

EDITED BY  
A. JAMES MCADAMS AND  
ALEJANDRO CASTRILLON

# CONTEMPORARY FAR-RIGHT THINKERS AND THE FUTURE OF LIBERAL DEMOCRACY



Routledge Studies in Fascism and the Far Right



“A. James McAdams and Alejandro Castrillon have produced an excellent collection on the connections among the French Nouvelle droite, the Alt-right, and the Paleoconservative movement. The diverse contributors, who span the globe, admirably account for the evolution of the extreme Right in the context of the crisis of liberal society and show that it is not necessarily backward looking. It can also be modern and avant-garde. Moreover, they call our attention to the persistence of the racial question for the extreme Right. A salutary book for everyone. A must read!”

**Stéphane François**, *University of Mons, Belgium*

“With its thorough and insightful analyses of a wide range of extreme-right thinkers and their sustained efforts to reach a broader political audience and influence public opinion, this important collection sheds crucial light on the battle of ideas that liberal democracy is facing in the early 21st century. Given the worrisome advance of rightwing populism, which draws a number of its appeals from this intellectual cauldron, it is high time to take this ideological milieu seriously. McAdams, Castrillon and their expert contributors make a major contribution by systematically elucidating radical-right thought in Europe, the United States, and beyond.”

**Kurt Weyland**, *University of Texas at Austin, USA*

“For anyone who believed that fascism was defeated on the battlefield in World War II, this volume will provide a bracing wake-up call. Whether calling itself the “Alt-right,” “Young Conservatism,” or “White Nationalism,” the thinkers discussed here are all motivated by an intense animus against liberal democracy. This book should be read by anyone wishing to understand the philosophic roots of what took place in Washington DC on January 6, 2021.”

**Steven B. Smith**, *Yale University, USA, and author of*  
*Reclaiming Patriotism in an Age of Extremes*

“Here at last we have a series of genuinely scholarly engagements with a wide range of propagandists for ‘differentialist racism’ in several of its New Right, Identitarian, and overtly racist dialects. No matter how abstruse or ‘metapolitical’ these thinkers seem, understanding them matters because they supply the discourse for a broad spectrum of right-wing populist and neo-fascist movements chipping away at the foundations of liberal democracy all over the world.”

**Roger Griffin**, *Oxford Brookes University, UK, and author of* *Fascism:  
An Introduction to Comparative Fascist Studies*

“For years we have ignored far-right thinkers as primitive or irrelevant, at our own peril. Now that far-right politics has entered the political mainstream, we no longer have this luxury. Many of the thinkers in this book have evaded serious analysis, despite having profoundly affected politics. Others might seem marginal now, but so did people like Alain de Benoist a few decades ago. To protect liberal democracy against their ideas, we first must understand them. This book is an essential guide for that purpose.”

**Cas Mudde**, *University of Georgia, USA, and author of  
The Far Right Today*

“McAdams and Castrillon have assembled a diverse team of brilliant scholars to provide a comprehensive overview of the main themes and concerns of far-right thinkers in Europe, North America, and beyond. By taking the ideas and ideals of anti-liberal movements seriously, this volume collectively gives the reader an intimate understanding of the main intellectual concerns animating anti-democratic activists in the developed world--and a heightened sense of just how dangerous these movements may turn out to be for the future of global democracy.”

**Steve E. Hanson**, *Lettie Pate Evans Professor of Government  
at William & Mary, USA*

# CONTEMPORARY FAR-RIGHT THINKERS AND THE FUTURE OF LIBERAL DEMOCRACY

This book is the first systematic analysis of the efforts of a broad range of contemporary far-right thinkers to popularize their critiques of liberal-democratic norms and institutions and make their ideas the subjects of sustained political and academic debate.

The book focuses on outspoken thinkers in western and eastern Europe, Russia, the United States, Canada, and Australia. They include Alain de Benoist, Guillaume Faye, Götz Kubitschek, Pat Buchanan, Fróði Midjord, Jason Jorjani, contributors to the online magazine *Quillette*, and the elusive personality known as the Bronze Age Pervert. The book explores the diverse intellectual foundations of these thinkers' positions, the similarities and differences in their ideas, and their prospects for influencing attitudes about democratic politics within their respective countries. It examines diverse movements and schools of thought, including the European New Right, Paleoconservatism, the Alt-right, Identitarianism, White nationalism, and antifeminism.

Providing a much-needed global perspective, this book will be of considerable interest to students and scholars of populism, right-wing extremism, identity politics, fascism, racism, and conservatism.

**A. James McAdams** is the William M. Scholl Professor of International Affairs in the Department of Political Science at the University of Notre Dame, USA.

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Alejandro Castrillon*



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Alejandro Castrillon  
For Kristen, Melva, Sandra, and Claudia  
A. James McAdams  
For my entire family, past, present, and future





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# PREFACE

One of the most striking features of the early twenty-first-century crisis of liberal democracy has been the increased visibility of far-right activist intellectuals in the United States, France, Australia, Canada, Slovakia, Germany, and numerous other countries. In less turbulent times, we may not have paid much attention to the ideas of personalities like Götz Kubitschek, Jason Jorjani, Markus Willinger, Steve Bannon, and Martin Sellner, or even to their intellectual forebears, such as Pat Buchanan, Guillaume Faye, and Alain de Benoist. However, thanks to the rise of powerful populist parties and movements and the proliferation of rancorous conflicts over immigration, economic justice, and religious, ethnic, and racial identity, these individuals have found ample opportunities to make their voices heard.

Who are these thinkers and what are their distinctive ideas? Do they represent a significant threat to liberal-democratic institutions and values, and if so, to what extent and in what way? Finally, will their appeals have a lasting impact on popular expectations of democratic governance? These questions, among many others, have provided the inspiration for this volume. Although this book draws upon papers that were presented at a conference at the University of Notre Dame in early 2020, this is by no means a typical conference volume. It was conceived more than a year earlier as a multistage project on the historical, political, and philosophical dimensions of far-right thought. We began this undertaking with a workshop entitled “Taking New Right Thinkers Seriously” at Notre Dame’s Kellogg Institute for International Studies on May 1, 2019. At the workshop, A. James McAdams, Ronald Beiner, Marlene Laruelle, and Jean-Yves Camus presented papers on the subject, with commentary by Garrett Fitzgerald and another contributor to this volume, Emma Planinc. They were joined by Notre Dame faculty, graduate students, and undergraduate students who shared additional insights about the intellectual challenges of far-right thinkers to liberal democracy. On August

31, 2019, McAdams, Beiner, Laruelle, and Camus (*in absentia*), as well as a new collaborator, Jérôme Jamin, presented revised versions of their papers on a panel at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association (APSA) in Washington, DC. In a confirmation of our topic's importance, the APSA chose our panel as one of the national meeting's primary Theme Panels. Over the course of the year, the core participants worked together to identify experts from around the world who could provide representative accounts of far-right thinkers in diverse locations. All of these scholars agreed to prepare draft papers on their respective subjects before our planned meeting. As a result, when we met as a group for the first time at the Kellogg Institute's international conference on "New Right Thinkers and the Crisis of Liberal Democracy" on February 6–8, 2020, each participant had already read all of the draft papers and taken the time to reflect on their topics and arguments. Thus, there was no need for formal paper presentations. Along with several Notre Dame faculty participants, everyone was prepared to discuss each paper and to exchange views on the similarities and differences among a wide variety of far-right thinkers.

Our collective learning process did not end with the Notre Dame conference. During the year of the Covid-19 pandemic, 2020, the participants became even more deeply engaged in the project. Shortly after our meeting, we provided the presenters with summaries of both the comments on their respective papers and the concluding group discussions. On these bases, each participant turned his or her paper into a draft chapter. We then circulated these chapters, as well as a draft introduction by McAdams, to every member of our group. At this point, each participant transformed his or her draft into a finished chapter. We hope the readers of this volume will recognize that all of the authors engage, in one way or another, the issues and arguments raised in their fellow contributors' chapters. Indeed, as the reader will find, the contributors know each other's work so well that each refers to his or her fellow authors in both the text and endnotes of every chapter.

We have been fortunate to have the support of many people in the process of bringing this collaborative undertaking to fruition. We would like to express our thanks to the Kellogg Institute for International Studies and its director, Paulo Carozza, and the Dr. William M. Scholl Foundation for sponsoring the three stages of our endeavor. We are especially indebted to Therese Hanlon who demonstrated her extraordinary virtuosity in organizing the initial Kellogg Institute workshop in May 2019. Garrett Fitzgerald and Emma Planinc were generous commentators at the event. We also thank Jeffrey Kopstein and Stephen Hanson who subsequently served as discussants on our panel on "New Right" thinkers at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association in 2019. In the final stage of our project, Therese played the central role in bringing scholars from around the world to our large conference in February 2020. She was joined by Elaine Yanlin Chen in ensuring that all of our dreams about the gathering were realized.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our stenographer, Cathy Bruckbauer, both for her mastery of the English language and for her patience in dealing with the



onslaught of revised papers and chapters throughout the creation of this volume. In addition, we are very grateful to Craig Fowlie who immediately took an interest in our project and supported us along the way. We thank Hannah Rich and Nicole Abbott for their help in producing our book and the editors of the Routledge series on “Fascism and the Far Right,” Nigel Copsey and Graham Macklin.

*A. J. M.*

*A. C.*

## NOTE TO THE READER

We would like to offer the reader a few words about the title of this book. Anyone who has studied the thinkers in this volume, as well as the many other intellectuals and activists with whom they are associated, will be familiar with a conspicuous challenge: What should we call them? This challenge becomes even more daunting when one seeks to make generalizations about these figures across multiple continents. In this study, we have deliberately chosen to use the term “far right” to characterize the majority of our subjects. We are fully aware of the term’s limitations. As the following chapters attest, one can easily identify significant differences among the panoply of thinkers associated with distinct rightist movements, such as the Alt-right, the French New Right, Paleoconservatism, and Identitarianism. Still, we believe the term “far right” is a useful umbrella concept. When we consider these diverse ways of thinking under the same heading, we have a valuable opportunity to engage in comparative analysis. By recognizing these thinkers’ differences, we can also ask what views they share in common. In this way, we acquire a deeper understanding of what makes each of these figures distinctive.

In addition to using the term “far right” as a selection criterion, we have chosen to emphasize contemporary thinkers. Most of our subjects are still alive and active in far-right circles, both nationally and internationally. More importantly, their conceptions of social, political, and cultural change are forward-looking. Their goal is to transform their societies by normalizing anti-liberal and anti-democratic views. For this reason, their arguments about controversial issues, including immigration, identity politics, multiculturalism, religion, gender, and political representation, are directly related to the global crisis of democracy in the twenty-first century.

# CONTRIBUTORS

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## **PART I**

# Introduction





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# 1

## CONTEMPORARY FAR-RIGHT THINKERS IN THE ERA OF LIBERAL-DEMOCRATIC CRISIS

*A. James McAdams*

### Introduction

In the first two decades of the twenty-first century, a remarkable number of far-right intellectuals and activists has risen to prominence in tandem with the surging forces of global populism. The names of writers, pundits, publishers, online commentators, financiers, and occasional politicians, such as Stephen Bannon (USA), Götz Kubitschek (Germany), Daniel Friberg (Sweden), Martin Sellner (Austria), Diego Fusaro (Italy), Roger Köppel (Switzerland), Thierry Baudet (the Netherlands), Fabrice Robert (France), Vladislav Surkov (Russia), and Olavo de Carvalho (Brazil), might otherwise have gone unknown. However, thanks to a perfect storm of intersecting conflicts over immigration, economic inequality, religion, and race relations, they have successfully ridden the waves of popular discontent over their governments' policies and voiced their opposition to the continuation of liberal-democratic politics as usual. Testifying to their appeal, they have been joined by paternal figures from the past, including the *éminence grise* of the French New Right (*Nouvelle droite*) movement, Alain de Benoist, and the American Paleoconservative, Pat Buchanan.

These thinkers have succeeded in spreading their views beyond the realm of conventional intellectual discourse, cultivating large numbers of followers and, at times, weighing in on the decisions of politicians and political parties. They have capitalized on their access to print and electronic media to attract diverse audiences. Many routinely give interviews and appear on television talk shows. Some have founded publishing houses and research institutes. Others maintain personal web sites and use blog posts and social media to call their enthusiasts to action. They also take advantage of extremist outlets, like 4chan, Reddit groups, and dark corners of the web to recruit new followers. Accentuating these individuals' visibility, populist politicians, such as Poland's president Andrzej Duda and the former US president,

Donald Trump, have forwarded their messages to millions of readers on Twitter and other social media platforms. Additionally, far-right thinkers have been dedicated organizers. Through conferences, symposia, public lectures, and educational forums, organizers like Friberg, the co-founder of the influential publishing house, Arktos Media, and the German strategist, Kubitschek, have reached out to disaffected young people, right-wing politicians, and extremist movements.<sup>1</sup> From Berlin to Paris, Washington, DC, Stockholm, Budapest, and Melbourne, they have also joined forces to expand their networks. In all of these ways, far-right thinking is no longer limited to particular countries. As much as any other movement in modern times, it has global dimensions.

Given the conjunction of these individuals' emergence from virtual anonymity and the unexpected success of populist politicians and movements over these years, one might be tempted to equate the ideas of far-right intellectuals with the agendas of like-minded political actors. The two groups typically present themselves as the natural allies of the common man and woman, offering their guidance in an ostensibly zero-sum battle against liberal elites, mainstream news media, and the "deep state." Whenever they can, they actively capitalize on each other's strengths and weigh in on their counterparts' perspectives. On the one side, right-wing populist politicians are attracted by the opportunity to apply a veneer of intellectual legitimacy to their policies. On the other side, the theorists are happy to find their ideas reflected in speeches and television appearances. In fact, the desire to be taken seriously is a driving force behind their actions. Provocatively, many of the most outspoken far-right intellectuals have advanced degrees in fields like political theory and philosophy but have been unable to find meaningful employment in academic institutions and recognition by mainstream publications.<sup>2</sup>

Despite these similarities, however, the views of a majority of contemporary far-right intellectuals are distinctly non-populist. In fact, I shall suggest in this chapter that these figures are better characterized as *anti*-populist.<sup>3</sup> Unlike populist politicians who boast about having ready solutions to complex problems but then adapt their stands to the ebb and flow of voters' preferences, far-right intellectuals do not have to worry about satisfying the desires of political constituents. Quite the opposite, they see themselves as the voice of an enlightened vanguard standing above the dirty business of partisan infighting and the demands of retaining political office. As a result, most are unabashedly elitist and uncompromising. Regardless of whether their populist counterparts win or lose, their self-assigned mission is to articulate convincing alternatives to liberal conceptions of democracy. In the words of Fabrice Robert, the president of the French Identitarian Bloc, "we are not the right wing of the patriotic movement, we are its point, firm in thought, sharp in action."<sup>4</sup>

This disposition accounts for the counterintuitive fact that some of these figures, among them the American far-right organizer, Bannon, and the Austrian Identitarian, Sellner, have admitted an attraction to Leninism. In their self-perception, they are engaged in a long-term process of changing minds and hearts. Bannon minced no words about his role in an interview in 2017, declaring "I am

a Leninist.” When asked what he meant by the term, he replied, “Lenin wanted to destroy the state and that’s my goal too. I want to bring everything crashing down and destroy all of today’s establishment.”<sup>5</sup> Sellner, too, has embraced Lenin, as well as the Leninist co-founder of the Italian communist party, Antonio Gramsci, calling both revolutionaries “important sources of inspiration for our strategy and activism.”<sup>6</sup>

Scholars have generally underplayed these figures’ affinity to the father of the Bolshevik revolution. In contrast, they have drawn direct parallels between them and the ideologues of fascism and National Socialism of the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>7</sup> In many ways, this equation of notable far-right personalities with fascist thought makes sense. Some activist thinkers have made this judgment easy. For example, Gianluca Iannone, the counter-cultural leader of the Italian Identitarian organization CasaPound has openly admitted his admiration for Benito Mussolini’s fascist regime. Others, such as Friberg and Sellner, were once members of neo-Nazi and skinhead groups. Even far-right intellectuals who explicitly base their arguments on the rejection of fascism, including the founders of the *Nouvelle droite*, regularly draw upon ideas—or at least cite passages—from the works of Carl Schmitt, Ernst Jünger, Armin Mohler, Martin Heidegger, and Julius Evola, all of whom had direct or indirect links to fascist ideologues.<sup>8</sup>

Far-right thinkers also invoke many of the counterrevolutionary themes of contemporary neofascist movements: The rejection of Enlightenment values and free market economic policies; the superiority of corporate forms of identification over radical individualism; and the desirability of racial and ethnic uniformity. Despite their claims to oppose racism, anti-Semitism, and violence, many have attended the rallies of neo-Nazis and White supremacists. The fact that some, as we shall see in this volume, have moved beyond their pretense to moderation and joined these movements lends credence to the argument that they have been crypto-fascists all along.

Nonetheless, there is a substantial difference between the sentiments of the fascist cognoscenti of the past century and the positions of the new wave of far-right personalities in the current age. Whereas fascist and National Socialist theorists sought the ears of dictators and assumed influential positions in a climate of democratic failure, economic crisis, and widespread support for authoritarian politics, contemporary far-right intellectuals seek recognition in very different circumstances. With the exception of those individuals who came of age under the repressive conditions of communist rule in the former Soviet bloc, they are acting in circumstances in which democracy is taken for granted by ordinary citizens who have experienced no other form of government.<sup>9</sup> In western Europe, nearly universal agreement on preventing a resurgence of fascism and other manifestations of authoritarianism has been one of the foundations of post-World War II democracy. In Germany, anti-democratic organizations are expressly prohibited in the name of “militant democracy.” In the US, democratic institutions have not been seriously threatened since the country’s Civil War, although they were certainly tested under the presidencies of Richard M. Nixon and Donald Trump. Even in the states in postcommunist

eastern Europe, such as Hungary and Poland, where populist autocrats have risen to power, sizable segments of their populations remain committed to the democratic system and basic liberal principles.

For these reasons, it makes sense that contemporary far-right thinkers should attempt to present themselves to mainstream audiences as well-intentioned citizens who are sincerely motivated to serve the public good. If they simply mimicked the inflammatory rhetoric of the fascist past, they would be hard-pressed to make their views known, let alone be taken seriously by the intellectual establishment.<sup>10</sup> Outside of fringe groups—rabid neo-Nazis and a diverse array of extreme-right skinheads, Viking enthusiasts, and Black metal bands—their ideas would lack currency and, as in past decades, they would be relegated to lives of obscurity. In contrast, by intoning the political vocabulary of the established order and affirming their commitment to democracy, they can position themselves to take advantage of times of social and economic uncertainty and make the case for their views. Thus, the publishers of *Arktos Media* take pains to emphasize that they simply aim to enhance democracy by exposing readers to new ideas. “*Arktos*,” they explain,

does not seek to propagate any specific ideology, system of beliefs or viewpoint, nor do we seek consistency. Rather, we want to provide a voice for individuals and viewpoints who are often overlooked by the mainstream, but who offer original and challenging alternatives to our prevailing culture that cannot be found elsewhere.<sup>11</sup>

In support of this position, far-right thinkers, such as Götz Kubitschek, de Benoist, and Sellner routinely invoke a concept known as “metapolitics” when pressed to defend their views. In accord with this quasi-philosophical strategy, which its users attribute almost religiously to Gramsci, they argue that there is no point in trying to change society through revolutionary violence.<sup>12</sup> In their description, one must turn to the realm of ideas and seek to transform the culture on which the social and political order is based. In this case, far-right thinkers describe their objectives in terms of awakening an otherwise dormant and unenlightened segment of their population to the cynicism and hypocrisy of the liberal establishment. However, unlike in Gramsci’s case, the people they intend to liberate are not an enslaved proletariat. Instead, they seek to persuade a supposed majority of the populace that one can find salvation in association with ethnic, racial, and cultural communities, or any related form of collective identification. It is easy to understand why these intellectuals would be attracted to a strategy based upon the hegemony of ideas rather than the exercise of power by governments or socio-economic forces. In Faye’s words, metapolitics is all about “the social diffusion of ideas and cultural values for the sake of provoking profound, long-term political transformation.”<sup>13</sup> Hence, in accord with this mission, these figures have reason to feel good about themselves. By their definition, they are already masters of metapolitics!

In one important respect, however, it does make sense to look for parallels between contemporary far-right intellectuals and their fascist predecessors. Despite

the manifest differences between the worlds of the 1920s and the 2020s, the line that divides these figures' claims to respect democratic principles and institutions from the advocacy of anti-democratic extremism is not at all uncrossable. As we shall see in this volume, it is telling that many of these thinkers appear to have moved from one realm to the other. As a result, however we choose to label them, we should not lose sight of the potential threat that their ideas represent to democracy.

The tension between the promise and contradictory views of far-right thinkers is a recurring theme in this book. In the following pages, I shall set the stage for the chapters to come by providing a framework for addressing both what these authors say and what their views might entail. To this end, I shall begin by outlining the core elements of their critique of liberal democracy and the measures they propose to rectify its perceived defects. Then, I shall identify ways in which their arguments can be, and have been, used to justify the anti-democratic attitudes and behavior they claim to decry. On these bases, I shall suggest three grounds for debate about the divergence between the claims and troubling implications of far-right thinking. Finally, I shall conclude this chapter by outlining prominent themes in the study of far-right thought and then provide brief sketches of the chapters that fall under each of them.

## The far-right critique of liberal democracy

To understand the positions of today's far-right thinkers and their efforts to attract diverse audiences, one must begin by recognizing that they are engaged in an essentially contradictory exercise. On the one hand, their desire for recognition and respect requires them to affirm at least *some* of the core elements of liberal democracy. On the other hand, because they are engaged in a basically subversive activity, they must present their arguments in such a way that they justify calling into question at least *some* of the assumptions behind the liberal-democratic idea. Typically, far-right thinkers attempt to square the circle between these competing objectives by underscoring the political establishment's failure to live up to three of the central promises of classical liberalism: Human fulfillment, equality, and tolerance.<sup>14</sup> On this basis, they seek to persuade potential supporters that they, and not their adversaries, are the true defenders of democracy.

Let us turn to the first element of this critique. For a majority of far-right intellectuals, one of the greatest problems with contemporary democracy is that liberal elites have prevented their citizens from achieving the sense of personal fulfillment that is owed to them as human beings. Despite their pretensions to look after the needs of each member of society, establishment politicians have formulated their policies on the basis of artificial principles, including the idea of individual autonomy, the existence of universal human rights, and the possibility of absolute equality, that have no real connection with the human experience. As a result, they have condemned their citizens to lead deformed and unhappy lives.

In taking this stand, far-right thinkers do not reject the idea that one can find grounds for personal fulfillment in the contemporary world. Because their demands

for social and political change are primarily forward-looking, most do not rest their cases on the return to a mythological good life of premodern times. In this regard, there is an important difference between them and other right-wing intellectuals, such as the various personalities associated with the so-called Traditionalist School.<sup>15</sup> Instead, they contend that human beings can fulfill their potential by rejecting the constraints of liberal individualism and exploring the distinctive identities that they share with others like them. For this reason, the critics insist, the primary source of the problem is not democracy itself. Rather, it is the liberal assumption that people can find a sense of self-worth outside their respective communities.<sup>16</sup>

Naturally, far-right thinkers have contending views about the appropriate sources of group identity. Europeans favor definitions of belongingness based on ethnicity, heritage, culture, and even biology. In contrast, Americans and Australians are more open to racialized definitions of identity, although most emphatically deny that they are racists. Then, too, Russians, like many Americans, support distinctions based on religious traditions, especially Orthodox and Protestant Christianity, respectively, whereas Europeans, as well as members of the American Alt-right, are widely divided over the desirability of religious identification.<sup>17</sup> In contrast, other Europeans oppose all forms of organized religion. In their judgment, the Christian church bears a particularly heavy responsibility for the corrosion of group identities because of its willingness to accept all believers into its fold, regardless of their differences.

Of course, there are many points at which these definitions of belongingness intersect and overlap. Given the labyrinth of contacts among contemporary far-right intellectuals, opportunities for the cross-fertilization of ideas and preferences will undoubtedly continue to expand. Yet, these thinkers' differences are likely to persist as well. Despite their mutual agreement about the intrinsic value of group identity, their conceptions of what this means in practice vary across national and regional boundaries. In keeping with their populations' long-standing antipathy to the hypernationalist movements of the first half of the twentieth century, European and Russian intellectuals have advanced a variety of conceptions of transnational identification (e.g., pan-Europeanism, Indo-Europeanism, Eurasianism).<sup>18</sup> In their view, there is no contradiction between recognizing commonalities with other peoples, on the one hand, and preserving one's own culture, on the other. The advantage of belonging to a broader community with people *like* themselves, they insist, is that these bonds enhance their ability to ward off corrupting influences from the outside.<sup>19</sup>

In the eyes of other far-right thinkers, national identity comes first. The experience of centuries of Russian expansionism continues to fuel European skepticism about the intentions of their easternmost neighbor. Russian theorists distrust their European counterparts because they believe their homeland has always been treated as a second-class civilization. For their part, American far-right intellectuals, like much of the US population, regard all forms of transnational association with suspicion. Ironically, they regularly portray themselves as defenders of a broad "Western" civilization that is grounded in the ideals and values of classical antiquity and the



Judeo-Christian tradition. Yet, when pressed, they are more inclined than their European counterparts to view their mission through a nativist lens. Hence, influential Paleoconservatives, like Pat Buchanan and Paul Gottfried, endorse measures to promote national pride and ethnic loyalty. At the same time, however, they demand sweeping restrictions on immigration and the practice of Islam and other minority faiths. In much the same spirit, their Australian peers champion both nationalist and racist policies, although they are less suspicious of international agreements.<sup>20</sup>

The second element of the far-right critique of liberal democracy is that establishment politicians have failed to live up to their obligation to treat all citizens as equals. In these personalities' formulation, the liberal elite's policies are purely hypocritical. In the name of nonexistent universal values and unfounded arguments about the natural equality of all persons, its representatives contend that they are applying the same standards to everyone. However, the critics maintain, they have shown that they are only interested in advancing the interests of minority groups, such as people of color, religious minorities, and legal and illegal immigrants. As a result, their promotion of affirmative action policies and multiculturalism has led to a different type of inequality: The denial of rights to the majority of citizens.

Given the disdain that far-right intellectuals hold for Enlightenment principles, it may seem strange that they should invoke the concept of rights at all. Yet, by portraying themselves and a majority of their compatriots as the victims of liberal discrimination, they can argue that they are the true advocates of equality. Far from being racists or ethnic chauvinists, it seems, they merely seek to call attention to the actual sources of inequality in their societies. According to this logic, they, and not their liberal and leftist rivals, are the true "anti-racists."<sup>21</sup> Fortified with this argument, these intellectuals would also have their audiences believe that they are the bearers of good news. Supposedly, they have identified the misguided assumptions and deceptive practices that have allowed the liberal establishment to deprive most citizens of what is due to them. Armed with this insight, the advocates of this alternative perspective are, not surprisingly, eager to share their wisdom about reversing these ostensibly discriminatory practices and finally treating everyone as equals.

The final element of the far-right critique of contemporary liberal democracy provides the contours for this message. In a twist on the liberal conception of tolerance, its exponents maintain that the requisite for a good society is the acceptance of the reality of "difference." Since the existence of human differences is an indisputable fact of life, they inform their audiences, there is no justification for demanding that one person adopt another person's identity. The Enlightenment assumption that all human beings are formed in the same immutable mold is precisely what is wrong with the universalizing practices of modern liberalism. For this reason, these thinkers emphasize, the measure of true tolerance is that one accepts every other human being for what he or she is and, as a sign of respect for their unique identity, makes no effort to change them.

Not surprisingly, it has been easier for far-right intellectuals to agree about how this principle should be applied to the treatment of majority populations than to minorities. From a self-interested perspective, the implications of defending the

right to difference in the former case are straightforward. Given the majority's purported victimization by *intolerant* liberal elites, real tolerance should mean returning to the many the rights and benefits that have been unjustly reserved for the few. Concretely, this argument has taken a multiplicity of forms. From America to Europe and Australia, far-right intellectuals denounce hate-speech laws for restricting freedom of expression, condemn policies that promote multicultural perspectives and political correctness, and demand that putatively masochistic and guilt-inducing depictions of national history in schools be replaced with programs that instill patriotic values. Furthermore, these self-proclaimed defenders of the majority link their demands to redressing perceived economic inequities. Hence, those who attack redistributionist policies that provide services to the urban poor and immigrant populations go beyond arguing that they amount to unfair burdens on taxpayers. These policies, the critics maintain, are evidence of the establishment's willingness to subordinate the needs of a largely white, Christian majority to supposedly less deserving ethnic, racial, and religious minorities.

In contrast, far-right intellectuals have been far less successful in identifying a uniform standard of tolerance for the political and social differences of minority populations. Formally, they pay lip service to the importance of respecting the differences of every person, regardless of their respective identities. Yet, they diverge over what it means to coexist with "the other." For some theorists, one should welcome difference and support policies that cultivate it. In 1999, de Benoist and Charles Champetier, the editor of the *Nouvelle droite* magazine *Éléments*, underscored this point in a widely-read "Manifesto of the French New Right of the Year 2000." "A good society," they insisted, is "one that transmits at least as much diversity as it receives. The true wealth of the world is first and foremost the diversity of its cultures and peoples."<sup>22</sup>

Additionally, de Benoist and Champetier used this point to affirm the compatibility of their views with democratic institutions. In line with their ongoing pursuit of intellectual respectability, they maintained that no political system is better suited than democracy for ensuring that minorities and majorities alike have the opportunity to assert their distinctive identities. Because of the system's grounding in the concept of the common good, they advised, democratic leaders would naturally be inclined to support mutually beneficial relations among their citizens and, when conflicts arose, would have the necessary tools to resolve them. On prudential grounds alone, the Manifesto's authors emphasized, the majority had a vested interest in defending "freedom of expression for minorities because the minority could be tomorrow's majority."<sup>23</sup> If one accepts this reasoning, intolerance of other races, ethnic groups, and cultures is not only unacceptable. It is downright illogical!

However, other far-right thinkers have been conspicuously less inclined to acknowledge the benefits of interacting with minority cultures. The mental gyrations of Arkto's publisher, Daniel Friberg, provide an illuminating example of this ambivalence. In tune with Arkto's professed openness to diverse views, Friberg is quick to mouth the accommodating language of social and cultural inclusion. In fact, he has described de Benoist's and Champetier's manifesto as an "ah-ha"

experience in his life for providing an intellectually responsible alternative to the inflammatory positions of the extreme right.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, he has been reluctant to pin himself down on the all-important question of what it means to co-exist with the “other.” On the one hand, he portrays himself as a model of tolerance in a personal manifesto, *The Real Right Returns*. “Manic hatred of Jews, homosexuals, Muslims, or other minorities,” he declares, “is clearly irrational.” On the other hand, one looks in vain in the tract for his mentors’ celebration of diversity. In its place, Friberg concentrates on defending the interests of the majority. One’s toleration of others, he explains, should not obscure the fact that Europe needs “a Right which looks toward *her* own interests, not toward those who would turn her into a tool of groups which are, at best, indifferent to her future.”<sup>25</sup> In short, if Friberg were to reply candidly to de Benoist and Champetier, he would likely say this: Just because one lives next to people with different identities does not mean that one has to like it.

### Cracks in the far-right critique

Up to this point, I have largely given the arguments of far-right intellectuals the benefit of doubt. In outlining their views about the right to difference and the criteria for true equality and tolerance, I have taken their claims about seeking viable alternatives to the liberal conceptions of democracy at face value. Yet, one cannot deny the other, unmistakably negative side of the story. Many of these personalities, as well as their followers, espouse views that are clearly contrary to their professions of open-mindedness and respect for the perspectives of others. One does not need to label them fascist to recognize that at least some of their positions represent serious threats to the status quo. Indeed, precisely because they seek to take advantage of both the institutions and vocabulary of the existing political order makes their claims an even greater cause for concern. By invoking and distorting liberal-democratic principles, they can reach their desired audiences far more effectively than fascists and other extremists who reject these standards out of hand.

One cause for concern is the ambiguous relationship between the recognition of difference and its implications for the treatment of “the other.” As I suggest in Chapter 5, the *Nouvelle droite*’s defining idea of the “right to difference” has been largely superseded in the 2000s by the related, but distinct concept of “ethnopluralism.”<sup>26</sup> When contemporary far-right thinkers speak about ethnopluralism, they, too, put the promotion of difference at the center of their arguments, especially those differences that are reflected in one’s identification with a specific ethnicity. Furthermore, the concept’s allusion to “pluralism” suggests an appreciation for the value of diversity. Nonetheless, the shift away from the principle that all persons have a *right* to act on what makes them unique has introduced a new layer of ambiguity to the discussion of difference. On the one hand, the recognition of difference may be nothing more than a way of raising questions about how majorities and minorities are to live with each other. On the other hand,

however, it can provide a handy pretext for justifying discriminatory policies in the name of fairness.

Some of the proponents of ethnopluralism take fairly benign approaches, comparatively speaking, to the topic. For example, in its attempt to take advantage of domestic furor over the Dutch government's handling of the immigration crisis, Thierry Baudet's Forum for Democracy (FvD)—which he single-handedly transformed from a think tank into a political party—proposed a Dutch Values Protection Act in 2018 to “clearly define what we expect from people and (religious) institutions in the Netherlands and clearly state where our limits lie.”<sup>27</sup> The nuances in the Act were classic expressions of Baudet's desire to build a national following for both himself and his party. It included the obligatory references to tolerating all forms of self-expression. “Everyone,” the FvD specified, “can believe what they want.” Yet, in both spirit and content, the Act was unmistakably anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant. Although it did not reject the idea of living in a pluralistic society, Baudet's party proposed a host of measures to protect what it called the “core values” of Dutch society. Religious schools would be required to bring their students into contact with peers who belonged to native religious traditions or had no beliefs at all, “(religious) professors [would be expected to] respect the pluralism of all philosophies of life, including competing religions, humanism and atheism, critics, scientists and cartoonists,” and the wearing of niqabs and balaclavas in public places would be prohibited. Any transgressions would be subject to fines.<sup>28</sup>

Notably, in a related statement, Baudet's party stopped short of calling for an end to immigrants' applications for asylum. Yet, the FvD showed its disdain for “the other” by demanding that the government's immigration policies be aimed exclusively at those persons “whom we need here and who we can accept.” In cases when assimilation into Dutch society and culture failed, the party emphasized, the logical solution was a policy of “remigration” to the country of one's origins.<sup>29</sup>

Nonetheless, other far-right thinkers and activists are far less open to the idea of a pluralistic society. As the evolution of the pan-European Identitarian movement over the 2000s has demonstrated, there is a fine line between Baudet's and other intellectuals' willingness to support ethnopluralist approaches, on the one hand, and the rejection of all manifestations of diversity, on the other. Many Identitarian groups have crossed this line, taking their inspiration from ethnocentric thinkers, such as Faye, who famously argued that Europeans should assert their ethnic and biological superiority over other civilizations to have a chance of surviving an imminent civil war with Muslims and Arab “colonizers.”<sup>30</sup> They have justified this step into the realm of extremist politics, in José Pedro Zúquete's words, by declaring an “Identity emergency,” and they believe that their mission is to stop—and in fact reverse—this tragedy in progress.<sup>31</sup> From this point, they throw any meaningful conception of equality and tolerance out the window.

The implications of the manifold interpretations of the concept of difference are not only a cause for concern in themselves. They also spill over to an equally problematic aspect of contemporary far-right thought. The ambiguity lies in its

representatives' divided feelings about democracy's suitability to serve their ideals. As I have previously noted about these figures' options in well-established democracies, it would not be in their best interest to go on record as opposing the prevailing political order. Still, it makes sense that they would have ambivalent feelings about the system. Whereas their professions to accept democratic institutions and processes provide them with opportunities to portray themselves as responsible critics of establishment elites, their chances of having the support of sympathetic politicians on the order of Donald Trump, Matteo Salvini, and Viktor Orbán have been slim, at least until recently. Accordingly, they are invariably at odds with the system when it reinforces ideas and values that they consider inimical to their conceptions of the public good.

Interestingly, we do not need to look to the most extreme expositors of far-right thinking to find a lack of conviction that democracy will be sufficient to reverse these trends. As Jérôme Jamin explains, Pat Buchanan has continually returned to this theme over the decades.<sup>32</sup> As a three-time candidate for the US presidency, an advisor to multiple presidents, and father of the term "silent majority," Buchanan may not seem to be a likely critic of the efficacy of the American political system. Yet, as a public intellectual who has consistently bemoaned the erosion of traditional mores and the loss of what he calls "the America we grew up in," Buchanan views democracy from a combative standpoint. In a chapter in his 1988 autobiography, revealingly titled "Democracy is Not Enough," Buchanan characterizes the democratic process in stridently zero-sum terms when he addresses the issue of sexual tolerance. "Someone's values are going to prevail," he begins,

Why not ours? Whose country is it anyway. Whose moral code says we may interfere with a man's right to be a practicing bigot, but must respect and protect his right to be a practicing sodomite? Why should the moral code of modern secularism prevail? Simply because the militant homosexuals have come marching out of their closets is no reason for the saints to go marching in.<sup>33</sup>

This assertion of the majority's right to impose its will on a minority group is a striking contrast with other far-right thinkers' claims to respect the differences of others, even if they privately believe otherwise. It is practically a declaration of war.

In recent years, Buchanan has also expressed doubts about whether the democratic system will be up to the task of defending the rights of the many (at least in his conception) against the demands of the few. "Everywhere," Buchanan lamented in an online column in 2017, "democracy seems to be losing its luster." In his portrayal, America has become hopelessly polarized as a result of the growing number of citizens with non-European ancestral roots, Christianity's declining role in shaping national character, and the corrupting influence of an intolerant Left. To overcome these divisions, Buchanan argued, "democracy requires a common ground on which we all stand." But, he added, "that ground is sinking beneath our feet, and democracy may be going down the sinkhole with it."<sup>34</sup>

The possibility that democratic institutions may be unequipped to redress what Buchanan and a new generation of thinkers consider the injustices of modern society is directly connected to a third reason for concern about far-right thought. Despite these figures' claims that they are only interested in promoting metapolitical change, and not advocating violence, it is unclear what they would propose to do if, in their view, the democratic system remains an impediment to redefining the dominant culture of their societies. Given their ongoing search for a foothold in the debates over the future of the democratic system, it is not surprising that foundational far-right thinkers have consistently sidestepped this question. Even Faye emphasized that he was not bent on taking up arms. "Make no mistake," he noted, "I'm not calling for war, but I consider it inevitable, something almost automatic."<sup>35</sup>

Nevertheless, the use of incendiary themes, images, and metaphors has become a pronounced element in the arguments of many far-right activists in the 2010s, especially among European Identitarians and the American Alt-right. For this reason, one does not need to find explicit endorsements of violence to suspect that the recourse to this option is wide open. In the words of the Austrian Identitarian Markus Willinger, one cannot rule out a war of some kind. "Our generation," he declared in a widely-read tract, *Generation Identity*,

is rising up to dethrone the 68ers. This book is no simple manifesto. It is a declaration of war. A declaration of war against everything that makes Europe sick and drives it to ruin, against the false ideology of the 68ers. This is us declaring war on you.<sup>36</sup>

Willinger may not claim that his war would extend beyond the realm of metapolitics. However, it is easy to find examples of fanatics who embody the worst of these sentiments.<sup>37</sup>

### Three grounds for debate

The existence of these manifest tensions between the promise and practice of contemporary far-right thought provides a valuable lens for exploring the crisis of liberal democracy in the first two decades of the twenty-first century. However, this is not to say that scholars agree about how to interpret the claims of the wide variety of individuals who fall under this rubric. To the contrary, there is substantial room for debate over three particularly important questions. First, is there a sufficient degree of overlap in these figures' arguments and points of reference to outweigh the impact of the diverse historical and cultural experiences that separate them? Second, assuming that their arguments are sincere, do their claims about respecting democratic values rest on solid ground or, conversely, have they built them on a slippery slope that can be used to justify the anti-democratic, neo-fascist, and violent policies that they claim to reject? Finally, will these ideas find political traction or will they simply pass by the wayside with changing political and social conditions?

The first issue, categorization, is among the thorniest challenges in the study of contemporary right-wing thinkers. Both this chapter and this volume are based upon the assumption that the most useful way to understand these figures is to group them under a single umbrella concept: Far right. This is not to deny the possibility of examining them, either individually or collectively, under one of a variety of other terms, among them New Right, Alt-right, radical right, Identitarian, Paleoconservative, and extreme right.<sup>38</sup> As with any ideal type, the issue is simply which rubric works best in making sense of a complex world.

In making my case, I have characterized contemporary far-right thinkers as individuals who claim to critique liberal democracy on its own terms. I have also identified similarities in these personalities' arguments that transcend their specific locations in Europe, America, and Australia. These common elements include their focus on group identity, claim to respect the differences of others, defense of the interests of purported majority populations, and assertion that the liberal establishment has failed to abide by its own principles of tolerance and equal treatment. Nonetheless, students of far-right thought can reasonably disagree about whether these similarities outweigh their differences. In particular, the way these figures define concepts such as rights, difference, and identity in their diverse settings could be less transferrable to other locations than one might assume. For example, are the positions of two general types of far-right thinkers, European Identitarians and American Alt-right theorists, more alike than unlike? Additionally, do their challenges to liberal democracy in the US and western Europe have the same meaning in Australia or the countries of the former Soviet bloc? To say that there is room for disagreement about the answers to these questions does not preclude classifying these figures under the same rubric. Yet, as the reader will see, the fit between some of these thinkers and the term far right is more tenuous than in other cases. Again, this is true of all ideal types.

Second, there is also room for debate over the ramifications of these thinkers' positions. For the purpose of making this point, if we assume that these critics are raising legitimate questions about the sources of discontent and division in their societies, are their positions compatible with basic democratic principles? Or are they riven with the kinds of contradictions that will allow their claims to be misused and abused by less sincere personalities? Predictably, foundational far-right intellectuals consider their ideas to be as viable as ever and in no way connected with the ethnonationalist and White supremacist movements that have grown out of Identitarianism and the Alt-right. When de Benoist was asked about his ties to these groups in 2017, he denied any paternity: "Maybe people consider me their spiritual father, but I don't consider them my spiritual sons."<sup>39</sup> However, it is one thing to make a philosophical claim and another to ensure that it is upheld in practice. Consider the argument for difference. If, in the name of affirming their identity, majority groups have the power to determine whether minorities are treated equally and fairly, there is no guarantee that their representatives will live up to their promises. Furthermore, one can easily imagine circumstances in which their leaders consciously use the argument for difference to fuel ethnic, racial, and religious



hatred. From the US to Sweden, Austria, New Zealand, and many other countries, there is an ample supply of fanatics who take these arguments one step further and engage in violence.<sup>40</sup>

Still, one must be cautious in making blanket claims about the relationship between foundational far-right thought and the extremist movements that have arisen in the 2000s. As historians advise, the fact that an idea or event comes after another does not, by itself, constitute sufficient grounds for making a definitive judgment about causation. There may be no linkage at all or there may be only a partial connection. For example, scholars in another field of intellectual history, the roots of Stalinism, have long disagreed about the relationship between V. I. Lenin's conception of the Bolshevik revolution and Josef Stalin's reign of terror in the 1930s. Some contend that Leninist thought was destined to degenerate into violence; others argue that the Bolsheviks could have avoided these extremes had they chosen to defend alternate conceptions of Lenin's path to socialism.<sup>41</sup> There is no reason similar debates should not occur over far-right thinking in the twenty-first century.

Finally, let us consider the future. Will contemporary far-right thinkers have the opportunity to continue basking in their recently acquired prominence or will they instead slip into intellectual oblivion? Ironically, in the same way that liberal-democratic institutions and values will not last forever, it is conceivable that these critics will fade from public view. Because they are the beneficiaries of social and political polarization, their success depends upon the existence of equally propitious conditions. Although most of the participants in this would-be vanguard assiduously attempt to distance themselves from the changing claims and day-to-day compromises of right-wing politicians and parties, their heightened visibility would not have been possible without the populist waves of the 2010s. The open question is whether these intellectual activists will survive if the appeal of populist politics wanes.

One possibility is that these figures will be able to take advantage of new crises, such as the turmoil unleashed by the Coronavirus pandemic or the advent of perilous economic conditions, to roil discontent among white working-class and lower-income populations about alleged mistreatment. In times of uncertainty, democratic elites are always convenient targets. A quite different possibility is that far-right intellectuals will survive because many of their views have already become an accepted part of political discourse on the right. In multiethnic and multicultural societies in particular, they are not alone in opposing liberal immigration policies, stoking popular fears about non-Christian faiths, and railing about the desecration of traditional values. Mainstream politicians and conservative public intellectuals routinely evince similar sentiments and seek to exploit ongoing tensions for their own self-interested reasons.

Yet, this convergence of views could also have the opposite effect. Paradoxically, should far-right thinkers be able to preserve their public profile, they may open themselves to cooptation by the political establishment and, as a result, be forced to temper their claims as a condition for continued visibility. Ironically, should

they make this concession, they could then lose credibility with the most volatile segments of their followings. Under these circumstances, democratic states could face a new peril. Without the tempering influence of certain far-right thinkers, they may have to reckon with a more radical and far less restrained generation of extremists. All of these scenarios are up for debate.

## A thematic approach

Contemporary far-right thinking, as I have suggested in this chapter, has become such a prominent feature of the ongoing challenge to liberal democracy that it would be impossible to address all of the notable personalities who have contributed to this movement. Even if one could, it would be just as impossible to identify the many variations in their critiques. Moreover, just as there is no single type of far-right thinker, each figure defies easy categorization. There are no neat boxes into which one could put them without running the risk of mischaracterizing their arguments or obscuring the points at which their approaches either intersect with or diverge from their contemporaries. Finally, although far-right thinkers share many points of departure and perspectives, the fact that their views change means that they are also moving targets. Nevertheless, there is every reason for us to welcome the diversity and fluidity of their views. The complexity of far-right thought is precisely what makes the comparison of its representatives' ideas compelling.

In view of this challenge, we have organized the chapters of this volume with the idea of parsimony in mind by focusing on recurrent themes that arise in the study of far-right thinkers. The first section ("The foundations of far-right thought") focuses on five personalities who have played key roles in laying the foundations for contemporary far-right thought. To this end, Sarah Shurts outlines the seminal contributions of four French theorists: de Benoist, Faye, Renaud Camus, and Alain Finkielkraut. Although these figures come from different intellectual and political traditions (both on the Right and on the Left), she argues that their cultivation of an illiberal discourse based upon ethnopluralism, nationalism, difference, and cultural conflict is integrally related to the positions of European Identitarian and extreme Right movements in the 2000s. Turning to America, Jérôme Jamin demonstrates how Pat Buchanan's views about ethnic loyalty and democracy have become an accepted feature of the populist rhetoric of the Republican Party and former US President Donald Trump. Yet, Jamin argues, Buchanan is not merely a nostalgic Paleoconservative who only yearns for the restoration of an "America we grew up in." Many of his perspectives, including his glorification of a predominantly white and Christian America, his explicit rejection of egalitarian policies, and ambivalent feelings about political institutions, are inimical to liberal democracy. Finally, Jean-Yves Camus demonstrates why Faye should not be considered a marginal figure in the far-right movement. To the contrary, he represented a significant alternate stream within the French *Nouvelle droite*. Whereas de Benoist preferred the life of a disengaged intellectual, Faye was committed to political action. His militant ideas about ethnonationalism and predictions of an imminent racial war between ethnic

Europeans and Muslim immigrants laid much of the groundwork for Identitarian extremism.

The second section (“Theory in context”) focuses on the analysis of the ideas of far-right thinkers and related personalities within their respective contexts. Far from being merely ivory tower intellectuals, these figures’ perspectives are necessarily shaped by their changing times and different locations. As a result, their views are invariably different and constantly shifting. This makes the challenge of characterizing their ideas as uniformly far right particularly daunting. In my chapter, I wrestle with this challenge by using a single concept—“difference”—to illuminate the extent to which European far-right thought has changed over the past half-century. I argue that the term’s evolution is directly related to the contrasting challenges faced by three distinct generations of thinkers, beginning with de Benoist, followed by the Identitarian movement, and culminating in (what I call) vanguardist organizers. In a similar fashion, Mark Bassin uses a single theme—Europe’s relationship with Russia—to show how the end to the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union led Faye to add an ethnopolitical dimension to his thinking. Rather than limiting himself to a geopolitical conception of relations between the two continents, Faye used the two regions’ purportedly shared ethnic roots to make the case for redefining Russians as Europeans.

In contrast, in their chapters, Imogen Richards and Callum Jones and Marlene Laruelle analyze two cases in which the characterization of their subjects as far right is either incomplete or problematic. In their analysis of the online magazine, *Quillette*, Richards and Jones demonstrate how a single platform can be used in multiple, contradictory, and potentially dangerous ways. Many of *Quillette*’s readers and contributors, who span the political spectrum, are only aware of one of the magazine’s faces. For them, *Quillette* is simply a welcome “alternative to the blank slate view ... very common in left-leaning media,” in the words of its founder, Claire Lehmann.<sup>42</sup> Were they to look more closely, however, they would encounter contributors who advocate radical traditionalism, racist thinking, and genetic determinism. Unlike Richards and Jones, Marlene Laruelle does not find evidence of these extremist tendencies in her study of Russia’s emerging school of mainstream conservatism, the Young Conservatives. Furthermore, she argues that her subjects, such as Michail Remizov, Boris Mezhuev, and Egor Kholmogorov, do not fit comfortably within far-right categories. True, they are formidable critics of present-day liberalism, the post-nation-state ideology, and globalization. However, their ideas about democratic nationalism, leftist economics, and isolationism have more to do with historically ingrained Russian attitudes and the nature of their country’s transition to democracy than with the circumstances that gave rise to far-right thinking in the West.

The studies in the third section (“From Illiberalism to Extremism”) show why concerns about the degeneration of far-right thinking into extremism and fanaticism are justifiable. Despite their professions of support for democracy and supposed opposition to racial, religious, and ethnic discrimination, many prominent personalities espouse views that are clearly incompatible with the system

that has made their dissenting positions possible. Nina Paulovicova considers the case of the young Slovak historian, Martin Lacko, who sought to legitimize such views by using his position in the highly regarded National Memory Institute to relativize the record of wrongdoing and persecution during World War II. After being forced out of the Institute, Lacko has since become an important source of extremist ideas for the hard-right People's Party Our Slovakia. Ronald Beiner uses the arguments of the American Alt-right thinker, Jason Reza Jorjani, as a case study of how some extremists attempt to cover up their actual beliefs in order to widen their appeal to "normies." As Beiner demonstrates, Jorjani's views about reviving an Aryan Persian empire and purifying populations through eugenics prove that he is a crypto-fascist. José Pedro Zúquete examines how variants of American Alt-right thought have crossed the Atlantic to Europe, where they have inspired White identity extremists, such as Fróði Midjord, to build transcontinental intellectual, cultural, and activist networks. In these developments, Zúquete sees the looming danger of White identity politics moving from the fringes into broader populist movements.

The contributors to the fourth section ("Into the future" offer different perspectives about the future of far-right thought. George Hawley suggests that there are good reasons for skepticism about the sustainability of at least some versions of far-right thought, especially that of the American Alt-right. Using the example of Nick Fuentes' "Groyper" movement, he describes how efforts to carve out an ideological space that is simultaneously distinct from racial radicalism and pro-Trump populism ultimately failed to attract large numbers of followers. Josh Vandiver offers a somewhat different perspective. He draws upon the success of the esoteric figure Bronze Age Pervert (BAP) to illustrate how one can use social media to capitalize on the discontent of certain segments of society and challenge the hegemony of mainstream thinking on both the Right and the Left. In contrast, in her examination of contributors to the online journal, *Arktos*, including John Bruce Leonard and D. F. Williams, Emma Planinc suggests that we assess the future of far right from a different perspective. Whatever fate should befall particular thinkers, she contends that our primary objective should be to prevent the far right from monopolizing our understanding of the core concepts of human rights and liberal democracy. For this reason, she emphasizes that it is essential to defend a regenerative conception of politics which holds that we can all be remade through transforming our political world.

Finally, in the concluding chapter in this volume, Alejandro Castrillon analyzes the commonalities and differences among these thinkers in light of their grievances, positions on diversity, and notions of identity. Across the world, he points out, we are witnessing a shifting political landscape in which the far right has made small inroads into the mainstream. Ideas can have dangerous and unpredictable consequences. We cannot know for sure whether the positions of these particular intellectuals pose an enduring threat, but there is significant evidence to conclude that elements of their thinking will continue to embolden future opponents of liberal-democratic ideas and values.

## Notes

- 1 On the mission of the Arktos Media publishing house, see <https://arktos.com/about/>. On Arktos's efforts to integrate Old and New Right themes and give them contemporary relevance, see Emmillie de Keulenaar's fascinating use of bigrams to analyze the themes of the publisher's books, at <http://oilab.eu/arktos-reformulations-of-far-right-ideas/>.
- 2 Among them, Greg Johnson (PhD, Catholic University of America); Jason Jorjani (PhD, SUNY, Stony Brook); Michael Miller (PhD, University of Toronto); Nina Kouprianova (PhD, University of Toronto); Thierry Baudet (PhD, Leiden University), and Tomislav Sunić (PhD, University of California, Santa Barbara), as well as the anonymous blogger who goes by the name Bronze Age Pervert, or BAP. On BAP, see Josh Vandiver's analysis in Chapter 13 of this volume. A few, like Greg Johnson (PhD, Catholic University of America) and Jason Jorjani (PhD, SUNY, Stony Brook) have had fleeting academic appointments; Jorjani was fired by the New Jersey Institute of Technology for praising Hitler.
- 3 Among possible exceptions, one might include Pat Buchanan. Nevertheless, despite Buchanan's use of populist rhetoric, his publications suggest that one could hardly call him a "man of the people." See Jérôme Jamin's analysis of Buchanan's multiple identities in Chapter 4.
- 4 *Novopress*, October 3, 2014, at <https://fr.novopress.info/176057/editorial-novopress-victoires-patriotiques-victoires-identitaires-envisager-lavenir-fabrice-robert/>.
- 5 See *The Guardian*, February 6, 2017. Bannon says that he does not recall making this remark. Still, I agree with Benjamin Teitelbaum that the comment is consistent with Bannon's character. See Teitelbaum, *War for Eternity: Inside Bannon's Far-Right Circle of Global Power Brokers* (New York: Dey Street Books, 2020), 109. On the idea of "Leninism," see my *Vanguard of the Revolution: The Global Idea of the Communist Party* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017), 141–2.
- 6 In an interview with José Pedro Zúquete, August 2, 2016.
- 7 For example, see Tamir Bar-On's nuanced arguments about the *Nouvelle droite*, and particularly de Benoist, in *Where Have All the Fascists Gone?* (London: Routledge, 2019), Chapter 1 and *passim*, and "Alain de Benoist: Neo-fascism with a human face?," Unpublished manuscript, Conference on "Entgrenzter Rechtsextremismus? Internationale Perspektiven und Gegenstrategien," Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, Munich, Germany, February 9–10, 2015, 1–26. For a broader argument, see Roger Griffin's discussion of the "metapoliticization of fascism" and "right-wing Gramscism," in "Fascism's New Faces (and New Facelessness) in the 'Post-Fascist' Epoch," in Andreas Umland, W. Loh, and R. Griffin, eds., *Fascism Past and Present, West and East: An International Debate on Concepts and Cases in the Comparative Study of the Extreme Right* (Stuttgart, Germany: ibidem Verlag, 2014), 51, 58. Also, see Richard Wolin's assessment of "Designer Fascism" in *The Seduction of Unreason* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 263–7. For a critique of these arguments, see Jean-Yves Camus and Nicolas Lebourg, eds., *Far-Right Politics in Europe*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), 1–2. About de Benoist in particular, see his self-defense against charges of neo-fascism in an interview with Arthur Versluis, "A Conversation with Alain de Benoist," *Journal for the Study of Radicalism*, vol. 8, 2 (2014), 79–106.
- 8 On these connections, see Ronald Beiner, *Dangerous Minds: Nietzsche, Heidegger, and the Return of the Far Right* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018).
- 9 Cas Mudde has made the same point about interpreting populist politics in the twenty-first century. "Many authors," he notes, "would focus almost exclusively on the historical

- background of the populist radical Right, in other words its connection to pre-war fascism and Nazism. The assumption was that the post-war populist radical Right had to be understood as the remnant of the past and not as a consequence of contemporary developments... In fact, [it is] best seen as a radicalization of mainstream values. Hence, the populist radical Right should be considered a pathological normalcy, not a normal pathology.” See “The Populist Radical Right: A Pathological Normalcy,” at [www.eurozine.com/the-populist-radical-right-a-pathological-normalcy/](http://www.eurozine.com/the-populist-radical-right-a-pathological-normalcy/).
- 10 It is hard to deny that there is an element of calculation in many of these figures’ public statements, especially those who are engaged in the political realm. For example, consider Roger Cohen’s observations about Steve Bannon’s goals: “The [Bannonite] new right has learned from the past. It does not disappear people. It does not do mass militarization. It’s subtler. It scapegoats migrants, instills fear, glorifies an illusory past (what the Polish sociologist Zygmunt Bauman called ‘retrotopia’), exalts machismo, mocks do-gooder liberalism and turns the angry drumbeat of social media into a minute-by-minute mass rally.” See “Steve Bannon is a Fan of Italy’s Donald Trump,” *New York Times*, May 19, 2019, 4.
  - 11 See <https://arktos.com/about/>.
  - 12 It is unclear that Gramsci ever used the term “metapolitics.” One way or the other, the concept is still a useful tool for understanding these thinkers’ intentions.
  - 13 Guillaume Faye, *Why We Fight: Manifesto of the European Resistance* (London: Media, 2011), 190.
  - 14 In a single chapter, I cannot even begin to address the countless debates over the idea of classical liberalism. Among the many works on this topic, see Ronald Beiner, *What’s the Matter with Liberalism?* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), which considers communitarian definitions. For a contrasting interpretation that focuses on the structural deficiencies of liberal democracy and their connection to the rise of far-right movements, see Aurelien Mondon and Aaron Winter, *Reactionary Democracy: How Racism and the Populist Far Right Became Mainstream* (London: Verso, 2019).
  - 15 Of course, contemporary far-right thinkers borrow ideas from the writers of the Traditionalist school, such as Julius Evola, René Guénon and, with some qualifications, Alexander Dugin, as well as many other like-minded groups. My argument is simply that these ideas are not the defining characteristics of their thought. On the Traditionalist school, see Mark Sedgwick, *Against the Modern World: Traditionalism and the Secret Intellectual History of the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).
  - 16 For a defense of this conception of community, see de Benoist’s *Beyond Human Rights* (London: Arktos Media, 2011).
  - 17 These conflicts also exist within religious traditions. For example, in France, a growing ultra-conservative Catholic movement has attacked Pope Francis for supporting Muslim immigrants. See José Pedro Zúquete, “The European Alt-Right’s Crusade against Pope Francis,” *Church Life Journal*, August 7, 2020, at <https://churchlifejournal.nd.edu/articles/the-european-alt-rights-crusade-against-pope-francis/>.
  - 18 See Mark Bassin’s analysis of Guillaume Faye’s adoption of an ethno-political approach to Europe’s relationship with Russia in Chapter 6 of this volume. Also, see Marlene Laruelle, *Russian Eurasianism: An Ideology of Empire* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Press/ Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012).
  - 19 For example, the Austrian Identitarian, Markus Willinger, has sought to strike a balance between the preservation of a specific group identity and the advantages of belongingness to a larger community. See *Une Europe des Nations* (Budapest: Arktos, 2017).

- 20 On the issue of racist thinking by contributors to the Australian online magazine, Quillette, see Imogen Richards' and Callum Jones' analysis in Chapter 7 of this volume.
- 21 On this position, see the declaration by Alain de Benoist and Charles Champetier, "Manifesto of the French New Right in the Year 2000," at [www.4pt.su/en/content/manifesto-french-new-right](http://www.4pt.su/en/content/manifesto-french-new-right).
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Cited from Benjamin Teitelbaum's interview with Friberg. See Teitelbaum, "Daniel Friberg and Metapolitics in Action," in Mark Sedgwick, ed., *Key Thinkers of the Radical Right* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 265.
- 25 *The Real Right Returns* (London: Arktos Media, 2015), 10, 30.
- 26 See my argument in Chapter 5.
- 27 The word "religious" is in parentheses in the original document.
- 28 See Dutch Values Protection Act at [www.fvd.nl/wet\\_bescherming\\_nederlandse\\_waarden](http://www.fvd.nl/wet_bescherming_nederlandse_waarden). Interestingly, the direct link to this site was removed from the FvD's main page after the party went through internal crisis in late November 2020. Baudet resigned from his position as party chairman in the wake of accusations of anti-Semitism, but he was reelected to the party leadership by an overwhelming majority of party members on December 3, 2020.
- 29 See the FvD statement on "Immigration and Remigration" at [www.fvd.nl/immigratie](http://www.fvd.nl/immigratie).
- 30 In Faye's incendiary tract, *Why We Fight* (London: Arktos, 2011), 94–5, 134. On Faye's position, see Jean-Yves Camus's analysis in Chapter 4.
- 31 Chapter 11, 209. In an exhaustive study, Zúquete has traced the evolution of these and other Identitarian views. See *The Identitarians: The Movement against Globalism and Islam in Europe* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2018).
- 32 See Jérôme Jamin's argument in Chapter 3.
- 33 Patrick J. Buchanan, *Right from the Beginning* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1988), 342.
- 34 "Has democracy found itself in a death spiral?" *nufdailynews.com*, April 22, 2017, at [www.google.com/search?q=buchanan+has+democracy+found+itself+in+a+death+spiral&rlz=1C1GCEA\\_enUS915US916&oq=buchanan+has+d&aqs=chrome.0.69i59j69i57j69i60.5785j0j9&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8](http://www.google.com/search?q=buchanan+has+democracy+found+itself+in+a+death+spiral&rlz=1C1GCEA_enUS915US916&oq=buchanan+has+d&aqs=chrome.0.69i59j69i57j69i60.5785j0j9&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8).
- 35 Faye, op cit., 93. However, in 2019, he made it clear that war was precisely what he wanted. "Yes, I wish that my people will start an uprising, regain the pride that it should never have lost, and win the final victory." Cited in Jean-Yves Camus, Chapter 4, 75.
- 36 *Generation Identity – A Declaration of War Against the '68ers* (London: Arktos, 2013), 15.
- 37 For example, Brenton Tarrant, the gunman in the attacks on two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand on March 15, 2020 donated money to Martin Sellner's Austrian Identitarian movement.
- 38 The challenge of categorization is not reserved to scholars alone. Far-right thinkers wrestle with the problem as well. For an example, see the Bronze Age Pervert's reflections on the definition of both Alt-right and Alt-left, "America's Delusional Elite is Done," *The American Mind*, October 22, 2019, at <https://americanmind.org/salvo/americas-delusional-elite-is-done/>.
- 39 J. Lester Feder, "The Man who gave White Nationalism a New Life," BuzzFeedNews, December 26, 2017, at [www.buzzfeednews.com/article/lesterfeder/the-man-who-gave-white-nationalism-a-new-life](http://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/lesterfeder/the-man-who-gave-white-nationalism-a-new-life).
- 40 For example, Greg Johnson, the editor of the American White supremacist magazine, *Counter-Currents*, claims to reject "Fascist and National Socialist party politics, totalitarianism, terrorism, imperialism, and genocide"—indeed, contrary to de Benoist's wishes,

he *affirms* de Benoist's paternity!—but nonetheless affirms many of these movements' defining features. See his appraisal of the “enormously important work” of David Duke, a former Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan, celebration of Hitler's and Mussolini's birthdays, and claim that there are fewer degrees of separation between him and the Norwegian mass murderer, Anders Behring Breivik, than with Barack Obama. “New Right vs. Old Right,” *Counter-Currents*, May 2012, at [www.counter-currents.com/2012/05/new-right-vs-old-right/](http://www.counter-currents.com/2012/05/new-right-vs-old-right/). For similar attitudes by an American Alt-right thinker, see Ronald Beiner's analysis of Jason Jorjani in Chapter 10. For a forceful and controversial critique that links the works of the eccentric Russian ideologue, Alexander Dugin, with both Breivik and the Syrian Jihadist leader Abu Musab al-Suri, see Claus Leggewie, *Die Anti-Europäer. Breivik, Dugin, al-Suri & Co.* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2016).

- 41 Stephen F. Cohen, *Rethinking the Soviet Experience* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), Chapter 2.
- 42 “An Interview with Clay Routledge at Psychology Today,” October 7, 2017, <https://clairelehmann.net/2017/10/07/an-interview-with-clay-routledge-at-psychology-today/>.