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Newsletter of the ECPR Standing Group on Extremism & Democracy

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

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STANDING GROUP ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dear *e-Extreme* readers,

We hope you are well, wherever you may be. Read on for the usual mix of announcements, reports, reviews and alerts to keep on top of all the recent developments related to 'extremism and democracy'.

We're happy to welcome our new book review liaison Uygar Baspehlivan. Uygar is a PhD candidate at the University of Bristol with an interest in the extremist cultural policies of the Alt-Right. If you want to review a book or a journal article for *e-Extreme,* please get in touch with him at: uygar.baspehlivan@bristol.ac.uk. We look forward to receiving reviews of the latest offerings in the field of populism, extremism and radicalism.

Please do get in touch with your contributions and ideas. In the meantime, take care.

REGISTER AS AN E&D STANDING GROUP MEMBER

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

In order to join, you will need a MyECPR account, which we assume many of you will already have. If you do not have one, you can create an account in only a few minutes (and you need not be from an ECPR member institution to do so). If you are from a non-member institution, we will need to accept your application to join, so your membership status (which you can see via your MyECPR account, and on the Standing Group pages when you are logged in to MyECPR) will be 'pending' until you are accepted.

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

CALL FOR REVIEWERS

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

E&D ROUTLEDGE BOOK SERIES

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

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

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

KEEP US INFORMED

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

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

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

EXTERNAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

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

Find it online *here,* and download the complete compendium in PDF format *here*.

VOX-POL NETWORK OF EXCELLENCE: RESEARCHER RESOURCES

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

BOOK AND ARTICLE REVIEWS

ROGER GRIFFIN. FASCISM: A QUICK IMMERSION
TIBIDABO PUBLISHING, 2020. ISBN 978-1-949845-12-9

Dr. Steven Woodbridge
Kingston University, London

Unravelling the ideas that underpin fascism remains one of the most difficult challenges for historians and political scientists in the field. As Roger Griffin notes, 'fascism' is evidently a contested and complex topic even today. Griffin's new study seeks to unpack the complexities of right-wing ultra-nationalism for a wider audience, although specialists will also find much of value in the book.

Ever since his ground-breaking study The Nature of Fascism (1991) appeared, Griffin has closely analysed right-wing extremism in all its forms. Thanks to his construction of a working definition of generic fascism, a fresh generation of scholars was able to find a new consensus. Famously, Griffin's succinct formulation in 1991 stated: 'Fascism is a political ideology whose mythic core in its various permutations is a palingenetic form of populist ultra-nationalism'. Much of his subsequent work provided further insights into this definition, and undoubtedly stimulated much scholarly debate - both for and against it - which has continued to influence new academic research.

Griffin's latest publication, as he aptly notes, is a little book 'but one dense with compressed arguments, theories and information'. Indeed, this publication is part of the 'Quick Immersions' series, a new initiative which seeks to provide 'accurate and straightforward language' to offer a good introduction or deeper knowledge on diverse issues in the social sciences and humanities. Griffin's contribution more than succeeds in meeting these objectives, and also revisits his extensive work on right-wing extremism over the years. He explains and dissects his original definition and its subsequent evolution over time in a satisfyingly clear-cut fashion.

The book is structured into four main chapters, together with a 'Post-scripture' and a brief but helpful guide to further reading. Griffin commences by responding to George Orwell's well-known article 'What is Fascism?', published in 1944, which had expressed pessimism over whether a clear and generally accepted definition would ever emerge. Griffin counters this by arguing that there is now 'good news' - enormous strides have been made, he contends, 'to provide a practical, generally agreed, working definition of fascism for use by historians and

political scientists in their research' (Griffin's emphasis). In fact, as Griffin persuasively argues, his working definition has proved to be an 'increasingly productive tool' for investigating both the 'classical' (interwar) versions of fascism and the many post-1945 permutations.

Throughout the book there is a welcome emphasis on employing precise terminology when discussing fascism. In chapter 2, for example, Griffin returns back to his original 1991 definition and restates key points concerning the then unfamiliar word 'palingenetic'. One aspect of the 'ineliminable core' (Michael Freeden's term, as used by Griffin) at the heart of most fascisms was the vision of a reborn nation, conceived in 'ultranationalist' and 'racist (but not necessarily biological) terms'. Fascism's demand for 'revolutionary change' to bring about a 'new order' and 'new men' (and women) consisted of a fusion of two sub-myths: one is the myth of the 'ultra-nation', an imagined community embracing the nation's largely mythicized history and its future (and which, like a living organism, can decline and 'die'), and the other is the myth of 'palingenesis' - the 'rebirth' of the nation from decadence and decline, to be realized by the enforced removal of obstacles to or 'enemies' of the nation's renewal, a process led by the fascist elite, movement, party or group.

Importantly, Griffin maintains that the specific elements that make up each fascist myth of rebirth consist of different blends of such elements. Thus, one version of fascism may embrace anti-Semitism, while another may want to experiment with corporatist economics, and yet another may seek to woo mass popular support. Others, as is the case with various post-1945 examples, may choose the strategy of 'leaderless resistance' and pursue a groupuscular, terroristic path. Even within the same movement, as Griffin points out, some ideologues may extol the 'eternal' values of the agricultural countryside, while others praise 'the heroic productivity of a technologically advanced metropolis'. The result is the 'extraordinary variety' of interwar and post-war fascist ideas in terms of specific content, while at the same time sharing the 'same' belief in 'the nation's imminent or postponed rebirth from decadence which gives them their generic fascist identity'.

In chapter 4, Griffin maps how the latter point has exhibited itself in 'Post-war and contemporary fascisms', and he explores a number of examples to illustrate this, sometimes with direct primary source quotations from extreme right texts. One such is the anti-Semite and Holocaust denier Richard Verrall, who penned articles for the National Front journal Spearhead in the 1970s. As far as Griffin is concerned, Verrall's language on 'decadent' art, which echoed strongly the interwar Nazi perspective on culture, illustrated one of the most influential forms assumed by post-1945 fascism - that of 'neo' or 'Universal Nazism'. More recent examples of this 'internationalization' of fascism, and the synthesis of interwar fascist ideas with post-1945 neo-fascist components, were the terrorist attacks carried out by Anders Breivik in Norway in 2011 and, in turn, the crimes perpetrated

by Brenton Tarrant in New Zealand in 2019. The 'manifestos' of both men represented hybrids of fascist and neo-fascist ideological elements.

Significantly, taking both its interwar and post-war permutations together, although many types of post-1945 fascism have tended to adopt either a pseudo-democratic party or a smaller 'groupuscular' organizational form, what strikes Griffin especially is how fascism over the course of the last one hundred years has 'displayed considerable ingenuity' in generating such a wide variety of fresh diagnoses of the decadence of the nation. Although one drawback to the book is the lack of an index, it nevertheless offers an excellent doorway into Griffin's highly regarded research on fascism since the 1990s, delivered in a very accessible short read form.

Dr. Steven Woodbridge is a Senior Lecture in History at Kingston University, London, Specialising in 20th century British, European and world history, with particular expertise in British fascist ideology and the wider nature of fascism and the contemporary extreme right.

LARS ERIK BERNTZEN. LIBERAL ROOTS OF FAR RIGHT ACTIVISM: THE ANTI-ISLAMIC MOVEMENT IN THE 21ST CENTURY
ROUTLEDGE, 2020. 212 PP. £27.99. ISBN 9780367224660

Callum Downes
University of Exeter

In the Liberal Roots of Far Right Activism: The Anti-Islamic Movement in the 21st Century Lars Erik Berntzen investigates the rise of anti-Islamic sentiment among the far-right in Western Europe and North America from 2001 onwards. He proposes that in order to understand this phenomenon we must first examine what he refers to as a 'liberal paradox' that is common among the contemporary far-right (Berntzen, 2019). This book offers a unique perspective of the anti-Islamic sentiment that is dominant among the modern far-right (Rydgren, 2018: 2) and presents new evidence to challenge the widespread academic consensus that the adoption of liberal values by the anti-Islamic far-right is primarily a strategy to prevent persecution and obtain legitimacy.

Of late, academic studies into the far-right have identified that the contemporary anti-Islamic far-right have abandoned many of the traditional values associated with the far-right and in their place embraced liberal and progressive positions (Berntzen, 2020: 38-40). For instance, many have discarded traditional anti-Semitic positions, perceiving the nation-state of Israel and the Jew as a natural ally

in the fight against Islam (Mudde, 2019: 28). Noticeably, in place of these traditional values, the development of anti-Islamic sentiment among the contemporary far-right has seen the inclusion of liberal and progressive positions, defining themselves as the defenders of such liberal values as gender and sexual orientation equality (Betz & Meret, 2009: 319).

While the anti-Islamic far-right's hostility towards Muslims sits well with the traditional far-right, their inclusion and support of liberal and progressive values is clearly inconsistent with the far-right's traditionally conservative views (Berntzen, 2020: 5). This is what Berntzen refers to as the 'liberal paradox'. The widespread academic consensus suggests that the anti-Islamic far-right's inclusion and exclusion of certain positions 'should not be taken at face value.' (Berntzen, 2020: 40). Rather, the anti-Islamic far-right's inclusion and exclusion of certain values is deemed to be strategic, concealing more extreme positions whilst appearing more moderate in public in order to avoid condemnation and attain legitimacy (Fleck & Muller, 1998: 436). Nevertheless, Berntzen questions this widespread academic consensus and argues that the contemporary anti-Islamic far-right 'is in fact liberalism that has drifted to the far-right' (Berntzen, 2020: 165-166).

This leads Berntzen to the central claim that he makes in his book, that the anti-Islamic far-right is 'characterised by a semi-liberal equilibrium.' (Berntzen, 2020: 172) In other words, the anti-Islamic far-right exists in a state of balance between liberal and progressive values on the one hand and authoritarian and traditional positions on the other. So as to justify this claim, Berntzen initially poses two research questions. Firstly, 'what characterises the anti-Islamic movements' structure and composition? [Secondly,] how, and to what extent, does the anti-Islamic movement incorporate progressive and liberal values?' (Berntzen, 2020: 3). In order to engage with these research questions the book provides a study of four specific dimensions of the anti-Islamic far-right. First, it examines the background and biographies of movement figureheads. Secondly, it analyses the official ideology of the anti-Islamic far-right. Thirdly, it examines their organisational networks in order to assess whether their programmes are coordinated or not. And finally, it tracks the mobilisation of recruits and sympathisers in order to assess whether they align with the official ideology of the anti-Islamic far-right.

Berntzen examines the expansion of anti-Islamic sentiment among the far-right from 2001 and 2017 and asserts that this expansion can be understood to have undergone four waves. They are characterised by the creation of new activist groups which have established movements in several countries (Berntzen, 2020: 65-76). By examining the emergence of anti-Islamic sentiment among the far-right from 2001 onwards, Berntzen conducts an analysis of the biographies of thirty anti-Islamic figureheads in order to assess their public appeal and obtain an explanation for why certain values have become more widespread among the

anti-Islamic far-right than others (Berntzen, 2020: 76-77). Berntzen identifies that among other things a left-wing background is more common than a far-right or extreme right background amongst these figureheads, and suggests that a left-wing legacy may be an explanation for why the anti-Islamic far-right embrace and advance positions that are typically considered left-wing (Berntzen, 2020: 80-81).

Following the exploration of the four waves of anti-Islamic expansion, Berntzen turns to examining the official ideology of the anti-Islamic far-right. Beginning with an examination of the collective action frames that are employed by the anti-Islamic far-right, Berntzen distinguishes the diagnostic, prognostic and motivational frames from one another. Whereas the diagnostic frame suggests that the West is under threat of Islamification, the prognostic frame proposes the non-violent solution of a greater emphasis being placed on Western values rather than multicultural doctrine and authoritarian legislation (Berntzen, 2020: 90-96). Thus, the motivational frame depicts their hostility and opposition to Muslims as a 'defensive battle for freedom and democracy.' (Berntzen, 2020: 96).

In light of his findings on the collective action frames implemented by the anti-Islamic far-right, Berntzen suggests that the anti-Islamic far-right incorporate a third type of master frame into their collective action framing. Rydgren's (2005) distinction between the 'fascist' and 'ethno-pluralist' master frames employed by the far-right does not take into account their position on such liberal values as gender and sexuality; thus, Berntzen suggests that the anti-Islamic far-right's shift from targeting specific ethnicities to Muslims and their inclusion of liberal and progressive values is 'sufficiently different to constitute a third master frame for the far-right', which he refers to as the 'civilizational master frame' (Berntzen, 2020: 103-106).

Succeeding his assessment of the anti-Islamic far-right's ideology, Berntzen's book turns to examining the organisational network of the anti-Islamic far-right. From his analysis Berntzen draws three significant conclusions. Firstly, from investigating the anti-Islamic far-right's online presence we are able to identify a fundamentally transnational nature (Berntzen, 2020: 118-122). Secondly, that 'birds of a feather really do flock together'. Anti-Islamic groups reach out to groups that share similar liberal and progressive positions, such as feminist, LGBTQ+, and pro-Israeli groups, although there are doubts that these groups reciprocate the anti-Islamic far-right's advances (Berntzen, 2020: 125-126). The third and final significant conclusion reached in this chapter is that the anti-Islamic far-right's ideological span of liberal positions is built on 'negative coalitions'; simply put, that sympathisers and activists are united by what they are against (Berntzen, 2020: 128).

Finally, Berntzen turns to examining the sentiment of members and followers of two-hundred and ninety-eight anti-Islamic groups on Facebook, in order to evaluate whether recruits and sympathisers align with the official ideology of the anti-Islamic far-right. His sentiment analysis concludes that recruits and sympathisers with the anti-Islamic far-right align with their official ideology. Firstly, that they use the same diagnostic frame which states that Muslims and Islam constitute an existential threat (Berntzen, 2020: 144), and secondly, that the inclusion of liberal and progressive values by the in-group is dominant (Berntzen, 2020: 146-150).

By providing detailed analysis of these four specific dimensions of the anti-Islamic far-right throughout his book, Berntzen answers his two initial research questions. Firstly, that the anti-Islamic expansion of the far-right is a transnational movement with a consistent worldview and ideology (Berntzen, 2020: 165). The transnational anti-Islamic movement continuously incorporates both traditional and liberal values, hence being characterised by what Berntzen refers to as a semi-liberal equilibrium (Berntzen, 2020: 165). Thus, this book provides a unique answer to the 'liberal paradox', maintaining that the anti-Islamic far-right's inclusion of liberal and progressive values is genuine rather than an attempt to avoid condemnation and obtain legitimacy.

One omission that may raise eyebrows is the book's unwillingness to assess the political consequences of the conclusion that it reaches. For instance, does Berntzen's conclusion that the anti-Islamic far-right are characterised by a semi-liberal equilibrium offer credence to their political agenda? By stating that the anti-Islamic far-right are more liberal and progressive than one typically supposes, one can in turn potentially legitimise the far-right and their political agenda. Nevertheless, the book's aversion to examining the consequences of its conclusion provides scope for further research in this field, as scholars can turn their attention to the political consequences that may ensue if we are to accept that the anti-Islamic far-right's inclusion of liberal and progressive values is genuine.

To conclude, this book provides a unique insight into the development of anti-Islamic sentiment among the far-right, and challenges widespread academic consensus regarding the contemporary far-right's inclusion of liberal and progressive positions. Scholars who study or have an interest in the far-right, Islamophobia, and social movements should pay significant attention to this book.

Callum Downes is a PhD candidate in the department of Sociology, Philosophy and Anthropology at the University of Exeter. He is an early career research fellow for the Centre for Analysis of the Radical Right (CARR). His doctoral research focuses on whether and to what extent the contemporary radical right suffers from epistemic injustice.

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MAURITS J. MEIJERS AND ANDREJ ZASLOVE. MEASURING POPULISM IN POLITICAL PARTIES: APPRAISAL OF A NEW APPROACH
COMPARATIVE POLITICAL STUDIES, 2021, 54(2): 372-407

Dr. Valerio Alfonso Bruno
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"Measuring Populism in Political Parties: Appraisal of a New Approach" by Maurits J. Meijers and Andrej Zaslove sets out from the discouraging consideration that, despite a large number of authoritative studies on populism in political parties in Europe, we are not yet able to measure it in a valid and precise manner. The aim of the authors, after having carefully listed in detail the weaknesses of existing approaches, is to address this issue of measuring political parties' populism. They propose a new approach for operationalizing and measuring populism through the use of expert surveys, and illustrate its advantages. In particular, the approach proposed is conceived to offer full coverage for all European political parties.

As Meijers and Zaslove recognize (pp. 373-374), the increase in support for European populist parties has been accompanied by a number of fundamental advances in populism research. Yet, when it comes to measuring populism in political parties in a way that covers its multiple dimensions, many studies continue

to use imprecise measurements or categorizations of the phenomenon. Typical limitations include: (a) the use of literature reviews based on a heterogenous set of studies applying a range of conceptions of populism; (b) the use of a limited set of countries cases; and (c) relying excessively on country specialists. In addition, Meijers and Zaslove note the asymmetry between the rich developments in the demand-side (individual-level research) and the supply-side (party-level research). The demand-side of the populist research develops prevalently through the individual perspective (such as voters' attitudes or citizens' issue positions), while supply-side research is interested mainly in studying the populist dimensions of political parties (for instance, how populist or anti-elitist a party is). The former, according to the authors, has produced the most important empirical advances, even if the study of populism in Europe actually originated from party-level research (in particular Mudde, 2004).

In reviewing "Measuring Populism in Political Parties", I have identified at least three important contributions to the current research in populism studies. The first important merit of the article is that, before introducing a new approach in measuring populism on the supply side party-level research, it provides a punctual, much needed, detailed and exhaustive assessment of the current approaches (pp. 374 – 381). The review is developed against the backdrop of four criteria for the satisfactory measurement of populism: (i) construct validity, (ii) multi-dimensionality, (iii) measurement precision and (iv) coverage. Each approach has so far failed, according to Meijers and Zaslove, to fit all the four criteria.

Subsequently, the article advances with a convincing proposal to measure European parties' populism through the use of an expert survey (pp. 381), in order to fit the four criteria mentioned above. They state that as a latent construct "[...] populism is measured indirectly through a number of survey items that share common variance – referring to the underlying construct of populism" (p. 382). This presents the second important merit of the article. Having considered populism as a latent construct, it is better measured from a number of different perspectives. In this case, a list of sixteen items deduced from a populism and political parties expert survey, covering four essential concepts of populism (p. 384):

- Regarding the first concept, *populism* (broadly speaking), based on the ideational approach, the items: (1) Manichean worldview, (2) indivisible people, (3) general will, (4) people-centrism and (5) anti-elitism.
- Regarding the second concept, *party ideology*, the items: (6) left-right (general), (7) left-right (economy), (8) immigration, (9) European integration, (10) nativism, (11) civil liberties versus law and order (12) ,ifestyle: traditional vs liberal.
- Regarding the third concept, *political style*, the items: (13) complex vs common-sense politics and (14) emotional appeal.

- Regarding the fourth concept, *party organization*, the items: (15) personalized leadership and (16) intra-party democracy.

Finally, the third and perhaps the main advance made by the article is the presentation of a newly conceived expert survey. The authors present a long and exhaustive comparison between some well-known expert surveys that measure populism (pp. 385- 397), notably the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) but also the Global Populism Database (GDP) and the PopuList dataset (Rooduijn et al., 2019). The expert survey conceived by Meijers and Zaslove between April and June 2018, entitled *Populism and Political Parties Expert Survey* (POPPA), was conducted in 28 European countries, covering 250 political parties, with a total of 861 invitations sent to country-experts, in order to (a) estimate the populism of the parties and (b) measure parties' ideological positions and characteristics pertaining to their organization and political style.

In conclusion, the new approach to measure populism proposed in the article, with its continuous measurement of populism that allows for the identification and differentiation between parties with varying levels of populism, is promising. It should be considered by all scholars interested in measuring the degree of populism within political parties in Europe.

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PUBLICATIONS ALERT

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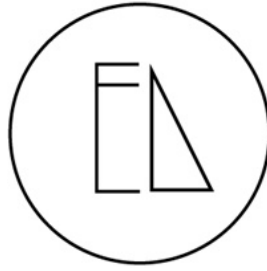
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