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# JRWS

# JOURNAL OF RIGHT-WING STUDIES

A PROJECT OF UC BERKELEY'S
Center for Right-Wing Studies

# The Journal of Right-Wing Studies

A Project of UC Berkeley's Center for Right-Wing Studies





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# CONTENTS

## Right-Wing Studies: A Roundtable on the State of the Field

## *Letter from the Editor*

We spent the year 2008 trying to get the UC Berkeley Center for Right-Wing Studies (CRWS) off the ground. There was pushback. In part, it was because there was no precedent—right-wing studies?—for such an entity on a major research campus. But above all, the pushback was about timing. Neoliberalism was suffering comeuppance in the form of transnational catastrophic financial collapse and near depression. In the USA, the most right-wing presidency in at least seventy-five years was coming to a shattering end, seeming to give way to a "transformative" administration under a Black Democrat. Sam Tanenhaus of the *New York Times* reflected the widespread mood, publishing *The Death of Conservatism*. Why now was there a need for right-wing studies?

The Tea Party swiftly put this objection to rest. Its populist uprising was the defining political event of the Obama years. It was launched in February 2009, one month after Barack Obama's inauguration as president and one month before CRWS opened its doors. We held an early conference on the Tea Party, wrote reports and a book on it, and the center attracted attention from many quarters around the world where right-wing populism was similarly on the rise.

By the time US populism morphed from the Tea Party to Trumpism, immigration surges had made the worldwide dimension of the trend unmistakable. Liberal democracy was back on its heels in Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Americas. Trumpism was of a piece with illiberal democratic regimes erupting across the continents. Behind them were populist right-wing mobilizations possessed by local variations of replacement theory. This state of affairs has only deepened over the past several years.

Surely it is time for a *Journal of Right-Wing Studies*.

*JRWS* will publish essays, research papers, book reviews, and commentary. We believe the problems we will address here are urgent, and that discussion and analysis need to be as widely diffused as possible. Accordingly, we are an open access journal available worldwide without economic barriers for readers or for potential authors.

Our first full issue—Issue One—will be published early this year. What we are publishing today we are calling our "Issue Zero." We have asked a dozen scholars to comment on what they consider to be the most compelling questions in right-wing studies today. We believe this provocative series of short essays offers a robust suggestion of what is to come in *JRWS*.

It is a pleasure to welcome you to our initial publication, Issue Zero of the *Journal of Right-Wing Studies.*

Lawrence Rosenthal, Editor in Chief
January 23, 2023

What are the most urgent issues and problems—either in research or policy—for those concerned with right-wing politics today? The twelve voices assembled in this roundtable provide widely divergent answers to this question. They reflect on the state of the right from different disciplinary fields, from different regions of the world, and with different issues in mind. At the same time, these twelve brief essays, taken together, highlight recurring themes in the contemporary academic study of the right. These overlapping concerns and areas of agreement map the terrain of present understanding and gesture toward new avenues of investigation.

One recurring theme is the need for attention to the legal and constitutional sphere of politics. Several contributors point to a disquieting trend: the construction of illiberal hybrids that merge law and democracy with autocratic or ethnonationalist forms of government. Others stress the legal availability of the means of violence (guns) or the legal erosion of women's rights (abortion) or the legal—and sometimes illegal—effort to restrict access to the democratic process (voting). In a related vein, multiple contributors to this roundtable draw our attention to the shifting ground of party politics. Far-right parties have entered mainstream politics and governing coalitions in numerous countries; other mainstream center-right parties have adopted increasingly far-right positions; and rhetoric and policies once deemed unacceptably extremist (particularly around immigration and race) have been absorbed into the lexicons and agendas of mainstream political actors—including, sometimes, those on the left. The relationship between the "mainstream" and the "extremes," the question of what drives such normalization, and the shifting allegiances of voters and parties all demand careful study. The same is true of the tension between statism and antistatism on the contemporary right-wing scene. Is the state an ally of the right, a set of institutions to be seized? Or is it an enemy to mobilize against? This tension underscores the need for careful distinctions in how we classify right-wing movements and actors.

What are the historical roots of this moment? There are no simple answers. A number of contributors point to neoliberalism as a source of present-day populist grievance. In this view, right-wing populism springs from widely held resentments born of, or at least fueled by, the growing precariousness of life at a time when social welfare nets and stable middle-class employment are sacrificed to the imperatives of global economic integration and perpetual market growth. Untangling the complex historical roots of contemporary rightist politics also requires care in how we think about the relationship between today's right and its most odious historical manifestation—fascism. That the term appears sparingly and thoughtfully in these pages speaks against the facile conflation of every disliked right-wing movement with Hitler's Nazism or Mussolini's Fascism. Multiple contributors suggest that more light will shine through a clear analytical lens than one obscured by the haze of polemics. Grasping the roots of today's "crisis of liberal democracy" also means recognizing, as several contributors point out, that liberal democracy was never pristine to begin with, that authoritarian,

racist, misogynistic, anti-immigrant, and anti-LGBTQ currents have always been with us and are by no means invaders from Mars.

What attitudes or methods should students of the right cultivate? Multiple contributors stress the need for humanistic learning, deliberate interdisciplinarity, and a culture of dialogue, criticism, collaboration, and fairness. Others emphasize the importance of empathetic ethnographic study of the right and warn against the distortions of excessive partisanship. Several essays also remind us to avoid stereotypes in our own thinking, including the tendency to confuse "the working class" with white or "native" identity, since many of the poorest come from immigrant backgrounds and are at least as subject to the precarity of modern life as the typical populist voter left behind by economic change. A final recurring theme is the need to modulate our level of focus, balancing localized or issue-based studies or even accounts pitched at the level of national politics with a view of global trends and international influences. The right's contemporary resurgence, and its radicalization in many parts of the world, must be understood in particular cases played out in particular contexts.

These twelve essays exhibit many differences but few or no sharp disagreements. This is a noteworthy fact, given that study of the right used to be riven between Marxists intent on demonstrating that fascism always lurks behind the genteel humanitarian mask worn in normal times by capitalist liberal democracies, and non-Marxist scholars more concerned with the cultural or psychological roots and ideological appeal of far-right, and especially fascist, politics. Perhaps an echo of this division remains between those contributors to this issue who stress the socioeconomic dimension and those who place greater emphasis on cultural norms and grievances (directed at gender politics, "political correctness," immigrants, "elites," and so forth). But the gulf has closed considerably. As this roundtable demonstrates, there are ample grounds for dialogue and the exchange of insights across the differences that remain. It is with great pride, and with fond hope for such dialogue, that we offer this roundtable discussion as the inaugural publication of the *Journal of Right-Wing Studies*.

Eliah Bures, Managing Editor

## Cas Mudde



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I have recently argued that the far right has moved from the "third wave" (Von Beyme 1988) to the "fourth wave" (Mudde 2019a). While the various waves are particular to the situation in Western Europe, I would argue that the main characteristics of the "fourth wave" have a broader, global scope. They are, most notably, heterogeneity, mainstreaming, and normalization. In light of this transformation, it is crucial that the study of the far right catches up with the reality of the far right on the ground. Focusing primarily on far-right party politics, I offer here some of the most important suggestions.

**Move beyond the "Outsider Paradigm"**

Much of the literature still treats far-right parties as outsiders, i.e., as new parties that "challenge" the political mainstream from the outside. While this still applies to several far-right parties around the world, the most important parties are part of the political mainstream in several countries (e.g., Spain and the US) and in a growing number of countries even define it (e.g., Hungary and India). This is not to say that far-right parties no longer challenge the liberal democratic system; they do, as their ideologies are fundamentally opposed to, or at odds with, fundamental liberal democratic institutions and values, such as minority rights and pluralism. Rather, they are no longer outside of the (party) political mainstream, operating increasingly like all other parties (de Vries and Hobolt 2020).

**Separate between Far-Right Actors and Far-Right Ideas**

Simply said, far-right parties are political parties whose core ideology is far right, consisting mostly of nativism, authoritarianism, and populism (i.e., the populist radical right) but sometimes even racism, elitism, and anti-democracy (i.e., the extreme right). But in the fourth wave, contrary in particular to the third wave, ideas and policies inspired by these ideological features are no longer limited to far-right parties. Consequently, to accurately assess the far-right threat to liberal democracy, we have to go beyond the "usual suspects" and look at *all* parties pushing nativist and racist ideas and policies. To be clear, many of these parties are (considered) neither radical, like the Dutch People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD), nor right-wing, like the Danish Social Democrats.

**Analyze the Mainstreaming**

Mainstreaming can, and should, be studied empirically. In essence, it means that far-right and mainstream parties share discourses, issue positions, and policies. The *process* of mainstreaming can happen because of the moderation of far-right parties, the radicalization of mainstream parties, or a combination of the two. Some initial studies found more evidence for the radicalization of the mainstream than the moderation of the far-right (Akkerman, de Lange, and Rooduijn 2016; Bale and Rovira Kaltwasser 2021). Obviously, party political mainstreaming does not take place in a political vacuum, and the role of the media (traditional and social) is particularly important in this respect. At a more fundamental level, we should reflect more on the politicization of the term "mainstream" and the role not only journalists and politicians but also social scientists play in this process (Moffitt 2022; Mondon and Winter 2020).

**Rethink Classifications**

As far-right ideas and policies are also being espoused, mainly but not exclusively, by right-of-center "mainstream" parties, the boundaries between far-right and non-far-right parties are no longer so clear. Where does conservatism end and the radical right start? In the past decades, several conservative parties have transformed into fully fledged far-right parties, notably Hungary's Fidesz and the US Republican Party, while others are pushing the boundaries, like the British Conservatives and the French Republicans. Moreover, in light of the nativism of the political mainstream—just think of the Islamophobic discourse and policies of most parties in Central and Eastern Europe during the so-called refugee crisis (Mudde 2019b; Wondreys 2021)—it is doubtful that we can still include some parties as far right, like the Norwegian Progress Party (FrP), while excluding others, like Direction–Slovak Social Democracy (Smer-SSD).

**Oppose (and Study) Normalization**

While mainstreaming is an empirical process, the term "normal" has clear normative connotations, and the process of normalization is thus primarily normative. When far-right ideas and values become part of the mainstream, their far-right essence and origins are whitewashed. For instance, the argument that immigration policy should be part of a broader portfolio of "protecting our European way of life," as the European Commission has suggested, is fundamentally nativist, irrespective of whether the idea and terminology came from the program of the "mainstream" right European People's Party (Mudde 2019b). Similarly, while it has become common sense in Europe to argue that "multiculturalism has failed" or "illegal immigration is a threat," these statements are mostly based on nativist assumptions and often lack empirical evidence. We should also be cautious in adopting seemingly "neutral" terminology, like referring to voters of the far right as "left behind" or "working class," as they have implicit normative and racial assumptions, i.e., that socioeconomic marginalization causes and justifies nativist ideas or that *the* working class is white (Abou-chadi, Mudde, and Mitteregger 2022; Mondon and Winter 2020).

**Avoid Conceptual Stretching *and* Conceptual Squeezing!**

There were few electorally relevant far-right parties in the third wave. Consequently, some researchers would take a liberal approach to classification to increase the number of cases—particularly, but not exclusively, in quantitative studies. But this "conceptual stretching" (Sartori 1970) can lead to imprecise, if not outright wrong, findings when results are primarily driven by misclassified parties. We no longer face the challenge of too few electorally relevant far-right parties, even if we still must worry about conceptual stretching for ideological or political reasons. Because of the mainstreaming and normalization of the far right, there is growing pressure to limit the group of far-right parties so as to not get into trouble with influential supporters of mainstreamed far-right parties (such as Israel's Likud or the US Republican Party). This *conceptual squeezing* could lead to imprecise or wrong results because only a subset of cases is included, as some parties are assessed on the basis of more demanding criteria than the concepts themselves warrant.



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Janet McIntosh

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Our designated task for this inaugural issue of the *Journal of Right-Wing Studies* is daunting. How to choose the most urgent issue in the study of right-wing politics, even if delimiting by nation (the USA, in my case)? The right's racist, sexist, xenophobic, heteronormative, corporate-capitalist nostalgia for some imagined earlier version of the nation is cataclysmic for the socially vulnerable and threatens the loss of our democracy. Misinformation campaigns rampage over mass and social media, allowing ignorance and amnesia to reign. The courts are packed and systematically deleting human rights, electoral districts have been (re)drawn, the right is heavily armed and talking about violence against the left. The Overton window has been stretched to the point that some right-wing political thinking has become apocalyptic, and some pawns taken in by, for example, QAnon or the Big Lie are willing to go down with the ship.

In this hair-raising political landscape, rather than prioritizing urgencies, I will address some issues that catch my attention as a linguistic and psychological anthropologist with interests in affect, semiotics, and violence.

First, by way of prescription, I think we need still more experience-near analysis—ethnographic, where possible—of the US right wing, because, to paraphrase Sara Ahmed (2004), affect glues people together politically and propels action. I applaud work along related lines by scholars such as Arlie Hochschild (2018), Katherine Cramer (2016), Donovan Schaefer (2020), and Lawrence Rosenthal (2020), whose scholarship goes beyond criticism of the right wing, and beyond the economic history and social-structural forces underpinning far-right politics, to examine the feelings—whether or not justified by facts—that motivate such voters. The way it *feels* to be right-wing can be quite different from the left's characterization of the right—including in my own first paragraph here. To repeatedly charge the right wing with racism, for instance, sometimes captures a deep truth but aggravates another problem because it stokes the right-wing narrative that they are imperiled by the hostile and condescending left.

And right-wing politicians and pundits have done a marvelous job stoking this sense of imperilment through media funded by wealthy donors happy to nourish hostility to liberals and progressives. According to their emotional alchemy, gun control and rethinking policing will result (as one Donald Trump supporter told me) in law-abiding homeowners helplessly watching robbers invade their homes; support for immigrants will result in rape, pillage, and dispossession; bids for verbal sensitivity will amount to metaphorical strangulation (McIntosh 2020); sensitivity training in the military will dangerously compromise national security (I heard this from a Marine Corps drill instructor); and left-wingers hoping to raise moral awareness will become menacing "woke mobs," in Ron DeSantis's recent phrasing. At this point, to many on the right, the very qualities of empathy and compassion liberals and progressives

consider unquestionably good are not only stupid but also dangerous to right-wing lives and well-being.

Our understanding of the political landscape is thus incomplete without grasping that people on both ends of the political spectrum now feel that their very existence is threatened, a condition anthropologist Elise Kramer (2012) has deemed "mutual minorityhood." And if the right wing continues to engage in threat construction because they feel like a precariat in decline, they will further amp up talk of violence to reassert their security and safety. They will also continue to gravitate toward extreme politicians who offer satisfying dramatizations of their resentment—a complex blend, it must be said, of justified and manufactured narratives, emergent from real economic problems and deeply unfair interpretations—while promising to reclaim lost dominance through whatever means necessary.



A second key affective dynamic is that right-wing pride is wounded by what seems to them like endless hectoring from the left. Bear in mind that many right-wing voters don't *feel* "racist"—and don't realize that racism, as understood by the contemporary left, doesn't always take the form of ill will. American progressives, in fact, sometimes stumble into the tension inherent in their own models, correctly construing problems like racism and sexism as embedded in social structures, yet repeatedly shaming the right in their personalized search for accountability—consider the slogan "All cops are bastards" (or "ACAB"), which circulated widely during the US protest movements in the wake of George Floyd's death. According to Donovan Schaefer (2020, 6), progressivism today is shaped by an "orientation to shame . . . in a relentless project to become more sensitive, more thoughtful, more moral." But shame is an uncomfortable dwelling place that prompts most folks to circle the wagons rather than self-reflect. Hostility to being shamed probably explains the familiar words of one Republican respondent of mine, who said, "I don't want to apologize for being white." While I hear a deep misunderstanding in this phrase, my respondent is rejecting the finger wagging of the left (and responding, too, to misinterpretations of the left fostered by the extreme right) as well as wishing to reclaim pride in the aspects of existence that feel, to him, blameless.

Much semiotic behavior on the far right can be explained in terms of what Schaefer aptly identifies as the "refusal to be shamed" (2020, 2). Not only do we see ostentatiously offensive symbolism—middle fingers, murderous Pepe the Frogs, T-shirts reading "Trump 2020: Fuck Your Feelings"—but also a rejection of patronization by the hypereducated, with their university-sanctioned expertise and moral-high-ground politics. Note that elements of this approach play well to working-class and suburban voters—as does the Trumpian agenda of rejecting immigrants to (supposedly) support US labor, avoiding wars, and championing the police. But generally, telling people they're better than smug liberals is a great way to unite different class strata for a cause.

Right-wing semiotics manages to achieve this while making it fun to be a Republican. Consider the recent example of the slogan circulating on the right since fall 2021: "Let's Go Brandon." The slogan actually means "Fuck Joe Biden"—a little game of semiotic peekaboo that mocks the verbal respectability and empathic sensitivity so important to many liberals. At the same time, its concealment offers a big tent, welcoming in

those who enjoy profanity, evangelicals who prefer to avoid it, and even children, who can be seen sporting Let's Go Brandon T-shirts. Republicans experience the phrase as amusing, while its underlying hostility also boosts the affective circulation of vengeful rage, to the point that some gun manufacturers now print their weapons with the slogan (McIntosh 2022b).

The QAnon movement also mined a rich vein in right-wing pride. Q's major occupation was dropping clues, or "breadcrumbs," that followers (Anons) would "bake" through elaborate interpretive moves. Part of reclaiming lost pride, for them, was claiming superior access to Truth. By their own account, Anons came to feel anointed with powers of discernment surpassing those of the elite (mostly left-wing) "experts" (McIntosh 2022a).

We know US political factions are based partly on demographic identity, but the dynamics I describe have stoked *affective* identities. Feeling imperiled and shamed, members of the right wing converge on a sense of vengeful pleasure in distrust, dehumanization, and demolition of the left. The crowd effects of Trump rallies, right-wing conventions, and meme circulation have done much for collective attunement to the cause. At the very least, greater ethnographic understanding of right-wing subjectivities and semiotics—far richer than what I've offered here—might help the left better anticipate how US politics will continue to unfold, rather than finding itself stunned and disbelieving when a Trump is elected to office. At the most, it might even point the way toward more successful countermeasures.

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Much of the most influential writing on right-wing politics, particularly in the United States, is animated by warnings about a dramatic "end of democracy."[1] This literature now constitutes something of a horror genre where extant institutions are brutally violated and civic ideals savaged as monsters emerge to tear the body politic limb from limb, leaving it in red and blue pieces that may never be reattached. But as Freud said about that which horrifies us, "[it] is in reality nothing new or alien, but something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression."[2] In other words, maybe this horror story is so gripping because it speaks to something we already knew was there.

The US, never fully democratic to begin with, has been under antidemocratic assault for many decades now. The promises of the US liberal order—the protection of individual liberties, democratic governance, a regulated market, modest social welfare provisions, a stable global order—have withered in the face of myriad social, economic, and political crises. The failures today are everywhere. "Deaths of despair" fueled by addiction, suicide, and other causes of premature death. A carceral system unmatched in the world. Tent cities of the unhoused in nearly every major urban area and on both sides of the southern border. The doom of climate and ecological change. Debt, precarity, and overwork as the baseline condition for hundreds of millions in the US. An upward redistribution of wealth and political power that accelerates by the day.

These conditions—felt broadly if unevenly across the US—have hastened the decline of the public trust and social consent required of robust liberal democracies. As such faith has atrophied, the right has been afforded an historic opportunity to attack the idea of public goods and even the notion of democratic rule itself and enlist broad support in so doing.

The majority of Republican voters today believe that the current president was elected fraudulently, and increasing numbers think of themselves as embattled "true patriots" in opposition to those they see as civically unworthy, socially threatening, or

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1 See, for example, Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt, *How Democracies Die* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2018); Jan-Werner Müller, *Democracy Rules* (New York: Macmillan, 2021); Yascha Mounk, *The Great Experiment: Why Diverse Democracies Fall Apart and How They Can Endure* (New York: Penguin, 2022); and Timothy Snyder, *The Road to Unfreedom: Russia, Europe, America.* (New York: Crown, 2019).

2 Sigmund Freud, *The Complete Psychological Works*, vol. 17 (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), 241.

under the control of outside forces. This phenomenon is abetted by the proliferation of far-right armed paramilitaries that routinely confront democratic demonstrators on the streets, intimidate parents at school board meetings, and act as security for far-right public figures. From the banning of ideas, concepts, and books in public schools to new laws to suppress voting rights and control election administration, we are seeing a fundamental shift in politics.

But the fact that millions of Americans believe that Joe Biden was installed illegally, that violence may be necessary to save the republic, and that Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a set of dangerous ideas imposed on innocent school children cannot be explained by pointing to a band of far-right thugs with un-American, anticonstitutional ideas ready to overthrow the republic. Rather it presents us with a series of questions not so easily answered, and not so comfortably delineated with a friend/enemy distinction.

When scholars first began writing about "the radical right" in the 1950s, explanations centered on psychological states, the anxiety of class position, and/or irrational attachments to racist beliefs. Not much has changed in terms of explanation in the many decades since. And yet here we are, faced not with a movement of cranks on the fringe but a very sizable portion of the American electorate—and one that ranges across race and class positions. They don't see themselves subverting the republic but rather defending it. They do not see themselves as attacking the Constitution but as returning the country to that document's original intent. They are far less likely to invoke the rank racism of the Ku Klux Klan and the segregationist Citizens Councils and much more likely to deploy liberal multicultural rhetoric about individual rights and freedoms in order to attack critical teaching and learning in schools.

The current right draws on beliefs, practices, and commitments that are at the heart of American political culture. The disavowal of slavery and genocide as constitutive of (and not anomalous to) US political history, the celebration of the United States as an exceptional nation, the premium placed on individual rights and freedoms, the sanctity of private property, and gendered notions of the bourgeois family as the cornerstone of society all legitimate and animate the basic claims of the right-wing political formation at the center of our politics.

We are, in other words, on political ground that is at once new and old. It is new insofar as our ability to pathologize the right or write it off as a collection of racist and conspiratorial groups on the margins of society is no longer an option. Far-right political imperatives—issuing from elites, armed political groups, and tens of millions of Republicans in the electorate—now threaten the framework of liberal democracy. It is old in that this right draws on the same mainsprings of American political culture that liberals do. Indeed, were it not for these mainsprings, the current right would be unable to make the kind of political appeals that has allowed it to grow so dramatically in recent years.

Just as much of the "end of democracy" genre errs in treating right-wing authoritarianism as a novel threat, so does it err in calling for a restoration of commitments to liberal democratic institutions as the singular strategy to defend against that threat. In various ways white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, and elite class

rule have all been active forces in suppressing democracy and nurturing authoritarian politics, both institutionally and culturally, since the founding; it is those same forces we see at work today. To study the US right today therefore requires us to interrogate and engage these deeply American phenomena and their constitutive role within the US political order.

Fred Block

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Right-wing movements thrive and become particularly dangerous in times when societies become highly reliant on the idea of self-regulating markets. This was the case in the 1920s and early 1930s, when the restoration of the international gold standard placed severe constraints on the ability of governments to protect their citizens from economic dislocations. From 1980 to the present, the global ascendance of neoliberalism has made it increasingly difficult for governments to create economic stability and predictability.

To be sure, only some of those who support right-wing movements have personally suffered economic dislocation such as unemployment or declining or unstable incomes. Many others belong to the moderately or highly affluent, who are mobilized through fear that instability and uncertainty represent a threat to their social position, as parties of the left raise demands for a more equal distribution of society's income, wealth, and respect.

Karl Polanyi ([1944] 2001) insisted that people need a certain basic level of stability and predictability to lead their lives, and when that level is absent, they can turn to politics to protect themselves from the uncertainties created by markets. In periods of turbulence, demands for this protection tend to polarize between two options. On one side, there are egalitarian visions of socialism or social democracy that favor taxing the rich to finance government benefits and programs that would stabilize people's income. On the other, right-wing movements promise to protect the "core" population by taking things away from immigrants, detested minorities, and other enemies. Today, as in the 1930s, it is these warring responses to economic dislocations that have fed the growth of the authoritarian right.

Hence, the critical question for both scholars of right-wing movements and everyone else is: What can be done to defuse polarization once it has started? What kinds of programs and policies could begin to shift the views of people who think that building a bigger border wall or excluding Muslims is the best way to protect themselves? There are no easy or obvious answers. We have seen during the COVID-19 pandemic that basic questions of public health, such as wearing masks and getting vaccinated, quickly became polarized, even though individuals who made bad choices were risking death. Moreover, in the context of ongoing culture wars, any initiatives from the center or the left will quickly be labeled as another incarnation of "woke" oppression.

Some will doubtless counsel that the best response is to pursue a centrist agenda because it would be less threatening to those on the right. But it was precisely the "left neoliberalism" of politicians such as Bill Clinton, Tony Blair, and Gerhard Schroeder that set the stage for the current level of bitter polarization. The refusal of these middle-

way politicians to reverse the promarket policies initiated by Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher set the stage for the global financial crisis of 2008–2009 and the following decade of austerity.



The preferable strategy after years of austerity is to make funds available to address the very real economic deprivation experienced by a substantial portion of the population. The best historical examples are some of the policies pursued by Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal. The most familiar was the recognition of the long-neglected aspirations of industrial workers. However, his administration also electrified rural areas by providing government loans to local cooperatives that wired communities and connected them to the national grid. The resulting electrification had a hugely positive impact on agricultural productivity. Moreover, involving people at the local level in a productive and cooperative endeavor probably helped to dampen the intense political polarization of the early 1930s.

It is, therefore, somewhat encouraging that the big spending bills passed in the first two years of the Biden administration make available billions of dollars to those rural and small-town communities that have been a central pillar of Donald Trump's electoral coalition. Funds are provided to increase availability of high-speed internet, address pressing environmental issues, finance clean and renewable energy, improve access to health care, develop affordable housing, adopt environmentally sustainable farming practices, and to support local economic development initiatives. There are even funds targeted at the rural electrical cooperatives that have survived since the 1930s.

To be sure, it remains uncertain whether there will be the will and the energy to take advantage of these resources at the local level. Where distrust of the federal government is most acute, it might be risky to acknowledge that a project is being funded by the people in Washington, DC, who are routinely maligned by extremists as pedophiles. Nevertheless, where there are people able to make productive use of these funds and involve their neighbors in projects of improvement, it could gradually defuse the toxic resentments that the right has consistently cultivated. This will not happen overnight, but it could make a real difference a few years down the road.

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Back in the mid-1990s, many scholars I spoke to in Europe considered studying the rise of the radical right to be a dead end. It was felt that they were "a flash in the pan" that would disappear in a few years. After my first book, *Voting Radical Right in Western Europe*, was published in 2005, I moved away from the subject, focusing on the way that the European Union was pursuing and implementing immigration policy. But the radical right didn't go away. It continued to grow and became a regular part of the landscape in Europe, and similar elements would also take over the Republican Party in the US. We have seen a major shift in party systems around the globe toward more authoritarian leaders and success for parties like the Rassemblement National (National Rally), led by Marine Le Pen in France, and the Alternative für Deutschland (Alternative for Germany), which also won a significant number of seats in the last two German legislative elections. Many other parties and leaders have become part of the party landscape in the last twenty years who want to stop immigration and are becoming more openly racist, but it's also important to note that many of the discourses of the radical right that I documented in the 1990s have become part of the discourses of the mainstream right.

The evolution of my research over the past twenty years has led me to focus more directly on the conflation of immigration and race in politics on both sides of the Atlantic. In my most recent book, *The Roots of Racism: The Politics of White Supremacy in the US and Europe*, I connect the dots between the history of race, its connections to the slave trade and colonialism, and how these issues continue to play a role in the politics we see today. The proliferation of guns in the US and attacks on women's autonomy are just two of the symptoms of the shift we are seeing in political systems.

A struggle for power is developing that will define politics for the next few decades. It is a struggle between an inclusive vision of society and one that caters to White supremacy. The resistance to immigration and the adherence to conspiracy theories like "replacement theory" are a means for politicians to create divides and appeal to their bases, but it is not only the right that has taken on these themes. Concerns about Muslim immigrants often come from left-leaning politicians who take their positions from the idea that Muslims repress women and are homophobic. However, these issues are not unique to Muslims; indeed, the Catholic Church has many problems in these areas. Whether coming from the left or the right, in many cases radicalization comes from the repressive and discriminatory nature of the society in which Muslims live, which those from Catholic backgrounds are less likely to experience. When young men from immigrant backgrounds grow up in the French suburbs learning *liberté, égalité, fraternité* (liberty, equality, brotherhood), it might be understandable if they become

disillusioned by the discriminatory realities they face.

In the US and Europe, there is radicalization occurring on all fronts. Violence is becoming a regular occurrence, fueled by the easy availability of guns in America and rhetoric that demonizes people of color and politicians, as seen in the January 6 attack on the US Capitol. Party politics has shifted in ways that have challenged the long-standing divides between mainstream left and right, as witnessed in the ascendence of radical-right parties in recent elections in France, Germany, and Italy. We must be prepared as social scientists to let go of our assumptions and develop new models and tools to help us gain greater understanding of the societal shifts that are being impacted by and shaping party politics. This will take interdisciplinary approaches and collaboration in the disciplines of history, sociology, psychology, economics, and politics. Most importantly, we need to incorporate a better understanding of racism and xenophobia, which, as I explain in *The Roots of Racism*, have always been a component of our political systems. We can't afford to ignore the historical connections that have led to the perpetuation of bias that has become systemic in modern societies.

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Right-wing movements (depicted under such rubrics as alt-right, far right, extreme right, nativist, right-wing populist, radical right, fundamentalist, etc.) have been rising since the 1990s,[1] especially in the US and Europe. Many of these movements, which are not monolithic but represent a spectrum of ideologies with local specificities, are nonetheless continuous with older forms of right- and ultra-right-wing movements, from Nazism, neo-Nazism, and Fascism to white supremacism. In the US, for example, the historical roots of white supremacy go back to prior to the Civil War. In Europe, antisemitism and anti-Muslim racism can be traced back to 1492, with Christians' reconquest of the Iberian Peninsula and the expulsion of Jews and Muslims from Spain. The rise of right-wing movements is not limited to the US and Europe; these movements are also becoming popular in other parts of the world,[2] and they all emerge in the context of neoliberal global capitalism. Right-wing mobilization in the US, along with what scholars have identified as Euroscepticism in England, as *l'extrême droite* in France, and as neo-Nazism and neofascism in Germany, Italy, Austria, Finland, Denmark, Hungary, Poland, and other parts of Europe, all have a lot in common. They all invest in several binaries, turning complex political, cultural, and social issues into "us versus them." They continue to be invested in racist imperial and colonial discourses that are antisemitic, antiblack, antirefugee, anti-Muslim, and anti-immigrant. Concepts such as "Muslim terrorists" and "immigrant invasion," among many others, are part of such discourses in our current sociopolitical and socioeconomic context.

While some of these movements identify as libertarian, antiestablishment, or antigovernment, many have become massively invested in taking over the state and its institutions. Thus, electoral politics has become an important site of right-wing mobilization. The hyphenated relationship joining the nation and the state has become a justification for suppressing democratic dissent and asserting the nation's homogeneity. Since colonial modernity in the US and Europe, the juxtaposition of a whitening Christianity and the imperiality of the state has been crucial for such mobilization. The claims to "Britishness" or "Frenchness," "Western civilization" or "white identity," are examples of such an imperiality.

The notion of "the people," borrowed from left-wing discourses, appears to be central to these movements. While left-wing movements refer to "the people" to either represent

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1 See Ella Shoat, "Rethinking Jews and Muslims: Quincentennial Reflections," *Middle East Report*, no. 178 (September–October 1992): 25–28.

2 For example: India, Brazil, Argentina, Israel, Greece, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Afghanistan, and Iran.

or bring the subaltern and working classes into the realm of political contestation, "the people" in right-wing movements denotes the convergence of race, religion, and class, and an alliance between the ultrarich and the poor. An "us versus them" call for the regeneration of the "nation" as pure, homogeneously white and Christian, continues to be at the core of right-wing movements in the US and Europe.

Older antiblack and antisemitic discourses have converged with newer forms of anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim racism. For example, Marie Le Pen and her party replaced antisemitism with anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim racism in France. According to the FPÖ (the far-right Austrian Freedom Party / Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs) and the PVV (the far-right Dutch Freedom Party / Partij voor de Vrijheid), the refugee crisis is an opportunity for terrorists and criminals to enter the country. As reported by Ishaan Tharoor, the speech by Geert Wilders, leader of the Dutch Freedom Party, in parliament in September 2015 called the crisis an "Islamic asylum tsunami" and called the refugees "testosterone bombs" who "threaten our girls." He stated that "we have a Christian culture, and we want to keep a Christian culture for our children."[3] Blatant racism and discrimination against "the other" of the "white nation," along with covert racism of extermination,[4] are strong components of these right-wing movements.

Some scholars argue that the "losers" of globalization are threatened by unemployment and international competition and as a result they have been making up the core electorate of the far right. Ironically, immigrants and refugees are an integral part of the global labor market because they are mainly concentrated in precarious and superexploitative service jobs in the secondary segments of the labor market. Slogans such as "foreigners take away our jobs" or "immigrant invasion" conceal this reality through xenophobia and racism. Thus, reference to we-ness and otherness continues to create alliances between the poor and the ultrarich across the political spectrum.

Also shared by most right-wing movements is a blatantly sexist, misogynist, and queerphobic position vis-à-vis women and gender issues. Reactivation of a militant "white masculinity" in the US and Europe, and a militarized masculinity in other parts of the world, has been consistently energizing these movements, gaining support among men who see themselves as losing their privileges to women who have gained access to the public sphere, regardless of current gender inequalities and limitations. The fear of the dismantlement of reproductive heteronormativity has provoked a reinvestment in patriarchal ideas of family and community among these movements.

The expansion of digital and social media, and massive investments by right-wing movements in media, have facilitated the circulation of these ideas from one location

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3 Ishaan Tharoor, "Europe's Refugee Crisis Strengthens Far-Right Parties," *Washington Post*, October 13, 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/10/13/europes-refugee-crisis-strengthens-far-right-parties.

4 I refer to the covert and sometimes overt operation of a specific form of racism (distinguished from the racism of discrimination) that aims to destroy and systematically annihilate a racialized group. For more information about various forms of racism, see David Theo Goldberg, *The Racial State* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002).

to another. Furthermore, anti-intellectualism and the suppression of academic freedom, especially in US universities and the tenure system, have been hallmarks of these movements.

Academic institutions have a responsibility to actively engage with what is happening. The rise of right-wing movements has significantly impacted educational institutions, where expanding awareness and opening possibilities for debate, discussion, and intellectual communities are the core values. The right-wing attack on academia requires resistance, courage, a reinvestment in the use value of education, and placing critical analysis in all aspects of one's life. Indeed, any democratic order requires the action of citizens who are not spectators or consumers of ideas but participants in learning and thinking outside the box.

The expansion of right-wing authoritarian movements creates the need for an academic infrastructure of research, discussion, analysis, teaching, and community building—especially from a transnational and comparative perspective. These networks may need to bring scholarly work on various forms of fundamentalism in the 1990s into conversation with newer forms of right-wing mobilization.[5] Furthermore, given historical and political differences between such movements around the world, studying their commonalities and differences is crucial to understanding historical linkages and temporal continuities. An interrogation of modern nation-states and their juridical limits in responding effectively to populist protest movements may also be key. Crucial, too, is a discussion of the crises of our era, including what I elsewhere called the crisis of production, cognition, and coercion,[6] along with the crisis of blatant racial and gender violence and the environmental crisis that has created a gap to be filled by an eco-fascist discourse (blaming climate change on immigration, overpopulation, and refugees). Finally, we are still far from understanding the convergence of the entertainment industry (celebrity culture, performative politics, etc.) with the military-industrial complex as politics and aesthetics converge to conceal geopolitical and biopolitical inequalities.

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5 I am referring to a rich scholarly literature describing and analyzing various forms of religious and secular fundamentalism from Christian and Jewish to Hindu and Muslim in the 1990s. For examples, see Martin E. Marty, *Fundamentalisms Observed* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Rebecca E. Klatch, *Women of the New Right* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987); and Minoo Moallem, "The Ethnicity of an Islamic Fundamentalism: The Case of Iran," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 12, no. 2 (1992): 25–34.

6 Minoo Moallem, *Between Warrior Brother and Veiled Sister: Islamic Fundamentalism and the Politics of Patriarchy in Iran* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 156–59.

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The straightforward question posed to this roundtable can be addressed by separating out two crucial points: (a) the *idea* of "right-wing politics" and (b) the *environment* it creates for researchers and policy analysts. These issues, no doubt, do have global political-academic significance. Yet there is a need to contextualize them in a systematic manner in order to identify how right-wing politics affects intellectual explorations in countries such as India.

The Indian case has its own specificity. The *Hindutva* politics of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), broadly speaking, are a clear manifestation of right-wing politics. The BJP defines Indian culture in overtly Hindu terms; it supports an open market and encourages citizens to respond to market incentives. However, these right-wing tendencies are always substantiated by a set of strategic moves to provide constitutional validity to Hindutva politics. This is what I call *Hindutva constitutionalism*.

Hindutva constitutionalism is based on three premises. First, the constitution must be treated as a rule book, a sacred document, so as to freeze its transformative potential. Second, there is need to emphasize *one nation–one constitution* to legitimize growing political centralization. And finally, it asserts a revised and expanded notion of minority status in a broader South Asian context to underline the relative powerlessness of Hindus. The 2019 Citizenship Amendment Act and the abrogation of Article 370 are reflections of the BJP's active politics of Hindutva constitutionalism.

The highly successful career of Hindutva constitutionalism as a political doctrine has its own limitations. It has emerged as an antithesis of parliamentary democracy itself. While the BJP has a significant presence in the parliament, it does not rely entirely on its numerical strength. The party often disregards the established procedures to get a law passed; it undermines the autonomy of democratic institutions; and it views the culture of open debate and discussion as an anti-national activity. Hindutva constitutionalism, in this sense, turns out to be an inseparable constituent of a rather visible strategy to appropriate law and institutions.

This poses a crisis of a different kind. Liberal democracy does not mean simply regular elections. It is about the institutional stability and the dignity of legal procedures. Various studies conducted by CSDS-Lokniti have found that the Indian masses have great faith in parliamentary democracy.[1] Despite knowing the complexities and corruption associated with the electoral process, Indians participate enthusiastically in elections.

1 "Politics and Society Between Elections, 2019," report by the Centre for Regional Political Economy, CSDS-Lokniti-Azim Premji University, accessed December 21, 2022, https://www.lokniti.org/media/upload_files/politics-and-society-between-elections-2019-report.pdf.

The BJP's version of Hindutva constitutionalism, it seems, does not reciprocate this popular faith in democracy. It is possible for the BJP to win elections in the near future. But the systematic erosion of democratic values will certainly lead toward lawlessness and anarchy. Ironically, the opponents of Hindutva—liberal intellectuals and non-BJP parties—do not recognize its success, while its own practitioners are clueless about the dangers of the growing undermining of political democracy inherent in it.

This brings us to a second concern, the challenges for researchers and policy makers. In my view, there are two types of issues that are relevant for this discussion. First, Hindutva politics has successfully created an anti-intellectual environment. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, one of the most popular political leaders in contemporary India, has always been critical of intellectuals and academics, especially those who do not follow the agenda of the government. More specifically, there is complete disregard for professional researchers in the humanities and social sciences. The New Education Policy (NEP) is a good example in this regard. It gives more emphasis to teaching and, in a way, discourages long-term, independent social science research.

Official hostility to global research reports and studies is the second important challenge. It is true that previous governments were apathetic toward global studies such as the International Religious Freedom Report or the Global State of Democracy Report. Yet these studies were never outright refuted. The present BJP government does not merely refuse to accept any unfavorable report but it also questions the intention, contents, and above all the methodology of these academic endeavors. This aggressive strategy has helped Hindutva constitutional politics delegitimize international or multicountry analysis. Researchers in India are left to rely on available sources that are seen as unproblematic by the government.

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22

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On July 8, 2022, a Jair Bolsonaro supporter named Jorge Guaranho shot and killed the treasurer of the Partido dos Trabalhadores (Workers' Party), Marcelo Arruda, at the latter's birthday party, continuing the growing wave of political violence that has characterized Brazil and other countries in Latin America and around the world in recent years. This violent phase in Brazil began with the murder of Marielle Franco on March 14, 2018.[1]

Since the coup that dismissed the elected president Dilma Rousseff in 2016, we in Brazil have experienced a set of actions that have led to the loss of social, political, and economic rights—a loss reacted to by Brazil's social movements. Notably, the Black women's movement has expressed itself and sought effective responses, whether through denunciation on social networks or through political mobilization in the streets; more interestingly, it has sought solutions through the recognition that "without racial and gender equality, there is no democracy." Accordingly, political campaigns are mobilizing for elections at the municipal, state, and federal levels with the slogan "I vote for a Black woman!" By doing that, Black movements and Black women's movements seek to make the population aware that without Black women in parliament there will be no significant changes for Black and poor people.

The economic and social crisis generated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine has affected all countries with increases in the price of food, medicines, and oil. Brazil has more than thirty-three million people facing hunger. Unemployment has led many people to live on the streets, marking this period as the one with the largest number of homeless people in Brazil's history.

We know that in moments of crisis nationalist discourse occupies a central place in political representations. The widespread idea that right-wing governments or even military dictatorships can establish order and the social pact through the force and violence of the state unfortunately permeates the Brazilian social imaginary.

These questions are always present in our reflections: What are the reasons for the growth of extreme right ideology? What political, economic, and social achievements

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1 Marielle Franco was born on July 27, 1979, in Rio de Janeiro. She was a councilwoman, elected in 2017 by the Socialism and Freedom Party (PSOL). In her political career, Marielle was internationally recognized for her formulation of bills and guidelines in defense of the rights of the LGBTI population and of Black and *favelada* women. (The *favelas* are unplanned shanty towns on the outskirts of Brazil's cities.) On March 14, 2018, Marielle Franco and driver Anderson Pedro Gomes were killed with thirteen shots. The Marielle case, as it became known, made news around the world and generated several demonstrations that continue to demand justice and seek to keep her legacy alive.

and projects have been presented to convince the population that this is the best path to follow? Faced with these questions, I outline here some possible answers, writing as a researcher who has traditionally perceived and interpreted the world and its dynamics from a left-wing point of view, and as one who pays attention to poverty, racism, sexism, and other social ills as social phenomena historically constructed in many Latin American countries.

Increasingly, the Brazilian right wing is promoting the fallacy that an agenda that disregards Black and poor people presents a better political project for the middle and upper classes. At the undemocratic extreme of this ideological imaginary the poor are considered "undesirable" in society and the solution to end violence is to arm the rich. The number of guns in Brazil has grown significantly in the last four years, as has the number of elected candidates who advocate carrying guns in their political agendas.[2] The gun lobby operates within the National Congress. The rights of Indigenous people are dismissed in political speeches that declare that in Brazil there is "a lot of land for a few native people." With this reasoning, deforestation and genocide against Indigenous peoples have been authorized to expand space for illegal mining that invades their lands. New laws ease fines and punishments for illegal mining and the invasion of Indigenous lands and dismantle inspection bodies. Violence in Indigenous lands has grown dramatically. The most recent widely reported case nationally and internationally was the murder of Dom Phillips and Bruno Pereira in June 2022,[3] but there are countless cases of Indigenous children, adults, and elderly people who have died anonymously defending their own existence.

I cannot fail to mention here the issues related to the legalization of abortion. According to Brazilian law (Federal Decree 2.848/1940), abortion can only be performed in two situations: when the mother is a victim of sexual abuse and when pregnancy puts a woman's life at risk. Legislation in 2012 added when the fetus is anencephalic. However, when an eleven-year-old child tried to terminate her pregnancy because she was a victim of rape, Judge Joana Ribeiro Zimmer asked her if she would "bear [being pregnant] a little longer" until the child was born.[4] This incident once again generated a

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2 "Número de licenças para uso de armas cresce 325% em três anos, diz levantamento" [Number of licenses for the use of weapons grows 325% in three years, says survey], *Jornal Nacional*, February 4, 2022, https://g1.globo.com/jornal-nacional/noticia/2022/02/04/numero-de-licencas-para-uso-de-armas-cresce-325percent-em-tres-anos-diz-levantamento.ghtml.

3 On June 5, 2022, Brazilian indigenist Bruno Pereira and British journalist Dom Phillips were murdered while traveling through the Javari Valley, the second largest Indigenous reservation in Brazil, in the extreme west of the Amazon.

4 "An eleven-year-old girl was being kept by the justice in a shelter in Santa Catarina to prevent her from having an authorized abortion. Victim of rape at the beginning of the year, the child discovered that she was twenty-two weeks pregnant when she was referred to the University Hospital of Florianópolis." Sofia Mayer, Caroline Borges, and Clarìssa Batìstela, "O que se sabe sobre caso da menina de 11 anos impedida de fazer aborto em SC após estupro" [What is known about the case of the 11-year-old girl prevented from having an abortion in SC after rape], *G1* (website), June 21, 2022, https://g1.globo.com/sc/santa-catarina/noticia/2022/06/21/o-que-se-sabe-sobre-caso-da-menina-de-11-anos-impedida-de-fazer-aborto-em-sc-apos-estupro.ghtml.

great public mobilization of people and groups for and against abortion, with the result that the child's right to terminate her pregnancy was upheld.

Another point to highlight is the discussion of sexual and gender identities that has grown in Brazil and throughout the world in recent years. Many writers attributed Bolsonaro's victory in the 2018 elections to the growing identity politics supported by left-wing parties, in particular the Partido dos Trabalhadores. The "coming out of the closet" of many groups, as well as the growing feminist wave and the feminist Black tide, was also associated with identity politics and criticized on the ground that political claims based on different identities fragment the idea of a universal citizen—presumed to be white and heterosexual—who has interests in common with the rest of the nation. Ultimately, the arguments that best explain Bolsonaro's rise to the presidency are situated in the ideological field, in which the right assures the rich that Black and poor people will be kept in the same subservient places they have been throughout the history of this country.

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The defeat of Donald Trump by Joseph Biden in the 2020 US presidential election provides little comfort to those attuned to right-wing movements and the potential for authoritarian populism. Examining antiabortion efforts tells us that authoritarian populism remains viable in the United States.

While several countries have recently decriminalized abortion, the United States Supreme Court has struck down its 1973 decision in *Roe v. Wade*, which liberally standardized regulations of abortion nationally. The June 2022 decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* has replaced a national standard for restricting abortion with a chaotic web of restrictions that will vary from state to state and from month to month, given various legal challenges to those myriad restrictions. Efforts in Kansas and Kentucky to permanently ban abortion with amendments to state constitutions were voted down, proving decades of polling correct: even in the reddest states, the majority of Americans support the individual right to terminate a pregnancy. But that majority view can be inconsequential when new regulations and restrictions are designed to exacerbate political tensions. The kinds of laws that have been produced in the wake of the *Dobbs* decision show us that overturning *Roe* is a way to criminalize people and to foment localized conflict, as Americans are newly entitled to rat out fellow citizens for seeking or providing abortions.

A law originating in Texas, Senate Bill 8, inaugurated a new approach to not only restricting abortion but also potentially criminalizing all involved in terminating a pregnancy by effectively deputizing citizens to surveil and sue "anyone—from an Uber driver to a doctor—who knowingly 'aids and abets' a woman getting an abortion after the sixth week of pregnancy." It goes so far as to reward successful lawsuits with $10,000 plus legal fees; a copycat bill in Idaho makes the bounty "$20,000 to family members who sue, including 'a sibling of the preborn child.'"[1] This new frontier in abortion politics codifies and legalizes what has been for decades the mindset of vigilante antiabortionists—the idea that defenders of the unborn must take matters into their own hands in preparation for the end times of white America or Western civilization, which abortion supposedly signifies. Such an apocalyptic narrative has operated for decades, producing political subjects and historical actors who see themselves as warriors in a zero-sum game.[2]

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1 Kate Zernike, "States Aren't Waiting for the Supreme Court to Tighten Abortion Laws," *New York Times*, March 7, 2022, https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/07/us/abortion-supreme-court-roe-v-wade.html.

2 Carol Mason, *Killing for Life: The Apocalyptic Narrative of Pro-life Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell

As the war in Ukraine dials down the volume on pro-Putin voices of the *global* right, more amplified are the voices of the *local* right. Alongside local battles over control of voting, local battles over control of abortion are the bellwether of populism's authoritarian power. One would think that with *Roe v. Wade* overturned abortion foes would simply celebrate a job well done and relax. But attacking abortion rights, like many other culture war issues, is a strategy—not a goal. Illiberal and authoritarian forces are building on the momentum of the historic win against reproductive freedom to create laws and policies designed to turn people against each other, to create litigious and physical altercations much like what abortion foes have been doing on college campuses for many years.[3] This is more than a weaponizing of lawsuits (a tactic inaugurated in the 1990s). It is a way of sharpening the edge of dissent among local defenders of the unborn and emboldening them so they not only *feel* entitled. This law makes it so they *are* entitled to take matters of the law into their own hands.

We should see the Texas law in the context not of right-to-life sentiment, which is indebted to liberal notions of rights for the unborn, or even of the pro-life movement, which sees the state as a potential ally to woo to their side. Rather, the Texas law is more aligned with an "abolitionist" antiabortion sentiment that criticizes pro-lifers for being "incrementalist" in their legislative approach to repeal *Roe* and that often sees the federal government as the enemy.[4] The Texas bill puts the law in the hands of the people, granting regular citizens the power to discern for themselves who is acting in a criminal manner. This do-it-yourself policing threatens to turn family members against family members and to perpetuate stochastic terrorism like the massacres by white supremacists and the murders of abortion providers.[5]

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University Press, 2002).

3 For more on campus antiabortion campaigns and how they relate to alt-right work such as the Battle of Berkeley and the subsequent Unite the Right rally, see Carol Mason, "Created Equal, but Equal in No Other Respect: Opposing Abortion to Protect Men," in *Male Supremacism in the United States: From Patriarchal Traditionalism to Incels and the Alt-Right,* ed. Emily K. Carian, Alex DiBranco, and Chelsea Ebin (New York: Routledge, 2022), 94–114.

4 Paul de Parrie's magazine, *Abortion Abolitionist*, preceded the Oklahoma-based group called Abolish Human Abortion, which espoused this abolitionist stance and appears to have evolved into the group called Free the States. See Carol Mason, "Opposing Abortion to Protect Women: Transnational Strategy since the 1990s," *Signs* 44, no. 3 (2019): 665–92, esp. 680–85. See also Cloee Cooper and Tina Vásquez, "The Anti-Abortion Abolitionist Movement Is Dangerous. Here's What You Need to Know," *Prism*, March 11, 2020, https://prismreports.org/2020/03/11/the-antiabortion-abolitionist-movement-is-dangerous-heres-what-you-need-to-know/.

5 Stochastic terrorism is a concept used to hold accountable people who perpetuate rhetoric that makes it statistically likely for violence to happen. I think this term is useful only up to a point. We should not be satisfied with it as an explanation for all antiabortion terrorism, which is not always a matter of inflammatory rhetoric meant to spur unstable zealots but, rather, is often part of a leaderless resistance whose decentralization makes it mostly illegible. This leaderless resistance is a common denominator of the white power movement and antiabortion militancy, both of which emerged in the last twenty-five years of the twentieth century with parallel and, sometimes, intersecting trajectories.

It also advances the thinking that people educated and trained to do professional jobs can and should be doubted, checked, or surpassed by regular people, amateurs with no training or formal education. This thinking infuses many right-wing campaigns now, including the granular approach of installing first-time polling place workers who, believing the Big Lie of supposed voter fraud, aim to challenge their superior election officials. Organizing these "lesser magistrates" and encouraging their dissent against perceived tyranny is a crossover tactic from antiabortion militants,[6] whose endeavors, once deemed extreme within the antiabortion movement, are now mainstreamed via laws like those proposed in Texas and Idaho. The authoritarian populism of these laws is presaged by years of antiabortion discourse and organizing.

6 For more on the "doctrine of the lesser magistrates" as a tactic of antiabortionists, see Mason, "Opposing Abortion to Protect Women," 680–83.

Carole Joffe

28

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In light of the earthquake in American reproductive policy that has been set off by the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* in June 2022, in the *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* case, what are some of the most pressing issues for scholars of the antiabortion movement to pursue? The most basic issue, of course, is what becomes of this movement after it has reached the goal it has doggedly pursued for nearly fifty years? Will it simply disband, as some movements do after reaching their objective? This seems highly unlikely for several reasons. The first is that, in the short run, the overturning of *Roe* will end abortion in only about half the states, and therefore the new goal of the movement will be to work for a national ban on abortion—something that Mitch McConnell, the Republican leader of the Senate, did not rule out when queried by a reporter shortly after the leak of the infamous Alito draft decision in May 2022.[1] In the fall of 2022, just as the midterm electoral season was heating up, Senator Lindsey Graham of South Carolina introduced a bill calling for a national ban at fifteen weeks.[2] And it has been clear for some time that the long-term goal of the movement is for the Supreme Court to find constitutional protection for fetuses, which would ban abortion everywhere.[3]

Second, the antiabortion movement has become such a dominant force in the Republican Party, with the power to anoint candidates at all levels, that it seems unlikely the movement's leaders would want to cede such power, nor that the millions of Americans who make up the movement's rank and file will be ready to give up their identity, and activity, as "pro-life" advocates.[4] Third, as Carol Mason has so ably demonstrated in this roundtable, the more extremist wing of the movement—including a group called

1 Charlotte Klein, "Mitch McConnell Acknowledges a National Abortion Ban Is "Possible" If *Roe* Is Overturned," *Vanity Fair,* May 8, 2022, https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2022/05/mitch-mcconnell-acknowledges-a-national-abortion-ban-is-possible-if-roe-is-overturned.

2 "Graham Introduces Legislation to Protect Unborn Children, Bring U.S. Abortion Policy in Line with Other Developed Nations," Lindsey Graham (US Senate website), September 13, 2022, https://www.lgraham.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2022/9/graham-introduces-legislation-to-protect-unborn-children-bring-u-s-abortion-policy-in-line-with-other-developed-nations.

3 Kate Zernike, "Is a Fetus a Person? An Anti-Abortion Strategy Says Yes," *New York Times,* August 21, 2022, https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/21/us/abortion-anti-fetus-person.html.

4 See Ziad W. Munson, *The Making of Pro-life Activists: How Social Movement Mobilization Work*s (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

the "abolitionists"[5]—will continue to strengthen ties with white supremacist groups in pushing for an authoritarian society. Both the extremists as well as more mainstream elements of the movement will continue to protest abortion care taking place in blue states—very likely with violence, given the rage among some that the demise of *Roe* has not ended altogether the provision of abortion in America. Already the past few years have seen a resurgence of "clinic invasions," a phenomenon widespread in the 1980s, but one which had died down in the 1990s, when President Bill Clinton signed the FACE Act (Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances), which made it a federal crime to block entrances to abortion clinics or to intimidate clinic staff or patients.[6] Students of the abortion issue might wish to devote attention to the emerging splits within the antiabortion movement. The abolitionists differ considerably in important respects from the more mainstream elements of the movement. The former, for example, do not accept the core tenet, held for many years by the latter, that women receiving abortions are also "victims" and are not to be punished, as opposed to the chief culprits, abortion providers. Abolitionists, moreover, do not accept that if there is a conflict between the pregnant woman's life and that of the fetus, the woman's life should be prioritized. As their website proclaims, favoring the woman is "ageism."[7]

A question of enormous consequence, both to scholars of the abortion issue and students of American politics more generally, is how the abortion issue fared in the November 2022 midterms. The period immediately after the *Dobbs* decision was announced saw a huge surge in voter registration, particularly among women—and this had been widely, and I believe correctly, interpreted as a predictor of a massive backlash vote against the decision. The highly visible protests against the decision even led some antiabortion candidates to soften their previously stated positions on abortion, for example, opposition to any exceptions for rape or incest, and to remove these past positions from their campaign websites. (In doing so, they further inflamed the more extremist wing of the movement). Given the pro-choice vote that did in fact materialize in a significant way in November, we can speculate that this too will motivate extremist elements of the antiabortion movement to engage in various violent acts.

Another issue concerning abortion in the post-*Dobbs* era that merits scholarly attention is the legal surveillance that will doubtless intensify on women and people who can get pregnant—both those seeking extralegal abortions and those seeking legal ones in other states. "Digital security" has become a major preoccupation of the pro-choice movement as information on people's phones—for example information from

5 See Steve Sanchez, "What is an Abortion Abolitionist?," Stone the Preacher (website), January 17, 2021, https://stonethepreacher.com/what-is-an-abortion-abolitionist/.

6 Gwen Ifill, "Clinton Signs Bill Banning Blockades and Violent Acts at Abortion Clinics," *New York Times*, May 27, 1994, https://www.nytimes.com/1994/05/27/us/clinton-signs-bill-banning-blockades-and-violent-acts-at-abortion-clinics.html.

7 "We are Abolitionists," Free the States (website), copyright 2021, https://freethestates.org/abolitionist-not-pro-life/.

the menstrual period trackers many women use—is readily obtainable.[8] Even before *Dobbs*, as the legal group Pregnancy Justice (formerly National Advocates for Pregnant Women) has documented, numerous people had been arrested for various pregnancy-related offenses, including attempting their own abortions.[9] Now that abortion is on track to be banned in about half the states, thousands of women will order the drugs for a medication abortion on the internet, or otherwise procure them. Whether in some localities antiabortion forces will urge postal authorities to examine suspicious foreign mail (many of the drugs in question are mailed from India), or whether emergency room staff will feel pressured to call the police when there is suspicion that a patient's miscarriage may have been started by these drugs or other means, arrests of some of those who seek abortion and those who help them is a certainty in the difficult future that lies ahead. What role extremist groups in certain locales will play in pressuring law enforcement to crack down on those involved in abortion provision remains to be seen.

8 Megan McGibney, "Do Period Tracker Apps Put Your Privacy at Risk post *Roe v. Wade*?," *Teen Vogue*, July 14, 2022, https://www.teenvogue.com/story/do-period-tracker-apps-put-your-privacy-at-risk-post-roe-v-wade.

9 See the Pregnancy Justice website: https://www.pregnancyjusticeus.org.

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The new *Journal of Right-Wing Studies*—indeed, "right-wing studies" as a field—confronts problems of partisanship. These problems arise from the fact that academic study of the political right is dominated by researchers who do not identify or sympathize with the people and movements they study. Imagine if the *Journal of African American Studies* contained no African American voices. In one sense, of course, scholarship driven by political concern is valid, necessary, and even inevitable. We are all situated in the world (there is no view from nowhere), and no study of society by persons thus situated can expect to be value-free. As one of *JRWS*'s cofounders, I believe study of the right is vitally urgent today. I worry that a surge of ethnic nationalism, authoritarianism, misinformation, conspiracy thinking, and traditionalist fantasy pose a threat to pluralistic societies and liberal democratic institutions in multiple parts of the world. But I also worry about the distorting optics of studying what one fears. I see two related tendencies that threaten to cloud our thinking and befog our analysis at a time of right-wing radicalization—a moment when clarity of vision is necessary.

The first tendency regards historical analogy. We naturally, and sometimes usefully, compare the present to the past in a search for cautionary tales or "lessons." We liken the contemporary United States to the dysfunction of Weimar Germany, to the tottering Roman Republic, and to the simmering hostilities of its own immediate pre–Civil War past. We compare Russia's war in Ukraine to the Soviet invasion of Finland in 1939, the Nazi invasion of France in 1940, the North Korean invasion of South Korea in 1950, and to a dozen other episodes besides. Always, the specter looms of the twentieth century's ideological conflicts. But such comparisons can be deeply fraught. Often they divulge more about the panic and bewilderment of those making the comparison than they disclose about the present. And when historical analogies are sought without concern for *disanalogy*—for contrasts and dissimilarities—the search can quickly become a partisan exercise.[1] You find what you are looking for, to your own rhetorical advantage.

The truth is that study of the past supplies no roadmaps into the future, and reflexively turning to the past can produce a cramped imagination as easily as an expanded one. Any two human events can be compared, of course. But the comparison of past moments or the excavation of patterns is not what historians do best. Where historians excel is in understanding events in their uniqueness—with "thick" descriptions and attention to complex contexts—and in explaining the vagaries of change over time. Both speak against the conflation often found in historical analogy. And both demand that we make distinctions and see novelty—work that is generally more difficult but also more

1 See Samuel Moyn, "The Problem with Analogy," *New York Review of Books*, May 19, 2020, https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2020/05/19/the-trouble-with-comparisons/.

potentially insightful than reducing and comparing.

For students of right-wing politics, sensitivity to particularity and contingency has its own lessons. It means grasping that ideology is always conditioned by time and place, and that our *postfascist* age is marked less by the peril of interwar fascism's return than by its adaptation to new realities and its hybridization with other ideological currents.[2] Viktor Orbán's "illiberal democracy" in Hungary—a crony capitalist mafia state that eschews violent oppression and permits token opposition but has hijacked the media, courts, elections, and universities in a cynical defense of Europe's "Christian identity"[3]—can tell us more than Mussolini's Italy about the dangers inherent in our time. Attention to particularity and contingency also teaches epistemic modesty, which can help yield new discoveries by resisting ideology's foregone conclusions and neglect of inconvenient facts. History's real lesson is that human affairs are *unpredictable*. How often have the expectations and certainties of the past been scotched? The story of the right in the twenty-first century—a century already being shaped by digital technologies, information warfare, energy crises, and global warming—may be quite different from its history in the twentieth.



A tendency to oversell the case points to a second way that partisanship can muddle our thinking. We live in an age of culture wars, real and imagined. These are understood to be either between cultures—a Huntingtonesque "clash of civilizations" pitting, say, an Islamist caliphate or a "Russian world" against the West—or within them, as those who represent the True Nation fight the nefarious quislings who are allegedly betraying it. The hallmark of culture war is reciprocal public demonization between supposedly incompatible moral communities who believe themselves locked in existential conflict.[4] Today's right-wing radicalization—fueled by loathing of Marxists, globalists, liberal elites, and other devils of "the left"—partakes of this culture war style. But so can the alarm of the right's critics. Many of us who would study the right have spent our lives awash in the culture of the culture wars, our sentiments educated by countless cues and feedback loops. We can become unaware of the air we breathe, pushing every argument to maximalist conclusions, uncharitable toward opponents. To study the right without self-critical concern for the climate in which opinions are formed can be naive and open oneself, at least some of the time, to error.[5]

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2 See Federico Finchelstein, *From Fascism to Populism in History* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017).

3 "Orbán: Europe Can Only Be Saved by Returning to Christianity," *Hungary Today*, November 26, 2019, https://hungarytoday.hu/orban-christianity-europe-persecuted/. See also Bálint Magyar, *Post-Communist Mafia State: The Case of Hungary*, trans. Bálint Bethlenfalvy, Ágnes Simon, Steven Nelson, and Kata Paulin (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2016). As Magyar writes, "The link between the Church and the political power is businesslike, in a very secular way" (240).

4 See James Davison Hunter, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America* (New York: Basic Books, 1991).

5 Part of this climate is lingering cultural trauma from World War II's unprecedent death and destruction, which can distort our understanding of the post-1945 right. See Roger Griffin, "Ghostbusting Fascism? The Spectral Aspects of the Era of Fascism and Its Shape-Shifting Relationship to the Radical Right," *Fascism* 11 (2022): 59–86; and, from a different perspective, Tamir Bar-On and Jeffrey M. Bale, *Fighting the Last War: Confusion, Partisanship, and Alarmism in the Literature on the Radical Right* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2022).

Psychology tells a grim story. Humans are hardwired to be "easily divided into hostile groups, each one certain of its righteousness."[6] Confirmation bias is an ineradicable feature of the human mind, rooted in our tendency to protect beliefs tied to our social identity. The effects of cognitive distortions arising from partisan attachment have been so consistently demonstrated that it would demand unusual hubris to believe they do not shape the worldviews of professors, journalists, and policy wonks. Education is little guard against these effects because such biases shape how we assimilate new information. And over the past two decades, as the right has radicalized and polarization has exploded, social media has inflamed the human wont to deploy tribal signifiers, to take pot shots, to shame, to traduce, to perform, to seek "likes."

Since its founding in 2009, UC Berkeley's Center for Right-Wing Studies has been an international leader in nonpartisan analysis of the right, not a narrow ideological outfit but a promoter of research from multiple theoretical and methodological angles. It has also been a steadfast source of responsible information to the public. The solution to the distorting optics of studying what one fears is openness to multiple viewpoints, a culture of fairness and rigor, and the epistemic institutions of peer review and serious, fact-based journalism. It is my hope that the *Journal of Right-Wing Studies* will continue this spirit as a forum for many voices, including students of the right from the right, and as a go-to bridge between academic research and the interested public.

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6 Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion* (New York: Vintage, 2012), xviii. On cognitive biases, partisanship, and social sorting, see Lilliana Mason, *Uncivil Agreement: How Politics Became Our Identity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018).

## Roger Griffin



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I would highlight six main structural, ongoing issues in non-Marxist fascist studies:

1. The first is the default position/reflex of seeing all illiberal right-wing phenomena through the lens of "fascism," often accompanied by a deeply unscholarly and ill-informed impulse to apply the term uncritically to forms of politics that, when examined closely, either bear only a superficial resemblance to interwar fascist movements and regimes or share with them only a few ill-defined traits also found in a wide panoply of anti-humanistic politics (e.g., authoritarian or dictatorial tendencies, populist rhetoric, Manichean analyses of a national crisis, conspiracy theories, xenophobia, and racism).

It is striking that this deplorable tendency has been reinforced not just by the pronouncements of a number of professional academics with no qualifications to make such judgments but even by some high-profile specialists in right-wing studies who should know better. Yet they persist in, or insist on, using the term "fascism" in an idiosyncratic, poorly defined way (à la Umberto Eco) reminiscent of the deplorably confused and methodologically sloppy state of fascist studies that prevailed until the 1990s.[1] The ignorant or delusional basis of this taxonomic reflex has recently been thoroughly explored by Jeffrey Bale and Tamir Bar-On.[2]

2. One effect of the overrepresentation of fascism as a theme of radical-right studies is that too little intelligent, taxonomically and methodologically sophisticated, historically grounded, and genuinely comparative scholarly energy has been devoted in research articles and books to contemporary forms of the illiberal (but not always antidemocratic) right. Some of these forms are rooted in the 1960s, such as right-wing populism (another contested term); "illiberal democracy" and various forms of speciously constitutional authoritarianism or hybrids of constitutional democracy with autocracy; fundamentalist forms of politicized religion (to be distinguished from sacralized forms of secular politics); and such major illiberal processes as the autocratic, xenophobic, culturecidal turn in Chinese politics. (The gradual autocratic turn in Putin's political vision and the implications of its radicalization since 2013 were also poorly diagnosed by "experts" in political and military intelligence.)

3. The corollary of these endemic flaws is the need for more initiatives and projects funded and undertaken in a spirit of collaborative, international, and transdisciplinary research so as to marginalize the distorted and disproportional impact of loners,

1 Umberto Eco, "Ur-Fascism," *The New York Review of Books*, June 22, 1995, https://www.nybooks.com/articles/1995/06/22/ur-fascism/.

2 Jeffrey Bale and Tamir Bar-On, *Fighting the Last War: Confusion, Partisanship, and Alarmism in the Literature on the Radical Right* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2022).

often poorly qualified, who promote idiosyncratic definitions and methodologies without engaging intelligently with the prevailing orthodoxy (Madeleine Albright, Jason Stanley, Enzo Traverso, and Federico Finchelstein come to mind).[3] To be clear, all competing heuristic models, definitions, and approaches are to be welcomed. But if they fail to acknowledge the existence of a flourishing, broadly consensual school of comparative fascist studies aligned with the journal *Fascism* and the association COMFAS (International Association for Comparative Fascist Studies) and neglect to present a considered critique of that school's premises, then the resulting analysis smacks of ignorance or arrogance. An example of the sort of ambitious but fruitful project that reflects a methodologically sound form of comparative studies in this area is the recent collection of essays *Fascismos Iberoamericanos* (Latin American fascisms).[4] Far too many conferences and workshops on the right lack definitional and methodological rigor in the organization and formulation of aims and thus come to little or nothing. A demonstration of how to turn a series of carefully planned international workshops into a groundbreaking comparative study of one form of authoritarianism, namely the ideologically driven totalitarian state, is *Beyond Totalitarianism*: *Stalinism and Nazism Compared*.[5]

4. Researchers, political journalists, and contributors to studies of the illiberal right need to make greater efforts to incorporate the insights drawn from adjacent human sciences into their understanding of the drivers of the illiberal right in both secular and religious movements and regimes. I have in mind such research areas as cultural anthropology, social psychology, group psychology, and other fields that study group and individual psychosis, megalomania and extreme narcissism, palingenetic longings, the mechanisms of "othering" and demonizing outgroups through the power of Manichean mythopoeia, theories of the role of narrative in extremist activism, and the power of symbolic, metaphorical, and utopian thinking in sociopolitical allegiances and behavior.

5. In initiatives, exercises in consultation and collaboration, grants, awards, and other funding, far more effort should be devoted to building bridges and networks connecting *academic research* into the illiberal right and counterextremism policies or laws to *investigation* by security forces, governmental and nongovernmental agencies, and foreign policy officials, both at a national and international level. The failure to anticipate Putin's expansionist/imperialist policy toward Ukraine, or the deeper motivations behind China's domestic and foreign policy, represents a major failure of intelligence on a par

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3 See Madeleine Albright, *Fascism: A Warning* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2018); Jason Stanley, *How Fascism Works: The Politics of Us and Them* (New York: Random House, 2018); Enzo Traverso, *The New Faces of Fascism: Populism and the Far Right,* trans. David Broder (London: Verso, 2019); and Jason Stanley, Federico Finchelstein, and Pablo Piccato, "Will Fascism Win the US Election?" *Project Syndicate,* October 30, 2020, https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/trumpian-threat-of-fascist-authoritarianism-after-election-by-federico-finchelstein-et-al-2020-10.

4 Gabriela de Lima Grecco and Leandro Pereira Gonçalves, eds., *Fascismos Iberoamericanos* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2022).

5 Michael Geyer and Sheila Fitzpatrick, eds., *Beyond Totalitarianism: Stalinism and Nazism Compared* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

with the chronic misreadings of the buildup of illiberal pressures within Iraq and Iran or the probability of Pakistan and India becoming nuclear powers. Closely connected with this need to encourage a greater alignment of academic with state intelligence in understanding the illiberal right, both secular and religious, whether in antistate or state manifestations, is a proactive policy to inform the official media about what terms such as "the right," "populism," and "fascism" actually mean, so that less rubbish is perpetuated in TV and newspaper coverage of politics. (Social media is a lost cause.)

6. Even more utopianly, I would welcome an international initiative led by academics and state agencies concerned with "the right" to call for the creation in every liberal democracy of an official body conceived on the lines of the German "Office for the Defence of the Constitution" (Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz)—a committee of state and academic experts whose job it is to monitor politics hostile to liberal democracy, whether within or against "the system." This would enable genuine fascist formations or undertakings—such as neo-Nazi revisionism and organizations with demonstrable links with, or roots in, the extreme secular or religious right—to be monitored, exposed, and banned as illegal.