

Briefly Noted

Far-Right Politics in Europe, Jean-Yves Camus and Nicolas Lebourg, trans. Jane Marie Todd (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2017), 320 pp., \$29.95 cloth.

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A wave of migration, coupled with a dramatic increase in the exchange of ideas, results in a surge of discrimination and authoritarianism. One might assume that Jean-Yves Camus and Nicolas Lebourg are speaking of modern events in the opening pages of *Far-Right Politics in Europe* rather than a historical period that began in the 1840s. Known as the “first globalization,” this period birthed the foundation for much of today’s European far right.

Far-Right Politics provides a precision and historical context often lacking in today’s heated discourse, which tends to either conflate populism, fascism, and the far right, or to reduce the terms to simple pejoratives, devoid of ideology and context. Starting in the late eighteenth century, the authors trace the progression of Europe’s political parties as they relate to themes such as post-fascism, white power, and religious fundamentalism; and they dissect the belief structures of political parties and movements, precisely placing theories and policies on the left-right continuum. Though dense with history, the book remains accessible, providing a digestible survey of the formation and current state of Europe’s far right. Indeed, it often reads like a who’s who of fringe movements, highlighting important connections between leaders and communities.

While the bulk of *Far-Right Politics* is devoted to history rather than analysis, consistent themes emerge. The authors trace movements and ideologies as they spread through time and space, fracturing and cleaving as figureheads refine their beliefs. Some groups shrink as they narrow the bounds of acceptable identity; others expand as they concede ideological purity in favor of mainstream acceptance. Taken together, the convoluted lineages of the far right are indicative of the inherently divisive nature of exclusionary ideology. The book emphasizes the importance of propaganda, and the authors carefully note those groups whose ownership of media outlets has allowed for the spread of ideas across borders and even oceans. The role of culture is also addressed at length. While established, politically integrated parties such as France’s Front National have the ability to draw from relatively diverse demographics by endorsing a set of policies, other groups, especially those associated with the white power movement, appeal to youth by creating an alternative lifestyle, complete with tailored music and fanzines.

The true strength of *Far-Right Politics* is that it eschews alarmism in favor of detailed and measured reporting. Careful to avoid generalization, Camus and Lebourg assess

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the viability of the far right country-by-country. Though the authors conclude that these movements are likely to continue growing in Europe, they also note the low levels of support they receive during elections as well as the institutional and demographic obstacles they face. Though some groups have succeeded in gaining a seat at the political table, they have done so only by shedding their most extreme beliefs. Overall, *Far-Right Politics* succeeds in

reminding readers of the futility of oversimplification. Despite a few core characteristics, individual far-right movements are distinct in their priorities, and group aims are uniquely reflective of geography and historical memory.

As the world is tested once again by mass migration and populist backlash, *Far-Right Politics in Europe* serves as an excellent primer for making sense of the current landscape of Europe's far right.

Theory of the Border, Thomas Nail (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 288 pp., \$99 cloth, \$29.95 paper.

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As both a candidate and now as president of the United States, Donald Trump has frequently reiterated his desire to dam the flow of immigration by building an impregnable wall, declaring “no border, no country.” In *Theory of the Border*, Thomas Nail takes a more nuanced view of the relationship between borders and modern nation-states, though he agrees with Trump that the border is foundational for nation-building. Whereas Trump deems the border a necessary condition of existence for America, Nail treats borders as the condition of existence for all social mobility and politics in general. He articulates a political theory based on human movement that he dubs “kinopolitics.” Nail sees the border not as a set of stable lines on a map, physically separating two groups, but as a ubiquitous process of social division that redirects flows of movement. Today, borders are not confined to the barbed wire structures that divide states; rather, they structure the process of dividing social groups, organizing everything from passport controls to the singing of national anthems.

Nail traces the evolution of bordering mechanisms through history, beginning with the emergence of fences corralling animals in the Fertile Crescent and ending with the refined checkpoints designed to regulate movement between nation-states. He then applies theory to practice by examining the U.S.-Mexico border. The theoretical legwork occupying the first half of the book allows Nail to unravel, succinctly and in detail, the multifaceted dimensions of one of the most controversial borders in the world today. In the end, Nail demonstrates how border technologies produce and constantly reproduce the contours of the societies they enclose.

Understanding the logic of the border is crucial for dealing with immigration policy, of course, but *Theory of the Border* transcends the scope of that issue, concerning itself with nothing less than the central contradiction of globalization: income inequality continues to grow even as more people are migrating now than at any other time in history. Transnational institutions like