

Institute for  
European, Russian,  
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THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

*Different Shades of Black.*  
**The Anatomy of the Far Right in the  
European Parliament**



Ellen Rivera and Masha P. Davis

*IERES Occasional Papers, May 2019*  
*Transnational History of the Far Right Series*



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# TransHistFarRight

## Transnational History of the Far Right Series *A Collective Research Project led by Marlene Laruelle*

At a time when global political dynamics seem to be moving in favor of illiberal regimes around the world, this research project seeks to fill in some of the blank pages in the contemporary history of the far right, with a particular focus on the transnational dimensions of far-right movements in the broader Europe/Eurasia region.

*Cover Photo: Protesters of right-wing and far-right Flemish associations take part in a protest against Marrakesh Migration Pact in Brussels, Belgium on Dec. 16, 2018. Editorial credit: Alexandros Michailidis / Shutterstock.com*

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Of all European elections, the one scheduled for May 23-26, 2019, which will decide the composition of the 9th European Parliament, may be the most unpredictable, as well as the most important, in the history of the European Union. Far-right forces may gain unprecedented ground, with polls suggesting that they will win up to one-fifth of the 705 seats that will make up the European parliament after Brexit.<sup>1</sup> The outcome of the election will have a profound impact not only on the political environment in Europe, but also on the transatlantic and Euro-Russian relationships. This in turn will affect: policy on the Middle East, where the EU is currently challenging Washington's break from the Iran nuclear agreement; immigration and global environmental policies; and a broad range of international security issues.

As far-right parties form new factions in the European Parliament after the election, a new pan-European alliance will be the major player: the far-right parliamentary "supergroup" European Alliance of Peoples and Nations, led by Italian deputy prime minister Matteo Salvini. Salvini's "European Spring,"<sup>2</sup> which includes some of the most important national far-right parties in the EU, among them the Italian League, the French National Rally, and the German Alternative for Germany, can be considered a milestone for the far right, as it brings various hitherto disunited tendencies into one fold for the first time.

Salvini (born 1973) is the young protégé of the powerful Italian fascist Mario Borghezio (born 1947), who has ties to some of the most dangerous figures in the European netherworld of neo-Nazi terror, including Stefano Delle Chiaie. Salvini has maintained close ties to the leadership of the neofascist organization Casa-Pound, named after the American poet Ezra Pound, who lived in Italy and proudly served as a propagandist for "Il Duce," Benito Mussolini. In January 2015, CasaPound even launched a political movement called Sovranità in support of Salvini.

Since 1999, Borghezio has held a seat in the European Parliament, where he has worked with leading European radical figures, including Nick Griffin, Udo Voigt, and Jean-Marie Le Pen. It was there, during his stints as a member of the EU parliament in 2004-2006 and 2009-2018, that Salvini was groomed by Borghezio and his colleagues. It was Borghezio who orchestrated an April 2015 event in Rome urging what was then called the "Northern" League to develop a national presence and thus win state power. An enthusiastic participant in the event was the Russian fascist ideologue Aleksandr Dugin, in whose honor the assembled Italian leaders played the Russian national anthem.

Also non-European actors have been working on a rapprochement among various right-wing forces in the European Union, amongst them former Trump advisor Steve Bannon. He spent the week before the 2018 Italian elections coaching and supporting Salvini's campaign. In a speech at the annual convention of Marine Le Pen's party in March 2018, he urged her cadres to wear the accusation of racism as a "badge of honor."

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<sup>1</sup> Alastair MacDonald, "Center-Right to Top EU Poll; Far-Right Surges: Survey," *Reuters*, February 18, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-eu-election-idUSKCN1Q70RE>.

<sup>2</sup> Shaun Walker, Angela Giuffrida and Jon Henley, "Salvini Aims to Forge Far-Right Alliance Ahead of European Elections," *The Guardian*, April 4, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/apr/04/salvini-aims-to-forge-far-right-alliance-ahead-of-european-elections>.

Furthermore, Bannon joined far-right Catholic forces in their efforts to purge the current Pope and his moderate clerics and has embarked on creating a school in a former Italian monastery to train far-right activists from across the continent.

Even before the 2019 European elections, it is already possible to say that a resurgent far right has had a dramatic impact on the EU. The corrosiveness of this development was visible in the Brexit referendum, which exemplified the split between those nationalists who want to leave transnational EU structures altogether and the growing number who think that they should remain engaged with Europe in order to take over these structures and put them in the service of their own agendas.

According to the most recent polls, the largest ideological bloc will likely remain the center-right conservative European People's Party (EPP, estimated 183 seats), followed by the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (around 135 seats). Salvini's far-right bloc (up to 141 seats) could therefore become not only a force to be reckoned with, but also a potential partner, particularly for the center-right.<sup>3</sup> Signs of such a rapprochement can already be discerned: for example, the right-wing to far-right parliamentary groups (European Conservatives and Reformists, Europe of Nations and Freedom, and Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy) almost unanimously voted against energy efficiency.<sup>4</sup>

Our main goal with this article is to dissect this bloc into its different shades of black, providing an introduction to the various far-right parties and groups within the European Parliament, as well as to key groups, foundations, and individuals reaching into the orbit of European politics.

Furthermore, we aim to point out the tangible dangers that would result from any further empowerment of the political far right, highlighting that the platforms of certain groups, among them the Alliance of Peace and Freedom, call for measures including a white-supremacist breeding program,<sup>5</sup> the abolition of abortion rights or the right to contraception,<sup>6</sup> the relaunching of fascist paramilitary militias,<sup>7</sup> the dispossession and deportation of immigrants,<sup>8</sup> and neo-feudal conditions reminiscent of the Middle Ages.<sup>9</sup> The trope of a Great Replacement of the "white race" by immigrants due to the former's declining demographics, an idea rooted in Jean Raspail's *The Camp of the Saints* (1973) and Renaud Camus' *The Great Replacement* (2011),<sup>10</sup> has permeated all layers of the European far right, prompting some camps to even call for outright warfare to defend the "European race" in a white "Reconquista."<sup>11</sup>

Additionally, we try to elaborate on the emerging role of the transnational "Black International," which includes far-right parties in the US and Russia as well as in Europe. Bannon has committed himself to advising the campaigns of the European Right; Russian funding and propaganda have supported these efforts as well.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> VoteWatch Europe, "Vote on Energy Efficiency," last modified January 17, 2018, (registration required), <https://www.votewatch.eu/en/term8-energy-efficiency-draft-legislative-resolution-vote-commission-proposal-ordinary-legislative-procedure.html###vote-tabs-list-2>.

<sup>5</sup> Nick Griffin, "Reconquista: The 100 Years War—And the Only Way to Win It," in *Winds of Change—Notes for the Reconquista* (Helsingborg: Logik Förlag, 2018), 58. Subsequent footnotes refer to the Kindle edition.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Roberto Fiore, "After the Night—The Dawn," in *Winds of Change—Notes for the Reconquista* (Helsingborg: Logik Förlag, 2018), 53.

<sup>8</sup> Nick Griffin, "An Introduction to Distributism," in *Winds of Change—Notes for the Reconquista* (Helsingborg: Logik Förlag, 2018), 25.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Renaud Camus, *Le Grand Remplacement* (Neuilly-sur-Seine: David Reinharc, 2011); Jean Raspail, *Le Camp des saints* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1973).

<sup>11</sup> Griffin, "Reconquista," 65; Derek Holland, "The Political Soldier," in *Winds of Change—Notes for the Reconquista* (Helsingborg: Logik Förlag, 2018), 31.

Given that the European elections experience ever lower voter turnouts,<sup>12</sup> it is essential that responsible sources in Europe immediately mobilize progressive and mainstream European voters to become more actively involved and participate in the vote.<sup>13</sup>

### **EU Far-Right Parties and Parliamentary Groups**

The European Parliament is currently comprised of 751 Members of Parliament (MEPs) directly elected by EU citizens.<sup>14</sup> Its main task is to negotiate and adopt laws together with the Council of the EU—that is, to vote yes or no on draft proposals written by the EU Commission. The composition of MEPs in the EU Parliament depends on the election system in place in each member state. In an open-list system, also called “preferential voting,” implemented for example in Sweden, Finland, and Greece,<sup>15</sup> MEPs are elected as individuals on the basis of their personal qualities. These MEPs tend to be more devoted to EU affairs than those elected through party-list systems such as those in France, Germany, and Spain. In the latter case, only the head of a list is usually looked at; in the worst-case scenario, people vote according to blind party loyalty.

Similar to national parliaments, the European Parliament is made up of different parties that cover the whole political spectrum. It also supports so-called “political groups” or parliamentary groups, broader ideological coalitions that include a number of European parties, national parties, and independent MEPs. Elected MEPs can decide whether they want to join one of the registered Europarties (of which there are currently 10)<sup>16</sup> and/or one of the eight parliamentary groups; the alternative is to remain a Non-Inscrit (non-attached MEP).

The advantages of recognition as an EU party or group are predominantly financial. In fiscal year 2019, six percent of the roughly 1.8 billion euro of EU parliamentary funds—or around 110 million euros—were directed to the activities of political groups, parties and associated foundations.<sup>17</sup> At present, to gain official recognition as a parliamentary group, 25 MEPs from at least seven EU member states must be officially represented.<sup>18</sup> The requirements for parties are a little more complex, but essentially they must comprise representatives from at least one-quarter of EU member states.<sup>19</sup>

The European far right has established itself firmly within this structure. During the current 8th European Parliament (2014-2019), three right-wing to far-right European parties (Alliance of European National Movements, Alliance for Peace and Freedom, and Movement for a Europe of Nations and Freedom) and two parliamentary groups (Europe for Freedom and Direct Democracy and Europe of Nations and Freedom) were registered. We will discuss each of these in detail below.

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<sup>12</sup> “Voter Turnout in the European Elections,” *Politico*, October 6, 2018, <https://www.politico.eu/interactive/voters-turnout-in-the-european-elections/>.

<sup>13</sup> An important contribution is the publication by a collaborative team of researchers around Dominique Vidal (ed.), *Les Nationalistes à l’Assaut de L’Europe* (Paris: Editions Demopolis, 2019).

<sup>14</sup> “European Parliament,” European Union, accessed May 8, 2019, [https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/institutions-bodies/european-parliament\\_en](https://europa.eu/european-union/about-eu/institutions-bodies/european-parliament_en).

<sup>15</sup> “2019 European Elections: National Rules,” European Parliament, last modified October 2018, [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2018/623556/EPRS\\_ATA\(2018\)623556\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2018/623556/EPRS_ATA(2018)623556_EN.pdf).

<sup>16</sup> “List of Registered European Political Parties,” Authority for European Political Parties and European Political Foundations, accessed April 16, 2019, <http://www.appf.europa.eu/appf/en/parties-and-foundations/registered-parties.html>.

<sup>17</sup> “Budget: How the European Parliament Makes the Most of Its Annual Funding,” European Parliament, accessed May 8, 2019, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/about-parliament/en/organisation-and-rules/parliaments-budget>; “Draft General Budget 2019,” European Parliament, European Union, Budget Online, accessed May 8, 2019, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/budget/www/index-en.htm>.

<sup>18</sup> Honor Mahony, “New Rules to Make It Harder for MEPs to Form Political Groups,” *EU Observer*, July 9, 2008, <https://euobserver.com/institutional/26468>.

<sup>19</sup> “The Regulations Governing Political Parties and Rules Regarding Their Funding at European Level,” EUR-Lex, March 4, 2009, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=LEGISSUM:l33315>.

Although they seek to dissociate themselves from the more explicitly far-right parties and groups, the Eurosceptic and anti-federalist party European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR), its affiliated parliamentary group Alliance of Conservatives and Reformists in Europe (ACRE), and the European People's Party (EPP) all have members whose national parties can be considered to belong to the far-right spectrum. These will only be peripherally addressed below.

There is an ongoing debate as to how far-right political ideologies, particularly Euroscepticism, should be classified.<sup>20</sup> While there are many axes along which the antagonisms within the European far right could be analyzed (EU secessionists vs. EU reformists, pagan vs. Christian, monarchist vs. national-revolutionary, openly vs. covertly racist, pro-/anti-Russian, pro-/anti-American, etc.), we will focus instead on the different party and group alignments and their official political platforms.

Although these are fairly stable reference points, it should be noted that there appears to be enormous fluidity within EU parties and groups, with MEPs often changing camps during a parliamentary term. This occurs particularly often on the far right, where rivalries within the ranks regularly lead to splits, a reality that has impeded many attempts to unify these parties under a single umbrella.

Although right-wing and Eurosceptic parties have existed for as long as the EU, the first real effort of the far right to establish itself as a parliamentary group came only in January 2007, with the formation of Identity, Tradition, Sovereignty (ITS), which existed for about a year. When ITS member Alessandra Mussolini, the daughter of "Il Duce," Benito Mussolini, insulted the Romanian delegation to the ITS, they withdrew; since this left the group with too few members, it was de-registered as of November 2007.<sup>21</sup>

Organized under the leadership of the French Front National politician Bruno Gollnisch, and with both Marine and Jean-Marie Le Pen as members, the French delegation was dominant within the group. ITS's link to nostalgia for Nazism became apparent through subtle details such as the fact that at least one of its propaganda items was published by *Les Editions d'Héligoland*, a neo-Nazi publisher of books heralding the exploits of the French collaborationist Charlemagne SS division.<sup>22</sup>

After the EU elections in 2009, fundamental changes took place in the right and far-right groupings within the parliament. Four Eurosceptic parliamentary groups and parties dissolved: the right-wing group Union for Europe of the Nations and its associated Alliance for Europe of the Nations party, the right-wing populist Independence/Democracy (IND/DEM) group, and the far-right European National Front party.

The dissolution of these rather established formations, particularly the IND/DEM, can be attributed to the rivalries between two distinct camps of Eurosceptics: a reformist subgroup (sometimes referred to as Euro-realists, or "Soft Eurosceptics") that believes that the EU is essentially desirable, if reformed; and a secessionist subgroup consisting of those MEPs who believe that the EU is inherently wrong even if reformed and therefore advocate a full withdrawal.<sup>23</sup>

From the ashes of these parties and groups, two new entities emerged in 2009, one in either camp. On the former side was the far-right Alliance of European National Movements (AENM) party,<sup>24</sup> initially joined by

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<sup>20</sup> Sofia Vasilopoulou, "Varieties of Euroscepticism: The Case of the European Extreme Right," *Journal of Contemporary European Research* 5, no. 1 (2009): 3-23, <http://www.jcer.net/ojs.index.php/jcer/article/view/106/131>.

<sup>21</sup> To form a political group in the European Parliament, there needed to be 20 MEPs from six different states (in 2009, this was increased to 25 MEPs from seven states).

<sup>22</sup> For example, EDH published the journal *Les Amis de Jean Mabire*. Jean Mabire is famous for his books in praise of the French Charlemagne SS. One of the journal's issues was a tribute to Mabire, with essays by Dominique Venner and Alain de Benoist.

<sup>23</sup> Martin Olof Persson, "Turkey as a Member of the European Union? A Discourse Analysis of the Views Presented in the European Parliament" (Master's thesis, Luleå tekniska universitet, 2007), 25, <http://ltu.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1030614/FULLTEXT01.pdf>.

<sup>24</sup> Alliance of European National Movements, <http://aemn.info/>; AEMN's Facebook page, accessed April 16, 2019, [https://www.facebook.com/pg/aemn.eu/about/?ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/pg/aemn.eu/about/?ref=page_internal).

both Marine Le Pen and Bruno Gollnisch; on the latter was the EU-secessionist Europe of Freedom and Democracy (EFD) group under the leadership of Brexiteer Nigel Farage. Both groups were to last for the next 10 years. In 2010, another right-wing secessionist party, the European Alliance for Freedom (EAF), was founded by UKIP MEP Godfrey Blum, but it disappeared in 2016.

During the 8th parliamentary term, three more political entities on the right to far-right emerged in the EU Parliament. Marine Le Pen initiated a split from the AENM that saw the formation of the Movement for a Europe of Nations and Freedom (MENF) party in 2014 and its associated group, Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF), in the following year. The next year brought the creation of the Alliance for Peace and Freedom (APF), arguably the most openly racist and anti-Semitic party in the EU parliament.

Most of the parties and groups established from 2009 onwards will likely dissolve in the upcoming parliamentary term, inaugurating a major regrouping comparable to the one a decade ago. This disintegration is attributable to at least three factors: Brexit; Salvini's announcement that he will be forming a new parliamentary group; and the departure of veterans of far-right politics such as Jean-Marie Le Pen from the EU parliament.<sup>25</sup>

While it is presently unclear exactly how this regrouping will take shape, the history of the aforementioned parties and groups will be decisive for the anatomy of any new far-right political structures that may emerge.

## EU Far-Right Parties

### *Alliance for Peace and Freedom*

The Alliance for Peace and Freedom (APF) can be considered the most unapologetically racist and anti-Semitic party in the EU parliament. It was unofficially established on September 14, 2014, by the leader of the Italian neo-fascist Forza Nuova party, Roberto Fiore, together with the neo-Nazi parties Golden Dawn (Greece) and the National Democratic Party (Germany). All three parties had previously been involved in the dissolved European National Front (2004-2009).

In accordance with the EU grant system for parties, the APF received €400,000 in January 2016, with an additional €197,625 for its affiliated foundation "Europa terra nostra."<sup>26</sup> But as early as May 2016, following complaints, the European Parliament launched an investigation into whether the APF met the requirements for EU party funding, in particular whether it recognized the principles on which the European Union is founded.<sup>27</sup> The disbursement of EU funding was ultimately frozen in 2017.<sup>28</sup> In subsequent years, the APF failed to acquire new funds and as of September 2018 had been removed from the party register on the grounds of a change in the registration rules,<sup>29</sup> but this does not rule out that the party might be re-formed after the election in May.

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<sup>25</sup> "Far-Right NF Co-Founder Jean-Marie Le Pen to Leave European Parliament," *RFI*, April 14, 2019, <http://en.rfi.fr/europe/20190414-far-right-nf-co-founder-jean-marie-le-pen-leave-european-parliament>.

<sup>26</sup> "MEPs Condemn €600,000 EU Grant for Far-Right Bloc," *BBC News*, May 5, 2016, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-36213156>.

<sup>27</sup> "Parliament Launches Investigation into Compliance by Alliance for Peace and Freedom with EU Founding Principles," European Parliament, May 12, 2016, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20160512IPR27173/ep-to-check-alliance-for-peace-and-freedom-s-compliance-with-eu-basic-principles>.

<sup>28</sup> "Die APF: Europas rechtsextremer Rand," Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, August 7, 2017, <http://www.bpb.de/politik/extremismus/rechtsextremismus/253898/die-apf-europas-rechtsextremer-rand>.

<sup>29</sup> "Press Release: Implementation of Regulation 2018/673 Amending Regulation No°1141/2014," Authority for European Political Parties and European Political Foundations, September 27, 2018, [http://www.epgencms.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/upload/fc24ff5d-b483-4455-a57c-3ecf44819d3b/2018\\_09\\_27\\_PRESS\\_RELEASE\\_IMPLEMENTATION\\_OF\\_REFORM.pdf](http://www.epgencms.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/upload/fc24ff5d-b483-4455-a57c-3ecf44819d3b/2018_09_27_PRESS_RELEASE_IMPLEMENTATION_OF_REFORM.pdf).

The key figures in the APF are Jean-Marie Le Pen of the French National Front,<sup>30</sup> the Italian Roberto Fiore (Forza Nuova), Nick Griffin (formerly of the British National Party), and the German Udo Voigt (NPD), all of whom have long histories in the radical far right.

Roberto Fiore emerged from the far-right extremist milieu active in the later phase of the Years of Lead (*Anni di piombo*) in Italy, a period between the 1960s and the late 1980s marked by a wave of political terrorism. Together with the neo-fascist Gabriele Adinolfi, Fiore had been a leading ideologue in the orbit of Terza Posizione (Third Position, TP), one of the most important extra-parliamentary far-right movements in Italy, which was heavily influenced by the fascist teachings of Julius Evola.<sup>31</sup> TP served as a front for the Armed Revolutionary Nuclei (Nuclei Armati Rivoluzionari), which committed over 30 murders<sup>32</sup> and took part in the false-flag bomb attack on the Bologna main train station that killed 85 people in 1980.

With an arrest warrant out on him, Fiore fled to London,<sup>33</sup> where, according to historian Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, a specialist on esoteric Nazism, he had a strong influence on the ideological development of the fascist British National Front (NF), including the young Nick Griffin:<sup>34</sup>

Roberto Fiore and his colleagues helped the NF forge a new militant elitist philosophy that foreswore electoral strategies in favor of educating and training a fanatical, quasi-religious “New Man” in select cadres for a national revolution. By 1983, this group—led by Griffin, Holland and Harrington—had broken away to form the NF “Political Soldier” faction. Cadres similar to Iron Guard legionary “nests” became the organizational unit, and training seminars were held at the Hampshire country house of Rosine de Bouneville, the publisher of the Catholic anti-Semitic magazine *Candour*, originally founded by A. K. Chesterton.

The “Political Soldier” motif is based on the “most militant tract” of *The Aryan Doctrine of Battle and Victory* by Italian fascist ideologue Julius Evola, which calls for a “Great Holy War” aiming at spiritual and racial renewal in parallel with a physical “Little Holy War” fought out in daily life.<sup>35</sup>

In 1989, Fiore and Griffin founded (with Patrick Harrington) a fanatically Catholic fascist group, the International Third Position, which campaigned against Zionism and had close links with terrorist organizations.<sup>36</sup> This anti-Semitic bent was particularly supported by Griffin, who was found guilty of Holocaust denial and of inciting racial hatred.<sup>37</sup> Under his leadership, the British National Party (BNP), to which he had switched from the NF, prohibited the admission of ethnic minorities.<sup>38</sup> Griffin also has ties to American Renaissance,

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<sup>30</sup> “France’s Jean-Marie Le Pen Joins European Far-Right Alliance,” *The Local*, April 7, 2018, <https://www.thelocal.fr/20180407/frances-jean-marie-le-pen-joins-european-far-right-alliance>.

<sup>31</sup> Founded in 1976 as Lotta Studentesca and renamed TP in 1978, it consisted mainly of ex-members of previously outlawed neo-fascist groups such as Ordine Nuovo, Avanguardia Nazionale, Lotta di Popolo, and Fronte Studentesco.

<sup>32</sup> Alberto Custodero, “Giusva Fioravanti incontra i parenti delle sue 33 vittime,” *La Repubblica*, August 2, 2010, [https://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2010/08/02/news/bologna\\_fioravanti-6007414/](https://www.repubblica.it/cronaca/2010/08/02/news/bologna_fioravanti-6007414/).

<sup>33</sup> René Monzat, *Enquêtes sur la droite extrême* (Paris: Le Monde-éditions, 1992), 89.

<sup>34</sup> Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, *Black Sun: Aryan Cults, Esoteric Nazism, and the Politics of Identity* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 68-69.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Kim Sengupta, “East London Bombing: Far-Right Faction Aims to Trigger Violent Race War,” *Independent*, April 29, 1999, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/east-london-bombing-far-right-faction-aims-to-trigger-violent-race-war-1089684.html>.

<sup>37</sup> Claire Carter, “Nick Griffin: Holocaust ‘Is a Moral Club,’” *The Telegraph*, May 14, 2014, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/bnp/10829555/Nick-Griffin-Holocaust-is-a-moral-club.html>.

<sup>38</sup> Rosa Prince, “BNP Ordered to Accept Ethnic Minority Members or Face Prosecution,” *The Telegraph*, June 23, 2009, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/5611876/BNP-ordered-to-accept-ethnic-minority-members-or-face-prosecution.html>.

an organization that aims to produce pseudo-scientific studies demonstrating the superiority of the white race.<sup>39</sup>

That the APF is looking for allies in the pursuit of its anti-Semitic agenda can be deduced from the international contacts it devises. For example, there are reported meetings with representatives of the Syrian Baath party,<sup>40</sup> as well as with leading members of Lebanon's Hezbollah.<sup>41</sup> And the picture would not be complete without mentioning Udo Voigt, leader of the German NPD, who called Hitler "a great man"<sup>42</sup> and attempted to nominate Nazi leader Rudolf Hess, whom he considers a martyr,<sup>43</sup> for the Nobel Peace Prize.<sup>44</sup>

The most concise document illuminating the APF's ideology is a party publication from 2016 called *Winds of Change—Notes for the Reconquista*,<sup>45</sup> co-authored by Voigt, Griffin, Fiore, and others. A bluntly white-supremacist and eugenicist pamphlet, it calls for a variety of autocratic measures, but Griffin's contributions are the most explicit in their demands. According to him, immigrants should be deported and their property expropriated;<sup>46</sup> they would then be kept from trying to enter "white Europe" through the "deployment of heavily robotised armed forces with standing orders to shoot to kill any outsiders trying to crash their way into a society..."<sup>47</sup> He sees the "white race" as endangered and is committed to a significant increase in white birth rates, particularly in point four of his "Ten Point Program," which promotes the abolition of abortion rights and of the right to contraception:<sup>48</sup>

To impose on the entire population the measures needed to boost the birth rate to at least four and preferably ten children per woman of child-bearing age: The abolition of the right of young women to go into higher education until they have had at least three children; punitive taxes on all those—of either sex and whatever sexuality—who chose to remain childless; ruthless action to ban all propaganda or lifestyle choices which reduce the birth rate; the abolition of contraception and abortion save in cases of genuine medical need. Finally, population controls to prevent those who do not accept such measures simply emigrating.

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<sup>39</sup> Griffin was a speaker at their 2002 conference, alongside then-Front National second-in-command Bruno Gollnisch. See: "American Renaissance," Southern Poverty Law Center, accessed May 8, 2019, <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/group/american-renaissance>.

<sup>40</sup> "Alliance of Peace and Freedom Delegation: Europe Must Take Syria's Side and Fight Terrorism," *Syrian Times*, June 6, 2015, <http://syriatimes.sy/index.php/news/local/18192-alliance-of-peace-and-freedom-delegation-europe-must-take-syria-s-side-and-fight-terrorism>.

<sup>41</sup> Benjamin Weinthal, "German Neo-Nazi Politician meets Hezbollah, Supports Terror against Israel," *The Jerusalem Post*, March 22, 2019, <https://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/German-leader-meets-with-Hezbollah-supports-terrorism-against-Israel-584259>; "Hizbullah Official in Beirut Receives Visiting Far-Right 'Alliance for Freedom and Peace' Party Members from UK, Italy, Belgium, Germany, and Croatia—Who Express Support For Hizbullah's Fight against Israel," *MEMRI*, March 19, 2019, <https://www.memri.org/reports/hizbullah-official-beirut-receives-visiting-far-right-alliance-freedom-and-peace-party>.

<sup>42</sup> "Meet the Neo-Nazi Boss Costing You €8k a Month," *The Local*, May 27, 2017, <https://www.thelocal.de/20140527/meet-the-racist>.

<sup>43</sup> Katrin Lange, "Rechtsextremismus-Vorwurf: Ehemaliger Pfleger von Rudolf Heß wirbt bei NPD," *Morgenpost*, July 23, 2008, <https://www.morgenpost.de/berlin/article102205820/Ehemaliger-Pfleger-von-Rudolf-Hess-wirbt-bei-NPD.html>.

<sup>44</sup> "After Nominating Rudolf Hess for Nobel Peace Prize: NPD Leader Charged with Inciting Race Hate," *Spiegel Online*, August 24, 2007, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/after-nominating-rudolf-hess-for-nobel-peace-prize-npd-leader-charged-with-inciting-race-hate-a-501910.html>

<sup>45</sup> Roberto Fiore, Nick Griffin, Udo Voigt et al., *Winds of Change—Notes for the Reconquista* (Helsingborg: Logik Förlag, 2018).

<sup>46</sup> Griffin, "An Introduction to Distributism," 25.

<sup>47</sup> Griffin, "Reconquista," 65.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 64-65.

Griffin also pledges to redistribute land expropriated from immigrants to white families in a move that he describes as “White Flight to rural idyll,”<sup>49</sup> urging them to give up their urban lifestyles in exchange for a self-sufficient family life in the countryside. To achieve that goal, he makes explicit reference to medieval feudalism and the guild system as the ideal form of political organization.

All of the contributions to *Winds of Change* are united by a belief in the Great Replacement: that due to the negative demographics in Europe, elites have to import people from other countries in order to maintain their profits, a process that will lead the number of these immigrants to exceed the native white population. Udo Voigt calls for a “Fortress of Europe” that would put “an end to the criminal policy of racial mixing, of resettlement and replacing our peoples by immigrants.”<sup>50</sup>

The authors see themselves as already being at war against this “racial dilution” and call for it openly. Derek Holland, for instance, does not shy away from evoking Adolf Hitler’s “final victory”:<sup>51</sup>

Launch the Holy War that cleanses our soul, purifies our mind and casts out forever the traitors and cowards in our midst! Fight with courage, a granite determination and happy heart until Final Victory!

### ***Alliance of European National Movements***

The Alliance of European National Movements (AENM) can also be considered a xenophobic EU party, having served as a melting pot for various European fascist parties and groups. Formed in 2009, the party at various times included France’s National Front, the British National Party,<sup>52</sup> Italy’s Tricolor Flame, Sweden’s National Democrats, Hungary’s Jobbik, and Belgium’s National Front. The far-right Ukrainian Svoboda party had “observer status” until 2014.<sup>53</sup> The AENM has also been able to count on the support of the influential Italian far-right movement CasaPound.<sup>54</sup> It has received EU funds, including €228,616 in 2016.<sup>55</sup>

All of the parties involved have a history rooted in the fascist past. The Italian Fiamma Tricolore party was founded in 1995 by the more radical members of the neo-fascist party Movimento Sociale Italiano (Italian Social Movement, MSI), led by Pino Rauti (1926-2012).<sup>56</sup> A leading figure of the Italian far right for decades, Rauti’s strategy was to create an atmosphere of civil unrest that he hoped would be favorable to a neo-fascist takeover.<sup>57</sup> Rauti’s name cropped up in the inquiry into the 1969 Piazza Fontana bombing (in which 17 were killed and 88 wounded);<sup>58</sup> he is also suspected of having helped set up the Armed Revolutionary Nuclei (*Nuclei Armati Rivoluzionari*) implicated in the Bologna Massacre of 1980.<sup>59</sup> Fiamma Tricolore clearly adheres

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<sup>49</sup> Griffin, “An Introduction to Distributism,” 25.

<sup>50</sup> Udo Voigt, “Who Are the Real Enemies of Europe,” in *Winds of Change—Notes for the Reconquista* (Helsingborg: Logik Förlag, 2018), 9.

<sup>51</sup> Derek Holland, “The Political Soldier,” in *Winds of Change—Notes for the Reconquista* (Helsingborg: Logik Förlag, 2018), 31.

<sup>52</sup> Nick Griffin left to form APF with Fiore when he was kicked out of the BNP in 2014, but the BNP party stayed in AENM.

<sup>53</sup> Anton Shekhovtsov, “The Old and New European Friends of Ukraine’s Far-Right Svoboda Party,” *Searchlight*, August-September 2013, [https://www.academia.edu/attachments/31830817/download\\_file?st=MTU1NTUwMzE4OSwxODUuMTA0LjE4NC4yMTI%3D&s=swp-toolbar](https://www.academia.edu/attachments/31830817/download_file?st=MTU1NTUwMzE4OSwxODUuMTA0LjE4NC4yMTI%3D&s=swp-toolbar).

<sup>54</sup> “Elezioni Europee 2019: CasaPound in lizza con Destre Unite,” *Affaritaliani*, April 7, 2019, <http://www.affaritaliani.it/politica/elezioni-europee-2019-casapound-in-lizza-con-le-destre-unite-598085.html>.

<sup>55</sup> Nikolaj Nielsen, “Far-Right Parties Re-Register to Access EU Funds,” *EU Observer*, February 14, 2018, <https://euobserver.com/institutional/140987>.

<sup>56</sup> The more mainstream/conservative part of MSI formed the National Alliance (AN).

<sup>57</sup> Franco Ferraresi, *Threats to Democracy—The Radical Right in Italy After the War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 86 & 225.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 59, 101.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 239.

to its fascist roots: it considers the Nazi puppet state Italian Social Republic (RSI) a model state.<sup>60</sup> But the party also seems to attract a new generation of fascists, represented by CasaPound,<sup>61</sup> an influential network of far-right social groups whose mastermind is considered to be Gabriele Adinolfi.<sup>62</sup>

The AENM financially supports Adinolfi's far-right think tank EurHope,<sup>63</sup> which features articles and videos by well-known fascists such as Mario Borghezio of the Italian Lega party<sup>64</sup> and New Right ideologue François Bousquet.<sup>65</sup> Another frequent contributor is a *Winds of Change* co-author, Irene Dimopoulou, who is the editor of Golden Dawn's journal and is married to Golden Dawn politician Chris Pappas. The Frenchman Pascal Lassalle, who is connected to EurHope as well as Adinolfi's elitist fascist Lansquenets group, has tangible links to paramilitary structures in Ukraine.<sup>66</sup>

An important influence on the AENM's ideology was the French Front National. Founded in 1972 with the aim of unifying the French far right, it was modeled on the Italian MSI,<sup>67</sup> which was trying to unite Italian far-right groups into a broader coalition. However, France's far right enjoyed no real homogeneity beyond maybe a fascination with authoritarian regimes and violence, attributable to the fact that the parties' founders were

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<sup>60</sup> On June 10, 1940, Italy officially entered the Second World War on the side of Germany. On July 9, 1943, the Allies invaded Italy, removed Mussolini from power, and took him prisoner. On September 12, 1943, Mussolini was rescued from captivity by German parachutists commanded by Otto Skorzeny. Mussolini was put in charge of a German-dependent regime in Northern Italy, the Italian Social Republic.

<sup>61</sup> CasaPound entered politics with Tricolor Flame in 2006. See: Giuseppe Pisani, "CasaPound's First Big Outing in Rome Was a Snooze-Fest," *Vice*, December 5, 2012, [https://www.vice.com/en\\_us/article/mvp4y8/casapound-demo-rome-24-nov](https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/mvp4y8/casapound-demo-rome-24-nov). CasaPound was named after the anti-Semitic poet Ezra Pound. Its members refer to themselves as *arditi* ("daring ones") and greet each other with the stiff-armed Roman salute. See: Ian Thomson, "Italy's Salvation Will Not Come with a Sleek and Smarmy Redeemer Like Berlusconi," *New Statesman*, March 9, 2018, <https://www.newstatesman.com/culture/observations/2018/03/italy-s-salvation-will-not-come-sleek-and-smarmy-redeemer-berlusconi>.

<sup>62</sup> Helmut Kellersohn, "Es geht um Einfluss auf die Köpfe—Das Institut für Staatspolitik," *Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung*, July 7, 2016, <http://www.bpb.de/politik/extremismus/rechtsextremismus/230002/es-geht-um-einfluss-auf-die-koepfe-das-institut-fuer-staatspolitik>; José Pedro Zúquete, "Free the People: The Search for 'True Democracy' in Western Europe's Far-Right Political Culture," in *The Promise and Perils of Populism: Global Perspectives*, ed. Carlos de la Torre (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2015), 248.

<sup>63</sup> EurHope, <https://www.eurhopethinktank.eu/>. See bottom of the page for the AENM logo.

<sup>64</sup> Gabriele Adinolfi, "UAEEI 2017—Mario Borghezio—De mon engagement chez Jean Thiriart...", YouTube video, 25:27, August 23, 2017, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eBXEjY911\\_A&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eBXEjY911_A&feature=youtu.be).

<sup>65</sup> Institut Illiade, "« L'idéologie 'Big Other' : les autres avant les nôtres » (François Bousquet) », YouTube video, 18:32, April 17, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QfzNjcBhc0A&feature=youtu.be>.

<sup>66</sup> Pascal Lassalle has a long history in the French New Right, but despite moving in this "traditionally Russia oriented" milieu has become "an ardent defender of the Ukrainian cause." See "1st Paneuropa Conference Report," Reconquista Europe, June 15, 2017, archived on April 21, 2018, <https://web.archive.org/web/20180421163806/http://reconquista-europe.tumblr.com/post/161847863121/1st-paneuropa-conference-report-the-1st-paneuropa>. Lassalle translated at least two of Gabriele Adinolfi's books into French. Adinolfi and Roberto Fiore's *Noi Terza Posizione* appeared as *Nos belles années de plomb* (L'Encre, 2004). Adinolfi's *Tortuga, l'isola che (non) c'è* appeared as *Pensées corsaires. Abécédaire de lutte et de victoire* (Paris: Éditions du Lore, 2008). See "Faut-il se garder d'une « russophilie » excessive ? (entretien avec Pascal G. Lassalle)," Emax, March 6, 2010, <http://www.europemaxima.com/ecrit-avec-ton-sang-et-tu-decouvriras-que-ton-sang-est-esprit-par-gabriele-adinolfi/>.

<sup>67</sup> The French National Front even adopted a French version of the MSI tricolor flame as its logo.

Nazi collaborationists<sup>68</sup> and OAS<sup>69</sup> terrorists. Former National Front leader Jean-Marie Le Pen was a lieutenant of the 1st Foreign Parachute Regiment under commander Hélié Denoix de St Marc, one of the leaders<sup>70</sup> of the Algiers putsch of 1961,<sup>71</sup> and was a close friend of the Belgian Nazi Léon Degrelle.

Marine Le Pen's rise in the Front National and her "de-demonization" strategy split the party between the more openly racist camp around Jean-Marie Le Pen and those who sought to make its discourse more "acceptable." Most National Front members quit AENM after Marine Le Pen took over the leadership of the party in 2011, instead joining the newly founded Movement for a Europe of Nations and Freedom.<sup>72</sup> This brought an end to Bruno Gollnisch's term as the AENM's chairman (2010-2013); the post would be filled by Béla Kovács from the Hungarian Jobbik party.

That nostalgia for the Second World War seems to be a common denominator within the AENM is also exemplified by Jobbik, which is known for its paramilitary wing, Magyar Gárda (Hungarian Guard), which has been compared to Hitler's brownshirts (SA) in Nazi Germany.<sup>73</sup> Magyar Gárda denounces local Sinti and Roma populations as "Gypsy criminals" and calls for putting them in ghettos.<sup>74</sup> Jobbik's worldview is also

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<sup>68</sup> The founders of the French National Front include former corporal of the Charlemagne SS division Pierre Bousquet; member of The Legion of French Volunteers Against Bolshevism (a collaborationist militia of Vichy France) and member of Jacques Doriot's Parti Populaire Français (collaborationist party) André Dufraisse AKA "Uncle Panzer"; and Waffen-Untersturmführer Léon Gaultier.

<sup>69</sup> The Organisation Armée Secrète was a dissident paramilitary organization during the Algerian War (1954–62). The OAS carried out terrorist attacks, including bombings and assassinations, in an attempt to prevent Algeria from gaining independence from French colonial rule. Historian Rémi Kauffer estimated the number of people killed by the OAS to be between 1,700 and 2,000. See: Rémi Kauffer, *OAS: Histoire d'une guerre franco-française* (Paris: Seuil, 2002). For a list of FN members who participated in the OAS, see: "Liens actuels et historiques OAS-FN," accessed May 8, 2019, [https://mrap-strasbourg.org/IMG/pdf/liens\\_entre\\_le\\_fn\\_et\\_l\\_oas.pdf](https://mrap-strasbourg.org/IMG/pdf/liens_entre_le_fn_et_l_oas.pdf).

<sup>70</sup> Along with Raoul Salan, André Zeller, Maurice Challe, and Edmond Jouhaud.

<sup>71</sup> A failed coup d'état to press French President Charles de Gaulle not to abandon French Algeria.

<sup>72</sup> The National Front withdrew from AENM and joined the ephemeral European Alliance for Freedom (EAF) (2011-2015) before joining the Movement for a Europe of Nations and Freedom (MENF), founded in 2015.

However, leader of the French National Front Jean-Marie Le Pen and his right-hand man, Bruno Gollnisch, maintained their position in the AENM. In 2013, FN leader Marine Le Pen requested that they both leave their positions in the AENM in order to join the more moderate EAF. This was part of her "de-demonization" strategy, for which cooperation with the openly racist and anti-Semitic parties present in AENM was seen as counterproductive.

<sup>73</sup> The Guard was officially banned by the country's constitutional court in 2009, but it is not uncommon to still see Jobbik members dress in fascist regalia for public displays. See: David Chance, "Hundreds Join Hungary Far-Right Guard, Take Oath," *Reuters*, October 21, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSL21414478>.

<sup>74</sup> Veronika Gulyas, "Hungary's Far-Right Jobbik Party Wants to Close Gypsies in Ghetto," *The Wall Street Journal*, September 2, 2010, <https://blogs.wsj.com/emergingurope/2010/09/02/hungary%E2%80%99s-far-right-jobbik-party-wants-to-close-gypsies-in-ghetto/>.

seductive overseas: Donald Trump's Deputy Assistant, Sebastian Gorka,<sup>75</sup> affirmed his support for the Magyar Gárda.<sup>76</sup> Nor are the Sinti and Roma the party's only scapegoats: Jobbik's policy is also to "stop hushing up such taboo issues" as "Zionist Israel's efforts to dominate Hungary and the world."<sup>77</sup>

In February 2016, Jobbik cut ties with AENM; its MEPs are currently Non-Inscrits in the EU Parliament. That same year, AENM's president, Béla Kovács, left Jobbik.<sup>78</sup> Kovács currently stands accused of espionage and EU budget fraud. According to the indictment, he met with an officer from the Russian military intelligence agency (the GRU) several times after May 2010 and maintained regular contact with him.<sup>79</sup>

After the Front National and Jobbik split from the AENM, support for the party dwindled, and as of January 2019 it had been de-registered as an official party,<sup>80</sup> although this does not rule out the possibility that it might re-form.

### ***Movement for a Europe of Nations and Freedom***

Marine Le Pen's Rassemblement National (formerly Front National) is now part of the Movement for a Europe of Nations and Freedom (MENF), alongside other "mainstream" far-right parties. MENF was founded in October 2014 by parties affiliated with the unsuccessful European Alliance for Freedom (EAF).<sup>81</sup> Today, only four of those parties are represented in the MENF. They are, in descending order: the Freedom Party of Austria (Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs), the French National Rally (Rassemblement National), Italy's League (Lega), and the Belgian Flemish Interest (Vlaams Belang).

Unlike the EAF, which was a creation of the highly controversial former UKIP whip Godfrey Blum, the MENF was organized as an association of national parties and was expected to replace the EAF in the medium term.<sup>82</sup> After being recognized as a party in December 2014, MENF received a grant of €1,170,746 from the European Parliament in March 2015,<sup>83</sup> plus €621,677<sup>84</sup> for its affiliated political foundation, the Fondation pour une Europe des Nations et des Libertés. After monitoring MENF's expenditures in September 2016, the

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<sup>75</sup> Sebastian Gorka is familiar with the Hungarian anti-Semitic scene, as he and two former members of the Jobbik Party co-founded the New Democratic Coalition (see: Lili Bayer, "Senior Trump Aide Forged Key Ties To Anti-Semitic Groups In Hungary," *Forward*, February 24, 2017, <https://forward.com/news/national/364085/sebastian-gorka-trump-aide-forged-key-ties-to-anti-semitic-groups-in-hungary>); he also took a "life-long oath of loyalty to nazi Hungarian group Vitézi Rend (see: Brad Reed, "Top Trump Adviser Sebastian Gorka Is a 'Sworn Member' of Nazi-Linked Group: Report," *RawStory*, March 16, 2017, <https://www.rawstory.com/2017/03/top-trump-adviser-sebastian-gorka-is-a-sworn-member-of-nazi-linked-group-report/>).

<sup>76</sup> Tom McKay, "Senior Trump Aide Sebastian Gorka Endorsed Violent, Racist Hungarian Militia," *Mic*, April 3, 2017, <https://mic.com/articles/173016/senior-trump-aide-sebastian-gorka-endorsed-violent-racist-hungarian-militia#.PssQjbRVr>.

<sup>77</sup> "Policies," Jobbik, accessed May 8, 2019, <https://www.jobbik.com/policies>.

<sup>78</sup> "Statement of Jobbik on AENM," Jobbik, accessed May 8, 2019, [https://www.jobbik.com/statement\\_of\\_jobbik\\_on\\_aenm](https://www.jobbik.com/statement_of_jobbik_on_aenm).

<sup>79</sup> András Dezső, "Külföldi titkosszolgálatoktól kapott adatok is elhangzanak Kovács Béla perén," *Index.hu*, July 9, 2019, [https://index.hu/belfold/2018/07/09/kulfoldi\\_titkosszolgalatoktol\\_kapott\\_adatok\\_is\\_elhangzanak\\_kovacs\\_bela\\_peren/](https://index.hu/belfold/2018/07/09/kulfoldi_titkosszolgalatoktol_kapott_adatok_is_elhangzanak_kovacs_bela_peren/).

<sup>80</sup> EuropeElects, Twitter post, January 22, 2019, <https://twitter.com/EuropeElects/status/1087782359276109825>.

<sup>81</sup> "FN: Aymeric Chauprade veut se réconcilier avec Marine Le Pen," *La Nouvelle Gazette Française*, February 11, 2015, <http://la-nouvelle-gazette.fr/aymeric-chauprade-veut-se-reconcilier-avec-marine-le-pen/12597>.

<sup>82</sup> Cas Mudde, "The EAF Is Dead! Long Live the MENL!" *Open Democracy*, October 12, 2014, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/can-europe-make-it/cas-mudde/eaf-is-dead-long-live-menl>.

<sup>83</sup> "Grants from the European Parliament to Political Parties at European Level Per Party and Per Year," European Parliament, March 2015, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/pdf/grants/Grant\\_amounts\\_parties%2003-2015\\_new%20logo.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/pdf/grants/Grant_amounts_parties%2003-2015_new%20logo.pdf).

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

European Parliament revised the funding for 2015 to €400,778,<sup>85</sup> demanding that the party return €800,000 of the funds already paid as a “first crackdown against populist groups that use Parliament money to fund Eurosceptic causes.”<sup>86</sup>

Although all of the MENF’s major parties cloak themselves in so-called “right-wing populism,” their roots are clearly in the fascist tradition. The best example is the French Front National, which joined the MENF after Marine Le Pen took over the leadership of the party in 2011<sup>87</sup> and embarked on what has become known as her “de-demonization” strategy: to soften the party’s image by distancing it from her father’s gas chambers controversies,<sup>88</sup> including by changing the name of the party to “National Rally.” However, the party is still involved with the more hardcore tendencies of the French far right, namely the violent student group Groupe Union Défense (GUD)<sup>89</sup> and the French offshoot of the Identitarian movement, Génération Identitaire.<sup>90</sup>

The Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ), which is currently in a governing position, has likewise been struggling to rid itself of obvious links to its Nazi past. The FPÖ was founded in 1956 by former Brigadeführer of the SS Anton Reinthaller, a friend of SS Obergruppenführer Ernst Kaltenbrunner, leading Nazi party member Rudolf Hess, and major Nazi ideologist Richard Walther Darré.<sup>91</sup> That the FPÖ has stayed true to its roots over the years is apparent from the biography of its current chairman, Heinz-Christian Strache, who has been vice-chancellor of Austria since 2017. Strache was a member of the “Viking Youth,” a Hitler Youth-like group, in his younger years, and has remained in contact with it.<sup>92</sup> His radical views can also be considered a family affair: he was for many years in a relationship with the daughter of Norbert Burger, a neo-Nazi convicted in Italy for waging a terrorist campaign against the return of the Italian South Tyrol to Austria<sup>93</sup> and whom Strache had called a “substitute dad.”<sup>94</sup> However, since 2017, Strache has managed to get his constituents to

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<sup>85</sup> “Grants from the European Parliament to Political Parties at European Level Per Party and Per Year,” European Parliament, last modified September 2016, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/pdf/grants/Grant\\_amounts\\_parties\\_09-2016.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/pdf/grants/Grant_amounts_parties_09-2016.pdf).

<sup>86</sup> Tara Palmeri and Nicholas Vinocur, “Far-Right Groups Ordered to Pay European Parliament €800,000,” *Politico*, September 13, 2016, [www.politico.eu/article/national-front-marine-le-pen-far-right-groups-ordered-to-pay-european-parliament-e800000/](http://www.politico.eu/article/national-front-marine-le-pen-far-right-groups-ordered-to-pay-european-parliament-e800000/).

<sup>87</sup> The National Front withdrew from AENM and joined the European Alliance for Freedom (2011-2015) before joining the Movement for a Europe of Nations and Freedom (MENF), founded in 2015. However, leader of the French National Front Jean-Marie Le Pen and right-hand man Bruno Gollnisch maintained their position in the AENM. In 2013, FN leader Marine Le Pen requested that they both leave their positions in the AENM in order to join the more moderate EAF. This was part of her “de-demonization” strategy, for which cooperation with the openly racist and anti-Semitic parties present in AENM was seen as counterproductive.

<sup>88</sup> “Le Pen Repeats Slur that Nazi Gas Chambers Were a ‘Detail,’” *France24*, March 27, 2009, <https://web.archive.org/web/20130903042534/http://www.france24.com/en/20090325-jean-marie-le-pen-repeats-gas-chambers-detail-slur-european-parliament>.

<sup>89</sup> Maxime Vaudano, Jérémie Baruch, Olivier Faye and Agathe Dahyot, “Qui sont les trente proches de Marine Le Pen qui comptent au sein du FN ?,” *Le Monde*, April 26, 2017, [https://www.lemonde.fr/les-decodeurs/article/2017/04/26/qui-sont-les-trente-proches-de-marine-le-pen-qui-comptent-au-sein-du-fn\\_5118119\\_4355770.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/les-decodeurs/article/2017/04/26/qui-sont-les-trente-proches-de-marine-le-pen-qui-comptent-au-sein-du-fn_5118119_4355770.html); Mathias Destal and Marine Turchi, *Marine est au courant de tout...* (Paris: Flammarion, 2017), 191-220.

<sup>90</sup> An undercover investigation by Al Jazeera uncovered links between high-ranking National Rally figures and Generation Identity, a far-right group connected with racist crimes (see: “Generation Hate Part 1,” *Al Jazeera*, December 26, 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/12/generation-hate-part-1-181226094751438.html>).

<sup>91</sup> Philip Rees, *Biographical Dictionary of the Extreme Right Since 1890* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990), 317.

<sup>92</sup> “FPÖ-Chef Strache gibt Kontakt zur Wiking-Jugend zu,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, November 6, 2018, <https://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/oesterreich-fpoe-chef-gibt-kontakt-zur-wiking-jugend-zu-1.230976>.

<sup>93</sup> The Associated Press, “Norbert Burger Is Dead; Austrian Nazi Was 63,” *The New York Times*, September 28, 1992, <https://www.nytimes.com/1992/09/28/obituaries/norbert-burger-is-dead-austrian-nazi-was-63.html>.

<sup>94</sup> “Eine harte Kindheit in der Landstraße,” *Kleine Zeitung*, July 28, 2017, [https://www.kleinezeitung.at/service/info-grafiken/dossier/5251995/Strache\\_Eine-harte-Kindheit-in-der-Landstrasse](https://www.kleinezeitung.at/service/info-grafiken/dossier/5251995/Strache_Eine-harte-Kindheit-in-der-Landstrasse).

forget about his past and has succeeded in cleaning up the party's image, making it possible for the FPÖ to be included in chancellor Sebastian Kurtz's conservative governmental coalition.<sup>95</sup>

The Italian League is also currently a governing party, having formed a coalition government with Luigi Di Maio's Movimento 5 Stelle (Five Star Movement, M5S) in May 2018. Originally, the League was called Northern League (Lega Nord), and under the leadership of its founder, Umberto Bossi, demanded the independence of the northern regions of Italy. It maintained some degree of distance from the more openly neo-fascist parties Movimento Sociale Italiano (MSI) and Alleanza Nazionale (AN). But when Bossi stepped down following a corruption scandal in 2012,<sup>96</sup> Matteo Salvini took over and shifted from this separatist course to a nationalist agenda, while simultaneously renewing the fascist connections.

Salvini had been a protégé of Mario Borghezio, one of Italy's most eminent fascists in the European Parliament, who has a lengthy criminal history and long-standing ties to the radical far-right Italian underground (see below). Although Salvini maintains a mainstream image in order to fit into the coalition with M5S, the anti-immigration demonstrations that took place in Rome in 2014<sup>97</sup> are a blatant example of Salvini's willingness to welcome neo-fascists into his midst: the demonstrations counted on the participation of the neo-fascist social movement CasaPound,<sup>98</sup> with which Salvini even created a joint political platform called "Sovereignty,"<sup>99</sup> as well as of Fratelli d'Italia (Brothers of Italy), a party in the MSI/AN tradition that recently announced that its main candidate for the EU election would be Benito Mussolini's great-grandson Caio Giulio Cesare Mussolini.<sup>100</sup>

The never-ending tension between the two tendencies—that is, adhering more or less openly to the fascist tradition—can also be seen within the Belgian Vlaams Belang party. Vlaams Belang is a reconfigured version of the Vlaams Blok, founded in 1979, which dissolved in 2004 after a trial condemned the party for racism.<sup>101</sup> Vlaams Blok started out as a radical far-right party advocating Flemish autonomy; later, it increasingly came to focus on immigration and domestic security.<sup>102</sup> Subsequently, it sought to change its image from a radical party to a more conservative one. However, this created tensions within the party's current leadership, which was divided between those who sought to build a mainstream conservative party, on the one hand, and a more radical faction led by Filip Dewinter, on the other. Dewinter considers Staf De Clercq—the co-founder and leader of the Flemish nationalist Flemish National League (Vlaamsch Nationaal Verbond), who was a Nazi collaborator—to be a "historic leader of the party," thus making a connection between Vlaams Blok and

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<sup>95</sup> Nicola Slawson, "Austrian President Approves Far-Right Freedom Party Joining Coalition Government," *The Guardian*, December 16, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/dec/16/austrian-president-approves-far-right-freedom-party-role-in-coalition-government>.

<sup>96</sup> John Hooper, "Umberto Bossi Resigns as Leader of Northern League Amid Funding Scandal," *The Guardian*, April 5, 2012, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/apr/05/umberto-bossi-resigns-northern-league>.

<sup>97</sup> "Italy Anti-Immigration Rally Draws Thousands in Rome," *BBC News*, February 28, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-31674709>.

<sup>98</sup> "Lega Nord and Neo-Fascism," *Weekly Worker*, March 5, 2015, <https://weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1048/lega-nord-and-neo-fascism/>.

<sup>99</sup> "A .38-Caliber Rosary: The Dangerous New Face of Salvini's Italy," *EuropeNews*, December 13, 2018. <https://eu-news.cc/2018/12/13/a-38-caliber-rosary-the-dangerous-new-face-of-salvinis-italy/>.

<sup>100</sup> Anna Momigliano, "Mussolini's Great-Grandson Runs for a Seat in the European Parliament," *The Washington Post*, April 18, 2019, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/mussolinis-great-grandson-runs-for-a-seat-in-the-european-parliament/2019/04/18/5ac52890-6153-11e9-bf24-db4b9fb62aa2\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.95037d2cffe8](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/mussolinis-great-grandson-runs-for-a-seat-in-the-european-parliament/2019/04/18/5ac52890-6153-11e9-bf24-db4b9fb62aa2_story.html?utm_term=.95037d2cffe8).

<sup>101</sup> "Key Case against Vlaams Blok Goes to Court," *Expatica*, March 1, 2004, <https://www.expatica.com/be/key-case-against-vlaams-blok-goes-to-court/>.

<sup>102</sup> Lieven De Winter, "The Vlaams Blok and the Heritage of Extreme-Right Flemish-Nationalism" (paper prepared for the seminar "The Extreme Right in Europe, a Many Faceted Reality," Sabadell University, Barcelona, July 5-6, 2004).

Belgium's collaborationist history.<sup>103</sup> Dewinter is also a popular guest speaker, having been invited to such events as the 2016 annual conference of Jared Taylor's American Renaissance<sup>104</sup> and the 2007 CounterJihad Brussels conference organized by Frank Gaffney's Center for Security Policy.<sup>105</sup>

It is unclear whether the MENF will dissolve in the upcoming elections. Most of its national parties have announced that they will join Salvini's new parliamentary group, but there is a chance that it will continue to operate as a EU party while changing its group affiliation from Europe of Nations and Freedom to Salvini's European Alliance of Peoples and Nations.

## EU Parliamentary Groups

In addition to European parties, the European Parliament is made up of an array of parliamentary groups, also called Political Groups, of which there have been around eight during the current 8th parliamentary term. These groups are broader ideological coalitions that bring together a number of European parties, national parties, and independent MEPs.

The two far-right EU parliamentary groups currently still active, Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD), dominated by the Brexit Party under Nigel Farage, and Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF), co- led by Marine Le Pen, have to date reflected the rivalries between the two main camps of Eurosceptics: the EU-secessionists and the EU-reformists.

With its largest national parties having agreed to join a new parliamentary group led by Matteo Salvini, namely the European Alliance of Peoples and Nations (EAPN), the ENF will almost certainly dissolve. Whether the EFDD will be able to meet the necessary quota requirements is as yet unclear, since one of its main national parties, Luigi Di Maio's M5S, is leaving to form its own group. In a remarkably "ecumenical" move, Marine Le Pen has openly said that she would welcome Farage into the EAPN group should the EFDD fail to reconstitute itself, which could potentially bring together hitherto disunited camps.

### ***Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy***

In the course of the major re-grouping of EU far-right parties and groups after the 2009 EU elections, which saw the dissolution of the parliamentary groups Union for Europe of the Nations and Independence/Democracy, a more radical secessionist subgroup emerged: Europe of Freedom and Democracy (EFD, 2009-2014), co-led by former UKIP leader Nigel Farage and Francesco Speroni of Italy's Lega Nord. The EFD, due to considerable flux in its membership, faced difficulties re-forming for the 8th European Parliament, with the result that it was superseded by the Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD) group in June 2014; the name change reflected a trend in the far right toward support for "direct democracy."

The establishment of the group coincided with the foundation of an associated EU party, the Alliance for Direct Democracy in Europe (ADDE). Comprised predominantly of UKIP members, the party existed for a

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<sup>103</sup> Adi Schwartz, "Between Haider and a Hard Place," *Haaretz*, August 28, 2015, <https://web.archive.org/web/20051016172726/http://www.filipdewinter.be/page.php?linkID=200>

<sup>104</sup> American Renaissance, "Filip Dewinter: 'The Islamization of Europe,'" YouTube video, 48:55, May 27, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5zY-ILwWpZ0>.

<sup>105</sup> "Counterjihad Brussels 2007 Conference," *CounterJihad Europa (blog)*, October 23, 2007, <https://counterjihad-europa.wordpress.com/2007/10/23/counterjihad-brussels-2007-conference/>.

mere two years before being closed down. After an auditors' inquiry in 2016, it was revealed that its associated think tank, the IDDE, had illegally diverted party funds to UKIP to the tune of £400,000.<sup>106</sup>

Until January 2017, the EFDD had two co-presidents: then-UKIP and later Brexit Party leader Nigel Farage, as well as David Borrelli of Italy's M5S.<sup>107</sup> However, David Borrelli had to resign the co-presidency after a failed attempt by M5S MEPs to split from the EFDD and join the Alliance for Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) group.<sup>108</sup>

Initially, the EFDD was made up largely of UKIP MEPs (24 of 47 seats), but it also included members of the Front National (France), Order and Justice (Lithuania), Italy's M5S, the Sweden Democrats, the Party of Free Citizens (Czech Republic), the Latvian Farmers' Union, and the Congress of the New Right (Poland).<sup>109</sup> With Marine Le Pen's departure from the EFDD to form her own group in June 2015, the majority of the 42 seats<sup>110</sup> are now held by Brexit Party MEPs (14 seats) and M5S MEPs (11 seats). Other notable member parties include the French "Patriotes" and "Debout La France," with 2 seats each; there are also several MEPs from smaller European far-right parties.<sup>111</sup> Two members, Janet Atkinson<sup>112</sup> and Amjad Bashir,<sup>113</sup> left the EFDD after their exclusion from UKIP on the grounds of alleged financial fraud.

Tracing the emergence of the EFDD requires looking into the history of UKIP itself. UKIP was founded in 1993 as an outgrowth of the Anti-Federalist League, a Eurosceptic UK minority party. The League opposed the Maastricht Treaty and sought to sway the governing Conservative Party toward removing the United Kingdom from the EU.<sup>114</sup> Nigel Farage, the longtime leader of UKIP until his resignation in 2016, subsequently chaired all European groups affiliated with the party: first Independence/Democracy, then EFD, and finally EFDD. In 2019, Farage founded the British Brexit Party; he is vice-chairman of the Brexit lobby group Leave Means Leave.

Thanks to Farage's long-standing ties to powerful players in the U.S. Alt-Right, the EFDD became one of the most important stages for U.S. far-right interventionism, particularly in regards to the Brexit vote in 2016.

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<sup>106</sup> Shehab Khan, "Nigel Farage Sharing £4 Million House with Female French Politician," *Independent*, February 5, 2017, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/nigel-farage-laure-ferrari-ukip-sahring-secret-house-french-politician-a7563426.html>.

<sup>107</sup> "Groups in the European Parliament," *BBC*, June 26, 2014, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/democracylive/europe-28035100>.

<sup>108</sup> "Farage chiede e ottiene la testa di Borrelli," *Il Foglio*, January 11, 2017, <https://www.ilfoglio.it/politica/2017/01/11/news/nigel-esclusione-borelli-efdd-114470>.

<sup>109</sup> "Farage Creates Eurosceptic Group in EP," *EU Observer*, June 18, 2014, <http://euobserver.com/tickers/124651b>; James Crisp, "Le Pen Candidate Joins Farage's New EFD Group," *EurActiv*, June 19, 2014.

<http://www.euractiv.com/sections/eu-elections-2014/le-pen-candidate-joins-farages-new-efd-group-302906>.

<sup>110</sup> "Members of the Europe of Freedom and Democracy Group," European Parliament, accessed April 21, 2019, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/search/advanced?name=&groupCode=4276&countryCode=&bodyType=ALL>.

<sup>111</sup> Namely AfD (DE), Les Français Libres (FR), the Libertarian Party (UK), and the Free Citizens' Party (CZ).

<sup>112</sup> "UKIP Suspends MEP Janice Atkinson over Expenses Claim," *BBC News*, March 20, 2015, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-kent-31976343>; "UKIP's Janice Atkinson Expelled from Party," *BBC News*, March 23, 2015, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-32028343>.

<sup>113</sup> Tim Ross, "UKIP MEP Amjad Bashir Defects to Conservative Party," *Daily Telegraph*, January 24, 2015, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/ukip/11367754/Ukip-MEP-Amjad-Bashir-defects-to-Conservative-Party.html>.

<sup>114</sup> Amir Abedi and Thomas Carl Lundberg, "Doomed to Failure? UKIP and the Organisational Challenges Facing Right-Wing Populist Anti-Political Establishment Parties," *Parliamentary Affairs* 62, no. 1 (2009): 78-87, doi:10.1093/pa/gsn036; Karine Tournier-Sol, "Reworking the Eurosceptic and Conservative Traditions into a Populist Narrative: UKIP's Winning Formula?" *Journal of Common Market Studies* 53, no. 1 (2015): 142, doi:10.1111/jcms.12208.

For example, Farage had worked on the Brexit campaign hand in hand with former Trump advisor and Breitbart editor Steve Bannon, who operates in the orbit of the billionaire Robert Mercer, who is heavily financing the far-right turn, particularly in the U.S. Republican Party.<sup>115</sup>

Under Bannon, who has claimed to have known Farage since 2012,<sup>116</sup> Breitbart not only served as a propaganda machine for Trump's election campaign, but also played a decisive role in the Brexit referendum, for which UKIP under Nigel Farage lobbied. "Farage has often praised Breitbart for its support of Brexit, saying the 23 June [2017] referendum would not have gone in favor of the leave campaign without the news website's 'supportive voice.'" <sup>117</sup> Breitbart even seems to have paid senior "volunteers" within UKIP before the EU referendum, as subsequent complaints by whistleblowers have revealed.<sup>118</sup>

EFDD's vice-chair,<sup>119</sup> Aymeric Chauprade, formerly right-hand man of Marine Le Pen as well as "special Russian envoy," also has a rather controversial history. In 2015, as he himself has admitted,<sup>120</sup> he assisted with the escape from the Dominican Republic of two French pilots who were accused of having helped to smuggle 1,500 pounds of cocaine,<sup>121</sup> a scandal that cost Chauprade his status in the party but not his job as MEP.

Before his dismissal, Chauprade had acted as a liaison with key players in Russia's right-wing turn. For example, in June 2014, Chauprade took part in a seminal meeting in Vienna hosted by "Orthodox businessman" and oligarch Konstantin Malofeev that celebrated the 200th anniversary of Metternich's Holy Alliance. The meeting brought together the A-list of the European and Russian far right in hopes of developing a pan-European strategy. It included the Russian neo-Eurasianist ideologue Aleksandr Dugin, the well-known Russia nationalist painter Ilya Glazunov, and the leaders of several European far-right and monarchist groups: Prince Sixtus Henry of Bourbon-Parma, leader of the Catholic-monarchist Carlist movement in Spain; Marion Maréchal Le Pen, granddaughter of Jean-Marie Le Pen and niece of Marine Le Pen; Heinz-Christian Strache, chairman of the FPÖ, as well as his deputy Johann Gudenus; Viennese FPÖ politician Johann Herzog; Serge de Pahlen, Swiss director of a finance company and husband of the heiress to the Fiat automobile empire, Margherita Agnelli de Pahlen; Volen Siderov, chairman and founder of Ataka; several right-wing extremists

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<sup>115</sup> Damien Leloup, "Des milliardaires américains financent discrètement des campagnes de désinformation en Europe," *Le Monde*, March 7, 2019, [https://www.lemonde.fr/pixels/article/2019/03/07/des-milliardaires-americains-financent-discretement-des-campagnes-de-desinformation-en-europe\\_5432486\\_4408996.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/pixels/article/2019/03/07/des-milliardaires-americains-financent-discretement-des-campagnes-de-desinformation-en-europe_5432486_4408996.html).

<sup>116</sup> Sam Knight, "Nigel Farage on the Story Behind His Friendship with Trump," *The New Yorker*, November 30, 2016, <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/persons-of-interest/nigel-farage-on-the-story-behind-his-friendship-with-trump>.

<sup>117</sup> Stephanie Kirchgaessner and Nick Hopkins, "Revealed: UKIP Whistleblowers Raised Fears about Breitbart Influence on Brexit," *The Guardian*, October 30, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/oct/30/revealed-ukip-whistleblowers-raised-fears-about-breitbart-influence-on-brexit>.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> "Aymeric Chauprade," Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy, accessed May 8, 2019, <http://www.efdd-group.eu/members/aymeric-chauprade-mep>.

<sup>120</sup> François de Labarre, "Air cocaïne. Exclusif. Aymeric Chauprade: 'J'étais le chef de l'équipe 1,'" *Paris Match*, October 29, 2015, <https://www.parismatch.com/Actu/Societe/Air-cocaine-Aymeric-Chauprade-FN-sur-les-dessous-de-l-operation-d-exfiltration-des-pilotes-855431>.

<sup>121</sup> Although the Dominican Republic had issued an arrest warrant for Chauprade, it may not have gone through with actually issuing an Interpol Red Notice. See: "Dominican Republic Seeks Arrest of Euro MP for Cocaine Convicts' Speedboat Escape," *Reuters*, November 23, 2015, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-dominican-france-cocaine/dominican-republic-seeks-arrest-of-euro-mp-for-cocaine-convicts-speedboat-escape-idUSKBN0TC29X20151123>; "República Dominicana emite mandado de captura de eurodeputado," *tvi24*, November 23, 2015, <https://tvi24.iol.pt/internacional/aymeric-chauprade/republica-dominicana-emite-mandado-de-captura-de-euro-deputado>; "Air Cocaïne : Aymeric Chauprade 'étonné' par un mandat d'arrêt 'loufoque,'" *Le Point*, November 23, 2015, [https://www.lepoint.fr/justice/air-cocaine-mandat-d-arret-dominicain-contre-aymeric-chauprade-23-11-2015-1983875\\_2386.php](https://www.lepoint.fr/justice/air-cocaine-mandat-d-arret-dominicain-contre-aymeric-chauprade-23-11-2015-1983875_2386.php).

from Croatia; and a group of noblemen from Georgia and Russia. These contacts may seem disparate at first, but they are not. All are campaigning for the establishment of a European ultraconservative international that would bring together monarchists, far-right parties, and Catholic and Orthodox groups.<sup>122</sup>

Quotes on Chauprade's website barely conceal his own white-supremacist views, such as "For a Greco-Roman, Judeo-Christian and modern Europe-civilisation of freedoms. Respectful of the diversity of its nations and of their choices... A Europe that refuses the fatality of migration and the Islamisation of society."<sup>123</sup>

With the Italian M5S wanting to form a new group, the EFDD may fail to reach the required quota and could thus lose its status as a parliamentary group. And although the UK will take part in the upcoming EU elections, due to the impending Brexit it may be represented in the EU Parliament just for a short time, until a withdrawal treaty will be finally agreed upon. In the event that the EFDD dissolves, the remaining national parties will likely either be absorbed by Salvini's new group, European Alliance of Peoples and Nations, or support the latest efforts by M5S.

### ***Europe of Nations and Freedom***

Following the European elections in May 2014, the far-right European Alliance for Freedom (EAF)<sup>124</sup> party (2010-2016), founded by misogynic climate change denier and former UKIP party whip Godfrey Bloom, also sought to form a parliamentary group. This resulted in the establishment of Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF),<sup>125</sup> officially launched in June 2015.<sup>126</sup> EAF's future vice-president, Marine Le Pen, had announced that the new group would comprise MEPs from the French Front National, the Dutch Party for Freedom, the Italian Lega Nord, the Freedom Party of Austria, Flemish Interest, and the Polish Congress of the New Right, as well as former UKIP member Janice Atkinson.<sup>127</sup>

In July 2015, the European Parliament granted the group €3 million per year from EU funds in accord with the existing distribution system.<sup>128</sup> The public money grants for the group as well as for the linked political party Movement for a Europe of Nations and Freedom (MENF) and its think tank amounted to €17.5 million in the first year of their mandate, according to research by Open Europe.<sup>129</sup>

With 37 members at present,<sup>130</sup> the group is the smallest in the European Parliament. The ENF's core party, the MENF, forms the majority with 28 members; the remaining 9 MEPs seem to be there mainly to secure

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<sup>122</sup> Bernhard Odehnal, "Gipfeltreffen mit Putins fünfter Kolonne," *Tagesanzeiger*, June 3, 2014, <https://www.tagesanzeiger.ch/ausland/europa/Gipfeltreffen-mit-Putins-fuenfter-Kolonne/story/30542701>; Herbert Lackner und Martin Staudinger, "Eurasier unter sich: Mit wem sich Heinz-Christian Strache in Wien traf," *Profil*, June 10, 2014, <https://www.profil.at/oesterreich/eurasier-mit-heinz-christian-strache-wien-375880>.

<sup>123</sup> Aymeric Chauprade, "My Commitment," accessed March 8, 2019, <https://www.aymericchauprade.com/my-commitment>.

<sup>124</sup> European Alliance for Freedom, archived on April 1, 2018, <https://web.archive.org/web/20180401173153/http://www.eurallfree.org/>.

<sup>125</sup> Europe of Nations and Freedom, <http://www.enf.eu/>.

<sup>126</sup> Andrew Rettman, "Far-Right Parties Form Group in EU Parliament," *EU Observer*, June 15, 2015, <https://euobserver.com/political/129129>; "France's National Front Says Forms Group in European Parliament," *Yahoo News*, June 15, 2015, <https://uk.news.yahoo.com/frances-national-front-says-forms-group-european-parliament-204612484.html>.

<sup>127</sup> Rowena Mason, "Ex-UKIP Janice Atkinson Joins Le Pen-Led EU Group," *The Guardian*, June 16, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/16/ex-ukip-janice-atkinson-joins-le-pen-led-eu-group>.

<sup>128</sup> Maïa de La Baume and Tara Palmeri, "Le Pen's €3 Million Pot," *Politico*, July 8, 2015, <https://www.politico.eu/article/le-pens-e3-million-pot/>.

<sup>129</sup> James Crisp, "Le Pen's New EU Parliament Group to Scoop €17.5 Million of Public Money," *EurActiv*, June 16, 2015, [www.euractiv.com/sections/eu-priorities-2020/le-pens-new-eu-parliament-group-scoop-eu175-million-public-money-315410](http://www.euractiv.com/sections/eu-priorities-2020/le-pens-new-eu-parliament-group-scoop-eu175-million-public-money-315410).

<sup>130</sup> European Parliament, "Members of the Europe of Nations and Freedom Group."

the ENF's status as a group. When it comes to the national party affiliation of its MEPs, the French National Rally is most strongly represented, with 17 out of 37 MEPs.

That the ENF is primarily Russophile can be deduced from its electoral behavior on resolutions critical of Russia or measures not in the Kremlin's interest, for example the Ukraine–European Union Association Agreement. Hungary's Political Capital Institute found that future members of the ENF voted “no” on 93% of such measures.<sup>131</sup> Two parties with strong representation are alleged to have received money from Russia; while the case of Front National's €9 million loan under Marine Le Pen is well established,<sup>132</sup> the case of the Lega party under Matteo Salvini still needs clarification.<sup>133</sup>

In November 2014, Marine Le Pen confirmed that her party had received a €9 million loan for the National Front from the First Czech Russian Bank in Moscow.<sup>134</sup> Senior Front National officials from the party's political bureau informed *Mediapart* that this was the first installment of a €40 million loan. Furthermore, in April 2015, a Russian hacker group published texts and emails between Timur Prokopenko, a member of Putin's administration, and Konstantin Rykov, a former Duma deputy with ties to France, discussing Russian financial support for the National Front in exchange for its support of Russia's annexation of Crimea.<sup>135</sup>

When it comes to Italy's Lega, the case of illegal party funding by Russian sources is a little less straightforward. In a recent dossier, the Italian *L'Espresso* reported about an opaque case of party financing that implicates the Lega in having received money from Russia via a kick-back scheme.<sup>136</sup> The dossier came to the conclusion that the Russian company Avangard Oil & Gas “is selling 3 million tons of diesel fuel... to an Italian state company, Eni, that Salvini as interior minister can help manage.”<sup>137</sup>

Lega's Russia “fixer” in this alleged kickback scheme, Gianluca Savoini, has long-standing ties to preeminent figures on the Russian far right. Savoini reportedly stated that he has known the far-right Eurasianist ideologue Aleksandr Dugin for over 20 years;<sup>138</sup> he has also contributed to the think tank Katehon, founded by

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<sup>131</sup> Péter Krekó, Marie Macaulay, Csaba Molnár and Lóránt Gyóri, “Europe's New Pro-Putin Coalition: The Parties of ‘No,’” Political Capital Institute (Hungary), Institute of Modern Russia, August 3, 2015, <http://imrussia.org/en/analysis/world/2368-europes-new-pro-putin-coalition-the-parties-of-no>.

<sup>132</sup> “What a Loan to Le Pen Tells Us About Russian Foreign Influence Campaigns,” *The Washington Post*, December 27, 2018, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/video/world/what-a-loan-to-le-pen-tells-us-about-russian-foreign-influence-campaigns/2018/12/27/cf45f829-0711-4416-8edf-9fd6bf53aba9\\_video.html?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.02d10c83665d](https://www.washingtonpost.com/video/world/what-a-loan-to-le-pen-tells-us-about-russian-foreign-influence-campaigns/2018/12/27/cf45f829-0711-4416-8edf-9fd6bf53aba9_video.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.02d10c83665d).

<sup>133</sup> Original exposé by *L'Espresso*: Giovanni Tizian and Stefano Vergine, “Esclusivo - La trattativa segreta per finanziare con soldi russi la Lega di Matteo Salvini,” *L'Espresso*, February 21, 2019, [http://espresso.repubblica.it/inchieste/2019/02/20/news/esclusivo-lega-milioni-russia-1.331835?refresh\\_ce](http://espresso.repubblica.it/inchieste/2019/02/20/news/esclusivo-lega-milioni-russia-1.331835?refresh_ce);

“Italian MPs Demand Explanation from Matteo Salvini over Claims His Party Sought Funding from Russia,” *The Telegraph*, February 22, 2019, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2019/02/22/italian-mps-demand-explanation-matteo-salvini-claims-party-sought/>.

<sup>134</sup> Marine Turchi, “Far-Right Front National's Russian Loan: ‘31 Mln Euros More to Follow,’” *Mediapart*, November 27, 2017, <https://www.mediapart.fr/en/journal/international/271114/far-right-front-nationals-russian-loan-31-mln-euros-more-follow>.

<sup>135</sup> “Financement du FN: des hackers russes dévoilent des échanges au Kremlin,” *Le Monde*, April 7, 2016, [https://www.lemonde.fr/les-decodeurs/article/2015/04/02/fn-des-hackers-russes-devoilent-des-echanges-au-kremlin\\_4608660\\_4355770.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/les-decodeurs/article/2015/04/02/fn-des-hackers-russes-devoilent-des-echanges-au-kremlin_4608660_4355770.html).

<sup>136</sup> Tizian and Vergine, “Esclusivo—La trattativa segreta.”

<sup>137</sup> Barbie Latza Nadeau, “An Italian Expose Documents Moscow Money Allegedly Funding Italy's Far-Right Salvini,” *Daily Beast*, February 22, 2019, <https://www.thedailybeast.com/an-italian-expose-documents-moscow-money-allegedly-funding-italys-far-right-salvini?ref=scroll>.

<sup>138</sup> Alberto Nardelli and Olga Tokariuk, “Here's a Totally Incredible Story about Pro-Russian Mercenaries and a Close Aide to Italy's De Facto Leader,” *BuzzFeed News*, September 13, 2018, <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/albertonardelli/matteo-salvini-russia-gianluca-savoini>.

Orthodox billionaire Konstantin Malofeev.<sup>139</sup> It is perhaps no coincidence that Avangard Oil & Gas is located in the same building as Malofeev's Tsargrad TV channel.

Another ENF member, the Non-Inscrit Janice Atkinson, stretches her hands out East and West. Ever since being thrown out of UKIP for bringing the party into disrepute after her chief of staff was recorded trying to fraudulently inflate her expenses, she has become a frequent visitor to Moscow.<sup>140</sup> She served as an observer of the Russian presidential election<sup>141</sup> and appears frequently on RT and Sputnik to advertise Brexit<sup>142</sup> or spread anti-Islamic sentiments.<sup>143</sup> Since November 2017, Atkinson has been hosting the show "Make Europe Great Again," published by the YouTube channel of the EU party MENF.<sup>144</sup> In July 2018, the channel published a video in which Atkinson was talking with Tom Dupré from Generation Identity, UK, among other things about the Great Replacement—the very idea that was behind the Christchurch killer's actions.<sup>145</sup> This conversation came just a month after she released her book, *Migrant Crime Wave: The EU Cover Up Revealed*, with a foreword by Matteo Salvini.<sup>146</sup> Her latest gig is with Rebel Media,<sup>147</sup> a platform supported by Alt-Right billionaire Robert Mercer.<sup>148</sup>

Since four of its main national parties—Rassemblement National, FPÖ, Lega, and Vlaams Belang—have agreed to join Salvini's new parliamentary group, European Alliance of Freedom and Nations, the ENF will most certainly disband. That the EAPN will be its direct successor can be deduced from Marine Le Pen's recent statement that "we have mandated Matteo Salvini ... to try to build this very big group of the Defense of European Nations' in the European parliament."<sup>149</sup>

### ***Italy's 5-Star Movement Announced New Group***

Although few details are yet known, the Italian populist cross-front party 5-Star Movement (Movimento 5 Stelle, M5S), founded by comedian and blogger Beppe Grillo but now led by Luigi Di Maio, announced in mid-

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<sup>139</sup> "Gianluca Savoini," Katehon, <http://katehon.com/person/gianluca-savoini>.

<sup>140</sup> Ian Johnston, "UKIP MEP Janice Atkinson's Staff 'Tripled Restaurant Bill to Claim More EU Expenses,'" *The Independent*, March 19, 2015, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/generalelection/ukip-mep-janice-atkinsons-staff-tripled-restaurant-bill-to-claim-more-eu-expenses-10121354.html>.

<sup>141</sup> RT Producers, "Janice Atkinson Talks to RT Int," YouTube video, 4:40, March 18, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gDb5303KERg>.

<sup>142</sup> Janice Atkinson, "World on Brexit: Are We Nearly There Yet?" *Sputnik International*, March 21, 2019, [https://sputniknews.com/columnists/201903211073424830-brexit-theresa-may-eu-uk/?utm\\_source=short\\_direct&utm\\_medium=short\\_url&utm\\_content=kYRb&utm\\_campaign=URL\\_shortening](https://sputniknews.com/columnists/201903211073424830-brexit-theresa-may-eu-uk/?utm_source=short_direct&utm_medium=short_url&utm_content=kYRb&utm_campaign=URL_shortening).

<sup>143</sup> RT, "'Europe Is a Sitting Target for Jihadists Feeling Middle East'—Janice Atkinson," YouTube video, 5:29, October 18, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0X-miQuzAa0>.

<sup>144</sup> Mouvement pour une Europe des Nations et des Libertés, "MEGA TV: Make Europe Great Again," YouTube playlist, January 17, 2019, [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLqyhVX9wYOqP6hpGgfFDn\\_yWYpH6c2iOr](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLqyhVX9wYOqP6hpGgfFDn_yWYpH6c2iOr).

<sup>145</sup> Joe Heim and James McAuley, "New Zealand Attacks Offer the Latest Evidence of a Web of Supremacist Extremism," *The Washington Post*, March 15, 2019, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/new-zealand-suspect-inspired-by-far-right-french-intellectual-who-feared-nonwhite-immigration/2019/03/15/8c39fba4-6201-4a8d-99c6-aa42db53d6d3\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.7273f2dde7ee](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/new-zealand-suspect-inspired-by-far-right-french-intellectual-who-feared-nonwhite-immigration/2019/03/15/8c39fba4-6201-4a8d-99c6-aa42db53d6d3_story.html?utm_term=.7273f2dde7ee).

<sup>146</sup> Picture on Janice Atkinson's website, accessed March 22, 2019, <http://www.janiceatkinson.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Migrant-Crime-Wave-poster.jpg>.

<sup>147</sup> Ezra Levant, "Janice Atkinson: Covering European Populism for The Rebel," *The Rebel*, February 1, 2019, <https://www.therebel.media/janice-atkinson-rebel-media-europe-populism-eu-rebel-media-news-politics>.

<sup>148</sup> Leloup, "Des milliardaires américains."

<sup>149</sup> Raf Casert, "France's Le Pen Wants Salvini to Form Populist EU Group," *The Washington Post*, April 15, 2019, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/frances-le-pen-wants-salvini-to-form-populist-eu-group/2019/04/15/25f5a74e-5fa4-11e9-bf24-db4b9fb62aa2\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.8027fbdec013](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/frances-le-pen-wants-salvini-to-form-populist-eu-group/2019/04/15/25f5a74e-5fa4-11e9-bf24-db4b9fb62aa2_story.html?utm_term=.8027fbdec013).

February 2019 that it would form a new parliamentary group.<sup>150</sup> So far, besides M5S, Croatia's Zivi Zid (Human Shield), Finland's liberal Liike Nyt (The Now Movement), Greece's AKKEL (the Agricultural Livestock Party), and Poland's far-right Kukiz'15 have agreed to join.

The group still needs parties from two more European member states in order to form a parliamentary group, but at a recent press conference M5S leader Luigi Di Maio assured listeners that these two parties had been identified and were close to joining the group. Di Maio further stated that he is also in contact with representatives of the Gilets Jaunes (Yellow Vests) movement in France, which, like the M5S group, strives explicitly for direct democracy.<sup>151</sup> His frequent meetings with members of the group recently prompted France to recall its ambassador from Rome.<sup>152</sup>

Although it claims not to be a far-right alliance,<sup>153</sup> the facts that it has joined up with the right-wing populist far-right Lega and is a member of the EU-secessionist EFDD suggest that the right-wing tendencies in the M5S have gained the upper hand. M5S seems aligned with the non-secessionist Eurosceptics, as Evangelos Tsiobanidis of Greece's AKKEL stated: "We are in favor of the EU although it sounds like we are Eurosceptics, but this is because we don't want to leave the EU, we want to change it."<sup>154</sup>

Even though Di Maio boasted at the group's launch event in Rome that "This group will tip the scale in the European Parliament because the EPP [European People's Party] and the S&D [Socialists and Democrats] won't have enough votes to govern alone,"<sup>155</sup> the M5S fared badly in the recent regional elections. The announced group, which does not even have a name yet, may never even come into existence.<sup>156</sup>

### ***European Alliance of People and Nations***

That M5S and the Lega may ultimately part ways can be assumed from Matteo Salvini's recent announcement that he wants to spark a populist "European Spring" by creating a new far-right group in the European Parliament: the European Alliance of People and Nations (EAPN).

The first rumors of the formation began to circulate when Lega's youth wing leader, Andrea Crippa, invited leaders of youth groups from various European far-right parties to meet in Rome on March 29, 2019.<sup>157</sup> Among the speakers were Damian Lohr of the Alternative for Germany (AfD); Maximilian Krauss, chairman of the youth group of the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ); Jordan Bardella, chief of the Rassemblement National's youth wing in France; and representatives of the British UKIP and the Belgian Vlaams Belang. Even the "Young Guard" (*Molodaia Gvardiia*) of the Russian presidential party United Russia is said to have received an invitation.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Silvia Sciorilli Borrelli, "Italy's 5Stars Launch New Group in European Parliament," *Politico*, February 15, 2019, <https://www.politico.eu/article/italys-5stars-launch-new-group-in-european-parliament/>.

<sup>151</sup> Piotr Kaczyński, "The Five Star Movement's Attempt to Create a European Parliament Group," *Euractiv*, February 18, 2019, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/eu-elections-2019/opinion/the-five-star-movements-attempt-to-create-a-european-parliament-group/>

<sup>152</sup> Eline Schaart, "French Ambassador to Italy to Return 'Very Soon,'" *Politico*, February 14, 2019, <https://www.politico.eu/article/french-ambassador-to-italy-to-return-very-soon/>.

<sup>153</sup> Kaczyński, "The Five Star Movement's Attempt."

<sup>154</sup> Borrelli, "Italy's 5Stars Launch New Group."

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>156</sup> Holly Ellyatt, "Italy's Anti-Establishment M5S Could Be Headed for 'Political Disaster' as Support Collapses," *CNBC*, February 26, 2019, <https://www.cnn.com/2019/02/26/italy-m5s-could-be-headed-for-political-disaster-after-regional-collapse.html>.

<sup>157</sup> Sabine am Orde, "Mobilisierung vor der Europawahl: Rechte Jugend trifft sich in Rom," *Taz*, March 20, 2019, <http://www.taz.de/!5581237/>.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*

Although Salvini had previously approached various possible European alliance partners, such as the Polish PiS party<sup>159</sup> and Viktor Orbán, only four of the invited parties were represented at the kick-off event for the EAPN on April 8, 2018. Besides Salvini, the AfD federal spokesman and MEP Jörg Meuthen,<sup>160</sup> Anders Vistisen from the Danish People's Party, and Olli Kotro from the Finns Party spoke at the press conference at the kick-off event.<sup>161</sup>

In his speech, Meuthen summarized the main demands of the new group, particularly decentralization of the EU, as well as the establishment of a Fortress Europe:

Matteo has already made it very clear what we want to do differently in this group: We want to reform the European Union from head to toe, but we do not want to destroy it. We want a radical change to the effect that the European Union should give competences back to the member states. We want much more power in our home countries and much less concentration of power in the bureaucracies of Brussels and Strasbourg. For example, we also want vital and powerful protection of the Union's external borders. We want to reduce illegal migration into the EU to zero. In the future, only those who have obtained our prior permission outside the EU's borders will be allowed in and be able to enter the EU. If we want to preserve our Europe of diversity, of prosperous cultures, and its extremely rich heritage—and I emphasize this with determination—then we will have to build a Fortress Europe into which we will only let those we are prepared to let in.<sup>162</sup>

So far, the list of interested parties includes:

- Italy's League (*Lega*), which, according to recent polls, will make massive gains, reaching up to 31% of the votes;
- the French National Rally (*Rassemblement National*), which is currently polling around 21%, compared to 25% during the last election;<sup>163</sup>
- the German Alternative for Germany (*Alternative für Deutschland*), which is polling around 15%;
- the Danish People's Party (*Dansk Folkeparti*), which, according to a recent YouGov poll, will fall to a 6-year low of 12.1%;<sup>164</sup>
- the Austrian Freedom Party (*Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs*),<sup>165</sup> which has experienced slight losses in recent polls, falling from 26% to 22%;<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> "Italy's Salvini Hopes to Spark Populist 'European Spring' with Poland," *France24*, January 10, 2019, <https://www.france24.com/en/20190110-italy-salvini-looks-trigger-populist-european-spring-with-poland-far-right>.

<sup>160</sup> "Europee: Meuthen (Afd) sarà a Milano con Salvini," *ANSA*, April 3, 2019, [https://www.ansa.it/europa/notizie/eu-roparlamento/news/2019/04/03/europee-meuthen-afd-sara-a-milano-con-salvini\\_19605477-c283-46ed-93e4-a10fcc85e242.html](https://www.ansa.it/europa/notizie/eu-roparlamento/news/2019/04/03/europee-meuthen-afd-sara-a-milano-con-salvini_19605477-c283-46ed-93e4-a10fcc85e242.html).

<sup>161</sup> "Rechtspopulisten sammeln sich in Mailand für Europawahl," *WELT*, April 8, 2019, <https://www.welt.de/politik/video191526263/Meuthen-besucht-Salvini-Rechtspopulisten-sammeln-sich-in-Mailand-fuer-Europawahl.html>.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>163</sup> Europe Elects, Twitter post, April 10, 2019, <https://twitter.com/EuropeElects/status/1116021911883001857>.

<sup>164</sup> Europe Elects, Twitter post, April 11, 2019, <https://twitter.com/EuropeElects/status/1116402248349888513>.

<sup>165</sup> Zia Weise, "Austrian Far-Right Party to Join Salvini's EU Election Alliance," *Politico*, April 9, 2019, <https://www.politico.eu/article/austrian-far-right-party-to-join-salvinis-eu-election-alliance/>.

<sup>166</sup> Europe Elects, Twitter post, April 13, 2019, <https://twitter.com/EuropeElects/status/1117078026137886721>.

- the Belgian Flemish Interest (*Vlaams Belang*),<sup>167</sup> currently polling around 2%;
- the Conservative Party of Estonia (*Eesti Konservatiivne Rahvaerakond*), polling between 15 and 18%;<sup>168</sup>
- the Latvian Nationalists (*Latviešu Nacionālisti*), which announced their intention to join the EAPN in a TV debate; LN is a minor party that has not been listed in any polls.

Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orbán hailed the new partnership Salvini forged with Poland,<sup>169</sup> but he is not expected to join the coalition at this time, albeit that the EPP's recent suspension of Fidesz may have changed the calculus.<sup>170</sup>

Although Marine Le Pen did not immediately announce that she would join the group, she certainly showed herself willing to follow Lega's leadership in the new alliance.<sup>171</sup> She even indicated that Nigel Farage would be "welcome if he wants to join" in the event that his EFDD group dissolves.<sup>172</sup> Regardless, the EAPN will be the most powerful far-right parliamentary group the EU has ever seen, bringing the main parties of the resurgent far right in Europe together under a new umbrella.

## Case Studies

Although the strengthening of the far right can be discerned almost everywhere in Europe, this rise has been particularly pronounced in Italy and France. We will therefore describe these case studies in more detail. Furthermore, we will look into instances of U.S. influence on the European far right. These case studies may serve as examples of the basic methodology of looking at the history of the far right locally and tracing it to supranational levels.

### *Italy*

Although Italy's far-right scene has always been alive and well, it was not until Italy's 2018 general election that it had a political breakthrough, with the right-wing populist to far-right Lega (Nord) becoming a governing party. Although it only came in third, Lega entered a coalition with the populist cross-front party Movimento 5 Stelle (M5S), with which it formed a majority. When it comes to European politics, the main factions of Italy's far-right scene coalesce around two central figures: Mario Borghezio, the Lega MEP in the ENF group; and the former MEP of Italy's neo-fascist Forza Nuova party, Roberto Fiore, who is still president of the EU party APF.

It may be not so much ideology as the degree of extremism with which their respective parties display their adherence to the far right that distinguishes the two men and their respective camps. While Fiore's Forza

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<sup>167</sup> "Lega en AfD starten nieuwe eurosceptische fractie, ook Vlaams Belang doet mee," *De Standaard*, April 8, 2019, [http://www.standaard.be/cnt/dmf20190408\\_04309879](http://www.standaard.be/cnt/dmf20190408_04309879).

<sup>168</sup> Europe Elects, Twitter post, April 11, 2019, <https://twitter.com/EuropeElects/status/1116298795187412992>.

<sup>169</sup> Shaun Walker, "Viktor Orbán Calls for Anti-Migration Politicians to Take Over EU," *The Guardian*, January 10, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jan/10/viktor-orban-calls-anti-migration-politics-take-over-eu-matteo-salvini>.

<sup>170</sup> "European People's Party Votes to Suspend Hungarian President Orban's Fidesz Party," *France24*, March 20, 2019, <https://www.france24.com/en/20190320-european-peoples-party-votes-suspend-hungarian-president-orbans-fidesz-party>.

<sup>171</sup> Casert, "France's Le Pen Wants Salvini to Form Populist EU Group."

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*

Nuova (New Force) openly calls for vigilante actions against immigrants<sup>173</sup> and has strong ties to the neo-Nazi and skinhead scene,<sup>174</sup> the Lega opts for a more mainstream-compatible right-wing populism. This does not mean, however, that Fiore and Borghezio are not both extremists in their own right.

Roberto Fiore (born 1959) is an anti-immigration hardliner and self-identified fascist<sup>175</sup> who emerged from the radical far-right scene active during the latter phase of Italy's Years of Lead. He found refuge in the UK for almost two decades; it was there that he (along with Massimo Morsello) founded Forza Nuova in 1997.

Fiore returned to Italy in 1999 after an amnesty. In 2000, he and Gabriele Adinolfi published *Noi Terza Posizione* (Our Third Position), which picked up on their common project, Terza Posizione (TP), for which the ideological groundwork had been laid in the mid-1970s by Fiore, Adinolfi, and Peppe Dimitri in the tradition of Italian Neofascism. Italian Third Positionism is characterized by what historian Roger Griffin called palingenetic ultranationalism,<sup>176</sup> an extreme form of nationalism that aims at a "national rebirth" by way of national liberation movements, as well as racial separatism and adherence to a militaristic lifestyle. That TP is still upholding the militant elitist philosophy Fiore and his colleagues helped to forge for the National Front in the early 1980s is evident from a submission to the APF publication *Winds of Change*, in which a whole chapter is dedicated to the "Political Soldier."<sup>177</sup> TP has also adopted some of the positions of the contemporary far right, notably the ethnopluralism of French Nouvelle Droite ideologue Alain de Benoist, who envisioned the establishment of separate territories for different ethnic groups, ideas that today also reverberate in the Identitarian movement. Today, TP's ideas are represented in Italy by Forza Nuova and by CasaPound.

Fiore's decisively anti-Zionist and anti-American stance, and his rejection of Bannon's far-right networking schemes, can be deduced from statements such as:

Goodbye, Mr. Bannon

We don't want Americans that tell us what to do in Europe.

We don't want foundations and parties with HQ in Israel to dictate our foreign policy.

We don't want old capitalist theories to make our peoples poorer.

We don't want pro-life nice theories and then a reality of abortion in the ninth month.

Time to say goodbye, Mr. Bannon.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> "Italian Elections: How the Far Right Is Cruising on the Anti-Immigrant Wave," Southern Poverty Law Center, March 2, 2018, <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2018/03/02/italian-elections-how-far-right-cruising-anti-immigrant-wave>.

<sup>174</sup> "Irruzione naziskin Forza Nuova sta con Veneto Fronte Skinhead: 'Forza Nuova esprime solidarietà e massimo sostegno al Veneto Fronte Skinhead,'" *Giornale di Como*, November 30, 2017, <https://giornaledicomo.it/attualita/irruzione-naziskin-2/>.

<sup>175</sup> David Pallister, "Neo-Fascist Clear to Resume Charity Role," *The Guardian*, August 6, 1999, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/1999/aug/06/davidpallister>.

<sup>176</sup> Roger Griffin, "The Palingenetic Core of Fascist Ideology," in *Che cos'è il fascismo? Interpretazioni e prospettive di ricerca*, ed. A. Campi (Rome: Ideazione editrice, 2003), 97-122, <https://www.libraryofsocialscience.com/ideologies/docs/the-palingenetic-core-of-generic-fascist-ideology/>.

<sup>177</sup> Derek Holland, "The Political Soldier," in *Winds of Change—Notes for the Reconquista* (Helsingborg: Logik Förlag, 2018), 29-45.

<sup>178</sup> Roberto Fiore, Twitter post, March 22, 2019, 0:13 A.M., <https://twitter.com/RobertoFioreFN/status/1108990003827355648>.

While Fiore was once closely allied with anti-communist and anti-Russian entities such as Ukraine's far-right Svoboda party, following the war in Donbass, Fiore and other APF members "made a considerable shift to the pro-Russian camp," according to historian Giovanni Savino.<sup>179</sup>

In November 2013 ... Nick Griffin, ... Roberto Fiore and the spokesperson for Greek Golden Dawn, Ilias P. Kasidiaris were on a visit to Moscow and held a joint news conference. The 'guest list' is given special significance by the constellation of their party alliances. The New Force has close ties to Golden Dawn through the European National Front (FNE), established in 2004 by far-right parties and presided over by Fiore. On the other hand, BNP is part of the Jobbik-led Alliance of European National Movements (AENM), where the French National Front was a former member.<sup>180</sup>

Another tactical meeting with Russian far-right proponents followed in March 2015, when Fiore, Nick Griffin, Udo Voigt, and other leaders of the "fascist International" attended the International Conservative Forum in St. Petersburg.<sup>181</sup> Today, Fiore is full of praise for rulers such as "perhaps the bravest leader of our era, Bashar al-Assad," as well as Vladimir Putin, whom he calls a "new man of Providence, who has made some evil things impossible and all good things possible."<sup>182</sup>

That members of both Forza Nuova and the Lega have ties to former terrorist networks is an open secret, one that was underlined during a recent incident: on January 7, 2019, the Italian reporter Federico Marconi and the photographer Paolo Marchetti "were 'hit and kicked' by members of ... 'Avanguardia Nazionale' and the head of Forza Nuova Roma [Giuliano Castellino], the Roman chapter of the far-right party."<sup>183</sup>

Avanguardia Nazionale (National Vanguard), the nucleus of which was established in 1958 by the neo-fascist Stefano Delle Chiaie,<sup>184</sup> was a group involved in domestic false-flag terrorism—right-wing terrorism intended to incriminate the left—at the beginning of Italy's Years of Lead.<sup>185</sup> For example, the group was involved in the 1969 Piazza Fontana bombing that killed 17 people and wounded 88. It later transpired that the attack was facilitated by several Italian secret service branches,<sup>186</sup> as well as other terrorist groups, notably Ordine Nuovo and the anti-Communist mercenary organization Aginter Press, which operated under

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<sup>179</sup> Giovanni Savino, "From Evola to Dugin: The Neo-Eurasianist Connection in Italy," in *Eurasianism and the European Far-Right: Reshaping the Europe–Russia Relationship*, ed. Marlene Laruelle (Lanham, MD, and London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015): 97-124, 115.

<sup>180</sup> "The Russian Connection," Political Capital Policy Research and Consulting Institute, March 14, 2014, p. 5, [http://www.riskandforecast.com/useruploads/files/pc\\_flash\\_report\\_russian\\_connection.pdf](http://www.riskandforecast.com/useruploads/files/pc_flash_report_russian_connection.pdf).

<sup>181</sup> "Europe's Far Right Flocks to Russia International Conservative Forum Held in St. Petersburg," *Meduza*, March 24, 2015, <https://meduza.io/en/feature/2015/03/24/europe-s-far-right-flocks-to-russia>.

<sup>182</sup> Fiore, "After the Night—The Dawn," 55.

<sup>183</sup> "Two Journalists Attacked by Far-Right Extremists in Rome," *The Local*, January 8, 2019, <https://www.thelocal.it/20190108/two-journalists-attacked-by-far-right-extremists-in-rome>; Giovanni Tizian, "Violenza nera: Vergognosa aggressione fascista a Roma contro i giornalisti de L'Espresso," *L'Espresso*, January 7, 2019, [http://espresso.repubblica.it/attualita/2019/01/07/news/vergognosa-aggressione-fascista-a-roma-contro-i-giornalisti-de-l-espresso-1.330219?ref=HEF\\_RULLO](http://espresso.repubblica.it/attualita/2019/01/07/news/vergognosa-aggressione-fascista-a-roma-contro-i-giornalisti-de-l-espresso-1.330219?ref=HEF_RULLO).

<sup>184</sup> Stuart Christie, *Stefano Delle Chiaie: Portrait of a Black Terrorist* (London: Anarchy Magazine, 1984), <https://libcom.org/files/Stefano-Delle-Chiaie.pdf>.

<sup>185</sup> Nicola Rao, *La fiamma e la celtica* (Milan: Sperling & Kupfer, 2009), 57; Monzat, *Enquêtes sur la droite extreme*, 92.

<sup>186</sup> Massimo Theodore, member of the parliamentary investigation committee concerning the 1969 Piazza Fontana bombing, stated in an interview: "We found unambiguous reports and evidence that reveal a collaboration of [Guido] Giannettini and Delle Chiaie with several Italian secret services and reveal their joint responsibility for the attack in Milan. According to that, Giannettini was Delle Chiaie's liaison with the secret services, who helped him escape after the attack on Piazza Fontana." See: Egmont Koch and Oliver Schröm, "Kennzeichen D: BND-Schmiergeld," *ZDF*, February 16, 2000, partly available on YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qqCFYC6nF7I>; English transcript: <https://www.scribd.com/document/212742949/Kennzeichen-D-Report-False-Flag-Terrorism-in-Italy-English-Subs>.

the auspices of Portuguese and French secret services.<sup>187</sup> These far-right groups reached into the stay-behind networks in Europe that were set up with the help of NATO<sup>188</sup> as well as American and European secret services: secret armies to be activated in the event of a Communist takeover.<sup>189</sup> Although outlawed in 1976, Avanguardia Nazionale seems to have experienced a resurgence in recent years, as embodied in the trajectories of former members such as Delle Chiaie and Mario Merlino.<sup>190</sup>

In 2014, a phone call between Fiore and then-Rome leader of Forza Nuova Alessio Costantini was intercepted in the course of a surveillance measure by the Raggruppamento Operativo Speciale (ROS). The secret service unit was tasked with determining who was behind the 2014 immigrant hunt (“bangla tour”) in which around 80 Bangladeshis were systematically beaten up by Forza Nuova members.<sup>191</sup> The investigation revealed that the two had agreed that Stefano Delle Chiaie was behind a rapprochement between the Lega Nord and Casa-Pound.

Costantini remarked on a meeting between Delle Chiaie and APF MEP Mario Borghesio in Rome, most likely referring to a seminal event in June 2014<sup>192</sup> at which Borghesio and Delle Chiaie appeared to be celebrating

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<sup>187</sup> Italian magistrate Guido Salvini, in charge of the Piazza Fontana investigation, explained to the Italian senators the entanglement of several far-right European groups that had worked hand in hand with the secret services to prepare the attacks: “In these investigations data has emerged which confirmed the links between Aginter Press, Ordine Nuovo and Avanguardia Nazionale ... It has emerged that instructors of Aginter Press ... came to Rome between 1967 and 1968 and instructed the militant members of Avanguardia Nazionale in the use of explosives.” See: Judge Guido Salvini hearing before the Italian Parliamentary Commission of investigation on terrorism in Italy, 9th session of February 12, 1997, <https://web.archive.org/web/20160303175430/http://www.parlamento.it/parlam/bicam/terror/stenografici/steno9.htm>, quoted in Daniele Ganser, *NATO’s Secret Armies: Operation Gladio And Terrorism In Western Europe* (London: Routledge, 2005), 120; Collection of documents concerning Aginter Press in connection with the legal proceedings ensuing the Piazza Fontana bombing, published by the association “Rita Atria,” <http://www.ritaatria.it/LeStorie/IncidentieStragi/PiazzaFontana.aspx>, particularly the documents on “Aginter Press,” [http://www.ritaatria.it/Portals/0/Documenti/PiazzaFontana/aginter\\_presse\\_parte\\_1.pdf](http://www.ritaatria.it/Portals/0/Documenti/PiazzaFontana/aginter_presse_parte_1.pdf); [http://www.ritaatria.it/Portals/0/Documenti/PiazzaFontana/aginter\\_presse\\_parte\\_2.pdf](http://www.ritaatria.it/Portals/0/Documenti/PiazzaFontana/aginter_presse_parte_2.pdf).

<sup>188</sup> “The cooperation between the CIA and the Italian military secret service, as [former prime minister Giulio] Andreotti explained in the document, was supervised and coordinated by secret non-orthodox warfare centres of NATO: ‘Once the clandestine resistance organisation was constituted, Italy was called upon to participate... in the works of the CCP (Clandestine Planning Committee) of 1959, operating within the ambit of SHAPE [NATO’s Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe]...; in 1964 the Italian secret service also entered the ACC (Allied Clandestine Committee).” Daniele Ganser, *NATO’s Secret Armies*, 12, quoting from Franco Ferraresi, “A Secret Structure Codenamed Gladio,” in *Italian Politics. A Review*, vol. 7 (London: Pinter, 1992), 30.

<sup>189</sup> A long list of titles have dedicated themselves to understanding these secret service entanglements, most notably: Pauline Picco, *Liaisons dangereuses: Les extrêmes droites en France et en Italie (1960-1984)* (Rennes, PUR, 2016); Ganser, *NATO’s Secret Armies*; and Veronica Bortolussi, *I rapporti tra l’estrema destra italiana e l’Organizzazione de l’Armée Secrète francese* (PhD dissertation, Università Ca’ Foscari, 2017), 36, <http://dspace.unive.it/bitstream/handle/10579/12182/857843-1208195.pdf>.

<sup>190</sup> Federico Gervasoni, “Arriva la ‘spaghetata fascista’ a Brescia e Roma Scoppiano le polemiche,” *La Stampa*, September 27, 2017, archived on August 11, 2018, [https://web.archive.org/web/\\*/https://www.lastampa.it/2017/09/27/milano/arriva-la-spaghetata-fascista-a-brescia-e-roma-scoppiano-le-polemiche-MvxyofijLwF0InQz8M0xYI/pagina.html](https://web.archive.org/web/*/https://www.lastampa.it/2017/09/27/milano/arriva-la-spaghetata-fascista-a-brescia-e-roma-scoppiano-le-polemiche-MvxyofijLwF0InQz8M0xYI/pagina.html).

<sup>191</sup> Giuseppe Scarpa, “Roma, Fiore: ‘Servizi dietro Militia. Delle Chiaie registra dell’asse CasaPound-Lega,’” *La Repubblica*, December 13, 2017, [https://roma.repubblica.it/cronaca/2017/12/13/news/fiore\\_servizi\\_dietro\\_militia\\_casa\\_pound\\_e\\_con\\_la\\_lega\\_ci\\_ha\\_lavorato\\_delle\\_chiaie\\_-183971971/](https://roma.repubblica.it/cronaca/2017/12/13/news/fiore_servizi_dietro_militia_casa_pound_e_con_la_lega_ci_ha_lavorato_delle_chiaie_-183971971/); Paolo Biondani, Giovanni Tizian and Stefano Vergine, “I segreti di Roberto Fiore, il fascista a capo di Forza Nuova,” *L’Espresso*, December 20, 2017, <http://espresso.repubblica.it/inchieste/2017/12/15/news/soldi-oscuri-servizi-e-delinquenza-tutti-i-segreti-di-roberto-fiore-il-fascista-a-capo-di-foza-nuova-1.316175>.

<sup>192</sup> Saverio Ferrari, “Avanguardia Nazionale, ritorno in nero,” *Contropiano*, July 10, 2016, <http://contropiano.org/news/politica-news/2016/07/10/avanguardia-nazionale-ritorno-nero-081511>.

the revival of the outlawed terrorist organization Avanguardia Nazionale (video footage exists).<sup>193</sup> He sees Delle Chiaie's and Borghezio's alignment as proof that the secret services are once again entangled with the far-right elements they instrumentalized during the Years of Lead.<sup>194</sup>

Lega's Mario Borghezio is among the most eminent fascists in the European parliament, having served as an MEP on and off since 2001. Before joining the Northern League, he had experience both in the monarchist movement and in the extreme extra-parliamentary right. As a young man, he claims, he was a member of the Jeune Europe movement, a pan-European neo-Nazi movement founded by Jean Thiriart, a Belgian politician who was jailed after the Second World War for collaboration with the Nazis, and has been a central figure in the Italian neo-fascist milieu ever since. Borghezio's boundless hatred of immigrants repeatedly made headlines, as with a case in 1991 when he slapped and forcibly turned in a 12-year-old Moroccan street seller to the police<sup>195</sup> and another case, in 2000, when he set fire to a migrant camp under a bridge.<sup>196</sup>

Initially, Borghezio was a member of the Eurosceptic nationalist EU parliamentary group Independence/Democracy, but he was ousted in March 2006. He would later join the Union for Europe of the Nations and then Farage's Europe of Freedom and Democracy (EDF), from which he was likewise expelled on the grounds of racist remarks and insults levied at Italian integration minister Cécile Kyenge. The extent to which he has become a nuisance within the European Parliament can be deduced from a petition with more than 130,000 signatures on the change.org platform that calls on the EU parliament to expel Borghezio—or at least take severe disciplinary action against him.

He is currently a member of the populist right-wing parliamentary group Europe of Nations and Freedom, to which Marine Le Pen also belongs. He is a member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs; the Special Committee on Financial Crimes, Tax Evasion and Tax Avoidance; and the Delegation for Relations with the Arab Peninsula.<sup>197</sup>

As a member of the EU Arab Delegation, Borghezio seems to meet frequently with Saudi officials. In July 2018, he was seen shaking hands with the Saudi Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and a member of the Council of Ministers, Adel Aljubeir;<sup>198</sup> in September 2018, he attended a meeting with ambassador Mohammed Alar-

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<sup>193</sup> Patrizia de Rubertis, "Neofascismo, Borghezio a Delle Chiaie: 'Comandante, serve rivoluzione nazionale,'" *Il Fatto Quotidiano*, June 26, 2014, <https://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2014/06/26/neofascismo-borghezio-a-delle-chiaie-comandante-serve-rivoluzione-nazionale/286145/>.

<sup>194</sup> "If Maurizio Boccacci (leader of Militia Italia, former leader of the radical far-right faction of Castelli Romani, ed.) moves, he moves because a whole series of situations are moving. And this is secret service stuff. This is the state. It's the secret services, given the fact that Boccacci receives a paycheck... They are all back together with Delle Chiaie, Giuliano (Castellino, ed), Boccacci, to form a group of shit." Scarpa, "Roma, Fiore: 'Servizi dietro Militia. Delle Chiaie regista dell'asse CasaPound-Lega.'"

<sup>195</sup> "Leghista violento su minore," *Corriere della Sera*, June 23, 1993.

<sup>196</sup> M. Travaglio, "Il leghista Borghezio rischia il carcere," *La Repubblica*, March 12, 2002.

<sup>197</sup> "Mario Borghezio," European Parliament, accessed April 3, 2019, [www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/21817/MARIO\\_BORGHEZIO/home](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/21817/MARIO_BORGHEZIO/home).

<sup>198</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Twitter post, July 12, 2018, 9:23 A.M., <https://twitter.com/KSAmofaEN/status/1017444291445182464>.

ify “focused on regional issues of mutual interest, and strengthening dialogue with the European Parliament.”<sup>199</sup> The most recent of these meetings was in February 2019, whereupon the Saudi Mission to the European Union tweeted the same picture with ambassador Mohammed Alarify as it had for a meeting on October 27, 2018,<sup>200</sup> writing:<sup>201</sup>

HE Ambassdor @SaadAlarify, Head of Saudi Mission to the European Union, met His Excellency Italian Member of European Parliament Mr. Mario Borghezio from the ENF parliamentary political group discussed issues of mutual interest and means to strengthen cooperation.

Borghezio also appears to be lobbying for a rapprochement with Russia, particularly in ultra-Catholic circles like the Fatima network. In May 2012, while he was a member of the EU-Russia Parliamentary Cooperation Committee, he spoke at a conference in Rome entitled “Fatima: Our Last Chance” (*Fatima: nostra ultima possibilita*). In his speech, Borghezio announced that “the Christian parliamentarians of the EU-Russia Commission ... will have to take a position on the issue of the consecration of Russia into the immaculate heart of Mary.”<sup>202</sup> This led to a motion by Borghezio and fellow Lega MEP Lorenzo Fontana in October 2012 in which they called upon the EU Parliament to appeal to Pope Benedict XVI to carry out such consecration.<sup>203</sup>

As mentioned above, Matteo Salvini was a protégé of Borghezio during his stint in the EU parliament (2004-2018). By the time Salvini took over the leadership of the Lega party from Umberto Bossi in 2013, the pair’s Russian connections already abounded.

Of central importance have been the contacts of prominent Italian far rightists with Aleksandr Dugin. As early as 1990, Dugin, having established himself in Russian fascist circles, was introduced to Claudio Mutti,<sup>204</sup> a protégé of Julius Evola and self-identified “Nazi-Maoist”<sup>205</sup> implicated in the Piazza Fontana bombing.<sup>206</sup> The connection to Mutti seems to have persisted over the years, since Dugin had appeared as scientific advisor

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<sup>199</sup> KSA Mission EU, Twitter post. September 28, 2018, 09:10 A.M., <https://twitter.com/KSAmissionEU/status/1045707267717419008>.

<sup>200</sup> KSA Mission EU, Twitter Post, October 17, 2018, 01:02 P.M., <https://twitter.com/KSAmissionEU/status/1052650985502531587>.

<sup>201</sup> KSA Mission EU, Twitter Post, March 1, 2019, 02:24 A.M., <https://twitter.com/KSAmissionEU/status/1101427973373214721>.

<sup>202</sup> LNVideo Europarl., “Borghezio sul Messaggio della Madonna di Fatima: ‘No all’Usura Bancaria Mondiale,’” YouTube video, 20:20, June 7, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nbgbM8-PfZM>.

<sup>203</sup> “Father Nicholas Gruner and Christopher A. Ferrara Intervene at European Union Parliament Concerning Consecration of Russia,” Fatima Network, October 24, 2012, archived on April 3, 2016, <https://web.archive.org/web/20160403010431/http://www.fatima.org/news/enlarchive/102412enlpr.asp>.

<sup>204</sup> Interview with Aleksandr Dugin by Robert Steuckers and Arnaud Dubreuil, originally published in *Vouloir* n° 71/72, 1991, “Entretien avec Alexandre Douguine, éditeur traditionaliste à Moscou,” <http://vouloir.hautetfort.com/archive/2011/03/15/dugin.html>.

<sup>205</sup> “An admirer of Islamic fundamentalism and Franco Freda’s brand of armed right-wing terrorism to provoke revolution, Mutti styles himself a ‘Nazi Maoist.’” See: Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, *Hitler’s Priestess: Savitri Devi, the Hindu-Aryan Myth, and Neo-Nazism* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 217.

<sup>206</sup> In June 1974, Mutti was arrested and accused of being involved in the Ordine Nero, an underground neo-fascist organization. At the time of his arrest, he was in possession of a membership card for several leftist organizations, such as the Socialist Party, the radical left-wing Italian political group Potere Operaio, and the CGIL trade union. See: Frédéric Laurent, *L’Orchestre noir: enquête sur les réseaux néo-fascistes* (Paris: Nouveau Monde Editions, 2013). After five months in prison, he was cleared and released but accused of helping Franco Freda, accused of carrying out bomb attacks. See: Savino, “From Evola to Dugin.”

to the Italian right-wing extremist publication *Eurasia: Journal for Geopolitical Research* (*Eurasia: Rivista di Studi Geopolitici*),<sup>207</sup> which was edited and published by Mutti.<sup>208</sup>

Once one starts looking for Dugin in Italy, he seems to crop up everywhere: leading an exclusive interview with Salvini for Malofeev's think tank Katehon in 2016<sup>209</sup> or appearing at a CasaPound panel in 2018.<sup>210</sup> Dugin also showed up at an important Lega Nord meeting on April 21, 2015, where he sat on a panel with Mario Borghezio. Before Dugin's speech, the Russian national anthem was played to celebrate his presence. The conference, entitled "Toward a National League" (*Verso una lega nazionale*),<sup>211</sup> indicates that this was the starting point of Lega Nord's campaign for a name change that would allow it to gain Italy-wide significance and rid itself of the Northern secessionist element.

Another influential Russian figure, Aleksey Komov, has openly appeared at Lega events since 2013. Komov, a contact of Gianluca Savoini, Lega's Russia "fixer" in the alleged Avangard Oil kickback scheme, is an associate of oligarch Konstantin Malofeev and an important representative of the American ultraconservative super-group World Congress of Families:

Komov, who *L'Espresso* says works for Malofeev at his massive St. Basil the Great Charitable Foundation, is also tied to U.S. President Trump's former campaign chairman Steve Bannon through the Catholic group Dignitatis Humanae, which is building a university for alt-right politicians in an 800-year-old monastery outside of Rome. Komov is the Russian ambassador of the World Congress of Families, which fights abortion and same sex unions on whatever platform it can.<sup>212</sup>

Komov spoke at a Lega Nord party congress in 2013,<sup>213</sup> where he introduced the mascot of the World Congress of Families for the following year: a Russian doll whose outer doll is a man instead of a woman, since, according to Komov, "God created woman from a man," while inside the woman are five children.

## **France**

Just as M5S and Lega are doing in Italy, France's political establishment is currently also being destabilized by a cross-front movement, the Yellow Vests (*Gilets Jaunes*, YV), which have been engaging in massive and sometimes violent weekly demonstrations since the introduction of the umpteenth fuel tax levied by the Macron government.

Although the group was originally considered an apolitical movement that spontaneously formed as a non-homogenous platform for protesting against the politics of president Emmanuel Macron, several media have pointed out that existing right-wing online networks paved the way for the breathtaking success of the *Gilets Jaunes*. Were it not for the social media infrastructure's massive amplification of the "patriotic sphere," particularly on Facebook, the Yellow Vests would never have gained such influence.

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<sup>207</sup> *Eurasia Rivista*, archived version of April 16, 2017, <https://web.archive.org/web/20170416073619/https://www.eurasia-rivista.com/>.

<sup>208</sup> Anton Schechowtsov (Eng. Anton Shekhovtsov), "Das Netzwerk der Euromaidan-Verleumder," *Zeit Online*, February 21, 2014, <https://www.zeit.de/politik/ausland/2014-02/ukraine-russland-europa-rassismus-medien/komplettansicht>.

<sup>209</sup> Aleksandr Dugin and Matteo Salvini, "Italy, EU and Trump," Katehon, November 24, 2016, <http://katehon.com/article/italy-eu-and-trump>.

<sup>210</sup> Populismo, "Alexander Dugin, Simone Di Stefano, Giulietto Chiesa ed altri: 'Putin contro Putin' (22/06/2018)," YouTube video, 2:04:08, June 24, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QSCqCf4GQNE>.

<sup>211</sup> Cnowebtv, "Verso una Lega Nazionale, il convegno," YouTube video, 3:55, April 23, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tdy0WCpEtTA>.

<sup>212</sup> Nadeau, "An Italian Expose."

<sup>213</sup> Lega Salvini Premier, "Congresso Federale Lega Nord 2013—Ambasciatore Russo Nazioni Unite Alexey Komov," YouTube video, 5:45, December 18, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DsgJtcNZZwQ>.

It all started when, on January 9, 2018, Édouard Philippe announced a speed limit of 80 km/h on country roads for that summer. This was opposed by all sorts of motorists, but also by numerous politicians, mostly from the right-wing to far-right spectrum, chief among them Marine Le Pen, who in early January 2018 described it as “persecution of motorists.” Various rallies against the law were organized all over France.<sup>214</sup> This “perceived vendetta against motorists attracted mostly right-wing communities,” *Le Monde* reported.

Around that time, so-called “anger groups” (*groupes colère*)<sup>215</sup> emerged in opposition to the speed limit. These groups played a vital role in organizing and amplifying the Yellow Vests protests that would follow around 10 months later, as *BuzzFeed News*<sup>216</sup> and later *Le Monde* reported. The latter counted 35 such anger groups, which “totaled to nearly 200,000 members at the beginning of April 2019,” pointing to “signs that their creation was coordinated in one way or another, since most (25 out of 35) were created between January 9, 2018 and February 4, 2018.”<sup>217</sup> *BuzzFeed News* went so far as to say that the Gilets Jaunes protests were “a beast born almost entirely from Facebook.”

When another point of contention, a fuel tax increase, hit the headlines in fall 2018, it was these anger groups that jumped on it. According to one of their organizers, Jonathan Torres, these groups “were the ones who spread the November 17 appeal in the region... to give momentum to the movement at its beginning.”<sup>218</sup>

Facebook groups connected to Rassemblement National (RN) and other right-wing to far-right parties were among the major amplifiers of the movement.<sup>219</sup> Frank Buhler from the far-right *Debout la France* party stated that “this movement started from the heart of the right, but it is apolitical in the sense that we were delighted that there were people from everywhere.”<sup>220</sup> Buhler’s video calling for blockades on November 17 was such a success that it was viewed more than 4 million times on Facebook, largely by far-right groups. According to *Le Monde*, “left-wing and far-left communities, on the other hand, did not share these messages at all—one sign among others that they have played a rather weak role in the movement thus far.”<sup>221</sup>

The *Le Monde* report also revealed that some of these far-right social media presences have a longer history, such as a Facebook page called “Macron piss off!” (*Macron dégage!*),<sup>222</sup> with over 700,000 Facebook followers, that was called “Hollande step down” (*Hollande démission*) when created in April 2013.

The fuel tax increase and an ensuing online petition that garnered more than a million signatures won a broad audience and sparked the initial demonstrations and road blocks of November 17, 2018. These quickly spread across France: the Yellow Vests were present in more than 2,000 locations, drumming up around

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<sup>214</sup> Adrien Sénécat, “Derrière la percée des « gilets jaunes », des réseaux pas si « spontanés » et « apolitiques »,” *Le Monde*, April 17, 2019, [https://www.lemonde.fr/les-decodeurs/article/2019/04/17/derriere-la-percee-des-gilets-jaunes-des-reseaux-pas-si-spontanes-et-apolitiques\\_5451242\\_4355770.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/les-decodeurs/article/2019/04/17/derriere-la-percee-des-gilets-jaunes-des-reseaux-pas-si-spontanes-et-apolitiques_5451242_4355770.html).

<sup>215</sup> Most of these anger groups are named in a certain pattern, “Colère + region number,” since France’s regions are numbered. Some of the participants of that first rally in November 2018 had written “Anger 72” (*Colère 72*) on the back of their yellow vests, a reference to a Facebook group of the same name that served as a rallying platform for all sorts of dissatisfied people from the Sarthe region, and which was, with 30,000 members, the largest of these anger groups. See: Sénécat, “Derrière la percée des « gilets jaunes »;” Facebook group “Colère 72,” <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2008942829379111/>.

<sup>216</sup> Ryan Broderick and Jules Darmanin, “The ‘Yellow Vest’ Riots in France Are What Happens When Facebook Gets Involved with Local News,” *BuzzFeed News*, December 6, 2018, <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/amhtml/ryanhates-this/france-paris-yellow-jackets-facebook>.

<sup>217</sup> Sénécat, “Derrière la percée des « gilets jaunes ».”

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>219</sup> Among them “Rassemblement national HBM,” “Résistance et unité PACA,” “Marine Le Pen 2022,” and “Amis patriotes de Marine Le Pen.” See: Sénécat, “Derrière la percée des « gilets jaunes ».”

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>222</sup> Facebook page of “Macron Dégage,” <https://www.facebook.com/DegageMacron/>.

280,000 supporters. Since then, the Yellow Vests have held smaller demonstrations every Saturday, mainly in Paris and other major French cities.

The original protest against the increase in the price of gasoline has expanded to other fiscal and social demands, such as increased purchasing power, improved public services, reinstatement of a wealth tax, etc., and has turned into an overall critique of the French “intelligentsia,” targeting both politicians and the media.

During the seminal demonstration in Paris on December 1, 2018, in Paris, which led to a wave of destruction and violent clashes, it was again Marine Le Pen who was at the forefront, giving the movement positive publicity and leading her forces into the “battle at the Champs Elysees.” In the ensuing weekly demonstrations, French and European far-right proponents could frequently be spotted among the ranks of the Yellow Vests in Paris. Popular far-right activists and nationalist leaders posted selfies on social media showing themselves wearing the infamous yellow vests at rallies.<sup>223</sup> Far-right groups organize Yellow Vests-themed events, such as Résistance Républicaine and Riposte Laïque; the latter hosted Lega MEP Mario Borghezio for a panel discussion with Yellow Vests proponents.<sup>224</sup>

Proclaimed apoliticism, a “neither right nor left” stance, a denunciation of the opposition between “people” and the “elite,” and the conspiracy theories that sometimes go along with such stances<sup>225</sup> are all anchors for the far right, which has been dwelling on these themes for a long time. But more specifically, there are two main intersections between the far right and the Yellow Vests: the demand for reform of the French democratic system through the institution of “direct democracy” and the resignation of president Emmanuel Macron.

Naturally, Macron’s resignation would allow for the election of a new, potentially far-right leader, making it possible for France to enter the European “populist club” alongside Matteo Salvini and Viktor Orbán. And the Yellow Vests’ advocacy for “direct democracy” might be a vehicle for just that, since direct democracy has long been an iconic demand of the far right.<sup>226</sup> The Yellow Vests’ demands center around the implementation of what they call the RIC (Citizen’s Initiative Referendum), a process that would allow citizens to call for a referendum without the need for the parliament or the president to agree.<sup>227</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> French far-right proponents spotted at the Yellow Vest rallies include: Génération Identitaire, Dissidence française, Parti de la France, Civitas, Bastion social (GUD), Action Française, Zouaves (GUD), Marion Maréchal Le Pen, Œuvre Française (Yvan Benedetti), Debout La France (Nicolas Dupont Aignan). For a complete account of the French far-right presence among the Yellow Vests, see: “Un point de vue antifasciste sur les Gilets Jaunes,” *La Horde (blog)*, December 19, 2019, <http://lahorde.samizdat.net/2018/12/19/un-point-de-vue-antifasciste-sur-les-gilets-jaunes/>. European far-right proponents spotted at the Yellow Vest rallies include: CasaPound (Davide Di Stefano and Luca Marsella) and far-right activists with Russian contacts (Xavier Moreau, Fabrice Sorlin, André Chanclu and Emmanuel Leroy). Although Aleksandr Dugin was not present at the rallies, he followed them closely and showed his support on social media. For a complete account, see: Anton Shekhovtsov, “French Yellow Vests, the Far-Right and the Russian Connection,” *Tango Noir (blog)*, December 12, 2018, <http://www.tango-noir.com/2018/12/12/french-yellow-vests-the-far-right-and-the-russian-connection/>.

<sup>224</sup> “Assises de la France des Gilets jaunes,” *Synthèse Nationale (blog)*, March 7, 2019, archived on April 22, 2019, <https://web.archive.org/save/http://synthesenationale.hautetfort.com/archive/2019/03/07/rappel-dimanche-17-mars-venez-nombreux-participer-aux-assise-6133930.html>.

<sup>225</sup> “Les «gilets jaunes» plus sensibles aux théories du complot (sondage),” *Le Figaro*, February 11, 2019, <http://www.lefigaro.fr/flash-actu/2019/02/11/97001-20190211FILWWW00015-les-gilets-jaunes-plus-sensibles-aux-theories-du-complot-sondage.php>.

<sup>226</sup> The EU groups Alliance for Direct Democracy in Europe and Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy, founded in 2014, can attest to this.

<sup>227</sup> Anne Brigaudeau, “L’article à lire pour comprendre le référendum d’initiative citoyenne, l’une des revendications des ‘gilets jaunes,’” *FranceInfo*, December 13, 2018, [https://www.francetvinfo.fr/economie/transports/gilets-jaunes/l-article-a-lire-pour-comprendre-le-referendum-populaire-l-une-des-revendications-des-gilets-jaunes\\_3093737.html](https://www.francetvinfo.fr/economie/transports/gilets-jaunes/l-article-a-lire-pour-comprendre-le-referendum-populaire-l-une-des-revendications-des-gilets-jaunes_3093737.html).

The RIC would be a godsend for the French far right, for two important reasons. First, the campaigns surrounding each new referendum would be of crucial importance to its outcome. This could open the door to voter manipulation such as micro-targeting, as was the case for the Brexit referendum.<sup>228</sup> Second, the topics of the referenda will depend on citizens' initiatives. However, if the RIC system were implemented, the Yellow Vests movement would likely dissolve, as it would have lost its main purpose. And with its disappearance—and the corresponding loss of the community it has created—there is little chance that people would continue their political involvement. Outside of established structures (e.g., political parties), such initiatives can frequently be found in the right-wing extremes that are particularly focused on these local efforts. In a nutshell, implementing the RIC in France would probably mean having a new political force, comprised predominantly of far-right members, competing for power with the more centrist parliament.

The more the Yellow Vests movement grew, the more some political analysts saw similarities between the French movement and the Italian M5S.<sup>229</sup> They both appeared to be born spontaneously out of a popular initiative, they both emerged from social media and took form in the streets, both are built on an anti-system rhetoric, both focus on implementing a form of direct democracy—the list goes on. But can we expect to see the Yellow Vests take over the French votes in the European elections, as the M5S did in Italy?

Several Yellow Vests proponents have indeed decided to create their own independent list for the EU elections,<sup>230</sup> but they do not seem to be very popular.<sup>231</sup> Their profiles, like the movement itself, are ill-defined: no centralization, no leadership, no clear demands—in contrast to Di Maio's M5S. This disorganization might explain Di Maio's intervention:<sup>232</sup> he invited select individuals, namely the founder of the RIC European list, Ingrid Levavasseur, and a Yellow Vests spokesperson, Christophe Chalençon, to meet with him. Chalençon, reportedly active in far-right circles, has received negative attention due to his Islamophobic statements.<sup>233</sup> Di Maio's offer to use the M5S online platform to support the Yellow Vests<sup>234</sup> is more than him stretching out a hand to a likeminded organization; it is an attempt to centralize and promote the Yellow Vests movement.

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<sup>228</sup> Julien Talpin, "Un RIC sous conditions...", *Libération*, December 25, 2018, [https://www.liberation.fr/debats/2018/12/25/un-ric-sous-conditions\\_1699668](https://www.liberation.fr/debats/2018/12/25/un-ric-sous-conditions_1699668).

<sup>229</sup> Elie Michel, "« Gilets jaunes » et Mouvement 5 étoiles : « Dans les deux cas, l'expression d'un 'ras-le-bol' général »,» *Le Monde*, January 9, 2019, [https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2019/01/09/gilets-jaunes-et-mouvement-5-etoiles-dans-les-deux-cas-l-expression-d-un-ras-le-bol-general\\_5406517\\_3232.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2019/01/09/gilets-jaunes-et-mouvement-5-etoiles-dans-les-deux-cas-l-expression-d-un-ras-le-bol-general_5406517_3232.html).

<sup>230</sup> Four Yellow Vests candidacies have been announced for the EU elections:

- "Ralliement d'Initiative Citoyenne" (RIC), led by Jérémy Clément (formerly Ingrid Levavasseur)
- "Union jaune," led by Patrick Cribouw
- "Rassemblement des Gilets Jaunes Citoyens," led by Thierry-Paul Valette
- "Evolution citoyenne," led by Christophe Chalençon

For a complete account of the French candidates in the European elections, see: Julien Da Sois, "Elections européennes: qui sont les têtes de liste en France ?" *CNEWS*, April 15, 2019, <https://www.cnews.fr/monde/2019-04-01/elections-europeennes-qui-sont-les-tetes-de-liste-en-france-804394>.

<sup>231</sup> Between 3 and 10% of the vote for all parties. See: "L'internaute, "Elections européennes: la compilation des sondages," accessed May 8, 2019, <https://infogram.com/8cbd5b5f-93b6-4ea0-acfc-0e3b387974e8>.

<sup>232</sup> Aline Leclerc, "La rencontre de « gilets jaunes » avec l'Italien Di Maio crée des tensions au sein de la liste RIC," *Le Monde*, February 7, 2019, [https://www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2019/02/06/la-rencontre-de-gilets-jaunes-avec-l-italien-luigi-di-maio-cree-des-tensions-autour-de-la-liste-ric\\_5420114\\_823448.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2019/02/06/la-rencontre-de-gilets-jaunes-avec-l-italien-luigi-di-maio-cree-des-tensions-autour-de-la-liste-ric_5420114_823448.html).

<sup>233</sup> Nicolas Tucac, "Christophe Chalençon: le leader des gilets jaunes accusé d'islamophobie," *FranceSoir*, December 3, 2018, <http://www.francesoir.fr/politique-france/christophe-chalencon-le-leader-des-gilets-jaunes-accuse-islamophobie>; <https://www.facebook.com/1366550591/posts/10213791162597723/>.

<sup>234</sup> Juliette Gramaglia, "Italie: comment marche 'Rousseau', la plateforme des 5 Etoiles, proposée aux Gilets jaunes," *Arrêt sur images*, January 10, 2019, <https://www.arretsurimages.net/articles/italie-zoom-sur-rousseau-la-plateforme-participative-proposee-par-les-5-etoiles-aux-gilets-jaunes>.

The Yellow Vests rallies are strongly amplified by Russian media (*RT* and *Sputnik*), as well as by factions of the Russian far right, a reality that has not gone unnoticed in the press.<sup>235</sup> *RT*, in particular, has featured the protests at length.<sup>236</sup> Anton Shekhovtsov reported that Russophile far-right proponents had participated in the rallies, among them Xavier Moreau, who posed with a Donbass flag.<sup>237</sup> Similarly, Russian fascist ideologue Aleksandr Dugin and his daughter and think-alike, Daria Dugina, post updates on the Yellow Vests demonstrations on a regular basis.<sup>238</sup> Dugina even wrote a piece for *RT Russia* on the topic,<sup>239</sup> in which she names the same Christophe Chalençon,<sup>240</sup> whom Di Maio would meet three months later, as one of the main spokespersons of the Yellow Vests, at a time where the movement had no clear leaders at all. In her *RT* piece, Dugina highlighted a significant detail:

One of the leaders of the “Yellow Vests,” Christophe Chalençon, has declared that General Pierre De Villiers should become Prime Minister. General De Villiers, let us recall, is the former Chief of Staff of the French Army, an anti-globalist who resigned after entering into conflict with Macron over opposing defense budget cuts.

Pierre de Villiers was fired by Macron in July 2017 after refusing to accept cuts to the military budget. *Reuters* reported, “By cutting de Villiers down to size, Macron swung a punch too at a wing of the ultra-conservative Catholic aristocracy—a grouping that backed Francois Fillon, one of his main rivals for the presidency. De Villiers, whose brother Philippe heads an ultraconservative political group called Movement for France (MPF), became Fillon’s military adviser in 2008 while the conservative politician was prime minister under President Nicolas Sarkozy’s presidency, and became head of the army two years later.”<sup>241</sup>

Furthermore, Philippe de Villiers is known to be close to Vladimir Putin<sup>242</sup> and the far right. De Villiers had personal meetings with Putin about a theme park to be built at the Livadia Palace in Crimea, the historic venue of the Yalta Conference. According to the *New York Times*, “The Crimea park, along with another planned in Moscow, will be partly financed by Konstantin V. Malofeev, a Russian oligarch on the European Union’s sanctions list who is known for his close ties to Ukraine’s rebels.”<sup>243</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> “Gewalt in der Geisterstadt: Russland soll Krawalle in Frankreich aktiv befeuern,” *t-online.de*, December 9, 2018, [https://www.t-online.de/nachrichten/ausland/krisen/id\\_84916012/paris-russland-soll-gelbwesten-krawalle-in-frankreich-aktiv-befeuern.html](https://www.t-online.de/nachrichten/ausland/krisen/id_84916012/paris-russland-soll-gelbwesten-krawalle-in-frankreich-aktiv-befeuern.html).

<sup>236</sup> Search results for “RT” and “Gilets Jaunes” on YouTube, [https://www.youtube.com/results?search\\_query=%22gilets+jaunes%22+rt](https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=%22gilets+jaunes%22+rt).

<sup>237</sup> Anton Shekhovtsov, Twitter post, December 8, 2018, [https://twitter.com/A\\_SHEKH0VTS0V/status/1071400938940833792](https://twitter.com/A_SHEKH0VTS0V/status/1071400938940833792).

<sup>238</sup> Facebook page of Aleksandr Dugin, <https://www.facebook.com/alexandr.dugin>.

<sup>239</sup> Daria Platonova (pseudonym for Daria Dugina), “Rise of the People,” *RT Russia*, December 4, 2018, <https://russian.rt.com/opinion/579313-platonova-parizh-zheltye-zhilye>; Daria Platonova, “The People’s Uprising: ‘Yellow Jacket’ Case,” *Geopolitica*, December 5, 2018, <https://www.geopolitica.ru/en/article/peoples-uprising-yellow-jacket-case>.

<sup>240</sup> Facebook page of Christophe Chalençon, <https://www.facebook.com/christophe.chalencon.3>.

<sup>241</sup> Simon Carraud and Michel Rose, “France’s Armed Forces Chief Resigns after Clash with Macron over Budget Cuts,” *Reuters*, July 19, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-france-politics-defence-idUSKBN1A40KR>.

<sup>242</sup> Villiers Staff, “Rencontre entre le Président Vladimir Poutine et Philippe de Villiers,” YouTube video, 15:41, August 16, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uTYacqnm5PI>.

<sup>243</sup> Danny Hakim, “Proposal for a Theme Park Draws from Crimea’s Distant Past,” *The New York Times*, February 3, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/04/business/international/creating-a-historical-theme-park-in-crimea.html>.

This Franco-Russian axis in support of the Yellow Vests is also exemplified by central French far-right ideologue Alain de Benoist's writing of an article on the Yellow Vests movement for Aleksandr Dugin's geopolitica.ru.<sup>244</sup> In the article, he referred to a similar movement that predated the Yellow Vests, the "Red Caps," which appeared in 2013 in Bretagne in opposition to an eco-tax on lorries using French roads.<sup>245</sup> De Benoist quoted François Bousquet as saying that the protests sprung from "peripheral France," which was "the most French thing in France," and called the movement "populism in its pure state. Not the populism of parties or movements that claim this label, but what Vincent Coussedière called the 'populism of the people.'"

Marine Le Pen, an avid supporter of the Yellow Vests, decided not to run in the European elections this year, instead appointing 23-year-old Jordan Bardella to head RN's list of EU candidates. Although Bardella's résumé is impressive,<sup>246</sup> his nomination came as a shock to many RN supporters due to his young age. Speculations abound as to why Marine Le Pen would jeopardize the loyalty of her membership with such an unexpected choice. Besides the obvious "renewal" strategy that goes with having a young face as the head of the movement, it is speculated that Marine Le Pen was also looking for a malleable mind she could direct from the shadows. Such a project already failed once, when she put her trust in the young Florian Philippot: Philippot, who had his own ideas, ended up leaving the party and taking valuable members with him.<sup>247</sup>

Thus, Marine Le Pen needed someone heading the candidates' list whom she could control and who would not go rogue. Bardella had the double advantage of being both inexperienced and the son-in-law of Frédéric Chatillon, a long-time friend of Marine Le Pen and former leader of the extremely violent Groupe Union Défense (GUD)—the same "GUD connection"<sup>248</sup> that is currently handling the RN's finances and communication campaigns.<sup>249</sup>

While RN will be the predominant French far-right party running for the EU elections,<sup>250</sup> the moderate right-wing party Les Républicains (LR) seems to be joining Marine Le Pen on her turf. LR and RN have grown closer since Laurent Wauquiez took over the leadership of LR.<sup>251</sup> LR's prime candidate for the EU elections, François Xavier Bellamy, has all the qualities of an ultra-conservative Catholic leader: he has spoken against abortion rights, marched with the homophobic "Manif pour tous" demonstration,<sup>252</sup> is close to OAS networks, and

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<sup>244</sup> Alain de Benoist, "Alain de Benoist on the Yellow Vests Movement," *Geopolitica*, December 7, 2018, <https://www.geopolitica.ru/en/article/alain-de-benoist-yellow-vests-movement>.

<sup>245</sup> Henry Samuel, "Who are France's Red Caps?" *The Telegraph*, November 14, 2013, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/francois-hollande/10450559/Who-are-Frances-Red-Caps.html>.

<sup>246</sup> Jordan Bardella joined the RN at the age of 16; became departmental secretary of Seine-Saint-Denis aged 19; became regional counselor of Ile-de-France at the age of 20; and was promoted after the 2017 presidential elections to spokesperson of the RN and national director of Génération Nation, the youth branch of the RN.

<sup>247</sup> For a recap of the Marine Le Pen - Phillipot split, see: Aurelien Breeden and Elian Peltier, "A Marine Le Pen Aide Leaves Far-Right Party," *The New York Times*, September 21, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/21/world/europe/france-florian-philippot-national-front.html>.

<sup>248</sup> "Skins, GUD, JNR: extrême droite, le flambeau de la violence," *L'Obs*, June 18, 2013, <https://www.nouvelobs.com/politique/20130612.OBS2962/skins-gud-jnr-extreme-droite-le-flambeau-de-la-violence.html>.

<sup>249</sup> "La 'GUD connection', gardienne de la bourse du FN," *L'Obs*, October 18, 2013, <https://www.nouvelobs.com/politique/20131018.OBS1806/la-gud-connection-gardienne-de-la-bourse-du-fn.html>.

<sup>250</sup> For a complete list of the French far-right candidates in the EU elections, see: Jean-Yves Camus, "L'extrême droite aux élections européennes: le jeu des sept familles," Fondation Jean Jaurès, May 6, 2019, <https://jean-jaures.org/nos-productions/l-extreme-droite-aux-elections-europeennes-le-jeu-des-sept-familles>.

<sup>251</sup> Marylou Magal, "LR-FN: l'union par la base," *Le Point*, April 26, 2018, [https://www.lepoint.fr/politique/lr-fn-l-union-par-la-base-26-04-2018-2213690\\_20.php](https://www.lepoint.fr/politique/lr-fn-l-union-par-la-base-26-04-2018-2213690_20.php).

<sup>252</sup> Abel Mestre and Caroline Monnot, "« Manif pour tous »: quand les vieux réseaux OAS s'en mêlent," *Droite(s) Extrême(s) (blog)*, April 19, 2013, <http://droites-extremes.blog.lemonde.fr/2013/04/19/manif-pour-tous-quand-les-vieux-reseaux-oas-sen-melent/>.

recently intensified his collaboration with “Sens Commun,” a Manif pour tous satellite organization set up in collaboration with LR.

Even though there is no plan for an alliance between the two parties at the EU elections, a rapprochement between them has been made a political issue of late.<sup>253</sup> The radicalization of the moderate right was picked up by Emmanuel Macron’s La République En Marche’s PR team, who decided to build their campaign around the Manicheist opposition between the good progressivist and the bad nationalists.<sup>254</sup>

Since the EU party MENF and the EU parliamentary group ENF, to which Rassemblement National currently belongs, will likely dissolve, Marine Le Pen decided—if hesitantly—to join Salvini’s new parliamentary group and thus give it considerable weight, since RN is polling at around 21% of the national vote in France.<sup>255</sup>

### ***U.S. Influence on EU Politics***

In the course of the still partly ongoing “Russia-gate” in the United States, the media seem to have developed a sort of tunnel vision when it comes to European support for the far right, becoming obsessed by Russian funding while understating the role of the American far right in supporting an international right-wing turn.

Of preeminent importance are billionaire donors who have, through various extra-parliamentary initiatives, funded an international far-right resurgence, among them Robert Mercer and Robert Shillman.<sup>256</sup>

The American Robert Mercer came to enormous wealth on the back of his computer science skills, building an empire around applying data analytics to investment strategies. He uses this wealth to promote an array of right-wing causes in the US. These range from the “Making America Number 1” super-PAC<sup>257</sup> to Donald Trump’s presidential campaign to the Brexit referendum,<sup>258</sup> as well as including far-right outlets Breitbart<sup>259</sup> and Rebel News.<sup>260</sup> He and two of his three daughters, Jennifer Mercer and Rebekah Anne Mercer, sit at the heart of a web of data analysis firms, such as the SCL Group<sup>261</sup> and its various subdivisions, among them the now-infamous Cambridge Analytica, as well as Emerdata.<sup>262</sup> Leading personnel involved in SCL’s specialist military division, IOTA Global, come from the U.S. or UK army and intelligence sector and have ties to NATO’s

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<sup>253</sup> “Favorable à un rapprochement avec le FN, Mariani va rencontrer Wauquiez,” *La Croix*, April 18, 2018, <https://www.la-croix.com/France/Politique/Favorable-rapprochement-FN-Mariani-rencontrer-Wauquiez-2018-04-18-1300932590>; Corinne Laurent, “Nice, siège de la rivalité entre la droite et l’extrême droite,” *La croix*, April 25, 2018, <https://www.la-croix.com/France/Politique/Nice-siege-rivalite-entre-droite-lextrême-droite-2018-04-25-1200934461>.

<sup>254</sup> Louis Hausalter, “‘Vous n’avez pas le choix’: la campagne toujours plus manichéenne du camp Macron pour les européennes,” *Marianne*, March 11, 2019, <https://www.marianne.net/politique/elections-europeennes-campagne-manicheenne-macron-lrem>.

<sup>255</sup> Europe Elects, Twitter post, April 10, 2019, <https://twitter.com/EuropeElects/status/1116021911883001857>.

<sup>256</sup> Leloup, “Des milliardaires américains.”

<sup>257</sup> “Keep the Promise I/Make America Number 1, Contributors, 2016 Cycle,” Open Secrets, accessed May 8, 2019, <https://www.opensecrets.org/pacs/pacgave2.php?cmte=C00575373&cycle=2016>.

<sup>258</sup> Carole Cadwalladr, “The Great British Brexit Robbery: How Our Democracy was Hijacked,” *The Guardian*, May 7, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/may/07/the-great-british-brexite-robbery-hijacked-democracy>.

<sup>259</sup> Zachary Mider, “What Kind of Man Spends Millions to Elect Ted Cruz?” *Bloomberg*, January 20, 2016, <https://www.bloomberg.com/politics/features/2016-01-20/what-kind-of-man-spends-millions-to-elect-ted-cruz->

<sup>260</sup> Leloup, “Des milliardaires américains.”

<sup>261</sup> Anne Marlow and Wendy Siegelman, “SCL Group—Companies & Shareholders,” *Medium*, May 8, 2017, <https://medium.com/@wsiegelman/scl-companies-shareholders-e65a4f394158>.

<sup>262</sup> Wendy Siegelman, “Chart: Emerdata Limited—The New Cambridge Analytica/SCL Group?” *Medium*, March 26, 2018, <https://medium.com/@wsiegelman/chart-emerdata-limited-the-new-cambridge-analytica-scl-group-63283f47670d>.

strategic communications department. One of Emerdata's top executives, Johnson Chun Shuyn Ko,<sup>263</sup> is also executive director and deputy chairman of the Frontier Services Group, together with Eric Prince, whose mercenary armies (Blackwater, Xe Services, Academi) have gained international notoriety.

One of Mercer's emissaries is Steve Bannon, who, having been dethroned as official advisor to Donald Trump and also as editor-in-chief of *Breitbart* news, has now set his eyes on Europe. In spring 2018, Bannon embarked on a tour across the continent in which he systematically met with central figures from various European far-right parties.

Bannon spent the week before the Italian general election in March 2018 working with Salvini and his cohorts.<sup>264</sup> Shortly thereafter, he appeared onstage at a Front National event in Lille with Marine Le Pen, where he uttered the now-infamous quote: "Let them call you racists. Let them call you xenophobes. Let them call you nativists ... Wear it as a badge of honor."<sup>265</sup> His battle cry also resonates in the Spanish far-right party Vox, whose Rocío Monasterio repeated it almost verbatim at a recent party event.<sup>266</sup>

Bannon has also been meeting with AfD and FPÖ politicians. For example, in the framework of a speaking engagement in Zurich, Switzerland, he met two of the four co-chairmen of the AfD parliamentary group, Alice Weidel and Beatrix von Storch.<sup>267</sup> Weidel's office said that she was particularly interested in Bannon's experiences with political communication and alternative media. This was indirectly confirmed by Bannon in an interview: "Mr. Bannon said that a common message he had received from populists throughout Europe was a desire to establish a media outlet for their views. 'They see what Breitbart did and they want it in their own language,' said Mr. Bannon [...], calling that 'phase two.'"<sup>268</sup>

Bannon's contacts also reach into the European Catholic right due to his role in the "Catholic-fundamentalist think tank"<sup>269</sup> Dignitatis Humanae Institute (DHI). According to the Christian newspaper *Christ und Welt*, Bannon aims to unite the conservative forces inside the Vatican with the support of the institute.<sup>270</sup> With the help of the DHI, Bannon was able to lease an enormous Italian monastery for a term of 19 years; there, he

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<sup>263</sup> "Chun-Shun Ko," *Bloomberg*, <https://www.bloomberg.com/research/stocks/people/person.asp?personId=8286844&privcapId=2482088>.

<sup>264</sup> Stephanie Kirchgaessner, "Steve Bannon in Rome to 'Support Far-Right Candidate' in Italian Election," *The Guardian*, March 1, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/mar/01/steve-bannon-in-rome-to-support-far-right-candidate-matteo-salvini>.

<sup>265</sup> Adam Nossiter, "'Let Them Call You Racists': Bannon's Pep Talk to National Front," *The New York Times*, March 10, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/10/world/europe/steve-bannon-france-national-front.html>.

<sup>266</sup> "We don't care if they call us fascists, because we are proud of our flag. We don't care if they call us sexists, because we defend the equality of all Spaniards, whether they are women or men. We don't care that they call us xenophobes because we defend Spain's borders, our home. We don't care if they call us homophobes simply because we don't want them to tell our 8-year-old boys that they might be girls and that little girls may be boys." See: Sarah Morris, "Could Spain's Far-Right Vox Party Become Kingmaker?" *France24*, April 3, 2019, <https://www.france24.com/en/20190403-focus-spain-vox-far-right-party-early-general-election-coalition-kingmaker-andalusia?ref=tw>.

<sup>267</sup> Jason Horowitz, "Steve Bannon Is Done Wrecking the American Establishment. Now He Wants to Destroy Europe's," *New York Times*, March 9, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/09/world/europe/horowitz-europe-populism.html>; "Treffen mit Trumps Ex-Berater: Alice Weidel holt sich Tipps bei Steve Bannon," *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, March 6, 2018, <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/alice-weidel-holt-sich-tipps-bei-trumps-ex-berater-steve-bannon-15481231.html>.

<sup>268</sup> Horowitz, "Steve Bannon Is Done Wrecking the American Establishment."

<sup>269</sup> "CDU-Politiker distanziert sich von katholischem Institut," *Radio Vatikan*, February 23, 2017, [https://web.archive.org/web/20171110115856/http://de.radiovaticana.va/news/2017/02/23/cdu-politiker\\_distanziert\\_sich\\_von\\_katholischem\\_institut/1294208](https://web.archive.org/web/20171110115856/http://de.radiovaticana.va/news/2017/02/23/cdu-politiker_distanziert_sich_von_katholischem_institut/1294208).

<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.*

hopes to educate an elite of “Gladiators” for what he calls the “nationalist populist movement.”<sup>271</sup> The DHI places heavy emphasis on its connection to Bannon, who is listed as “patron” of the organization.<sup>272</sup> A search for the term “Bannon” on the DHI’s website turns up dozens of links to key news reports on his activities.<sup>273</sup>

The DHI was founded in December 2008 by a group of British Catholics in Brussels, under the leadership of Benjamin Harnwell and Nirj Deva.<sup>274</sup> Harnwell, a longtime member of the British Conservative Party, was at that time chief of staff to Deva, a British Conservative MEP who was also a Sri Lankan business magnate.<sup>275</sup>

The institute is one link in a vast network of national and international organizations and lobbying groups that are commonly subsumed under the term “pro-life” campaigners. They advocate various Catholic and conservative objectives, such as making abortions and contraception illegal, bringing down the “gender ideology,” ostracizing homosexuality, and opposing divorce. Under the catchphrase of “human dignity,” the DHI and other lobby organizations lead a legal war, a particular goal of which is to make embryos legal entities. Some of these groups, such as ADF International<sup>276</sup> and European Dignity Watch,<sup>277</sup> are very well-connected within the European Parliament and the European Commission.

Currently, however, Bannon’s most ambitious project in Europe, which he announced in July 2018, is the foundation of a far-right “super group” in Brussels called “The Movement.”<sup>278</sup> The organization, staffed by 10 full-time employees, will start by focusing on data analysis and surveys.<sup>279</sup> According to Bannon, the number of employees might grow to 25 depending on the outcome of the 2019 European Parliament elections.<sup>280</sup>

In an interview with *Reuters*, Bannon stated that The Movement will function as a “clearing house” for the “populist, nationalist movement in Europe,” with the aim of bringing together and boosting Eurosceptic political forces.<sup>281</sup> To the *Daily Beast*, he said:

Everybody agrees that next May is hugely important, that this is the real first continent-wide face-off between populism and the party of Davos ... Right-wing populist nationalism is what will happen. That’s what will govern ... You’re going to have individual nation states with their own identities, their own borders.<sup>282</sup>

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<sup>271</sup> “The Ultra-Conservative Crusade against Pope Francis,” *MSNBC*, video, 14:20, April 14, 2019, <https://www.msnbc.com/on-assignment/watch/the-ultra-conservative-crusade-against-pope-francis-1493172291746>.

<sup>272</sup> “FAQ,” Dignitatis Humanae Institute, archived version from February 11, 2017, <https://web.archive.org/web/20170801100300/http://www.dignitatishumanae.com:80/index.php/about-us/faq/>.

<sup>273</sup> Search results for “Bannon” on the DHI website, <http://www.dignitatishumanae.com/?s=bannon>.

<sup>274</sup> “Benjamin Harnwell,” Dignitatis Humanae Institute, <http://www.dignitatishumanae.com/index.php/about-us/benjamin-harnwell/>.

<sup>275</sup> Niro Deva, “Declaration of Members’ Financial Interest,” European Parliament, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ep-dif/rev/4556\\_05-07-2012\\_Rev2.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/ep-dif/rev/4556_05-07-2012_Rev2.pdf).

<sup>276</sup> ADF International, <https://adfinternational.org/>.

<sup>277</sup> European Dignity Watch, <http://www.europeandignitywatch.org/>.

<sup>278</sup> Nico Hines, “Inside Bannon’s Plan to Hijack Europe for the Far-Right,” *Daily Beast*, July 20, 2018, <https://www.thedailybeast.com/inside-bannons-plan-to-hijack-europe-for-the-far-right>.

<sup>279</sup> “Entscheidender EU-Gipfel zu Brexit,” *ORF*, April 10, 2019, <https://tvthek.orf.at/profile/ZIB-24/1225/ZIB-24/13984885>.

<sup>280</sup> “Steve Bannon Plans Brussels-Based Foundation ‘The Movement’ for EU Far-Right,” *Deutsche Welle*, July 21, 2018, <https://www.dw.com/en/steve-bannon-plans-brussels-based-foundation-the-movement-for-eu-far-right/a-44774972>.

<sup>281</sup> Alastair Macdonald, “Belgian Lawyer Launches Trump-Inspired Anti-EU Movement,” *Reuters*, July 24, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-eu-parliament-bannon/belgian-lawyer-launches-trump-inspired-anti-eu-movement-idUSKBN1KE2BJ>.

<sup>282</sup> Hines, “Inside Bannon’s Plan to Hijack Europe.”

The official legal vehicle for Bannon's project seems to be an existing private foundation called "The Movement/Le Mouvement," founded on January 9, 2017, by the Belgian far-right politician and lawyer Mischaël Modrikamen, his wife, Yasmine Dehaene-Modrikamen,<sup>283</sup> and Laure Ferrari, an aide to Nigel Farage.<sup>284</sup>

The Modrikamens and Ferrari had already been working in Farage's orbit. Yasmine Dehaene-Modrikamen served as Executive Director of the EU party Alliance for Direct Democracy (ADDE)<sup>285</sup> and Laure Ferrari as that of its attached think tank, the Institute for Direct Democracy in Europe (IDDE). In 2017, the IDDE stood accused of having illegally diverted public funds totaling £400,000 to UKIP prior to the UK general election and the Brexit referendum.<sup>286</sup> The European Parliament stopped funding the IDDE around February 2017 and in November initiated an investigation into this possible breach of its financing rules. Mischaël Modrikamen's offices were subsequently raided "as part of a probe of funding linked to UKIP, though he and all those involved reject any wrongdoing."<sup>287</sup>

Mischaël Modrikamen also seems to have established good Russian contacts. He visited the Russian parliament in 2015 and subsequently "called for an end to sanctions against Moscow imposed for its annexation of Crimea from Ukraine, and for its support of pro-Russian rebels in eastern Ukraine. And he said Europeans and the United States should be working on common ground with Russia, notably in combating violent Islamist movements."<sup>288</sup>

Another brainchild of Robert Mercer and Steve Bannon, the scandal-ridden political consulting firm Cambridge Analytica, which specialized in data mining, data analyses, and data brokerage, has become the subject of ongoing criminal investigations in the UK and the US.<sup>289</sup> Cambridge Analytica was founded in 2013 as an offshoot of the London-based SCL Group, "a government and military contractor" that specialized in psychological warfare and manipulating elections (originally in developing countries like Afghanistan, Somalia, and Brazil).<sup>290</sup> Cambridge Analytica had been working for Donald Trump's presidential campaign as well as for Leave.EU, rallying for a "hard" Brexit. This engagement entailed the inappropriate acquisition of the personal information of up to 87 million Facebook users.<sup>291</sup>

The data gathered was predominantly used to develop a system of personality profiling that made it possible to target ads to particular audiences (so-called "dark ads"). Dark ads were deployed in the course of both the Trump and the Brexit campaigns. For example, various Brexit campaigns, such as Vote Leave, 50 Million, BrexitCentral / BeLeave, and DUP Vote to Leave, commissioned the Canadian software company AggregateIQ

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<sup>283</sup> The Executive Director of ADDE, as well as contact person on the ADDE website, was Yasmine Dehaene-Modrikamen, who is also among the initial founders of The Movement. See: <http://www.addeurope.org/how-to-rearch-us/>.

<sup>284</sup> "Foundation Deed of The Movement / Le Movement," Belgische Federale Overheidsdiensten, January 9, 2017, [www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/tsv\\_pdf/2017/01/11/17301031.pdf](http://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/tsv_pdf/2017/01/11/17301031.pdf).

<sup>285</sup> Member list accessible on an archived version of ADDE's website: <https://web.archive.org/web/20160317195527/http://addeurope.org/about-us/members>.

<sup>286</sup> Khan, "Nigel Farage Sharing £4 Million House."

<sup>287</sup> Macdonald, "Belgian Lawyer Launches Trump-Inspired Anti-EU Movement."

<sup>288</sup> Alastair Macdonald, "Bannon's EU Project Eyes Government Allies," *Reuters*, July 25, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-eu-parliament-bannon/bannons-eu-project-eyes-government-allies-idUSKBN1KF2BN>.

<sup>289</sup> "Disinformation and 'Fake News': Interim Report," UK Parliament, July 29, 2018, <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmcomeds/363/36302.htm>.

<sup>290</sup> David Ingram, "Factbox: Who Is Cambridge Analytica and What Did It Do?" *Reuters*, March 20, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-facebook-cambridge-analytica-factbox/factbox-who-is-cambridge-analytica-and-what-did-it-do-idUSKBN1GW07F>. On the original SCL website, since taken down, it was indicated that their employers included the British Defense Ministry, the U.S. State Department, and the U.S. Department of Defense.

<sup>291</sup> Cecilia Kang and Sheera Frenkel, "Facebook Says Cambridge Analytica Harvested Data of Up to 87 Million Users," *New York Times*, April 4, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/04/technology/mark-zuckerberg-testify-congress.html>.

(AIQ) to publish targeted ads on Facebook before the UK referendum.<sup>292</sup> Besides illegal data mining and profiling activities, Cambridge Analytica has been also accused of having used dirty methods such as “bribery stings, honey traps and spying” in order to influence the U.S. election in Trump’s favor.<sup>293</sup>

Cambridge Analytica played a role in a number of other U.S. elections and political projects. A key figure is former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations and current National Security Advisor John Bolton. “According to FEC filings, Bolton’s super PAC doled out \$1,152,299 for Cambridge Analytica’s work from 2014 through 2016.”<sup>294</sup> All of the services were billed as “research” and “survey research.” The UK parliamentary investigation brought considerable information to light, including identifying the connection to Bolton.<sup>295</sup>

In the course of the ongoing investigation by the UK’s Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO), Britain’s data protection authority, suspicions have also been raised of possible Russian interference with Cambridge Analytica. In July 2018, it was confirmed that “some of the systems linked to the investigation were accessed from IP addresses that resolve to Russia and other areas of the CIS [Commonwealth of Independent States].”<sup>296</sup> Cambridge psychology professor Aleksandr Kogan, of Moldovan origin, who was responsible for collecting the Facebook data set and selling it to Cambridge Analytica’s parent company, SCL Group, denies any collaboration with Russian entities.<sup>297</sup> A possible consequence of this leaking of information could have been that the unknown eavesdroppers “learned from Cambridge Analytica, and used that knowledge to run ads in America during the presidential election as well,” not to mention for other purposes.<sup>298</sup>

Another company connected to Robert Mercer via his neoconservative think tank Secure America Now Foundation, the political consulting and communications firm Harris Media, also worked for Donald Trump’s campaign,<sup>299</sup> as well as for several European far-right parties, such as Alternative for Germany and Rassemblement National.<sup>300</sup>

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<sup>292</sup> Cristina Helberg, “Dark Ads’ bei Facebook: Wie mit Falschnachrichten Stimmung für den Brexit gemacht wurde,” *Correctiv*, August 6, 2018, <https://correctiv.org/echtjetzt/artikel/2018/08/06/dark-ads-bei-facebook-wie-mit-falschnachrichten-stimmung-fur-den-brexit-gemacht-wurde/>; Carole Cadwalladr, “Revealed: How US Billionaire Helped to Back Brexit,” *The Guardian*, February 26, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/feb/26/us-billionaire-mercero-helped-back-brexit>; Cadwalladr, “The Great British Brexit Robbery.”

<sup>293</sup> “Trump Campaign Mined Facebook User Data Using Israeli ‘Intelligence Gathering,’” *Times of Israel*, March 20, 2018, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/trump-campaign-mined-facebook-user-data-using-israeli-intelligence-gathering/>.

<sup>294</sup> Maegan Vazquez and Paul Murphy, “Trump Isn’t the Only Republican Who Gave Cambridge Analytica Big Bucks,” *CNN*, March 21, 2018, <https://edition.cnn.com/2018/03/20/politics/cambridge-analytica-republican-ties/index.html>; Matthew Rosenberg, Nicholas Confessore and Carole Cadwalladr, “How Trump Consultants Exploited the Facebook Data of Millions,” *The New York Times*, March 17, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/17/us/politics/cambridge-analytica-trump-campaign.html>.

<sup>295</sup> “SCL Election—Digital Summary: SCL Digital,” *AggregateIQ*, March 28, 2014, <https://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-committees/culture-media-and-sport/Chris%20Wylie%20Background%20papers.pdf>.

<sup>296</sup> Donie O’Sullivan, Drew Griffin and Patricia DiCarlo, “Cambridge Analytica’s Facebook Data Was Accessed from Russia, MP Says,” *CNN*, July 17, 2018, <https://money.cnn.com/2018/07/17/technology/cambridge-analytica-data-facebook-russia/index.html>; Bob Dreyfuss, “Did Moscow Get Help from the Trump Campaign in Its Social-Media Trolling?” *The Nation*, October 21, 2017, <https://www.thenation.com/article/did-moscow-get-help-from-the-trump-campaign-in-its-social-media-trolling/>.

<sup>297</sup> Matthew Weaver, “Facebook Scandal: I Am Being Used as Scapegoat—Academic Who Mined Data,” *The Guardian*, March 21, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/mar/21/facebook-row-i-am-being-used-as-scapegoat-says-academic-aleksandr-kogan-cambridge-analytica>.

<sup>298</sup> O’Sullivan, Griffin and DiCarlo, “Cambridge Analytica’s Facebook Data.”

<sup>299</sup> Shane Goldmacher, “Trump Hires Rand Paul’s Former Digital Director,” *Politico*, June 28, 2016, [www.politico.com/story/2016/06/donald-trump-rand-paul-digital-224915](http://www.politico.com/story/2016/06/donald-trump-rand-paul-digital-224915).

<sup>300</sup> Leloup, “Des milliardaires américains.”

## Conclusion

The upcoming EU election will see a major reconfiguration of the far right, with most of its parties and groups dissolving. The expected disappearance of the far-right parties Alliance for Peace and Freedom (APF) and Alliance of European National Movements (AENM) can most likely be ascribed to their aging proponents, such as Jean-Marie Le Pen and Roberto Fiore, having left the European Parliament. The parliamentary group Europe of Freedom and Nations (ENF) and most likely its main party, Movement for a Europe of Nations and Freedom (MENF), will also dissolve, since ENF's major national parties (Lega, Rassemblement National, Vlaams Belang, AfD, and FPÖ) have announced that they will join Salvini's new European Alliance of Peoples and Nations (EAPN).

Whether Farage's Europe for Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD) will survive the post-Brexit chaos is still unclear. With M5S having announced that it will form its own group, a significant share of EFDD's seats, which are currently held by M5S MEPs, will be lost, which could have a detrimental impact on the group's ability to meet the established quotas. In anticipation of this scenario, Marine Le Pen has preemptively stretched out her hand to welcome Farage to Salvini's alliance.

Since none of the national parties from these formations have announced that they will join Di Maio's new group, the new major player on the far right will certainly be Salvini's EAPN. But this still leaves a pool of national parties that have not joined either initiative, and thus room for new formations or a revamping of parties that nominally still exist, such as APF and AEMN. No matter in what configuration these parties appear, their national clout has grown considerably, a fact that will be reflected in the upcoming EU parliamentary term.

While this article has focused primarily on right-wing populist to far-right European groups and parties, much has been left unsaid when it comes to national far-right parties that are members of center-right coalitions. This is the case of, for instance, the EU group Alliance of Conservatives and Reformists in Europe (ACRE) and its associated EU party, European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR). While considered center-right, both entities host members from far-right parties, such as the heir to the Italian MSI party, the Brothers of Italy; the authoritarian Polish Law and Justice party; the Finns Party; and the Sweden Democrats.<sup>301</sup> The same can be said about the accession to the EPP of the Hungarian Fidesz Party, which has, in the hot phase of election campaigning, been suspended but not expelled for its consistent transgressions of European values,<sup>302</sup> a gesture that has been described by some as "a political trick that would allow the EPP to keep Fidesz in the fold while giving the impression it is taking a tough line."<sup>303</sup>

By calling themselves "conservative" or "mainstream," these far-right parties often pass as alliance partners of liberal and conservative EU parties and groups that do not necessarily share their xenophobic agenda. But beyond the danger of passing for the wrong political category, it is often realpolitik that would incline center-right coalitions to accept the membership of far-right parties—that is, the fact that valuable seats translate into European funds.

Although this article focused on far-right political formations in the EU, it could not go into the causes that are behind its recent successes. Certainly, if it were not for the current fears, discontents, and unfulfilled expectations of EU citizens, and the failure of the EU to address these issues, the resurgence of the European

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<sup>301</sup> "Members of the European Conservatives and Reformists Group," European Parliament, accessed April 3, 2019, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/search/advanced?name=&groupCode=4271&countryCode=&bodyType=ALL>.

<sup>302</sup> Alastair Macdonald, "EU Parliament Pushes Hungary Sanctions over Orban Policies," *Reuters*, September 12, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-eu-hungary-idUSKCN1LS1QS>.

<sup>303</sup> Maïa de La Baume and Lili Bayer, "Hungary's Orbán Clings on to Europe's Power Center," *Politico*, March 20, 2019, <https://www.politico.eu/article/orbans-party-suspended-from-european-peoples-party/>.

far right could hardly be explained. The perception of the EU as a technocratic power has amplified the call for diverse forms of “direct democracy.” Yet as shown by the Brexit referendum, “direct democracy” is mostly a highly engineered “people’s vote” based on a corrupt mixture of micro-targeting on social media and shady flows of dark money to support the various “Leave campaigns,” which will undoubtedly serve not the majority of British citizens but the people that pushed for them in the first place. Europe’s multifaceted difficulties have opened the market for a new form of Euroscepticism: a blend of economic liberalism and xenophobic “national sovereigntism.” Brexit is a great example, as are Viktor Orbán’s policies promoting “slave-like” labor laws<sup>304</sup> alongside a proto-eugenic breeding program for Hungarians.<sup>305</sup> This new form of Euroscepticism, centered around the idea of a white, Christian Europe that would resist a “great replacement” by Muslim immigrants, has created an opportunity for the far-right network to reinvent itself and find new audiences.<sup>306</sup>

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<sup>304</sup> Palko Karasz and Patrick Kingsley, “What Is Hungary’s ‘Slave Law,’ and Why Has It Provoked Opposition?” *The New York Times*, December 22, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/22/world/europe/hungary-slave-law.html>.

<sup>305</sup> Shaun Walker, “Viktor Orbán: No Tax for Hungarian Women with Four or More Children,” *The Guardian*, February 10, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/feb/10/viktor-orban-no-tax-for-hungarian-women-with-four-or-more-children>.

<sup>306</sup> e.g., the Identitarian movement currently spreading from France across Europe. For a complete account of the re-configuration of the European far-right from the 1990s to today’s Identitarian movements, see: Stephane François, “Comment l’extrême droite radicale se recompose en France,” *The Conversation*, March 28, 2018, <https://theconversation.com/comment-lextreme-droite-radicale-se-recompose-en-france-94072>.