

## Far Right / Hard Right / Radical Right in the UK– The Case of Reform UK

See also File 15 Race riots – Immigration U.K.



Soutien à Tommy Robinson, fondateur du mouvement d'extrême droite English Defence League, lors d'un rassemblement à Londres, le 27 juillet 2024. HENRY NICHOLLS / AFP

- **Hope not Hate – <https://hopenothate.org.uk/>**

At HOPE not hate, our mission is to work tirelessly to expose and oppose far-right extremism.

Our work focuses on the organised far right, the communities who are susceptible to them and the issues and policies which give rise to them. We build skills and resilience across communities and civil society organisations, creating an alternative narrative of togetherness and unity.

See in particular their State of Hate 2025 Report (Reform Rising and Racist Riots)

<https://hopenothate.org.uk/state-of-hate-2025/>

## General – Terminology (again)

- Far right / Radical right / hard right
- Nativism
- Patriotism
- Nationalism – Ultranationalism – Ethnonationalism
- Fascism – Authoritarianism – Neo-fascism – Protofascism
- Anti-Islamism - Islamophobia
- The Great Replacement Theory
- (White Supremacy > U.S.)
- The Manosphere
- BUF (British Union of Fascists) Oswald Mosley
- Enoch Powell
- Tommy Robinson
- EDL English Defence League
- British National Party ( / National Front)
- Britain First – Patriotic Alternative – Homeland – British Freedom Party

- **Cas Mudde's *The Far Right Today*, Polity, Cambridge, 2019**

▪ Interviewed by [Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona | CCCB](https://www.cccb.org/), assessing the Far Right today.

July 18 2023 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m8rLvPO7CTM&t=224s&ab\\_channel=CCCB](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m8rLvPO7CTM&t=224s&ab_channel=CCCB)

- Longer, but complete, here is Cas Mudde presenting his thesis, the content of his book, with slides and all!  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vISpZGRchg8&ab\\_channel=CCCB](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vISpZGRchg8&ab_channel=CCCB)

This video has chapters, yeah, so I advise you to pay attention to “Key Argument”, “Terminology” and “Post Fascism” in which he defines the “Four waves of postwar right wing extremism”, knowing that for him we are currently going through “the Fourth wave”.

## • The Guardian Lexicon – The Full text this time

### Populist, nativist, neofascist? A lexicon of Europe’s far right

[Jon Henley](#) *Europe correspondent*, Tue 18 Jun 2024

They are known, variously, as far right, national-conservative, radical right, anti-Islam, nativist, and Eurosceptic. Also as extreme right, populist, “alt-right”, neofascist, anti-immigration, nationalist, authoritarian, and assorted combinations of the above.

As the dust settles on the results of this month’s [European parliamentary elections](#), it is worth examining what some of the terms routinely used to describe Europe’s wide array of far-right parties mean – and whether they are always the right ones.

#### Radical right

Based on the work of [Cas Mudde](#), an expert on populism and the far right at the University of Georgia, **radical right** parties are defined as those that espouse two core ideologies: **nativism** (seen as the most significant), and **authoritarianism**.

**Nativism** is the belief that “states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the ‘native group’, and that ‘non-native elements’ fundamentally threaten the homogeneous nation state”.

That explains the core focus on immigration of radical right parties such as Marine Le Pen’s National Rally (RN) in France, Freedom Party (PVV) in the Netherlands, Vox in Spain or Fidesz in Hungary.

Nativism is a prominent form of **exclusionism**; radical right parties are typically also exclusionist towards other “outgroups” besides non-natives, including people of different religions (Muslims, for example) or gender and sexual orientation.

**Authoritarianism** is “the belief in a strictly ordered society” in which infringements are “punished severely”, hence a second key focus of the far right: a hardline approach to law and order, as seen, for example, in Germany’s AfD or Austria’s FPÖ.

Unlike **extreme right** parties, **radical right** parties generally operate within the boundaries of the democratic framework: they are not working actively to subvert the democratic system, and they tend not to approve the use of violence.

#### Extreme right

**Extreme right** parties share the same two central ideologies of radical right parties, but unlike them, their ultimate objective is to overthrow the existing democratic order, and they have no objection to violence in achieving their ends.

While it participates in elections, the Dutch Forum for Democracy (FvD), which promotes conspiracy theories and the establishment of a “countersociety”, is generally considered **extreme right**, as too is Greece’s [neo-Nazi Golden Dawn](#).

#### Far right

Many political scientists, including those involved in The PopuList, use the term “**far right**” as a catch-all descriptor for parties considered **radical** or **extreme** right. This can be because there is a doubt about which category a party falls into – for example, because some elements within a party may be more extreme than others so its messaging is inconsistent, or because a party’s position has changed or is changing.

“In practice, it’s often difficult to decide,” said Matthijs Rooduijn, a leading member of The PopuList team. “Some party members may make multiple extremist dog-whistles, but in its formal statements it may just be radical.”

Parties that are only moderately far right, or whose positions have moderated over time, may be described as **borderline far right**.

#### Populist

**Populist parties**, again using the definition proposed by Mudde, are defined as those that “endorse the ideas that society is ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, a ‘pure people’ v a ‘corrupt elite’”.

**Populist parties** also argue that politics should be “an expression of the will of the people”. Anything that stands between “the will of the people” and policymaking they dislike and, in power, may try to weaken: a free press, an independent judiciary.

Many, but not all, far-right parties are obviously also populist. When that is the case, however, said Rooduijn, “it’s always best to say so. Just ‘populist’ can make them seem more moderate than they are.”

(Populism is not, of course, confined to the far right: many leftwing and far left parties are also considered populist, such as the Smer (Direction) party of Slovakia’s prime minister, Robert Fico, or France Unbowed (LFI), led by Jean-Luc Mélenchon.)

## Hard right

**Hard right** is a term that has been widely used by media outlets, including *the Guardian* (and *The Economist*). Rooduijn advised against it. “I think it’s more confusing than anything else,” he said.

Often, the term is used to describe parties that may have moderated their tone or stances while campaigning for an election, or once they are in government. “Parties do change over time; they can become more, or less, moderate,” Rooduijn said.

“But we avoid changing parties’ classifications when they’re in government. Parties have to compromise if they’re in a coalition with more moderate partners, they have to be less radical. But once they’re out, often you see their identity hasn’t changed.”

## Conservative, Eurosceptic, climate-sceptic

To a greater or lesser extent, Europe’s **far-right** parties – besides their core focus on **nativism** and other **exclusionary** ideologies and, in most cases, their **populist** approach – can share a multitude of other ideological stances.

To differing degrees, many are **Eurosceptic**, with beliefs ranging from “outright rejection of the entire project of European political and economic integration”, and of one’s country’s membership, to “contingent or qualified opposition”.

Some, particularly in central and eastern Europe, are socially **ultra-conservative**, promoting the concepts of duty, patriotism and traditional values, family structures, gender roles and sexual relations.

Increasingly, many are also **climate-sceptic**, either rejecting the science of climate change entirely or resisting and seeking to delay efforts towards the green transition.

## History (see complement to this file)

Many are also **illiberal** – setting out to capture the judiciary and media, usurping constitutional bodies, attacking civil society – and “**anti-woke**”.

But what matters most, said Rooduijn, is that core ideology. Is it **nativist, exclusionary of outgroups, authoritarian?**

Then you have a far-right party.

## So which parties qualify?

By these criteria, **Alternative für Deutschland (AfD)**, which finished second (ahead of all three members of the governing coalition) in the European parliamentary elections in Germany, can be classified as far right, populist – and with an extremist element.

**RN**, which finished first in France with a victory so crushing it prompted Emmanuel Macron to dissolve parliament, is far right and populist, although relatively leftwing – albeit nationalist – in socioeconomic policy. Despite its relative moderation as regards cooperating with the EU and running national economic policy, Giorgia Meloni’s **Brothers of Italy**, whose roots are widely considered neofascist, qualifies as far right, populist and socially conservative.

The Finns, currently constrained by being in coalition, are far right and populist; the Sweden Democrats, also with extreme-right roots, are now far right and populist; the Danish People’s party is far right – although arguably more moderate than many.

**Vox** in Spain is far right and populist as well as anti-feminist and economically rightwing. **Chega** in Portugal is far right and populist, with a strong focus on immigration, Islam, and “political correctness”.

Austria’s **FPÖ** is far right and populist, as are **PVV** in the Netherlands (with an emphasis on Islamophobia), Viktor Orbán’s Fidesz in Hungary (also illiberal, and with strong anti-LGBTQI+ views) and Poland’s **Law & Justice** (PiS).

Finally, a number of Europe’s mainstream centre right parties, including France’s Les Républicains (LR), the Netherlands’ VVD and Britain’s Conservatives, have adopted nativist policy platforms, most notably on immigration.

In The PopuList’s 2023 iteration, only the fact that exclusionism was not a core component of their ideologies prevented the academics from classifying them as borderline far right.

# The British far right today

## The changing face of the British far right

Alice Sibley, Blogs.lse May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2023

*This blog post draws on the research article “Behind the British New Far-Right’s veil: Do individuals adopt strategic liberalism to appear more moderate or are they semi-liberal?” published in the British Journal of Politics and International Relations. [HERE](#)*

*The British far-right narrative is changing. Although the far-right is often equated with fascism, recently some far-right groups have moved towards certain liberal values. But where might this lead? Alice Sibley explains what these changes in far-right rhetoric might mean and why we need to research the far right now more than ever.*

Far-right activity is now considered a major threat in most Western liberal democracies. In the UK alone, the far right is the fastest-growing form of extremism according to the most recent counter-extremism Prevent report. Moreover, this threat is not restricted to the violent Extreme Right (ER). The Populist Radical Right (PRR) influences the ER and vice versa.

PRR groups are far-right groups that are non-violent and support democracy. They differ from the ER, normally associated with fascism, who use and endorse violence and oppose democracy. The PRR and ER often share similar concerns related to immigration, globalisation and Islam, among other themes, but have a different view on fascism and violence. What’s more, the Populist Radical Right narrative is changing, as my research, drawing on 15 interviews with supporters and leaders of the British far right, illustrates.

Some far-right groups in the UK have evolved to become more compatible with liberal democracy. Researchers have highlighted the PRR’s adoption of some liberal values. Some British far-right groups support women’s rights, LGB rights and animal rights. Some argue that this adoption is strategic, and their pro-liberal rights stance is a front to appear more moderate. Certain supporters may adopt some liberal values to appear more democratic, moderate and less of a threat. However, other research suggests that this is not necessarily the case. This research found that while some supporters did strategically adopt some liberal values to appear more moderate, these individuals originated from the authoritarian-right side of the political spectrum and were therefore strategically liberal, while others were driven by different motivations.

Although not representative of the British far right generally or far-right groups specifically, an example of

the adoption of some liberal values is the use of women’s rights by two PRR leaders: Tommy Robinson and Anne Marie Waters. The quote below from an interview with the English Defence League’s Tommy Robinson highlights this appropriation of women’s rights to convey a liberal ideology:

“I’d say, my opposition to Islam comes from my liberal views. I am a liberal... People say, you are against immigration. Nope, I would open the British embassy tomorrow and get every woman out of Saudi Arabia. Every single one of them. And just leave loads of cavemen scratching their heads going, what... is going on, all the women have gone”.

The above quote is an example of femonationalism; the deployment of some women’s rights arguments to position so-called British values (perceived to be pro-women’s rights) as superior to so-called Islamic values (perceived to be anti-women’s rights).

In contrast, supporters and leaders that originated on the left side of the political spectrum but who moved over to the PRR still held some authentic liberal views, and were therefore, semi-liberal. In an interview, Anne Marie Waters talked about the difficulties of being the leader of a political party that was positioned as far-right. As the leader of the For Britain Movement, she mentioned that within her area of politics, sexism is still present:

“You’ve got to contain yourself, ’cause if you get angry, they’ll be like, oh hysterical woman... it’s relentless. If you speak out about sexism, she’s pulling the sexism card. If you don’t, you just have to sit there and take it. Which I do a lot of the time. If you do say something, you have to make sure you say it in a certain way so that they don’t dismiss you as a hysterical woman, probably has her period. Believe me, women still face this and in politics, it is everywhere.”

Anne Marie Waters’s women’s rights argument is unrelated to nationalism, nativism or Islam. She discussed the treatment of women within all aspects of politics. This argument, therefore, is not strategic and is semi-liberal. While Robinson’s argument was strategically liberal, Waters’s was semi-liberal. This shows the varied narratives in the British PRR.



Due to their changing rhetoric related to supporting some liberal values and opposing fascism, the PRR are attracting a new type of supporter, one that previously would have been deterred by the fascistic elements of the far right. This new type of supporter is usually referred to as the sexually modern nativist supporter: a higher-educated, pro-LGB rights woman who might also be part of the LGB community themselves. Anne Marie Waters fits this typology as a university-educated, lesbian woman. This highlights not only the change in the narratives of the British PRR but also how this translates into a new type of person being vulnerable to far-right recruitment.

***The Populist Radical Right are attracting a new type of supporter, one that previously would have been deterred by the fascistic elements of the far right.***

### **From The Great Replacement to The Great Reset conspiracy theories**

Along with the shift towards a more moderate, liberal-based position, there has also been a shift in some corners of the British far-right away from The Great Replacement conspiracy theory towards The Great Reset conspiracy. The Great Replacement conspiracy is infamous. Even if you do not know it by name, you know the idea it propagates; White Europeans are being replaced by (Muslim) non-Europeans leading to white genocide. This was the main rallying cry for the British far right until recently. In my interviews, although concern about Islam and The Great Replacement was still a main theme, there was a shift in argument following the COVID-19 pandemic. In my interview with Tommy Robinson, he said:

“So now as I’ve progressed, I believe that all these things... is to divide. Everything that happened with Islam [The Great Replacement], everything that happened to me [perceived persecution], all the censorship, then COVID, it’s all part of the same thing

under different names, different banners. The same objective, the objective is to divide... this is The Great Reset... they’ll destroy everything so much... that people will be crying out for a basic credit system... for more law and order... for more freedoms to be taken away, more cameras, more facial recognition.”

The Great Reset is a conspiracy theory which posits that the global elite are “resetting” the world-wide system to gain global totalitarian control. This highlights the potential shift away from conspiracies about Islam and Muslims gaining global control towards conspiracies about elites and global governments. For some corners of the far-right, COVID-19 represented a shock that led them to position the global elites as the enemy who are restricting our freedoms (COVID-19 restrictions) and taking away our rights (COVID-19 vaccinations). This is particularly worrying as research suggests that young people have lost trust in the British government because of COVID-19, making young people in particular potentially vulnerable to believing in this conspiracy theory. As The Great Reset is connected to antisemitic conspiracy narratives, this could also indicate a change in focus from one out-group, Muslims, to another, Jews. This narrative moves the PRR closer to the antisemitic ER, potentially leading to some alignment between the PRR and the ER.

Although, the adoption of some liberal values is moving the PRR away from the stereotypical fascistic narrative, the shift towards The Great Reset may move these groups closer together. It is, therefore, more important than ever to monitor these potential changes in the British far-right.

*Alice Sibley is a PhD candidate and Lecturer at Nottingham Trent University. Her PhD focuses on the British anti-Islam far-right and her research interests include the Populist Radical Right, the Extreme Right, Fascism and Terrorism.*

**Here is her conclusion in the afore mentioned article. I find the analysis very useful**

### **The New Far-Right: Both strategic and semi-liberal**

This research suggests two things. First, some individuals within the New Far-Right do have semi-liberal arguments. Second, other individuals use liberal arguments to distance themselves from fascism, using a liberal veil as a façade. This semi-liberal or strategic liberal position, according to Berntzen, depends on the pathway individuals have taken to align with the New Far-Right. The present research supports Bentzen’s findings ([Berntzen, 2019](#)). Individuals that moved from the left appeared to hold semi-liberal views covering a range of issues, not only in opposition to Islam. Those that held more authoritarian views only used liberal arguments combined with nationalism to oppose and criticise Islam. It also suggests that although the arguments of the far-right can be extreme, unfounded, and strategic, the semi-liberal arguments within New Far-Right narratives may be legitimate and need to be listened to. Therefore, using terms of nationalism, such as femotionalism, animal nationalism, and homonationalism, along with more extremist terms, such as fascism, to define all supporters or groups of the New Far-Right, may obscure some genuine semi-liberal

concerns individuals may have. Using these terms may also be a strategy used by the left to dismiss all concerns of the New Far-Right, despite the liberal origins of some individuals. It is necessary, therefore, to identify which arguments within the New Far-Right are semi-liberal and work to appeal to individuals that hold these views. The shared liberal values between mainstream politics and semi-liberal supporters of the New Far-Right may act as a bridge to encourage disillusioned individuals on the right-wing fringes to reconnect with mainstream politics.

For individuals that hold authoritarian views and adopt liberal values to distance themselves from traditional fascism, researchers need to be aware of the backstage that these individuals may be concealing to appeal to a wider population. Statistics and discourse analysis need to be conducted to understand the makeup of the New Far-Right, how many people are strategically liberal, how many are semi-liberal, and how strategically liberal individuals conceal their extreme backstage narratives. This research suggests that the New Far-Right is not homogeneous, and there are significant differences within New Far-Right groups, not only between. To understand the New Far-Right fully, research needs to be conducted to identify why people choose to move from the left-political spectrum to the right, why authoritarian individuals choose to become involved in the New Far-Right rather than the fascistic far-right, and how we bring individuals with semi-liberal views back into mainstream politics. Finally, academics, governments, and the media need to be careful to appropriately categorise different groups within the far-right. Previous research suggests that using extreme terms such as fascistic, to describe New Far-Right groups, may push supporters further to the extremes. Using less extreme language and understanding the semi-liberal nuances within the New Far-Right may reduce the number of individuals that become extreme or violent as a result of being pushed further to the fringes of the political spectrum.

● This dates back to 2012, from **Hérodote's** special issue on *L'extrême droite en Europe*. It provides with an excellent overview of the British extreme right up to 2012 and the rise of UKIP

In French

<https://shs.cairn.info/revue-herodote-2012-1-page-182?lang=fr>

In English

<https://shs.cairn.info/journal-herodote-2012-1-page-182?lang=en&tab=texte-integral>

## Analyses in the wake of the summer 2024 race riots (see also File 15)

● **The Facts - Who Are the Far-Right Groups Behind the U.K. Riots? *The New York Times*, August 3, 2024 - [HERE](#)**

After a deadly stabbing at a children's event in northwestern England, an array of online influencers, anti-Muslim extremists and fascist groups have stoked unrest, experts say.

Or [HERE](https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/why-are-there-riots-uk-who-is-behind-them-2024-08-07/) <https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/why-are-there-riots-uk-who-is-behind-them-2024-08-07/>

### The evolution of Britain's extreme right

**White nationalism has become more amorphous and more online**

*The Economist*, Aug 6th 2024 (Listen to the Story – See Cahier de Prépa)

THEY BROKE through the hotel doors soon after midday on August 4th. Around 700 far-right activists had gathered outside the Holiday Inn Express in Manvers, a suburb in the deprived northern town of Rotherham, that morning. The mob chanted “get them out” and “burn it down” at asylum seekers housed inside and hurled chairs, planks and bricks at the police. Hotel staff erected barricades. One rioter started a fire in a doorway. It is remarkable no one was badly hurt.

The violence over the past two weeks in Britain has been horrifying. Sparked initially by the killing of three children on July 29th, the disorder took on a life of its

own. Thousands have taken part in riots; violence has spread to 22 towns and cities. White nationalists have attacked mosques, asylum hotels and Muslim neighbourhoods and businesses. It is hard to judge how quickly it will stop. Fears of more trouble on August 7th were not realised as counter-demonstrators took to the streets. But further clashes are possible.

In some ways the violence, and some politicians' ambiguous response to it, recalls earlier bouts of far-right brutality. But in its scale and the way it was organised, it points to something new.

The first major race riot in Britain took place in 1919. Up to the 1970s they flared periodically, usually in urban centres and poor mixed neighbourhoods. Most riots since, with a handful of exceptions, have been between black youths and the police. The last big one, in 2011, was sparked when police shot dead a black man in London; five other people lost their lives. But the past week has seen “the most widespread far-right violence in Britain’s post-war history”, says Joe Mulhall of Hope Not Hate, a campaign group.

That is a shock. Until recently the far right in Britain appeared a diminished force, caught between a decline in racist attitudes and a winner-takes-all electoral system that favours big political parties. Throughout the 20th century the far right tried, and largely failed, to combine street activism with success at the ballot box. The British Union of Fascists (BUF), founded by Oswald Mosley, an aristocratic antisemite, attracted some 50,000 supporters in the 1930s but failed to make any electoral headway. After the second world war, Mosley turned to aggressive street campaigning in migrant communities.

That was a tactic continued in the 1970s by the National Front, a white-nationalist group that campaigned against the arrival of Ugandan Asians. In an infamous clash, in 1977, 500 National Front members marched through Lewisham, a multicultural borough in London, under a banner that read “clear the muggers off the streets” before brawling with police. Bouts of street thuggery damaged the National Front’s appeal; the Lewisham riots came to be seen as the start of its decline. In the 2000s a successor outfit, the British National Party (BNP), won a handful of council seats and two seats in the European Parliament.

The electoral market for such extreme views, never that large, has steadily shrunk. Only 17% of people now say that to be truly British, it is very important to have been born in Britain, down from 48% in 1995. As a result a distinction has emerged between what academics term the “extreme right”, explicitly racist outfits like the National Front and the BNP, and the “radical right”, electoral movements whose ranks include populists like Nigel Farage, the leader of Reform UK.

In their different ways, both have made headway. The radical right is more prominent than ever. Mr Farage, who shares many of the extreme right’s concerns about immigration, crime and policing, is one of five Reform UK MPs in Parliament following the election on July 4th. Like other stars of the populist right, he gets top billing on GB News, a television channel. Extreme-right actors have meanwhile found new ways of tapping old grievances.

Whereas in the past the extreme right was organised through institutions with leaders, organisational structures and membership lists, it is now a looser constellation of influencers and networks. Its leading figure is Stephen Yaxley-Lennon, a 41-year-old former football hooligan from Luton who uses the pseudonym Tommy Robinson. On July 27th he drew 30,000 people to a rally in London where speakers melded genuine local concerns, for example about the location of asylum hotels, with wild theories about Britain being an “occupied country”. Although he has not taken part in the unrest, he has used a large social-media following to whip it up.

The English Defence League (EDL), an anti-Muslim group founded by Mr Yaxley-Lennon, is supposedly defunct. But its former members continue to share messages. Another important network is Patriotic Alternative. Whereas those associated with the EDL tend to be older hooligans, Patriotic Alternative targets a younger audience by organising video-gaming events and fight clubs. Neither group has many official members but both have a large reach through apps, says Julia Ebner, an expert on extremism at Oxford University.

The recent unrest does not appear to have been centrally organised. Instead local activists chose a specific location, announced an intention to congregate there and waited for their plans to be amplified via apps. This decentralised approach explains one difference with past riots, which tended to happen in cities. But in other respects the internet encourages uniform behaviour, as troublemakers repeat slogans pushed online. “They oppress the wrong people,” parroted one youth about the policing of a protest in Manchester.



110 Chart: The Economist

How might things play out from here? One scenario is that a heavy judicial response has the desired effect, and, perhaps with the help of some rain, the unrest peters out.

115 In a previous role as director of public prosecutions, Sir Keir Starmer, now the prime minister, helped put almost 1,300 people involved in the 2011 riots in prison. The court cases have already begun; that some of the first to face justice wept in the dock does not suggest a

120 movement hardened for a fight. Loose organisational networks may mean that far-right activity dissipates as quickly as it flared up.

Another scenario is that the unrest will continue, or mutate. The focus may move to mass rallies, or to

125 protesting about those who have been prosecuted. Mr Mulhall notes that after a riot near an asylum hotel in

Knowsley in 2023, similar events continued for six weeks. People who take part in violent protests may form stronger group identities, says Ms Ebner.

130 It will take longer to work out how the riots will shape the future of the right. Early polling shows that the great majority of voters abhor the violence, though some do not (see chart). Initially Mr Farage did not condemn the scenes, describing them as a reaction “to fear, to

135 discomfort, to unease” shared by “tens of millions of people”. Leading Tories have been less equivocal, though some were slow to respond. British political history suggests that participating in street violence leads to electoral failure. The question today is whether

140 finding excuses for it has the same effect. ■

## Emeutes au Royaume-Uni : « L’extrême droite britannique est une constellation de groupuscules, sans véritable organisation ni hiérarchie »

**Tribune** Stéphane Porion, Maître de conférences en civilisation britannique

*On croyait la droite radicale et raciste marginalisée outre-Manche depuis le Brexit : elle est toujours bien là, se ramifie sur les réseaux sociaux, où elle recrute principalement des hommes blancs trentenaires, issus*

5 *des classes ouvrières et peu éduqués, explique l’universitaire Stéphane Porion dans une tribune au « Monde ».*

**Le Monde**, 17 août 2024

Depuis une attaque meurtrière au couteau à Southport,

10 le 29 juillet, qui a tué trois fillettes et blessé une dizaine de personnes, le Royaume-Uni est en proie à des émeutes racistes ciblant des communautés musulmanes, des mosquées et des hôtels pour demandeurs d’asile, ainsi que la police. Une fake news rapidement relayée

15 sur la fachosphère a désigné l’auteur présumé d’abord comme un musulman puis comme un demandeur d’asile rwandais, alors qu’en réalité, il s’agissait d’un mineur d’origine rwandaise de 17 ans, né à Cardiff et qui a grandi au Royaume-Uni.

20 La première semaine d’août a été émaillée de scènes de violence d’une ampleur inédite dans plus de vingt villes anglaises et à Belfast où étaient scandés des slogans racistes, xénophobes et islamophobes : « *Stoppez les canots pneumatiques* », « *Nos femmes ne sont pas de la*

25 *viande halal* »... « *Je n’hésiterai pas à appeler les choses par leur nom : ce sont des brutalités d’extrême droite* » a réagi le nouveau premier ministre travailliste, Keir Starmer.

Ces émeutes violentes, instrumentalisées par l’extrême

30 droite sur les réseaux sociaux, posent la question de

l’état de cette mouvance politique dont on pouvait croire qu’elle était repoussée dans les confins de la marginalité depuis le référendum sur le Brexit de 2016 : pendant la campagne, l’élue travailliste Jo Cox avait été assassinée

35 par un suprémaciste blanc néonazi. Huit ans après, elle est toujours bien là et le fait savoir de manière violente dans les rues. Doit-on y voir une renaissance, une mutation ou un nouveau visage ?

Qu’entend-on vraiment quand on parle d’extrême droite

40 au Royaume-Uni ? Depuis le discours raciste, dit « *des fleuves de sang* », du conservateur nationaliste Enoch Powell en avril 1968, l’extrême droite était représentée par des petits partis politiques ouvertement racistes et violents à l’héritage nazi, au gré de fusions et de

45 scissions. Le National Front, créé en 1967 et composé de blancs nationalistes, connut un déclin dès 1977 après une manifestation violente à Lewisham, une banlieue multiculturelle de Londres.

Au pouvoir, Margaret Thatcher adopta une politique très

50 droitiste en matière d’immigration, qui entrava le développement de l’extrême droite. Quant au British National Party, il opéra une mue idéologique avec son leader Nick Griffin, abandonnant l’idée d’un nationalisme ethnique. Bilan : deux sièges gagnés au

55 Parlement européen en 2009, et quelques-uns dans certains conseils municipaux, avant de subir également un déclin.

### L’insubmersible Nigel Farage

Les chercheurs font une différence entre ces partis

60 politiques et la droite radicale, composée du UK



Independence Party (UKIP), puis du Brexit Party (une sorte de UKIP 2.0), et enfin le Reform UK, qu'ils décrivent comme des mouvements électoraux populistes et nationalistes, dont le point commun s'appelle Nigel Farage. Lors des législatives début juillet, le Reform UK a obtenu environ 14 % des suffrages et cinq députés, dont Nigel Farage, à l'issue d'un scrutin uninominal majoritaire à un tour, peu favorable aux petits partis. Même si ce dernier aura une influence limitée au sein de la Chambre des communes, ces émanations de la droite radicale ont toujours exercé une pression sur les conservateurs, les poussant à se droitiser en matière de politique d'immigration.

Les émeutes racistes remettent au-devant de la scène l'English Defence League (EDL) et son ancien leader Stephen Yaxley-Lennon, connu sous le nom de Tommy Robinson. Ce mouvement violent anti-islam issu du hooliganisme, créé en 2009 et qu'on pensait réduit à peau de chagrin depuis la fin des années 2010, défend un nationalisme anglais blanc. Il a représenté une forme nouvelle d'extrême droite, car ce mouvement de rue, cultivant les rixes, ne cherchait pas à participer aux élections.

Cette extrême droite de 2024 se présente en réalité comme une constellation de groupuscules, sans véritable organisation, ni hiérarchie ni leader affirmé. Selon l'analyse de 2018 de Joe Mulhall, directeur de recherche du groupe de pression antiraciste Hope not

Hate, l'extrême droite britannique est devenue « *un mouvement post-organisationnel* », s'appuyant sur les nouvelles technologies et les réseaux sociaux.

Ces nouveaux moyens servent à recruter principalement des hommes blancs trentenaires provenant de la classe ouvrière, peu éduqués, qui s'engagent dans un militantisme violent s'exprimant par des manifestations sporadiques et spontanées. Il est donc facile pour des membres de l'EDL et autres influenceurs de la fachosphère de diffuser à distance des idées racistes et islamophobes et d'attirer de nouveaux soutiens extrémistes qui s'autoradicalisent.

Ce fut bien l'origine des émeutes. Tommy Robinson utilisa X pour répandre de fausses informations sur l'identité du meurtrier de Southport et appeler à des manifestations violentes au nom de « *la résistance britannique* ». Nigel Farage et Elon Musk firent de même. Les émeutes ont attiré des membres de l'EDL, de Patriotic Alternative, de Britain First et du National Front, des néonazis, des supporters violents de football, des militants antimusulmans, et des Britanniques en colère sans lien avec l'extrême droite.

Comment répondre aux attentes de ces Britanniques blancs en colère ? Farage, qui sait parler à cette frange de la population, fut un poison pour les conservateurs. Il devient celui des travaillistes qui le perçoivent déjà comme la voix de l'English Defence League au sein du Parlement britannique.

### About the Race Riots, see also:

- [https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2024/08/30/au-royaume-uni-une-extreme-droite-eclatee-mais-capable-de-fortement-mobiliser\\_6298957\\_3210.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2024/08/30/au-royaume-uni-une-extreme-droite-eclatee-mais-capable-de-fortement-mobiliser_6298957_3210.html)

- **Read carefully Text 10 In File 15**

- Deflecting, Minimising and Justifying: Three Months on From the Racist Riots

Marcus North, *Love not Hate*, 14 November 2024

**Since August there has been a concerted effort to legitimise the violence of the summer. We show how it has happened.**

<https://hopenothate.org.uk/2024/11/14/deflecting-minimising-and-justifying-three-months-on-from-the-race-riots/>

### Au Royaume-Uni, le modèle multiculturel a résisté aux émeutes d'extrême droite

**Analyse** - Cécile Ducourtieux, Londres, correspondante

*Le Monde*, 06 septembre 2024

Dans un pays où le respect du multiculturalisme est la norme, seule l'extrême droite tient les identités multiples et l'islam pour responsables de tous les maux d'une classe populaire blanche au fort sentiment de déclassement.

Des « *voyous d'extrême droite* » qui ne déploient que de la « *pure violence* » et vont « *regretter d'avoir pris part* » aux émeutes ou d'avoir attisé la haine raciale et anti-musulmans en ligne. C'est ainsi que le premier ministre britannique, Keir Starmer, a qualifié celles et surtout ceux qui, début août, de Southport à Bristol en passant par Belfast, ont jeté des briques sur la police, des mosquées ou même tenté d'embraser des hébergements d'urgence de migrants. Le travailliste

a refusé d'esquisser des explications à ces explosions de colère, écartant tout ce qui pouvait ressembler à un début de justification de la violence. Elles ont été attisées par des groupuscules et des activistes d'extrême droite, qui ont propagé la fausse information selon laquelle le meurtre de trois fillettes à Southport (nord-est de l'Angleterre) avait été commis  
10 par un migrant de confession musulmane.

La réponse du dirigeant aux émeutes a, jusqu'à présent, été exclusivement judiciaire : les arrestations ont été massives (plus d'un millier), la justice prompte et particulièrement sévère : des centaines de personnes sont déjà passées devant un juge, dont une majorité a été condamnée à des peines de prison. M. Starmer a choisi la même stratégie de la dissuasion que lors des émeutes de 2011 à Londres, quand il était directeur des poursuites judiciaires publiques.

15 Les violences ont pourtant éclaté dans des villes parmi les plus pauvres du pays comme Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Rotherham, dans le nord de l'Angleterre, où les populations expriment un manque de confiance dans les partis de gouvernement après des décennies de dégradation de leur niveau de vie. Ces localités comptent par ailleurs davantage d'hébergements d'urgence de migrants que la riche Angleterre du Sud, car les loyers y sont moins élevés.

#### « Un acquis »

20 Pourtant, la ligne de Keir Starmer a fait consensus et ni la gauche ni la droite ne questionnent le modèle multiculturel national ou l'assimilation des Britanniques musulmans aux valeurs nationales. Certes, Nigel Farage, le chef de file du parti populiste Reform UK, a qualifié des heurts à Leeds de « *politique du sous-continent [indien]* ». Mais seule l'extrême droite extraparlamentaire, en particulier sa principale figure, Tommy Robinson, tient le multiculturalisme et l'islam pour responsables de tous les maux d'une classe populaire blanche au fort sentiment de déclassement.

25 « *Le fait que la société britannique soit multiethnique est considéré comme un acquis. Les gens ne le questionnent pas, ils en sont même fiers, c'est ce que montrent nos sondages. Seules 7 % des personnes interrogées [dans un sondage réalisé le 9 août] pendant les émeutes disaient leur honte de vivre dans un pays multiethnique, contre 48 % qui se disaient fières, et 45 % qui étaient sans opinion* », souligne Luke Tryl, directeur du cercle de réflexion More in Common UK. Au début des années 2010, David Cameron, alors premier ministre [2010-2016], avait évoqué les « *échecs* » du  
30 multiculturalisme. Le dirigeant travailliste Tony Blair [1997-2007], après les attentats dans le métro londonien en 2005, insistait, lui aussi, sur la nécessité, pour toute la population du pays, de partager les « *valeurs britanniques* » ou occidentales.

Ces questionnements ont presque disparu dans un pays où le respect des identités multiples est la norme – on peut s'y revendiquer sans problème comme écossais et britannique, nord-irlandais et britannique ou britannique d'origine  
35 nigériane, caribéenne ou pakistanaise. Par ailleurs, le rapport à l'islam y semblait jusqu'alors apaisé. « *Les Britanniques font aisément la différence entre musulman et extrémiste islamiste* », assure Luke Tryl.

Le Royaume-Uni ayant comme religion d'Etat l'anglicanisme, les cultes sont omniprésents dans l'espace public et en politique. Les sessions à la Chambre des communes commencent chaque jour par des prières et des évêques siègent encore à la Chambre des lords. Les signes religieux distinctifs sont tolérés dans les administrations et écoles. Downing  
40 Street prend soin de saluer toutes les fêtes du calendrier religieux, quel qu'il soit (Hanouka, Pâques, Divali, Aïd, etc.). Et quand Humza Yousaf, issu d'une famille pakistanaise, a été désigné premier ministre écossais en 2023, les médias se sont félicités qu'un Britannique de confession musulmane accède à un tel poste de pouvoir.

#### « Besoin d'un débat plus ouvert »

Cela ne veut pas dire que les musulmans britanniques ne sont pas victimes d'islamophobie. « *Selon une de nos études*  
45 *réalisées juste après les émeutes, plus de 50 % des Britanniques estiment que les musulmans ne sont pas en sécurité dans le pays, ce qui est alarmant* », souligne Luke Tryl. Cela ne signifie pas non plus que le Royaume-Uni n'est pas confronté à des cas inquiétants d'intolérance religieuse.

En 2021, à Batley, dans le comté de Yorkshire (nord de l'Angleterre), un enseignant a été obligé de quitter ses fonctions puis de se cacher, après avoir été victime d'une campagne d'intimidation et de menaces, des parents d'élèves et des  
50 leaders religieux locaux l'accusant d'avoir montré une caricature de Mahomet en classe. Un rapport du gouvernement a estimé que l'enseignant n'avait pas été traité comme une victime, alors qu'aucune faute professionnelle ne lui était reprochée. Et que l'école avait montré une attention « *disproportionnée* » à ne pas offenser les sensibilités religieuses de ses harceleurs.

« *Nous aurions besoin d'un débat plus ouvert sur l'intégration, l'apprentissage de nos valeurs, la nécessité*  
55 *d'encourager la mixité sociale. Nous avons peut-être été trop passifs dans notre approche du multiculturalisme et sur les moyens de le faire fonctionner*, souligne encore Luke Tryl. Un grand nombre de gens, dans nos études estiment que les autorités devraient faire davantage pour lutter contre l'isolement culturel de certains groupes ethniques, y compris blancs, qui se considèrent comme laissés-pour-compte. »

# Reform UK more specifically

• Love not Hate Everything you need to know about Reform UK - <https://hopenothate.org.uk/reform-party-2024/>

## JOIN THE FIGHTBACK - STOP REFORM UK'S FAR-RIGHT AGENDA

Reform UK's rise is a threat to our communities, spreading division and pushing far-right ideas. In the 2024 General Election, they garnered 4.1 million votes, making it the largest GE vote share ever for a far-right party in the UK. Their success mirrors the troubling rise of similar far-right movements across Europe. If we don't act now, we risk seeing their influence grow even further in future local, mayoral, and general elections.

### It's a mistake to call Reform UK "far-right"

Tim Bale, Blog.lse.ac.uk, March 21st, 2024

*The use of the term "far-right" to describe political parties such as Reform UK is unhelpful. The term causes too visceral a reaction and at the same time is too broad to be meaningful. Tim Bale argues for a distinction between the "extreme right" and the "populist radical right" as more illuminating categories that can help us make sense of right-wing political parties.*

10 On March 18<sup>th</sup> the BBC website's *Corrections and Clarifications* page carried the following statement:

15 "In an article about the Liberal Democrats' spring conference we wrongly described the political party Reform UK as far-right when referring to polling. This sentence was subsequently removed from the article as it fell short of our usual editorial standards. While the original wording was based on news agency copy, we take full responsibility and apologise for the error."

20 The BBC's statement apparently came about after the organisation was contacted by lawyers acting for the leader of Reform UK, Richard Tice. In his response on social media, Tice noted that the party was "also in touch with other news organisations" which had  
25 repeated a description that he views as "defamatory and libellous". This may explain why, with the odd exception, few people seem to have pushed back on the corporation's climbdown.

I'm no lawyer so I offer no opinion whatsoever on  
30 whether the BBC did or did not libel or defame Reform. But as a political scientist, I want to suggest that applying the term "far-right" to any particular party is probably a mistake – partly because the term is something of a "boo-word" and therefore inevitably  
35 more likely to generate more heat than light, but also because it is actually an umbrella term used to group a whole bunch of parties which, individually, can be more

precisely (and arguably, therefore, more fruitfully) labelled.

40 *It's fair to say that there exists a degree of consensus that, when it comes to the right there are two important subtypes: the mainstream right and the far right.*

Contested concepts are hardly uncommon in the social sciences. Scholars often disagree about the best way to  
45 define key notions that we routinely, almost unconsciously, employ to make sense of the political world. And given that there is already plenty of room for argument about what exactly we mean by the 'descriptors "left" and "right", it is hardly surprising  
50 that going beyond them to distinguish between subtypes – and then between subtypes of those subtypes – isn't necessarily plain sailing. But that doesn't mean it's not worth doing.

In fact, it's fair to say that there exists a degree of  
55 consensus that, when it comes to the right – or at least the right in Europe – there are two important subtypes: on the one hand, the *mainstream* right, and on the other hand, the *far* right. We can then distinguish specific party families within each of these two subtypes or  
60 umbrella terms. While the *Christian democrats*, the *Conservatives* and the *Liberals* are normally seen as examples of the *mainstream right*, the far right tends to be represented by parties of, on the one hand, the *populist radical right* and, on the other,  
65 the *extreme* right.

Mainstream right parties tend to be long-established players. Not only do they adopt relatively centrist and moderate programmatic positions, they also support existing norms and values traditionally associated with  
70 liberal, representative democracy, meaning they wouldn't dream of calling, for instance, for the prevailing political system to be overturned, let alone overthrown.

By contrast, far right parties, tend to be newer entrants  
75 into the political system – "challengers", "disruptors",

“insurgents”, call them what you will. And they almost instinctively adopt more obviously hard-core positions, as well as exhibiting weaker commitment to the formal and informal rules of the game that are intrinsic to (liberal) democratic regimes. Their critique of those regimes is sometimes explicit, even going so far as to countenance or at least tolerate violence – one reason, presumably, why the far-right label is seen as so toxic. But regime critique can often be rather more subtle, indicated, for example, by a questionable commitment to certain rules of the game such as respectful discourse or even basic civil, political, and minority rights. The extreme right, often with its roots in fascism and/or the neo-Nazi underground, is characterised by the more explicit of the two approaches and, even when not openly undemocratic, it provokes suspicions that, were it ever to win power, free and fair elections, along with a whole bunch of democratic safeguards, would soon be scrapped. The populist radical right, however, having no such heritage or else doing its best to claim (like the Austrian Freedom Party or the Sweden Democrats, for example) that it has transcended them, takes a more subtle approach, that includes a commitment to democracy. Just as importantly, it may (often with justification) be associated with nationalism and nativism that sometimes shades into outright xenophobia, believing that the needs and the interests of citizens should take priority over non-citizens – especially but not exclusively when it comes to, say, welfare or housing. That said, the populist radical right, unlike the extreme right, does not (at least formally) trade in discrimination along ethnic and racial lines. Instead, it holds that,

rather than one being inherently superior to another, 110 different ethnicities, nationalities and (increasingly) religions are potentially incompatible and best off staying where they belong if they are unwilling or unable to integrate. Nor is radical right wing populism inherently authoritarian – at least in the common sense understanding of that word. Indeed, parties classified as such are often, if anything, libertarian, save when it comes to matters like migration and crime and punishment.

But what really marks out the populist radical right is its populism – namely the distinction it makes, as Cas Mudde famously put it, between “the pure people” (who are assumed to abound in ‘common sense’) and “the corrupt elite” and its tendency to prioritise popular sovereignty over liberal, representative democracy that, in its views, favours an out-of-touch, self-interested, and increasingly “woke” establishment bent on frustrating “the will of the people”.

These features will be more than familiar to anyone who has listened to hard-core Brexiteers over the last decade or so. Whether, along with some of the other defining characteristics of the populist radical (as opposed to the extreme) right outlined above, it helps us – and perhaps even the BBC – more accurately describe Reform UK (and even perhaps some parts of the contemporary Conservative Party) I leave others to judge.

*Tim Bale is Professor of Politics at Queen Mary University and is the author, together with Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, of Riding the Populist Wave and, most recently, The Conservative Party after Brexit.*

140

### Why Reform UK is Far-Right – and why Using the Right Terminology Matters

As Reform UK draws the UK’s media eye at a press conference today, Hope Not Hate argues it’s time for journalists to call it out

**Byline Times, Dr Joe Mulhall, 7 October 2024**

Byline Times is an independent, reader-funded investigative newspaper, outside of the system of the established press, reporting on ‘what the papers don’t say’ – without fear or favour.

Dr Joe Mulhall is the Director of Research for the anti-fascism group Hope not Hate.

What do we mean when we say far-right? In the words of Cas Mudde, a leading academic on populism and extremism: “Reform UK is far-right. That is not an opinion, that is a fact.”

While “far-right” is a contested term, most academics and experts generally agree that it includes certain key beliefs and themes, such as racist and xenophobic rhetoric, the undermining of democratic process, attacks on human rights and the principle that all human beings are equal, and a populist, conspiratorial belief in a sinister “elite”.

Reform UK fits all of the above.

Reform Party Candidates Continue to Make Richard Tice’s Insistence the Party is not Far-Right Seem Questionable – Here’s More Examples

10 For the second time this week Byline Times exposes more Reform UK candidates sharing content from far-right influencers and commentators

Olly Haynes

The terms far-right and fascist are often mistakenly interchangeable, creating an inaccurate expectation that the label “far-right” should only be applied to swastika-waving skinheads and Third Reich apologists.

- 15 Despite having attracted its fair share of these sorts of extremists, Reform UK itself is not fascist. But that doesn’t mean it isn’t far-right. “Far-right” is an umbrella term, and while useful, it is not a monolith, so academics and experts split it into its constituent parts.

#### Reform UK Facebook Groups Rife with Far-Right Sentiment and Support for Riots

- 20 From conspiracy theories to spats over Tommy Robinson, Reform UK supporter groups are kicking off amid Britain’s racist riots

Josiah Mortimer

The historians David Renton and Neil Davidson essentially divide the right of the political spectrum into conservatives, the non-fascist far-right, and fascism. In these definitions, Reform UK sits comfortably in the “non-fascist far-right” category.

- 25 Similarly, Mudde breaks down the term far-right further into the following:

The radical right which “accepts the essence of democracy, but opposes fundamental elements of liberal democracy”.

This describes Nigel Farage and Reform UK, as the party rejects key elements of liberal democracy, most notably the concept that every human being has inherent dignity and universal rights.

The extreme far-right which “rejects the essence of democracy, that is, popular sovereignty and majority rule”.

30

#### **The Reluctance to Use the Term**

Reform UK is adamant that it is not far-right and is willing to litigate the point, leading to many journalists and media outlets fearing legal repercussions for describing the party accurately.

- Former leader Richard Tice claimed that news organisations using the term were “defamatory and libellous”, while 35 many voters of the party genuinely see themselves not as extreme or fringe, but as ordinary, normal exemplars of “the people”.

#### The Politics of Farage and Reform is No Joke of a Matter – The Established Media Must Learn Its Lessons and Start Holding Them to Account

- 40 The normalisation of racism and dog-whistles will only get worse if the press continues to treat Farage as an entertaining figure representing the ‘real views’ of the British people – it must stop, writes Byline Times’ Editor

Hardeep Matharu

However, their refusal to self-identify as far-right doesn’t mean that they aren’t.

The failure to accurately describe policies and statements by supposedly “mainstream” commentators and politicians is a key factor in the normalisation of far-right politics.

- 45 The term “far-right” still has some power and if accurately deployed it can help slow or maybe even reverse the normalisation and mainstreaming of far-right parties and politicians like Reform UK and Farage.

#### **Farage’s Links to the Far-Right**

For decades, Farage has made overtly racist and xenophobic remarks and propagated antisemitic conspiracy theories.

- 50 He has spent years collaborating, befriending and showering praise for a wide range of far-right politicians across the world.

While leader of UKIP and as an MEP, Farage worked closely with a range of far-right parties as part of the Europe of Freedom and Democracy group which included Lega Nord, the Danish People’s Party, Finns Party and the Slovak National Party.

- 55 In 2014, Farage was widely criticised for joining forces with the Sweden Democrats, a far-right party with Nazi roots. Farage is friendly with and openly admires far-right leaders like Donald Trump, Georgia Meloni, Marie Le Pen and Victor Orban.

#### How Nigel Farage, Major Media Outlets and Ofcom ‘Normalised Islamophobia and Then Justified It’

- 60 Farage would be cancelled if he said the same things about Jews as he does Muslims – yet he gets endless airtime Faisal Hanif

Reform UK and its leader Farage fit comfortably within the definition of the far-right.

Key reasons include:

Undermining democracy: Farage has repeatedly questioned election results in Peterborough (2019), Rochdale (2024) and Oldham (2015), where he said that the electoral process was “dead” due to “ethnic changes in the way people are 65 voting”.



Attacks on human rights: Farage has called for the UK to withdraw from the European Convention on Human Rights, rejecting key principles of liberal democracy.

Racist and xenophobic rhetoric: Farage has a history of racism, xenophobia, and misogyny, with Reform UK's current focus being on portraying asylum seekers and Muslims as threats to the nation.

70 Populism and elite conspiracy: Farage frames himself as a defender of "the people" against a sinister "elite," fuelling distrust in politicians and institutions.

We must not shy away from calling Reform UK what they are – far-right.

Reform UK has repeatedly used racist and xenophobic rhetoric, attacking human rights and rejecting key principles of liberal democracy.

75 Nigel Farage's Nationalism Exposed: Champion of 'Little England' Courts Global Elites at Nomad Capitalist Event  
While the Reform leader portrays himself as a champion of England's white working class, his personal actions align far more with the interests of the ultra-wealthy and global elites  
Iain Overton

Farage may posit himself as the defender of the "people" against the elites, but he is the UK highest earning MP – hardly  
80 a man of the people.

Not using the correct terminology is a key factor in normalising Reform UK's harmful and dangerous politics. It's time to call a spade a spade.

### Could Nigel Farage become the next Tory leader? In some ways, he already has

Samuel Earle, *The Guardian*, Mon 24 June 2024

*Rather than providing a check on the far right, the party opened the door to Faragism – and made his fantasies come true*

5 Samuel Earle is the author of *Tory Nation: The Dark Legacy of the World's Most Successful Political Party*

It's easy to mock Nigel Farage: a cartoonish nationalist who's made more comebacks than any pop star, who's failed to win a seat in Westminster on seven different  
10 occasions, and whose urgent mission to save Britain from disaster doesn't stop him selling bottles of "Farage gin" on the side (£40). Farage is aware of this mockery, too – and you sense a desire for revenge is partly what motivates him. As he infamously told the European  
15 parliament after the 2016 referendum, "When I came here 17 years ago ... you all laughed at me – well, I have to say, you're not laughing now, are you?"

Even influential Conservatives – who desperately consume whatever Farage is selling, praying his  
20 followers will be included in the deal – heap insults on him. Michael Gove recently likened Farage to a clown or showman – a source of "amusement and diversion" – and called Reform UK "a giant ego trip". David Cameron says that Farage is "trying to destroy the  
25 Conservative party" and offers only "inflammatory language and hopeless policy", having previously called his supporters "fruitcakes and loonies and closet racists". Farage's friendly comments about Putin on  
Friday – that Nato and the EU "provoked" Russia's  
30 invasion of Ukraine – has provided fresh opportunities for them to take the moral high ground. But

Conservatives never square this condescension with their capitulation to his demands. Why, despite being in power for 14 years with ever bigger majorities, have  
35 they let Farage make such a strong claim to being the most influential politician of the period? Looking back on the soap opera of British politics since 2010, it is Conservative prime ministers who make cameo appearances, and Farage who is the arch protagonist,  
40 shaping events, sealing fates, hogging the media's attention.

Now, as this series of Tory rule draws to a close, Farage is claiming that he wants to kill off the same Conservative party that has granted his every wish.  
45 There's a strong sense of déjà vu: in Reform, Farage is leading his third different party in four elections; immigration is again being framed as a national emergency, after a brief pause; and the "smug, complacent and snobby" Cameron, as he put it in a  
50 recent Daily Telegraph column, is again the target of Farage's ire.

**But there is one major novelty. Farage's party has overtaken or drawn level with the Tories in many polls. In the past, Conservatives liked to say that a  
55 vote for Farage was a vote for Labour. Farage now says, gleefully, that a vote for the Conservatives is a vote for Labour. "A Tory vote is a now wasted vote – we are now the real opposition," he declares. Who's laughing now?**

60 As ever, Conservatives are split over what to do with the former City broker. While figures such as Suella Braverman and Jacob Rees-Mogg are eager to incorporate Farage and his crowd into the Tories'

electoral coalition, others – from Cameron to Kemi  
65 Badenoch – are steadfastly opposed. The Conservatives  
know this conundrum well. In their quest to defeat  
Labour, a question recurs throughout the party’s history:  
how to maintain an aura of respectability, and thus keep  
its moderates on side, without losing voters to parties  
70 further on the right?

This often results in awkward acrobatics. In the interwar  
period, with socialism and the Labour party on the rise,  
the press barons Lord Rothermere and Lord  
Beaverbrook launched the United Empire party to  
75 challenge the perceived centrism of “semi-socialist”  
Stanley Baldwin. Like Reform, the movement was a  
reactionary cry for recognition, and its leaders also  
claimed to want the Conservatives’ extinction. In  
response, Baldwin cautioned his divided party against  
80 the allures of fascism and demagoguery, even as he  
pandered to xenophobia – his home secretary between  
1924 and 1929, William Joynson-Hicks, was described  
by the Jewish Chronicle at the time as “the most avowed  
and determined antisemite in the House of Commons”.  
85 Enoch Powell later demanded a similar balancing act  
from the Tory leadership. After Powell’s “rivers of  
blood” speech in 1968, Ted Heath kicked him out of the  
shadow cabinet but kept him in the party. While Powell  
was a liability and a threat to Heath’s leadership, he was  
90 also an electoral asset – someone who could attract “to  
his banner the anti-blacks, hangers, floggers, censors  
and the martinets, who support him”, as the  
Spectator observed in 1969. Every vote counts.

Margaret Thatcher navigated the same challenges.  
95 During the 1979 election, when the Conservatives fell  
to level with Labour in the polls and the National Front  
was a noisy presence to her right, she leaned into  
Powellian language about Britain being “swamped” by  
people “of a different culture”, even calling for “an end  
100 to immigration”. A member of her team protested  
privately: “Just imagine if she’d said we were being  
swamped by Jewish people.” But as her popularity  
spiked, the National Front was outraged for different  
**More on Reform UK**

reasons: plagiarism. “‘Thatcherism’ as a hardline new  
105 brand of Conservative policy ... stole votes from the  
National Front by stealing – or *appearing* to steal – NF  
policies,” cried National Front News on its front page, a  
few months after her victory.

The Conservatives justify these contortions by arguing  
110 that if they weren’t there to acknowledge these views,  
they would carry Britain to even darker places. But for  
the past decade, far from being a check on the far right’s  
power, the Conservatives have opened the door for it,  
allowing fringe reactionary interests to swamp Britain’s  
115 culture and politics. Leaving the European Union, tying  
all overseas aid to foreign policy interests, trying to send  
asylum seekers to Rwanda, prioritising funding for the  
armed forces – all these policies would be at home in a  
Thatcher-era National Front manifesto, and they are all  
120 now promoted by the Conservative party. The Tories  
might bicker over whether Farage has a place in their  
party, but in truth they made their peace with Faragism  
long ago: lax on inequality and authoritarian on  
immigration, with a few kind words about the NHS  
125 thrown in, sums up the Tory strategy for most of the past  
50 years.

Could Farage become leader of the Conservatives? One  
tempting answer is that he already has. But as this  
bruising phase of Tory government has taught us, things  
130 can always get worse. A Conservative party featuring  
Farage anywhere near its leadership would be a more  
reactionary mainstream force than Britain has ever seen  
in modern history. Is this what Farage is working  
towards? Does he want to destroy the Conservative  
135 party and rebuild it in his image, or simply flog a few  
more bottles of gin? Unless Farage thinks the  
Conservatives will get even fewer than Reform’s half-  
dozen or so expected seats, his claim to being the  
opposition is bluster. But Farage didn’t get where he is  
140 by understating his influence and, more worryingly, the  
Tories have an unhappy habit of making his outlandish  
fantasies come true.

<https://bylinetimes.com/2024/01/18/reform-uk-limited-the-political-business-brought-to-you-by-billionaires/>

## Overview in March 2025 See also selection on Europe

### Hard-right parties are now Europe’s most popular

**But our number crunching shows that they have mostly been kept out of power**

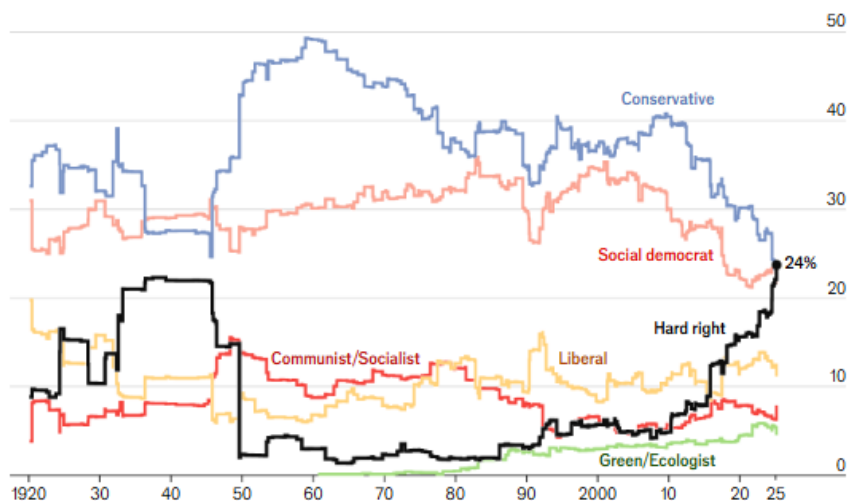
[Graphic detail](#) | Fighting over the firewall *The Economist*, Feb 28th 2025

ON FEBRUARY 23RD more than one in five [German voters](#) supported the hard-right Alternative for Germany (AfD).  
The party—which is under surveillance by domestic spooks for [suspected extremism](#)—doubled its vote share from the

previous election and received more votes than any hard-right group in the country since 1933. Not so long ago this would have been unthinkable in a stable, wealthy and moderate democracy in the heart of Europe. But over the past 15 years hard-right parties have made substantial gains across the region. Drawing on the work of political scientists, our analysis shows that they now make up Europe's most popular family of political parties by vote share, beating out the conservative and social-democratic blocs for the first time in modern European history (see chart 1).

### The hard rise

European democracies\*, average vote share† by party type, %



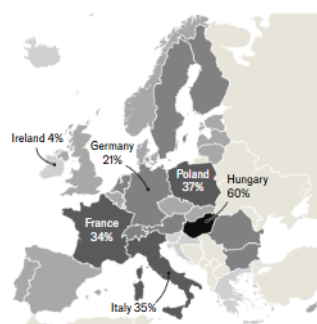
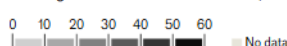
\*Including 27 members of the European Union, Britain, Iceland, Norway and Switzerland. Countries are included only for years they are considered to be democracies †Most recent election in all countries, population-weighted  
Sources: National elections; Our World in Data; ParGov; The PopuList; The Economist

The origin of Europe's recent hard-right surge is difficult to pin down. Some theorise that, beginning with the financial crash in 2008-09, voters were driven away from the mainstream and towards the extremes by economic anxiety. But the evidence for this is mixed. Europe is the richest it has ever been. And hard-right parties often win substantial support from the well-to-do. You could hardly look at the Netherlands—one of the wealthiest countries in the world, per person—and cite economic anxiety to explain its hard-right-led government.

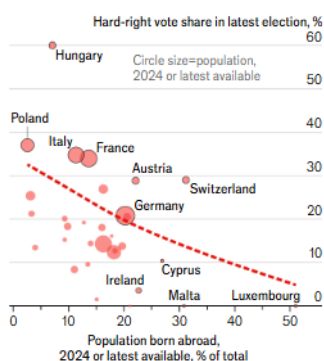
Another often-heard argument is that the hard right represents a backlash against the migrant crisis that came to a head in 2015. Irregular immigration to some European countries has remained very high. Again, this theory is imperfect. In Germany, like many other countries, the hard right's support comes predominantly from areas with little immigration. In fact, the association between immigration rates and support for the hard right is weaker than you might expect. Ireland has one of the largest foreign-born populations in Europe, for example, but no major hard-right party. The inverse is true of Poland (see chart 2).

### Think again

Hard-right vote share in latest election, %



European democracies\*, hard-right vote share and population born abroad



\*Including 27 members of the European Union, Britain, Iceland, Norway and Switzerland  
Sources: Eurostat; ONS; Our World in Data; National elections; ParGov; Scotland's Census; The PopuList; The Economist

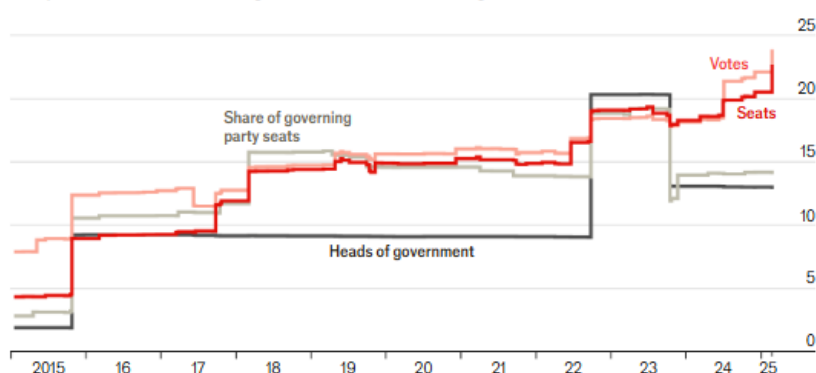
Instead, the rise of the hard right is probably the result of a mix of factors. A succession of crises from 2008 onwards have weakened confidence in European leaders. And although Europeans are getting richer, many feel anxious about

their economic security and social status. This makes them more sensitive to cultural changes such as immigration—even when those changes are happening far away. These trends are compounded by changes to the media landscape, particularly the rise of social media. The hard right’s growing support also has a ratchet: each time the parties increase their representation, they are normalised in the eyes of more mainstream voters.

And yet, despite their growing popularity, our analysis shows that they remain underrepresented in government. Grouping together the hard right as a single ideology across various countries is tricky. We drew on research from the University of Bremen and PopuList, a pan-European dataset of populist political parties, to form a list. We then tracked their representation since 1920. Based on our list we found that Europe’s hard-right parties received 24% of the vote in recent national elections, winning 23% of parliamentary seats. But they make up just 14% of the seats held by parties that are in power. Just two heads of government—Giorgia Meloni of Italy and Viktor Orban of Hungary—come from the hard-right parties in our list (see chart 3).

### Mind the gap

European democracies\*, hard-right share of votes, seats and governments†, %



\*Including 27 members of the European Union, Britain, Iceland, Norway and Switzerland. Countries are included only for years they are considered to be democracies †Population-weighted Sources: National elections; Our World in Data; ParlGov; The PopuList; The Economist

This has drawn condemnation from hard-right populists around the world. J.D. Vance, America’s vice-president, has criticised European leaders for “shutting people out of the political process”. Indeed, in some countries the hard right is locked out of power. In Germany, for example, the AfD is excluded from coalitions by the “firewall” that other parties maintain around it. That has done little to put voters off. But this is hardly undemocratic: more than three-quarters of Germans say that they oppose the country’s biggest party—the Christian Democratic Union—forming a coalition with the AfD. In other words, the firewall is not a stitch-up by liberal elites.

Even with minority support the hard right is disrupting politics across Europe, leaving the question of how other parties should respond. Many mainstream parties have decided that the hard right is simply too big to work around. However, while Germany’s firewall has not prevented the rise of the AfD, evidence from elsewhere suggests that dropping firewalls legitimises them. In Sweden, where mainstream parties have abandoned a firewall against [the Sweden Democrats \(SD\)](#), the hard right props up a minority government. Research suggests that voters now view the SD more favourably.

“Bringing the far right into government is what may cement and expand their vote because of the legitimacy signals it sends,” says Stuart Turnbull-Dugarte, a political scientist at the University of Southampton. What’s more, there is little evidence that collaborating with hard-right parties encourages them to moderate their more extreme policy proposals. Another approach for mainstream parties is to woo the hard right’s voters by adopting some of their preferred policies. A succession of European leaders—in countries from Britain to Denmark—have gone down [this route](#), denouncing immigration and pulling back from climate goals. Research by Tarik Abou-Chadi of the University of Oxford shows that when mainstream politicians adopt anti-immigrant positions, it only serves to remind voters why they might vote for hard-right parties in the first place. As Mr Abou-Chadi puts it, “there is no magic formula which will make the far right disappear.”

If the hard right gains as much power as its vote share suggests, Europe stands to become less economically unified, less welcoming for racial and sexual minorities and less committed to fighting climate change.■