

The Rise of Populist Right-Wing Parties in Western Europe: A Case Study of the Front National in France

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Abstract : This paper examines France as a microcosm of the rise of right-wing populism in the broader European context. The attack on the Charlie Hebdo newspaper is arguably, a reaction to the aggressive European secularism spreading throughout Europe that sees its true enemy in the growth of extremist and violent interpretations of Islam. With each terrorist attack, the popularity of anti-immigrant policies and ideologies increases. What ultimately drives movements like the French National Front are the concepts of monoculture and ethnic identity. This paper analyses the character of right-wing populist parties using the National Front as a case study. Such parties generate anxiety and resentment by fomenting an irrational fear of the 'other'. In this way, populists promote their identity on the basis of xenophobia, Islamophobia, and practices of social exclusion against targeted out-groups. They position immigrants and foreigners as 'others', claiming they are a threat to native cultures and a source of social and economic strife. Ultimately, right-wing populism exerts a negative influence over the democratic framework in Europe and opposes the European Union's integration project. Right-wing populism attacks this supranational model because of its alleged inefficiency and departure from what it considers to be 'authentic' European traditions and citizenship. In this context, understanding the rise of radical right-wing populist parties is extremely important for the future of Europe, democracy and multiculturalism.

Keywords : cultural identity, Europeanization, front national, immigration, integration, Islamophobia, multiculturalism, nationalism, right-wing populist parties, xenophobia

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