Gender and Far-right Nationalism: Historical and International Dimensions. Introduction

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Abstract
This special issue explores the entangled history of contemporary far-right nationalism and gender. Seven case studies apply a distinct historical perspective and analyse gender as a meta-language for xenophobia, racism, and anti-Semitism since the 19th century, while solidifying patriarchy as a foundation of the contemporary as well as historical far right. Topics include family motifs in the propaganda of Alternative for Germany that draws on rhetoric and images used by the National Socialist Regime, the salience of ‘Mother India’ to Hindu Nationalism since the middle of the 20th century, the anti-Semitic subtext of anti-gender discourse in contemporary Poland that seeks to undo any attempts to integrate ‘liberal’ gender norms into official Catholicism since the 1960s, the amalgamation of anti-Semitism and homophobia in the American far-right since the 1970s, the historical roots of identitarian gender concepts in Austria, a historical take on the relationship between ‘metapolitics’ and gender, and an intellectual history of how today’s neo-fascism engages in perpetual historical reflexivity. The special issue – while attentive to the transnational and transatlantic dimensions of the contemporary far-right – is both integrative and organized in distinct case studies. Methods used are archival research and analysis, critical review of discursive and political strategies, media content analysis, and mapping of national and transnational networks. Several authors underscore the crucial role of social media platforms and memes in the making and messaging of contemporary far-right nationalism, others rely on more ‘traditional’ media such as journal articles, political speeches and texts. Taken together, the papers in this volume highlight several overlapping themes relevant to the historical study of far-right nationalism and gender and its contemporary transformations: (1) essentialism, (2) racism, and (3) memes and discourses.

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Berlin, August 2020: When Berlin was flocked by Covid-19 protesters in late August 2020, right-wing nationalists and Neo-Nazis constituted a visible and aggressive segment of the demonstrators. Observers from around the world realized with disgust that some protesters even managed to climb the steps of the German parliament, the historical Reichstag Building, and brandish flags and banners of the far-right, namely the colours of the German Kaiserreich and the Nazi Regime. While this attack on German parliamentary democracy marked the calculated and well-planned violation of a taboo, the seemingly more ‘peaceful’, ‘alternative’, ‘colourful’ and ‘hippie-like’ protesters, some of whom simply were critical of the current government, merged with anti-vaccinationists, mystics, conspiracy theorists and mothers concerned about protecting their children from state intervention. Indeed, the German movement against Covid-19-related restrictions foregrounded the family as one of the units most disrupted by pandemic-induced measures. The placards carried and slogans shouted at this protest portrayed white German women as reproducers and maternal caretakers concerned for the well-being of both their children and the nation.

Kenosha, Wisconsin, August 2020: In the wake of one of the many police shootings involving unarmed African American men that have catapulted the United States into its most intense period of racial reckoning since the civil rights movement of the 1960s, a 17-year-old white self-styled vigilante, Kyle Rittenhouse, appeared on the scene after a black man was shot by a police officer. Armed with an AR-15 style rifle, Rittenhouse shot two men and injured another. One year later, he was acquitted of all criminal charges based on the defence that he was protecting the community from further violence, and he immediately became a darling of the far-right, making the rounds on far-right media and conferences.

The appearance of armed and camouflaged extremists at anti-racist marches across the entire country is a powerful reminder of the heightened visibility of the far-right in the United States. Since Donald Trump’s election in 2016, the far-right has been emboldened and characterized by allegiance to white identity politics and hyper-charged masculinity. For example, the fraternal groups, Patriot Prayer and the Proud Boys, have been engaged in protracted street battles with...
leftist protesters in Portland for the past few years.\(^5\) At the same time, conspiracy theorists who are allied with Trump and white nationalists have been peddling outlandish theories such as Q’Anon, which purport, among other things, that Democratic politicians run paedophilia rings and are endangering young children.\(^6\) This intensifying far-right mobilization made its most dramatic appearance on 6 January 2021, when a cross-section of extremists, including Q’Anon believers, militia groups, and Trump MAGA supporters, stormed the U.S. Capitol in Washington, DC, resulting in tense hours of fear among law-makers, several deaths and the destruction of federal property.\(^7\)

These two recent snapshots from both sides of the Atlantic demonstrate the intensification of far-right nationalism, which is manifesting on the streets, through local and national elections, and in popular culture. The examples also underscore that the far-right in the early 21st century cannot be understood without close attention to gender and sexuality. At the same time, these snapshots point to the value of systematic international comparison and of applying analytical perspectives that trace the historical evolution of concepts such as race, ethnicity, nation, and Volk/community that are integral to far-right nationalism. A long-time analyst of the far-right, Cas Mudde, refers to the current moment as the ‘fourth wave’ of the ‘postwar far right’, and he stresses that what distinguishes this wave from previous waves is the extent to which far-right ideas and parties ‘have become mainstreamed and increasingly normalized, not just in Europe, but across the world’.\(^8\) This special issue explores this ‘fourth wave’ in light of its historical origins. It also demonstrates how critical the aspects of gender and sexuality have been to the mainstreaming of the far-right since the early 2000s. We address this significant gap by offering an integrative historical approach.\(^9\)

The contributions to this volume analyse discursive and political strategies, national and transnational networks as well as shape-shifting ideologies of exclusion and difference. Topics range from cultural and virtual aspects of female extremists in the United States to family motifs in the Alternative for Germany, and from the salience of ‘Mother India’ in Hindu Nationalism to the anti-Semitic subtext of the discourse vilifying ‘gender ideology’ that is disseminated throughout Europe but which is especially virulent in Poland. While interdisciplinary in nature, all contributions apply a distinct historical perspective.

I. New dimensions of 21st century far-right nationalism

This special issue is particularly attuned to how 20th century fascism and Nazism inform contemporary far-right nationalisms, as today’s far-right actors simultaneously re-enact, revamp and even reject earlier ideologies to repackaging populism and nationalism for the early 21st century. While

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5. C. Miller / H. Graves, ‘When the ‘Alt-Right’ Hit the Streets: Far-Right Political Rallies in the Trump Era’, in: SPLC Southern Poverty Law Center, 10 August 2020, https://www.splcenter.org/20200810/when-alt-right-hit-streets-far-right-political-rallies-trump-era (accessed 28 September 2020).
6. A. LaFrance, ‘The Prophecies of Q. American conspiracy theories are entering a dangerous new phase’, in: The Atlantic, June 2020.
7. D. Barry / M. McIntire / M. Rosenberg: ‘Our President Wants Us Here’: The Mob That Stormed The Capitol’, in: New York Times, 9 January 2021.
8. C. Mudde, The Far Right Today, Cambridge, UK 2019, 3; also see C. Miller-Idriss, Hate in the Homeland: The New Global Far Right, Princeton, NJ 2020.
9. Interestingly, the best historical analysis on the intersections of gender and nationalism deals with the 19th century: I. Blom / K. Hagemann / C. Hall (eds.), Gendered Nations. Nationalisms and Gender Order in the Long Nineteenth Century, Oxford 2000. See also J. Mulholland / N. Montagna / E. Sanders-McDonagh (eds.), Gendering Nationalism. Intersections of Nation, Gender, and Sexuality, Cham 2018.
initial research on nationalism focused principally on the emergence of European nation-states in the 19th century, more recent approaches have incorporated postcolonial theory and global history to study the various facets of 20th century nationalism. Many scholars have argued that the last decade of the 20th century saw nationalism recede, at least for modern Western societies, due to the end of the Cold War, the ever-expanding effects of globalization, and the development of the European idea that was expressed most aptly in the consolidation of the European Union. However, since the early 2000s, there has been an emergence and eruption of nationalism that privilege concepts of racial descent and ethnic or tribal purity (Ethnos) over emotional, cultural or political belonging (Demos).

Until recently, the relationship between far-right nationalism and gender received limited scholarly scrutiny. Since the early 2000s, a growing body of articles and books has explored the profound role of gender and sexuality in the far-right, using frameworks and methods from feminist studies, critical studies and media studies. Using the category of gender as a lens to examine far-right nationalism adds to feminist scholarship and illustrates the relevance of gender, sexuality and reproduction to the architecture of far-right ideologies. Deploying the approach of gender history, for example, offers insight into the contours of Islamophobia and xenophobic animus against refugees.

Furthermore, gendered analysis of concepts and images that are related to biology and reproduction, demonstrates how the nation, glorified as the homeland or fatherland, is inextricably bound up with ideas and expectations around gender and sexuality. Building on the foundational work of Joan Scott, who was one of the first to purpose gender as an analytical category, we analyse unequal power structures within ethnonationalist and right-wing approaches and their respective echo chambers.

In their excellent opening essay in a recent volume on gender and far-right politics in Europe, Gabriele Dietze and Julia Roth coin the term ‘right-wing populist complex’ to clarify that ‘right-wing populism (does) not only (relate) to parties, movements, or organizations, but also

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10. B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London 1983; E. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780. Program, Myth, Reality*, Cambridge 1990; R. Koselleck / F. Gschneidner / K. F. Werner / B. Schönenmann, ‘Volk, Nation, Nationalismus, Masse’, in: R. Koselleck / W. Conze / O. Brunner (eds.), *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur Politisch-Sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, Vol. 7, Stuttgart 1992, 141–431; H.-U. Wehler, *Nationalismus: Geschichte, Formen, Folgen*, München 2011.

11. D. Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton 2008; P. Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World. A Derivative Discourse*, Minneapolis 1993; S. Conrad / S. Randeria (eds.), *Jenseits des Eurozentrismus: Postkoloniale Perspektiven in den Geschichts- und Kulturwissenschaften*, Frankfurt am Main 2002; E. W. Said, *Orientalism*, New York 1978; H. K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, London 1994; G. C. Spivak, *In Other Worlds. Essays in Cultural Politics*, New York 1987.

12. See e.g. D. Sachsenmaier, *Global Perspectives on Global History. Theories and Approaches in a Connected World*, Cambridge 2011; P. K. Crossley, *What is Global History?*, Cambridge 2008; B. Mazlish, *The New Global History*, New York 2006.

13. J. Habermas, *Die Postnationale Konstellation*, Frankfurt am Main 1998; S. Arnold / S. Bischoff / J. König, ‘Postnationale Potentiale. Praktiken jenseits der Nation’, in: *APuZ* 48 (2018). For critical studies of the European project, see K. K. Patel, *Project Europe: A History*, Cambridge 2020; M. Conway, *Western Europe’s Democratic Age: 1945–1968*, Princeton, Oxford 2020.

14. C. Geulen, ‘Zur ‘Wiederkehr’ der Nationalismus?’, in: *APuZ* 48 (2018); S. Malešević, *Identity as Ideology: Understanding Ethnicity and Nationalism*, New York 2006.

15. See among others the essay collection P.-I. Villa / S. Hark (eds.), *Anti-Genderismus: Sexualität und geschlecht als Schauplätze aktueller politischer Auseinandersetzungen*, Bielefeld 2015; R. Kuhn / D. Paternotte (eds.), *Anti-Gender Campaigns in Europe: Mobilizing Against Equality*, London, New York 2017; M. Köttig / R. Bitzan / A. Petö (eds.), *Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe*, Cham 2017, 175–189.
to media discourses, narratives, and forms of action’. 16 We find this conceptualization useful but believe that the concept of ‘far-right nationalism’ also allows us to foreground the intersections of extremism and nationalism. ‘Far-right nationalism’ can encompass the unwieldy American Alt-Right and European Identitarians, as well as networks and parties that adhere to more populist agendas, such as the Polish far-right, the German AfD and Hindu nationalists. Furthermore, this formulation grants us the terminological latitude to incorporate examples from what scholars refer to as the ‘international alt-right’, ‘far-right politics’, ‘populist radical right’, and ‘national populism’, and to engage with recent books on the alt-right and white nationalism in the United States. 17

Building on Dietze and Roth, we view gender as a ‘meta-language for negotiating different conditions of inequality and power’. 18 This language is often expressed in media genres and is also increasingly utilized in social media. Our special issue offers original insights into the implications of the emergence of social media and the internet, which has fuelled the visibility and fortified the far-right while making its expressions more ephemeral. By analysing social media not only as the transactional messenger of ideas but also as an actor in its own right, several articles in this issue scrutinize social media as a means to galvanize far-right nationalism through appeals to emotion and nostalgia. In particular, our authors examine how the cutting and pasting of memes, images and slogans across different social media domains has afforded an incongruous mixture of humour, emotion and bigotry that is emblematic of the ‘fourth wave’ of the far-right. 19 The prominence of social media and the internet in contemporary far-right nationalism has implications for its relationship to the aspects of gender, sexuality, and reproduction that several of our articles explore in detail.

2. The reinforcing relationship between gender and ethnonationalism

Given our historical training, we are keen to explore how contemporary far-right nationalisms amalgamate longer-standing notions of ‘race/blood/ethnicity’ as preserved in the nation and the traditional family unit and those of ‘territory/space/homeland’ as both a geographical entity. For contemporary far-right nationalists, this is often expressed in the concept of ‘human biodiversity’ that, rather than celebrating racial and ethnic differences, urges countries to strictly segregate along ‘bloodlines’ so that the diversity of each race or ethnicity can be contained and protected. In Europe, such ethnonationalist views are on display in anti-refugee policies and

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16. G. Dietze / J. Roth, ‘Right-Wing Populism and Gender. A Preliminary Cartography of an Emerging Field of Research’, in: idem (eds.), Right-Wing Populism and Gender, Bielefeld 2020, 7–22.

17. See P. Hermansson / D. Lawrence / J. Mulhall / S. Murdoch, The International Alt-Right. Fascism for the 21st Century?, New York 2020; R. Eatwell / M. Goodwin, National Populism: The Revolt Against Liberal Democracy, London 2018; M. Wendling, Alt-Right: From 4chan to the White House, London 2018; V. Tenold, Everything You Love Will Burn: Inside the Rebirth of White Nationalism in America, New York 2018; D. Neiwert, Alt-America: The Rise of the Radical Right in the Age of Trump, New York 2018; J.-Y. Camus / N. Lebourg, Far-Right Politics in Europe, Cambridge, MA 2017.

18. Dietze / Roth, Right-Wing Populism, 7. For the United States, see A. L. Ferber, White Man Falling: Race, Gender, and White Supremacy, New York 1998; E. G. McRae, Mothers of Massive Resistance: White Women the Politics of White Supremacy, New York 2018.

19. See for example, N. Hemmer, Messengers of the Right: Conservative Media and the Transformation of American Politics, Philadelphia 2016; W. Phillips, This is Why we Can’t Have Nice Things: Mapping the Relationship between Online Trolling and Mainstream Culture, Cambridge, MA 2015; S. U. Noble, Algorithms of Oppression. How Search Engines Reinforce Racism, New York 2018; J. Daniels, CyberRacism: White Supremacy Online and the New Attacks on Civil Rights, New York 2009.
calls to protect the homeland from invasions, as iterated by political parties such as the Swedish Democrats, France’s National Front, Italy’s Lega, Austrian FPÖ and the German AfD, all of which are assembled in the fraction Identity and Democracy of the European Parliament. In the context of the United States, these segregationist ideas of ‘biodiversity’ manifest in the concept of the white ethnostate. In summary, the term ‘far-right nationalism’ allows us to emphasize the links between ideas of racial and volkish belonging and unity that have inspired a myriad of historical and contemporary right-wing ideologies and activism while remaining cognizant of the critical influence of social media.

For the most part, far-right ideologies and movements have a strong reactionary component against feminism and ideas of gender egalitarianism. Instead, they tend to promote rigid and binary constructions of gender that assume and expect that women should fulfill their naturally ordained roles as mothers, reproducers, and caretakers. They believe that men, conversely, are destined to act as protectors, aggressors, and leaders. Often, gender and sexuality equality is the despised centrepiece of reactionary ideologies. For example, populist leaders in South America and Eastern Europe reject gender egalitarianism and the acceptance of queer lifestyles, attacking them as politically correct stances enforced by ‘Western’ liberalism and being out of step with traditional national values. Moreover, far-right nationalists across Europe appropriate the term ‘gender’ to associate it with ‘chaos’, ‘moral decline’, a troubling version of modernity and, finally, ‘danger to the young generation’. In this reading, the quest for ‘gender equality’ is transformed into a perverted notion of ‘gender ideology’ and is thus harmful to the nation. For the most part, the far-right overwhelmingly endorses homophobic and transphobic positions on sexuality. This certainly was the case during previous waves of the far-right, in which heterosexuality was non-negotiable and queer-bashing was practically a rite of passage for new recruits. In the current context of gains for LGBTQIA+ communities, through both legal victories and greater social acceptance, in some circumstances, the contemporary far-right is more flexible with regard to gender and sexuality, yet such flexibility is always enacted in the name of ethnonationalism and protecting borders. For example, far-right nationalists in Scandinavian countries such as Sweden with strong traditions of welfare mobilize rhetoric focused on protecting the country and its values from threatening outsiders, such as African and Muslim refugees, and pit the protection of gender equality and LGBTQIA+ rights against the encroachment of the ostensibly retrograde, patriarchal cultures of the Middle East and

20. See the articles of V. Weiss / A. Pfahl-Traughber, in: Dossier Rechtspopulismus BpB (2015), https://www.bpb.de/politik/ extremeismus/rechtspopulismus (accessed 1 October 2020); R. Kempin, ‘Der Rassemblement National in Frankreich. Irritationen im politischen System’, in: Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte 67 (2019) 3, 464–475.
21. S. Polakow-Suransky, Go Back to Where You Came From: The Backlash Against Immigration and the Fate of Western Democracy, New York 2017.
22. B. Sauer, ‘Authoritarian Right-Wing Populism as Masculinist Identity Politics. The Role of Affects’, in: Dietze / Roth (eds.), Right-Wing Populism and Gender, 23–40; M. Kimmel, Angry White Men. American Masculinity at the End of an Era, New York 2013; M. M. Ferree, ‘The Crisis of Masculinity for Gendered Democracies. Before, During, and After Trump’, in: Sociological Forum 35 (2020), 898–917.
23. E. Korolczuk / A. Graff, ‘Gender as ‘Ebola from Brussels’. The Anticolonial Frame and the Rise of Illiberal Populism’, in: Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society 43 (2018) 4, 797–821; J. Roth, ‘Intersectionality Strikes Back. Right-Wing Patterns of En-Gendering and Feminist Contestations in the Americas’, in: G. Dietze / J. Roth (eds.), Right-Wing Populism and Gender, Bielefeld 2020, 251–272.
24. For the right-wing take-over of the term ‘gender’, see Kuhar / Paternotte, Anti-Gender Campaigns, 16–17, 253–276. For the right-wing strategy of linking gender and nation, see Korolczuk / Graff, ‘Ebola’.
25. On the American alt-right’s homophobic and transphobic rhetoric that endorses biologist concepts of binary gender roles, see Stern, Proud Boys, 76–79.
Africa. In their recent study, Agnieszka Graff and Elżbieta Korolczuk demonstrate how contemporary populist movements on a global scale have been imbued with anti-gender sentiments. Departing from the case of Poland, they identify ‘opportunistic synergies’ between ultraconservative anti-gender forces and right-wing activists that, while pretending to address the harmful effects of neoliberalism, challenge liberal democracy as such.

From whichever vantage point, our contributions demonstrate that gender politics is omnipresent in the contemporary far-right: Male politicians calling for the protection of German women from Muslim rapists, white male vigilantes roaming the streets of cities and towns in the United States, the foregrounding of anti-genderism in Poland’s far-right nationalism and the centrality of Mother India in the Bharatiya Janata Party’s (BJP) vision of the Indian nation. Even where gender and sexuality are not obvious, they remain operative, often stealthily serving as conceptual handmaidens for the deepening of far-right ideologies. For example, the appeal of Identitarianism across Europe and the attempts of AfD to enter mainstream politics are partly derived from their ability to incorporate seemingly more accepted norms of gender and sexuality.

This dynamic is evident in the tacit endorsement of the white heteronormative family in far-right nationalism today. In 2019, in Verona, the right-wing pro-family activists participated in the annual World Congress of Families. This conference, which was partly sponsored by US-American evangelical pro-family networks, fortified alliances among right-wing actors that demand a return to the essential heterosexual family and a ban on same-sex relationships and gender education. On a larger scale, far-right politicians all over Europe and the US continue to romanticize the nuclear family and invoke the family-nation analogy as they encase it in discourses of protection, safety, and nostalgia for a glorious and orderly past. Such appeals, which are frequently coated with a thick layer of xenophobia, are made by othering immigrants, excoriating multiculturalism, and hardening categories of racial and ethnic difference, as seen in Italy in the 2010s. Ironically, the current pandemic, which has propelled the family to centre stage, has intensified demands and increased pressure on families, particularly on mothers.

With some impressive exceptions, much of the literature on far-right forms of nationalism, including fascism, white nationalism, ethnonationalism, and Identitarianism, has typically failed to consider or seriously interrogate gender and sexuality. We submit that a historical longue-durée perspective on the 20th and early 21st centuries can help us to properly understand current manifestations of far-right nationalism such as the incidents of Berlin and Kenosha in the summer of 2020.

Fascism and National Socialism emerged as political forces in the 1920s and the 1930s. The international eugenics movement propelled the idea of race as a scientific category to the forefront

26. O. C. Norocel, ‘Constructing Radical Right Populist Resistance: Metaphors of Heterosexual Masculinities and the Family Question in Sweden’, in: Norma 5 (2010) 2, 170–183; K. Steiner, ‘Pitted Women, Aggressive Men. Images of Muslims in Swedish Christian and Secular News Discourse’, in: Kottig / Bitzan / Peto (eds.), Gender and Far Right Politics, 253–270.

27. A. Graff / E. Korolczuk, Anti-Gender Politics in the Populist Movement, New York 2021.

28. See the official homepage: World Congress of Families XIII, Verona, 29–31 March, 2019, https://wcfverona.org (accessed 28 September 2020).

29. E. Garau, Politics of National Identity in Italy: Immigration and ‘Italianità’, New York 2015.

30. M. Steer, ‘Sind die Frauen die Verliererinnen der Corona-Krise? Überlegungen aus der Frauen- und Geschlechtergeschichte’, in: H-Soz-Kult Forum: EU, 1 September 2020, https://www.hsozkult.de/debate/id diskussionen-5049 (accessed 1 October 2020).

31. See for example E. Traverso, The New Faces of Fascism: Populism and the Far Right, London 2019; J. P. Zuquete, The Identitarians: The Movement against Globalism and Islam in Europe, Notre Dame, IN 2018.
and formed the basis for grand nationalist projects of social engineering.33 ‘Eugenics’ posited that different groups possessed differential values to a society based on their biological inheritance and that only the well-born should reproduce while the ‘defectives’ had to be excluded. These discriminatory ideas led to forced sterilizations of tens of thousands of people who were deemed feebleminded in the US and European countries.34 After German National Socialism transformed eugenics into extermination policies and especially the mass murder of the European Jews, the idea was officially discredited.35 However, coerced sterilizations of people deemed ‘less valuable’ on social or racial grounds (mostly directed at women) continued in the US and Eastern Europe, and the new discipline of Human Genetics (formerly Race Biology) capitalized on the idea of biological difference and sought to prevent defective genes (and thus, disability) through the use of new reproductive and genetic technologies.36 The end of World War II and the rise of liberal democratic regimes in Western countries created obstacles to new manifestations of far-right nationalism in Europe and the US. However, right-wing groups and ideologies thrived in the fringes and pockets of post-war liberal democracies.37 An important case in point was the rise of the new Christian right in the US during the 1960s and their respective rigid ideas about women’s roles and gender norms.38 Another important strategy of negating women’s rights was the equation of legal abortion with eugenics (and, ultimately, the Holocaust) as put forward by the anti-abortion movement in the US and in ‘softer’ forms all over Europe.39 The context of decolonization as well as the rise of conservative governments during the 1970s and the 1980s in the US and many Western European states enabled right-wing parties and grassroots movements to refresh themselves into digestible formats and integrate strategies of social movements into their own activism.40 The end of the Cold War, the dissolution of the USSR, and the rise of Globalism in the 1990s created new geopolitical maps (e.g. in Eastern and Central Europe) and possibilities for political belonging, transnational movement and cultural affiliation.41 In the context of decolonization and its long reverberations, reinforced nationalist movements such as Hindu nationalism promoted concepts of ‘ethnic purity’ that encompassed specific demands on women as ‘mothers of the nation’ and guardians of the home. The communications revolution and the explosion of the internet technologies in the

33. See e.g. I. Heinemann, ‘Race’, in: S. Baranowski / A. Nolzen / C.-C. Szejnmann (eds.), *A Companion to Nazi Germany*, Oxford 2018, 499–514; T. Etzemüller (ed.), *Die Ordnungen der Moderne. Social Engineering im 20. Jahrhundert*, Bielefeld 2009, 11–40.

34. A. M. Stern, *Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America*, Berkeley 2005. For the international outreach of eugenics, see the case studies in: A. Bashford / P. Levine (eds.), *Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics*, Oxford 2010.

35. For the lasting and controversial impact of Nazi racial policies, see D. Pendas / R. Wetzell / M. Roseman (eds.), *Beyond the Racial State: Rethinking Nazi Germany*, Cambridge 2017. D. Herzog, *Unlearning Eugenics: Sexuality, Reproduction and Disability in Post-Nazi Europe*, Madison, WI, London 2018.

36. A. M. Stern, *Telling Genes. The Story of Genetic Counseling in America*, Baltimore 2012; D. Thomeschke, *In der Gesellschaft der Gene. Räume und Subjekte der Humangenetik in Deutschland und Dänemark, 1950–1990*, Bielefeld 2014.

37. Conway, *Democratic Age*.

38. Dowland, *Family Values*; C. Wilcox, *Onward Christian Soldiers: The Religious Right in American Politics*, Boulder, CO 1996.

39. D. Herzog, *Unlearning Eugenics: Sexuality, Reproduction and Disability in Post-Nazi Europe*, Madison, WI, London 2018.

40. For a US-based case study, see D. T. Chritchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroot Conservatism: A Woman’s Crusade*, Princeton, NJ 2005; B. Schulman / J. Zelizer (eds.), *Rightward Bound. Making America Conservative in the 1970s*, Harvard 2008.

41. For an approach to the ‘normalization’ of ethnonationalist thinking in contemporary Europe through migration policies and policing from cultural anthropology, see A. M’charek / K. Schramm / D. Skinner, ‘Topologies of Race. Doing Territory, Population and Identity in Europe’, in: *Science, Technology, and Human Values* 39 (2014) 4, 468–487.
new millennium further helped far-right circles to find and cultivate audiences. For example, the white supremacist message board, Stormfront, was launched by white supremacists in the US in 1995, creating a critical network for the far-right.\textsuperscript{42} The advent of social media, including sites such as Twitter, Reddit and 4chan, gave rise to toxic echo chambers that were nearly impossible to regulate and rein in with conventional political and judicial techniques.\textsuperscript{43} The crescendo of the far-right was on full display between 2015 and 2016. These two years saw the immigration crisis in Europe at the height of the Syrian civil war, the emboldening of Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the Occident (PEGIDA) in Germany, the sexual violence against women during New Year’s Eve 2015/2016 in Cologne that ignited a xenophobia firestorm,\textsuperscript{44} and the election of Donald Trump as President of the United States. The far-right was galvanized all over Europe as well as in the US and was gaining traction in other parts of the world. Voicing demands to send refugees ‘back to where they came from’ and to protect ‘our women and children’ against ‘them’,\textsuperscript{45} far-right nationalist movements in the Global North also united in their fight against ‘gender ideology’, ‘sex education’, and LGBTQI+ activism.

In tandem with these developments, far-right activists in countries of the Global South ignited fears of immigration in general and, specifically, of assaults by ‘other’ (mostly Muslim) men on local women. These anxieties served as an argument to contain women’s rights and fight feminism while downplaying the amount of misogyny and gendered violence that characterized contemporary societies, as the case of India amply shows. These trends in India have long historical roots that hark back to the eras of colonialism, independence, and partition, even as they have hardened recently with the mounting electoral victories of the BJP since 2014 and the concomitant creation of a truly majoritarian and increasingly exclusionary state.\textsuperscript{46} Hindu nationalism has become politically dominant and culturally pervasive, facilitated by technologies (such as the internet and social media) and normalization across society, a process in which gendered dynamics have played a critical role.\textsuperscript{47} Muslims and ethnic and religious minorities have borne the brunt of demonization and othering, a process characterized by gendered and sexualized violence. For example, in Uttar Pradesh, where Hindu extremism has been intense, Hindi women are portrayed as in need of protection from rapacious Muslims, while Muslims and lower-caste men are consistently hyper-sexualized or emasculated.\textsuperscript{48}

3. Themes of the special issue

With these rough historical contours in mind, the essays in our volume engage with the past while producing different narratives and slightly varying periodizations, highlighting important

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\item \textsuperscript{42} J. Daniels, \textit{CyberRacism}.
\item \textsuperscript{43} O. Klein / J. Muis, ‘Online Discontent. Comparing Western European Far-right Groups on Facebook’, in: \textit{European Societies} 21 (2018) 4, 540–562; M. Butter, \textit{Plots, Designs, and Schemes: American Conspiracy Theories from the Puritans to the Present}, Berlin 2014; C. Butterwegge / G. Hentges (eds.), \textit{Massenmedien, Migration und Integration}, Wiesbaden 2006.
\item \textsuperscript{44} For a feminist critique that denounces the sexual violence against women in Cologne as an expression of ‘Islamic terror’ against women, see the essay collection by A. Schwarzer (ed.), \textit{Der Schock – Die Silvesternacht von Köln. Mit Beiträgen von Kamel Daoud, Necla Kelek, Bassam Tibi u.a.}, Frankfurt am Main 2016.
\item \textsuperscript{45} Polakow-Suransky, \textit{Go Back to Where you Came From}.
\item \textsuperscript{46} M. Ayoob, ‘The Rise of Hindu Nationalism in Historical Perspective’, in: \textit{India Review} 19 (2020) 4, 414–425; C. Bhatt, \textit{Hindu Nationalism: Origins, Ideologies and Modern Myths}, New York 2020.
\item \textsuperscript{47} E. Anderson / A. Longkumer, ‘“Neo-Hindutva”: Evolving Forms, Spaces, and Expressions of Hindu Nationalism’, in: \textit{Contemporary South Asia} 26 (2018) 4, 317–377.
\item \textsuperscript{48} A. P. Chatterji, ‘Remaking the Hindu/Nation: Terror and Impunity Uttar Pradesh,’ in A. P. Chatterji / T. Blom Hansen / C. Jaffrelot (eds.), \textit{Majoritarian State: How Hindu Nationalism is Changing India}, Oxford 2020, 397–418.
\end{itemize}
intersections of far-right nationalism. In turn, our historical conceptualization has been enriched by the findings of the case studies in this volume. First, several of the articles trace historical continuities and discontinuities from the fascism of the 1930s to today (Isabel Heinemann) and from the far-right of the 1970s and the 1980s to the present (Kristoff Kerl). These articles put more conventional archival sources, such as key texts and political speeches from the Nazi-Era and the far-right periodical Instauration, in conversation with more contemporary propaganda from the far-right. Using gender and sexuality frameworks, these articles illuminate dimensions of racism, xenophobia, homophobia, and anti-Semitism that are profoundly gendered. In an essay focused on a new brand of female extremists in the United States, Alexandra Minna Stern shows how women on the far-right perform femininity and uphold patriarchal notions of family and society, largely through their social media presence and idealization of homesteading and home-schooling. Secondly, the articles use history as a reference for contemporary movements and provide substantive context to understand, for instance, the rise and fall of Identitarianism in Austria (Judith Goetz) and the ultra-right Catholic homologies between anti-genderism and anti-Semitism that seek to undo any attempts to integrate ‘liberal’ gender norms into official Catholicism since the 1960s (Agnieszka Graff), and the contemporary far-right as a brand of neo-fascism that engages in perpetual historical reflexivity (Simon Strick). Finally, using historical tools that question the production of symbols and images, the articles critically examine memes that encapsulate and amplify far-right nationalism in contemporary Indian politics (Mrinal Pande) and the United States (Simon Strick).

While utilizing historical methods such as classical hermeneutics and discourse analysis, as well as close reading and media content analysis to study a broad range of sources (archival material, far-right publications and journals, party programs, social media campaigns, images, memes and videos), the articles in this volume demonstrate the salience of several overlapping themes for the study of far-right nationalism and gender. Specifically, these themes are (1) essentialism, (2) racism and (3) and memes and discourses.

Far-right ideologies are built on essentialist notions of human purpose and capacity. Along these lines, motherhood is a paramount category for the far-right that is frequently invoked as an archetype and social role that requires male protection as the emblem of the family-nation. The theme of motherhood is especially apparent in the articles of Pande, Goetz, and Heinemann. While Hindu nationalists used to draw on the popular image of ‘Mother India’ to confine women to their ‘proper place’ of submission to the male-dominated national cause and to highlight their reproductive function (Pande), the German AfD insisted that German women and German families were being menaced by the fecundity of ‘Islamic migrants’ that have ‘flooded the country’ since 2015 (Heinemann). Women in the Austrian Identitarian movement, however, risked marginalization when they claimed too visible and unfeminine roles in the movement (Goetz).

Alongside motherhood is the construct of hyper-masculinity, expressed through rejections of homosexuality and portrayals of muscular strength and dominance, as explored in the chapters by Goetz, Strick, and Kerl. Understanding far-right nationalism is not possible without close attention to anti-feminism and the virulent rejection of ideologies of gender egalitarianism, usually revolving around rigid binaries of cis-gendered categories of male and female, gay and straight. Amongst far-right actors, feminism is linked to the activism of the 1960s, often seen as precipitating the downfall of Western civilization, which opened the doors to ethnic and racial diversity and massive demographic change. Visions of far-right nationalism revolve around the restoration of societies ordered by gender binaries and essentialism. Demographic anxieties are never far under the gendered surface, usually fuelling discourses of Islamophobia and xenophobia.

The final theme, memes, and discourse are gendered in a myriad of ways. Sometimes, as with representations of ‘Mother India’ or the macho ‘boogaloo bois’, memes are obviously gendered and seek to represent an ideal and essential type. Alternatively, memes can also be gendered in
more insidious ways, as with the famous ‘Pepe the Frog’ meme, which was drawn from largely male comic book culture. To a great extent, memes and messages on social media constitute 21st century sloganeering and generate appeals to the emotions in order to win ‘hearts and minds’ and to ‘red pill’ recruits to the far-right. At the same time, the internet itself is a male-dominated virtual space that allowed for the rise of the ‘manosphere’ and a domain where women frequently are attacked, mocked, and, in the darker corners of the digital world, subjected to rape and torture fantasies. Strick, Stern, Goetz, and Pande all explore the gendered dimensions of memes in social media, covering different regional and social contexts.

As we reflect on the increasing threat of the far-right and the fragility of liberal democracies at the start of the 2020s, the landscape is dark, not bright. For example, we observe hardening opposition to women’s rights and human rights in general, in the name of the traditional family and an ethnically as well as tribally defined nation that necessarily excludes refugees and migrants. We are interested in the consequences of this contemporary history for the future of civic nationalism and civil compacts for citizenship that is codified on gender egalitarianism, diversity and inclusion. We hope that this special issue will contribute to evolving scholarship on gender and far-right nationalism, and make a difference, no matter how small, in imagining democratic futures.

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49. Stern, *Proud Boys*.