

S2E08 Foreword: Populism and (Mis)Information

Guest: Ibrahim Berrada

[00:00:00] **Alison Innes:** [00:00:00] Welcome to forward a podcast from Brock university, faculty of humanities. I'm your host, Alison Innes. And each episode, I bring you a conversation with one of our researchers.

[00:00:18] Today, we're going to be delving into politics and Canada's role in the world. We'll be exploring the idea of populism and global policy. Of what it means for us here in Canada, I guess today is a PhD candidate and a researcher and lecture and Canadian studies at Brock university. Ebraheem burrata, Abraham completed his bachelor of arts in political science with a concentration in international relations at Carleton university.

[00:00:46] And an ma in Canadian American studies, a joint program between Brock university and the state university of New York at Buffalo. Abraham is currently finishing his PhD at Laurentian university where his research explores populous [00:01:00] influence in a Canadian American cross border context. He's also an adjunct professor in sociology at Niagara university in Niagara falls, New York.

[00:01:08] He brings a great mix of academic research and on the ground experience. Work after completing his ma he worked in parliament in Ottawa for about seven years, with different members of parliament on various national and international portfolios. His most recent political role supported the minister of public services and procurement Canada in the past year has appeared on local and national media, many times to share his expertise in analysis of current events.

[00:01:36] And we are very glad to finally have him here with us today. So welcome.

[00:01:40] **Ibrahim Berrada:** [00:01:40] Thanks for having me. I'm very

[00:01:41] **Alison Innes:** [00:01:41] excited. Yes. Reading that through. You're a very busy person, so we're, we're glad that you've made the time for it for us today. Now I said, we're talking about populism and I think I know what populism is, but I certainly couldn't give a definition.

[00:01:56] So maybe we can just start with talking about what [00:02:00] populism is.

[00:02:00] **Ibrahim Berrada:** [00:02:00] So it's a very interesting question, and it's a very difficult question to answer, uh, depending on what populous scholar you speak to, they'll have a completely different definition of what populism might be, but in the general terms, what you see is this idea of antiestablishment terrorism, this idea of anti-elitism this idea of pitting the people against that establishment and against that elitist.

[00:02:26] Uh, uh, political circle and you can go beyond just simply the political circle, but you can look at the elitist economic circle as well. Populism has its roots in politics, but can be seen elsewhere, uh, around the world. And in Canada, you can look at the COVID

pandemic. For example, as an, as a classic way of, of analyzing populism, you can look at economic populism, you can look at political populism, you could look at social populism and you've seen.

[00:02:54] Different ideas of what populism might appear. It might be. [00:03:00] For instance, if you look at Latin America, populism in Latin America tends to be socialist. Populism in the United States tends to be right wing populism, uh, with, you know, the rise of the Bernie Sanders type populist, uh, in Canada, you do have a mix of both, uh, in a sense, depending again, on who you are.

[00:03:19] Two, because it's just such a broad phenomenon. And it's one that does require additional research. And because there is a lack of populous analysis in Canada, there's a lack of comparative American Canadian populous analysis as well in the, in the literature and the scholarship. Uh, and it's something that, that requires additional attention.

[00:03:40] So wait, till we can understand why society is heading down in that direction, particularly when we're looking at the rise of Trumpism. Jen, you continued a fax of, of Trumpism to this day. Uh, and, and Trumpism is not going away anytime soon. So this is, this is something that's absolutely necessary when we're [00:04:00] looking at, uh, at, at populism and why we need to continue to, to, to analyze populism.

[00:04:06] **Alison Innes:** [00:04:06] So is populism good or bad for democracy or does it, um, or is it just a thing that happens to be. Can be

[00:04:14] **Ibrahim Berrada:** [00:04:14] either. So interestingly, it depends on who you ask as well. The populist would tell you that the populism is fantastic for democracy. It provides a voice for the people. The iStat, right. Mint will tell you that populism is bad for democracy.

[00:04:29] Since it goes against the liberal democratic institutions. It de-legitimizing the democratic institutions that exists within society. If you were to ask me what my opinion is on this, I would, I would argue that it definitely does deal legitimize, or it threatens the sanctity of our democratic processes and the actual, uh, institutions that exist within our society and worryingly.

[00:04:54] That is, you know, this is what we've we fought to protect for so many years. And we are seeing [00:05:00] the fractures of our democratic institutions emerging as a result of, you know, Trumpism or as a result of this. Continuous attack on, on, on, uh, on our democratic. And so here's an example would be Trump's attack on the electoral process, for instance, right?

[00:05:16] De-legitimizing the electoral process and de-legitimizing, uh, the voting, uh, the voting approach that, that people have adopted for years, uh, at this point, that means. Is it a perfect system? No, that's a whole other debate, but, uh, we, we definitely need to consider obviously revamping and fixing errors and problems with the system, but to deal with legitimize is to effectively, uh, break down the system from within.

[00:05:44] **Alison Innes:** [00:05:44] It sounds to me like you're suggesting that populism is linked to extreme. Views within the society. There

[00:05:52] **Ibrahim Berrada:** [00:05:52] are, there are populace that do adopt extremist views. It's not always that a populist will be, uh, an extremist per se. Uh, [00:06:00] Sanders for instance, is an excellent example of where populism does not necessarily lead to extreme.

[00:06:05] But what we see with Trumpism for instance, is this approach of, of extremism that does become the by-product of populism. It's tied into xenophobia, it's tied into, uh, ethnic ethno nationalism. It's tied into nativism and this in a, in an effect leads to. More polarization in an already polarized society.

[00:06:29] And so it's, it's definitely a divisive phenomenon, the idea. And going back to the definition, the idea of pitting the people against the elite is in an, in and of itself a defensive approach. And so it is a defensive phenomenon to begin with.

[00:06:45] **Alison Innes:** [00:06:45] So you mentioned ethno nationalist. Uh, there, can you, can you explain that?

[00:06:50] Right.

[00:06:50] **Ibrahim Berrada:** [00:06:50] So in, in that sentence, uh, if we want to look at around the world, around the Western world, in the rise of populism, we see a lot of them [00:07:00] rooted within, uh, an approach to, uh, to remove the diversity or to cleanse the diversity. I dare say. And, and scaring only say that it is, it is an innocence. Uh, a dangerous approach.

[00:07:14] I can list out a couple of examples here, uh, of populous slogans that can just give you an idea of what that means. So this idea, for instance, of Trump and make America great, again, is a nostalgia for the past when things were simpler when white superiority was at its at its height, when economic prosperity was high, when power, when American power.

[00:07:38] Globe and around the world was at its height. And so, uh, these are entrenched in the populous rhetoric. So if we look around the world, we have, for instance, a Marine Le pen in, uh, in France and their slogan is France for the French, right in Brexit. The idea was take back control, uh, in, uh, Germany. And the, the party alternative for Germany was our [00:08:00] culture, our home, our Germany in Poland.

[00:08:04] Pure Poland, white Poland. This was the Poland's law and justice party in Sweden. We have the Sweden Democrats with keeps Sweden Swedish. So these, uh, these slogans, uh, effectively are tying back to these racist groups effectively and this, uh, this appeal for a or homogenous society. And we've been down that route before, right?

[00:08:27] We've seen this in history and we know what happened when we, uh, when we, uh, go down that route and this is. You know, again, another reason why populism is very important to analyze. So who

[00:08:38] **Alison Innes:** [00:08:38] becomes a populous leader? Do these tend to be people coming from that, um, antiestablishment background or do these tend to be a elite who are leveraging the language of populism to further their, their

[00:08:55] **Ibrahim Berrada:** [00:08:55] ends?

[00:08:55] So interestingly it, I subscribe to the approach. [00:09:00] Populism as a political strategy. And, um, you, you see the rise of populism as a political strategy for success in, in the polls and success amongst them base. And so when we look at, when we look at the populists, they tend to emerge and we look at, you can see them in the United States.

[00:09:17] Uh, as a classic example, they tend to emerge as the, the voice of the people they claim to be the voice of the people, uh, attempting to drain the Washingtonian establishment, the Washingtonian swamp. Uh, in an attempt to, you know, give, give back to the people what has been taken from them from the elite, but, you know, from analysis and from, you know, different, different, uh, the scholars, they would, they would easily.

[00:09:43] And, and it just from, from a regular point of view, anyone who's analyzing this can tell you that these anti elitists tend to. Just revert to the elitist ways to begin with. They claim to be in their rhetoric, anti elitists and antiestablishment Tarion. But [00:10:00] in the long run, they are very much a part of quite a few are very much a part of the actual, uh, establishment, or they become re entrenched in the establishment to begin with.

[00:10:11] So there are. Uh, there are a lot of, of ways for them to, uh, provide in their rhetoric and appeal for anti-elitism and a continuous appeal for anti-elitism. But that does not necessarily mean that they are anti elitist. Okay.

[00:10:29] **Alison Innes:** [00:10:29] So you've mentioned a number of international examples where, where we're seeing populist rhetoric, populist slogans.

[00:10:36] Is there an increase in populism globally? If, so where is that coming

[00:10:42] **Ibrahim Berrada:** [00:10:42] from? Right. And so you can tie this back to this idea of economic disparity, and that is one classic approach to analyzing populism. A lot of people are suffering, uh, economically suffering. There are neoliberal inequalities [00:11:00] that exist as a result of the current systems that are in place.

[00:11:03] And these often push forth disparities. Don't allow the average person to make it in a sense, right? And when there is a global economic downturn, it's often these people that are impacted when there is a national economic downturn, there is often these people that are impacted. So in a sense, when a politician emerges and adopts populist rhetoric, the approach is appealing to people who are often ignored by the political circles at, by the established.

[00:11:33] So you can see a real reason why, uh, the average folk would support a leader. Again, we're not talking about someone that's a complete incomplete support of someone like Trump or someone like Nigel Farage in, in the UK. But as someone who has an, uh, does not necessarily realize the extent. Of the, the interconnectedness and the complexity of the, the [00:12:00] neoliberal inequalities that exist, but has often been given a short hand in, in, in the long run.

[00:12:05] And so these populous populous and the rhetoric that they espouse are often very appealing to people who are given the short, short hand in the long run. And it's, it's, it's worrisome. It's worrisome. To begin with. There are disparities that exist and the political elite so-called quote, quote, unquote, the political elite don't necessarily pay attention to the disparities that exist out there.

[00:12:31] And they ignore them. And, you know, Brexit is a classic example where, you know, Lon, London. Uh, uh, was, uh, an area where the populace, uh, sorry that people rejected this idea of Brexit and the populous rhetoric that emerged, but outside of London, where there are more economic disparities is where people tended to support Brexit.

[00:12:54] And you see that, uh, in terms of Trump as well, right? You see people supporting, [00:13:00] uh, Trumpism simply because they are, uh, economically disadvantaged. You can look at Canada and the COVID. Uh, perspective in a sense applies. It applies very, very well. People are, are fatigued. People are, are COVID fatigued and, you know, they are looking for, or an escape and a populace that comes out.

[00:13:20] I E Maxine, Bernie from the people's party of Canada, right. Uh, espousing this populous rhetoric, uh, saying that, you know, the problems are all based on the establishment that exists within parliament. Uh, these are effectively appealing narrative, right? Can get people to support that rhetoric, right? And that's where you see the rise of populism coming into play.

[00:13:45] Now in Canada, we haven't necessarily seen a more extreme version of this as you have in the United States. But it doesn't mean that it can't happen in Canada. That's what we're kind of worrying about is that we are kind of heading [00:14:00] down that route, uh, in the long run, uh, Nick nanos and, uh, Michael Adams, uh, both pollsters are both saying that we have, we've been successful in Canada at remaining ahead of the curve and remaining ahead of the trend.

[00:14:12] But does that mean. Trumpism or Brexit won't happen in Canada now it's very much a possibility. It's very much a reality that we might face and something that we need to be concerned about.

[00:14:25] **Alison Innes:** [00:14:25] Do we in Canada, um, learn from what we're seeing happening elsewhere and kind of what maybe signs or symptoms, um, do we need to be wary of so that we don't get complacent and.

[00:14:39] Wake up some morning with results that people are largely unhappy

[00:14:44] **Ibrahim Berrada:** [00:14:44] with. I guess you're asking me in a sense to solve the populous problem. And this is not necessarily something that I

[00:14:52] **Alison Innes:** [00:14:52] lots of time on your hands. I'm sure you've got it all.

[00:14:55] **Ibrahim Berrada:** [00:14:55] It's very complex. I'll tell you that much. And, and you know, one of the things that we [00:15:00] can, we can pay attention to here is this idea of an economic insecurity or economic disparity that exists.

[00:15:07] Uh, another thing that we can look. Is this idea of misinformation or a lack of education on whatever it may be. If we want to take COVID. As an example, a recent study that came out of the UK showed that the lack of communication between the government to the people, uh, has allowed for an information vacuum to emerge.

[00:15:27] And that's when you see the rise of these conspiracy theories, the rise of these, you know, uh, it's essentially coming out to fill a void that exists. And, and that is an issue that we, we do see here and in Canada, it's an issue that we see in the United States. If you want to look at a non COVID example, uh, and you want to look at it, uh, an, uh, an esto cultural example, the, the argument that emerges, uh, in the United States, And this is what Donald Trump came out with his, in his first campaign speech, [00:16:00] when he was running his election saying that Mexicans are X, Y, and Z, and we can't accept Mexicans and they are rapists and they are murderers.

[00:16:07] And some of them are good, but you know, most of the, most of them are bad. And the ones that come here are bad and, you know, Uh, misinformation. These mistruths are effectively, uh, allowing, uh, people to, you know, run firstly to the populace and the appeal that they're trying to portray and to generate this understanding of, oh, Mexicans are coming and taking our jobs in reality, that is the farthest thing from truth.

[00:16:34] And this is something in sociology that we look at. Uh, we call it the frustration aggression thesis, where they don't necessarily realize. That you know, Mexicans aren't coming to take away their jobs, but the easiest way for them to lay blame on the, the lack of job or employment that they have is to, uh, pin pinpoint a group of people that are working or our employment, uh, are employed.

[00:16:58] And these [00:17:00] are of different ethnic origin. And so we're going to, you know, pinpoint and attack those people. And that's what Trump is appealing to in a sense. Trump is trying to spark and exacerbate that just so that he can get the voter ship in and to appeal to his base and to appeal to the people that like that kind of rhetoric.

[00:17:20] **Alison Innes:** [00:17:20] You mentioned that Trumpism isn't dead, um, that it's still around. I wondered if you have any thoughts on what you're seeing happening now, and just for context, we are recording. At the end of may, the, um, the us Senate just turned down, creating an, a, creating a, I don't think inquest is quite the right word, an investigation into the events of January 6th.

[00:17:43] Where is, where is Trumpism now? And do you have thoughts about where it's going or what we're likely to see?

[00:17:51] **Ibrahim Berrada:** [00:17:51] Trumpism has fractured the Republican party. And I dare I say the moderates in the Republican party who we in the [00:18:00] past would have considered the far right or the further, right? Not necessarily the far right.

[00:18:04] People are the moderates in a sense, compared to the Trump or the Trump loyal Trump supporters, there has been fractures within the Republican party. And there are, there's a reason for those fractures. Populous strategies, work, populism works division

works, and these populous sympathizers are in effect attempting to revive or to protect the Trump rhetoric that emerged because they know it works.

[00:18:32] Uh, someone like, uh, Ted Cruz who, oh, by the way, is it elitist? Is it elitist? Would, you know, espouse the same kind of narratives that. Uh, with a spouse and, you know, a classic example of a lead is, and I know I'm going off on a tangent here, but a classic example of a leadism is, you know, leaving Texas right in the middle of a storm and, you know, a state crisis and going, you know, abroad [00:19:00] for a vacation, uh, when people are suffering and that's a classic example of elite.

[00:19:05] And, you know, this idea of protecting the Trump rhetoric is important to the, uh, to the Republican party because they're trying to win in the next election. Right. And so why would they give up a strategy that works? And so to protect the Trump narrative, uh, is to effectively vote down, uh, an investigation on the January six, uh, storming of the Capitol.

[00:19:30] And that that's just a classic political move that you would see whether or not it's a popular in populism or not, or a populous approach or not. It is a classic political movement. You saw this with the outstaying of Liz Cheney. Uh, Liz Cheney was a more moderate voice among the Trump supporters. Uh, and she questioned Trump's role.

[00:19:51] She questioned Trump's approach to the electoral process, uh, and to, you know, uh, questioning the electoral process. And she. Was effectively [00:20:00] punished by the Republican party for voicing her views on an Antifa Trump platform. And so it, it, it is not necessarily going to go away, even if Trump doesn't run again.

[00:20:13] Right. Even if Trump, I'm not going to predict the future here, but even if Trump doesn't run again, the rhetoric espoused by Trump is going to remain because it worked in the past and they don't want it. Give that up.

[00:20:26] **Alison Innes:** [00:20:26] So then what impact is, or has Trumpism had on Canada or globally on other global leaders has had, how has, how has this shift after eight years of Obama and democratic party leadership and then the shift to.

[00:20:46] It's very dramatic shift to Trump is. And what kind of impact has has that had on Canada?

[00:20:53] **Ibrahim Berrada:** [00:20:53] Canada, Canada was in a unique scenario where pre-Trump, they, they had a good relationship [00:21:00] with, with the Obama administration and yeah. Uh, Justin Trudeau developing that quote unquote bromance, uh, with, uh, with Barack Obama and, uh, you see that kind of friendship.

[00:21:11] Re-emerging now with, uh, Joe Biden as well. And it's a good, it's a good thing for our, our relationship with the United States because, you know, Trudeau and Joe Biden have had a past relationship to begin with. But what you saw was Canada constantly fighting fires, right? It was a, it was a nonstop fighting fires from the renegotiation of NAFTA to the U S MCA from, uh, you know, a threat of putting military at the border, uh, you know, uh, and something unheard of in our Canadian American relationship from, you know, uh, rejecting people at the border to, you know, we could keep.

[00:21:50] You know, listing out one, one after the other here, it was really a tumultuous time for our politics. And I have to, I have to give kudos to, uh, Chrystia [00:22:00] Freeland who really played the political game. Right. It was very difficult to deal with an array. Trump government. I mean, none nonetheless, she managed to, to, to kinda keep, uh, the relationship alive until, you know, Joe Biden came aboard.

[00:22:20] So it really was a difficult time for Canada. Uh, we can, I mean, we could just sit here and talk about economic partnerships and economic, you know, the constant threat of. Of tariffs and on our trades, uh, did impact our economy. It did it didn't only impact Canadian economy. It also impacted American economy.

[00:22:38] People on both sides of the border suffered from that. Whether we like it or not, we are a globalized, uh, uh, society and the world is a globalized society. We rely on each other for our economic, economic prosperity. These policies. Can appeal to some base, uh, some base supporters, but they don't necessarily come to fruition in the long run, as some would [00:23:00] seem.

[00:23:00] And, you know, the impact on the American economy was huge as well. So, you know, this, this was attempted by previous Republican leadership. This was attempted by other leaders. Uh, you still see an America first approach. You do see an America first approach. And this is something that you would most likely see as a result of a global, global economic downturn as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

[00:23:23] But in the long run, when we look at our relationship with the United States, now, at least we are able to have dialogue. At least we're able to have that conversation. Something that I always say to my students, it's something that I always say to us, anyone who has listened is that the issues that we see in our society today, Can disappear if we are, if we allow ourselves to converse with people, if we don't, if we cut that off, if we say, oh, no, he's a Republican.

[00:23:53] Oh no, he's a conservative. Oh no, he's a liberal or she's a liberal or whatever it is. And we say, I don't, I don't [00:24:00] listen to that ideology. I don't. That person, and we no longer have that, uh, democracy or this ability to talk with each other. Then we start to lose the basis of our democracy. The conversation democracy is about compromise.

[00:24:14] And if we can't compromise, if we can't converse with the next person, well, then we're gonna, we're gonna find ourselves in a very polarized society that is based on factionalism, right? That is based on I'm in this camp and you're in that camp and we're gonna fight until whatever camp rises and that's not.

[00:24:30] What's the goal of democracy is, and that's the beauty about what we have now with the Biden administration is that Trudeau can actually talk to the Biden administration, even if there's going to be disagreements, Keystone XL, pipeline, excellent example of a disagreement, but there's still a conversation.

[00:24:45] There's still a conversation about what else can we do to alleviate some of the issues that exist in our societies

[00:24:52] **Alison Innes:** [00:24:52] and from a global perspective. Trump's success, at least for one turn with this populist rhetoric has that [00:25:00] emboldened other global leaders who were perhaps already inclined to be populous

[00:25:05] **Ibrahim Berrada:** [00:25:05] leaders.

[00:25:06] And so for a populous society for our society to be populists successfully populous, there needs to be elements of polarization that are within that society. And you do see within the, within, around the Western world and around the globe. Is a rise of populist, uh, populous strategies and populous sentiments, uh, whether or not they're always populous as a whole different scenario, but you do see for instance, in Brazil with your most Sinero, um, and you know, we can look at COVID his COVID response, right.

[00:25:40] We could see with, you know, uh, uh, Boris Johnson and his COVID response, and we could see, you know, Populous. I don't have any research on this, but just from simple observation, you could see that populous countries or countries that leaders espouse some populous rhetoric. You do see a correlation for [00:26:00] instance, where there is less success in COVID 19 strategies and implementation and deterrence.

[00:26:05] And you do see that in terms of my own opinion on that. As an observation, you do see that around the globe with these populous, uh, the populous countries. So it is definitely. Uh, a phenomena that does exist globally and that there is a rise in that. Does that mean that it came from Trump? No, absolutely not.

[00:26:23] The United States has always been a populous society. Uh, the, the, uh, if you look at Canada, we have had historically populous parties that existed. You want to look at the precursor precursor to the NDP, the CCF that came from the roots of populism you'll want to look at the reform party that's populous.

[00:26:39] Right? So it doesn't necessarily. Uh, emerged from Trump. Trump may be lit the fire, uh, in more recent times that kind of gave more of a momentum for populism to kind of re re-emerge. And we also, again, have to look at these economic disparities as well. Populism is very much. A feature [00:27:00] of America, the American political system, it exists there.

[00:27:04] It is a part of that. It's not going away anytime soon. It very, very well will remain there. Whether it's Trump or the next person, it's going to be a part of that society.

[00:27:15] **Alison Innes:** [00:27:15] This could be a terrible question. So I made it this one out just to give you, give you a heads up. Um, does populism tip over into authoritarianism?

[00:27:27] **Ibrahim Berrada:** [00:27:27] It's a very difficult question. It's a very difficult question because this is where I would say authoritarian authoritarianism can have popular. Tendencies and can be populous, but populism doesn't necessarily mean that it's going to be, so there's a,

[00:27:45] **Alison Innes:** [00:27:45] there's a lot of gray areas I'm gathering from our conversation.

[00:27:49] **Ibrahim Berrada:** [00:27:49] Oh my goodness. I got to tell you what I first started researching populism. I, I was, I was banging my head on the wall because there is a lot of gray area. Because you could [00:28:00] sit down and listen to a speech and say, oh my God, that's a populous speech. And look at the rhetoric that's being espoused and et cetera, et cetera.

[00:28:07] But the leader isn't necessarily a populous person, right. Or a populous strategist. Uh, an example of this could come from Nick nanos, who would make the argument that Trudeau is a populous character. And particularly during the election. Time, he would come out with this idea of, Hey, the middle-class we got to protect the middle-class.

[00:28:26] We got to raise the middle-class. We can't allow, for instance, in 2015, we can't allow for the Harper conservative elite to impact the, the middle class, you know? And you started hearing terms like cronyism or Harper cronyism come from the Trudeau government, particularly during the last. And I mean, Harper didn't help himself with, uh, the barbaric cultural practices, hotline, and, and this approach of, you know, don't give refugees his healthcare and, uh, and let's make voting harder.

[00:28:54] And so these are kind of populous tendencies as well. And Harper did it emerge from a [00:29:00] populous party roots in a sense. Uh, you know, you do see, you do see a rise, uh, sorry. You do see a, a populism that exists in societies where, or in political parties where populism may not be a part of their strategy is during the interim be between elections, right during their tenure.

[00:29:20] Trudeau's it necessarily a populace is very much a part of the elite in a sense, or the establishment. If you want to consider him. But beyond that, you'll see that rhetoric come out in the election times just because it's a populous strategy that works, right. It's a left populist strategy that works, and that's why they adopt it.

[00:29:37] The danger comes down to when you start seeing an, exactly what I was just talking about with the Harper example, when you start seeing a right-wing populism or right-wing fringe populism coming in. And targeting certain groups, uh, and, and essentially saying that these groups are the groups that we should worry about, or these groups of the groups that we should kind of push aside in our society.

[00:29:58] And an excellent way to [00:30:00] explain this would be by John Judas, who, who looks at populism and effectively said that left-wing populism is dyadic and right wing populism is triadic left-wing populism. The elite against the people, right? Wing populism pits, the elite against the people and uses an out-group as of target, uh, to, you know, get their message across populace will always regardless of left or right.

[00:30:25] Find a common enemy so that people can say, oh, this is why I have to vote for this person. And so an classic example of this was Hugo Chavez in Venezuela, right? As his approach was the United States and George Bush. Devil. And he said this quote unquote in the UN speech, uh, at one point and he said, George Bush is the devil incarnate himself.

[00:30:47] And he re he essentially riled up his support within his people within the Venezuelan population, by saying the United States is who we need to fight back against.

And you often see that, you'll see that with Trump as [00:31:00] well. Trump used Hillary Clinton as a target. Uh, AOC is a target used L Han Omer as a target.

[00:31:07] He uses all these women in this case here, right? As a target and said, Hey, you need to vote for me so that we can't, we don't, we don't fall into a trap. It's very interestingly, very interestingly. To this day, the Republican party are still using Clinton as a target, right? Because it worked in the past.

[00:31:26] They can't, nothing is sticking to Joe Biden in a sense, because he's just so establishment and boring in a sense, and boring is good. Sometimes trust me, but you know, nothing is necessarily sticking to Biden. So they're saying, Hey, let's go back to Hillary Clinton because that worked and it's still filling up the base support in a sense.

[00:31:43] So you, this is where the dangers of populism comes out is when you start seeing these outgroups. Being attacked. And that's where you start seeing discriminations, you know, phobia marginalization, you start seeing people being targeted and you start seeing the rise of hate in a society. You start seeing a rise of Islamophobia.

[00:31:59] You [00:32:00] start seeing a rise of anti-Semitism you start seeing the rise of gender inequality. You start seeing, you know, this is all anti-Asian hate very recently, right? Particularly with the way that Trump espouse the COVID pandemic issue, right. This is where we start seeing the danger. Of populism when you start targeting these groups of people and it's worrisome because people die, people get hurt, right?

[00:32:23] The, this is the danger that comes out. The, the rhetoric translates to actual violence. And if we can't stop that violence well, then the rhetoric is dangerous because it's inciting that violence. It's inciting, for instance, what you saw January 2nd. An insurrection in a sense, a storming of what we around the Western world called the bastions of democracy, right?

[00:32:48] The halls of democracy is, you know, in Washington. Right. And we see this, uh, attack on that. Well, that's worrisome, right? And it doesn't mean in the worrisome.

[00:33:00] It can happen anywhere, right? And that's why we need to analyze populism and see what results may emerge from these populous, from the populist rhetoric, so that we can be aware of them.

[00:33:10] B try to avoid that violence and stop that violence. We don't want a divided society. We want in Canada, at least we want a multicultural society and a diverse society that works with one another. Anyway. Yeah,

[00:33:24] **Alison Innes:** [00:33:24] no, you are giving us lots to think about, which is just fantastic. So I want to circle back to what you were saying earlier about missing for information.

[00:33:33] And I think you already answered this in some of your answers to other questions I've had, but I think it would be interesting to kind of tease this out a little bit more explicitly is on June 6th, the, uh, before the event happening in the United States took over the news

cycle. There was a very brief window where, uh, there had been a report issued in, in Canada on misinformation.

[00:34:00] [00:33:59] Warning about links to extremism, particularly I think misinformation around COVID if I'm recalling correctly. So I'm just wondering, how does misinformation create risks for us? Not just on individual levels, as you alluded to with some of the hate actions that have been seen, but also on a national security level.

[00:34:20] **Ibrahim Berrada:** [00:34:20] so misinformation, there's a danger that comes with misinformation and we've seen this with COVID, uh, very much so, uh, misinformation in the COVID era is, you know, it shows us, it shows us not only the dangers, but the, the cracks and the fractures that exist within our society. And the lack of direct information.

[00:34:40] The reason why is what misinformation exists is because we do get a lot of conflicting. Uh, messaging from the government. So this, the blame does lay on the government as well here. Uh, and the people responsible, uh, for delivering information. If we look at the COVID pandemic, uh, as an example, misinformation has exacerbated, [00:35:00] uh, our population and led to anti masker movement has led to anti-vaxxer movements.

[00:35:04] Something that can be a solution. And I've said this before, and people don't necessarily see the merit to this, but you know, the idea of. Educating the, you know, the old, the old fashion public service, and that will Smith, you know, what is a vaccine? Not a lot of people can tell you what the vaccine does.

[00:35:23] Right. But if we can, you know, bring it back to basics, right. I bring it to back to biology class and show people what a vaccine actually does. That's a class. But an old traditional approach to combating misinformation. Otherwise, what you'll see is people going to other external sources that don't have the capacity or the knowledge to deliver the proper information and rely on the mistruths that.

[00:35:52] About the vaccines, for instance. Right. Uh, and from this, you do see as well, again, this idea of the goat, the COVID fatigued [00:36:00] populace, right? The population is tired. And so listening to someone who says that the vaccine is going to, you know, implant a chip in you or the 5g towers are going to, you know, uh, connect the chip.

[00:36:13] Well, you know, you'll see a rise of the speed. People are already wary of what's going on. They're already scared of what's happening out there. It's something that they've never seen before. It's something, and it is the responsibility is on the government, the responsibilities on the media, the responsibilities on, uh, public health organizations and the responsibilities on these leaders that stoke the misinformation.

[00:36:36] Promote, uh, this misinformation. So you do see some form of, of populism that emerges our COVID-19 populism and populism. If you will, that emerges as a result of this information and, you know, it can lead to violent extremism. It can lead to extremism that emerges within our society. And as the report points.

[00:36:57] That, uh, uh, a prolonged [00:37:00] pandemic will lead to an increased support and empathy and sympathy towards these right wing, extreme right wing, populous movements that can effectively lead to violence. And they'll in the long run. And you do see that with anti master campaigns. You see it, see that with threats to public health officials, you know, public health officials are, are, are classic examples of.

[00:37:24] Bureaucrats that are working for the people and you see threats that are, are, are sent to them. Right? And so the idea to combat this is to not allow this vacuum, uh, or this information vacuum to increase, to expand. This does the, the impact of this or the results of this, uh, is, uh, as a result of the, uh, the vacuum.

[00:37:46] And so the government needs to step up their game here. They can't, you know, on one day announced some form of restriction that are draconian, you know, that go back to what we seen in March, for instance, and then, you know, [00:38:00] when the pandemic started and then all of a sudden re you know, rescind all those orders and then provide you orders that make no scientific sense.

[00:38:08] Right? So. I think, you know who I'm talking about here? I won't say any names, but you know, it's, it's, it's basing things on science. It's basing things on actual facts and not emotions. And that is what's happening in, in with the COVID-19 pandemic is, uh, and I heard this being said before, is that everyone thinks they're an epidemiologist Salva sided, right?

[00:38:32] No, we believe that to the actual epidemiologists. Yeah. They'll be able to tell us what we can. Do and because the science has evolved, we know what we are allowed and what we are not allowed to do in a sense. Right. And we know what will help push down the pandemic and what we can't and you know, and this is when, when we level our approach.

[00:38:55] To the people, instead of lecturing at them at the pulpit, as [00:39:00] we've seen with politicians from all stripes, by the way, we see daily lecturing at the puppet, right? If we level our approach and speak to people level in a level-headed sense, we will see positive results. We will see positive results. Some initiatives are good.

[00:39:17] I E you know, Social media. We do see these labels that are emerging. You know, when you talk about COVID-19 or are you hashtag COVID-19 or the pandemic, you'll see these labels coming out. Now, these labels aren't necessarily as effective overall, but they are,

[00:39:34] **Alison Innes:** [00:39:34] oh, I was just gonna say. Listeners who may not be on these platforms.

[00:39:39] You're referring to, um, Instagram and Twitter. If you, if you tweet or post something, it automatically generates a link, but you're supposed to follow for accurate COVID

[00:39:49] **Ibrahim Berrada:** [00:39:49] information. Right? And so these are great in a sense, right? But they are not foolproof. Like you can, you could ignore them in the long run

and there's something in [00:40:00] communications where we call it the third party effect where you see effectively.

[00:40:04] People that will say, oh, this misinformation will not impact me. I'm a smart person. I won't, but in reality it will, they'll say the next person will be impacted by this, but in reality, misinformation can impact, uh, can impact everybody. Right? They fall into that trap. And this is where do you need to see an increased initiative?

[00:40:24] Uh, you need to see an increasing initiative of unity. And an example we can talk about here is during the first world war you saw the unity government, uh, where, you know, all stripes joined with sir Robert Borden and, uh, uh, effectively I'm giving a very, very simplistic breakdown of what actually happened.

[00:40:43] Uh, they joined with Robert Borden to, to overcome the, uh, first world war and the crisis that they were experiencing at that time. I'm not saying that we need a unity government today, but what we do need to see is people working today. Right. We do need to see people [00:41:00] working together. We can't, we can't have politicians undermining the COVID-19 efforts and if they are undermining it for their own political game, as you see in Ontario happening where they'll bill pointing to at, you know, Doug Ford, sorry, I'll point out Doug, Doug Ford, as an example where he is basing the third wave entirely on.

[00:41:22] Uh, this idea that the borders were not closed when we know that in reality, only 1% or 1.5% of actual COVID cases come from outside of our Henda areas or national borders and the issues lie with the policies that they've adopted within Ontario. That's problematic, right? Admit to the errors of your ways.

[00:41:42] And move on in a way where you can work together with the federal government. And I'm talking about everybody altogether, the federal government has to work with the provinces. I'm not scapegoating anyone here, everyone should be working together because our common goal is to get out of the COVID-19 pandemic, [00:42:00] obviously.

[00:42:00] Right? And so unity will bring forth. Of course, opposition is important. We need to question things. We need to always question things and that's part of democracy, right. But to undermine the efforts. Is is a problem to undermine the approach because of your own failings, your own policy feelings. That is an issue.

[00:42:20] **Alison Innes:** [00:42:20] We've talked a lot about what has happened in the past few years. Um, and certainly in, in the past, Year and a bit, uh, that we've been dealing with COVID what kinds of issues are you keeping an eye on going

[00:42:33] **Ibrahim Berrada:** [00:42:33] forward? Oh, well, I'm keeping an eye on misinformation. I'm following the Trump approach. I'm following what's happening in Canada.

[00:42:42] That mimics the Trump approach we saw after the last election, the rise of a very, very ill faded, right. Died very quickly, thankfully, but the rise of the WEX movement, uh, if you remember that, uh, after the last election, and this is Western Canadians that are

frustrated by [00:43:00] the central government and frustrated by a liberal central government, the rise of the wigs, that movement.

[00:43:06] Pushed forth by a populist appealing politician, uh, Michelle Rempel Garner and, uh, uh, uh, three other of her colleagues, uh, and, and, and effectively said that, Hey, you need to revamp the equalization payments for Alberta. You need to revamp, uh, your approach to Western Canada. You need to see us as a distinct society in a sensor, uh, and you need to revisit your approach to how you deal with Western Canadians, or you will face the threat of cessation.

[00:43:34] Right. We, we will succeed and you don't necessarily hear too much of the webs that movement anymore, but you still see the sentiments that exist. Right. Uh, in, in, in, in Western Canada, in Quebec, we see the rise of Islamophobia. We see, you know, the rise of. Of, uh, targeting, uh, minorities based on what they're wearing and these policies that are emerging, that, uh, that, that are, uh, [00:44:00] discriminatory.

[00:44:00] Right? Uh, so there is very much the sentiments that exists in Quebec society as well. So it's not something that is not. Does not exist in Canada. It's something that really does existing in Canada and something that I'm very worried about when we look at the United States and we look at Trump, people are saying, oh, well, Trump has done.

[00:44:18] And Biden's there. So we don't need to have to worry anymore. And they turn off their TVs and they don't listen to it in use anymore. And they're like, oh, you know, the world is great. Well, no, no. The, the issues that emerged here is that Trump is very much, does very much have political strings within the Republican party.

[00:44:34] Right. He's new he's new slogan is no longer make America great. Or keep America great. Uh, his new slogan is save America, save America from Biden, save America from this, the elite, save America from the foreigners. You know, the, do we all remember the first few policies that he came out with was the Muslim ban, right.

[00:44:53] He came out with a lot of, you know, the border wall. And even though the border wall, [00:45:00] ridiculous initiative, the idea or the concept, the notion. Of the border wall and the impetus behind it was effectively say, Hey, we are going to separate ourselves from the other. Right. And that's what was appealing. And so we still see these sentiments flowing around in our society.

[00:45:16] We can't ignore these sentiments because what they lead to. Increased polarization. And what increased polarization leads to is potential violence and threats to the sanctity of our democratic institutions and our society. So it's, it is worrisome and that this is what I'm kind of paying attention to these days in Canada and in the United States.

[00:45:35] And you know, if we look around the world, Do you look at Brexit? Brexit has, you know, the, the impact of Brexit has, has severely impacted, uh, the United Kingdom and people within the United Kingdom. And like it or not, I mean, this is based on, you know, their decision and I'm not going to criticize their decision, but like it or not, we are a globalized society.

[00:45:58] We can't. Ignore [00:46:00] the others that exist in this society, we can't ignore economic relationships within the society. Uh, Brexit was pushed forth by Nigel Farage and one of the Nigel Farage, his approaches was this idea of foreigners and immigration. And, you know, we're pushing back against these immigration against immigrations and immigrants coming into the UK.

[00:46:20] You know, if we, uh, tend to ignore, if we tend to ignore that rhetoric, we'll, we're going to see that increased violence. Right. It's unfortunate that it exists, but this is something that we have to realize that it exists and then we can tackle it properly. Well, you

[00:46:37] **Alison Innes:** [00:46:37] have certainly given us lots to think about, and I will be thinking more, even more carefully than usual.

[00:46:43] I think. But that I consume too, to kind of think about, uh, what, what my responsibility is in terms of what to believe and to take on board and how to, how to understand things. It's certainly, uh, a complicated landscape. I think that many of us find, find ourselves [00:47:00] navigating these days. So, so thank you very much for joining us today and thank you to our listeners for tuning into this episode.

[00:47:08] We appreciate your feedback on social media at Brock humanity. And in the show notes, you can find the link to a transcript as well as links to some of the articles and news items featuring ebook. Thank you very much.

[00:47:27] **Ibrahim Berrada:** [00:47:27] Thank you so much for this. Find all of our footnotes links to more information transcripts and past episodes. Oh no. Website, rock u.ca forward slash humanities. We love it to hear from our listeners. So please join us on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. At rock humanities, please subscribe and rate us as well on your favorite podcasting app.

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[00:48:19] This podcast is financially supported by the faculty of humanities at Brock university.