

The European Far Right: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives

Edited by
Giorgos Charalambous

REPORT 2/2015

**FRIEDRICH
EBERT** 
STIFTUNG

 **PRIO**
Cyprus Centre

About the Editor

Giorgos Charalambous is Senior Research Consultant at PRIO Cyprus Centre and Adjunct Lecturer at the Department of Social and Political Sciences, University of Cyprus. Currently, he also serves as President of the Cypriot Association of Political Science. His research and publications centre on political parties and ideologies, political behaviour and southern European politics. His articles have appeared in the *European Political Science Review*, *Government and Opposition*, *Italian Political Science Review* and *South European Society and Politics* among other journals.

THE EUROPEAN FAR RIGHT: HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES

Edited by:

Giorgos Charalambous

Contributors:

Giorgos Charalambous

Daphne Halikiopoulou

Aristotle Kallis

Andreas Kemper

Andrea Mammone

Aurelien Mondon

Krisztian Szabados

Sofia Vasilopoulou

A joint Publication by:

PRIO Cyprus Centre

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung

Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO)

Hausmanns gate 7
PO Box 9229 Oslo
NO-0134 OSLO, Norway
Tel. +47 22 54 77 00
Fax +47 22 54 77 01
Email: info@prio.no
Web: www.prio.no



PRIO encourages its researchers and research affiliates to publish their work in peer reviewed journals and book series, as well as in PRIO's own Report, Paper and Policy Brief series. In editing these series, we undertake a basic quality control, but PRIO does not as such have any view on political issues. We encourage our researchers actively to take part in public debates and give them full freedom of opinion. The responsibility and honour for the hypotheses, theories, findings and views expressed in our publications thus rests with the authors themselves.

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (Foundation)

20, Stasandrou, Apt. 401
CY 1060 Nicosia
Tel. +357 22377336
Website: www.fescyprus.org



The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung or of the organizations for which the authors work.

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung and Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), 2015

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without permission in writing from the copyright holder(s).

ISBN 978-82-7288-660-7 (print)
ISBN 978-82-7288-661-4 (online)

Production and Cover design: Action Global Communications

CONTENTS

CONTRIBUTORS V

CHAPTER 1:
INTRODUCTION TO THE REPORT..... 1
GIORGOS CHARALAMBOUS

CHAPTER 2:
A THIN RED LINE?
FAR RIGHT AND MAINSTREAM IN A RELATIONAL PERSPECTIVE..... 7
ARISTOTLE KALLIS

CHAPTER 3:
IDEOLOGICAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL ASPECTS
OF THE GREEK CYPRIOT FAR RIGHT 13
GIORGOS CHARALAMBOUS

CHAPTER 4:
THE RISE OF THE GOLDEN DAWN IN GREECE 23
DAPHNE HALIKIOPOULOU AND SOFIA VASILOPOULOU

CHAPTER 5:
ROME IN BLACK(SHIRT): FAR-RIGHT ALLIANCES IN RECENT ITALY 29
ANDREA MAMMONE

CHAPTER 6:
THE IRRESISTIBLE RISE OF THE FRONT NATIONAL?
POPULISM AND THE MAINSTREAMING OF THE EXTREME RIGHT 35
AURELIEN MONDON

CHAPTER 7:
AfD, PEGIDA AND THE NEW RIGHT IN GERMANY..... 43
ANDREAS KEMPER

CHAPTER 8:
THE PARTICULARITIES AND
UNIQUENESS OF HUNGARY'S JOBBIK..... 49
KRISZTIAN SZABADOS

CONTRIBUTORS

Giorgos Charalambous is Senior Research Consultant at PRIO Cyprus Centre and Adjunct Lecturer at the Department of Social and Political Sciences, University of Cyprus. Currently, he also serves as President of the Cypriot Association of Political Science. His research and publications centre on political parties and ideologies, political behaviour and southern European politics. His articles have appeared in the *European Political Science Review*, *Government and Opposition*, *Italian Political Science Review* and *South European Society and Politics* among other journals.

Daphne Halikiopoulou (PhD LSE) is Associate Professor in Comparative Politics at the University of Reading. Her work focuses on nationalism and far right parties in Europe. She is co-author of *The Golden Dawn's Nationalist Solution: Explaining the rise of the far right in Greece* (Palgrave Macmillan 2015 with Sofia Vasilopoulou).

Aristotle Kallis is professor of modern and contemporary history at Lancaster University, UK. He researches fascism and modern right-wing radicalism/ extremism in Europe. He is the co-editor of *Rethinking Fascism and Dictatorship* (Palgrave 2014). He is currently working on a book exploring the relationship between extremism and the mainstream.

Andreas Kemper is a sociologist with a research focus on classism, at the Department of Sociology, University of Münster. He works for the Duisburg Institute for Language and Social Research (DISS) about the AfD. Kemper also analyzes anti-feminist networks at the European level.

Andrea Mammone is a historian of Modern Europe at Royal Holloway, University of London, and author of "Transnational Neofascism in France and Italy". He is writing a book on recent Europe. He has written for Al Jazeera, The Guardian, The Independent, Foreign Affairs, Reuters, The New York Times, and New Statesman.

Aurelien Mondon is a senior lecturer in French and comparative politics at the University of Bath working on racism, populism, the far right and the crisis of democracy. His first monograph 'The mainstreaming of the extreme right in France and Australia: A populist hegemony?' was published in 2013 and his research can be found on <http://extremism.hypotheses.org/>

Krisztian Szabados, is an economist and political analyst and is the founder and co-owner of Political Capital Institute, a Budapest-based think-tank specialized in research on political extremism. He is a former network fellow at Edmond J Safra Center for Ethics at Harvard University. Szabados is the author of several books on Hungarian domestic politics as well as a biography of Nicolas Sarkozy. He is regularly quoted by the international media on current affairs.

Sofia Vasilopoulou is Lecturer in the Department of Politics at the University of York, United Kingdom. Her work examines the theme of political dissatisfaction with democracy and democratic institutions across Europe. She is the co-author of *The Golden Dawn's Nationalist Solution: Explaining the Rise of the Far Right in Greece* (Palgrave 2015 with D. Halikiopoulou). She has been awarded support from the ESRC for a three year project entitled 'Euroscepticism: dimensions, causes and consequences in times of crisis'.

CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

Giorgos Charalambous

This report is a compilation of essays discussing the far right in Europe, introduced first by a crucial reminder that the far right is not unknown in Europe's history. Rather, it is the outgrowth and historical (re-) culmination of deeply entrenched traditions that pervaded earlier periods of the twentieth century, and which were enmeshed with conservatism. These are, in part, even reflected in the dominant ethno-centric, populist and opportunistic mentality of Europe's leading elites and member-state governments, making the so-called mainstream consensus unable to transcend the core and inner elements of far right discourse and ideology.

The essays were presented or resulted from participation at a conference organized jointly by the PRIO Cyprus Centre, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Cyprus and the Cypriot Association of Political Science (CAPS) held in November 2015 in Nicosia, Cyprus. The conference included a workshop component structured to provide insights into particular far right European organizations, and was at the same time focused on offering a more longitudinal look at the far right as a political concept and phenomenon in historical perspective, that is, as it has evolved throughout the latter years of the twentieth century and into the first years of the twenty-first.

The electoral growth of far right parties in European countries between the early 1980s and today has been gradual, increasing consistently, at times steeply. From representing barely 1 per cent of the vote, the average has shot up to approximately 7 per cent, with the post-2000 period witnessing a particularly rapid growth. This is, of course, the average; some countries, as well as specific areas, are much more significant than others, while some parties more extremist than others. These trends also only reflect parliamentary results. The number of far right MEPs (Members of the European Parliament) has increased from 37 in 2009 to 52 in 2014 and a far right group in the European Parliament called 'Europe of Nations and Freedom', led by France's Front National, was formed in 2015.

Yet, as frightening and notable as the recent electoral trajectories of far right organizations in Europe may be, our focus on the far right does not exclusively derive from electoral (or even strictly political) criteria. After all, some of the raw data point in another direction. Less than half of the 29 EU member states have a far right party in their national parliaments.

Far right parties are also, still and for the most part, a rather modest electoral factor; in recent national elections, they surpassed 10 percent of the vote in only six of the twenty-eight EU member states. At the transnational level the European far right is neither strong nor cohesive. Although there is a tendency to refer to and even approach the far right in Europe as a single indivisible group, in the European Parliament (EP) the strongest force underlying the recently established far right group has been the desire of non-attached MEPs to avoid being treated as 'second-rate MEPs'. There are also reasons to suspect that we haven't yet seen the height of far right resurgence; far right electoral success may be inhibited in most European countries due to these parties' focus on non-economic issues at a time when most citizens are concerned about the economic crisis.

The analyses in this report look at the far right in the political sphere as part of a broader picture, one that includes social behaviour and ideological thought. Large popular demonstrations and violent actions, as well as attitudes, norms and state practices should in this way matter equally to election results and political strategies. Similarly, how ideological currents support political organizations and how social divides generate political ones are of equal importance to how party leaders craft political plans at elections.

More specifically, the rationale for the conference, and therefore for this compilation of essays, is fourfold. First, the report aims to illuminate the various phenomena related to far right organizations that have gradually been translated into accepted concepts by historical evolution; in particular, the concepts of mainstream and extreme, and to a lesser extent, those of fascism, populism and conservatism. Second, the report focuses on political parties, as these are the principle vehicles of far right ideologies and other social trends; they cultivate societal manifestations of extremism such as racism, exclusivity, violence and authoritarian thinking, and in turn are sustained by them. Third, the report provides brief histories and analyses of recent developments in the major political and social characteristics of the far right. In doing so, it updates previous analyses by (among other things) investigating the latest electoral, social-psychological and political events that have shaped the relationship between far right politics and European societies. Fourth, and no less important, the report pursues the above goals in an inter-disciplinary way so as to include several different frameworks for interpretation. Both the original conference presentations and these essays are the work of political scientists, historians and sociologists, all of whom, themselves, are flirting with the boundaries of their respective disciplines.

The report has opted for a broad and diverse sample for comparison. (Yes), not all European countries are covered, but we have included both successful and 'failed' cases, both established and new far right parties, parties from southern, northern, western and eastern European countries, and countries in crisis as well as countries that are not (at least not yet and not fully) experiencing economic malaise or political upheaval. It is our hope that this careful selection of case studies, each of which serves a number of comparative purposes, will offer valuable insights into far right thought, practice, strategy and organization, covering contextual, time and country specificities.

We have deliberately focused on several specific questions. The economic and political crisis in southern Europe is especially emphasized, as evidenced by the contribution discussing the Greek Golden Dawn; the issue of electoral strength is also highlighted in this essay. The Golden Dawn is an exceptional case: because this is an explicitly neo-Nazi party, the authors are well placed to include a number of policy implications in their analysis. The fascism that epitomizes the ideology of Golden Dawn distinguishes it from most other far right parties, which now are more established and resemble mainstream political actors.

The Cyprus case illustrates the potentials and limitations that weak far right organizations face in their efforts both to grow and demarcate themselves from their right wing and nationalist neighbours. One of the attempted arguments is that the Cypriot far right is anchored socially and ideologically in a space currently still occupied by the main right wing party. Largely responsible for this incomplete detachment is the issue of 'ethnic conflict', so annoyingly familiar to Cypriot political analysts. How this shapes the character of far right rhetoric and politics and how developments around the Cyprus problem delimit the strategies of far right politicians on the island can be a useful avenue for further research. Nevertheless, one thing is by now clear in the case of Cyprus: although a far right political actor is not well placed to make electoral gains, far right rhetoric and the incorporation of far right elements in allegedly centrist actors make the local political environment prone to nationalist, xenophobic and racist outbursts.

The essay on the French Front National highlights the various sources and implications of mainstreaming a far right organization, while still sustaining a crucial sub-culture of extremism. It also connects to the importance of leadership, as shown in the critical case of Marine Le Pen and her difference in leadership style with her father, long-time leader of the party. Interestingly and also worryingly, as part of this mainstreaming, which has indeed been driven by Marine Le Pen, the far right has borrowed and adapted ideas of the left; e.g., a turn towards what the Front National calls 'economic patriotism'. Although this orientation is based on a racist exclusionary agenda it is explicitly anti-neoliberal, evidenced by its support for tariffs, subsidies for local industry, expansion of public sector jobs. Mainstreaming, however, is a two-way process: it is driven by Le Pen through 'modernisation', cleaning up the image, borrowing from centrist and leftist actors; but also, mainstream parties themselves activate mainstreaming through their use of populist rhetoric that simplifies and distorts existing cleavages and divisions in society.

The Italian far right has been considerably more successful than its other southern European counterparts (except Greece since 2012), but beyond the charismatic leadership of the Lega Nord, in both person and organisation, there is an abundance of far right ideological currents, groups and practices in northern Italy, ranging from the right wing fringes of Silvio Berlusconi's alliances to outspokenly fascist street groups. In Italy, where movement politics has always mirrored developments in party alliances, the recent march of the Black(shirts) in Rome, which the essay in this report describes so vividly, perhaps mirrors a realignment against the Renzi government inside parliament.

Movement dynamics reflect both recent electoral results and a realignment of forces within the conservative flank of the mainstream right. This is especially true of the situation in Germany, a country traditionally seen as outside the purview of far right politics and thus a non-case. In Germany the refugee crisis is the main development currently being capitalized on by the Alternative for Germany and Pegida, and in a much more effective way than most other countries affected by the issues of refugees and immigration regimes. Refugees, asylum seekers and migrants are the main topic on the German far right's agenda. In essence, another crisis has presented itself and non-economic issues are being repoliticized by and (in some cases more than in others) to the benefit of the far right.

The Hungarian Jobbik makes an interesting contrast to Greece's Golden Dawn. Jobbik, an organization that is not the type of extremist party which Western Europe is used to, has managed to become part of the mainstream Hungarian political landscape. The essay in this report examines the party's key distinguishing features and analyzes the major differences between Jobbik and the far right in western Europe, with a focus on how the origins of a far right party and its financial ties shape its exceptionalism, especially with regard to Muslims. The essay discusses the implications of having (at least until recently) a far right pro-Muslim organisation as part of the political mainstream, and in this respect highlights the blurry boundaries between the 'extreme' and the 'mainstream' in empirical terms.

The first essay after this introduction offers an important opening analysis to the historical trajectory of the concepts 'extreme' and 'mainstream' right, which helps in understanding the electoral growth as well as the mainstreaming of the far right (throughout the past decade especially). In other words, it becomes clear how the recent trends in far right politics reflect historical reality, as they project a more contemporary version of a historical strain of thought and behavior that by its very nature and reproduction mechanisms is difficult to confront effectively. Nationalist and fascist perceptions of social reality and politics across countries and over time are often little more than a radicalisation of mainstream belief systems.

Because concepts such as 'extreme' and 'mainstream' are still under scrutiny, we have chosen to use the term 'far right' to describe the topic we are investigating. This report is, above all, about political parties, and when these are approached in a systemic sense, it is their distance from and relations to the other main positions in the party system that distinguishes them as units of analysis. Put differently, far right parties are those that are positioned to the right of the mainstream right wing or centre right actors that in Europe are liberal, conservative or Christian democratic. Far right parties can take many shapes and forms: modernized and soft in tone and rhetoric, or extremist and fascist, endorsing violence, supporting authoritarianism and openly racist.

The contributors to this report were encouraged to use their preferred term, since the far right has usually been a sensitive issue for those who study it and for those who come from countries scarred by it. Political concepts are inherently ideological devices and conceived to reflect a multiplicity of terms used to describe the same phenomena within academic circles. After all, terms and concepts should adjust to different contexts; what defines extremism in

France, where the issue of Islamophobia has been debated consistently, clearly does not correspond to the situation in Hungary, where the mainstream consensus is more authoritarian, xenophobic and conservative. In the same way, while much of Le Pen's populism is similar to that of the Golden Dawn, it is nevertheless not so extreme, although both parties can be understood as the most extreme within the confines of their countries. While the term 'new right' would not make sense in Cyprus, where historical references and genealogical logics explain away most of today's far right's ideology, in Germany the term makes perfect sense, as it is supported by a significant section that recently broke away from a mainstream right wing party.

Considering arguments of the introductory historical essay together with the country-specific essays in this report, we can conclude that mainstream and extremism should not be approached as contrasting terms, either historically or through a more contemporary perspective. Their relationship in terms of political strategy, discourse, behaviour and ideology is far too complex to be viewed as opposite—and this is true for both the inter-war years and today. Giles Fraser, writing in *The Guardian*, compared the wristbands forced on refugees in Europe today with the handcuffs and chains binding the victims of historical fascism: 'history may not be repeating itself, but it's certainly rhyming'¹.

The essays in this report also reveal that the far right as a political phenomenon can flourish in the presence as well as in the absence of crisis, and crisis of whatever sort. Although it is true that in Greece social degradation, political disaffection and psychological panic served as the breeding grounds for the legitimization of extremism, neither economic malaise nor immigration /refugees can explain why far right organizations, rhetoric and propaganda continue to thrive beyond the period of crisis. There are both structural and agential factors that can contribute towards a more refined understanding of how extremism retreats and resurges. The two types of factors are both related to the strategies and internal dynamics of far right parties themselves, as well as sometimes to the lack of response to extremism by mainstream political actors; moreover, they also stem from the impact of globalized and neoliberal capitalist democratic structures on the European social fabric. In this sense, the conception of crisis has to be relativized in such a way that captures the nuances of what constitutes normality in particular contexts. As Aristotle Kallis reminds us in his essay, the research into the inter-war years has taught us that what matters most in relation to the far right-crisis nexus, is 'political framing and psychological perception rather than any objective historical reality and direct causality'.

Additionally, the report indicates that the far right, as a political ideology characterizing individuals and groups in the social and political sphere, is more cohesive than diversified.

¹ Fraser, G. (2016). 'Wristbands and refugees: History is not repeating itself, but it is rhyming', *The Guardian*, 25 January. Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/jan/25/wristbands-red-doors-refugees-history-rhyming-holocaust-echoes-of-past>.

Although terms are often used interchangeably and different phenomena are often conceptualized by a single traditional form of labeling, the far right does have an ideological core which speaks to the heart of Europe's recent history: xenophobia, ethno-centric analyses and nationalism, racism, exclusivity and populism as rhetorical means of getting across their views, independent of how extremist these are. Far right parties also have two main forms of ideology - 'background' and 'mainstream' - which can coexist and which enable these parties to garner support from marginalized extremists as well as conservatives from the middle class. The partial exception here is again Greece's Golden Dawn, where the outright violent, xenophobic and fascist elements of the party's ideology are also common in its leadership's rhetoric and actions. Cases such as the Golden Dawn add another, today thin but still existing, characteristic to the far right thick ideological core - the normalization of violence.

From the perspective of mobilization and organizational practice, the European far right is also distinctive as a family of parties. The leader is important in the sense that he or she both dominates the internal decision-making process and communicates the party profile; leadership politics thus matters much more than the base of party activists and intellectuals; movement-like imaginaries thrive despite the person-centric politics; the myths, symbols, ways and orthodoxies of fascism often remain intact beneath the mainstreaming of leaderships (where this has been the case); in this way the far right as a social space develops capacities of resilience. Interestingly, as the German case vividly illustrates, the political intricacies and complexities that are exhibited by larger and more popular far right organizations (such as the Front National in France) are also mirrored in the microcosms of the more marginal cases, such as that of the emerging German far right. It is perhaps wise, therefore, to investigate the years of formation, stagnation and resurgence of far right parties, even if across countries, with the aim of connecting them, so as to understand the latter within the context of the former. In this vein, the electoral success of far right parties should not guide our research direction in too strict a fashion.

CHAPTER 2:

A THIN RED LINE? FAR RIGHT AND MAINSTREAM IN A RELATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Aristotle Kallis

Overcoming (?) 'fascism'

From the first postwar years, the liberal imaginary has been carefully invested with an unprecedented aura of moral authority. It is an authority largely derived from a foundational claim that liberalism eventually triumphed against fascism - a triumph that may have been achieved through a brutal military campaign but at least marked an 'overcoming' of fascism. In the words of Jürgen Habermas, the defeat of fascism by liberalism in 1945 was a

normative watershed ...[that] discredited an array of myths which, ever since the end of the nineteenth century, had been mobilised against the heritage of 1789 ... [and] undermined the foundations of all forms of political legitimation that did not - ... at least in words - subscribe to the universalist spirit of political enlightenment. (Habermas 2001:46)

In the first decades after the war, the historical place of fascism in the *longue durée* of European history was explained away as 'just a bad moment we had to go through, a sort of historical error' (Guattari 2008) or alternatively as a 'malaise', a lapse into barbarism and 'dis-civilisation' (Elias 1994) that, it was claimed, corrupted and denied everything that the liberal world stood for (Vincent 2010).

The crudeness of this interpretation may have subsided, giving way to more sophisticated and methodologically empathetic understandings of the emergence and political success of interwar fascism. But the tendency to 'exceptionalise' fascism has remained central to the narrative of liberalism's triumph over, and overcoming of, fascism. In fact, it has been instrumental in embedding the notion of fundamental incompatibility between a liberal mainstream and the diverse ideological guises of extremism. The 'thin red line' that I refer to in the title of this piece is a symbolic yet fragile double cordon sanitaire instituted shortly after 1945 - defending a new liberal, democratic, and humanistic mainstream as both a set of values and

a sense of a longer term historical trajectory of the west against a - theoretically exogenous - threat of extremism (Van Donselaar 2003).

And yet, Habermas's normative watershed has proved to be nearly as unreliable, fuzzy, and permeable since 1945 as it had been before then. Dealing with ideal types of 'mainstream' and 'extremism' in a conceptual laboratory may sustain such a comforting boundary between mainstream and extremism. Can a usable distinction based on such neat binaries, however, survive in the granular reality of modern society, where in-betweenness, pluralism, and hybridity are constituent elements of social reality (Kallis 2014: 1-11)? Gilles Deleuze has controversially argued that fascism is not exceptional to liberalism but in many ways coextensive with it (Evans and Reid 2013). Now, undoubtedly the Deleuzian understanding of 'fascism' - as a diachronic psychological human desire for power - is highly idiosyncratic and largely at odds with much of the current scholarship on interwar fascism. However, I read his observation as a methodological warning - that a rigid conceptual distinction between the categories of 'extremism' and 'mainstream' obscures intersections, overlaps, and hybrids on the level of everyday practice that remain supremely uncomfortable to the mainstream mind.

This is a point that Cas Mudde has fruitfully introduced into the study of the contemporary far right. Mudde argued that 'ideologically and attitudinally, the populist radical [r]ight constitutes a radicalization of mainstream views'. Thus, he continued,

[t]he argument is that key aspects of populist radical [r]ight ideology are shared by the mainstream, both at the elite and mass levels, albeit often in a more moderate form. [...] The key difference between the populist radical [r]ight and western democracy is not to be defined in kind, i.e. by antithesis, but in degree, i.e. by moderate versus radical versions of roughly the same views. (Mudde 2010)

Mudde has popularised the term 'pathological normalcy' in order to describe how extremism is very often fed by ideas and attitudes that have roots within mainstream society. The term works well in terms of de-exceptionalising the radical right - not by relativising or normalising it but by undermining the notion that it constitutes an anomalous divergence from an alleged social and political mainstream. It also contains a disturbing, if subtle, rebuttal of the claim that postwar liberalism has irreversibly 'overcome' fascism, for such a claim would presuppose a discontinuity that cannot exist. If social demand for more radical ideas and policies always inheres in mainstream society, then the question is not so much why the radical right exists or performs well in elections but why it scores its successes at particular points in time and in particular ways or forms. The analytical focus thus shifts from the causes of the radical right to the forces and processes that drive the radicalization from within the social and political mainstream.

What crisis?

If one observes closely the explanations for the rise and success of fascism in the interwar years given by different scholars, the majority of them are framed in terms of a crisis. 'Crisis' is

a fraught and over-extended term; but it also remains the historian's favourite emergency toolkit. As Reinhart Koselleck has noted, 'from the nineteenth century on, there has been an enormous quantitative expansion in the variety of meanings attached to the concept of crisis, but few corresponding gains in either clarity or precision' (Koselleck 2006). Almost immediately after the establishment of Mussolini's dictatorship in Italy, contemporary Marxist observers connected the rise of fascism as the product of a systemic crisis of the capitalist order (Hall 1994). In his book, *The German Catastrophe*, the conservative German historian Friedrich Meinecke argued that Hitler's regime was like an 'alien force' taking hold of Germany in 1933-45, a kind of extraneous 'malaise' that afflicted German society. During his postwar trial, the German philosopher Martin Heidegger claimed that the 'malaise' that fed the European fascist episode lay much deeper, in a profound crisis of the whole cultural tradition of the west (Clark 2006).

Postwar historiography too has made ample use of the analytical toolkit of 'crisis' in explaining the rise and success of fascism. Richard Overy described the entire period between the end of the First World War and the outbreak of the second global conflict as one marked by multiple, mutually reinforcing crises (Overy 2014). In Italy, the 'crisis of the dopoguerra' has featured prominently in interpretations of the rise of Italian fascism (Sabbatici 1976). In Germany, the debilitating effects of the worldwide depression have been used as causal explanatory factors of the spectacular rise of the electoral power of the NSDAP between the low of 1928 and the peak of 1932 (Fulbrook 2015).

It is always easier in retrospect to see crisis as an objective, structural cause of historical change - especially if this change moves in a direction deemed too radical or morally troublesome. But in invoking the concept of crisis in order to account for the rise or increasing popularity of fascism and radicalism in general, are we not re-introducing exceptionalism to the heart of our explanation? Michel Dobry has cautioned against this kind of methodological exceptionalism - using a concept of crisis as a means of indicating radical discontinuity or rupture with an alleged normality. Instead, he has argued, crisis should be approached from within a hypothesis of essential continuity (Dobry 2015).

What could Dobry's hypothesis of continuity mean for the relation between crisis and radicalism or indeed extremism? Is it possible to view the mainstream-extremism nexus in terms of a volatile continuum, as a space of intersections and overlaps and vast liminal spaces? The experience of interwar fascism is instructive in this respect. In different ways, both fascist and (mainstream) conservative/liberal political constituencies in the 1920s and 1930s had effectively blurred the boundaries that allegedly separated radicalism from a wishful liberal mainstream, the 'old' from the 'new' right, conservatism and even liberalism from authoritarianism. This does not imply that differences did not exist; but it does reveal that a significant number of people at the time did not consider them as important or mutually exclusive as they may be assumed today.

George L Mosse highlighted how successfully interwar fascism reconciled its two seemingly antithetical rhythms, the 'amoeba-like absorption of ideas from the mainstream of

popular thought and culture, countered by the urge towards activism and its taming'. He also noted that 'fascism positioned itself much more in the mainstream than socialism ... [for] it accepted the common man's preferences and went on to direct them to its own ends' (Mosse 1987: 137–8). On their part, interwar political elites were less entrenched in ideological 'red lines' against some extremist alternatives than often assumed. Their commitment to liberalism and democracy was brittle to begin with, if not grudging and tactical in many cases. Faced with formidable challenges to their power from both the revolutionary left and the far right, they often prioritised order and maintenance of their status over defence of the liberal-parliamentary order. As fascism gained in strength and political legitimacy, they learnt from its radical praxis, adapting selectively some of its institutional experiments, political strategies, and stylistic elements. It was this ongoing convergence between extremism and the mainstream that, by the 1930s, had rendered a number of earlier taboos (dictatorship and dismantling of the liberal-parliamentary system, persecution of political opponents, discrimination against minorities, anti-Semitism, totalitarian models of social control, militarism, etc.) far more acceptable to mainstream political elites as well as large sections of the public (Kallis 2014: 272–282).

If crisis did play a role in the 1930s, it was on the level of political framing and psychological perception rather than any objective historical reality and direct causality. On the one hand, fascists articulated a convincing vision of terminal decadence of the old order that they opposed in the most uncompromising, action-oriented way. On the other hand, Roger Griffin has talked in fascinating detail about a collective 'sense-making crisis' (Griffin 1991) that afflicted large sections of the European population in the wake of the First World War. Scholars working on interwar fascism have come to the conclusion that the political 'success' of interwar fascism in particular countries was not the direct result of crisis - whether of objective structural crisis or the subject sense-making crisis (Passmore 2006). It rather resulted from a powerful alignment of suppressed radical social demand for an alternative future with a novel mass-mobilizing kind of radical supply of ideas, actions, and rituals offered by the various fascist movements and regimes amidst a deepening perception of crisis. The intensifying perception of crisis acted as a force of cognitive liberation of previously suppressed or de-legitimised radical views under the surface of mainstream moderation.

The normality of crisis

The recent narrative of the far right's 'successes' in Europe has been widely based on a sense of an exceptional crisis conjuncture. The existential crisis that was fed by international terrorism in the post-9/11 world; the identity crises laid bare through critiques of multiculturalism and anxieties about migration; and more recently the financial crisis with its multiple disruptive economic and social manifestations, have morphed in popular imagination and public discourse into a powerful crisis mindset - an interpreted social reality where seemingly extraordinary challenges have eroded certainties and have unlocked radical possibilities for

remedial action. Interestingly, deliberate references to the 1930s permeate many of the current analyses of the social and political effects of the economic crisis and the alleged successes of the far right.

The temptation to explain away the popularity of the far right as the product of 'crisis' should be resisted. The breakthrough in recent analyses of interwar fascism came from de-exceptionalising the appeal of, and support for, fascism, deconstructing the cordon sanitaire that allegedly separated it from either the 'mainstream' society of its time or indeed Europe's alleged Enlightenment-based long-term historical trajectory. The study of the contemporary far right can benefit greatly from a similar relational approach. This will no doubt involve probing the limits and fragility of the postwar normative watershed that Habermas eulogised. It may even involve a Ballardian inversion, in which the real exception lies in the misguided belief that such a watershed - in the form of a liberal triumph over fascism and extremism - ever existed or could exist in the first place (Wood 2011). Finally, it should involve re-dimensioning and re-purposing the concept of 'crisis' in the analytical toolkit of scholarship on the far right, historical or contemporary - not as a force of fundamental discontinuity, rupture, and anomalous exception but as a subjective mindset conducive to an alternative path of continuity with radicalised mainstream values.

Beyond theoretical observations and long-term prescriptions, however, does the experience of the interwar 'crisis' and the parabola of 'historic fascism' hold any value in facing the challenge from the far right and in addressing the mounting anxieties at the heart of today's mainstream society? While the conditions of the 1930s are not reproducible in today's world (a revival of 'fascism' in its historic gear is highly unlikely, and even more unlikely to succeed; a catastrophic collapse of democracy is almost inconceivable), it should always be remembered that it was precisely the failure of mainstream political and social actors to engage, address, and respond to the rise of right-wing extremism in interwar Europe that put in place the necessary conditions for the victory of fascism. If indeed there is a cautionary tale from the 1930s, it is that right-wing extremism with its twins of hypernationalism and demonisation of others is at its most potent when it benefits from a *close alignment between radical supply and radicalised popular demand*. Policy measures and initiatives, over the short, medium, and long term, should aim at breaking the vicious reinforcing circle between (existing and latent) public anxieties and populist fear-mongering that constantly strengthens and radicalises them.

An important part of this strategy must be based on the acknowledgement that a large part of the problem lies not in the fringes of the political system and society but much closer to the heart of a new *mainstream* consensus. This is why purely preventative or aggressively confrontational measures can yield only limited benefits in the longer term. Above all, the so-called 'mainstream' parties (or indeed their institutional heirs) must strive to rebuild their damaged relationship with an increasingly disaffected public. Once this is addressed effectively, all other measures aimed at preventing the success of the far right and at 'de-radicalising'

social attitudes in relation to key topical issues such as immigration, national identity, and so on will be far more effective in their intended outcomes. In the meantime, the least mainstream political actors can do is to refrain from irresponsibly outbidding the far right in the pursuit of short-term electoral gain or desperate damage-limitation.

References

- Catalano, F. (1964). *Potere economico e Fascismo: la crisi del dopoguerra* [Economic power and Fascism: the postwar crisis]. Milan: Lerici.
- Clark, M.W. (2006). *Beyond catastrophe: German intellectuals and cultural renewal after World War II, 1945-55*. Oxford: Lexington Books, 2-3.
- Dobry, M. (2015). 'Critical processes and political fluidity'. In A. Horvath, B. Thomassen, & H. Wydra (eds.), *Breaking boundaries: Varieties of liminality*. New York & Oxford: Berghahn.
- Donselaar, J. V. (2003). 'Patterns of response to the extreme right in Western Europe'. In P. Merkl & L. Weinberg (eds.), *Right wing extremism in the twenty-first century*. London: Frank Cass, 272-292.
- Elias, N. (1994). *The civilizing process*. Oxford: Blackwell, 51.
- Evans, B., and Reid, J. (2013). *Deleuze & Fascism: security, war & aesthetics*. London & New York: Routledge, 3.
- Fulbrook, M. (2015). *A history of Germany, 1918-2008: The divided nation*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 40-52.
- Griffin, R. (1991). *The nature of Fascism*. London & New York: Routledge, 193.
- Guattari, F. (2008). *Chaosophy*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 166-167.
- Habermas, J. (2001). *The postnational constellation*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.
- Hall, J.A. (1994). *The state: critical concepts*. Vol 2. London & New York: Routledge, 117-119.
- Kallis, A., and Pinto, A.C. (2014). 'Rethinking Fascism and dictatorship'. In A. C. Pinto & A. Kallis (2014). *Conclusions. Rethinking Fascism and dictatorship*. London: Palgrave MacMillan, 1-10.
- Koselleck, R. (2006). 'Crisis'. *Journal of the history of ideas*, 67(6): 397.
- Mosse, G. L. (1987). *Masses and man. Nationalist and Fascist perceptions of reality*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 183.
- Mudde, C. (2010). 'The populist radical Right: A pathological normalcy'. *Eurozine*, 31(8). Available at: <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2010-08-31-mudde-en.html>
- Overy, R. J. (2014). *The interwar crisis* (2nd ed.). Abingdon & New York: Routledge, 95-100.
- Pinto, A. C., and Kallis, A. (2014). *Conclusions. Rethinking Fascism and dictatorship*. London: Palgrave MacMillan, 272-282.
- Passmore, K. (2006). 'Generic Fascism and the historians'. In R. Griffin, W. Loh, & A. Umland (eds.), *Fascism past and present, west and east: an international debate on concepts and cases in the comparative study of the extreme right*. Stuttgart: Ibidem, 171-174.
- Sabbatici, G. (1976). *La crisi italiana del primo dopoguerra: la storia e la critica* [The Italian crisis of the postwar period: history and criticism]. Bari & Rome: Laterza.
- Vincent, A. (2010). *Modern political ideologies* (3rd ed.). Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 140-141.
- Wood, J. C. (2011). 'Going mad is their only way of staying sane: Norbert Elias and the civilized violence of J.G. Ballard'. In J. Baxter & R. Wymer (eds.), *J. G. Ballard: Visions and revisions*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 198-214.

CHAPTER 3:

IDEOLOGICAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL ASPECTS OF THE GREEK CYPRIOT FAR RIGHT

Giorgos Charalambous

In Cyprus, the far right as an ideological space has traditionally been diverse and strong. It was grouped under a lasting political leadership after the de facto division of the island in 1974. Between then and 2008, only one party appeared that was to the right of DISY (Democratic Rally) on non-economic issues - New Horizons in 1996, which entered parliament in 2006 and eventually formed EVROKO (Evropaiko Komma; European Party) in the same year. The next formation in the far right space was ELAM (National Popular Front or Ethniko Laïko Metopo), established initially as a branch of the Greek far right Golden Dawn and then as a formally autonomous party. It is this third formation that is the topic of this essay, not because it exhausts the far right space - far from it, it is argued - but because it most closely resembles other European far right parties, being more like them than either (the now disintegrating) EVROKO or the initial far right regrouping of New Horizons. This is so in part because the party was started and built by Golden Dawn activists and leaders. But in many respects, ELAM is a different creature from the Golden Dawn - political conflict on the island imposes very different opportunities and constraints than in Greece, although both countries are currently experiencing an economic crisis.

Opportunities and constraints

The impact of ELAM in Cyprus might be negligible (see Table 1) compared to similar parties in Europe (as the cases of the National Front in France, Jobbik in Hungary, or Greece's Golden Dawn illustrate), but a number of caveats should accompany this observation. First, in real numbers, ELAM's voters have increased from 622 in the European elections of 2009 to 6,957; this is more or less a ten-fold increase, which also mirrors percentages. As it attained nearly 3 per cent of the vote in the European elections of 2014, ELAM automatically became the main new party with the potential to obtain a seat in the national parliament.

Second, in the Republic of Cyprus, individuals and groups from the far right are scattered across parties, both as politicians and 'ideal-type' voters; taken together, however, they make

the presence of far right rhetoric quite strong. Many times politicians invest in an already traditionally xenophobic climate (strengthening it either implicitly or explicitly) not only in order to gain more votes, but also in order to increase their social capital in between elections. On other occasions they are themselves responsible for shaping the rather negative public opinion regarding the immigration issue. For instance, in 2011 there was public outrage regarding the allowance to which immigrants are entitled. However, according to that period's Eurobarometer, this issue was not one of the more important issues of the time, where public opinion was concerned. Today that ELAM is stronger than before, the issue of migration is even less important, according to the relevant polls.¹

Third, ELAM has enjoyed the strong support of a number of state /public institutions, including the Church of Cyprus and well-known groups and associations, such as the EOKA Fighters Association (*Syndesmos Agoniston EOKA*). This constitutes a legalization not only of those issues put forward by the far right, but also of its very existence as a new, fresh and alternative political entity. Further, ELAM's actions and views are regularly covered by the media. This is translated into easier participation in public dialogue, which means that ELAM – since it is now regularly covered by the Cypriot media – has the ability to invest resources previously used for self-promotion into other activities (e.g., of an educational character).

Table 1: ELAM's Election Results

	Percentage	Number of votes
2014 (European)	2.69%	6,957
2013 (Presidential)	0.88%	3,899
2011 (Legislative)	1.08%	4,354
2009 (European)	0.22%	622

Source: Cyprus Ministry of Interior

A fourth danger lies in the already established organizational structure of the party: although the party has the resources to mobilize effectively, it lacks the votes and external support to parlay organizational into electoral growth. Today ELAM does not have regional branches in most areas of Cyprus (as do the five larger parties on the island), but it has managed to have district offices, a fairly detailed structure and the capability for pre-electoral activities in both urban and rural areas. It has a strong publicity office that issues frequent press releases, a website that is comparable to that of larger parties, and enjoys exposure through the Golden Dawn website and other nationalist websites. The office is well organized

¹ See, for example, Standard Eurobarometer 80 – National Analysis: Cyprus [Areas Administered by the Republic of Cyprus], 4.

in Greece, and, because of its close relation with Golden Dawn, can influence fascist-leaning students as well as protest voters before they acquire or change their ideological conscience. It has entered football fans' groups, and is now a regular presence at football matches. It is also present in upper secondary schools (*lykeia*) and has its own branches and candidates in student elections in most universities (although mostly the private ones). During the crisis, the party created a Solidarity Body, which offers charity to 'Greeks only' in a similar way to Golden Dawn in Greece, but on a much more limited scale and with fewer activities.

Even though establishing the exact demographics of ELAM's voters requires further methodological work (due to very small sample sizes in the relevant available surveys), it is noteworthy that the party aims to be versatile – at least where social class is concerned. ELAM's candidates for the 2011 European Parliament elections included businessmen, scientists, labourers and the self-employed. The presence of the first probably helps to explain ELAM's ability to finance itself effectively. However, ELAM's basic mobilization core is to be found within the youth. There are videos (dating from as early as 2010) showing more than 100 students in ELAM-organized demonstrations. Although the party denies that it also has paramilitary structures, it does have the so-called freedom divisions, which in the past were accused of harassment and violence against leftists, migrants, Turkish Cypriots and anti-fascists. Additionally, ELAM has created women's groups, groups for the environment, for solidarity, youth, university and school students. These groups exist as auxiliary to the main party; they receive guidance from the latter on activities organized under the individual groups' aegis (or on activities in which the groups take part).

On the other hand, there is a new obstacle to ELAM's upward trend: the bill revising the electoral law and most importantly the threshold to enter parliament from 1.8 to 3 per cent was eventually passed in 2015 in view of the forthcoming elections. This was of course not solely aimed at potentially blocking ELAM, but rather reconfirmed the weight of the two main parties' interests in light of increasing political disillusionment. Equally hurt by the revised law are the Green party, the European Party, the liberals, potential new formations and, to a lesser extent, EDEK (social democrats). This notwithstanding, prior to passage of the new electoral law, the main new contender for a seat in parliament was ELAM. As the new criteria for political parties to receive state support are now stricter than before, this recent development will constrain organisational growth as well. If we take the declining number of press releases as representative of wider organisational activity and mobilisation, then we would argue that during the crisis the party faced problems, which may also concern funding.

The reappearance of the far right

In order to avoid any historical misunderstandings, it should be noted that the far right has not *appeared*, but rather *reappeared* in Cyprus in the past decade (Katsourides 2013). It was first present in the period from 1930 to 1948, initially under the banner of the *Ethniki Rizospastiki Enosi Kyprou* (National Radical Union of Cyprus; EREK) and subsequently under that of

Organization X (*Organosi Chi*). This second period lasted approximately 16 years, beginning with the murders of leftists and Turkish Cypriots by EOKA members at the end of the 1950s, and ending with the fall of the Sampson coup-imposed government in 1974 and the de facto division of the island (Katsourides 2013). Following an absence of about 20 years, the beginning of the 1990s saw the creation of groups comprising Hitler-friendly intellectuals and other nationalists. In 2004, during the historic momentum created by the referendum on the Annan Plan for the reunification of Cyprus, the Greek Golden Dawn set up a Cyprus office and gathered its supporters in Eleftheria Square, in one of its first organized public meetings. Along with the Cypriot branch of the Golden Dawn, other far right groups also made their appearance then, initially gathering virtually on relevant websites with limited, though still visible, activities. These activities centred primarily on attacks against migrants and spreading written material expressing the groups' maximalist views on the Cyprus problem.

ELAM officially became an autonomous political party in 2008, after its supporters realized that continuing to exist as a branch of the Greek Golden Dawn would deprive Cypriot far right supporters of legitimization – especially since no other political party in Cyprus is organically linked to its Greek counterpart. Since then, ELAM has stood as an independent party in four elections: the 2009 European Parliament elections, the 2011 (Cypriot) parliamentary elections, the 2013 presidential elections, and the 2014 European Parliament elections. Around 2011, on the occasion of the Cypriot parliamentary elections, ELAM's leader and leading members appeared publicly for the first time². Gradually ELAM managed to incorporate, absorb or displace other branches of the far right on the island, thus establishing itself as the basic owner of the Golden Dawn 'franchise' in Cyprus. By way of example, the National Resistance Front (KEA; also mentioned above) now systematically covers ELAM's activities and statements on its website; it was not a candidate in the last European Parliament elections, since its own leader was a candidate with ELAM.

In the 2013 presidential election, ELAM's candidate received only 0.88 per cent — in part, a consequence of the party's lack of strategic planning in that period, when ELAM's mobilization was minimal and superficial. It probably only took part in the elections so that the party would continue reminding voters of its presence in Cypriot politics, until the 'real' battle of the European Parliament elections. A defeat of the party's presidential candidate would not be as serious as the defeat of the party leader (a candidate in the European Parliament elections). Furthermore, 2013 was a historic moment for the Cypriot right (due to the popularity, and eventual victory, of the right-wing candidate), and ELAM was presumably trying to avoid criticizing the Left at the expense of the Right. The Left had already been in power for five years by then, and had been harshly criticized for its shortcomings by the

² Previously articles published by ELAM were only signed, whereas, as of 2011, they have also included their author's rank [e.g., 'division head']. Furthermore, in the past, photographs of ELAM's leader – for instance, in interviews he gave for the media – concealed his face. This has now changed.

media, the (other) political parties and the public. The gravity of the situation became apparent when Ilias Kasidiaris, the Golden Dawn spokesperson, arrived in Cyprus in 2012, probably in an effort to convince ELAM's leadership to run for election.

The fact that ELAM chose only members from within its leading ranks for the 2014 European Parliament elections might point to the fact that it cannot yet attract personalities from the wider far right space who could shape public opinion and thus strengthen the party's electoral campaign. The recent departure of conservative and Cyprus Problem hard-liner, Eleni Theocharous, from the right-wing DISY, for example, was one occasion among many when ELAM failed or decided not to capitalize on established politicians leaving mainstream parties. However, this might also point to the fact that the party focuses its energy on clearly distinguishing itself from the rest of the right-wing parties, as well as on creating a far right political identity. Such an identity would be markedly different from those of other right-wing parties such as DISY and EVROKO, and would include people who have not been 'worn-out' by their overexposure in the media or their participation in local institutions. The latest polls show that ELAM's percentage has risen to about 2 per cent and, in the process of mobilising for the upcoming May 2016 parliamentary elections, the party's website shows increased activity.

The most convincing explanation as to why the Greek Cypriot far right has remained marginal in terms of both electoral success and organizational influence is the cleavage structure of political competition in Cyprus. Non-economic issues, the flagship issues of the far right, have traditionally been limited to the Cyprus Problem and there, nationalism, xenophobia, traditionalism, exclusive views and maximalist positions are also those of the mainstream actors of the right and the centre. By extension, the far right in the Republic of Cyprus has not been able to claim a space on its own because DISY— the party that united the entire Right after the events of 1974 and is now dominated by a liberal leadership but is still also supported by conservatives and ultra conservatives — is able to occupy the far right space as well. Unlike in Greece, violence as well as resistance in its discursive sense is much less institutionalised in Cyprus and this gives one less reason for people to identify with a violent organization and for the organization to promote or claim to represent a violent ethic.

The particularities of Cypriot nationalism

Between 2008 and 2013 ELAM showed signs of ideological maturity, reflected in how the party presented its basic positions. These now cover several themes: the Cyprus Problem, defence, immigration and illegal immigration, the economy (where a specific document has been approved by the party), education, social policy, the European Union, health, and the environment. However, the fact that ELAM now has clearly defined positions on these topics should not trick us into forgetting that it is, still, an extreme nationalist party that incorporates all the structural characteristics of militarism and authoritarianism, that defends (what it calls) 'law and order', as well as objecting to modernity.

ELAM's nationalism combines elements of political nationalism – that is, it is closely linked to claims to national sovereignty – and ethnic nationalism, which has different nuances. At the same time, the nationalism espoused by ELAM (and Golden Dawn) is different from cultural nationalism, since it focuses exclusively on the question of origins. To give an example, it is interesting to note that ELAM consistently avoids mentioning topics such as Cypriot or Greek folklore and tradition. A central characteristic of this type of nationalism is the falsification of historical reality through a reproduction of myths and inaccuracies. The not-so-flattering aspects of some of the so-called heroes of 1821 (i.e., the Greek War of Independence) are being silenced, the bi-communal clashes of 1963–64 are given the name 'Turkish mutiny', the terrorist activities committed by some branches of EOKA are denied, the end of colonialism is attributed to a battleground victory of EOKA against the British, and the coup of 15 July 1974 is called 'a movement' (*kinima*). In addition, some sort of glorification is always present when ELAM discusses the central characters of its narrative, such as Georgios Grivas (ELAM 2014).

This kind of nationalism can only be assessed on the basis of Cypriot history's idiosyncrasies and the discussions surrounding it. In political terms, nationalism in Cyprus can only be fully understood after considering the many different positions expressed on the Cyprus Problem by various political actors. There are several nuances where nationalism is concerned. Sometimes the simple 'national feeling' may be combined with an anti-federation position as well as maximalist views regarding the talks aiming to resolve the Cyprus Problem; however, this does not necessarily include a rejection of the bi-zonal, bi-communal federation. Nonetheless, within certain groups there is a request for the immediate application of the 'national defence mechanism' (*Eniaio Amyntiko Dogma*) between Cyprus and Greece. This request is often accompanied by a concealed desire for *enosis*, which is itself characterized by an extreme type of nationalism that stresses the Greeks' national superiority against the Turks. 'We believe,' ELAM's leader has said, 'that there are some people that create civilizations, unchanged in the passing of time, such as the Greeks, the Chinese and the Indians, and others that degrade them, such as the Turks' (ELAM 2014); the party refers to the topic with pride, almost proclaiming that they would welcome war with the Turks.

Indeed, ELAM has a particularity in relation to most other far right parties, one that is partly shared by the Golden Dawn. The so-called 'national issue' (i.e., the Cyprus Problem) is still unresolved in Cyprus. This is enormously important in terms of political rivalries on the island, not only because there has been no commonly accepted solution to the problem (either since 1963 or, especially, after 1974), but also because of the violent nature of the conflict between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities in the 1960s and 1970s. The unresolved national issue – combined with the island's small size, the existence of Greek Cypriot refugees and the issue of Turkish settlers – is constantly being used to show the increasing dangers of so-called demographic change, national elimination, and ethnic mixing. Looking at this from a comparative perspective, the effort to create a fictional national enemy is no longer found in the majority of the European far right parties in terms of a

specific country; most remain chiefly anti-immigration parties, anti-Muslim, anti-Semitic or more generally xenophobic.

Islamophobia, a position taken by most European far right parties, targets immigrants on the basis of their religion, culture and colour, but it does not define them in terms of national homogeneity. Their perception is that not only is the nation under threat, but also Western civilization itself, Europe and Christian values (Zuquette 2008). Nevertheless, for ELAM, as well as for other far right parties, the issues of nation, nationalism and national identity are closely linked to those of migrants, refugees and political asylum seekers (that is, the three basic groups that ELAM's ideology targets, along with Turks and Turkish Cypriots) (Georgiadou 2004). The anti-immigrant position of the far rightists can be seen as a natural consequence of their extreme nationalism.

Nationalism is supplemented, at the same time, by a tendency towards populism (Mudde 2004: 542-563)³. Whereas the terms 'far right' and 'populist' are different, the second term more or less characterizes all far right parties. According to a minimal definition, populism is based on the differentiation between the popular mass and the corrupt, self-seeking elite. Accordingly, the people—the simple people—are neither real nor entirely inclusive, but a mythical and fabricated sub-section of a country's total population (Mudde 2004: 546). Claiming to represent this sub-section, the party feeds off the notion of a power-grabbing conspiracy between the mainstream parties. At the same time, there is no internal differentiation at the level of, for instance, ideology or class, neither within the people nor within the elite. In the case of ELAM, this schematic and absolute interpretation is expressed through the use of terms such as 'the bailout party' (used for parties that voted in favour of a bailout agreement with the Troika in the House of Representatives). For far right parties, populism also acts as a marketing and self-promotion tool. In terms of rhetoric, this is expressed through an ideological salad, framed within complex terms that are meant to obfuscate the meaning of history. Such terms include 'Turkish kowtowers' (*Tourkoproskynimenoi*), 'English-American communists', 'neo-democratic McCarthyism', etc.

But any discussion on the far right's populism should not overshadow the fact that the far right does not propose any concrete financial system. ELAM supports a mixed economy where the state has a strong regulatory role as well as a generous social state for what it calls 'the Greeks of Cyprus'. However, its pseudo-socialism, as well as that of historical fascism, moves around three basic axes. First, it is historically defined and self-serving. Because of the lower middle-class origins of many far right supporters, capitalism is demonized. Second, it stems from anti-materialism, which is viewed as preventing the process of national renaissance.

³ Populism has been defined and conceptualized differently by different authors – as a thin ideology, discourse and organisational strategy, but minimal definitions tend to emphasize people-centrism and anti-elitism (see Moffit and Torney 2013) and most analyses emphasize that populism is not an exclusive feature of far right parties.

Third, this pseudo-socialism coexists with – or rather incorporates – anti-communism; social class therefore draws attention away from national renaissance and the importance of race (Paxton 2006).

The party's background ideology – one that is not publicly discussed by the party leadership - is a different story, however. While the party's public ideology appears to be more refined, more politically correct and exclusively nationalistic, and does not directly attack the foundation of the social and political system and electoral democracy, at the level of culture, festivals, educational material, symbols and behaviour the party's neo-Nazi leanings are evident and nationalism borders on expansionism.

Just as the Golden Dawn pays tribute to Pattakos and Metaxas, ELAM and the rest of the Cypriot far right pay tribute to Grivas (the leader of the fascist paramilitary group, EOKA B). Just as the Golden Dawn declares the motto 'North Epirus, Hellenic land, we will come back and the earth shall tremble', ELAM, adding a reference to Goebbels, proclaims 'Blood – Race – Blood and Honour – we will come back and the earth shall tremble'. As is the case with many other political parties whose leadership has been normalized – such as the Front National in France or the Freiheitspartei (Liberty Party) in Austria – ELAM is linked to fascist mythology. This is precisely its background ideology (Mudde 2001), which the party may publicly reject, when confronted by militant journalists, both for itself and for Golden Dawn.

Yet, this mythology seems to have two important particularities. First, that it is not widespread to ELAM's allies and potential voters, but rather to a core of activists with more historical ties with Golden Dawn members.. Second, and by extension, that this fascist mythology does not lead to the wide-spread promotion of violence by the leadership or the occurrence of frequent episodes of violence on behalf of the party or its supporters.

Conclusions

ELAM operates in a political arena where ethnic conflict and the economy have been the most salient issues since the consolidation of the party system in the early 1980s. On the economy, the party has adopted a pseudo-left-wing stance whereby it opposes austerity, and dismisses negotiations with the Troika as submission to international and European money brokers. Recent political and social developments— including a shift in the terms of the debate after the 2004 Annan Plan referendum, a significant growth in civil society organisations and (to a lesser extent) movements, the abandonment of maximalist positions by the Anastasiades government, the change to an explicitly pro-solution politician as head of the Turkish Cypriot community – have led to a change in rhetoric regarding the Cyprus Problem. The party's once extreme, outspoken, even explicit statements about the other players involved, beyond the standard blame-shifting on Turkey, have been significantly reduced in public discourse. This has given rise to a more politically correct, sensitive and calmer environment, where ELAM's polemics are less convincing. Its policy positions on the Cyprus problem - e.g. closing of the crossing points on the green line dividing the country, the

interruption of Turkey's accession negotiations with the EU - are not voiced by anyone else, but some mainstreamization has already happened in ELAM. Immigration remains a frequently debated issue but there again, ELAM's rhetoric is similar to statements by a number of mainstream politicians in the main five parties.

As extremism in some of the political rhetoric has receded, populism increased, emphasis is placed on the fight against corruption and left-wing politics have been adopted. But this cannot translate into much electoral progress in view of the two main aspects of the party system that remain intact: 1) the attachment of many nationalists, conservatives and ultra-conservatives to the right-wing of DISY and to a lesser extent the 'centrist' DIKO and splinters from these two main parties; 2) the relatively intact, i.e., unaffected by the crisis, organisational capacities of both DISY and the left-wing AKEL as linkage agents between the state and society (Charalambous and Christophorou 2016).

Still, the only real hope for ELAM's future is partition of the island, or some sort of de facto continuation of the current status quo in terms of the Cyprus Problem. As compromise remains a key component of the ongoing negotiations, if the Cyprus Problem is resolved through a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation as is hoped (and within the year), ELAM will be a party distinguished by nationalism in a country where nationalism will have been defeated, at least temporarily and in political terms.

References

- Charalambous, G. and Christophorou, C. (eds) (2016) *Party-society Relations in the Republic of Cyprus: Political and Societal Strategies*. London and New York: Routledge.
- ELAM (2014). 'Omilia gia ton stratigo Georgio Griva Digeni sta grafeia tis Kentrikis Dioikisis' [A talk on general Georgios Grivas Digenis at the offices of the central administration] Available at: <http://www.elamcy.com/latest-articles/item/4578-omilia-gia-ton-stratigo-georgio-griva-digeni-sta-grafeia-tis-kentrikis-dioikisis.html>
- Georgiadou, V. (2004). 'Eisagogi stin Elliniki ekdosi' [Introduction to the Greek edition]. In P. Hainsworth (ed.), *I Akrodexia: ideologia – politiki – kommata* [The far right: ideology – politics – political parties]. Athens: Papazisis, 1-22.
- Katsourides, Y. (2013). 'Determinants of extreme right reappearance in Cyprus: The National Popular Front (ELAM), Golden Dawn's sister party'. *South European society and politics*, 18(4): 567–589.
- Moffitt, B. and Tormey, S. (2013). 'Rethinking Populism: Politics, Mediatization and Political Style'. *Political Studies*. vol. 62, no. 2, pp. 381-397.
- Mudde, C. (2001). *The Ideology of the extreme right*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Mudde, C. (2004). 'The populist zeitgeist'. *Government and opposition*, 39(4): 542–563.
- Paxton, R.O. (2006). *I Anatomia tou Fasismou* [Anatomy of Fascism]. Athens: Kedros.
- TVXS (2014). 'ELAM: I Chrysi Avgi tis Kyprou' [ELAM: Cyprus's Golden Dawn]. Available at: <http://tvxs.gr/news/ellada/elam-i-xrysi-aygi-tis-kyproy>.
- Zuquette, J.P. (2008). 'The European extreme-right and Islam: new directions?' *Journal of political ideologies*, 13(3): 321–344.

CHAPTER 4:

THE RISE OF THE GOLDEN DAWN IN GREECE

Daphne Halikiopoulou and Sofia Vasilopoulou

Since the collapse of the Greek junta regime (1967-1974), the far right in Greece has, for the most part, been confined to the fringes of the party system. The first far right party to gain parliamentary representation since 1984 is the Popular Orthodox Rally (Λαϊκός Ορθόδοξος Συναγερμός, LAOS), which entered the European Parliament in 2004 and subsequently the national parliament in 2007 and 2009. LAOS, however, is a radical variant of the far right: while nationalism defines the ideology of radical right parties, these parties tend to distance themselves from fascism, racism and violence, have modernized their discourse and practices (Halikiopoulou et al. 2013) and function within the framework of representative democracy. No party that can be described as an extreme variant of the far right - i.e., parties that have not distanced themselves from fascism, tend to employ violence, are openly racist and reject democracy altogether (Mudde 2010) - was able to garner any substantial support in Greece until the breakthrough of the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn in May 2012 when the party received 6.97 per cent of the vote, gaining 21 seats in a parliament of 300. The Golden Dawn maintained its support in subsequent national and European elections despite the indictment of its leading members following the murder of left-wing activist Pavlos Fyssas in 2013. In September 2015, while the Golden Dawn's leader and key figures were on trial for maintaining a criminal organization, and while the party did almost no campaigning, it still received 6.99 per cent of the vote, which translated into 18 seats in the Greek parliament (see table 1).

Table 1. Golden Dawn Electoral Results

Year	Election	Percentage	Votes	Seats
1994	EP	0.11	7,242	0
1996	National	0.07	4,487	0
2009	EP	0.46	23,609	0
2009	National	0.29	19,624	0
2012 May	National	6.97	440,966	21
2012 June	National	6.92	426,025	18
2014	EP	9.39	536,910	3
2015 January	National	6.28	388,387	17
2015 September	National	6.99	379,581	18

Why has Greek society - a society that has experienced Nazi atrocities and a military junta - granted parliamentary representation to such a group? In our book (Vasilopoulou and Halikiopoulou 2015) we have argued that the Golden Dawn has been successful *because of* and not *despite* its anti-systemic rhetoric. The party has increased its appeal by offering plausible solutions to the three sets of crises - economic, political and ideological - that have culminated in an overall crisis of democracy in Greece. Much of the party's success can be attributed to its strategic choice to tap into the widespread disillusionment of the Greek people by offering them a 'nationalist solution': a rhetoric that emphasizes the twin fascist myths of social decadence and national rebirth as a way out of the Greek crisis.

The main premise of this argument, which we pursue in this short essay, is that the Golden Dawn is a neo-Nazi party and thus its rise should be understood within the framework of theories of fascism/ Nazism (Mann 2004; Griffin 1991) rather than the broader theories that seek to understand the rise of radical right variants in post-war Europe.

Fascism

While there is tendency to differentiate between Fascism and Nazism, sociologist Michael Mann (2004) argues that both movements shared similar core values, had similar social bases and developed similar movements. The main difference between the two can be found in the Nazi emphasis on the 'volk', i.e. the people, versus the fascist focus on the state. But these were variations on common themes. In other words, Nazis were fascists, but simply put, Nazism placed a greater emphasis on nationalism. The first point to make therefore is that Nazism, and by extension neo-Nazism, are variations of fascism. They belong to the same category, they are not case-specific, and as such may arise outside case-specific contexts.

Second, it is important to identify what fascism and its variants stand for. Fascism is often defined in terms of its negations: it stands against capitalism, Marxism, liberalism, and bourgeois democracy (Breuilly 1993; Linz 1976). It is also defined in terms of fulfilling certain 'minimums' (Rydgren 2007; Nolte 1965): all variants of fascism are pan-nationalist, authoritarian, statist, and militarist movements, seeking to transcend social cleavages and cleanse the nation from internal (i.e., political dissidents) and external (i.e., those not belonging to the 'organic' nation) enemies (Mann 2004). Their end goal is totalitarianism. From this analysis we may identify two overall themes that are recurrent in all fascist movements: the myth of societal degeneration; and the proposed fascist solution which encompasses the need for national rebirth through a collective movement from below, usually embodied by a fascist party (Griffin 1991). The Nazi variant includes a fixation on the People, i.e., the 'Nation', which is represented by the Nazi movement, is personified by the Nazi leader, and embodies the state.

The Golden Dawn's ideology and organization

The Golden Dawn belongs to the fascist family and fulfils all the above criteria, including the Nazi emphasis on the 'Nation'. So, while the party itself may reject the fascist label, it nonetheless espouses all core fascist, and more specifically Nazi, principles. The Golden Dawn is an ultra-nationalist group that emphasizes the superiority of Greek lineage, Greece's unique language and ancient heritage and the glorification of struggle against the 'other', which is portrayed as aggressive and expansionist but culturally inferior. The Greek nation is under threat and constantly undergoing an ideological battle to be salvaged from destruction. But what makes the Golden Dawn a fascist formation, rather than a patriotic or nationalist group, is not simply its ultra-nationalism, which is a characteristic of all far right-wing parties in general, but more specifically the theme of palingenesis - the key theme of national rebirth which forms the Golden Dawn's 'nationalist solution' to social decadence. The Golden Dawn, like other fascist movements before it, sees itself as having the unique mission to lead the nation to a phoenix-like national rebirth, rising from the ashes of the old degenerate social order. Its obsession with the Nation and its people, personified by the party leader, underlines the Golden Dawn's Nazi character.

The party rejects liberalism and socialism and endorses what it terms the 'third biggest ideology in history', i.e., nationalism, combined with support for an all-powerful state premised on 'popular sovereignty'. In its manifesto the party states that being a member of the Golden Dawn entails the acceptance of the following principles: the establishment of the state in accordance with nationalism; the moral obligations that derive from this ideology including the rejection of any authority that perpetuates societal decline; the acceptance of nationalism as the only authentic revolution; the establishment of the popular state in which there are no inequalities on the basis of wealth; racial supremacy and more specifically the belief in the continuation of the 'Greek race' from antiquity to the modern day; the idea that the state must correspond and be subservient to the nation/race; and the nationalization of all institutions (Vasilopoulou and Halikiopoulou 2015).

This is openly expressed in the numerous online materials posted on the party's elaborate website (<http://www.xryshaygh.com>). The starting point for the Golden Dawn is social decay. Hellenism is on a downward slope. The country is in 'ruins' because of the incompetence of Greek politicians who 'destroyed the nation' (spelt 'Nation' with a capital N in all Golden Dawn texts). The decadence of Greek society is all encompassing: it is political, cultural, moral and includes a decline of power, i.e., Greece's underdog status compared to its Golden Past. The Golden Dawn sees itself at the helm of a movement whose vocation is to purify the Greek nation of the social decadence associated with corruption, deception, partisan interests and kleptocracy. It is the party's calling to lead the Greek people in a difficult struggle towards 'Virtue and self-improvement'. This can only be achieved through a 'National government with a coherent plan and socio-political vision aligned with the principles of Nationalism and popular socialism' (Golden Dawn 06/03/2013).

The Golden Dawn sees itself not in elitist terms, but rather as a movement from below. The party envisages itself as the embodiment of the collective will of the Greek people and seeks ultimate state power, which it understands as the epitome of the nation and its will. 'The Nationalist Socialist leader does not stand above or beside the people, he is not part of the people, he is the People' (*Efimerida ton Sydakton* 2013). He incarnates the secret 'calling of the blood' and his ultimate goal is full control of state power in the name of the nation.

For the Golden Dawn, representative democracy is not the 'true democracy' of the people, it is 'the child of capitalism', an instrument through which capitalism dominates the popular masses. For this reason the party condemns liberal democracy and its institutions and in turn admires fascist and totalitarian regimes. Its members glorify fascist personalities, portraying them as heroes for purifying their nations and epitomizing the will of people in a truly democratic system. Party materials make ample references to fascists such as Greece's Ioannis Metaxas, and Spain's Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera and Francisco Franco.

The ideal regime for Greece, according to the Golden Dawn, is the August 4th Regime, led by Ioannis Metaxas between 1936-1941. During the August 4th regime, 'Greece became an anti-communist, anti-parliamentarian and totalitarian state with an agricultural and working class base, and hence an anti-plutocratic state' (Golden Dawn 01/05/2013).

The Golden Dawn seeks 'catharsis'. The party's key goal is to eliminate all political divisions and cleanse the nation of outsiders. Communists are identified as those internationalists that seek the annihilation of the Greek nation. Also contributing to this ethnocide are Greece's external enemies, which include immigrants, but also 'foreign loan sharks, contractors, pimps and media owners' (Golden Dawn 07/01/2014).

The Golden Dawn seeks to achieve cleansing through violence. Militarism, hence, is the key to both the Golden Dawn's ideology and its organizational structures. The army is the ultimate value, they claim. A value that encloses within it 'blood, struggle and sacrifice'. The Golden Dawn admires the army, not only because of its institutional significance as protector of national security, but also symbolically as the embodiment of the ultimate value of collective sacrifice for the nation. In its justification for the supremacy of the army, the party

offers an overview of the role of the Greek army from antiquity until the present day in what it perceives to be a constant and enduring Greek nation. Admiring the army as the 'natural aristocracy of the people' requires army-like demeanour: discipline, ultimate respect for the leader, uniformed marching and saluting.

Party members see themselves as 'street soldiers' fighting for the nationalist cause. This places violence at the heart of Golden Dawn's activities and illustrates their distinctive view of democracy as a bourgeois construct only to be used as a means for achieving their ultimate goal: its abolition, as its leader Michaloliakos claims. It also explains the link between Golden Dawn members and army officials, as well as the organization of 'paramilitary orders' or 'battalions' (τάγματα εφόδου).

Policy Implications

This has significant policy implications. The ability of the Golden Dawn to operate within the confines of parliamentary politics has significantly impacted Greek society, both directly and indirectly. On a theoretical level this raises the question of the limits of toleration and the extent to which intolerant groups should be tolerated in a liberal society. Beyond shifting the policy agenda and legitimizing exclusionary and conservative policies, the Golden Dawn has also revealed a deeply ingrained intolerance and propensity towards violence especially in a society ridden by crisis.

One potential remedy has included the Constitutional outlawing of the party especially after the arrest of its MPs. However, the danger of such a solution may be that it is at best temporary and at worse could have the reverse effect of increasing the party's support. If we are right about the electoral support of party *because of* and not *despite* its anti-systemic character, then the maintenance and confirmation of this anti-systemic status is likely to increase the party's appeal. Finally, there is also the much-discussed effect of economic crisis: for those who argue that the rise of the Golden Dawn is the direct outcome of Greece's economic predicament, a return to economic stability will weaken the party. But this is again a problematic claim. According to the findings of our research (Vasilopoulou and Halikiopoulou 2015), the rise of the Golden Dawn is the product of an overall crisis of democracy not just the result of an economic crisis.

The Golden Dawn is a specific symptom of a broader institutional pathology. The broad answer to the Golden Dawn question is the need to reintegrate key social groups back into the political mainstream and empower the middle class. The middle class is key to both economic prosperity and democratic stability (Lipset 1960). Weak democratic institutions and widespread corruption have resulted in the weakening of the middle ground and this is what allows extremist groups to co-opt middle-class voters. In parallel and equally important is the strengthening of civil society institutions, which foster tolerance. Greek civil society is weak at all levels: weak structure, limited impact and limited membership (Mouzelis and Pagoulatos 2005). There is a wider sentiment of public distrust towards this type of organisation in Greece because of the long tradition of corruption and clientelistic relations that

prevail. Lastly, in the longer term the broader phenomenon of right-wing extremism is also a question of education: because education is a key means of socialisation that institutionalises political culture. The type of socialisation that occurs from an early age at the school level is the one that becomes most embedded. And, because people of a younger age are more easily moulded into violence and extremism, they tend to occupy a large portion of far right party membership. As long as the Greek education system promotes exclusion (Fragoudaki and Dragona 1997) and vilifies the other through official textbooks, it will continue to offer opportunities for right-wing extremism.

References

- Breuilly, J. (1993). *Nationalism and the state*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Efimerida ton Syntakton* (2013). 'Το κρυφό καταστατικό της ναζιστικής οργάνωσης Χ.Α.' (The secret constitution of the Nazi Golden Dawn), available at: <http://archive.efsyn.gr/?p=123425>.
- Fragoudaki, A. and Dragona, T. (eds) (1997). *Τι Είναι η Πατρίδα μας; Εθνοκεντρισμός στην Εκπαίδευση* (*What is our homeland? Ethnocentrism in education*). Athens: Alexandria.
- Golden Dawn (06/03/2013). 'Συνεργασία: Πώς αντιμετώπιζε το κράτος τους οφειλέτες του Δημοσίου πριν έναν αιώνα και τώρα' (Cooperation: How the state dealt with public sector debtors today and a century ago), available at: <http://www.xryshaygh.com/enimerosi/view/ofeiletes-dhmosiou>.
- Golden Dawn (01/05/2013). 'Ο Εθνικός Κυβερνήτης Ιωάννης Μεταξάς και η Εργατική Πρωτομαγιά' (National leader Ioannis Metaxas and Labour Day), available at: <http://www.xryshaygh.com/enimerosi/view/o-iwannhs-metajas-kai-h-ergatikh-prwtomagia>.
- Golden Dawn (07/01/2014). 'Εφημερίδα "Ακρόπολις": Ο απερχόμενος δήμαρχος απαγόρευσε στους βουλευτές της Χρυσής Αυγής να μπουν στο λιμάνι' (Newspaper Acropolis: the former mayor prohibited Golden Dawn MPs to enter the port), available at: <http://www.xryshaygh.com/enimerosi/view/efhmerida-akropolis-o-aperchomenos-dhmarchos-apagoreuse-stous-bouleutes-ths>.
- Griffin, R. (1991). *The Nature of Fascism*. London: Routledge.
- Halikiopoulou, D., Mock, S., and Vasilopoulou, S. (2013). 'The civic zeitgeist: nationalism and liberal values in the European radical right'. *Nations and nationalism*, 19 (1): 107-127.
- Linz, J. (1976). 'Some notes toward a comparative study of fascism in sociological historical perspective'. In W. Laqueur (ed.), *Fascism: A reader's guide*. Berkeley: University of California press, 15-16.
- Lipset, S. M. (1960). *Political Man: The social bases of politics*. New York: Anchor Books.
- Mann, M. (2004). *Fascists*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mouzelis, N. and Pagoulatos, G. (2005). 'Civil society and citizenship in post-war Greece'. In F. Birtek and T. Dragonas. (eds), *Citizenship and the Nation-State in Greece and Turkey*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Mudde, C. (2010). 'The populist radical right: A pathological normalcy'. *West European Politics*, 33(6): 1167-1186.
- Nolte, E. (1965). *Three Faces of Fascism*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson.
- Rydgren, J. (2007) 'The sociology of the radical right'. *The annual review of sociology*, 33(1): 241-262.
- Vasilopoulou, S. and Halikiopoulou, D. (2015). *The Golden Dawn's 'nationalist solution': Explaining the rise of the far right in Greece*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

CHAPTER 5:

ROME IN BLACK(SHIRT): FAR-RIGHT ALLIANCES IN RECENT ITALY¹

A. Mammone

On a sunny Saturday roughly 25,000 far-right activists marched, probably for the first time with such large numbers and media exposure, in Rome. They gathered in the very central and beautiful Piazza del Popolo, with some groups executing Roman salutes and proclaiming slogans for the Duce. No, it was not 1922, the year of the fascist March on Rome. This was a recent demonstration against Italy's government, full of references and, above all, insults to Prime Minister Matteo Renzi, immigration, and the EU. It was led by the right-leaning Lega Nord (Northern League, LN) and its dynamic leader Matteo Salvini. Marine Le Pen, from France's powerful Front National (National Front, FN), sent a video message to fully back the Italian politician. Foreign representatives from the small French Bloc Identitaire, the rising German anti-Islam Pegida, and the Greek Golden Dawn also attended. A slogan from the organizers suggested their hopes for the event: 'We will make History, do not miss it!'

The historical relevance of the Italian far right

Why might one of the many right-wing gatherings happening in Europe be so relevant? First of all, we need to take into consideration the historical relevance and international influence of the Italian far right. Italy was, in fact, the nation experiencing the first right-wing dictatorship, and the place where fascism (as a word and movement) was officially established. It produced a leader such as Benito Mussolini dreaming of a fascist century ahead. The fascist regime also benefited from the intellectual input of important thinkers, along with the activism of a number of fascists believing that their 'Italian' ideology was, in reality, genuinely 'universal' (Cuzzi 2005). Mussolini, and later the radical experience of the fascist Italian Social Republic (also named the Salò Republic), are reference points for many European far-right activists.

¹ This chapter represents an extended and revised version of an article published in Policy Network in 2015. Some of these reflections are also present in Mammone 2015.

However, Italy is not central to the history of right-leaning Europe merely in and for the interwar years. Italian fascism, exactly like it happened in many other European nations with their more extreme local right, did not disappear after 1945. Twenty years of fascist rule and socialisation naturally influenced the political ideals of some Italians. This also meant that, after some clandestine and subversive activity and a policy of infiltrating existing movements, fascist believers managed to see the establishment, in Rome, of the Movimento Sociale Italiano (Italian Social Movement, MSI) in 1946. Politically, it may be seen as the vanguard of right-wing extremism (at least in its electoral version) in western European societies for roughly forty years. It had a quite strong presence in the Italian national parliament and in some local areas. The MSI was a magnet for similar foreign groups, and it cultivated links with many of these movements (funding a number of them), along with maintaining ties with authoritarian regimes across Europe (Albanese and Hierro forthcoming). Despite this, only a few scholars were interested in the history of the MSI itself. Study into this political phenomenon started quite late, and was not undertaken until the party had transformed itself and entered into a governmental coalition. The same can be said for historical works in the English language on the postwar far right (where there is also a lack of historians working on the subject; for a partial exception, see Eatwell 2003). Continuing interest in the fascist regime had probably diverted most scholarly attention towards the interwar phase of Mussolini's movement and regime. This is surprising, because Italian neofascism (taken as a whole and not confining this phenomenon to the MSI) often had a kind of 'international aspiration', which again, was overlooked by scholars for quite a few years. This internationalism was, as suggested above, linked with the Italian neofascists' actual impact and influence on foreign like-minded movements, and for its attempts to build or participate in the creation of European and pan-national associations (such as the European Social Movement in the 1950s and the Euroright in the 1970s). Moreover, some have pointed out how Italian right-wing extremism often looked to foreign theorists for ideas, which they then incorporated (Germinario 2005).

To summarise, this party managed to maintain a stable presence in Italian politics and develop an international role.

The recent decades

In July 1991 another political phase began for the MSI with the (re-)appointment of Gianfranco Fini as party leader (who, by that time, had famously claimed, 'we are the fascism of the year 2000'), together with the symbolically very important election to parliament of the granddaughter of Benito Mussolini, Alessandra Mussolini, and, nostalgically, with the MSI commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the March on Rome. Yet, the time was approaching for a huge development in the politics of the Italian peninsula. Silvio Berlusconi invited the MSI to join his newly created rightist coalition in the 1994 electoral campaign, and then involved MSI members in his government at a national and local level. At the 1995 Fiuggi Congress, the MSI controversially moved towards the centre of the political spectrum, and subsequently transformed into the Alleanza Nazionale (National Alliance, AN) (see Tarchi

2003). Some conservative Christian Democrats also joined the AN, while other MSI activists founded a few genuinely neofascist groups (for example, *Fiamma Tricolore* and *Fronte Nazionale*; see Rao 2007).

In some ways, and this is probably the prevailing attitude in Italy, one might believe that with the establishment of the AN, Italian neofascism — and consequently a strong far right — had no place, and no future, in Italian society. In reality, I would suggest that a 'place' for this right-leaning extremism exists. The borders between the far right and the mainstream right became more fluid, with many former MSI activists joining the moderate/liberal right when the AN merged with Berlusconi's party, creating the *Popolo della Libertà* (People of Freedom, PDL). One of the (other) early leaders of this mainstream, and 'apparently' moderate centre-right movement that was associated with European People's Party, was Alessandra Mussolini, at that time leader of the small far-right anti-immigration group *Azione Sociale* (Social Action) (Mammone and Peace 2012). In fact, it is quite possible that Italy (and much of Europe as well) simply experienced a degree of legitimisation of the far right; certainly there was a wide acceptance of some of its main social, political and cultural themes and propaganda (Mammone 2009).

This historical background should clearly indicate that developments on the far-right side of the political system might have some wider relevance. In other words, it is exactly in this environment, and framework, that we may better understand the LN's February 2015 event. This latter is, in some ways, a symbolic reminder of the city in the interwar years, and of the earlier fascist march. This modern march is actually revealing of the politics in Italy and the will to gain power by showing an ability to mobilise many people in public spaces.

This right-wing presence in Italian society is not really surprising. As mentioned earlier, there was already a partial legitimization of fascist culture, especially, and naturally given the inclusion of MSI members in, Silvio Berlusconi's governments (Mammone 2006). His coalitions included neofascists (with no rejection of most of their traditions), and the anti-South and anti-Rome Northern League. This was, in the tycoon's words, an alliance of the 'moderates', and the public, and the press agreed with this bizarre perception.

However, Berlusconi's appeal is fading, and Italians have come to understand that not even a 'miracle-worker' like him had sufficient magical powers when economic troubles hit Italy. It is evident that traditional politics was unable to slow down unemployment, produce innovations, encourage growth, and reduce public debt. The rallies of Berlusconi's allies and sympathisers in Rome against his conviction of tax fraud, and the 'occupation' of Milan Court by senior politicians decrying the infamous prostitution-related Rubygate trial, would have little success today.

This is leading to a fragmentation of the centre-right, as the need for a new leader is apparent. At the same time far-right policies are gaining popularity across Europe. If Marine Le Pen is the rising star among disillusioned French voters, parties that are anti-immigrant and anti-Islam are enjoying a favourable environment in northern Europe; and while ultra-nationalistic right-wing cultures lead some governments in the east, in Italy it is the Northern

League that is, according to surveys, in the lead, likely to beat Berlusconi's own Forza Italia party in an eventual election.

The gathering in Rome

Nationally, the demonstration in Rome therefore takes on great symbolic significance. A party characterised by the belief in the superiority of northern Italy is trying to spread its influence into the southern part of the country with the establishment of small, Salvini-inspired carbon-copy leagues criticizing the authority of the central state, immigration, Islam, the EU, banks, and, of course the Euro currency. This is certainly a big move for a movement originally considered merely regionalist; but over the years it has been moving rightwards, embracing xenophobic propaganda and FN-type policies (Avanza 2010; Cento Bull 2015; Ignazi 2005). It is also worth mentioning that Rome is a city lately and often coming to the attention of and scrutinised by international media because of the right. A number of its local football supporters have strong links with fascist groups and right-wing political movements, and in 2012 these fans launched anti-Semitic attacks against Tottenham fans. Also, former Mayor Gianni Alemanno, previously with AN and the PDL and a minister of agriculture, had a genuine neofascist background. His supporters celebrated the election in 2008 with fascist salutes and Celtic crosses, and in so doing became famous all over the world. Alemanno might also be, according to some, involved in the ongoing public corruption scandal *Mafia Capitale*, which refers to the links between mafia and politics in the capital city and includes some neofascist hardliners. This scandal involves wide-scale corruption of the local system, including state provisions for immigrants and refugees, whereby public funding was basically going to cooperatives and societies controlled by illegal organizations.

For this essay, what is important about the anti-government gathering organised in Rome, is that LN activists were joined by the hardliner group CasaPound, a movement that is proud of their fascist identity and which is attracting the interest of similar foreign groups. It took its name from Ezra Pound (the American poet who lived in Italy and admired Mussolini's fascism), and was founded with the occupation of a state-owned building in Rome in 2003. This movement is spreading to other parts of Italy as well. They are probably the most innovative 'social' and political group in recent years in right-wing Europe. At times they employ a violent, strong activism, using socialist, anti-capitalist and anti-global themes, a rock band, and establishing a presence in schools and universities. Recently, strong links with the LN have emerged: for example, CasaPound officially backed Mario Borghezio, 'former' neofascist and then Lega Nord European MP (elected in central Italy). This endorsement was the result of the Lega's stance against immigration, its support for economic protectionism, its use of a nationalist discourse, and, above all, its alliance with the French FN.

The respectable face of this variegated coalition demonstrating in Rome was the Fratelli d'Italia (Brothers of Italy), a young party that includes former government ministers and politicians from Berlusconi's party, and aspires to rebuilding a proper right-wing umbrella group. In other words, they aim for a party like the old AN, with the MSI flame in the party

symbol, while following Marine Le Pen's policies and performances (and trying for a more official association with the French party by spreading their ideology in Italy, organising meetings and debates, etc.).

Leading Italy's mainstream opposition

The real paradox is that some of these leading personalities were members of the mainstream right governing the nation, who joined the moderate and leading European People's Party and are not considered far-right politicians, even if they show admiration towards the fascist regime, reject immigration, are willing to protect the national economy, and promote similar policies. This is, nonetheless, in line with the above-mentioned rewriting of history and reality of interwar fascism, and, most intriguingly, suggests a fluidity between some Italian mainstream forces and the far-right environment. It also shows another worrying side of this coalition between the Northern League and those linked to the fascist tradition. Indeed, the League and Berlusconi with Brothers of Italy are running in alliance in some elections. The LN will probably even be the leading force. This is, once more, widely perceived as acceptable, causing almost no concern in the press.

The electoral and political opposition to Renzi seems to be primarily represented by this xenophobic and nationalist network, aligned under the leadership of Salvini and sharing general policies and principles (such as sovereignty, defending the territory, an anti-EU stance, anti-immigration and opposition to Islam), as well as identifying the centre-left as its main opponent in the political sphere. This network recognizes the need to replace Berlusconi. Internationally, the network follows the lead of the FN. Therefore, it opposes Islam, presently backs Russia and rejects the EU and the USA. This should be worrying in a nation where, as this essay suggests, the far right has at times played a relevant role, and actually led the neofascist front in western Europe for a very long period.

These stances are not particularly welcome in Europe, where the role of ethnic minorities and the place of immigrants, and the integration of different cultures, are, especially with the ongoing arrival of refugees, relevant matters. The EU should, then, really start enquiring what type of democracy some Europeans are experiencing, and what should be done to prevent the electoral appeal of these right-leaning forces.

References

- Albanese, M., and Del Hierro, P. (2016). *Transnational Fascism in the Twentieth Century Spain, Italy and the Global Neofascist Network*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, forthcoming.
- Avanza, M. (2010). 'The Northern League and its 'innocuous' xenophobia'. In A. Mammone and G. A. Veltri (eds.), *Italy Today. The Sick Man of Europe*. London and New York: Routledge, 131-142.
- Cento Bull, A. (2015). 'The fluctuating fortunes of the *Lega Nord*'. In A. Mammone, E. G. Parini and G. A. Veltri (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Italy: History, Politics, and Society*. London and New York: Routledge, 204-214.
- Cuzzi, M. (2005). *L'Internazionale delle Camicie nere: i CAUR, Comitati d'azione per l'universalità di Roma [The International of the Blackshirts: The CAUR, action committees for the universality of Rome]*. Milan: Mursia.

- Cuzzi, M. (2007). *Antieuropa. Il fascismo universale di Mussolini* [Antieuropa. Mussolini's universal fascism]. Milan: M and B Publishing.
- Eatwell, R. (2003). *Fascism: A History*. London and New York: Pimlico.
- Germinario, F. (2005). *Da Salò al governo: immaginario e cultura politica della destra italiana* [From Salò to the government: imaginary and political culture of the Italian right]. Turin: Bollati Boringhieri.
- Ignazi, P. (2005). 'The Extreme Right. Legitimation and Evolution of the Italian Right Wing: Social and Ideological Repositioning of Alleanza Nazionale and the Lega Nord'. *South European Society and Politics*, 10(2): 333-349.
- Mammone, A. (2006). 'A Daily Revision of the Past. Fascism, Anti-Fascism, and Memory in Contemporary Italy'. *Modern Italy*, 11(2): 211-226.
- Mammone, A. (2009). 'The Eternal Return? Faux Populism and Contemporarization of Neo-Fascism across Britain, France and Italy'. *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, 17(2): 171-192.
- Mammone, A. (2015). *Transnational Neofascism in France and Italy*. New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming.
- Peace, T., and Mammone, A. (2012). Cross-national ideology in local elections: the case of Azione Sociale and the British National Party. In A. Mammone, E. Godin and B. Jenkins (eds.), *Mapping the Extreme Right in Contemporary Europe: From Local to Transnational*. *Routledge Studies in Extremism and Democracy*, London: Routledge, 288-302.
- Rao, N. (2007). *La fiamma e la Celtica* [The flame and the Celtic]. Milan: Sperling and Kupfer Editori.
- Tarchi, M. (2003). 'The political culture of the Alleanza Nazionale'. *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 8(2): 135-181.

CHAPTER 6:

THE IRRESISTIBLE RISE OF THE FRONT NATIONAL? POPULISM AND THE MAINSTREAMING OF THE EXTREME RIGHT

Aurelien Mondon

Since the late nineteenth century, France's history has been marred by the struggle between the Republic and reactionary movements from the extreme right. From the Dreyfus Affair and the role played by Charles Maurras's Action Française, to the interwar fascist leagues and the failed coup of February 1934; from the Vichy Regime to the post-war nostalgic and anti-decolonisation movements, the French extreme right has so often stood opposed to the Republic, reminiscent of the dichotomy between revolution and counter-revolution so central to French history and historiography. While the Second World War dealt what many believed to be a fatal blow to the extreme right, the Front National has proven its resilience and even evolved to become an unavoidable part of French politics since the 1980s, and an apparent contender for power in the 21st century.

The Front National – from the margins to the second round of the presidential elections (1972-2002)

While Jean-Marie Le Pen was the leader of the Front National from its inception, he was not its creator: Le Pen neither conceived the idea, nor did he have the means to instigate it (Camus 1997; Mondon 2013a). The early impetus came from the neo-fascist Ordre Nouveau, which saw in the Front National the means with which to unify the extreme right and participate in the electoral system. The strategy was twofold: the most radical elements would continue to fight the left on the streets, while a more moderate branch would endeavour to gain some respectability and appeal to new groups through the FN. With an anti-liberal, anti-capitalist and anti-Marxist platform, the movement was to serve as 'a receptacle for all the discontentment' (Lecoeur 2003: 35). Although the leadership was trusted by many Ordre Nouveau members, Le Pen was made head of the party because of his 'moderate image'.

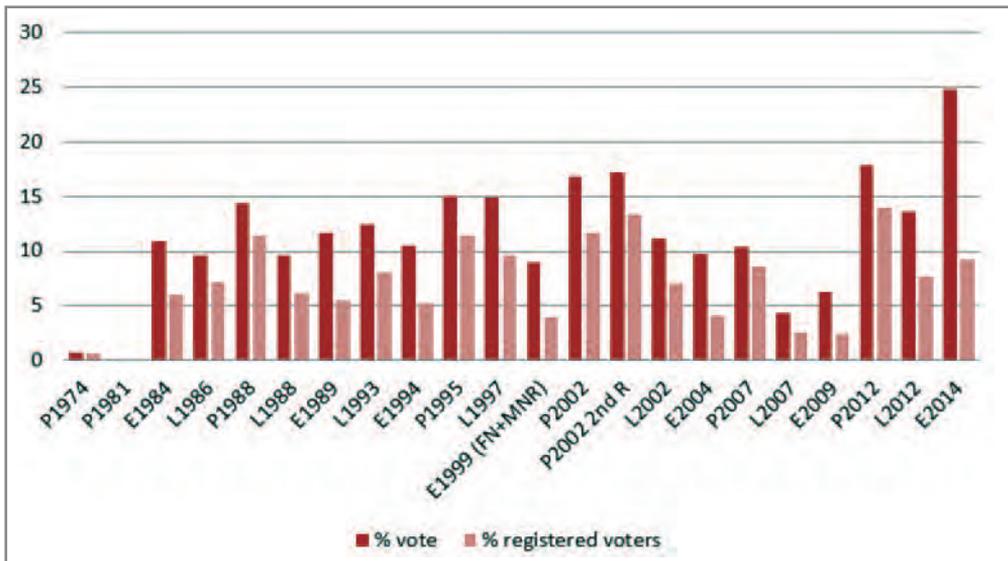
Table 1. The Evolution of the Front National Vote

Table 1: The evolution of the FN vote. P:presidential elections; E:European elections; L:Legislative elections. MNR: Mouvement National Républicain (Mondon 2015)

The first electoral results were poor (see table 1), and in 1974 a first split occurred when Ordre Nouveau left the party: the gamble seemed to have failed and the extreme right condemned to remaining on the margins. Yet the election of the Socialist François Mitterrand in 1981 proved a blessing in disguise and the FN managed its first double-digit results in the 1982 municipal elections. What had until then been an insignificant party in the French political landscape benefited from media hype orchestrated by Mitterrand in the hope that it would split the right-wing vote.

While the FN's support continued to grow, its inability to win elections became evident; instead, its prospects lay in its role as a majority maker or breaker for the moderate right. For Le Pen, this strategy became increasingly appealing after the Socialist government replaced the majority-type election with a proportional one in 1985. By managing the Le Pen phenomenon, Mitterrand hoped that divisions within the right would save the Socialists from an almost certain defeat. In the new system, the Front National's potential 10 to 15 per cent would be turned into a direct loss for the moderate right, as it would be unable to reclaim these voters in a second round. The FN secured 10 per cent of the vote and sent 35 deputies to the National Assembly. While this success was mitigated by the majority obtained by the moderate right and the subsequent return to a majority system, which would prevent the FN from sending its members to the Assembly, the party had become a force to be reckoned with.

Following a strong performance in the 1988 presidential elections, the party entered a new phase of the 'power conquest' led by its new strategist Bruno Mégret and his programme,

'The National Alternative: 300 measures for the rebirth of France' (Front National 1993). Mégret's Nouvelle droite background was clear and the programme was based on a counter-hegemonic strategy to reclaim common sense and a key concept of political life (Bar-On 2013; Taguieff 1994). Marxism and Communism were no longer the enemies, having been replaced by human rights, which sought to destroy nations and differences; national identity, anti-fiscalism, statism, ethno-exclusivism and security were the grand categories of the programme. This first phase of modernisation proved successful and Le Pen obtained 15.3 per cent in the presidential elections. While Mégret's strategy seemed to have paid off, his ambition and will to further modernise the party led to another dramatic split in 1998 with many commentators predicting the end of the FN altogether. Yet such predictions ignored a tense political climate in France at the end of a damaging cohabitation between a Gaullist president involved in corruption scandals and an uncharismatic Socialist intellectual, whose years as prime minister did not elicit enthusiasm.

In light of previous presidential elections, the results of 2002 were not so much of a surprise, and certainly not the 'earthquake' advertised in the media. The Front National and the newly formed splinter group MNR obtained around 5.5 million votes, around 900,000 more than they had when unified in 1995. However, this extreme right 'breakthrough' is nuanced by the absence of Philippe de Villiers, who in 1995 had brought the overall extreme right result to around 6 million votes. Le Pen's progression from 4.5 million votes in 1995 to 4.8 million is thus not spectacular given the circumstances. Despite the passion triggered by the results of the first round, the second round was a mere formality for Chirac, who won with 82 per cent of the vote. Further lessening the ground-breaking character of the Front National's result, between 1988 and 2002, Le Pen's 2002 vote increased by less than half a million votes in an electoral register comprising more than 41 million people (Shields 2010).

Towards a modernised Front National (2002-2016)

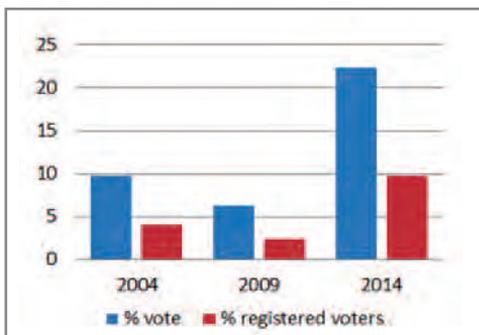
Apart from short stints in town councils in the late 1990s, the FN had little influence or power; nevertheless, its impact on politics grew as its ideas became increasingly agenda setting. Le Pen's setback in the 2007 presidential elections was often misinterpreted at the time as the demise of the FN. Nicolas Sarkozy's victory may have led to a fall in the share of the vote for the FN, as did the fear campaign orchestrated by the left so as not to relive a 21 April 2002; yet it ultimately proved an ideological victory as the right-wing populism espoused by Le Pen became quasi-hegemonic in the French political landscape. As studied in greater detail elsewhere (Mondon 2013b), Sarkozy owed much to the FN's success and strategy and, in return, the FN owed him much for popularising and mainstreaming its ideas. The expansion of the extreme right was limited so long as it remained a protest vote party. However, with the mainstreaming of its ideas by the moderate right and the lack of a response from the moderate left, part of the Front National's programme and the rhetoric central to its strategy have become widely accepted as part of the political establishment, cleared from the stigma attached to Le Pen's party (Mondon 2014). While Sarkozy obtained a landslide victory in 2007,

the 2012 elections made him a one-term President, as he had proved unable to deliver on his eclectic promises. The FN has, in the meantime, dramatically modernised its image.

When she was elected president of the FN, Marine Le Pen benefited from three factors: the groundwork laid by her father and almost 40 years of strategic evolution; the mainstreaming of many of the FN's ideas in Sarkozy's campaign; and a rejuvenated image far from the scandals that had always linked the FN with the darkest hours of France's history. While ideological changes remained at best minimal (Alduy and Wahnich 2015), the discourse had evolved to represent a more respectable party along the lines advocated by the Nouvelle Droite for over 30 years. The mainstreaming of its ideas and proposals meant that the FN's reach widened, as demonstrated by its ability to gather more than 12 per cent of the vote in all but one department in the 2012 presidential elections. With 17.9 per cent and 6.5 million votes, Le Pen eclipsed her father's records, and yet failed to reach the second round. As the Front National vote jumped by 2.7 million, Sarkozy's plummeted by almost 1.7 million. There is little doubt that many of those who had voted for Sarkozy in 2007 returned to their original choice in 2012.

Less than two years before the 2017 presidential elections, the FN appears in a very strong position. In the 2014 European elections, it even became the largest party in France. With over 25 per cent of the vote, Le Pen's party is the clear winner in these elections, with other parties, moderate and radical, apparently failing to counter the 'Blue Marine wave'. However, as per 2002, a more cautious analysis than that which was common in much of the media reveals that the expected 'earthquake' did not reveal a strong or even ongoing progression for Marine Le Pen's party. The European elections, commonly termed second order elections, took place in a fertile environment for a party whose platform rests on Euroscepticism, particularly given the state of the mainstream left and right in France, the ongoing economic weakness following the financial crisis, and the strength of the Eurosceptic movement across Europe. Yet, as demonstrated in table 2, the FN failed to appeal to more than 10 per cent of registered voters despite such favourable circumstances.

Table 2. FN results in European elections



Source: Mondon, 26 August 2016

From the Republican Front against the Front National to the Republican Front National

The shift in leadership from Jean-Marie to Marine Le Pen has had a significant impact on the FN, although it was more like a transition than a radical change. Pursuing the strategy of normalisation initiated in the late 1980s by Mégret amongst others, Marine Le Pen has endeavoured to reclaim key concepts in French politics and redefine them to suit core themes of the FN's ideology. Central to the new strategy, *laïcité* (secularism) has thus become central to the FN's narrative, as it has allowed a party traditionally associated with radical Catholicism to claim a role as defender of one of the most cherished, albeit misunderstood, political signifiers in France. While *laïcité* became entrenched in the 1905 law on the Separation of Church and State, its primary aims were to guarantee the free exercise of religion (Article 1) and its public aspect (Article 25) (Assemblée Nationale 1905). Yet, following a series of 'hijab affairs' (Scott 2007) as well as the growing stigmatisation of Islam in the post 9/11 world, the interpretation of the law has become increasingly radical and aimed predominantly at Islam in a so-called attempt to protect young women (in particular) against what is wilfully caricatured and essentialised as a sexist religion and culture (Delphy 2006). With Islamophobia becoming commonplace in France in the 2000s and 2010s (Hajjat and Mohammed 2013), the FN and its ethno-exclusivist ideology were ideally placed to reap the benefits. This allowed Le Pen to portray herself increasingly as the most radical protector of French *laïcité*, and by extension the Republic. It was therefore a complete rhetorical turnaround for a party that had been traditionally viewed as opposed to both elements core to French democracy, something which had so far justified its marginalisation under the 'Republican Front'. This shift in discourse and the redefinition of positive symbols in French politics has allowed the FN to gain legitimacy, but also to create havoc in the strategy of mainstream parties. The FN has remained ideally positioned against the 'system' and what it termed the 'UMPS' (contraction of the two major parties), but in this new setting Marine Le Pen is no longer the threat to the Republic its enemies could rally against, but its ultimate defender. While the programme remains deeply divisive and anti-egalitarian, in line with traditional extreme right politics, the FN has managed through its counter-hegemonic strategy to fill a void in French liberal democracy created by the apparent powerlessness of mainstream parties to offer anything meaningful to an increasingly disillusioned and distrustful electorate.

The recent exclusion of Jean-Marie Le Pen from the Front National could further legitimise the party in the eyes of the electorate. Following a series of interviews on radio station RMC and in the extreme-right magazine *Rivarol* in which he notably reiterated both his infamous comments on the gas chambers and his unwavering support for Maréchal Pétain, Jean-Marie Le Pen left his daughter little room to manoeuvre. In spite of the ongoing tension since the beginning of the affair, this may well prove a blessing in disguise for the modernising faction leading the FN. A tough stand against the party's founder and its leader's father will offer a clear sign to the many for whom the FN was unpalatable as long as the polemical and divisive

figure of Jean-Marie Le Pen remained. Yet, despite his eviction and replacement by Marion Maréchal Le Pen in the southeast constituency for the 2015 regional elections, the FN failed in its bid to conquer its first region, with the two round system preventing it once more from transforming strong performances in the first round into victories. With more than 6.8 million votes, 358 FN were elected, but the party could not win a region in its own name as the Parti Socialiste withdrew its lists in the North and South East and called to vote for the *Républicains*. Yet the cracks in the 'Republican front' have grown larger as the mainstream right refused to withdraw its lists as had been common in the past. While the two-round system should continue to prevent the FN from transforming its votes into seats the way a proportional system would, the ambivalent position of the right could pave the way for alliances in the future, particularly if Sarkozy remains leader.

The Front National's 'populism' as a diversion from a deepening crisis

As the 2017 presidential elections get closer, little seems to be obstructing the FN, and it seems increasingly likely that Marine Le Pen will reach the second round and break a new record for her party in terms of the vote. As in 2002 and 2014, the environment in which the FN will compete could not be more ideal. As things stand, Le Pen will be faced with the most unpopular president in the Fifth Republic, whose satisfaction ratings have plummeted since his election, hovering between 20 and 30 per cent for most of his term. On the centre right, the situation seems hardly better and renaming the UMP 'Les *Républicains*' has not sufficed to alleviate the deep divisions running within the broader family, partly resulting from Sarkozy's strategy towards the FN during his two presidential campaigns. As the campaign gets under way, it is expected that the hype around the FN will continue, and in turn facilitate its acceptance as a major player in the French political landscape.

While the FN's performance should not be underestimated, its coverage raises a number of interlinked issues that could have a dramatic impact on French democracy. In the 21st century, the FN has been increasingly defined by commentators and academics by its populist character. As the party has modernised and shed part of its historical legacy, it has become more difficult to characterise it as 'extreme right' without concurrent and lengthy definitional and conceptual discussions. The 'populist' label, which has made a resurgence in academia in various guises since the late 1990s (see, for example, Canovan 1999; Mudde 2007; Betz 2004; Panizza 2005), has often blurred the contours of parties traditionally defined by their position on the right (Collovald 2004). It is no surprise that the FN and its leaders have always espoused the term 'populism' while vehemently rejecting that of 'extreme right' – Marine Le Pen even threatened to sue anyone calling her party such.

Figure 1. 'Populist? This word does not bother me.'



Source: VSD 09/11/2011

Thus while 'extreme right' has become almost intrinsically linked with fascism outside of academia, 'populism's' history is not only less stigmatising, but the etymology of the term has allowed parties named such to claim a direct link with a reified 'people'. Even though the FN has struggled to appeal to more than 10 per cent of registered voters, and while its so-called irresistible rise becomes much less impressive when the whole electorate is taken into account, its populist characterisation has provided it with a semblance of democratic essence, which has diverted attention away from its authoritarian outlook and legitimised it as a contender for power. The legitimisation of the party as representing the popular wish has resulted, in turn, in the growing acceptance and normalisation of its ideas, as exemplified in the more authoritarian and nationalist line toed by mainstream parties on both the left and right, albeit to different extents. Finally, the link created between the 'people' and parties such as the FN has prevented us from undertaking a more thorough analysis of the state of the French democracy. By placing the focus on the FN as the alternative to the parties in power, many commentators have ignored elements that would nuance the reach of the party, and diverted our attention away from more pressing elements such as abstention and the distrust of the system, however defined (Mondon 2015).

References

- Alduy, C., and Wahnich, S. (2015). *Marine Le Pen prise aux mots : Décryptage du nouveau discours frontiste*. Paris: Sueil.
- Assemblée Nationale (1905). 'Loi du 9 décembre 1905 relative à la séparation des Églises et de l'État'. In: R. Française (ed.). Paris: Assemblée Nationale.
- Bar-On, T. (2013). *Rethinking the French New Right: Alternatives to Modernity*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Betz, H.-G. (2004). *La Droite Populiste en Europe: Extrême et Démocrate?* Paris: Ed. Autrement.
- Camus, J.-Y. (1997). *Le Front National. Histoires et analyses*. Paris: O. Laurens.
- Canovan, M. (1999). 'Trust the People! Populism and the Two Faces of Democracy'. *Political Studies*, XLVII: 2-16.
- Collovald, A. (2004). *Le populisme du FN : Un dangereux contresens*. Bellecombe-en-Bauges: Ed. du Croquant.
- Delphy, C. (2006). 'Antisexisme ou antiracisme? Un faux dilemme'. *Nouvelles Questions Féministes*, 26: 59-83.
- Front National (1993). '300 mesures pour la renaissance de la France l'alternative nationale programme de gouvernement'. Saint-Cloud: Ed. Nationales.
- Hajjat, A., and Mohammed, M. (2013). *Islamophobie. Comment les élites françaises construisent le 'problème musulman'*. Paris: La Découverte.
- Lecoeur, E. (2003). *Un néo-populisme à la française: trente ans de Front national*. Paris: La Découverte.
- Mondon, A. (26 August 2014). 'Nuancing the right-wing populist hype'. Policy Network.
- Mondon, A. (2013a). *The mainstreaming of the Extreme Right in France and Australia: A Populist Hegemony?* Aldershot, England ; Burlington, VT: Ashgate.
- Mondon, A. (2013b). 'Nicolas Sarkozy's Legitimation of the Front National: Background and Perspectives'. *Patterns of Prejudice*, 47: 22-40.
- Mondon, A. (2014). 'The Front National in the Twenty-First Century: From Pariah to Republican Democratic Contender?' *Modern & Contemporary France*: 1-20.
- Mondon, A. (2015). 'Populism, the people and the illusion of democracy - the Front National and UKIP in a comparative context'. *French Politics*, 13: 141-156.
- Mudde, C. (2007). *Populist radical right parties in Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Panizza, F. (2005). *Populism and the mirror of democracy*. London; New York, NY: Verso.
- Scott, J.W. (2007). *The politics of the veil*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Shields, J. (2010). Support for Le Pen in France: Two Elections in Trompe L'Oeil. *Politics*, 30: 61-69.
- Taguieff, P.-A. (1994). *Sur la Nouvelle droite: jalons d'une analyse critique*. Paris: Descartes et Cie.

CHAPTER 7:

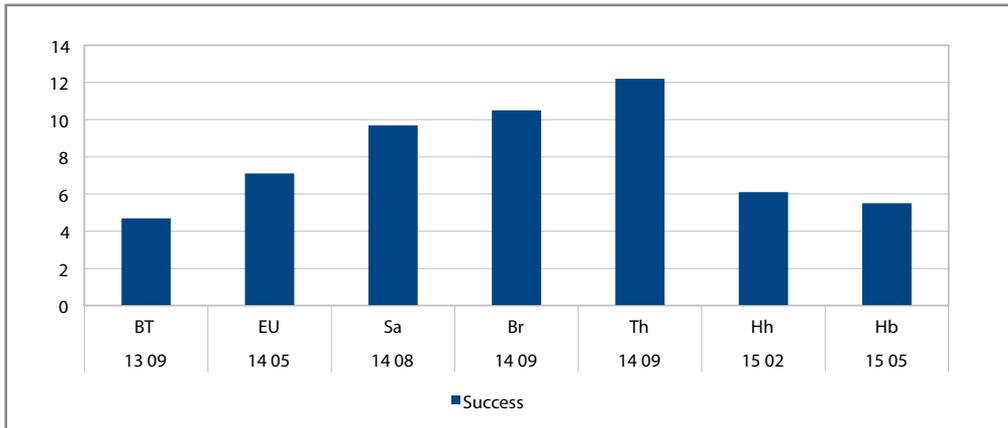
AfD, PEGIDA AND THE NEW RIGHT IN GERMANY

Andreas Kemper

In all European countries neighbouring Germany, right-wing parties such as *Partei Voor de Vrijheid* (PVV), *Front National* (FN) and *Freiheitliche Partei Österreich* (FPÖ) received more than 20 per cent of the votes. In Germany itself, until now there has not been a party that could position itself in the long-term to the right of the Christian democratic-conservative party CDU/CSU (*Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands/ Christlich Soziale Union Deutschlands*). Because of the German experience with National Socialism, a 5 per cent threshold was established for political parties, which, until now, has not been achieved by any of the right-wing parties, either in federal or in state elections. Until now, right-wing radicalism has been absorbed by other parties, and Franz-Josef Strauss's dictum that 'there is nothing to the right of the CSU but a wall' is still valid. Since the economic crisis, however, an increasingly strong right-wing opposition within the CDU/CSU has emerged, which considers Angel Merkel 'too social-democratic'. Out of these circles the *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD) was formed at the end of 2012 (Kemper 2013).

Some benchmark data regarding the electoral results for the AfD

Six months after its formation, the AfD received 4.7 per cent in the federal parliamentary elections that took place in the summer of 2013 and just missed the chance to enter parliament. During the elections for the European Parliament, the AfD got 7 per cent of the vote and could send seven parliamentarians to Brussels. In the following three elections for the state parliaments in East Germany in the summer of 2014, the AfD received between 10 and 12 per cent. In West Germany, the AfD managed to surpass the five per cent threshold in every election since (see Figure 1). In the summer of 2015, however, the AfD split up, and the transatlantic-neoliberal wing under Bern Lucke was defeated by the larger, national-conservative faction of the party. According to opinion polls, the AfD had dropped to 3 per cent. In October 2015, the party's ratings increased to 8 per cent due to the current debate over refugee policy. Thus, it might be possible that for the first time a party with a national-conservative and even fascist profile might get more than 5 per cent of the votes in a federal election and enter the Bundestag.

Figure 1. The AfD in elections

The origins of the AfD

In 2010, prior to the creation of the AfD, a debate was initiated by an unprecedented media campaign. With the massive support of the biggest daily newspaper, the *BILD*, and the biggest weekly magazine *DER SPIEGEL*, the book *Germany abolishes itself* (*Deutschland schafft sich ab*) by Thilo Sarrazin was published by Bertelsmann, the largest European media conglomerate. Thilo Sarrazin's book can be compared to the American book *The Bell Curve* (Hernstein and Murray 1994) and it caused a similar debate about migration and whether intelligence is inherited. According to Sarrazin, both immigrants from Muslim countries and members of the German lower classes have a low level of hereditary intelligence but high levels of fertility. This, in turn, will lead to the disintegration of Germany unless eugenic measures are implemented to counter this development. As a result of the publication, which, due to the accompanying media campaign was a bestseller in Germany, a debate was initiated which focused on racial and class-related racial issues and it seemed possible that a right-wing, populist Sarrazin party might emerge.

It would take another two years for the expected 'Sarrazin party' to emerge in the context of the loans given to Greece as part of the European Stability Mechanism (ESM). This development had been preceded by a debate amongst various business associations. The non-monopolistic capital of these associations of family-run companies protested against the ESM, whereas the monopolistic capital (Federal Association of German Industries – BDI) demanded just such a policy, which was then implemented by the governing coalition parties (Heine and Sablowski 2012). As a result, neoliberal economists and conservatives from the CSU formed the party 'Alternative für Deutschland'.

The AfD demanded to immediately end the help for Greece and to dissolve the monetary union with Greece. With regards to its gender and education policy, the party is very conservative and expresses major reservations towards migration. In its initial phase, the AfD was dominated by neoliberal economics professors, who favoured tax reductions for the wealthy

and cutbacks in the social budget. They did not shy away from demanding that the opportunities for democratic participation of the poor be limited for the benefit of the wealthy. Whether universal suffrage represented progress, 'one can doubt with some justification if you look at the difficulties that have resulted from of the inability of German politics to free themselves from the fixation on unproductive budget titles such as pensions, care, debt service and unemployment' (Adam 2006).

After the federal elections in the summer of 2013, the first disagreements between the neoliberal and the nationalist-conservative wing came to light. While the neoliberal wing wanted an alliance with the British Tories, the nationalist-conservative faction favoured a cooperation with the British United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP). And while the neoliberals could assert themselves on this issue, and joined the ECR in the European Parliament, they were defeated on another issue. The neoliberals were in favour of transatlantic cooperation and supported TTIP and sanctions against Russia during the Ukrainian crisis; the nationalistic-conservative majority, on the other hand, were against a free trade agreement with the USA and rejected sanctions against Russia.

After the state elections in East Germany in the summer 2014, the nationalist-conservative wing of the party gained strength. A little later, in the autumn of 2014, the first major demonstrations of right-wing hooligans in Cologne as well as marches organized by Pegida (Patriotic Europeans against the Islamisation of the Western World) took place in Dresden. Mainly in Dresden, demonstrations with sometimes more than ten thousand participants were held every Monday evening. The demonstrators warned against the 'Islamisation of the Western World' and turned more and more into a movement of right-wing extremists. This was another issue over which the neoliberal faction distanced itself from Pegida and the nationalist-conservative faction, which, in turn, sympathized with Pegida. By January 2015, the number of the weekly demonstrators for Pegida in Dresden rose to as many as 20,000. In this period, the influence of the New Right on Pegida increased steadily (Korsch 2015).

The New Right in Germany

The New Right makes reference to the anti-democratic Conservative Revolution (Konservative Revolution) that existed during the Weimar Republic in the first half of the twentieth century. A predecessor of the current New Right was the Thule Seminar, which was closely associated with Alain de Benoist, founder of GRECE and the Nouvelle Droit movement in France. Presently, the New Right is divided between a group influenced by 'realpolitik' and a 'meta-political' group (Kellershohn, Kauffmann and Jobst 2005; Bruns, Glösel and Strobl 2015; Kellershohn 2016).

The wing influenced by realpolitik publishes the weekly newspaper *Junge Freiheit* (Young Freedom), which has been supporting the AfD since its early stages in 2012. In the medium-term the New Right aims at establishing a party to the right of the CDU/CSU. In order to achieve this aim it is important not to appear too radical.

For the meta-political wing, the AfD constitutes a useful instrument. The AfD has the

'historical mission' to achieve cultural hegemony. Accordingly, it is important to break the 'terminological dominance' of the left and to stop the 'social experiments' in terms of educational, gender and migration policy. For the meta-political wing, Germany is currently in a phase of 'pre-civil war'. The present refugee situation is seen as an 'invasion' meant to destroy Germany. According to this reading, the German government is betraying the German nation. As a consequence, the government has to be brought down in a major, illegal operation (a German 'Maidan'). The German army was asked to act 'independently' and occupy the train stations along the German border in order to put a stop to the onslaught of asylum seekers.

Important individuals of the meta-political wing of the New Right are Jürgen Elsässer, who collaborates with Institut de la Démocratie et de la Coopération, (Kemper 2016) which is situated in Paris and receives Russian funding, as well as Götz Kubitschek from the New Right Institut für Staatspolitik (Institute for State Policy). He is the most important speaker of Pegida and represented Pegida during a conference and major demonstrations in Paris organized by the Lega Nord.

Kubitschek played an important role during the last confrontation between the transatlantic and nationalist-conservative factions of the AfD. His attempt to join the AfD was prevented by the transatlantic neoliberals. As a result, a new wing of the New Right was formed within the AfD with about 2,000 members. They were supported by the three regional leaders of the three East German states where the AfD has so far achieved its best electoral results. Eventually, the neoliberal wing, which so far had dominated the AfD, was ousted and in the summer of 2015 formed the Allianz für Fortschritt und Aufbruch – ALFA (Alliance for Progress and a New Beginning). In the European Parliament, ALFA has five seats and the AfD has two seats, whereas in the state parliaments ALFA has only three and the AfD 43 seats.

When the transatlantic-neoliberal wing left the party, leading AfD politicians labelled the AfD 'Pegida party'.

The strengthening and radicalisation of right-wing extremism during the refugee crisis

Right-wing extremism has been strengthened and radicalised during the ongoing refugee crisis. As a result of the significant surge of refugees in Germany from September 2015 onwards, the number of participants at Pegida demonstrations in Dresden has been growing. The sudden increase in attacks on refugees and their accommodations in Germany is cause for concern. While in 2011, there were 18 attacks, in 2014 nearly 200 attacks occurred. By mid-October 2015, the number had risen to 580 attacks (*Frankfurter Rundschau* 2015). These incidents have to be seen within the context of smaller right-wing parties, but also demonstrations against refugee accommodations.

The AfD started an 'autumn offensive' against the refugee policy of the federal government. Björn Höcke, an AfD politician and member of the New Right who is collaborating with

Götz Kubitschek, had been the driving force behind the weekly demonstrations in Erfurt, which attracted up to 5,000 participants on a regular basis during the month of October. On the sidelines of these demonstrations, where neo-Nazis and hooligans participated, youngsters and trade unionists were attacked. Björn Höcke represents a fascist ideology that has been understood as palingenetic ultra nationalism (Griffin 1991). He is consciously provocative when he uses expressions reminiscent of National Socialist terminology (e.g., 'thousand year-long German future' [Höcke]; 'thousand year-long Empire' [National Socialism]). According to Höcke, the Germans had become neurotic under American influence and Chancellor Merkel is part of a grand scheme that aims to destroy Germany and Europe, using the waves of immigrants that come to Germany ('migration as a weapon') (Kemper 2015). Therefore, it is imperative to organise a massive demonstration in Berlin in March 2016 and to bring down Merkel.

Outlook

Due to radical demands during the refugee crisis the AfD could become stronger. At the same time, the racist environment has become more militant. The New Right within the AfD predicts a civil war. Björn Höcke is becoming increasingly popular within the AfD and the right-wing scene. Another split in the AfD seems possible with the more moderate part leaving the AfD. At present, the AfD has 10 per cent in the whole of Germany and 15 per cent in the eastern states. If the refugee debate continues under the current circumstances, the AfD will be voted into all state parliaments by 2017.

Apart from immigration, the AfD considers itself the mouthpiece for a conservative approach to gender questions and hetero-normative issues. Beatrix von Storch, who coordinates the gender policy for the European Conservatives and Reformists Group in the European Parliament, has to be mentioned in this context. Storch's campaigning network, the Zivile Koalition (Civil Coalition), also organises the Demonstration for Everybody in Stuttgart, which emulates the French movement La Manif pour Tous. There were up to 5,000 participants in these demonstrations (Kemper 2014a; Kemper 2014b). ALFA might benefit from a European crisis or an intensification of the economic crisis, which would lead to a clash of interests between the capital factions. Currently, ALFA does not have the prospect of entering any parliament. Another important factor is Merkel's position within the CDU. Due to Merkel's stance in what concerns refugee policy, the CDU has lost a significant number of voters. Merkel will not enter into a coalition with the AfD. This might change if Merkel is replaced by a more conservative politician from the CDU.

References

- Adam, K. (2006). 'Wer soll wählen?' [Who should elect Parties?]. *Die Welt*, 16.10.2006.
- Bruns, J., Glösel, K. and Strobl, N. (2015). *Rechte Kulturrevolution. Wer und was ist die Neue Rechte von heute?* [Cultural Revolution of the Right. Who and what is the New Right of Today?]. Hamburg: VSA-Verlag.
- Frankfurter Rundschau (2015). 'BKA befürchtet mehr Angriffe auf Asylheime' [BKA fears more attacks on asylum homes]. *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 22.10.2015.

Griffin, R. (1991). *The Nature of Fascism*. London: Pinter.

Häusler, A. (ed.) (2016). *Die Alternative für Deutschland. Programmatik, Entwicklung und politische Verortung* [The Alternative for Germany. Programme, Development and Political Positioning]. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

Haller, M. and Nigggeschmidt, M. (2012). *Der Mythos vom Niedergang der Intelligenz. Von Galton zu Sarrazin: Die Denkmuster und Denkfehler der Eugenik* [The myth of the decline of intelligence. From Galton to Sarrazin : The thought patterns and flaws of eugenics]. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

Heine, F. and Sablowski, T. (2013). *Die Europapolitik des deutschen Machtblocks und ihre Widersprüche. Eine Untersuchung der Positionen deutscher Wirtschaftsverbände zur Eurokrise* [The European policy of the German power bloc and its contradictions. An examination of the positions of German business associations on the Euro crisis]. Berlin: Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung.

Kellershohn, H., Kauffmann, H. and Jobst, P. (eds.) (2005). *Völkische Bande. Dekadenz und Wiedergeburt. Analysen rechter Ideologie* [Peoples Linkages. Decadence and rebirth . Analyses of right ideology] (=Edition DISS. Bd. 8). Münster: Unrast Verlag.

Kellershohn, H. (2016). 'Risse im Gebälk. Flügelkämpfe in der jungkonservativen Neuen Rechten und der AfD' [Cracks in the Roof Beams. Battles among factions of the young conservative New Right and the AfD]. In A. Häusler (ed.), *Die Alternative für Deutschland. Programmatik, Entwicklung und politische Verortung* [The Alternative for Germany. Programme, Development and political Positioning]. Wiesbaden : Springer VS, 181-200.

Kemper, A. (2013). *Rechte Euro-Rebellion. Alternative für Deutschland. Zivile Koalition e.V.* [Right Wing Euro – Rebellion. Alternative for Germany. Civil Coalition Club] Münster: Unrast Verlag.

Kemper, A. (2014a). *Keimzelle der Nation? Familien- und geschlechterpolitische Positionen der AfD – eine Expertise* [Nucleus of the nation ? Family and gender policy positions of the AfD – an expert's report]. Berlin: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.

Kemper, A. (2014b). *Keimzelle der Nation – Teil 2. Wie sich in Europa Parteien und Bewegungen gegen Toleranz, Vielfalt und eine progressive Geschlechter- und Familienpolitik radikalisieren* [Nucleus of the nation 2 - How parties and movements opposing tolerance, diversity and a progressive gender and family policy became more radical]. Berlin: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.

Kemper, A. (2015). *Die neurotische Phase überwinden, in der wir uns seit siebzig Jahren befinden. Zur Differenz von Konservatismus und Faschismus am Beispiel der 'historischen Mission' Björn Höckes (AfD)* [To Overcome the neurotic phase, in which we find ourselves for seventy years'. About the difference between conservatism and fascism on the example of Bjoern Hoeckes' (AfD) 'historic mission']. Erfurt: Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung Thüringen.

Kemper, A. (2016). 'Antiemanzipatorische Netzwerke und die Geschlechter- und Familienpolitik der Alternative für Deutschland' [Anti emancipatory networks and the gender and family policies of the Alternative for Germany party]. In A. Häusler (ed.), *Die Alternative für Deutschland. Programmatik, Entwicklung und politische Verortung*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 81-98.

Korsch, F. (2015). 'Pegida – das erste halbe Jahr. Eine kritische Zwischenbilanz' [Pegida - the first half year. A critical interim assessment]. In F. Burschel (ed.), *Aufstand der 'Wutbürger'. AfD, Christlicher Fundamentalismus, Pegida und ihre gefährlichen Netzwerke* [Revolt of the 'Wutbürger'. AfD , Christian fundamentalism , Pegida and their dangerous networks]. Berlin: Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung, 58-70.

Plehwe, D. (2016). 'Alternative für Deutschland? Europäische und transatlantische Dimensionen des neuen Rechtsliberalismus' [Alternative for Germany? European and transatlantic dimensions of the new right-wing liberalism]. In A. Häusler (ed.), *Die Alternative für Deutschland. Programmatik, Entwicklung und politische Verortung* [The Alternative for Germany. Programme, Development and Political Positioning] Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 53-68.

Sarrazin, T. (2010). *Deutschland schafft sich ab. Wie wir unser Land aufs Spiel setzen* [Germany abolishes itself. How We Are Gambling with Our Country]. München: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt.

CHAPTER 8:

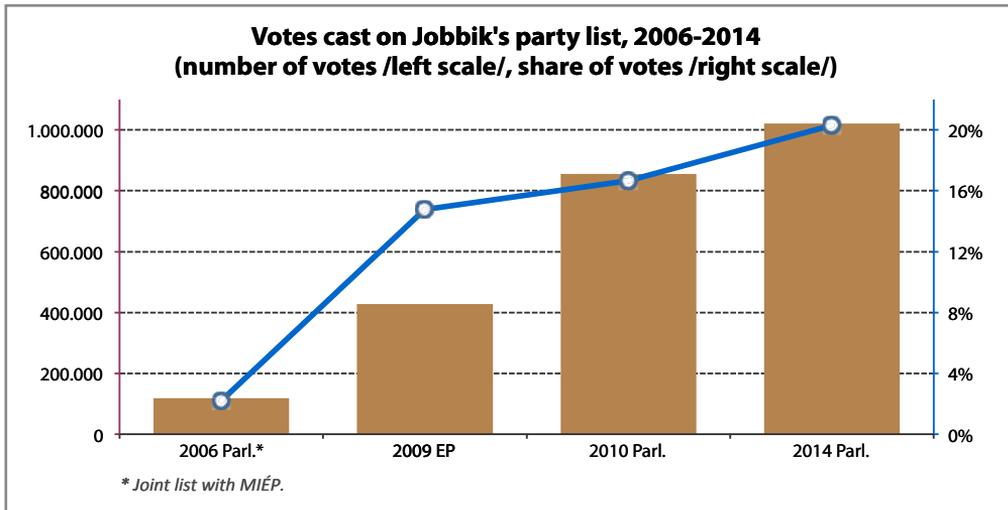
THE PARTICULARITIES AND UNIQUENESS OF HUNGARY'S JOBBIK

Krisztian Szabados

Jobbik is one of the most successful radical right wing political organizations in the European Union. Since its foundation in 2003, the party has grown to become an influential player in Hungary's political scene as well as a role model for other radical movements on the continent. Jobbik's growth to alarming proportions occurred relatively quickly and sent shockwaves through the European intelligentsia, especially because Jobbik is not the type of extremist party that Western Europe is used to. This essay will examine the key distinguishing features of Jobbik and analyse the major differences between Jobbik and the far right in Western Europe.

Jobbik Magyarországért Mozgalom (Jobbik Movement for Hungary) was founded in 2003 by a group of young politicians who had previously been engaged in politics—aligned either with the weak far right political movements or with Fidesz, the populist right wing party. In the first three years their efforts produced few results. They were viewed as a fringe group of the Hungarian Justice and Life Party (Magyar Igazság és Élet Pártja - MIÉP), the only far right party with any substantial public support. However, things changed in 2006 when, after an extremely poor showing in the parliamentary elections, the party elected the talented Gábor Vona as its new leader, a man who had started off his political career within the close circles of Viktor Orbán, the leader of Fidesz and former (and current) Prime Minister. With Vona came a new era and a new policy for the party. Leaving aside the anti-Semitic focus, Jobbik focused on a single major theme: the Gypsies.

The following year Gábor Vona, together with some intellectuals close to Jobbik and/or Fidesz, set up the Hungarian Guard, whose members dressed in Nazi-like uniforms and marched in villages and towns containing a relatively high ethnic Roma population. Jobbik and the Hungarian Guard worked hand in hand and both benefitted from this cooperation. Despite opinion polls predicting much less, Jobbik managed to attain almost 15 per cent of the votes in the European elections in 2009 and thus were able to send three MEPs to the EP. This came as a shock to both the Left and the Right in Hungary. Jobbik was now a party with major influence among the electorate, a party that could no longer be ignored.

Figure 1. Jobbik's election results

Source: valasztas.hu, Political Capital

Hungary's mainstream political parties have been unable to stop the gradual rise of Jobbik. By 2010 the party had doubled its voting base to more than 800,000, and further increased it in the last national elections. Jobbik is now the second largest party according to opinion polls of 2015. In a seemingly desperate move, Fidesz manipulated the election system in order to prevent opposition parties from gaining ground. The new election system not only helped Fidesz achieve a large majority in the Parliament in 2014— despite garnering 600,000 fewer votes than in 2010— but also reduced Jobbik's presence in Parliament in relation to the proportion of votes cast for the party.

Table 1. Jobbik's election results and representation in the Parliament

Year	% of votes	% of seats in national parliament
2010	16.7%	12.1%
2014	20.2%	11.5%

Source: valasztas.hu, Political Capital

What is the secret to Jobbik's success? In what ways is it different from other radical, extremist parties in the European Union? This essay will try to answer these questions focusing on four major explanatory factors.

Economic woes are not the main reason for Jobbik's rise

In the 90s and early 2000s the far right consisted of the violent but very small skinhead subculture, and a single-issue, anti-Semitic political party (MIÉP) led by an ex-informant of the communist secret service. MIÉP was supported mainly by voters aged 60 and over. The party peaked with 5 per cent of the votes, which gave it a seat in Parliament in 1998, but there was no room for further growth. Anti-Semitism had its limits in Hungarian politics. Between 2003 and 2006 Jobbik cooperated with MIÉP and focused on anti-Semitism, but this strategy did not deliver the expected results: Jobbik was unable to step out of the shadow of its ally. Furthermore, the party was not helped by the fact that Hungary was enjoying a long period of economic growth and improved living standards under the Socialist-led government.

It would appear as 'common sense' to recognize that there is a strong correlation between the economic performance of a country and the fortunes of radical political organizations: the worse the economic situation, the stronger the support for radicals in politics. And while this is true in the case of Golden Dawn in Greece, it is far from being a general tendency. Authoritative scholars in the field argue that the rise of the far right is generally not a consequence of the economic downturn (Mudde 2013), due to the fact that populist radical right parties are mainly seen by the voters as defenders of national identity against the minorities, but not as competent problem-solvers in the economic arena. As a consequence, they can most easily benefit when the main political issue is related to minorities and national identity (e.g., immigration concerns), but less so when it is the economy causing the problems (Mudde 2007).

Jobbik was able to change its fortunes and rapidly grow to become a powerful political force at a time of economic prosperity. Between 2001 and 2009 the average GDP growth was 3-4 per cent and real wages increased 2-6 per cent each year. During the decade before the global financial crisis of 2008 – or rather 2009 when the crisis hit Hungary – living standards had improved by more than 30 per cent and the distribution of wealth was more or less balanced among different groups of society – or at least it seemed more balanced in comparison with other countries of the region where the distribution of wealth created painful gaps within societies.

Yet, Jobbik was able to gather support for its radical agenda from all segments of the society, and for two main reasons. First, Jobbik capitalized on the widespread discontent at the presence of the ethnic Roma populations. These tensions date back many centuries in the history of Hungary, but they grew much stronger after the fall of communism. The transition from the planned economy to capitalism caused many Gypsies to lose their jobs, which forced them to live on state benefits. Most were unskilled workers in a country where the education system did not support social mobility. The majority of the Roma lived below the poverty line and the crime rate was very high, especially in villages and small towns in the eastern and southern parts of the country. The response of mainstream politics to the problem was utterly wrong. The Left positioned the issue as a social problem that could be solved through extensive government programs and state pay-outs. Those who criticized the leftist

ideas were labelled as racist and the high number of petty crimes committed by the Roma was considered a taboo topic. On the other hand, the Right ignored the issue and focused on corrupting the representatives of the Roma community in exchange for Roma votes (which was a strategy on the Left as well but applied less effectively). There was no open political discourse about the conflicts of co-existence and the deteriorating living standards of the Roma; the establishment simply swept the issue under the carpet.

But discontent had been steadily growing within the society over many years. Numerous studies at that time revealed that hatred and racist prejudice toward Gypsies had grown very strong. The antennae of society were tuned towards finding the political supply for their needs. This was the niche where Jobbik found its main political message and was given the chance to address an important political problem that was ignored by all other parties; here Gábor Vona, the new leader, was able to position himself as the 'taboo-breaker' and the 'truth-teller'.

In 2007 the Hungarian Guard was established. Despite the fact that Fidesz-related intellectuals, politicians and media outlets openly declared sympathy towards the organization, it soon became the strongest ally of Jobbik, helping the party recruit members and supporters. The Hungarian Guard was formed to stop 'Gypsy crime' and defend innocent white people suffering from the illegal activities of the non-white mob. Members of the Guard dressed in military uniforms that resembled the uniform of Hungarian Nazis during WWII. The Guard held marches in villages and towns with a relatively high proportion of Roma population and where crime rates were high. The marches received wide media coverage. While the Hungarian Guard was acting 'in the field', Jobbik echoed the message on political levels. The new strategy of, racism directed at the Roma population, with the extensive use of the phrase 'gypsy crime', was very well received by voters. Moreover, Jobbik mounted a campaign to attack the mainstream political establishment and accuse them successfully of ignoring and denying the problem, and lying about the truth.

By unleashing hate speech against the Roma, Jobbik was able to exploit a long-standing political sentiment in Hungarian society. Demand for such a policy has always been high (Derex Index),¹ but mainstream parties either ignored the topic or regarded it as taboo, taking refuge behind the curtain of political correctness.

But this alone—i.e., finding a niche market in politics— would not have been enough for Jobbik to achieve the success it did. The second reason for the party's success was that its mainstream competitors did not react effectively. Instead of retooling their arsenals, the mainstream parties employed the worst possible strategies. Fidesz, which was in opposition but was by far the most popular party, with full control over a vast media empire at that time, decided to start using the 'gypsy crime' phrase. Leaders of Fidesz expected that the party

¹ <http://derexindex.eu/>

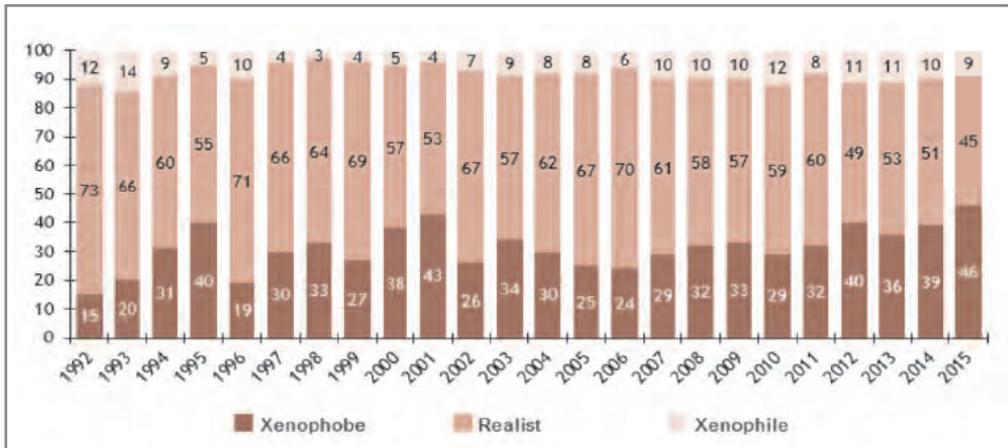
would be able to lure back the voters who had turned to Jobbik by letting the opinion leaders around the party – though not the politicians themselves - speak the same language and offer the same solution as the far right. But this strategy clearly backfired: instead of convincing the voters to return to Fidesz, it legitimized the racist narrative and the hate speech in the mainstream political discourse, allowing Jobbik to set the political agenda and help the far right break out of the political quarantine. Fidesz's strategy played right into the hands of Jobbik and is in large part responsible for the shocking success of the far right in the 2009 European Parliament elections.

On the other hand, the then-ruling Socialist party thought that Jobbik could help curb the rise of the right wing Fidesz. The Socialists called Jobbik a neo-Nazi party and tried to point out links connecting Jobbik and Fidesz. Rather than offering an alternative solution and explanation for the political issues surrounding the ethnic Roma minority, the Left wanted to use them for political purposes. By the time the Socialist Party realized that their strategy had misfired, it was too late. To this day the Hungarian Left remains paralyzed: the Socialist Party and other opposition parties have not been able to come up with an attractive and alternative answer for the traditional left wing voters – mostly working class people living in the eastern part of the country with a large ethnic Roma population.

Anti-immigration is not always the winning card for radicals

Exploiting xenophobic prejudices and resentments is a fundamental tool for almost all radical right wing political organizations in western Europe. France's Front National, the British National Party, the Dutch Freedom Party, Sweden's Democrats and Greece's Golden Dawn place immigration and immigrants in the focus of their political narrative.

Hungary offers particularly fertile soil for xenophobic voices. The Eurobarometer and local studies show that Hungarians are one of the most xenophobic nations in the European Union. One study revealed that one third of the population was openly averse to immigrants in 2003, the year Jobbik was founded.

Figure 2. Ratio of xenophobes, xenophiles and realists in Hungary, 1992-2015 (%)

Source: TÁRKI

Until 2015 immigration was insignificant. After the fall of communism it was primarily ethnic Hungarians from neighbouring countries who moved to the 'mother country', but this movement did not lead to social tension. The largest percentage of people of a different race came from China. Most Chinese immigrants settled down in the capital city at first, opening restaurants and stores where they sold cheap import products. Then, in the first decade of the 2000s, they began to settle throughout the country, setting up family-run businesses in every town in the countryside. The ethnic Chinese formed a small but visible community, whose members intensively interacted with the native population, especially with the lower, poorer classes.

According to an opinion poll (Nyíri 2013), Hungarians estimated the number of Chinese living in Hungary at an average 650,000, which is approximately 6.5% of the total population. But the real number was less than 20,000. It seemed obvious for a new radical party to walk the same path as its Western doppelgangers and start playing the racist card. Thus Jobbik launched a hate campaign against the Chinese community in 2004 hoping to distinguish itself from its old-school anti-Semitic ally, and attract some media attention. The party echoed the typical slogans and messages that many anti-immigrant radicals use: the Chinese take away the jobs of Hungarians, they destroy local businesses, and they don't pay taxes, etc. Party activists organized rallies with extensive media attention.

But the recipe that had worked so well in western Europe was not popular in Hungary. Despite the seemingly perfect choreography, the interested audience and the media limelight, the campaign proved to be a total failure. The racist slogans did not resonate with the otherwise xenophobic Hungarians. There is no clear explanation as to why the hate campaign did not work, but because it did not, anti-immigration disappeared from the radical right's narrative until 2015.

A pro-Muslim, right-wing radical

'Islam is the last hope for humanity in the darkness of globalization and liberalism' (Sourgo 2013). These are not the words of an Islamic cleric, but of Jobbik's leader, Gábor Vona, in 2013. This quote highlights another major difference between Jobbik and other west European far right parties: Jobbik was openly pro-Muslim right from its inception. The strange and unusual stance can be explained by obvious ideological reasons, as well as alleged financial reasons.

Gábor Vona participated in an Arab conference in 2003, but it was not until 2007 that he formulated his and his party's foreign policy, that claimed Iran to be the leader of the Muslim world. Yet after some years the Persian connection weakened, replaced by Turkey in around 2010. This switch occurred at the same time that pan-Turanian ideology became popular with party members, a theory that claims that Hungarians belong to the family of Turkic nations. It was part of a wider foreign policy strategy of 'eastern opening', whereby Jobbik established links to eastern political organizations – mostly in Iran and Syria – in search of allies against Israel. Besides pan-Turanism, anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism were the main driving forces behind Jobbik's alliance with the Muslim world. Israel-bashing, however, also had domestic policy implications: after anti-Gypsy rhetoric, anti-Semitism was the second most important community-building and support-garnering tool for the radical party; it was also an important ideological framework providing an explanation for social and economic problems. Jobbik used a wide range of tools to fuel anti-Semitism, from the most primitive conspiracy theories to the symbolic protection of the Palestinians and supporting their cause against Israel – including relativizing terrorist activities against Israeli civilians.

In 2009, a former member of Parliament's National Security Committee reignited a long-standing rumour concerning Jobbik's campaign financing. He said that the committee suspected that Jobbik had received financial aid from Iran. Further allegations linked the party's finances to Syria, and Hungarian media reported that the CIA had investigated the issue. However, these accusations were never conclusively proven. Whatever the truth is, Iran benefitted from the Jobbik connection in many ways. First, after 2010, when Jobbik became a member of the National Parliament, it used its new power to raise the level of cooperation between the two countries. The party openly backed Iran's nuclear ambitions and rejected international sanctions against Iran. Second, Jobbik's three MEPs in the European Parliament represented Iran's interest on EU level in several cases.

But the immigration crisis that began in 2015 put an intense strain on Jobbik's pro-Muslim policy. The influx of Syrian and Iraqi refugees to Hungary and the government-organized hate campaign against immigrants amplified xenophobic sentiments. Jobbik fell into a trap: its pro-Muslim stance backfired and the party was forced to make a sudden U-turn. Today Jobbik is desperately competing with the governing Fidesz party to convince voters that they are tougher on immigrants. At the time of writing this essay, Jobbik seems to be losing the race.

Jobbik is not an underclass phenomenon

In contrast to many typical right wing extremist political organizations, Jobbik gathers the majority of its supporters from classes other than the lower strata. Neither is Jobbik a rural phenomenon, recruiting voters from village people and agricultural workers. According to Political Capital's own research the typical Jobbik supporter tends to be young, urban, middle-class men who are more educated than the average.

Jobbik expanded its voting base in three phases. As mentioned above, Jobbik's first successful political campaign was the hate campaign directed at Gypsies that started in 2006. This campaign attracted traditional right wing voters who lived in rural areas near large Roma communities. The aggressive demonstrations of the Hungarian Guard counterweighted the lack of the presence of police forces in villages where the crime rate was painfully high. The second expansion between 2009 and 2014 targeted traditional working-class Socialist voters in urban areas in the poor, eastern areas of the country. Finally, the third expansion was launched in 2012 when Jobbik organized the Hungarian March of Life series of demonstrations, deliberately mocking the similarly named events commemorating the Holocaust. These marches were held in the most developed, middle-class western part of the country where the governing Fidesz party was very strong. This time Jobbik targeted voters who were fed up with corruption and relatively low wages. The third wave of expansion was so successful that Jobbik gained a landslide victory in a parliamentary by-election in March 2015 in Tapolca, a stronghold and safety seat of Fidesz. It was Jobbik's first victory in a constituency.

At present Jobbik's appeal is wide: it has managed to acquire voters from all parts of the country and almost all groups of the society, especially among young voters. The party is gradually shifting its policy towards the centre in order to convince unsure voters and is trying to moderate its radical members. Gábor Vona has stated in several public speeches that the party is aiming to win the next general elections in 2018, and is poised and ready for governing (Hungary Matters 2015).

Conclusions

Jobbik succeeded in putting down roots at the local as well as the national level, and its agenda has influenced, and is continuously shaping, the program of the governing populist right on such issues as immigration, coexistence with the Roma, and foreign policy (especially Hungary's relations with Brussels and Moscow). Jobbik is not a typical right wing extremist party. Economic woes are not the reason for the rise of the party. Instead, Jobbik was the party that brought racism and anti-Gypsy sentiments into mainstream politics. It tried to follow the anti-immigrant path of right wing radicals in western Europe, but surprisingly, in a country with strong xenophobic attitudes, this strategy failed. Jobbik was unique among European radicals in being pro-Muslim, which can be explained either by ideological reasons based on a pan-Turanian vision and an anti-Semitic logic which claims that 'whoever is against Israel is our friend', or by financial reasons for the alleged secret financial support from Iran and Syria.

Finally, Jobbik started off as a middle-class phenomenon, popular among young urban voters, and gradually expanded to enjoy wide appeal among different voter groups. These unique features of Jobbik have helped the party become the most successful right wing radical party in Europe - a party that will run to win in the next general elections in Hungary.

References

- Bernát, A., Juhász, A., Krekó, P. and Molnár, C. (2013). 'The roots of radicalism and anti-Roma attitudes on the far right'. Available at: http://www.tarki.hu/en/news/2013/items/20130305_bernata_juhasz_kreko_molnar.pdf
- Hungary Matters (2015, June 1). 'Jobbik leader claims they are "ready to govern" at congress'. Politics.hu. Available at: <http://www.politics.hu/20150601/jobbik-leader-claims-they-are-ready-to-govern-at-congress/>
- Juhász, A. (2010). 'Gypsy crime' as the symbol of the truth [A „cigánybűnözés”, mint az igazság szimbóluma]. *anBlok*, 4(1): 12–19.
- Krekó, P., Juhász, A., and Molnár, C. (2011). Radicalism and extremism: The increase in the demand for the far-right in Hungary [Radikalizmus és szélsőségesesség – A szélsőjobboldal iránti kereslet növekedése Magyarországon], *Politikatudományi Szemle*, 2 .
- Medved, F. (2014). Proliferation of migration transition. Selected new EU member states. European liberal forum.
- Mudde, C. (2007). *Populist radical right parties in Europe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Mudde, C. (2013, August 22) 'Contrary to popular opinion, Europe has not seen a sharp rise in far-right support since the start of the crisis'. The London School of Economics and Political Science. Available at: <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2013/08/22/contrary-to-popular-opinion-europe-has-not-seen-a-rise-in-far-right-support-since-the-start-of-the-crisis/>
- Mutual Benefits. Jobbik's pro-Iranian policy (2010). Political capital in depth analysis. Budapest, Hungary.
- Nyíri, P. (2010). 'Kínai migrások Magyarországon: mai tudásunk és aktuális kérdések' [Chinese Migrants in Hungary: our Knowledge and Current Questions]. In Á. Hárs & J. Tóth (eds.), *Változó migráció, változó környezet* [Changing migration, changing environment]. MTA Etnikai-nemzeti Kisebbségkutató Intézet.
- Sourgo, Y. (2013, November 13). 'Hungary: far-right party leader Says "Islam is the last hope of humanity"'. Morocco World News. Available at: <http://www.moroccoworldnews.com/>
- Demand for Right-Wing Extremism Index. Political Capital's Research Project. <http://derexindex.eu/>

The report can be ordered from:
PRIO Cyprus Centre
P.O.Box 25157, 1307 Nicosia, Cyprus
Tel: +357 22 456555/4
cypruscentre@prio.org



This report is a compilation of essays discussing far right parties in Europe, introduced first by a historical perspective that draws on research about the inter-war years and relativises the terms 'extreme' and 'mainstream'. The essays were presented or resulted from participation at a conference organized jointly by the PRIO Cyprus Centre, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Cyprus and the Cypriot Association of Political Science (CAPS) held in November 2015 in Nicosia, Cyprus. Several far right parties, the factors favouring or inhibiting their impact on society and politics and their associated phenomena are discussed: ELAM in Cyprus, the Golden Dawn in Greece, the French Front National, the Italian Northern League and the space around it, the German AfD and Pegida and the Hungarian Jobbik.

ISBN 978-82-7288-660-7 (print)
ISBN 978-82-7288-661-4 (online)



The report can be ordered from:
PRIO Cyprus Centre
P.O.Box 25157, 1307 Nicosia, Cyprus
Tel: +357 22 456555/4
cypruscentre@prio.org