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# The Phenomenon of the European Far Right and Their Foreign Policy Positions[1]

doi: 10.22394/2074-0492-2021-2-168-183

*Abstract:*
The article addresses two major issues. The first issue concerns the phenomenon of the European far right. The article argues that the "far right" is an umbrella term that refers to a broad range of ideologues, groups, movements and political parties to the right of the centre right. Fascism was the very first far-right ideology to have acquired worldwide significance. After the Second World War, fascism was discredited in Europe, but it — in the form of neo-fascism — survived in small West European movements and groups that still hoped for an ultranationalist revolution. Nevertheless, the West European post-war far right preferred to adapt to the new political environment rather than reject it. Hence, the post-war far right evolved into two major forms: (1) radical right-wing populist parties, which are the most common type of the far right today, and (2) the New Right that operates on the cultural and intellectual, rather than political, level. The second issue concerns foreign policy orientations of the European far right, and the article discusses these orientations through the prism of the attitudes of the far right towards globalisation, the USA, NATO, European integration, and Russia.

*Keywords:* far right, fascism, radical right-wing populism, New Right, foreign policy, globalisation



The term "far right" is used as an umbrella term that refers to a broad range of ideologues, groups, movements and political parties to the right of the centre right. It is probably impossible to define an umbrella term such as "far right" as anything less vague than a range of politi-

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cal ideas that imbue a nation (interpreted in various ways) with a value that surpasses the value of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The concept of a nation is central to all manifestations of the far right, and none of them considers the current state of their respective nation as favourable or even tolerable. A nation is *always* seen as either in decline or threatened by internal or external malicious forces, so the far right considers it indispensable to "handle" their nation in such a way as to "heal" it and/or alleviate the presumed problems underpinning its unsatisfactory condition.

Different manifestations of the far right, however, differ in the ways they imagine the "handling" of a nation. The exponents of fascism, which was the very first far-right ideology to have acquired worldwide significance, offered arguably the most radical approach to "healing" a nation. This thesis subscribes, methodologically, to a dominant school within contemporary fascism studies that considers "fascism" as a generic concept and posits fascist ideology as a form of revolutionary ultra-nationalism, where the latter is understood as an illiberal form of nationalism. This approach is most extensively elaborated by Roger Griffin who defines "fascism" as:



> a revolutionary species of political modernism originating in the early twentieth century whose mission is to combat the allegedly degenerative forces of contemporary history (decadence) by bringing about an alternative modernity and temporality (a "new order" and a "new era") based on the rebirth, or palingenesis, of the nation. Fascists conceive the nation as an organism shaped by historic, cultural, and in some cases, ethnic and hereditary factors, a mythic construct incompatible with liberal, conservative, and communist theories of society [Griffin 2007: 181].

In the interwar period, fascist groups, movements, organisations and parties operated across entire Europe, but only two European countries, namely Benito Mussolini's Italy and Adolf Hitler's Third Reich, "successfully" implemented essential tenets of fascism on the state level and were, thus, fascist *regimes*. Italian and German fascisms differed largely in that Italian Fascists conceived the nation in ethnic terms, whereas German National Socialists articulated their idea of the nation in racial terms, or to be more precise, in terms of the *Volk*, a metaphysical notion incorporating the concepts of race, German history and culture. The difference in these interpretations of the nation as the core concept for the definition of fascism allows for distinguishing a very specific form of fascism, namely National Socialism or Nazism, that emphasises a specifically racist or *völkische* interpretation of one's own nation. However, both regimes strove to revive and renew their allegedly decadent nations through, among other actions, eradicating ethnic and social elements, which they perceived as both causing the national decadence and im-

peding the national rebirth. Both regimes were also totalitarian, as — in terms of Emilio Gentile — each of them "destroy[ed] or transform[ed] the previous regime and construct[ed] a new state based on a *single-party regime*, with the chief objective of *conquering society*"; sought "the subordination, integration and homogenisation of the governed on the basis of the *integral politicisation of existence*"; and aimed "to shape the individual and the masses through an *anthropological revolution* in order to regenerate the human being and create the *new man*" [Gentile 2000: 19, emphasis in the original].

After the joint forces of the Western liberal democracies and the Soviet Union had crushed the war machine of the Third Reich, fascism in Western Europe was largely forced to evolve into three major forms. Revolutionary ultranationalists retreated to the fringes of socio-political life in the West. As they still remained true to the idea of an alternative totalitarian modernity underpinned by the palingenesis of the nation — however unrealistic its implementation was in post-war Western Europe — their doctrines were termed as "neo-fascist" (but sometimes simply "fascist") or "neo-Nazi". In terms of organisation, Western post-war conditions gave birth to a phenomenon of neo-fascist groupuscules, "intrinsically small political (frequently meta-political, but never primarily party-political) entities formed to pursue palingenetic (i.e. revolutionary) ideological, organizational or activist ends with an ultimate goal of overcoming the decadence of the existing liberal democratic system" [Griffin 2003: 30]. Neo-fascist groupuscules and larger organisations, in most cases, refrained from, or were too ideologically extreme for, participation in electoral processes, but, at the same time, they actively built contacts with like-minded groupuscules and organisations across the West, and these activities kept alive their faith in the imminence of a fascist revolution, however unfeasible or phantastic the latter was. Some post-war fascist groups even formed pan-European alliances, such as the New European Order (Nouvel ordre européen) or Spanish Circle of Friends of Europe (Circulo Espanol de Amigos de Europa) widely known by its Spanish acronym CEDADE, but their influence was limited only to the fascist "choir".



The second form of post-war "evolution" of fascism was associated with the originally French, though subsequently cross-national network of think tanks, journals, and conferences, labelled the New Right or, later, European New Right (ENR) [Griffin 2000; Spektorowski 2003; Bar-On 2007]. The ENR emerged with the creation of the French think tank Group for Research and Studies on European Civilisation (Groupement de recherche et d'études pour la civilisation européenne, GRECE) founded by journalists, writers, university professors, and other intellectuals under the leadership of Alain de Benoist. All the "nodes" that make up the broad ENR network are self-sufficient and have individual

doctrines, but they share common ideological origins and are characterised by the same set of distinctive features, which allows to assign these "nodes" to a common school of thought.

The first feature is the ENR's inherent opposition to individualism, multiculturalism and egalitarianism. According to ENR thinkers, these liberal democratic policies are the causes for the alleged contemporary crisis of the Europeanised world. Instead of them, the ENR longs to revive and revitalise Europe by implementing the principles of a hierarchically structured organic community and ethno-pluralism in a new post-liberal order. Alberto Spektorowski defines ethno-pluralism as "multiculturalism of the Right" that "endorses a radical conception of multiculturalism in order to undermine the intellectual basis of liberal multiculturalism" [Spektorowski 2003: 125]. In his turn, Jens Rydgren argues that "the notion of ethno-pluralism states that, to preserve the unique national characters of different peoples, they have to be kept separated. Mixing of different ethnicities only leads to cultural extinction" [Rydgen 2007: 244]. Essentially, the ethno-pluralist theory champions ethno-cultural pluralism globally but is critical of cultural pluralism (multiculturalism) in any given society. In ethno-pluralist terms, the "'mixing of cultures' and the suppression of 'cultural differences' would correspond to the intellectual death of humanity and would perhaps even endanger the control mechanisms that ensure its biological survival" [Balibar 1991: 22]. However, ethno-pluralism should not be confused with biological racism: "contrary to the traditional conception of racism, the doctrine of ethno-pluralism, as such, is not hierarchical: Different ethnicities are not necessarily superior or inferior, only different, incompatible, and incommensurable" [Rydgren 2007: 244].



The second feature is the ENR's extensive adoption of the Italian communist Antonio Gramsci's doctrine on cultural hegemony. This doctrine is based on the concept that a revolution can only be successful if based on the cultural domination over a given society by implanting certain ideological messages through newspapers, conferences, and higher education. The ENR's "right-wing Gramscism" — together with the adoption of specific New Left ideas, especially its sophisticated anti-capitalist rhetoric, as well as regionalist and environmentalist stances — has certainly been a novel strategic move to veil its fascist agenda in post-war Europe [Griffin 2000; Shields 2007]. Having abandoned both the milieu of revolutionary fascist groupuscules and the sphere of parliamentary contestation, the ENR preferred to focus on the battle for minds, thus choosing the way of so-called "metapolitical fascism". The fascist nature of the ENR, however, is disputed by some scholars who argue that the ENR thinkers have moved beyond fascism and the older revolutionary right-wing project toward "a unique post-modern ideological synthesis" [Bar-On 2007; Taguieff 1994].

Far-right organisations and parties that still wanted to participate in the political process in post-war period had to dampen dramatically their revolutionary ardour and translate it "as far as possible into the language of liberal democracy" [Griffin 2003: 38]. This strategy gave birth to the third form of post-war far-right politics, namely the phenomenon of radical right-wing political parties [Betz 1994; Kitschelt, McGann 1995; Carter 2005; Givens 2005; Mudde 2007], on which more below.

The above-mentioned major forms of the contemporary, post-war far right need to be treated as "ideal types" in the Weberian sense of the term. The ideological boundaries between them are often blurred, while their various permutations — including those adopting elements of other, non-right-wing ideologies — embodied in the plethora of groups, movements and organisations have acquired new names such as, for example, national-revolutionary and national anarchist movements, Radical Traditionalism, Third Position, and Identitarian movement. National-revolutionaries are inspired by fascism, German Conservative Revolution, nationalisms of the Third World, and the Soviet and left-wing propaganda [Lebourg 2013]. National-anarchists, according to Graham Macklin, promote "a radical anti-capitalist and anti-Marxist 'anarchist' agenda of autonomous rural communities within a decentralized, pan-European framework" [Macklin 2005: 301]. Radical Traditionalism draws upon the anti-modern, elitist and racist ideas of the Italian fascist thinker Julius Evola who imagined that the current period of "decadence" would be succeeded — through a "revolt against the modern world" — by a new "golden era" of racial hierarchy [Furlong 2011]. The far-right Third Position declares its opposition to both capitalism and communism, but at the same time features strong ultranationalist political ideas and far-left economic views. The Identitarian movement is influenced by the ENR, but stresses the need for the creation of "a Europe of nations" that would protect the European identity against foreign cultural and religious influences, especially Islam [Virchow 2015].



The ENR, as the more intellectual movement within the post-war far-right milieu, was particularly efficient in exerting influence on other types of the far right. In particular, the majority of European radical right-wing parties embraced the ENR's doctrine of ethno-pluralism, while some fascist groupuscules adopted ENR's right-wing Gramscian tactics and tried to influence society, especially young people, through cultural production, for example right-wing music [Dyck 2016].

Radical right-wing political parties are today arguably the most widespread form of far-right politics, which Roger Griffin identifies as "ethnocratic liberalism" arguing that "it enthusiastically embraces the liberal system, but considers only one ethnic group full members

of civil society" [Griffin 2000: 173]. In his turn, Michael Minkenberg defines right-wing radicalism as "a political ideology, whose core element is a myth of a homogeneous nation, a romantic and populist ultranationalism directed against the concept of liberal and pluralistic democracy and its underlying principles of individualism and universalism" [Minkenberg 200: 337]. He argues that "the nationalistic myth" of right-wing radicalism "is characterized by the effort to construct an idea of nation and national belonging by radicalizing ethnic, religious, cultural, and political criteria of exclusion and to condense the idea of nation into an image of extreme collective homogeneity" [Ibid.].

Cas Mudde provides yet another insightful interpretation of what he calls "radical right-wing populism" suggesting that it can be defined as a "combination of three core ideological features: nativism, authoritarianism, and populism" [Mudde 2007: 22]. As Mudde argues, nativism "holds that states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group ('the nation') and that non-native elements (persons and ideas) are fundamentally threatening to the homogenous nation-state"; authoritarianism implies "the belief in a strictly ordered society, in which infringements of authority are to be punished severely"; and populism "is understood as a thin-centred ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite'" [Ibid.: 22-23].



There is less academic consensus on the differences between the *radical right* and the *extreme right*. In the 1990s and 2000s, Anglophone scholars who studied radical right-wing parties predominantly preferred to use either the term "radical right" (e.g. Hans-Georg Betz, Herbert Kitschelt, Michael Minkenberg, Terri Givens, Pippa Norris, David Art) or "extreme right" (e.g. Piero Ignazi, Roger Eatwell, Cas Mudde, Kai Arzheimer, Elisabeth Carter) to refer to the object of their research. In the recent years — and especially after the publication of Mudde's seminal *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe* — there has been a growing consensus in the Anglophone world that is conceptually reasonable to distinguish between right-wing radicalism (or radical right-wing populism) and right-wing extremism. Such an approach largely draws on the long-standing practices in Germany where state authorities distinguish between radicalism and extremism. Thus, Germany's Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution indicates that political radicalism is associated with intentions "to tackle social problems and conflicts" radically, but at the same time "radical political opinions have their legitimate place in [the German] pluralist social order". In contrast, extremism, according to the Federal Office, aims to abolish "the democratic constitutional state" and "associated basic principles of [the German] constitutional order", as

well as eliminating "the fundamental values of liberal democracy".[1] In other words, right-wing radicalism harshly criticises liberal democracy, while right-wing extremism fully rejects it. In this sense, the ideological difference between right-wing extremism and fascism (or neo-Nazism) is often negligible.

The blurring of the boundaries between various forms of far-right politics is also reflected in the ideological heterogeneity of the electorally most successful far-right parties of today, namely the radical right-wing parties. Many of these parties have long political histories, and, over the years, they have integrated many activists coming from the movements and organisations of varying degrees of radicalism or extremism. Activists who have fascist, neo-Nazi or extreme right background may and usually do moderate under the pressure of the party leadership who — for political or tactical reasons — believe that extremist ideas and rhetoric will be harmful for electoral success.

The de-radicalisation process has become a common stage for the most successful European far-right parties today. The Norwegian Progress Party (Fremskrittspartiet), which was considered a radical right-wing party in the past [Widfeldt 2015: 83], has gradually removed or toned down most of its hardliners and now perhaps cannot be even considered a far-right party anymore. The same can be said about the Hungarian Jobbik party [Krekó, Juhász 2017]: starting from 2016, it has de-radicalised and, at the time of the writing, is part of the broad democratic coalition opposing Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's Fidesz that has, on the contrary, moved from the centre right to the far right in the recent years. Under the leadership of Marine Le Pen, the National Front (Front National, FN) [Davies 1999] expelled her father and the FN's longtime president Jean-Marie Le Pen for his radicalism, and was even renamed into National Rally (Rassemblement National) to distance from earlier, more radical positions. In 2020-2021, Italy's Northern League (Lega Nord, LN) [Zaslove 2011], after a short participation in the government, has also toned down its anti-EU positions and moved closer to the centre right.



There is a historical precedent for this process: the most notable early example of de-radicalisation of the far right is the refashioning of the fascist Italian Social Movement (Movimento Sociale Italiano) into a "post-fascist" party in the late 1980s and early 1990s. This was followed by the expulsion of right-wing extremists and transformation into the national-conservative National Alliance (Alleanza Nazionale) in 1995, and, eventually, the merger of the National Alliance into Silvio Berlusco-

1 Extremismus/Radikalismus. *Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz*. (https://www.verfassungsschutz.de/de/service/glossar/extremismus-radikalismus)

ni's now defunct centre-right People of Freedom (Popolo della Libertà) in 2009.

De-radicalisation has contributed to the growing popular support for the "moderated" radical right-wing parties, allowing them to enter sectors of the political spectrum that mainstream parties have long abandoned. Compared to the 1990s, the "moderate" radical right now has even more appeal to liberal voters concerned about identity issues, to the working class on labour and immigration issues, and to conservative voters anxious to preserve so-called traditional values.

De-radicalisation is not a mandatory condition for the electoral success of the far right, which is corroborated by the electoral fortunes of the Greek neo-Nazi Popular Association — Golden Dawn (Laïkós Sýndesmos — Chrysí Avgí) [Ellinas 2015] at the parliamentary elections in 2015 or the Slovak extreme right Kotleba — People's Party Our Slovakia (Kotleba — Ľudová strana Naše Slovensko) [Kluknavská, Smolík 2016] at the parliamentary elections in 2016. However, in general, the more radical the far-right parties are, the less electoral support they have, and vice versa [Carter 2005: 203]. Some of the more extreme far-right parties of today, for example, the British National Party (BNP) [Copsey 2004], Italian New Force (Forza Nuova) [Campani 2016], National-Democratic Party of Germany (Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands, NPD) or Party of the Swedes (Svenskarnas parti) have rarely had any tangible electoral successes. Even if many citizens of Western countries are seeking existential refuge in national identities, they are predominantly repulsed by blatant right-wing extremism and racist rhetoric. Some elements of the electorate of radical right-wing parties may clearly be driven by more extreme views than those espoused by their political favourites, but the majority of the voters do not seem to be racists or ultranationalists. Elaborating on the observation made by Laurent Fabius, France's Socialist Prime Minister (1984-1986), who said in 1984 that the FN's founder Jean-Marie Le Pen asked the right questions but came up with the wrong answers, one can suggest that the greater part of the electorate of radical right-wing parties make their electoral decisions because they are tempted by the right questions that the more moderate far-right politicians raise — about the efficiency of the liberal-democratic establishment, economic inequalities, job security, social cohesion, immigration, religious traditions and identity.



Foreign policy positions of radical right-wing parties stem from their ultranationalism, or nativism, as a constituent element of their ideologies, as well as ethno-pluralism adopted from the ENR. The approaches of radical right-wing parties to international relations are arguably best characterised by their attitudes towards globalisation, the USA, NATO, European integration, and Russia.

The overwhelming majority of radical right parties consider globalisation, for economic, political and socio-cultural reasons, as a destructive process. First, globalisation — as a process of de-regularisation and liberalisation of goods and labour markets — is blamed for undermining the welfare state, impoverishing small and medium businesses in favour of transnational corporations, cutting wages and rising unemployment.

Second, international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank or World Trade Organisation, as well as currently proposed trade agreements like the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, are seen as limiting economic and political sovereignty of European nation-states.

While these positions could potentially be also articulated by (radical) left-wing parties, these critical approaches to globalisation are — in the case of the radical right — underpinned by their ultranationalism. Concerns about the survival of the welfare state in a globalised world are part of the radical right-wing ideological package that can be called "welfare state chauvinism" suggesting that welfare benefits should be restricted to the indigenous population and, thus, implicitly cementing the inequality between "Us" and "Them". Similar ultranationalist implications can be found in the radical right narratives associating globalisation with the rise of unemployment and salary reductions: globalisation fosters immigration, and immigrants "take our jobs and drive down wages". Moreover, describing the IMF or World Bank as instruments of "international finance" enables the radical right's flirtation with anti-Semitism, as the term "international finance" is often a coded reference to the Jews [Richardson, Wodak 2009: 256]. The combination of "leftist" criticism of globalisation and nativist undertones allows the radical right to mobilise "losers of globalisation" more efficiently in comparison to the radical left; as Hanspeter Kriesi and others argued, "fears about national identities" are more important for the "losers of globalisation" than "the defence of their economic interests" [Kriesi et al. 2008: 19]. The majority of "losers of globalisation", who vote for the far right, come from the working class — a development that Hans-Georg Betz called a "proletarization of the radical populist Right's electoral basis" [Betz 1994]. He also suggested that, from the point of view of economic programmes, already in the early 1990s, "a number of radical right-wing populist parties resembled Socialist and Social Democratic parties more than any other of the established parties" [Ibid.].

Finally, radical right-wing parties directly blame globalisation, which — to a certain degree — implies free movement of persons, for uncontrolled immigration and erosion of national cultures. Immigrants from Africa and Asia receive special attention of far-right parties that believe that real or imaginary cultural differences between Africans and Asians, on the one hand, and Europeans, on the other, are too great to allow for a peaceful co-existence of these peoples in the European space

and for a successful integration of Africans and Asians into European societies. These arguments are underpinned by different but often overlapping motives ranging from overtly racist to ethno-pluralist ones. The racist motive relates to a belief in the superiority of "white race" over any other "races": Africans and Asians are thus seen not only as inferior to white Europeans but also a direct threat to the existence of "white race". The ethno-pluralist motive, in contrast to the overtly racist one, does not presume superiority of Europeans over Africans and Asians, but glorifies cultural diversity of different ethnic communities — a diversity that should be maintained, and, hence, different ethnic communities should have as low influence on each other as possible.

The rejection of globalisation by the majority of radical right-wing parties is closely associated with their general scepticism towards to the USA. As Christina Schori Liang sums up,

> Anti-Americanism has become one of the dominant foreign policy themes of the populist radical right since the end of the Cold War, and the United States is widely perceived as the main state adversary of Europe. [...] The United States is viewed by many populist radical right parties [...] as having hegemony over international institutions [...] and international business. The United States is also represented as a warmonger, forcing countries to join in unwanted conflicts and instigating and forcing political, economic, and cultural integration [Liang 2007: 9].



According to Lars Rensmann, "in general, anti-Americanism is now at the top of the agenda of extreme right parties all over Europe, from *Lega Nord* to *Front National*" [Rensmann 2003: 119, italics in the original], but exceptions do exist, while the attitudes of far-right parties towards the US may change with time. For example, the FN was strongly pro-American until the fall of communism in Central and Eastern Europe in 1989-1991 and the beginning of the US-led Gulf War that the FN strongly criticised; the Freedom Party of Austria (Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs, FPÖ), under the leadership of Jörg Haider, looked at the US with favour until the beginning of the 2000s when Haider started to cooperate with Saddam Hussein; and the Belgian Flemish Block (Vlaams Blok) was "virtually the only open supporter of American foreign policy in contemporary Belgium" [Mudde 2007: 78]. Nevertheless, the overwhelming majority of far-right parties remain, in a varying degree, anti-American.

At the same time, the election of President Donald Trump, who was often seen as an American populist and isolationist,[1] and whose presi-

1 Donald Trump Reveals His Isolationist Foreign-policy Instincts. *The Economist*, 22 March (2016) (http://www.economist.com/blogs/democracyinamerica/2016/03/aipac-and-foreign-policy)

dential campaign was led by one of the ideologues of the Alternative Right (or alt-right) movement Steve Bannon [Green 2015], exerted an impact on several European far-right parties who embraced his election, most importantly on the leadership of the FPÖ and LN. Four senior members of the FPÖ celebrated Trump's victory in the Trump Tower in New York in November 2016. The FPÖ's then General Secretary and MEP Harald Vilimsky also travelled to Washington in February 2017 to hear a speech by Trump, whom he later called "a great politician who challenged the corrupt leftist political networks and international fake news media"[1]. The LN's leader Matteo Salvini went to the US to meet Trump already in April 2016, months before Trump was elected as President of the US. Nevertheless, it seems safe to say that the fascination with Trump on the part of some European radical right-wing parties had little to do with any positive view of the US itself.

Radical right-wing parties' contemporary attitudes towards NATO are similar to those towards the US, but during the Cold War the European far right predominantly supported membership in NATO. Their anti-communism underpinned their belief that NATO was an efficient instrument to contain and deter the Soviet Union. After the fall of socialism and communism in Central and Eastern Europe in 1989 and the demise of the Soviet Union in 1991, most far-right parties switched to anti-NATO positions. During the Cold War, the Soviet Union and communism were considered as a bigger threat than the US, but after the 1989-1991, the US became to be seen as the only remaining superpower, and NATO — as an instrument of "American imperialism" [Liang 2007: 16].



However, there have been exceptions too. The FPÖ supported Austria joining NATO in the 1990s, even if, ironically, the majority of Austrians favoured the country's neutral status [Givens 2005: 12]. The Greater Romania Party (Partidul România Mare, PRM) considered NATO — at least until the death of its long-time leader Corneliu Vadim Tudor in 2015 — "the only possible instrument to protect the strategic interests of Romania" [Smrčková 2009: 53], while the Danish People's party (Dansk Folkeparti, DF) is still a resolutely pro-NATO far-right party. The All-Ukrainian Union "Freedom" (Vseukrains'ke Ob'yednannya "Svoboda") sees NATO as an instrument of resisting Russia's aggressive behaviour towards Ukraine, and, therefore, supports the idea of the country joining NATO.

With respect to the EU, the majority of West European radical right-wing parties supported European integration through to the signing,

1 Vilimsky H. (2017) *Großartige Rede von Donald Trump in Washington*, Facebook. (https://www.facebook.com/Vilimsky.Harald/posts/1220285024757109).

in 1992, of the Treaty on European Union that was seen as a step leading to the loss of national sovereignty and creation of a European super-state, in which national and ethnic particularities would be eradicated. Cas Mudde suggested arguably the most useful typology of contemporary far-right parties with regard to their approach to the EU by distinguishing between Euroenthusiasts, Europragmatists, Eurorejects and Eurosceptics [Mudde 2007: 161-165]. Euroenthusiasts, who express "support for both the underlying ideas of European integration and the EU itself" [Ibid.: 161-162], represent the smallest part of the European far right, and the Alliance for the Future of Austria (Bündnis Zukunft Österreich, BZÖ), when it was still a radical right-wing populist party under the leadership of Jörg Haider (2005-2008), was a notable example of a Euroenthusiast far-right party. Europragmatists are no larger group within the far-right milieu: "they do not believe in the underlying ideas of European integration, but they do support the EU" [Ibid.: 162], and the PRM, among very few others, could be categorised as a Europragmatist party. Eurorejects are a broader group of far-right parties: they oppose membership of their country in the EU, as they see it "as an infringement of or a threat to national independence" and criticise the "democratic deficit" of the EU [Ibid.: 163]. Some of the far-right parties in the Euroreject category are the BNP, DF, League of Polish Families (Liga Polskich Rodzin) and Bulgarian "Attack" (Ataka). Eurosceptics are the majority of radical right-wing populist parties; they "believe in the basic tenets of European integration, but are skeptical about the current direction of the EU" [Ibid.: 164].



Apart from concerns about the "EU-inflicted" loss of national sovereignty and erosion of national distinctions, as well as the ghost of a European super-state, the far right accuse the EU of the democratic deficit referring to the fact that neither the Council of the European Union nor the European Commission — the major EU institutions — is elected directly by the peoples of the EU. However, the far right often combine harsh, yet sometimes legitimate criticism of the functioning of the EU with conspiracy theories. One of most widespread conspiracy theories about the EU is that its elites allegedly promote mass immigration of Africans and Asians into Europe to replace the Europeans who are blocking the creation of a European super-state [Willinger 2014].

Up until Vladimir Putin became Russia's president for the third time in 2012, the European far right largely lacked any coherent attitudes towards Russia. The exception were avowedly anti-Russian far-right parties in particular European countries that were either Soviet republics until 1991 or part of the Soviet sphere of influence during the Cold War. Thus, radical right-wing populist parties in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Ukraine defined their negative attitudes towards Russia on

the basis of the historical grievances about the Soviet Union and the threat coming from contemporary Russia.

Nevertheless, consistent approaches towards Russia have been absent in the European far-right milieu in the 1990s and beginning of the 2000s. With the radical increase of anti-Western and anti-American sentiments of the Russian ruling elites, the situation started to change. Positive narratives on Russia produced by the far right since Putin's third presidential term can be divided into the narratives on Russia in general and those on Putin's Russia. The former narratives were broadly underpinned by anti-Americanism of radical right-wing populists: they welcomed Russia as a geopolitical counterweight to the US and NATO, as a state that could help Europe liberate itself from American influence. The narratives on *Putin's* Russia followed a similar pattern that had, however, its peculiarities.

One of the very first far-right narratives on Russia under Putin's rule was that the country "got up off its knees". The "anti-oligarchic" theme was also popular among the far right in their interpretation of Putin's Russia. For example, the FN's leader Marine Le Pen argued that Putin "inspired respect for his attempts to counter a group of oligarchs who had appropriated Russian national resources" [Aslamova 2012: 6]. Some far-right activists and ideologues imbued the "anti-oligarchic" narrative with their own agendas. For instance, the BNP combined this narrative with the anti-Semitic message inherent in the party ideology and claimed that Putin "moved to stop the oligarchs who had grabbed control of the vast wealth of Russia looting any more. And nearly all those oligarchs happened to be Jewish and with close ties to international Zionist organisations".[1]



As the European far right deplore the alleged loss of national sovereignty to Brussels, they consequently praise Putin for preserving Russia's sovereignty — an argument that Putin himself liked to stress during his later speeches. The LN's leader Matteo Salvini called Putin a statesman who did not "serve the interests of the globalists" [Mirakyan 2014], and argued that Putin defended "the interests of his own people regardless of the world technocrats and Brussels' biddings" [Tarasyuk 2014]. A far-right conspiracy theorist F. William Engdahl maintains that Russia, "especially after Vladimir Putin's return to the Kremlin, [...] made it very clear that it was going to defend its sovereignty, national interests and borders" [Engdal 2015].

1 "Watch out — Warmongers about!", *British National Party*, 24 April (2014) (https://web.archive.org/web/20140425212744/http://www.bnp.org.uk/news/national/watch-out-%E2%80%93-warmongers-about)

Another important far-right narrative on Putin's Russia is the acceptance of the conservative posture of Putin's regime and even its self-appointed global leadership in defending the so-called traditional values. For example, Chauprade stated that "thanks to Putin, other people acquire hope and opportunity to defend family values. For the West, Russia is a beacon of hope" [Chinkova 2014]. Fabrice Sorlin, the leader of the French Catholic ultranationalist organisation "Day of Wrath" (Dies Iræ) and former candidate for the FN, compared "Russia's anti-gay stand to its protection of Europe against the Mongol hordes and against fascism in the twentieth century" [Blue 2013]. The Italian far-right National Front (Fronte Nazionale) expressed its support for Putin's "courageous position against the powerful gay lobby", as well as his political backing of Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria, through dozens of posters in Rome announcing "I am with Putin!".[1]

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1 Fronte Nazionale Uffic., "Io sto con Putin", *Facebook*, 5 September (2013) (https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=615875215114378)

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**Рекомендация для цитирования:**

Shekhovtsov A. (2021) The Phenomenon of the European Far Right and Their Foreign Policy Positions. *Социология власти*, 33 (2): 168-183.

**For citations:**

Shekhovtsov A. (2021) The Phenomenon of the European Far Right and Their Foreign Policy Positions. *Sociology of Power*, 33 (2): 168-183.

Поступила в редакцию: 12.05.2021; принята в печать: 30.05.2021

Received: 12.05.2021; Accepted for publication: 30.05.2021