

In the past decade, the phrase “global resurgence of the far-right” has become ubiquitous within political discourse. Countless academic and mainstream analyses have been conducted and published trying to explain this phenomenon and the risks it may pose. It is important to note that while some are using the term “global” they predominantly mean North America and Europe.

This paper is not necessarily interested in analyzing the details that bring about the rise of the far-right. Rather, it will investigate what it means to have such a phrase within the political discourse. To do so, this paper will address the following questions: 1) How is the ‘far-right’ being defined at the current moment? 2) How does defining the ‘far-right’ in this manner impact the current political order? As with any analysis of events, multiple narratives and viewpoints can be written and taken when looking at the resurgence of the far-right. This analysis will predominantly focus on economic elements. That is not to say that cultural and political implications are not impactful, but as this article will argue they are, more often than not, exacerbated to dangerous levels by the economic situation.

Trying to define the rising ‘far-right’ is problematic as the term is not officially used as a self-identifier for the political movements that get labeled as ‘far-right’. It is a rather severely stigmatized label (Tannous, 2023) given to them by others. There are two clear markers present in most political movements that get designated the title of ‘far-right’: firstly, they espouse anti-establishment rhetoric. This is a populist rhetoric in which the interest of the people is championed by the political movement against the corrupt establishment/political elite (Greven, 2016). Secondly, there is a strong resistance to inclusion. There is a strong drive towards



exclusionary nationalism and xenophobia (Tannous, 2023). The two aforementioned markers result in an “Us vs Them” mentality the “Us” being a culturally homogenous group that is juxtaposed against the ‘other’ that arrived and ruined their garden of Eden. Additionally, the ‘far-right’ with its anti-establishment rhetoric subverts the formal and informal rules that are present within mainstream political discourse to their benefit (Greven, 2016).

Most analyses that look at the ‘far-right’ describe them as appealing to a nostalgic past and being against globalization. Globalization in this scenario is described as the free movement of people and ideas across borders. Before the rise of the ‘far-right’ most anti-globalization movements were led by leftist groups (Horner et al., 2023). Leftist groups argued that what is being called globalization is ‘corporate globalization’. They view globalization as “corporate power organized on a global scale [to] undermine the capacity of citizens and national communities to make independent decisions about social, economic and political priorities” This movement was anti-capitalist, not exclusionary (Ross, 2023).

It is important to point out a different definition of globalization. It allows one to look at the issue from a different moral point of view than the one predominantly presented within mainstream media. It is easy to condemn someone for being xenophobic and racist, and refuse to partake in dialogue with them. Framing the struggle against globalization in such essentializing terms highly derails the possibility of dialogue between groups. As Yanis Varoufakis, the ex-finance minister of Greece, puts it in a 2017 interview “Suppose we press a button and all the foreigners leave for Mars will everything be okay with you now? Through this dialectic, Socratic dialogue, we can draw from their souls that their fears have nothing to do with refugees or with



foreigners.” (Fränkel, 2017) The refusal or inability to have a conversation in which the underlying fears are aired out and discussed results in a dispossessed group feeling further marginalized.

The marginalization of dispossessed or fearing to be dispossessed groups allows for the employment of populist rhetoric. ‘Far-right’ movements seek to reinforce their fears and use them to acquire power. This rhetoric while racist and exclusionary does not tackle the concern of dispossession in any practical way. It was not the immigrants and the “other” that dispossessed them. It was the disappearance of the much-cited, but rarely-seen “invisible hand”. The concept of the invisible hand within the corpus of Adam Smith is different from its usage in modern economics. In modern economics, the concept was popularized by Paul Samuelson and it argues that in the pursuit of their own self-interests people positively impact the greater society. However, for Adam Smith, the concern he was addressing as he introduced this concept was the possibility of British business owners turning abroad for profit and favoring foreign markets over domestic ones. He argued that a home bias would compel them to invest in England rather than abroad (Chomsky, 2011). On both accounts, the “invisible hand” has gone missing. Since the 1970s, neoliberal trade practices have been the guiding principles of global trade. During that period, the world’s wealthiest nation has seen a decoupling of productivity and hourly compensation, rampant wage growth for the top 1% in comparison to the bottom 90%, and stagnant wages for middle-wage workers (Gould, 2014).

The economic rationality that Adam Smith feared had become a reality there was no “invisible hand” that compelled businesses to invest domestically when greater profits were available elsewhere. We are now witnessing the ills that arise from that harsh reality. It is vital to point



out, that the growth in popularity that the far-right has garnered in Western Europe and the United States during these past years is concerning and can have an extremely harmful impact on vulnerable people within and outside of those societies. However, unless national governments are willing to address the real issues plaguing the middle and lower classes that are struggling no major progress can be made. Politicians who are currently running against far-right coalitions and candidates seem to be either forgetful of that or purposefully employing it as a strategy. The platform that most politicians run against the far-right candidates is that of anti-racism and a return to the ‘normal’ liberal state of things. This approach is puzzling on two levels: 1) It does nothing to win over the racists and pushes them further into the far-right camp. The most famous example of this would be during the 2016 U.S. presidential race when Hilary Clinton referred to half of Trump’s supporters as “the basket of deplorables”. The basket includes “The racist, sexist, homophobic, xenophobic, Islamophobic — you name it. And unfortunately, there are people like that. And he has lifted them up.... Now some of those folks, they are irredeemable, but thankfully they are not America.” (Montanaro,2016) 2) For most voters alienated by the current social and economic situation it was that very ‘normal’ liberal state of things that got them to this point. Why would they want to return to it? On both accounts, this platform does nothing to chip away at the bloc that votes for the right or far-right candidate.

The racist tendencies in societies will not go away with the loss of political power of the candidates that channel racism to win elections. It requires a long and concentrated political project that has the goal of eradicating these tendencies. If racism does remain in societies, then it is essential to curb the most dangerous elements of racism. This does not mean appeasing racists or giving in to their demands. Governments must take steps to deal with the root causes



that disenfranchise their constituents. Rather, what we witness are governments and politicians who may be anti-racist in rhetoric, yet still maintain racist and xenophobic practices. To this point, we see that: 1) new data has shown that migrants are more likely to be released under Trump than Biden (Bier, 2023), 2) the current Chancellor of Germany is for more often and faster deportation of migrants (Hickmann & Kurbjuweit, 2023), and 3) the EU's foreign policy chief sees Europe as a 'walled garden' in comparison to the 'jungle' outside of it (Liboreiro, 2022). These centrist governments are racist and exclusionary in all, but their rhetoric.



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