

# E EXTREME

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Newsletter of the ECPR Standing Group  
on Extremism & Democracy

# Newsletter of the ECPR Standing Group on Extremism & Democracy

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The *e-Extreme* is the newsletter of the ECPR Standing Group on *Extremism & Democracy*. For any enquiries about the newsletter and book reviews, please contact the managing editors ([extremismanddemocracy@gmail.com](mailto:extremismanddemocracy@gmail.com)).

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# STANDING GROUP ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dear *e-Extreme* readers, we hope you are well, wherever you may be. Read on for the usual mix of announcements, reports, reviews and alerts to keep on top of all the recent developments related to ‘extremism and democracy’.

This issue of *e-Extreme* comes to you in the final weeks prior to the truly momentous 2020 US Presidential Election. We take this chance to look back on the past four years of the radical Trump presidency, with a selection of excellent articles from PhD students in the *Extremism & Democracy* network. Ugo Gaudino outlines the administration’s securitised approach to immigration, and the entanglement of authoritarian, populist and nativist stances within. Jordan McSwiney and Greta Jasser explain Gab: a social media platform popular among a wide range of Trump supporters, which connects more mainstream individuals to alt-right and neo-Nazi groups and plays an important role in radicalisation. Dominik Hammer and Greta Jasser then delve into QAnon, a conspiracy theory which has recently exploded in popularity and influence, and explore its strategic foundations. Finally, Daniel Smith analyses the Trump administration’s normalising of ideas, rhetoric and policy positions that were previously confined to far-right extremists. As a result, he warns of the threat of an approaching contested election and widespread political violence.

We will be back in the new year with another issue. As ever, there will be a symposium, in which we will collect recent research on a burning issue from members of the E&D Standing Group. Please do get in touch with your contributions and ideas. If you are interested in reviewing a book – or indeed a journal article – let us know. In the meantime, take care.

## REGISTER AS AN E&D STANDING GROUP MEMBER

You can join the ECPR Standing Group on *Extremism & Democracy* always free of charge and at the click of a button, [via the ECPR website](#). If you have not already done so, please register as a member so that our list is up to date and complete.

In order to join, you will need a MyECPR account, which we assume many of you will already have. If you do not have one, you can create an account in only a few minutes (and you need not be from an ECPR member institution to do so). If you are from a non-member institution, we will need to accept your application to

join, so your membership status (which you can see via your MyECPR account, and on the Standing Group pages when you are logged in to MyECPR) will be 'pending' until you are accepted.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to get in touch!

## CALL FOR REVIEWERS

*e-Extreme* is now offering scholars the opportunity to review articles! If you want to share your review of the latest published articles in the field of populism, extremism and radicalism and have it published in *e-Extreme*, please do not hesitate to get in touch with us via: [extremismanddemocracy@gmail.com](mailto:extremismanddemocracy@gmail.com).

## E&D ROUTLEDGE BOOK SERIES

The [Routledge Book Series in \*Extremism and Democracy\*](#), which is affiliated with the Standing Group, covers academic studies within the broad fields of 'extremism' and 'democracy', with volumes focusing on adjacent concepts such as populism, radicalism, and ideological/religious fundamentalism. These topics have been considered largely in isolation by scholars interested in the study of political parties, elections, social movements, activism, and radicalisation in democratic settings. A key focus of the series, therefore, is the (inter-)relation between extremism, radicalism, populism, fundamentalism, and democracy. Since its establishment in 1999, the series has encompassed both influential contributions to the discipline and informative accounts for public debate. Works will seek to problematise the role of extremism, broadly defined, within an ever-globalising world, and/or the way social and political actors can respond to these challenges without undermining democratic credentials.

The series was originally founded by Roger Eatwell (University of Bath) and Cas Mudde (University of Georgia) in 1999, and more recently co-edited by Matthew Goodwin (University of Kent). The editorial team now comprises Caterina Froio (Sciences Po), Andrea L. P. Pirro (Scuola Normale Superiore), and Stijn van Kessel (Queen Mary University of London). The editors strongly encourage ideas or suggestions for new volumes in the book series, both from established academics and early career researchers.

To discuss any ideas or suggestions for new volumes in this book series, please contact the editors at: [extremismanddemocracy@gmail.com](mailto:extremismanddemocracy@gmail.com).

## KEEP US INFORMED

Please keep us informed of any upcoming conferences or workshops you are organising, and of any publication or funding opportunities that would be of interest to Standing Group members. We will post all details on our website. Similarly, if you would like to write a report on a conference or workshop that you have organised and have this included in our newsletter, please do let us know.

Please, also tell us of any recent publications of interest to Standing Group members so that we may include them in the 'publications alert' section of our newsletter, and please get in touch if you would like to see a particular book (including your own) reviewed in *e-Extreme*, or if you would like to review a specific book yourself. We are always keen on receiving reviews from junior and senior scholars alike!

Finally, if you would like to get involved in the production of the newsletter, the development of our website, or any of the other activities of the Standing Group, please do get in touch. We are always very keen to involve more and more members in the running of the Standing Group!

# EXTERNAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

## C-REX REPORT: 'KNOWING WHAT'S (FAR) RIGHT: A COMPENDIUM'

This online compendium provides concise, solid and research-based answers by C-REX scholars to important questions in the study of the far right. The entries are written for a broad audience, including academics, policymakers, journalists, and the public at large. While they contain many analytical concepts and complex arguments, they aim to avoid (too much) disciplinary jargon. The compendium looks sure to facilitate a more fruitful academic and public discussion about the far right.

Find it online [here](#), and download the complete compendium in PDF format [here](#).

## VOX-POL NETWORK OF EXCELLENCE: RESEARCHER RESOURCES

In Summer 2020, VOX-Pol launched a new website section, entitled Researcher Resources. This collects and categorises information for researchers working in the areas of online extremism and terrorism, particularly graduate students, early career researchers, and those new to the field, but also for those with more experience in the field. The topics covered include ethics, researcher welfare, datasets and tools, conferences and summer schools, publication venues, and podcasts. A new page was added in Autumn 2020 covering [Jobs, Fellowships and Internships](#). The resources can be found [here](#).

# UPCOMING EVENTS AND CALLS

## CALL FOR BOOK PROPOSALS: ROUTLEDGE STUDIES IN FASCISM AND THE FAR RIGHT

**Book Series Editors:** Nigel Copey (University of Teesside) and Graham Macklin (Centre for Research on Extremism, University of Oslo)

This book series focuses upon national, transnational and global manifestations of fascist, far right and right-wing politics, primarily within a historical context but also drawing on insights and approaches from other disciplinary perspectives. Its scope also includes anti-fascism, radical-right populism, extreme-right violence and terrorism, cultural manifestations of the far right, and points of convergence and exchange with the mainstream and traditional right.

Routledge Studies in Fascism and the Far Right is a successful series which has over forty titles in press or published. Books in the series have included both monographs and edited collections and have been reviewed in *The Guardian*, *New Statesman*, *The Critic*, *Standpoint* and *The Spectator* among other places. The series has covered a geographically, methodologically and historically broad range of subjects.

We welcome new book proposals on all aspects of the far right, fascism and anti-fascism in both the interwar and post-war periods. In particular we would welcome new proposals for single authored monographs or edited collections on these and similar topics:

Anti-Fascism in Comparative / Transnational Context  
Ecofascism / Far Right and the Environment  
Extreme Right Terrorism and Accelerationism  
Gender, Male Supremacism and Incels  
National & Transnational Histories of the Extreme Right  
Extreme Right & Popular Culture  
Non-Western Far-Right and Fascist Movements  
Biographies of Prominent Far-Right Activists  
Anti-Communist and Ultra-Right Networks  
Digital Media and the Far Right  
Conspiracism and the Far Right

For more information please contact:

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## WEBINAR SERIES: RESEARCHING THE FAR RIGHT: METHOD AND ETHICS

**Location and date:** Online, September 2020 – June 2021

C-REX (University of Oslo) and PERIL (American University) are co-organizing a webinar series called 'Researching the Far Right: Methods and Ethics'.

This webinar series aims to initiate and facilitate a much needed discussion about the methodological, ethical, political, personal, practical and professional issues and challenges that arise when researching far right parties, protest movements, and violent actions.

The topics to be addressed in autumn 2020 and spring 2021 are largely inspired by the forthcoming volume 'Researching the Far Right: Theory, Method and Practice' (Routledge, 2020) edited by Stephen Ashe, Joel Busher, Aaron Winter, as well as Graham Macklin from C-REX.

The webinars will last one hour and take place every second Thursday of the month between September 2020 and June 2021. The webinar will have one or two (short) presentations followed by a Q&A session.

Upcoming events:

### **2020**

November 12: Challenges and opportunities of social media research with Jasper Muis (University of Amsterdam) and Ofra Klein (EUI)

December 10: Methods for mapping far right violence with Anders R. Jupskås (C-REX, University of Oslo)

### **2021**

January 7: Observing and interpreting far right demonstrations with Joel Busher (Coventry University) and Fabian Virchow (FORENA, HSD - Hochschule Düsseldorf)

February 11: Normalization to the right: Analyzing the micro-politics of the far right with Ruth Wodak (University of Vienna) (tbc)

For more information see: <https://www.sv.uio.no/c-rex/english/news-and-events/webinar/index.html>

# REPORTS

## ECPR GENERAL CONFERENCE SECTION REPORT

### POPULISM, RADICALISM AND EXTREMISM: AT THE MARGINS AND INTO THE MAIN-STREAM

Online, Virtual Event  
24-28 August 2020

Pietro Castelli Gattinara

*University of Oslo*

Léonie de Jonge

*University of Groningen*

Ofra Klein

*European University Institute*

The Section Populism, Radicalism and Extremism: At the Margins and into the Mainstream endorsed by the Standing Group (SG) on *Extremism & Democracy* at the 2020 ECPR General Conference explored the breakthrough of radical actors and ideas into the political ‘mainstream’ as well as the progressive rise of previously ‘marginal’ non-party organizations of the far right.

The section received a ground-breaking number of 106 applications, about half of which were accepted and organised into no less than seventeen panels. The transition of the conference from a physical into an online event resulted in a considerable dropout of participants. This reduced the section to twelve panels, comprising a total of 63 papers by 60 presenters with an equal number of male and female participants. Despite the relatively high dropout rate, the remaining papers covered a wide variety of conceptual, methodological and empirical approaches to examine populist and radical actors in fringe and mainstream politics.

The section kicked off with a [panel](#) addressing the age-old but still highly relevant question of which factors help explain the great variation in the success and failure of radical right parties in Europe. The opening discussion was followed by a rich variety of panels dealing with demand- and supply side explanations ([or a combination thereof](#)) for radical right support on the national and [local level](#). On the demand side, panels addressed [measuring voters’ attitudes](#) and [how these translate into politics](#). On the supply side, panels focused on issues such as [party competition](#) and [populist narratives](#). The section also featured discussions on the

radical right both [inside and outside electoral politics](#), as well as panels exploring the role of traditional and newer forms of media in explaining radical right success, such as two panels dealing with the ever-increasing hybrid media systems (see [here](#) and [here](#)). Additionally, a joint panel, co-sponsored by the sections of the *Extremism & Democracy* and *Participation and Mobilization* SGs, looked at [Far-Right Political Participation and Digital Media](#). Various panels addressed the changing face of the radical right, as well as the complex relationship between the far right and environmental movements. The panel entitled [United in Misogyny](#) dealt with the increasing backlash to gender equity in the radical right; while a panel on [‘Mobilizing Worldviews: The Visual Repertoires of the Far Right’](#) explored the role of visuals in radical right communication.

Overall, the section tackled a range of innovative topics, such as the various forms of non-conventional political participation; the connections between environmental politics and the far right; the role of the new media and visual repertoires; as well as ideological features such as male supremacy and misogyny. This came hand-in-hand with traditional themes linked to party competition, voting behaviour and the demand and supply side of the populist radical right in general. The combination of topics reflects the most recent developments in the study of extremism and democracy. It also illustrates the growing awareness that the distinction between niche and mainstreamed forms of far-right politics is becoming thinner.

The shift of the conference from Innsbruck to Zoom undoubtedly had its downsides. First, as section organisers, we noticed a considerable dropout among more senior scholars in the field. Second and perhaps more importantly, many junior researchers were unable to attend the conference, given that not all universities reimburse fees for online conference participation. Incidentally, the fees were still inexplicably steep, with a lack of transparency from the ECPR about how the money was spent. The high fees particularly affected post-docs and early-career researchers, who were not eligible for a student fee or a discount. On the other hand, the student discount facilitated participation from PhD students (including some joining us in their pyjamas from the other side of the world!), who would otherwise not have been able to afford travel and accommodation costs. As a result, the number of PhD students in the panels was relatively high compared to earlier conferences. The most serious disadvantage of the virtual conference was the difficulty of networking: the yearly meeting of the E&D standing group did not take place, just like the yearly networking event.

But the online format also had its benefits, mainly thanks to the intuitive online infrastructure provided by the ECPR. The general attendance of panel sessions was rather high compared to previous years, with around 15 to 20 participants attending the panels to up to more than 50. Our general impression was that it was easier to moderate sessions: presenters respected the time limit; people could

ask questions in advance using the chat; and the discussions were generally to the point and informative. We also noticed that participants were very enthusiastic and engaged in the session, creating a very positive atmosphere. The positive feedback we received as section chairs after the conference confirms that the virtual event was, overall, a success. Yet, we hope that if online conferences are here to become recurrent, the ECPR will reconsider its fees policy to make conferencing more inclusive.

As section chairs, we would like to take this opportunity to thank all the panel chairs, discussants and paper presenters for making this conference a success. We really hope to see everyone in real life in the not too distant future.

# SYMPOSIUM: THE RADICAL TRUMP PRESIDENCY

## HOW TRUMP SCALED UP THE SECURITIZATION OF MIGRATION

Ugo Gaudino  
*University of Kent*

The presidency of Donald Trump is a good illustration of how the management of internal and external security affairs can be infiltrated by ideological discourses. Looking back at Trump's presidency through the lens of securitization theory – according to which security threats are more socially constructed and reinforced than objectively defined – allows us to understand how foreign immigration was presented by Trump as an urgent and existential challenge that needed to be tackled through coercive measures. Illustrative examples can be found among his most controversial policies: strengthening the Mexican border; tightening the visa application process by introducing the “public charge principle”; banning travels from specific Muslim majority countries; and increasing deportations for unauthorised migrants.

The governance of security can be shaped by intolerant ideological discourses, which have been popularised by Trump along with right-wing populist parties elsewhere. Security agencies and bureaucracies are usually seen as acting in the name of state sovereignty and national security matters. In other words, they are technocrats who should be independent from ideological dynamics and party politics. This interpretation of internal and international security problems has been shattered by populism. As argued by recent research (Peters & Pierre 2019; Rockman 2019; Bauer & Baker 2020), populist presidents try to influence public administration in the identification of security threats, protection of illiberal norms and generation of resulting necessary measures. Facilitated by the US spoils system, former Republican presidents (Nixon, Reagan and Bush Jr., for example) had already tried to boycott the so-called ‘deep state’. Yet patronage of civil servants and sabotage of bureaucracies reached a peak under Trump and his populist drive against ‘the elites’.

The securitization of immigrants and the ordinary activities of security bureaucracies have become more entangled with authoritarian, populist and nativist views. In April 2019, Trump pulled back the nominee of Ronald Vitiello for Director of ICE and fired his Department of Homeland Security Secretary, Kirjsten Nielson. The two were considered to be ill-suited to pursue his crackdown on illegal migration. The decisions to sideline existing bureaucrats and appoint loyal ones reflect a centralistic vision of security. For instance, the first Muslim travel

ban was introduced without internal checks from Justice Department and State Department lawyers, in line with the scepticism and mistrust towards the elites usually peddled by populists. The ‘Muslim ban’ failed to pass legal scrutiny and was eventually revised. However, it provides us with a good insight into the receptiveness of bureaucracies for the harsher political direction instigated by Trump.

On top of that, Trump steered domestic security policies in a xenophobic direction by ordering more deportations. According to Pew Research Center, data on three key measures – border apprehensions, interior arrests and deportations – gathered by the Customs and Border Protection (CBP), Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) show that apprehensions at the US-Mexico borders have spiked in 2019 to their highest annual level in 12 years. While the number of interior arrests and deportations is lower compared to Obama’s first term, the executive order on Border Security and Immigration Enforcement Improvements has expanded the authority of ICE to detain a wider range of undocumented migrants.

The shift of priority from deporting immigrants with serious criminal convictions (Obama) to targeting unauthorised immigrants who committed minor offences (Trump) signals how state security is a contested field of vehement ideological battles between alternative visions for the country. Even if bureaucratic expertise can influence the governance of threats, professionals have less leeway for autonomous evaluations under populist and centralistic executives - as Trump showed in his co-optation of security agencies.

**Ugo Gaudino** is a PhD candidate in International Relations at the University of Kent. His research project addresses how right- and left-wing political parties securitized Islam in France and Italy. He holds a MA in Economy and Institutions of Islamic countries (LUISS University, Rome) and a Master's degree in International Relations (La Sapienza University, Rome). He is currently a visiting researcher at the Centre for International Studies (SciencesPo, Paris). @GaudinoUgo

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## GAB.COM: THE PRO-TRUMP ALTERNATIVE SOCIAL MEDIA

Jordan McSwiney

*University of Sydney, Australia*

Greta Jasser

*University of Hildesheim, Germany*

Gab.com is an alternative social networking platform closely associated with the so-called 'Alt-Right'. Since its public launch in 2017, Gab has provided a safe space for all manner of online far-right communities, a significant portion of which place themselves squarely in the '#MAGA' camp. Our research shows the important role it has played in connecting supporters of President Trump across the ideological spectrum.

As one of the biggest platforms of the broader 'Alt-Tech' movement – an assortment of alternative digital platforms embraced by the far-right – Gab explicitly markets itself as the alternative to what its founder Andrew Torba calls the 'left-leaning Big Social monopoly' of Facebook and Twitter. Gab mimics the microblogging format of Twitter and adds the ranking functionality of Reddit. However, what really distinguishes the platform is its almost non-existent content moderation. Users are free to post whatever they like, with the exception of private information that would identify other people (doxing) and child abuse material.

It is this absolutist approach to 'free speech' that has made Gab not only a haven for white supremacists and the so-called 'Alt-Right', but for tens of thousands of Trump supporters who believe they are being 'censored' on platforms like Facebook and Twitter. As our ongoing-research into the far-right communities on Gab highlights, this sense of persecution is the reason why many join the platform, while an overarching shared sense of victimhood – whether as members of a 'white race', free-speech absolutists, or Trump supporters – unites the broader community.

Our findings therefore challenge popular perceptions of the platform as one used principally by the 'Alt-Right' and neo-Nazis. While many of the most prominent accounts on Gab do fall into these brackets, their audience is in fact largely self-described Trump supporters and Right-Libertarians. 'MAGA' was the most frequently used term on Gab between August 2016 and January 2018 (Zannettou et. al. 2018). 'Trump' came third, (right after 'Twitter') and 'Trump Supporter' was the most frequent combination of terms (Zannettou et. al. 2018: 4).

These findings are consistent with our own regarding the structure and population of these communities. Although our research set out to uncover and qualita-

tively analyse only the most explicitly extreme far-right communities, Trump related content and accounts nevertheless ended up the most prominent groups in our analysis.

This underscores the important overlap between the ‘mainstream’ and the extreme, or what has been described elsewhere as the ‘Libertarian-to-Alt-Right Pipeline’ (Lewis, cited in Hermansson et al, 2020: 57). In effect, Gab serves as a space which connects ‘regular’ Trump supporters to figureheads of the Alt-Right and leading neo-Nazis. At a time when Trump’s relationship with major social media platforms continue to sour, and an election looming, Gab not only offers a safe space for the President’s supporters to coalesce online, but also a potentially dangerous space for radicalisation.

**Jordan McSwiney** is a PhD candidate in the Department of Government and International Relations at the University of Sydney, Australia. His research focuses on the far-right, with an interest in their ideology, organising practices, and use of technology. Jordan’s research has been published in *Information, Communication & Society* and *Journal of Australian Political Economy*.

**Greta Jasser** is a PhD student at Leuphana University Lüneburg, and a research associate at University of Hildesheim, Germany. She researches far-right and misogynist online networks, with an interest in technology, platforms, affordances and ideologies.

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## THE QANON CONSPIRACY BELIEF: INTERACTIVE MEANING-MAKING AND VAGUENESS AS STRATEGY

Dominik Hammer

Greta Jasser  
*Leuphana University Lüneburg*

Over the past three years, the QAnon-conspiracy belief has evolved from a US-American, far-right fringe online phenomenon into a political ideology with an international following. After the US congressional elections in November 2020,

some of these followers might even become members of the US House of Representatives. To grasp the extent and appeal of this conspiracy belief, it is vital to understand its strategic foundations.

While there are several strands of beliefs involved, in general the adherents of the QAnon conspiracy are convinced that President Trump is secretly fighting a global network of evil elites. This 'cabal' is alleged to sexually abuse, torture, and kill children, and to harvest the chemical compound adrenochrome in the process. Members of the cabal are thought to be in powerful positions in the media, business, the entertainment industry, international organizations, foreign governments, and parts of the US government. There they form the 'deep state': an illegitimate state within a state. QAnon-believers see themselves as a movement that will help the president to topple the conspiracy, in the so-called coming 'Storm'.

The source of information about this conspiracy is an anonymous poster (or posters) on the image boards 4chan, and later 8chan (now 8kun). They claim to be close to Donald Trump and hold the security clearance necessary to access Top Secret information: 'Q clearance'. 'QAnon', or 'Q' informs their followers through so-called 'Q-drops', cryptic messages that vaguely suggest coming events, like mass arrests and executions of those involved in the conspiracy.

Such vagueness is an integral part of QAnon's success, and allows for an interactive aspect to the movement. The community of QAnon believers interpret these messages – or 'bake' the 'crumbs' – to form more coherent stories (McQuade et al. 2019). The creation of meaning by the recipients of the 'drops' allows for a wide range of different interpretations: from Christian Eschatology to New Age creeds. Many of the stories seem to be based on other, well established conspiracy beliefs and incorporate aspects of earlier moral panics regarding child abuse, blood libel, (specifically evangelical) religious undertones. QAnon's 'prophecies' failing to materialize time and again has not stopped the conspiracy theory from growing in popularity. Such failure is explained, for example, by the claim that 'future proves past', meaning that some event in the future will eventually verify the truth of Q's announcements.

Meaning-making as a joint (online) activity enables the formation of a collective identity of 'those who see the truth'. This 'interactive social media facilitates a genre of affective and open-ended storytelling, and creates the conditions for the composition of personal and collective narrative' (Stern 2019: 95) – laying the foundations for a malleable ideology and movement, that is however, firmly anchored in conspiratorial thinking and right-wing world-views, as well as pro-Trump attitudes. The Q narrative appeals to parts of Donald Trump's core base, as well as social media wellbeing influencers and far-right activists alike. A recent development - the movement urging its members to conceal their affiliation to

the conspiracy theory to better convince others of ‘the truth’ – creates the potential for an ever more adaptable and easily spreading ideology.

**Dominik Hammer** is a PhD student at the Technische Universität Dresden, Germany. His research focuses on eugenic practices in liberal democracies, and their respective (historical) justifications. He has an interest in legal and political theory, particularly the impact of ideologies and how they express themselves in the digital world.

**Greta Jasser** is a PhD student at Leuphana University Lüneburg, and a research associate at University of Hildesheim, Germany. She researches far-right and misogynist online networks, with an interest in technology, platforms, affordances and ideologies.

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## THE 2020 ELECTION: RISKS OF A CONTESTED ELECTION AND FAR-RIGHT VIOLENCE

Daniel Smith  
*University of Cambridge*

The presidential race between the incumbent Republican Donald Trump and the Democratic challenger Joe Biden will be one of the most unpredictable in recent American history. President Trump has repeatedly questioned the legitimacy of mail-in voting; he described them recently as “fake ballots” and told his supporters in North Carolina to vote twice in order to ensure that their votes are counted.

Trump’s statements and sentiments have been echoed by Attorney General William Barr and other allies, as well as by activists, ideologues and thinkers associated with the alt-right. A coherent narrative has emerged which claims that a conspiracy between the Democratic Party, George Soros, Black Lives Matter protesters and “Antifa” provocateurs will contest the election and use political violence to stop Trump. Former White House speechwriter Darren Beattie recently went on Fox News’ flagship show, Tucker Carlson Tonight, to discuss the looming “color revolution” orchestrated by George Soros-backed protest movements. Another Trump speechwriter, Michael Anton, penned a piece titled “The Coming Coup?” making similar allegations. This piece was published in *The American Mind*, a pro-Trump website run by the far-right Claremont Institute. Roger

Stone, a long-time Trump ally who was convicted of witness tampering and lying to investigators as a result of the Mueller investigation (and whose prison sentence was commuted by Trump), went on Alex Jones' influential far-right conspiracy show, InfoWars, to argue that Trump should declare martial law if the Democrats win.

These messages spread from alt-right media outlets into the Facebook and Twitter feeds of millions of Americans. The convergence around the "coup" or "color revolution" narrative between Trump allies inside and outside of government could lead to two significant outcomes.

The first is a contested election on November 3, as mail-in ballots will likely take days or weeks to be counted. If Trump appears to be ahead on the evening of the election, he may claim victory before mail-in ballots are accounted for. This would likely trigger protests across the country, providing evidence for the "coup" narrative, and give Trump and his allies a reason to suppress dissent.

The second is a rise in right-wing vigilantism and terrorism before and after the election. Leaked reports from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) claim that white supremacist extremism is the greatest domestic terror threat in 2020, despite efforts from Trump allies to suppress concerns about right-wing extremism. This was echoed by Tucker Carlson, who told his Fox News audience in September that the threat posed by white supremacist terrorism is "a hoax... a conspiracy theory used to divide the country keep a hold on power."

The dire threats posed by a contested election and widespread political violence should concern Americans and democrats around the world. One of the most disturbing features of the Trump administration has been its normalising of ideas, rhetoric and policy positions previously confined to far-right extremists. The pathological and conspiratorial approach to politics characteristic of the far-right has now come to shape the messaging of the United States president and his allies, with the alt-right playing a crucial role as a "transmission belt" between mainstream conservatives and far-right extremists. While we can hope that neither of these outcomes come to pass, observers should pay close attention to the upcoming U.S. election and the risks posed by Trump fanning the flames of the far-right.

**Daniel Smith** is a PhD candidate in the Department of Politics and International Studies at the University of Cambridge. His doctoral research explores the relationships between anti-globalist populism, the American Far Right and the Republican Party from the mid-twentieth century to the present day. He tweets @DSAntiGlobalism

# BOOK REVIEWS

## PRZEMYSŁAW NOSAL AND WOJCIECH WOŹNIAK. POLITICS, IDEOLOGY AND FANDOM: THE TRANSFORMATION OF MODERN POLAND

ROUTLEDGE, 2020. 232 PP. £120.00. ISBN 9780367344528

Michael Cole

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In *Politics Ideology and Fandom: The Transformation of Modern Poland*, Radosław Kossakowski, Przemysław Nosal and Wojciech Woźniak attempt to demonstrate how the performative and discursive processes evident in the world of Polish football fandom, are an unavoidable result of the social and political developments occurring in the country.

The book kicks off by introducing two key features of football supporter identities based on their level of commitment to the political sphere, which provide the basis for the later analytical chapters – the static element and the dynamic element. The static element represents those unchanging components of football supporters' political leanings, which, often, are deeply rooted in the historical identity of the clubs to which they are affiliated. The dynamic element refers to supporter engagement with and reaction to, the kinds of current issues prominent in local, national or international political debate. Both elements are examined throughout the book, demonstrating the interplay between the cultural, political and historical developments of Poland and the discourses of the country's football supporters.

Kossakowski, Nosal and Woźniak position the Polish case in a broader context with an initial overview of the academic literature examining relationships between politics and football fandom in Central and Eastern European countries. While the topic has received considerable academic attention in studies of the Balkans and Romania in particular, the authors highlight a number of cases and aspects of supporter identities and experience deserving of much deeper analysis. The book's aims are thus clearly articulated and well justified as seeking to fill some of these gaps for the Polish case, whilst also laying the foundations for future comparative studies which assess the similarities and differences in how politics, society and fandom interact throughout the wider region.

To do so, the third chapter takes readers on a chronological journey through the socio-economic and political developments in Poland from 1918 right up to the present day. The authors present a detailed account of the key historical and political events in the country, providing the crucial background context necessary for understanding the unique environment in which Polish football fandom has evolved. This creates a strong basis for the following three chapters, which examine the parallel development of Polish football supporter culture during the same timeframe. As the introduction to the book suggests, football in many ways acts as a mirror to society, and the huge changes Poland has undergone during the period examined, are often clearly reflected in the experiences of fans on the terraces.

These background chapters are a real strength of the book, referencing a huge number of salient incidents in which football and politics have collided in Poland over a period of more than a century. From the emergence of the Polish Football Association (PZPN) in 1903, through the 'golden age of hooliganism' in the 1990s, to the instrumentalisation of supporters as a social category in the battle between the country's two major political factions in the 2010s, many of the issues covered are worthy of entire theses by themselves.

Chapter 6 in particular, which focuses on the antagonistic relationship between football fans and the Polish political elites, adds significant depth to understandings of the political inclinations of supporters in modern day Poland. Here the authors argue that processes occurring in Poland's football stadiums over the last decade provided a significant indication of the country's subsequent political developments. The result is a more nuanced articulation of the relationship between Polish football supporters and current ruling party PiS, which emphasises certain ideological synergy regarding religion and minority rights, but also highlights fan groups' residual resentment towards the left as a consequence of former Prime Minister Donald Tusk's 'war on hooliganism' in the 2010s.

The subsequent empirical chapters combine quantitative analysis of fans' political attitudes based on extensive survey data, with qualitative examination of material gleaned from interviews with individual supporters of a selection of Polish clubs. This represents an important step in attempting to reach deeper understandings of not only the political views of Polish football fans, but also how the in-group identities they construct around the symbols and rituals of their football clubs influence their ideological stances. Important themes such as 'local patriotism' and the 'myth of the cursed soldiers' are highlighted as core features of Polish supporters' identities, while the relative ease with which nationalistic and far right symbols are conflated with those of individual clubs is also demonstrated.

The final analytical chapter moves away from club football to the international game, in a whistle-stop tour from Poland's debut as a footballing nation against

Hungary in 1921, through the golden age of Polish football in the 70s and 80s and the nation branding exercise of Euro 2012, to modern-day consumer culture causing the depoliticisation of the national team.

The book is not without its weaknesses. Polish football supporters appear to be considered predominantly as a single homogeneous group throughout the book, which is not always easily reconciled with the perceived importance of ‘local patriotism’ to their sense of identity. While qualitative interview data is used to demonstrate that ‘local patriotism’ is a common feature of supporter identities across a number of Polish clubs, the influential ‘local’ element of this concept is less comprehensively examined, causing it at times to be conflated with the simple notion of ‘patriotism’.

*Politics, Ideology and Fandom: The Transformation of Modern Poland* provides a good introduction to the important relationship between football, politics and society in a country that has undergone considerable changes in all three of these domains during the period examined. In doing so, the book succeeds in its goal of providing a strong basis on which to build comparative studies of how these phenomena interact in other Central and Eastern Europe countries. It also suggests the need for a deeper and more systematic analysis of the impact of unique local factors on the discursive construction of Polish football supporters’ identities in ways that distinguish them from fans of other clubs.

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## **FABRIZIO FENGI. IT WILL BE FUN AND TERRIFYING. NATIONALISM AND PROTEST IN POST-SOVIET RUSSIA**

**UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN PRESS, 2020. 312 PP. \$79.95. HARDBACK. ISBN: 9780299324407**

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This book enquires into the convoluted history of the National-Bolshevik Party (NBP), and especially its overlooked contribution to shaping the culture of post-Soviet Russia. The NBP is a strange political creature: born as an alternative cultural milieu, it later evolved into a protest party characterised by a fuzzy ideology,

and ultimately became one of the staunchest critics of Putin's authoritarianism. Since 2014, the NBP has been readmitted into the mainstream because of its support for Russia's aggressive foreign policy. This work is the outcome of ethnographic fieldwork and scrupulous archival research: such a qualitative approach is required to enquire into such a complex topic.

The first chapter describes the life trajectory and peculiar philosophical outlook of the NBP leader, the now late writer Eduard Limonov. This task is simplified by the fact that most of his literary output concerns fictionalised autobiographical accounts. These works serve to illuminate the literary and political concerns that characterised his persona, and consequently influenced the aesthetics and political attitudes of the entire movement.

The second chapter analyses how the shocking countercultural aesthetics of the NBP (and in particular of its official publication *Limonka*) directly shaped the emergence of the culture of political dissent in post-Soviet Russia. Fenghi employs an innovative framework which uses the concept of 'stioob' – "a parody based on overidentification with the object of the parody itself" (p.59), typical of late Soviet culture – to explain the grotesque and extravagant discursive style of the NBP. Their display of fascist or Nazi references (often together with far-left ones), has prompted several scholars to include the movement into the extreme right category. However, seen in this light, they should be more insightfully considered as a stioob that aims to construct a radical countercultural imagined community, using both art and political action to espouse ambiguous and at times contradictory positions.

The third chapter enquires into the combination of bohemianism and political activism in NBP rhetoric as a sophisticated form of protest against neoliberal capitalism and the poverty of post-Soviet popular culture. Here the author adopts the framework initially elaborated by Boltanski and Chiapello. They theorised the existence of two discourses of anti-capitalist critique: the social one, preoccupied with the material inequalities generated by the capitalist system, and the artistic critique, which is "based on the idea of capitalism as a source of disenchantment and inauthenticity [...] and on the idea of capitalism as a source of oppression of individual freedom and creativity"(p.100). Understood in this light, the apparent inconsistency of NBP ideology finds an explanation: both left- and right-wing militants are expressing their search for authenticity within the same political project. The display of aggressive masculinity, one of the foremost characteristics of the party, attracted disaffected underprivileged youths from the provinces in search for meaning and community. Armed with a sharp countercultural critique and a fairly large number of supporters, the party employed direct protest actions, often characterised by a spirit of martyrdom, as its main political repertoire. In this way, they inspired more recent political-artistic projects such as 'Voina' and 'Pussy Riot'.

The last two chapters enquire into the major offshoot of the NBP, the Eurasia Movement, led by Alexander Dugin. Dugin was the chief NBP ideologue until 1998, and some of the party narratives have been further re-elaborated and popularised by the controversial philosopher. The fourth chapter explains the peculiarity of Dugin's outlook within postmodernism. Contrary to most of the scholarship, Fenghi is not preoccupied with identifying an ideological core or systematizing Dugin's political ideas. Instead Fenghi suggests postmodernism as the ontological framework that best encapsulates Dugin's philosophical-political production, and even explains his anti-postmodern stance. Viewed through these lenses, his unusual collage of philosophical ideas from a great array of disparate sources can be understood as an example of postmodern pastiche. Dugin's works seem to embody the essential contradiction of postmodernism, which may be subversive and oppressive at the same time. He ultimately aims at exploiting the weakness of postmodern de-ideologisation to bring about a new conservative global order.

The last chapter enquires into the importance of the conservative countercultural bohemian community that developed around Dugin and his Eurasia Movement. The difference between 'standard' bohemianism and such conservative bohemians is that, while both represent a reaction against modernity (or postmodernity), the latter strive to instil a radical political change by means of 'political technology'. Here the author insightfully analyses the development of the vanguard Russian artistic scene focusing on those artists who engage with neo-Eurasianist themes by producing artworks that express Manichean struggles and apocalyptic visions imbued with a totalitarian taste. In contrast to the NBP, the neo-Eurasianist cultivation of a violent aesthetics is not a form of self-expression but serves to provoke conflict and influence the mainstream culture through the construction of a 'common enemy'. This operation seems to have been ultimately successful, since part of the contemporary official conservative ideology in Russia reflects narratives originally conceived within this marginal milieu.

To conclude, this book provides a fascinating account of the relevance of counterculture and political fringe ideas in post-Soviet Russia. It is also the most complete and updated work on National-Bolshevism, especially as it frames the phenomenon within its socio-political context, and succeeds in tracing the consistency of the project despite its several ideological shifts. Another important contribution is the collocation of Dugin's ideas and political style within the Russian counterculture in general and the NBP in particular.

The importance of avant-garde arts and alternative cultural milieus is often overlooked in political science scholarship. As this book shows, the clever use of artistic skills and the attentive crafting of political narratives may serve as a trojan horse for the infiltration of fringe political ideas into the mainstream political

discourse. The author overcomes the shortcomings of Western-centric analyses to provide a convincing understanding of this milieu. In so doing, he underlines the importance of the unanswered questions provocatively posed by the adherents of the NBP, especially regarding the legacy of modernity and Enlightenment thought in our neo-liberal present, riddled with multiple inequalities, as it is.

**Jessica Valisa** is a PhD Candidate at the University of Otago (NZ). Her research explores pro-Russian views in the Italian far right milieu and especially how they are circulated in digital media.

## **EIRIKUR BERGMANN, NEO-NATIONALISM. THE RISE OF NATIVIST POPULISM**

**PALGRAVE MACMILLAN, 2020. 235 PP. ISBN: 978-3-030-41772-7**

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Eirikur Bergmann's work contributes to the field with a study of neo-nationalism, following the works of Theodore (2019), Hervik (2011) and Daigle et al (2019). In this comprehensive and well-structured book, Bergmann categorises nationalism after the WWII into three waves, following the research scheme – but not the periodization – of Beyme (1988) and Mudde (2016). He explores the main features of each wave and the main differences among these three waves.

One interesting contribution of this book is its connection of populism with nationalism in the rise of neo-nationalism in various post-war European and American countries, its framing of these ideas within the changing environments of these countries, and their relation with topics such as liberalism, economy, migration, and religion. Instead of only putting the emphasis on the populist parties themselves, he emphasizes the correlation of many populist parties across Europe and America with neo-nationalism and the impact of this correlation on the successive shifts of the discourse and content of both populism and nationalism. A further interesting point made by Bergmann's book is the reference to the current Covid-19 crisis and its possible future implications on nativist nationalism, which, of course, remains to be seen and examined.

Bergmann begins his book by recalling a personal experience regarding the dividing lines of nationalism and the EU policies towards migrants coming from Africa. This experience leads him to trace the neo-nationalist milieu in Europe after the WWII by discussing the transformations of nationalism and the failure of liberalism. Bergmann stresses the central features of the 'new world order', the rise of illiberal democracy, migration, the rise of populist parties, and their turn into mainstream parties and the call for a return to nation.

Bergmann then examines nationalism since its appearance in Europe until its latest shift to neo-nationalism. Drawing both from major work on nationalism (Anderson, Gellner, and Hobsbawm), and from nationalist thinkers, as Herder, Renan and Mazzini, Bergmann provides us with the necessary context to understand the developments around nationalism in a clean and sober way. He frames his work by defining both populism and nativism, while the introduction to neo-nationalism closes with the reference to two pivotal traits of contemporary nativist populists: their enmity 'against the liberal aspects of the post-war Western democratic order' and the fact 'that biological racism was replaced with cultural racism' (p. 48).

The next chapter on the first wave of nativist populism focuses on the impact of the oil crisis on the rise of neo-nationalism in the era of Thatcherism and neoliberalism, and traces the rise of the Front National, Nordic chauvinism and conspiracy theories. Bergmann is right to underline these years as the era when 'identity started to replace issues of class' (p. 69), and the idea of America's greatness and neoconservatism became dominant in the US and changed the Republican Party – and not only it.

The next chapter explores the rise of the second wave in the aftermath of the collapse of communism and the 9/11. In this Bergmann starts from the end of the Cold War, proceeds with the change in the character of the social democratic parties and focuses on the rise of neo-fascist and neo-Nazi movements and the shift towards anti-migration and the opposition to Islam. This wave puts more emphasis on the cultural racism and the cultural incompatibility among different racial and religious groups cultivated by the nationalist parties in order to advance their agendas. This chapter centres mainly on France, Scandinavian countries, and the UK to identify the new sources of legitimacy for these parties.

Finally, in the chapter on the third wave, which is the most extended of the book, he examines the most recent developments which connect with the international financial crisis starting in 2008 and the refugee crisis which began in 2015. This chapter is an overview of the most crucial aspects of these developments, such as: the conspiracy theories, the violent turn within neo-nationalist movements, the 'replacement theory' and the rhetoric regarding Islam, Brexit and the Trump presidency, the role of the social media in the formation of the third wave, and the white supremacism theory. Again, the most influential parties are examined with an emphasis on the anti-Islam rhetoric, the normalisation of the neo-nationalist discourse and their electoral successes.

Bergmann's book provides a concise overview of neo-nationalism. No matter how someone evaluates the contested concept of populism, this book is an important contribution to the mapping of populist parties in connection with neo-

nationalism and, thus, triggers further research on its transformations. It is also valuable for the identification of the trajectories of the most influential nationalist parties over the last 70 years. It is finally a useful tool for anyone who wants to find sources and information for more research on the area of nativism.

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## FRANK FUREDI. POPULISM AND THE EUROPEAN CULTURE WARS: THE CONFLICT OF VALUES BETWEEN HUNGARY AND THE EU

ROUTLEDGE, 2017. 152 PP., £34.99 (PAPERBACK). ISBN: 9781138097407

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*Populism and the European Culture Wars* investigates the attitudes of the West against Hungary, and claims that there are 'culture wars' against Hungary in press, politics, and academia. The book offers a different perspective on populism than traditional populism literature by conflating the term with traditions, values, and nationalism and it puts nationalism and Hungarian history at the centre of empirical discussions.

The book consists of five chapters discussing the topics of values, national consciousness, memory wars, and anti-populism. Each chapter focuses on explaining the West's treatment of Hungary and Hungarian values.

In the first section of the book, Furedi claims that there are various European

values and Europe should tolerate other values. Furedi argues that EU-phile technocrats of the EU are in favour of EU values but they neglect national values such as traditional Hungarian values. Furedi criticises their lack of understanding of Hungary because ‘they rarely encounter traditional conservatives in their own societies’ (Furedi, 2018: 6). Thus, Furedi criticises the EU's lack of respect for different values; not just those of contemporary Hungarians, but also European values and traditions of the past.

In the second chapter, Furedi claims that we should embrace our past instead of demonising it. According to Furedi, suspicion and hatred against traditions and values have roots in the 18th-century Enlightenment and Diderot is particularly responsible for this philosophy (Furedi, 2018: 43). On the contrary, traditional family values have been regarded as stability and security against multiculturalism. ‘Multiculturalism relentlessly promotes the idea of acceptance and discourages the questioning of people's beliefs and lifestyles’ (Furedi, 2018: 71). For instance, Hungary's transition from a communist to a liberal state was problematic because this transition was without the normative foundation.

In the third chapter, Furedi opposes anti-populists’ views on nationalism. According to him, anti-populism sees ‘nationalism as the irrational functional equivalent of religion’ (Furedi, 2018: 51). Anti-populists define nationalism as a pathology and the societies must get rid of this disease. The EU also depicts nationalism as the leading cause of the twentieth-century World Wars. However, Furedi rejects these claims. He defends nationalism as separate from xenophobia and thus cannot be blamed for the mistakes Europeans made in the past. Accordingly, the discussion in the third chapter morphs into a discussion of nationalism vs. the EU and it seems Furedi conflates populism with nationalism and values/traditions.

In the following chapter, Furedi acknowledges the importance of history by stressing national values. According to him, the EU is trying to erase Christianity from the European discourse. They intend to disconnect the present from the past. He even goes as far as to argue that ‘in numerous cases, UK employers have banned Christmas decorations from their offices because they do not want to offend other faiths’ (Furedi, 2018: 99).

The final section sheds light on anti-populism more broadly. In the author’s account, anti-populists ignore people’s national values and lifestyles. Thence, anti-populist elites are disrespectful of national decisions. Furedi describes their attacks on ‘authoritarian’ politics in Hungary as hypocritical. According to him, ‘they have little objection to authoritarianism as such - so long as it is exercised by a small group of transnationally educated, unelected judges’ (Furedi, 2018: 113). Thus, anti-populism and technocracy are also different forms of authoritarianism.

Overall, the book approaches populism from a different perspective and claims that the West is ignorant of other values. The Western and the EU elite do not respect other nations' traditions and people's choices. The EU is dictating its own rules and values in Hungary and so disrespecting national decisions and lifestyles. The book offers a wide range of examples of the EU's double standards on some occasions. From this point of view, populism must be embraced and people's decisions must be respected. The study also provides historical roots of why Hungarians care about their values more than other nations. Their struggle to be an independent nation and to have a national identity for hundreds of years are at the core of their challenge against the West today.

The book has several weaknesses. First, the reduction of discussions between the EU and Hungary into one of subjective values is not justified. After all, the problems between Hungary and the EU are not simply differences in cultures or values, but rather structural. According to The Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index, Hungary's 2017 score is 6.64 and this is a fall from 7.53 in 2006. Democratic backsliding may seem a bigger issue than culture wars today. The EU's criticism towards Hungary focuses on the deterioration of its democracy rather than of Hungarian culture.

Second, the refugee issue has been a specific problem between Hungary and the EU. To illustrate, in 2015, more than one million refugees came to the EU to seek asylum. Some pro-immigrant countries such as Germany and Sweden welcomed this wave, but Hungary staunchly opposed it. Since then, immigration has been one of the most important issues, but it is dividing EU member countries on the subject. Especially the immigrant quota system is not accepted by Hungary and several other countries. Here the book fails to explain why different attitudes between pro-immigrant and anti-immigrant Hungarians have to be defined as 'culture wars'. In what sense, different perspectives towards immigration are part of the national culture is not clear. Furedi also defends Hungary's individual response to the crisis but he fails to acknowledge that this individual response had caused more problems affecting the EU governance.

Overall, this book is an attempt to analyse the recent struggle between the Hungarian government and the EU institutions and leaders. Furedi acknowledges that the reforms of the Hungarian government took in recent years are criticised by the anti-populist Western and EU elites because of values clashes with Hungarian values. According to Furedi, the EU is imposing its values on nations who don't share them, and 'contrasting attitudes towards national sovereignty, popular sovereignty, and the questions of tradition and the past are the main drivers of the Culture Wars in Europe' (Furedi, 2017:9). Although cultural differences indeed are of significance for the problems faced by the EU, the genuine problem lies in a different understanding of democracy. Therefore, the main problems of the book

are the equalisation of populism with nationalism and culture, the lack of discussion about democratic backsliding in Hungary and the justification of Hungary's diverging policies under the banner of populism and cultural differences.

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# PUBLICATIONS ALERT

Our publication alert is based on a semi-automated search and can never be complete. Therefore, please tell us about any **recent** publications of interest to Standing Group members so that we may include them in our newsletter.

- Abdelaaty, L. & Steele, L. G. (2020) Explaining Attitudes Toward Refugees and Immigrants in Europe. *Political Studies*.
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