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BY **F. ZEHRA COLAK**

ABSTRACT

Cathrine Thorleifsson (2019) *Nationalist Responses to the Crises in Europe: Old and New Hatreds*. Routledge. 134 pp... Drawing on multi-sited fieldwork conducted in England, Hungary and Norway in 2015, Thorleifsson's book offers timely and critical insights into how hostility and racism toward migrants and minorities are situated within the material conditions, historical events and social contexts.

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Dynamics and appeal of populist nationalism in Europe

The recent resurgence of populist far-right across much of the west has attracted scholarly attention, with research investigating socio-economic, structural and globalized dynamics to explain their appeal for an increasing segment of the population. While there is a growing body of literature addressing the rise of exclusivist nationalism, such focus fails to fully account for the role of the everyday dynamics and appeal of nationalism for those who make and sustain it, mainly the supporters of the populist radical right (PRR) parties. This book is a welcome intervention in this regard. The essential aim is to explain the causes, dynamics, and local appeal of populist nationalism in contemporary Europe through an analysis of PRR parties and politicians as well as the PRR supporters' concerns and motivations. Situating individual experiences within the wider socio-political, historical, economic and cultural context, the book focuses not only on the supply but also on the often-ignored demand side of populist nationalism.

The ethnographic study is based on fieldwork carried out in multiple sites across England, Hungary and Norway amongst the voters and supporters of the UK Independence Party (UKIP), Fidesz and Jobbik, and the Norwegian Progress Party. It is acknowledged that these parties differ in their history, ideology and orientation, but what is notable is their convergence in constructing Muslim migrants and minorities as a threat to security, culture and national identity to instrumentalise sentiments of anxiety and fear. In addition to analyzing the role of PRR party leaders in shaping populist nationalism, Thorleifsson offers a comprehensive and clear account of how the supporters of these parties negotiate their belonging at the intersection of ethnicity, nationality and race.

Thorleifsson defines populist nationalism as “the exclusionary and polarizing nationalism that pits morally ‘pure’ and virtuous insiders against a set of internal and external others who are depicted as threatening to the nation-state” (pg. 2). The author interprets the rise of PRR parties as part of an attempt to downgrade the globalization processes rooted in the crisis of economy, culture and displacement. Furthermore, the resurgence of anti-immigration parties is attributed to working class resentments of economic insecurities, symbolic threats, and political discontent. Playing upon such anxieties and tapping into the grievances of disillusioned segments of the population, the PRR parties choose to frame migrants as a threat and capitalize on the so-called refugee crisis to strengthen national boundaries. Still, it is emphasized that the specific social context, historical background, structural circumstances and economic realities shape the manifestation and appeal of exclusionary populism across England, Hungary and Norway.

The book shows how in Doncaster, England, the UKIP breakthrough takes place against a background of neoliberal restructuring, economic transition

and rapid demographic change, which is interpreted to have an overheating effect. It is explained that the party's main support group is lower-educated working class, whose grievances and cultural or economic anxieties are addressed by UKIP as the party makes promises to restore the coal industry and protect the national borders from the so-called 'job-stealing migrants'. Previous invisible privileges tied to whiteness became more prominent over the fight for resources and rights even though the local Sikh minority are also attracted to the protectionist vision of UKIP.

The notions of nostalgia and coal nationalism are adopted to explain the nature of exclusive nationalism and the political strategies adopted by UKIP in the industrial town of Doncaster. Similarly, it is elaborated how strategies such as dual essentialization are used during Trump and UKIP Brexit campaigns to foster white superiority through racializing the white working class as pure and authentic and non-white people as a threat to security, culture, and identity. In other words, "the Muslim Other became a spectacular projection that met the populist needs of whiteness and Englishness, of whiteness and Americanness" (pg. 46).

Hungarian radical right's treatment of non-European and mainly Muslim migrant Others as disposable strangers uncovers the ways populist nationalism is manifested along racial, ethnic, and religious lines following the economic crisis and global migration. The book elaborates on how the framing of predominantly Muslim migrants as an economic threat laid the groundwork for their further dehumanization by the governing PRR party Fidesz. Despite Hungary being a transit zone for an overwhelming majority of migrants, it shows how Viktor Orbán copied Jobbik's ultra-nationalist political style and capitalized on migration flows with anti-immigration campaigns and policies. The theoretical framing is based on various anthropological and philosophical perspectives exploring the notions of purity and the wider implications of the border-crossing act for the constructed nature of citizenship. It convincingly argues that the rise of support for PRR parties needs to be understood against the background of socio-economic factors, historical background and the increasing ethno-nationalism fueled by anti-Islamic and xenophobic far-right rhetoric.

The discussion of the Hungarian far right is nuanced by showing how the former leader of the right-wing extremist party Jobbik (Movement for a Better Hungary), Gábor Vona, adopts a pro-Palestinian and pro-Islam stance, unlike Fidesz and many other PRR parties in Western Europe. This strategic twist on the part of Jobbik, accompanied by antisemitic and antigypsy propaganda, is attributed to the lack of a large Muslim presence in Hungary although anti-Muslim racism is still dominant in party campaigns and debates. The demonization of the Roma minority and Jews led to the party's breakthrough in 2010 across regions with a sizeable Gypsy population, including the industrial town of Ózd, where Thorleifsson conducted part of her research. Her interviews with Jobbik supporters underline how people rely on conspiracy theories and intertwined categories of exclusion based on a

merging of antisemitism and Islamophobia as they struggle with economic anxieties. While the main research focus is on far-right supporters, Thorleifsson briefly draws attention to the forms of Hungarian civil resistance contesting racialized securitization of migrants as an existential threat.

One of the common anti-immigration and mobilization strategies adopted by PRR across UK, Hungary, Norway and Sweden is argued to be based on a dystopian imaginary of Sweden where, supposedly, migration has created chaos and multiculturalism has failed. The book offers examples of how the imaginary of Swedish dystopia is reproduced across European far-right to warn against the so-called Islamification, demographic extinction and to promote nativism as a solution to disorder. In Norway, for instance, the anti-immigration Progress Party's rhetoric feeds off the myth around the rise of violent crimes allegedly caused by immigration in Sweden. In Hungary, the call for protection of the white nation and Christian civilization is justified through securitization of the migrant Other who threatens its so-called purity to avoid the conditions of Swedish dystopic place.

The final chapter of the book is dedicated to unravelling the dynamics of exclusion and antiziganism targeting itinerant Roma in Norway to identify how Norwegian-ness is constructed. It provides an elaborate picture of how the dehumanization of the Roma and their inaccurate portrayal as 'organized criminals' are perpetuated by the populist right-wing Progress Party politicians and its supporters. Treating Roma as human waste and moralizing cleanliness, ethnic Norwegians fail to consider the role of structural conditions in creating precarious living conditions for the Roma. The book describes how, unlike in England and Hungary, the categories of difference and exclusion in Norway are not based on economic tensions but mainly rely on culturalist discourses.

The main argument of the book is based on a convincing account of the causes, methods and appeal of populist nationalism by drawing on the individual, local, societal, and global conditions and processes. Although mainstream parties and politicians are invited in the conclusion chapter to better respond to the concerns of citizens, the role of elites (e.g., journalists, intellectuals, politicians) and liberal institutions in mainstreaming the xenophobic far-right agendas and discourses is not fully explored. For instance, in addition to the discursive practices and policies of mainstream actors, media coverage of the populist far-right can contribute to the legitimization of the far-right and shape public discourse, albeit inadvertently. Mondon & Winter (2020) note that "the mainstreaming of the far-right is not simply or even predominantly the result of popular demand or the savviness of the far right itself," calling for more attention to the systemic failures of liberalism (pg. 290).

Also, despite references to the concerns of voters to protect the white race from the racialized immigrant Other, a more critical engagement with the concepts of white privilege and white supremacy and their relationship to

the rise of far-right remains absent from the discussion. For instance, the nostalgia for the past is not only an outcome of radical socio-economic change and uncertainty but also reflects a deep yearning for an ethno-racial pure nation without undesired non-whites. In this respect, nostalgia narratives involving idealized representation of a racially homogenous past are adopted to strengthen and reproduce white supremacy drawing on the conviction in the inherent superiority of the white people. Exposing such internalized racism can throw more light on the link between the reproduction of whiteness within the existing socio-political and cultural structures and the growing appeal for the far-right actors and discourses.

Overall, this book is an important contribution to the continuing debate on the rise of right-wing populism and throws much-needed light on the agency and motivations of PRR supporters based on a critical ethnographic approach. The analysis generates new insights into various factors and processes that explain local support for populist right-wing parties across Europe. The research also opens up avenues for further study, especially on the concerns and experiences of the disillusioned citizens of Europe, who actively contest, negotiate and draw the boundaries of nationhood.



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The European Center for Populism Studies (ECPS) is an independent, non-partisan, nonprofit organization, based in Brussels, for research on and analysis of challenges posed by the resurgence of political populism. ECPS facilitates collaboration among networks of academic experts, practitioners, policymakers, media, and other stakeholders. ECPS offers a platform for the exchange of policy solutions on issues relating to rising populism and provides insights for policy-making and critical analysis to raise broader awareness and engagement through:

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