

STATE OF HATE

FAR-RIGHT EXTREMISM IN EUROPE

2021

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Jan Charvát is an assistant professor at the Department of Political Science at the Institute of Political Studies in the Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University. He is the author of the book *Současný politický extremismus a radikalismus* (Current Political Extremism and Radicalism, 2007, in Czech) and co-author and editor of the book *Mikrofon je naše bomba. Politika a hudební subkultura mládeže v postsocialistickém Česku* (The Microphone Is Our Bomb. Politics and Youth Music Subcultures in Post-Socialist Czech Republic, 2018). His main professional interest includes political extremism, especially the current far right, social pathology, and political subcultures.

REMUS CRETAN

Remus Cretan is Professor of Human Geography at West University of Timisoara, Romania. Remus's recent research includes urban, regional and cultural geographies, more specifically he has studied ethnic identities, social movements and place naming in Central and Eastern Europe. His key topics are

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JACEK DZIĘGIELEWSKI

Jacek Dzięgielewski graduated in philology and journalism and has been involved in the Polish anti-racist and anti-fascist movement for many years. He currently works closely with the 'NEVER AGAIN' Association from Poland on activities such as monitoring hate speech and racist violence, as well as removing racist and nazi symbols from public space.

PATRIK HERMANSSON

Patrik Hermansson is a researcher at HOPE not hate specialising in transnational extreme right networks, terrorism and digital research. In 2017 he spent a year undercover in the British and American far-right and is the co-authors of *The International Alt-Right: Fascism for the 21st Century?* (Routledge) released in 2020.

SAFYA KHAN-RUF

Safya Khan-Ruf is a researcher and journalist, covering different types of hate across Europe for HOPE not hate, the UK's largest anti-fascism and anti-racism organisation. She is particularly interested in interfaith efforts challenging prejudice, the interactions of minority communities with each other and the state, and the fortunes of the far right in Europe. Safya studied Neuroscience at King's College London, before doing a Masters in

COUNTRY POLAND

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For a few years now, we observe a major rise in the activity of far-right in Poland. By the beginning of 2020, the biggest political party on the far-right in Poland was Konfederacja (Confederation). They managed to introduce 11 deputies to the Parliament, making it a total of 6,81% of votes in the 2019 parliamentary election.

Konfederacja is a conglomerate of a few smaller political parties and movements – most notable being KORWiN and Ruch Narodowy (Nationalist Movement, which itself consists of Młodzież Wszechpolska (All-Polish Youth) and several smaller organizations). Ruch Narodowy rose to prominence after hosting the annual March of Independence, the biggest far-right manifestation in Europe. It attracts many far-right and neo-fascist groups from abroad, such as Forza Nuova from Italy or Jobbik from Hungary.

KORWiN is a party that takes its name from the surname of its founder, Janusz Korwin-Mikke. He is a controversial politician present on the Polish political scene for several decades. He is notable for countless sexist, homophobic and antisemitic remarks.

2020 also brought the COVID-19 pandemic, which lay the ground for numerous accounts of racist and antisemitic hate speech and violence, as well as conspiracy theories, often antisemitic and xenophobic by themselves. Another big surge of far-right aggression and violence came in October after the Constitutional Court decided to exacerbate the anti-abortion law. This decision led to massive protests in the whole country. Groups of young men, often coordinated by far-right organizations attacked the protesters – mainly young women.

The Guard of the Independence March, a paramilitary organization created to “protect” the annual Independence March “defended” churches (some protesters demonstrated against the meddling of the Catholic Church into politics and its hatred towards LGBT people). This “defense” led to acts of violence, again mainly towards women, including older and even the disabled people.

Prominent members of the ruling party, Law and Justice, frequently use homophobic language. Several local governments introduced so-called “LGBT-free zones”. The President of Poland, Andrzej Duda, also used homophobic rhetoric that might be even seen as dehumanizing.

MAIN FAR-RIGHT ORGANISATIONS

Name	Ideology
Konfederacja (Confederation)	Radical right, euroscepticism, nationalism
Ruch Narodowy (Nationalist Movement)	Ethno-nationalism
ONR (Obóz Narodowo-Radykalny, National-Radical Camp)	Far right, nationalism
Młodzież Wszechpolska (All-Polish Youth)	Radical right, nationalism
KORWiN	Radical free-market ideology, euroscepticism, nationalism

ELECTED FAR-RIGHT REPRESENTATIVES

Legislature	Party	Number of elected representatives
National	Konfederacja (Confederation)	11

MOST INFLUENTIAL ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Name	Platform	Followers/ Likes
Grzegorz Braun	Facebook Twitter	181 k 39,4 k
Robert Winnicki	Facebook Twitter	88 k 59,9 k
Janusz Korwin-Mikke	Twitter (removed from Facebook)	187 k
Krzysztof Bosak	Facebook Twitter	321 k 243,2 k
Marcin Rola / wRealu24	YouTube	483 k
Rafał Ziemkiewicz	Facebook Twitter	107 k 212,6 k

KEY NARRATIVES

Since 2015, a big narrative binding the far-right together is Islamophobia and inciting anti-refugee fear. Far-right politicians used the immigration crisis in Europe to convince people that refugees are a great threat to the security of Poland. Another big narrative is the hatred toward LGBT community. It is also a recurring theme, often used instrumentally to cover up bigger and more important issues also by more mainstream politicians and political parties.



Far right National Radical Camp (ONR) march through Gdańsk to celebrate the anniversary of its founding. Members chanted 'Death to enemies of the Fatherland'. Photo: @notesfrompoland / Facebook

In 2020, a new narrative was born – that COVID-19 pandemic is a hoax, or that the virus itself is a biological weapon, or that the vaccine will be used to depopulate the world – all kind of contradictory conspiracy theories. They also include racist and antisemitic themes and lead to violence and discrimination in real life.

RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The far-right used the pandemic to distribute many different conspiracy theories, which pose a great threat to public health and safety. Those theories include racist and antisemitic elements. They are also often contradictory to each other. COVID-19 brought also hatred and violence towards people from other countries – in the beginning people of Asian descent (even those living and working in Poland for many years), but later it spread onto people perceived as “others” in general – Russians, Ukrainians etc. At the end of the day, the pandemic was exploited by far-right leaders as a convenient situation to regroup and gather electorate and followers or gain new ones.

THE FAR-RIGHT THREAT IN 2021

The COVID-related hatred will most probably continue to exist, and so will the conspiracy theories. In fact, those theories may even rise and become a bigger threat to public safety as the vaccine is now being distributed. LGBT hatred will be also present for sure, also as an instrument for politicians to unite their electorate against a common enemy. Similarly, homophobia will be surely used to cover up current political affairs in the same manner it was used in 2020.