, which materialized in the FC.

Furthermore, some of the FC organizers criticized the Conservative Party for its perceived ideological convergence with the Liberal Party (Boutilier, 2019). This may have created a political opportunity to mobilize some supporters for the FC. However, particularly after Pierre Poilievre, who openly supported the FC (Vieira, 2022), became the leader of the Conservative Party, the effect of ideological convergence may be reduced. This does not necessarily indicate a decline in far-right support in Canada, as the literature on political opportunities suggests. Far-right parties and movements can benefit from both ideological convergence and polarization among parties; in the former, they may be seen as an alternative, while in the latter, they can gain legitimacy and increase in their overall influence.

Additionally, the main political opportunities for the mobilization of the FC are related to its issue ownership of and salience on two major issues: the COVID-19 pandemic and the mandates (on truckers). Far-right actors within the FC movement exploited these issues, integrating them into their socio-cultural cleavage and framing them as deeply ideological. By

doing so, they both secured issue ownership and increased their salience. The establishment of the FC would not have occurred without the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent implementation of related public health measures and restrictions. For an already growing right in Canada, the COVID-19 pandemic became a new front along which to define itself. Although on the surface, the COVID-19 pandemic itself is fundamentally a public health crisis devoid of inherent ideological dimensions, the FC made it so, using it to articulate the ideological positions against the role of the state, international institutions, media, and cosmopolitan elites.

As Lim and Rigato (2022) argue based on their observations in Canada, "Once the pandemic hit, far-right narratives switched from being predominantly racist and xenophobic to those based on civil rights, freedom, and COVID-19-related conspiracies." This pivot indicated a transformation based on an emerging political opportunity. The pandemic allowed the FC to reposition itself to exploit the issue and mobilize newer and older supporters by utilizing this opportunity. The widespread anxiety, uncertainty, and reactionary arguments have found a place within far-right circles, while many other political parties have failed to exploit or even recognize these concerns as they support mandates. Thus, the pandemic opened new ground in the ideological battleground for the far-right which aided their expansion.

By representing the issue as an assault against rights and the concept of 'freedom', the FC found a way to reach new audiences and merge them with their regular supporters. For instance, Lim and Rigato (2022) claim that to extend their reach, the far-right spread misleading assertions that vaccine mandates violate Canadians' rights and freedoms, which enabled them to easily form allies with existing anti-mandate groups in Canada, such as Canadian Frontline Nurses, and similar groups in the US. Gillies et al. also state (2023, p.2) "In many ways, the

Freedom Convoy leaders identified and seized social and political opportunities linked to the COVID-19 health emergency. In turn, it allowed them to shape the emergence of the protest movement, as well as frame its grievances, demands, and objectives—or more broadly a protest narrative—to garner public support".

New mandates on the truckers and other essential workers who crossed the border constituted the other political opportunity as this issue has been exploited to establish an issue ownership and salience, as well as gather and organize like-minded people who became mobilized after this last incident. A few days after the WHO declared COVID-19 a pandemic, on March 18, 2020, Canada and the US stated their decision to "restrict all non-essential travel across the Canada-U.S. border" (Prime Minister of Canada Justin Trudeau, 2020). Trucking was recognized as an essential service (Public Safety Canada, 2021). With the attempt to establish a new normal, the privileges of the essential service providers were determined to be lifted in late 2021 on both sides of the border started January 2022. This meant that truckers would be subjected to the same regulations as other travelers. If the truckers and other essential service providers were not fully vaccinated, they were required to quarantine (Canadian Trucking Alliance, 2022b).

Rouleau states that while this new mandate on truckers did not drive thousands of Canadians to join the FC, it still influenced the movement in two major ways: it mobilized some truckers and provided a powerful symbol that "could be used as a rallying point for the broader dissatisfaction among their [organizers who already engaged in political action] friends and supporters, whether with other COVID-19 mandates or with governments in general" (Rouleau, 2023, p. 135). As Rouleau points out, while some of the key organizers had connections with the trucking industry, such as Bridgette Belton, Chris Barber and BJ Ditcher (Parkhill, 2022), others

did not. In fact, CTA (Canadian Trucking Alliance) declared that “a great number of these protestors have no connection to the trucking industry and have a separate agenda beyond a disagreement over cross border vaccine requirements” (Canadian Trucking Alliance, 2022c).

The image and identity of truckers were an integral part of the protestors actual and online representations. Trucks were used in convoys and blockages. Besides, in the Tweeter and Facebook pages of the convoy, trucking related images and hashtags were heavily used. In addition to these, one of the donation campaigns for the convoy in GiveSendGo was named “Adopt-a-trucker”.

For the supporters and organizers of the FC, the heroic story of hardworking truckers who risked their health in a time of need and whom in return were forced to get vaccinated to be able to have a job was an essential but also mythical part of their movement. Lich describes truckers as “blue-collar heroes” who were praised by Trudeau during the pandemic only to become “public enemy number one” due to their critique of new mandates (Jordan B Peterson, 2023). The truckers and their narrative provided a new salient issue and identity for the far-right in Canada. The image of the truckers was not only exploited to increase support and mobilization but also produced a legitimate narrative that many Canadians can relate to. Hence, this political opportunity was also utilized successfully by the FC organizers, which contributed to the movement’s success fundamentally.

Three years after the United We Roll movement, with the FC, many shared actors were able to expand their movement to an astonishing and unimaginable point. The perceived existential threat of restrictions, pandemic fatigue, and the image of the truckers have been utilized and facilitated by the Convoy organizers as a political opportunity.

The role of the media is the last external element influencing the success of far-right political parties. The literature on the role of media shows that it provides a significant political opportunity for far-right parties to increase their visibility, spread their message, and catalyze their mobilization. Furthermore, by increasing issues salience, the media's coverage of far-right subjects like immigration and crime, as well as their leaders, benefits these parties (Mudde, 2007). Golder (2016) also argues that regardless of the media's attitude toward far-right parties, the media coverage makes the issue more salient and eventually helps these parties.

With the start of the FC, its organizers, and their intentions quickly became a media sensation. Not only did mainstream Canadian media outlets follow the FC, but international media organizations also reported on it frequently. News outlets provided live coverage and continuous updates, inevitably increasing the convoy's exposure and spreading its message, which may have further mobilized the FC and heightened its issue salience. As the duration and impact of the protest on different localities surpassed those of similar previous protests, such as BearHug (2021) and United We Roll (2019), the media offered a larger platform to the FC movement through extensive coverage, commentaries, analysis, and interviews with its supporters and organizers. Furthermore, considering Golder's (2016) observation on the lack of impact of the media's positive or negative attitudes toward the far-right—in other words, that there is no such thing as bad publicity—this extensive media reporting likely played a substantial role in legitimizing, mainstreaming, spreading, and mobilizing the views of the FC movement.

In addition to the role of the mainstream media, alternative social media personalities and channels operating on various social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube increased the visibility of the movement, spread their message, and increased their issue salience both during and afterward of the protest. FC organizers such as Tamara Lich (Jordan B Peterson,

2023), and Benjamin Ditcher (Jordan B Peterson, 2022) made interviews with Jordan Peterson, Steven Crowder (StevenCrowder, 2022), Dave Rubin (The Rubin Report, 2023) who have very large social media following and popular among the far-right circles. Some channels also uploaded live streams with supporter interviews from the protests. One such channels was Viva Frei (2022), a Canadian Youtuber with substantial number of subscribers (around 621 thousand in October 2024) who campaigned in the 2021 Canadian federal election for the People's Party of Canada (Canadian Jewish News, 2024). Such social media accounts provided a channel for supporters to increase their visibility and spread their ideas.

5.2.2. Internal Factors

Internal factors are the other key area in the supply-side literature. These explanations examine the effect of the far-right parties' internal structures and qualities in contributing to these parties' electoral success. The thematic analysis of the literature shows that far-right parties' ideology, leadership, and organizational structures are the three main internal factors influencing the success of the supply-side of such parties.

The "role of ideology" thesis contends that the ideology of the far-right political parties is an essential driver determining these parties' electoral success. The ideological qualities of far-right parties can attract or repel potential voters. Especially in light of the emergence of populist factions within the far-right party family, recent years have shown that the success of these parties rests on their ability to retain a relatively moderate ideology. Furthermore, the discussions on the far-right's `winning formula` show that particularly in the last two decades, the far-right parties which merge ethnocentric, authoritarian, and nationalist messages with a relatively less neoliberal stance on economic policy compared to traditional conservative neoliberal parties.

Even though an ideological variation among politicians is expected, describing a political party's ideological position is still more straightforward than defining a unified ideological position for a social movement, such as the FC. Political parties produce many useful documents, such as manifestos, party programs, and political commentary which can be used to conceptualize their ideological positions. Nevertheless, the FC is not a party and does not have a structured, decided, and commonly shared ideology among its organizers or supporters. While it was an overall far-right movement initiated by a few far-right political activists, their stances on various social issues were more diverse. For instance, one of the early organizers, James Bauder, and his Canada Unity (2021) organization were responsible for the famous MOU document calling for an undemocratic change of power, while other organizers, such as Chris Barber (CTV News, 2022), stated they disagreed with the document. On the other hand, while some organizers of the movement, due to their connection to the trucking industry, may support international trade and thus appear pro-neoliberal, it would be difficult to claim that the FC was more or less neoliberal than the Conservative Party. Therefore, using 'winning ideology' arguments for the FC movement would be challenging, as its ideological positioning is not as cohesive as that of a traditional political party.

Nevertheless, it is still possible to observe attempts within the movements to keep the FC as moderate as possible. First, there were some efforts to distance more extremist figures such as Patrick King who promoted violence to lift COVID-19 restrictions and made racist comments against Muslims, Asians, and Indigenous people (Anonymous, 2022), from the movement (Rouleau, 2023). Secondly, the Nazi and confederate flags were claimed to be planted by the government (Freedom Convoy 2022, 2022i). By arguing so, the extremism was rejected while scapegoating the FC's main opposition: The Liberal Party. Finally, the organizers were aiming to

keep the protest peaceful to not lose popular support (Rouleau, 2023). The Freedom Convoy 2022 Facebook page encouraged a moderate dialogue as posts with moderate and peaceful messages were common. For instance, a post from 31 January 2022 which was referring to Justin Trudeau's statement stated:

> "PEACE LOVE UNITY FREEDOM
>
> ❤️ CA ❤️ CA ❤️ CA ❤️ CA ❤️ CA ❤️ CA ❤️ CA ❤️ CA ❤️ CA ❤️ CA ❤️ CA ❤️ CA ❤️ CA
>
> FROM FREEDOM CONVOY 2022
>
> Have you voice heard directly on his post ❤️ CA💪🏰" (Freedom Convoy 2022, 2022j)

Hence, these attempts show, keeping the ideology of the FC moderate can be a factor affecting its political success as the supply-side far-right literature suggests.

As Mudde (2007) notes, propaganda plays a fundamental role in the spread of far-right ideology. The rise of the internet and social media provides new platforms to amplify the messages of far-right ideology. Nevertheless, the role of social media and the internet in the FC cannot be merely understood as a propaganda tool as social media and the internet also helped in the organization of the movement.

The FC movement was born, shaped, organized, and promoted in social media. After the government's announcement on truckers on social media platforms such as TikTok and Facebook, voices who dislike vaccine mandates, both new and old ones, came together and organized. Bridgette Belton was one of these people. She had been posting anti-wax and anti-mask content even prior to the mandates on truckers. On January 2, by utilizing her social media, she started to call other people, not only truckers but all Canadians who are fed up with all

COVID-19 restrictions, to convoy to end all mandates and fight for their freedom (Belton, 2022). According to Chris Barber, an online communication started between him and Belton in which Belton asked him to join her efforts (CTV News, 2022). Shortly after this, many of the key organizers including James Bauder, the cofounder of Canada Unity, Patrick King, who had approximately 500,000 followers across different social media (Rouleau, 2023), Tamara Lich, and Dave Steenberg joined these efforts (CTV News, 2022).

On January 13, 2022, King, Barber, Belton, and Bauder had a live Facebook event with nearly 3,000 viewers in which they shared their plans to convoy to Ottawa (Rouleau, 2023). On January 14, two important web pages were established by Tamara Lich (Rouleau, 2023). First, a Facebook page was created under the name "Taking Back Our Freedoms Convoy 2022" but later that day its name changed to "Freedom Convoy 2022". Second, a GoFundMe page was launched under the same name by Lich, which would raise almost 10 million dollars before it was shut down (Fraser, 2022). Convoy organizers used these web pages as well as their personal social media accounts to advertise the convoy and organize its supporters. Social media functioned as an integral part of the FC, helping organizers to meet, organize, mobilize, and advertise the FC.

The literature on the internal factors also suggests that party organization is another key factor behind far-right party success. Similar to party ideology, organizational structure is a critical factor in a far-right party's ability to take advantage of political opportunities. The size of party members and activists, the network of local branches, having professional staff, party's cohesion and competence can affect its electoral success. The literature on the supply-side of far-right parties mainly deals with political parties and their votes in its analysis. Thus, the arguments regarding the role of organization are grounded in the structures and dynamics of

political parties. Nevertheless, many aspects of the organizational discussions can be applicable to the FC.

Firstly, the role of far-right activists in mobilizing and organizing the FC is undeniable. Many of the key organizers were already well-known and experienced (or became well-known and experienced as the FC progressed) figures in the Canadian far-right circles. In fact, for some of them like James Buader, Tamara Lich, and Pat King, this was not even their first Convoy to Ottawa. All of these three key organizers participated in the "Yellow Vest Canada" convoy in early 2019 (Later known as "United We Roll") (Rouleau, 2023), which departed from Red Deer, Alberta on February 14 and ended on February 21, following a two-day-long demonstration at Parliament Hill. The Yellow Vest Canada protest started with the intention "to protest, among other things, the Federal Government's carbon pricing legislation and proposed changes to environmental laws" (Rouleau, 2023, p. 81), inspired by the French Yellow Vest movement. Nevertheless, similar to the French counterpart, Canadian Yellow Vest movement was also filled with the far-right notions such as racism and xenophobia (Wright, 2019). In fact, some claimed that the FC movement can be seen as a continuation of United We Roll protests due to sharing some key organizers, such as Lich and King, and some participants, such as Canada First and Diagolon (Lim and Rigato, 2022). Furthermore prior to any announcements related to mandates on truckers on either side of the border, James Bauder and Canada Unity was already planning for another convoy called "Convoy for Freedom" which was also called "Operation Bearhug" (Rouleau, 2023). In fact, they had this small convoy just a month prior to the FC to protests against the COVID-19 restrictions (December 6, 2021- December 10, 2021) and was already planning for a new convoy called BearHug 2.0 (Rouleau, 2023).

The previous experience of these key activists in convoying to Ottawa played a crucial role in the organizational success of the FC. The idea, logistics, and planning of a convoy to Ottawa seems to be a result of these key organizers coming together. Barber stated that the logistical concerns of the FC such as the routes and stops to Ottawa, were answered by planning done for Canada Unity's convoy (CTV News, 2022). Thanks to the key organizers' previous experiences and planning, they managed to start multiple donation pages, decide on how to organize their logistical needs such as roadmaps, stops, distribution of gas, contributing to a rapid organizational period and success of the convoy. Many different protests at small localities as well as different convoys starting at different places, which mainly functioned similarly to local branches, and being able to meet at Ottawa show that the FC was sufficiently organized and advertised. Furthermore, some of the organizers had military and RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) backgrounds, which not only helped them to appear professional and competent but also to make tactical decisions and extended the overall success of the FC (Trinh, 2022).

Yet cohesion was an organizational issue within the FC movement. From the start of the protests, there were disagreements among the key organizers. For instance, Ms. Belton and Mr. King planned different durations for the protest, as Belton expected to stay for a few days while King aimed to stay until their demands were met or the Government was removed (Rouleau, 2023). Particularly in the later stages of the protest, some of the key organizers started to have strong disagreements. For example, while he was informed about a deal between the City of Ottawa and the other convoy organizers, Benjamin Ditcher used his own and Tamara Lich's Freedom Convoy Twitter accounts to deny the existence of this deal (Rouleau, 2023). Similarly, Patrick King and Bridgette Belton also described the existence of this deal as 'fake news'

(Rouleau, 2023). Such disagreements signal fractioning within the movement, affecting their overall success both during and afterward of the protest.

The role of leadership, or the existence of a 'charismatic leader' is the final internal factor affecting the success of the far-right parties. However, this argument is not applicable to the FC, as it did not have a real 'leader' but rather fractioned activists who worked together to organize and direct the movement. As a movement organized and attended by multitudes of activists, the FC constitutes a collective structure rather than following the lead of one charismatic personality.

5.3.Conclusion

To conclude, both demand and supply-side analyses provide important insights to understand the FC. On the one hand, the demand, driven by cultural and economic grievances are both present in the FC. Increasing fear, the lack of power, and the need to make sense of the unknown strengthened in-group and out-group dynamics and reactionary positions against the out-groups, such as the political elite. Thus, the FC became a national issue surpassing the limits of a public health policy. Moreover, conspiracy thinking further catalyzed the sense of social identity as well as a way to backlash against common sense. Additionally, economic grievances caused by the pandemic, such as unemployment and income inequality, intensified economic insecurity, further fueling support for the FC.

On the other hand, despite its close ties to party politics, the supply-side analysis also enhances our understanding of the FC. External factors, such as political opportunities and the role of media are useful in conceptualizing the FC, as they point to the importance of the issue salience and ownership as well as the media coverage. Internal factors, including ideology,

(especially in terms of propaganda), and organizational elements like the role of political activists, provide deeper insights into how the FC was structured and sustained.

Chapter 6: Concluding Remarks

Canada's image as a successful example of resistance against the rise of the far right has been shaken by the FC. The FC remains an understudied phenomenon of far-right social movements because of the lack of connection between it and the vast body of far-right literature focusing on the factors affecting the rise of the far-right. This is despite the FC being a noteworthy case of far-right social mobilization. The FC presents a unique example, as it differs from the literature not only as a Canadian party-based example but also as a protest-centered case.

To address this problem, I use a thematic review of the extensive literature on the rise of the far right and analyze the FC based on the emerging themes and subthemes within the literature. Since the mid-1980s, the rise and revival of the far right, which includes radical, extreme, and right-wing populist parties, have been prominent features of contemporary politics. Following the emergence of this new political actor, there has been an increase in academic interest in understanding this phenomenon. In this thesis, I systematically connected the FC to this literature by examining various explanations within the far-right literature to better contextualize the FC movement.

The FC showcased how the pandemic and its countermeasures led to cultural anxiety and backlash among some Canadians. The pandemic increased people's sense of threat and insecurity, which catalyzed cultural grievances. A strong in-group and out-group dynamic emerged, conceptualizing the FC as a national struggle to defend Canada and Canadian values against perceived dangers. Supporters of the FC perceived themselves as defenders of Canadian identity, rebelling against tyrannical elites, both local and international. Conspiracy theories also further intensified cultural grievances reinforced in-group and out-group divisions, and provided a channel to reflect a counterhegemonic narrative against elites.

Approaching the FC through the lens of cultural grievances shows that both cultural anxiety and backlash—specifically in-group and out-group dynamics, identity building, and counterhegemonic reactions—were directed at elites. FC supporters primarily reflected populist and nationalist cultural grievances and portrayed themselves as defending ordinary Canadians against tyrannical elites. Given the success of populist far-right parties and political actors, this indicates a similar demand emerging in Canada. Furthermore, the prominence of populist and nationalist cultural concerns over more anti-immigrant, nativist or xenophobic sentiments may result from decreased immigration due to the pandemic, as well as the COVID-19 crisis representing a substantial threat that changed political priorities.

The pandemic has been a significant economic disruptor. It affected the demand for the FC via rising unemployment, inequality, inflation, and decreasing income, which all reflected as increasing economic insecurities. Those Canadians who were faced with the loss of income or job due to the pandemic and mandates had a valid reason to support the FC. One can also argue that the economic crisis induced by the pandemic, as well as the technological changes that occurred during the pandemic, such as the increasing use of automation, might have an effect on the FC movement. However, such claims require further economic analysis, which is beyond the scope of this thesis.

Nevertheless, some discussions on economic grievances, such as the role of globalization (particularly in the form of trade shocks), immigration, and welfare policies, did not have the expected effect on the demand for the FC movement. Firstly, the literature on globalization suggests that increasing globalization, especially trade with lower-wage countries like China, negatively affects certain segments of society, leading them to vote for far-right parties. However, the pandemic negatively impacted global trade, which would typically be expected to

decrease or at least stabilize the demand for far-right parties. Such an effect was not observable in the FC movement. While global trade also decreased for Canada, the demand for the FC indicates that this did not negatively impact supporters' demand for the movement. An interesting point to note is the image of truckers in the FC. As the demonstrations were initiated by mandates on truckers, who earn their living through international trade, a decrease in global trade actually catalyzed the FC, contradicting the common view of globalization's effect on the rise of the far-right. This may be a unique characteristic of the Canadian far-right, whose stance on neoliberalism may align more closely with Trump's position rather than with welfare chauvinists and more protectionist European far-right actors.

Secondly, the expected effect of immigration was also not present in the FC movement. The literature on the far-right shows that immigration is a significant factor in economic grievances due to ethnic competition for limited resources, such as jobs. Therefore, as immigration increases, it would be expected that the demand for far-right parties and movements would also increase due to this competition. However, the pandemic drastically interrupted immigration to Canada, with numbers falling to nearly half of the 2019 levels in 2020 (El-Assal, 2021). A decrease in the number of new immigrants would typically be expected to stabilize or reduce the demand for far-right parties. The absence of such an effect might result from deep economic insecurities outweighing other factors that could otherwise negatively influence the rise of far-right support.

Finally, the literature on the far-right shows that the negative effects of globalization can be mitigated by welfare policies, which help decrease the demand for far-right parties. Furthermore, the literature also demonstrates that with welfare cuts, support for the far-right strengthens. The pandemic required increased public spending in many countries, including

Canada. One of the most well-known interventions by the Canadian government was the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB), which provided financial support to people who lost income due to the pandemic. Nevertheless, the increase in welfare spending in Canada did not appear to reduce demand for the FC. This could also be related to the neoliberal stance of the Canadian far-right.

Considering that both cultural and economic grievances arguments are based on the assumption that the far-right gain traction under "extreme conditions" (i.e., crisis), the pandemic's positive effect on the demand for the far-right is not surprising. The pandemic created a 'fertile ground' for the far-right by changing or perceived deteriorating conditions, prompting voters to lean toward far-right options.

The literature on external factors affecting the supply of far-right parties, particularly the literature on political opportunities and the role of the media, is useful in understanding the FC. The pandemic and mandates affecting truckers were the main political opportunities for the FC organizers. Far-right actors framed these issues ideologically, increasing both issue ownership and salience. They transformed the pandemic into an addition to their ideological battleground. As a focal point, truckers also served in a similar way by becoming a heroic identity that could be exploited to generate support.

Additionally, the visibility and mobilization of the FC were substantially aided by both traditional and social media's attention. The literature demonstrates that media, regardless of their positioning, serves the interests of the far-right by providing exposure, which enhances their issue salience. The FC was covered extensively, which helped to spread the message and gain support. Thanks to the political opportunities provided by the pandemic and mandates on truckers, as well as the role of media, the FC was substantially more successful than previous far-

right protests, whose organizers were mostly shared. On the other hand, the literature on institutional opportunities is mostly not applicable to the context of a social movement as these analyses mainly deal with electoral rules.

The literature on internal factors, particularly the need for a moderate ideology (and a good propaganda tool to spread such ideology) and the importance of organization, is applicable to the FC context. As this literature points out, far-right parties are more successful when their ideology is moderate. There were efforts to keep the FC as moderate as possible by distancing the convoy from more extreme personalities and factions and promoting a peaceful protest. Propaganda is also a factor affecting the success of far-right ideology. The social media and the internet were utilized by the FC organizers to successfully advertise their ideology. Furthermore, social media and the internet played a key role in organizing the FC, as its organizers and supporters met, planned, and spread their ideas through these platforms. Social media was used for fundraising, organizing, and mobilizing. Moreover, the involvement of experienced far-right activists who had rallied to Ottawa before, as well as strategic involvement, also helped the convoy logistically. Finally, internal cohesion was an organizational obstacle for the FC, as key organizers disagreed on the duration and other strategic decisions regarding the convoy. These organizational obstacles likely negatively impacted the movement's success.

Nevertheless, the other arguments in the ideology and leadership literature are mainly based on political parties. For instance, as the FC is not a political party, the role of ideology thesis is not fully applicable, as there is no document declaring a more or less shared ideological position of the movement. Moreover, discussions on charismatic or competent leadership would not be applicable to the FC either, as this movement did not have a leader; instead, it had a few activists and organizers. Nevertheless, the impact of a collective structure in leadership requires

further discussion, as it has not been adequately addressed in the literature on the far-right. Furthermore, while the FC lacked a true 'leadership,' it has turned many far-right political activists into household names in Canada, creating an opportunity for these activists to potentially become political actors, or even leaders, in the near future.

To sum up, utilizing the extensive literature on the current far-right phenomenon to enhance the understanding of the FC has been fruitful. Both demand-side and supply-side analyses provide meaningful frameworks for approaching the Convoy. In particular, demand-side discussions highlight the dominance of populist, anti-establishment conceptualizations of in-group and out-group dynamics in the FC movement. Additionally, the analysis shows how some economic grievances, such as globalization, immigration, and the welfare state, are not prominent in the FC, which contrasts with the expected effects based on the literature. Finally, since the supply side uses political parties as their unit of analysis, some arguments, such as the role of a charismatic leader, are not applicable to the FC. However, others help to conceptualize perhaps the most important aspects of this discussion: the role of social media in organizing, mobilizing, and promoting as both an internal and external factor, as well as the political opportunities provided by the pandemic and trucker mandates.

Although the academic literature on the far-right tends to be Eurocentric and party-focused, it has proven to provide valuable insights for studying movements like the FC. I have aimed to address the significant gap in the existing literature by utilizing the FC to advocate for more non-European and non-party-centered studies within the far-right literature. Moreover, I have examined how social media and the pandemic affected far-right mobilization by discussing the FC as a case study. This research shows that social media plays an active role as both an external and internal factor, changing the rules of far-right exposure, propaganda, organization,

mobilization, and fundraising. Furthermore, I have argued that the pandemic functioned as a catalyst, affecting both cultural and economic grievances while also providing a political opportunity for far-right actors to exploit and expand their ideological battlefield.

Finally, the FC demonstrates that there is a substantial group of Canadians who support populist rhetoric, as well as activists capable of utilizing this populist rhetoric to organize and mobilize these individuals. Particularly following Pierre Poilievre's succession in the Conservative Party, how the Canadian right (and far-right) will evolve, whether this populist rhetoric will continue, and how the People's Party will position itself in such an environment remains to be seen.

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