

Euroskepticism and its Discontents

The real meaning of the European elections: lots of people hate the EU!

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The conventional wisdom is nearly always wrong, and rarely so wrong as when it comes to the EU elections, the results of which are being trumpeted as the [triumph](#) of the “far right.” The more alarmist among these uniformly pro-EU commentators are even claiming [neo-fascism](#) in Europe is on the march. Well, they’re at least half right: something is on the march. They just don’t know what it is.

The “far right” meme is based on the results in France, where the [National Front](#) of Marine Le Pen has for the first time won a plurality of seats in the European Parliament, and this news is usually coupled with [panic-stricken](#) reports of UKIP’s [sweep](#) across the Channel. Yet the two parties have [nearly nothing](#) in common except for opposition to the euro and the European project. The French Front is [statist, protectionist](#), and carries red banners in the streets on [May Day](#). UKIP is a quasi-free market [split from the Tories](#), pro-free market and vaguely Little Englander. They aren’t opposed to immigration [per se](#): they just want immigrants with assets, as opposed to the poorer variety.

The only thing these two movements have in common is opposition to [the rule of Brussels](#), but that is quite enough for the Eurocrats and their journalistic camarilla to cast them in the role of volatile “extremists,” dangerous “populists” out to tear apart the “social fabric” of Europe. One prominent Eurocrat, the former Prime Minister of Luxembourg, [foresees](#) a replay of 1914: “I am chilled by the realization of how similar the crisis of 2013 is to that of 100 years ago,” intones Jean-Claude Juncker.

While there aren’t many Archdukes left to assassinate, whatever the similarities to 1914, the so-called right-wing populists have little to do with it. Indeed, it is the EU, in seeking to assert itself as an international power, that has [ratcheted up](#) the war danger by [challenging Russia](#) in Ukraine, allying with Washington to push NATO to the very gates of Moscow. In opposing the EU’s very existence, these parties – whatever their other characteristics – are taking on the forces that make war more likely.

And while a good number of these emerging parties may be fairly characterized as “right-wing populist,” this generalization doesn’t hold at all when one looks at the details. Yes, the National Democratic Party of Germany, a group with [clear neo-Nazi sympathies](#), has entered the European Parliament for the first time: yet that has little to do with the minor uptick in their vote total and much more to do with German election law, [recently revised](#) to lower the threshold for being granted seats (from five percent to one percent). On the other hand, the [Alternative for Germany](#) (AfD), a party opposed to the euro albeit not necessarily to the political concept of the EU, garnered six percent: AfD is a split from the now politically irrelevant Free Democrats, whose leading lights are economists and academics rather than skinheads. It is a party that came out of nowhere and has now displaced the Free Democrats

as Germany's rising third force - yet the NPD gets all the [publicity](#).

The reason is because the NPD's negligible gains fit the preordained theme of the news coverage, the meme adopted by the media elite and handed down from on high.

The idea that "right-wing populism" or even neo-fascism is on the march due to the results of the European elections is never so nonsensical as when it is applied to Italy, where Beppe Grillo's "Five Star" movement came in with [21 percent](#) of the vote, an astounding total given the party's brief history and scant resources. The Five Starists are a unique combination of Euro-skepticism, populism (they favor direct democracy via the Internet), and outright cynicism, Italian-style. And while the 40 percent garnered by the pro-EU Democratic party is being hailed by the media and the Eurocrats (or do I repeat myself?) as a great victory, that the Five Stars managed to even approximate their last vote total without much institutional backing was in itself a major accomplishment. My point, however, is that Italy has real fascist parties, none of which registered above a few percent in the recent election.

Another example of this nonsensical "immigrant-bashing-neo-fascists-are-on-the-rise" line being handed out by Brussels is Greece, where, it's true, the openly fascist semi-criminal "Golden Dawn" party polled [nearly 10 percent](#). Yet these same alarmists downplay the victory - by four percentage points - of [Syriza](#), a far-left outfit, over the ruling center-right coalition: the usual excuse given is that the margin isn't considered big enough for an "upset." Syriza is described in news accounts as an "anti-austerity" party, a bit of a euphemism that downplays its origins as a coalition of Communists, Trotskyists, and other far-left grouplets.

In Poland, the controversial [Janusz Korwin-Mikke](#) and his "New Right" party combine a quasi-libertarian domestic program with outright opposition to the EU and a [mean streak](#) of misogynistic notions about women and sexuality that have won the party notoriety: they won 7 percent of the vote, thus ensuring them seats. They are the Polish version of UKIP: the same goes for the Danish Peoples Party, which won [27 percent](#) and doubled its seats. The neo-fascist British National Party [lost all its seats](#) this time around.

However, a kernel of truth abides in the conventional wisdom: there is indeed a rising fascist presence in European politics, and it is not confined to France's National Front, which is not openly fascist in any case. There is a geographical factor involved in this trend: the most successful fascist parties are those in southeastern Europe, including not only Golden Dawn but Hungary's [Jobbik party](#) - which is openly anti-Semitic and looks to the pro-Nazi collaborationists of World War II for inspiration. The Austrian Freedom Party, founded by Jorge Haidar, gained 27 percent, doubling its representation in the European Parliament. Under Haidar's leadership, the party was more like UKIP than BNP, but in recent years has [veered](#) more toward the Geert Wilders model - whose own Dutch anti-Muslim movement, by the way, fared pretty [badly](#).

That none of these mostly West European parties, including Le Pen's National Front, has the slightest chance of actually coming to power doesn't stop the "progressive" left from sounding the alarm - just hearing it galvanizes their followers and confirms them in the knowledge that [anyone to their right](#) is a racist homophobic misogynist with a secret yen for World War II memorabilia. Their big blind spot, however, is apparent when their gaze turns eastward, and particularly where it concerns the EU's latest conquest - Ukraine.

I had to laugh when I saw the [tweets from the usual suspects hailing](#) the presidential election results in Ukraine as proof fascism has no presence in that country. The presidential contest hardly measured the Ukrainian fascists' [actual strength](#): the real test will come later, with parliamentary elections and the progress of the EU's "[austerity](#)" program. In the meantime, the Svoboda (Freedom) party has seven supporters in the "interim" government, which will probably be unchanged until and unless parliamentary elections are held.

Originally the "[Social National](#)" party (i.e. national socialist, *wink wink!*), Svoboda holds 35 seats in the Rada (parliament), the result of their 10 percent vote total last time around. After playing such a [key role](#) in the Maidan protests, their vote total is bound to go up, and indeed the victory of the so-called Chocolate King, the oligarch Petro Poroshenko, in the presidential election will pave the way for their future success. [A pretty sleazy character](#) in his own right, the filthy-rich Poroshenko will preside over EU-dictated terms of austerity that promise to be fertile ground for precisely the sort of Weimar-like "populism" the Eurocrats are warning against.

Thus the Euro-elites dig their own graves - which one wouldn't mind at all if they didn't insist on taking so many innocents with them.

The reaction against the EU project on both the right and the left is easily explained: people don't trust big institutions, particularly of the governmental variety. The bigger they are, the more people resent and resist them.

The EU is often portrayed by its boosters as the prerequisite for Europe fully entering modernity, leaving behind the old detritus of national borders and cultural particularities and moving to embrace a Brave New World. Yet the Eurocrats uphold an old-fashioned conception of modernity, one born before the computer age empowered individuals and fostered the merits of decentralized decision-making. Just look at the decision by some [idiotic Spanish judge](#) to censor the Google search engine: these people just don't get it, do they?

All this baloney about how failure to recognize the supremacy of Brussels risks a replay of the Great War represents a severe case of projection. The foreign policy of the EU has been consistently aggressive and expansionist. This is underscored not only by Brussels' recent Ukrainian foray but also by its ambitions of absorbing [Georgia](#). And don't forget the on-again off-again ascension of [Turkey](#) to full EU status, long a project on the Eurocrats' agenda: the idea is to pair NATO membership with EU membership in a discount package deal. It is of course entirely laughable that Turkey is European in any respect: but power politics trumps culture and even language, at least among the Euro-elites. As the EU charges eastward, it won't be long before they'll be claiming the "president" of Kazakhstan a long lost European brother.

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