Ideology Research Unit

YEAR IN REVIEW REPORT

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About the Ideology Research Unit

The CARR Ideology Research Unit (IRU) aims to address and explore the conceptual issues around the terminology and the relationship between the different strands of radical right ideology. How can we delineate between various strands of radical right, such as fascism, accelerationism, New Right, metapolitics, populism, but also the uneasy relationship with some of the more 'established' ideologies, such as that of liberalism, conservatism, or socialism and ecologism? The role of IRU is to look at how these mutually informing yet sometimes very distant notions overlap intellectually.

About the CARR Year in Review Reports

The CARR Year in Review reports feature the latest research from CARR Fellows reflecting back on significant developments over the course of the year, specifically on topics pertaining to the individual Research Units. CARR Year in Review reports aim to provide a useful resource within a broader network of scholars, practitioners, and policymakers focusing on key dynamics of the radical right.

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About the Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right

The Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right (CARR) is a UK-based research centre and pedagogical outreach initiative focused on the study and countering of radical right extremism and intersecting phenomena (e.g. populism, gender, antisemitism, and Islamophobia) that aims to support a variety of mainstream groups, from government agencies to grass-roots charities, through podcasts, commentary, research reports, presentations, media interviews, and commissioned work.

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INTRODUCTION

ASHLEY MATTHEIS AND BALŠA LUBARDA

Ideologies are continuously evolving propositions about what makes an ideal society. 'Produced' and 'consumed' by groups and individuals, they are associated with power relations within the social, but not in a sense of presenting a 'false consciousness' behind which an objective reality can be unmasked. Rather, ideologies comprise a set of mutually (in)coherent statements which constitute their 'topography.' As such they can, and should, be approached from a variety of analytic perspectives including political, cultural, topical, and as frames for developing identity and subjectivity to better understand their uses and impacts.

In the CARR Ideology Research Unit, we study and research ideology across multiple scales ranging from the narrow to the broad, including individual, community, party, nationality, and among even socio-cultural interactions online. We also approach the study of ideology from a variety of disciplinary stances including political science, sociology, history, criminology, and communication. Therefore, our definitional framework for ideology is relatively broad and rests largely in the locus where we study ideology at work: exploring and producing knowledge about the radical right.

In this report, we highlight trends that have emerged over the year, including shifts induced by both time and technology. Emerging changes entail ideological evolution across the globe due to adjustments to contemporary socio-political issues, as well as admixtures of ideological components due to their circulation and integration across broad audiences online. This has led to the emergence of ideological conglomerates which may at times seem nonsensical, e.g. 'left-wing' platforms incorporated into radical right policy and messaging; extreme cross-spectrum (left-right) responses that overlap such as forms of accelerationism (the promotion of governmental collapse); and hybrid coalition building (such as that seen in the #Boogaloo movement) in anti-coronavirus pandemic protests. Additional trends include 1) the "Europeanisation" of far-right ideologies through the development of national strands of European nativism, and the transnational growth of populist sentiment; 2) the continued expansion of male supremacist ideological violence from "Incel" and now "MRA" actors which share gendered—specifically misogynist and

anti-feminist—logics with more traditional radical right ideologies; 3) an increasingly active radical right discourse and engagement with environmentalism; and, 4) the emergence of QAnon as a (now) transnational conspiratorial ideology which capitalises on the utility of conspiracy theories to forward interconnections between mainstream believers and previously fringe ideological frames.

In the following pages, members of the Ideological Research Unit present reviews of new literature on ideology which are useful in parsing these emergent trends. Alessio Scopelitti's review of Hooghe and Marks's article "Cleavage theory meets Europe's crises: Lipset, Rokkan, and the transnational cleavage" (*Journal of European Public Policy*, 25:1) examines the origins of the current radical right turn in the new ideological cleavage of a transnational nature, particularly visible within European Union politics. Brian Hughes's review of an investigative journalist report on the accelerationist group, The Base, points to the ideological range such ideations may occupy, from "posthumanist feminism to esoteric Hitlerism". Chamila Liyanage's focus on conspiracy theories [review of Gabriele Cosentino, "From Pizzagate to the Great Replacement: The Globalization of Conspiracy Theories," in *Social Media and the Post-Truth World Order: The Global Dynamics of Disinformation*, ed. Gabriele Cosentino (Palgrave Pivot, 2020, 59–86)] shows how radical right actors operationalise some conspiracies as a tool to ideologically discredit the fundamental tenets and values of liberal democracy. Since ideology is relational and contextually dependent, Valerio Alfonso Bruno reviews the volume *Left Radicalism and Populism in Europe* (Routledge, 2019), edited by Giorgos Charalambous and Gregoris Ioannou, exploring how the populist discursive construction of 'the people' can be swayed by historical and contextual circumstances to fit one of the opposing sides of the ideological spectrum. Even if ideology is perceived as a linear continuum, with measurable distance between the two 'points', this does not entail that left radicalism (or, for that purpose, any other ideology) has no shared concepts with the radical right. This should not be particularly concerning, although it also cautions against the uncritical appropriation of concepts such as 'people', 'nature', or 'equality'.

This report, therefore, outlines how we understand ideology as we are using it in our research. It is a necessarily broad, collaborative, and multi-modal project. Although this may seem to some as 'messy,' we would argue that the seeming messiness of ideology is rooted in the thing itself; its complex, always evolving nature as a mechanism used by humans living in relation. Threading the needle between the precise and the complex in

our work requires a willingness to sit with the 'messiness' of ideology as part of our effort to glean important insights and findings that may be put to use in our similarly 'messy' lives. Importantly, sitting with the 'messiness' of ideology, especially the places where our research diverges or interconnects, allows us to see trends emerging from our various vantage points and think through them together.

HOOGHE, L. AND MARKS, G. (2018). "CLEAVAGE THEORY MEETS CRISES: LIPSET, ROKKAN, AND THE TRANSNATIONAL CLEAVAGE", *JOURNAL OF EUROPEAN PUBLIC POLICY*, **25:1, 109-135.**

ALESSIO SCOPELITTI

We are currently witnessing a political polarisation across the globe, usually referred to as the dichotomy between populist parties vs. mainstream parties. Nevertheless, this dichotomy might not be comprehensive in describing global spaces of contention, since the definition of populism[1] has been differently appropriated in the more recent literature[2] (for instance, this term has been referred to ideologies, party strategies, communicative strategies, etc.). Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks point to current Western societies as being polarised by an alternative political conflict: the transnational cleavage. They argue that this new cleavage structure has globally widened since the early 1990s, after a series of major reforms (p. 113). These changes undermined national governments which voluntarily delegated their authority from the national to the international level, in order to facilitate international trade regimes and free movement of people (such as APEC, CIS, EAC, EEA, GEF, ISA/ISBA, NAFTA, WTO).[3]

Focusing on European societies, Hooghe and Marks argue that the Maastricht Treaty (1992) is a historical juncture that generated this new cleavage, since this agreement 'extended EU authority over wide ranges of [European citizens'] public life' (pp. 113-116). Moreover, the project of European political integration has been sustained by established political parties from both the left-wing and the right-wing political spectrum, with the assumption that moving national competences to transnational institutions would have facilitated engagement with global issues such as environment, terrorism, economic or migration crises, or the geopolitical balance with USA, Russia, and China. However, in the first two decades of the twenty-first century, the eurozone crisis and the migration crisis

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[1] Mudde, C. (2007). *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
[2] Hawkins, K.A. and Rovira Kaltwasser, C. (2017), "What the (Ideational) Study of Populism Can Teach Us, and What It Can't", *Swiss Political Science Review*, 23: 526-542.
[3] International Organisations founded in the 1990s: Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (1989), Commonwealth of Independent States (1991), East African Community I (1999), European Economic Area (1994), Global Environment Facility (1991), International Seabed Authority (1994), North American Free Trade Association (1994), World Trade Organization (1995). Source: Hooghe, L., Marks, G., Lenz, T., Bezuijen, J., Ceka, B., Derderyan, S. (2017). *Measuring International Authority: A Postfunctionalist Theory of Governance, Vol. III*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

exacerbated the debate on European integration. Therefore, established political parties electorally suffered the most from these crises, since they were not able to find collective compromises at the supranational level about the financial stability of the Eurozone, or a common migratory or foreign policy. This impasse at the transnational level showed the weaknesses of European institutions; while new political parties, founded on the new transnational cleavage,[4] capitalised on these recent socio-political changes.

As a result, Hooghe and Marks first underline that European party systems have been shaped by the formation of a new cleavage between those political forces that sustain the European integration project/pro-EU (EPP, S&D, and Renew-Alde), and those that reclaim national sovereignty/anti-EU (ECR and ID-ENF). For instance, this cleavage found its space in recent electoral campaigns, such as the French presidential election in 2017 (Macron vs. Le Pen), the Italian legislative election in 2018, which produced the first Italian government entirely shifted to hard Euroscepticism[5] (The First Conte Cabinet), or the British general elections in 2019, in which the informal slogan of the Conservative Party was "get Brexit done". Second, the authors argue that established political parties have more difficulties to adjust to the new polarised political context because they are "programmatically inflexible" and tend "to be sticky"; while the new "political parties are now formed alongside a new cleavage" (pp. 110-111, 119).

The emphasis on reclaiming national sovereignty (anti-EU) finds its roots from the ideology of souverainisme (souvrainism). The origin of this term comes from the 1980s with the independence movement in Quebec.[6] Eventually, the philosopher Michel Onfray argues that the term "sovereignty" was associated with Jean-Pierre Chevènement's argument on the necessity of destroying nations, since nations lead to nationalism and nationalism to war.[7] Thus, sovereignty becomes a stigmatised notion; learning from the experience of the two world war conflicts, the future is towards the globalism of the market. With this perspective, the supporters of the Maastricht Treaty welcomed this agreement as the beginning of economic prosperity, happiness and friendship among peoples, and eventually, as the decrease of unemployment, deprivation, and the end of wars on

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[4] Hooghe L. and Marks G. (2018). "Cleavage theory meets Europe's crises: Lipset, Rokkan, and the transnational cleavage", *Journal of European Public Policy*, 25:1, 109-135. [Online Appendix].

[5] Szczerbiak, A. and Taggart, P. (eds.) (2008). *Opposing Europe?: The Comparative Party Politics of Euroscepticism: Volume 1: Case Studies and Country Surveys*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[6] Thériault, J. Y. (1994). L'individualisme démocratique et le projet souverainiste. *Sociologie et sociétés*, 26:2, 19–32.

[7] Front Populaire (2020), Michel Onfray : ma définition du souverainisme. Available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XDLuoAriLAM (Accessed: 27 November 2020)

European soil.[8] Nevertheless, after almost 30 years, European societies are still experiencing these issues.

Hooghe and Marks identify this dichotomy in their work, offering a conceptualisation of the new cleavage parties: the 'green parties', the 'radical right parties', and the 'radical left parties'. However, the authors demonstrate that, as the Rokkanian cleavage structures[9] on religion and social class were mostly pursued by Catholics and socialists, souverainism is at the programmatic core of radical right parties, while the green parties are at the opposite pole of the transnational cleavage (pro-EU), and the radical left parties tend to disapprove more the technocratic austerity than the political European integration project (pp. 111, 127). This result is, in fact, in line with most recent studies on Euroscepticism, demonstrating that radical parties (both from the radical left and radical right) "do not share a common narrative or objective"[10] regarding the EU.

In conclusion, Hooghe and Marks' paper successfully demonstrates that the transnational cleavage is shaping European party systems. This leads to souverainism as an ideology becoming the zeitgeist, implying that new radical right political parties, founded on the transnational cleavage, are more likely to persist in the long run, because they respond to newly emerging social needs: to defend or regain national sovereignty (p. 127).

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[8] Chevènement, J.P. (1997). Le Bêtisier de Maastricht, Arléa.

[9] The most important cleavage structures identified by Lipset and Rokkan were State vs. Church, Centre vs. Periphery, Urban vs. Rural and Employers vs. Workers. Source: Lipset, S. M. and Rokkan, S. (1967), "Cleavage structures, Party Systems and Voter Alignments: An Introduction", in *Party Systems and Voter Alignments*. New York: The Free Press.

[10] Brack, N. (2020). "Towards a unified anti-Europe narrative on the right and left? The challenge of Euroscepticism in the 2019 European elections", *Research & Politics*, 7:2, 1-8.

Wilson, J. "Revealed: The True Identity of the Leader of an American Neo-Nazi Terror Group". *The Guardian*, January 2020.

BRIAN HUGHES

In January, The Guardian published an investigative report[11] by reporter Jason Wilson revealing critical information about the leadership of neo-Nazi accelerationist group 'The Base'. Wilson revealed that The Base was headed by Rinaldo Nazzaro, an American going by the aliases 'Norman Spear' and 'Roman Wolf'. Wilson's reports further indicated that Nazzaro worked in the field of military contracting, and currently resides in Russia. These revelations were drawn from a combination of public records, digital forensics, and leaks from a whistleblower within The Base organisation. Wilson's report came hot on the heels of two FBI-thwarted terrorist plots in Virginia and Georgia, comprising two Base cells of three men each, both of which were stopped prior to executing violent plots. These arrests, along with Wilson's reporting, may have significantly impeded The Base's ability to operate in 2020 and beyond.

Accelerationism has proven challenging to understand from both an ideological and an organisational perspective. Wilson's reporting helps to ameliorate this confusion. On one hand, accelerationism represents a broad tendency, which ranges from sophisticated philosophical critiques of ontology to the crudest nihilist violence. (The Base epitomises the latter.) What all accelerationist tendencies share in common, however, is the belief that our present socio-political order is untenable and unreformable, and that the solution to the crisis of modernity lies outside of that current order. As such, accelerationism spans all manner of politics, from posthumanist feminism to esoteric Hitlerism. It is inaccurate and irresponsible to conflate tendencies such as these beyond their broadly shared diagnosis of postmodernity's unreformability. While Wilson does not directly address this complexity (it is far beyond the scope of his investigation), the piece—and his reporting more broadly—has never fallen into this error.

Instead, Wilson's piece focuses on specificities: Nazzaro's unremarkable origins, his and The Base's plans for obtaining land to train, the group's internal communication

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[11] Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jan/23/revealed-the-true-identity-of-the-leader-of-americas-neo-nazi-terror-group

processes, and Nazzaro's ties to military contracting and Russia. Each of these elements offers a crucial departure point for researchers. In his education and apparent family affluence, Nazzaro demonstrates the bourgeois origin and trajectory so common to career terrorists. In highlighting The Base's plans to purchase land, Wilson demonstrates the need for municipal governments to join their federal counterparts in taking seriously the presence of groups like The Base in their communities. In documenting The Base's internal communication strategies, Wilson's exposé highlights those operational security flaws that have undone countless extreme right organisations when exploited by activists and watchdogs. But perhaps most significant of all Wilson's revelations is the fact that Nazzaro has worked as a military contractor and resides in Russia. Wilson's piece raises the possibility that Nazzaro and The Base might represent a "honeypot" operation, run by one government or other, and intended to attract potential terrorists for the purposes of surveillance, manipulation, and arrest.

However, the piece does not mention the obverse of its honeypot speculation. Debate currently rages among those who study accelerationism as to the role that foreign governments have played in spreading its most destructive expressions. So, the reasoning goes: We know that foreign information operations seek to 'flood the system' with misinformation, disinformation, and spurious facts in an effort to confuse, polarise, and demoralise adversaries. Then might foreign governments also 'flood the system' with support for a variety of violent actors? Here the intent would be to cause disruption and chaos, to sow political disorder, and to expend the target country's resources combatting these sources of violence. Given the widely accepted reality that Russia engages in such operations toward the United States, the possibility that Nazzaro is part of such a campaign (witting or not), is one worth considering. Wilson's piece does not speculate on this possibility.

Wilson's report, and subsequent reporting done around it, are invaluable contributions to our understanding of accelerationism as a movement and tendency, and The Base as an organisation. They represent one of 2020's high water marks for both investigative journalism and research into the contemporary extreme right. As scholars of the radical right work to understand and explain the full scope of accelerationism in all its myriad forms, it is essential to do so while dealing in demonstrable facts and rigorous theoretical analysis. Wilson's exposé offers a crucial anchor point for that project.

Cosentino, Gabriele. "From Pizzagate to the Great Replacement: The Globalization of Conspiracy Theories," *In Social Media and the Post-Truth World Order: The Global Dynamics of Disinformation*, ed. Gabriele Cosentino (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Pivot, 2020), 59–86

CHAMILA LIYANAGE

Conspiracies are overflowing from the age-old fringes out into the mainstream, delivering a blow to the common social perceptions of how we see the world around us. One might wonder if the rise of current conspiracy sensationalism is the first of its kind in history, as this trend seems to have a precise aim: discrediting liberal democracy. Many hypotheses have been already introduced to explain the rise of conspiracy sensationalism: the inducing climate of the pandemic (Bodner et al., 2020), the psychology of conspiracy theorists in an increasingly unstable world (Prooijen 2018), or, to look at specific cases, America's historical obsession with conspiracy theories (Konda 2019), security threats posed by conspiracy theories (Amarsingham and Argentino 2020; Schabes 2020), and QAnon's assault on democratic institutions (Muirhead and Rosenblum 2019).

Against this backdrop, Cosentino makes a commendable academic contribution to the much-hyped but less-analysed phenomenon of conspiracy sensationalism, focusing specifically on the globalisation of conspiracy theories in Chapter 3. Contemplating conspiratorial storms, as I will call them due to their present intensity, leads to an important research question: Why does the current trend of conspiracy sensationalism seem to have a single trajectory, which is vilifying Western liberal democracies exclusively? This question takes us to the micro-mechanisms behind the rise of conspiratorial sensationalism, which helps to understand this phenomenon's meso and macro levels. This conspiracy sensationalism cannot be understood without its essential political undercurrents, i.e., the global rise of authoritarianism.

Inside disinformation

Who will benefit from a conspiratorial storm that exclusively aimed at delegitimising Western liberal democracy and its key institutions, including accompanying institutions of the post-war rules-based international order?

Many direct beneficiaries would readily seize the opportunity to weaken Western liberal democracy. On a micro level, the direct beneficiaries are the authoritarian regimes and arch-ideological rivals, such as global radical right parties, groups, intellectuals, and individuals. The meso level of the conspiratorial storm is the virtual world, populated by actors of authoritarian regimes[12] and the global radical right, but in the background, joined by indefinite varieties of special interest groups and fringe communities: meme enthusiasts, gamers, ufologists, spiritual groups, traditionalists, culture warriors, old conspiracy theorists, believers of millenarianism, messianism, new age myths, cults, and anti-vaxxers. This is where the storm brews, but the dynamics that drive it stay in a core micro level, which is the engine of the storm or its underlying dynamics. The storm bears down on a macro level, targeting a global population, including disenchanted westerners and anyone who feels threatened by the Western model of democracy by choice, values, beliefs, or way of life.

Behind this conspiratorial storm is metapolitics, the famed 'silver bullet' of the radical right, put into action alongside the ruthless efficiency of hybrid warfare waged by authoritarian regimes such as Russia[13] and China: the competitors proved to use disinformation to weaken the West. Metapolitics presents the effort to deconstruct the prevailing ideological and cultural mindset, thereby preparing people for a total transformation in the long run. GRECE[14] thinkers such as Guillaume Faye explain

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[12] Examples: The Muller investigation uncovered that more than 126 million Americans were exposed to the organic content created by the Russian Internet Research Agency (IRA) on Facebook alone. The massive dataset of internet propaganda unearthed by the investigation shows contents that aim to sow racial discord among Americans, inflaming cultural differences of racial groups (https://intelligence.house.gov/social-media-content/). Global Media, an arm of the Chinese Communist Party, unleashed a relentless propaganda campaign with special coverage on George Floyd's death, attacking the US political system as the root of all problems (https://www.globaltimes.cn/special-coverage/Protests-erupt-over-Floyd's-death.html). 'The irony is that this is a regime that rounded up the Uighur minority into detention camps and killed prisoners for gruesome organ harvesting'. Liyanage, C. (2020). "Did a French Far-Right Thinker Predict 2020?", *CARR Insight Blog*, 17 September 2020.
[13] As the evidence shows, Russia's cosying up to Europe's radical right parties is an open secret. Marine Le Pen's National Front (now National Rally) was bankrolled by Russia in 2014. Alternative for Germany's (AfD) nativist and anti-European ideology made them partner with Russia as it sought to network with European populist parties. This alliance led the AfD leader, Alexander Gauland, to meet Kremlin-backed neo-fascist ideologue Aleksandr Dugin, who propagates a vision for the renaissance of a Eurasian empire against Western liberal values. Matteo Salvini's Lega, now the ruling party in Italy, was investigated for alleged negotiation with Russia to procure funds. In Austria, Sebastian Kurtz's coalition government collapsed due to the coalition partner, far-right Freedom Party of Austria's (FPÖ) alleged links with Russia. The evidence suggests that Russia actively seeks to cultivate radical right parties in Europe'. Liyanage, C. (2019). "War against the core values: Rise of the radical right in a context of hybrid war," *CARR Insight Blog*, 17 September 2019.
[14] The Groupement de Recherche Muller et d'études Pour la Civilisation Européenne (Research and Study Group for European Civilisation), GRECE is a think tank founded by the Nouvelle Droite.

metapolitics as "the occupation of culture": the "cultural/ideological struggle against the reigning liberal values and beliefs", seeking a complete political transformation in the long run.[15] Alain de Benoist, another key GRECE thinker, insists on the need for a metapolitical strategy to change the "collective consciousness", rooted in liberal values.[16] "Their metapolitical task is shattering the monopoly of the liberal democratic moral code in favour of European ultranationalism".[17] There is no better way to do it than vilifying the opponent, targeting the nerve centre of liberal democracy—its legitimacy.

Post-Truth in context

Cosentino offers several case studies from different regions using his conceptual model: the post-truth condition. Post-truth condition is the world we now live, flooded with misinformation, disinformation, conspiracy theories, and fake news. What should Cosentino have added to make his chapter robust? He overlooks the core mechanisms of conspiratorial disinformation. It's important to analyse the underlying dynamics of disinformation. Cosentino states how post-truth condition weakens democracies globally "from the Philippines, through India to Turkey".[18] All these examples move toward illiberal, authoritarian dispositions, indicating a clear direction to this phenomenon.

In the scholarly literature, several authors seem to gravitate toward the peripheries of the post-truth condition, trivialising its core mechanisms - Cosentino refers to Uscinski (2017) and Kalpokas (2018) in the text. As Uscinski argues, "conspiracy theories are necessary for the healthy functioning of a society because they help balance against concentrations of power".[19] Kalpokas points out the emancipatory feature of post-truth, which enables the "marginalised and alienated" to engage in political action by creating fictional realities.[20] These arguments are not befitting to the context, in which conspiracy theories are part of a global bulwark to eradicate the legitimacy of Western liberal democracy, enabling authoritarian contenders to have a cultural foothold. Even Kalpokas' idea does not make sense in the context of the global rise of authoritarianism. It is not the marginalised and alienated who are the bulwark of disinformation globally, but

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[15] Faye, G. (2011). *Why We Fight: Manifesto of the European Resistance*. London: Arktos Media, 13, 136.
[16] de Benoist, A. and Champetier, C. "Manifesto of the French New Right", http://www.4pt.su/en/content/manifesto-french-new-right.
[17] Liyanage, C. (2020). "The Metapolitics of the Far Right," *CARR Insight Blog*, 7 February 2020.
[18] Cosentino, G. (2020). *Social Media and the Post-Truth World Order: The Global Dynamics of Disinformation*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Pivot, 9.
[19] Uscinski, J. E. (2017). "The study of conspiracy theories." Argumenta: 2.
[20] Kalpokas, I. (2018). *A Political Theory of Post-truth*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

authoritarians and the radical right, targeting the marginalised through anti-democratic ideological messages. Authoritarianism would not save the marginalised and alienated in the long run. However, the conspiracy storm gives voice to some of the marginalised and alienated, such as the long-suffering conspiracy theorists.

It is tempting to frame post-truth's mortal challenge to democracy as a battle between commoners and elites, or people challenging the established power. However, this conception of post-truth as a battleground between commoners and elites is misguided. Through an emphasis on polarisation, this argumentation facilitates an authoritarian revival. The narrative is framed exactly to misguide: 'we the people against the deep state' or '99% against 1%'. The reality is more disturbing than the oversimplifying narrative of the rise of the people against ruling elites. If the affected people of post-truth expect emancipation, then why do they promote authoritarian values evident in metapolitics? There is a paradox between seeking emancipation and promoting autocracy. The post-truth enablers do not seek a better emancipatory system, but an authoritarian one.

Authoritarian revival needs a bogeyman, an existential threat strong enough to ignite racial discord in Western liberal democracies. Economic globalisation has its weaknesses, and the global inequality induced by capitalism is atrocious. Democracy has its challenges as well: mass immigration (also facilitated by ruthless human smugglers who operate as part of global organised crime syndicates) all help to validate the radical right narrative about an invasion from the Global South. Authoritarian regimes, such as the one in Russia, use this narrative to inject fear, exacerbating existing racial disparity, and promote radicalisation in Western societies. The trust crisis of the mainstream media and political institutions has partly emerged from their long-standing insufficiencies, weaknesses, and challenges. Still, in a post-truth world, the trust crisis is a direct result of relentless and ruthless vilification aimed at discrediting their legitimacy by any means possible. Social media, which is part of a profoundly democratic project that gives equality of voice to many millions worldwide, became a tool to promote authoritarianism. The point is that the shortcomings of democracies are numerous, but none of those could be framed as excuses for a global rise of authoritarianism.

What lies beneath the post-truth condition is a sophisticated disinformation campaign of vilification. Memes and gamification show the innovative aspects designed for mass participation and mobilisation. Why do gamers tend to promote authoritarian

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values? For example, QAnon fact-checking bakes (assemble) breadcrumbs (clues) to claim that there is a battle between President Trump, the protagonist of a reality game, and the so-called 'evil' liberal elites of the deep-state. It shows this phenomenon is more than a post-truth condition, a well-oiled metapolitical mechanism. It is the manipulation of the post-truth world by its makers to achieve an aim: delegitimising liberal democracy and weakening the post-war rules-based order, then, ensuing chaos will naturally demand authoritarian comeback to rein the mass fall out.

Alt-right: the portrayal of post-truth

Post-truth condition is promoted as part of a global authoritarian ideology, which has roots in the French New Right's neo-fascist ethno-pluralism, seeking a complete overhaul to the current system and replacing democracy with an 'ethnostate'. In this agenda, so-called traditional states such as Russia, Turkey, China, and India are said to be the winners.[21] They are called to safeguard their traditional culture and identity against Western neo-liberalism, portrayed as the great-unifying Satan. The ideology behind the post-truth condition is ethnonationalism with messianic, traditionalist, and authoritarian disposition. Given the alt-right's leading role as a promoter of the post-truth condition, it is vital to trace the roots of the alt-right that made them a bulwark against liberal democracy.

The alt-right is the ideological grandchild of the Nouvelle Droite that gave rise to the European New Right (ENR). This ideology has inherent roots in Julius Evola's version of traditionalism and fascist mysticism adopted by the Nouvelle Droite. Through the 'ethnopluralist' argument, the alt-right wants to organise races into separate geographic territories under the guise of protecting their culture and identity, a task Tamir Bar-On refers to as "fascism with a human face".[22] The outcome they seek is a fascist utopia where ethnocultures will be separated, and an archeofuturistic vision of a Eurosiberian Union[23] will become a reality.

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[21] Faye envisions that traditional societies in China, India, the Muslim-Arab world, Africa, Southeast Asia, Latin America, and even in North America will cooperate with a future Eurosiberian Empire.

[22] Bar-On, T. "Alain de Benoist: Neo-fascism with a human face?". Conference paper on "Cross-border Concepts of the Radical Right" as part of the symposium "Right-wing Extremism without Borders? International Perspectives and Counter-Strategies" by the Federal Agency for Civic Education in Munich, February 9-10, 2015.

[23] Guillaume Faye presents the concept of Archeofuturism, or returning to archaic principles and ancestral values, as an answer to what he calls 'the catastrophe of modernity'. His Utopia is the Eurosiberian empire, the 'first hyperpower' in history, which will regroup white Europeans (including Russians) in the wider European landmass. Faye, Why We Fight (2011); Faye, G. (2010). *Archeofuturism: European Visions of the Post-Catastrophic Age*. London: Arktos, 87.

The post-truth condition is not an organic phenomenon but part of a relentless incitement against Western liberal democracy, orchestrated by the global authoritarian revival with robust utilisation of radical right metapolitics. Analysing the post-truth condition is essential, but it is imperative to examine the underlying fundamental drivers towards achieving a specific aim: the globalisation of ethnonationalism, a bulwark against unifying multiculturalism, seeking to restore the 'traditional state' or 'ethnostate' for the people who share a common heritage, language, faith, culture, and ancestry around the world.

Charalambous, G. and G. Ioannou (eds.) *Left radicalism and populism in Europe*. Oxon: Routledge

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Is the 'marriage' between left radicalism and populism in Europe a brand new political phenomenon, or does it have historical equivalents? Given that there is an increasing focus on left-wing populism in the scholarly community and the use of populist framings by the European radical left, it is questionable whether this points to an ideological shift from socialism to left populism (and what that shift entails).

How do current left-wing populisms conceptually/ideologically relate to democracy? This is among the main questions that the authors of *Left Radicalism and Populism in Europe* (eds. Charalambous & Ioannou, 2020) attempt to answer in a brilliant collective effort that includes both empirical and theoretical contributions. Scholars have found empirical evidence that nowadays, in particular since the great financial crisis of 2007-2008, there is an increase in use of the populist rhetoric and tools by the radical left in Europe (and elsewhere), however, this has often been the case historically. As is argued in the chapters by Mullin, Escalona and Balampadinis analyzing left radicalism and populism across history, with the cases of the Russian Narodniki, France during the interwar period, and of Eurocommunism, populism and anti-capitalism have often established a complicated relationship. Several chapters of the book consider evidence of recent events, analyzing the cases of the indignados and the Syntagma square 'aganaktismenoi', of Podemos and SYRIZA (Kioupkiolis and Katsambekis), but also of Mélenchon in France (Chiocchietti) and Corbyn in the UK (Worth), or how populism was fruitfully used discursively as a strategy by the right-wing in Eastern Europe to "hijack the left" (Petsinis). The conclusive part of the book covers the complex relations existing between social movements, populism, and social strategy, with the theoretical contribution of Seraphim Seferiades (chapter 11) on populism as "deceptive invocation of the popular" being an excellent point.

The introductory part of *Left Radicalism and Populism in Europe* includes a comprehensive review of the conceptualisations of 'populism' (in particular the ideational conceptualisation and the discursive-performative approach). The introduction, together

with the already mentioned chapter by Seferiades and the conclusion drafted by the two editors, Charalambous and Ioannou, presents an essential theoretical contribution to all scholars of populism in Europe, not only those researching the radical left, but also to those interested in the study of populism in Europe tout court, as they show the possibility of populism to be used as a potential political strategy. An important contribution of the book concerns the role of the context to understand the relation between left radicalism and populism, using an important variety of political subjects and a diachronic perspective, combining historical and comparative assessments. The role of context, in particular crises, is well known in relation to the study of radical right and populism, however, it may well represent a 'temptation' for the radical left as well to use populist schemata and rhetoric. The European Union, with its long 'decade of crisis', started with the global financial crisis of 2008 and continuing into the pandemic, has represented an ideal occasion for the temptation to opt for simple and accessible populist schemata in response to austerity policies.

However, the book could also have considered more extensively the 'crisification' of policymaking in the EU (to use an expression recently crafted by Mark Rhinard), to better investigate the relationship between top-down supranational approaches based on crisis-management expertise, and bottom-up populist attempts of 'constructing the people'. To this cause, the debate concerning the technocratic features of the EU and its institutions is essential, in particular the influence of expertise over policymaking through highly technical task forces and other ad hoc bodies. In the last part of Left Radicalism and Populism in Europe the relationship between populism and left radicalism is defined, emblematically, as a "double-edged sword" (p. 264), as it provides solutions to mobilise masses, but at the potential risk of being deceptive (as suggested by Seferiades in chapter 11). This observation is better understood by taking into consideration the reflections by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe concerning the risks of 'constructing the people' as a political force for socialists and other progressives, made out of diverse classes and struggles that are not reducible to class conflict and the acute critic of capitalism.

IRU Researchers In Context

For more information on these trends and our work, please refer to these selected papers, blogs, and podcast episodes from our unit members published in 2020:

Eger, Maureen A. (Sociology & ideologies of nationalism)
- "Neo-nationalism in Western Europe." *European Sociological Review* 31(1): 115-130. https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcu087
- "From radical right to neo-nationalist." *European Political Science* 18(3): 379–399. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41304-018-0160-0
- The Return of Nationalism and the rise of the Radical Right – *Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right Insight Blog*

Forchtner, Bernhard (Environment & Cultural politics of the radical right)
- Star Trek vs. the Radical Right: Visions of a Better World, The Radical Right's Fictions of a Better World (originally published via *Fair Observer*)
- Art, Nature and the Exclusion of the Alien, Why Exclusion Can't Be Framed as Natural (originally published via *Fair Observer*)
- Eco-fascism 'proper': the curious case of Greenline Front – *Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right Insight Blog*
- 'Make ecology right again': Reading radical right eco-publications – *Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right Insight Blog*
- Fighting 'the Great Replacement' in 2020: an Identitarian road trip to Greece and back – *Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right Insight Blog*
- Images of a 'better' world? Fictional storytelling in the radical-right (Part I) – *Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right Insight Blog*

Hughes, Brian (Communication technology)
- "US Election: How can we challenge right-wing extremism?" panel discussion hosted by *openDemocracy*
- "Poets, Theologians, and Lone Wolves: Modeling Medium-Specific Processes of Radicalization," *International Journal of Communication*, 14

- "The Age of Lone Wolf Terrorism" (review). *International Journal of Communication* Vol. 14 January 2020.
- "'Pine Tree' Twitter and the Shifting Ideological Foundations of Eco-Extremism," (Loopcast podcast). January 2020.

Kreter, Maximilian (Ideology in white power music)

- Der Reiz des Verbotenen: Die sprachlich-ideologische Entwicklung der Band „Stahlgewitter" im Spiegel der deutschen Rechtsrockszene von 1995 bis 2017. In: Heidi Christ/Merle Greiser/Christoph Meinel/Nepomuk Riva (Hg.), *Verbotene Musik, Forschungsstelle für fränkische Volksmusik*, Uffenheim: pp. 119-167.
- Sachsen und Thüringen – Hochburgen des Rechtsrock in Deutschland? In: Uwe Backes/Steffen Kailitz (Hg.), *Sachsen – Eine Hochburg des Rechtsextremismus?*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen: pp. 315-337.
- „Die Kugel ist für dich". Wie der Rechtsrock aus Feindbildern menschliche Zielscheiben macht. In: Denken ohne Geländer. Der *Blog des Hannah-Arendt-Institut für Totalitarismusforschung e.V.*
- 'Grey zones' in music scenes – A blurred concept, or 'the attempt to nail a jelly to the wall' - *Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right Insight Blog*
- Personal Public (Death) Threat II: How Germanophone White Power bands threaten their enemies - *Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right Insight Blog*

Lubarda, Balša. (Environmental theory/environmental sociology)

- "Can Environmentalism be non-ideological? The case of ecofascism." (KapitalX Podcast)
- What Hungary's nationalist farmers have against Orban https://www.fairobserver.com/region/europe/balsa-lubarda-hungary-far-right-agriculture-farming-viktor-orban-opposition-news-00911/ (Originally published via *Fair Observer*)
- Analysis: Humans vs. The Planet. (*BBC Radio 4*)
- Remove or defend Kebab? Radical right, music of the Yugoslav wars, and the perils of simplifying narratives - *Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right Insight Blog*

- "Beyond Ecofascism? Far-Right Ecologism (FRE) as a Framework for Future Inquiries", *Environmental Values*, 29(6): 713-732, doi: [10.3197/096327120X15752810323922](10.3197/096327120X15752810323922)
- "'Homeland Farming' or 'Rural Emancipation'? The Discursive Overlap between Populist and Green Parties in Hungary", *Sociologia Ruralis*, 60(4): 810-832, doi:10.1111/soru.12289
- "Far-right agricultural alternatives to right-wing populism in Hungary: the "real" Caretakers of the Blood and Soil", *Culture Della Sostenibilita*, 24(1): 1-24, doi: [10.7402/CdS.24.002](10.7402/CdS.24.002)

Mattheis, Ashley A. (Gendered ideologies / Cultural impact of ideologies)
- "[QAnon and Momfluencers](#)" (Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right, Right Rising podcast episode)
- "[How the Radical Right is Appropriating Feminism](#)" (originally published via *Fair Observer*)
- "[Manifesto Memes: the Radical Right's New Dangerous Visual Rhetorics](#)" (originally published via *openDemocracy*)
- "[Understanding Digital Hate Culture](#)" (originally published via *Fair Observer*)
- "[Disrupting the Digital Divide: Extremism's Integration of Offline / Online Practice](#)" (*Interventionen*)
- "[Shieldmaidens of Whiteness: (Alt)Maternalism and Women Recruiting for the Far/Alt-Right](#)", *Journal for Deradicalization*, 17(1)

Volk, Sabine ('Europeanisation' of radical right)
- "'Wir sind das Volk!' Representative claim-making and populist style in the Pegida movement's discourse" in *German Politics* 29(4): 599-616. https://doi.org/10.1080/09644008.2020.1742325
- "'No borders, no nations' or 'Fortress Europe'? How European citizens remake European borders", in *European Studies and Europe: Twenty Years of Euroculture*, ed. Janny de Jong, Marek Neuman, Senka Stanivukovic-Neuman, and Margriet van der Waal, Göttingen University Press, 77-92. https://doi.org/10.17875/gup2019-1225

- "Commemoration at the Extremes: A Field Report from Dresden 2020", in Cultures of History Forum
- "Introducing eastern Germany's far-right intellectuals", *LSE Europp Blog,* Feb 2020,
- "In Controversial Company: Conservatives and Far Right United on German Unity Day *- Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right Insight Blog*

James F. Downes (Right-Wing Party Competition; Refugee Crisis; Populist Radical Right; Mainstreaming)
- Downes, J.F. M. Loveless & A. Lam (Forthcoming: 2020). "The Looming Refugee Crisis in the EU: Right-Wing Party Competition and Strategic Positioning." *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*
- Downes, J.F. F. Wiebrecht and E. Chan (2020). "From 'Challengers' to 'Incumbents': The Populist Radical Right in Government." In Eviane Leidig (ed.), *Mainstreaming the Global Radical Right* (ibidem-Verlag Press)
- "How the far right took over the mainstream." Countering the Radical Right Series, *openDemocracy*
- "Understanding Populism During COVID-19." (Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right, Right Rising podcast episode).
- "Populism in Italy: A Deep Dive." (With V.A. Bruno & A. Scopelliti). (Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right, Right Rising podcast episode)