CORA Cork Open Research Archive
Cartlann Taighde Oscailte Chorcaí

Title	Far-right intersections with gender ideologies and extremist behaviour (national and global perspectives): 'Our histories haunt us'
Authors	Cronin, Joan
Publication date	2025-08-08
Original Citation	Cronin, J. (2025) 'Far-right intersections with gender ideologies and extremist behaviour (national and global perspectives): 'Our histories haunt us'', in Ahmed, Y. (ed.) The Far-Right in Ireland - Rise, Activities and International Links. Bristol: Bristol University Press, pp. 93-112. https://doi.org/10.51952/9781529244847.ch004
Type of publication	Book chapter;book-chapter
Link to publisher's version	10.51952/9781529244847.ch004
Rights	© 2025, Bristol University Press. This is a post-peer-review, pre-copy edited version of a chapter published in The Far-Right in Ireland - Rise, Activities and International Links. The definitive publisher-authenticated version is available online at: https://doi.org/10.51952/9781529244847.ch004
Download date	2026-11-05 19:44:42
Item downloaded from	https://hdl.handle.net/10468/17872

UCC
University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

Four

Far Right Intersections with Gender Ideologies and Extremist Behaviour (National and Global Perspectives)

Joan Cronin

Far Right Intersections with Gender Ideologies and Extremist Behaviour (National and Global Perspectives)

'Our Histories Haunt Us'

Introduction

Historically, far-right politics or right-wing extremism encompassed a range of overarching conservative, nationalist, authoritarian and familial ideologies (Mudde, 2019). In the contemporary context, while still conserving a traditionalist value system that laments the demise of historic frames of reference (law and order, familial and religious values), it has been associated with a growing opposition to globalism and European integration (Mudde, 2019). Furthermore, processes of contemporary indoctrination, alongside the politics of gender, sexual diversity and multiculturalism are perceived as an inevitable threat to the nation state.

According to Mudde (2019), the fourth wave of the far-right movement which is currently underway in Europe is gaining traction as a consequence of three major crises; the 9/11 terrorist attack in the United States, the Great Recession in 2008 and the refugee crisis in 2015. Added to this, is increasing media coverage of far-right themes and ideologies, particularly on mainstream and social media (television, radio, newspaper) and (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram), which serve to exacerbate economic and cultural insecurities (Mudde, 2019).

Gender, tradition and the state of Ireland

Historically, Ireland has been dominated by two mainstream political parties, Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael, both of whom upheld the traditional value system of the dominant Roman Catholic Church (Fanning and Mutwarasibo, 2007). Drawing philosophical inspiration from Catholic social principles, theories of authority and systems of patriarchy, the Irish Constitution was enacted in 1937 by the then President of Ireland É*amon de Valera.* With a strong religious influence, the Constitution prescribed the standards by which the people of Ireland were expected to morally and socially conform to, in a Catholic dominated state (Cooney, 1999). Strict behavioural modes of conduct were recommended; women were expected to be submissive, conform to strict moral and ethical standards and engage in respectful behaviour (Cronin, 2021). Perceived as the lesser 'sex', positions of dominance and privilege were granted to men, in what can largely be categorized as a patriarchal state. Women's privilege was to produce generations of Irish Catholic children, within the confines and sanctity of marriage (Inglis, 1987). Women who failed to live up to idealized standards were removed from society, often hidden in one of the many institutions spread throughout Ireland. These included state run mother and baby homes, Magdalene laundries, industrial and reformatory schools and asylums (Boland, 2022, cited in Pope, 2022). The moral standards set out by both church and state were idealistic, unrealistic and grossly immoral, with the intent and purpose of creating and maintaining an 'idealistic' nation state.

Decades on and much has changed…or has it?

While traditionalist political parties have endorsed more liberal standpoints, particularly in relation to familial issues and amendments to the constitution have taken place, growing secularization and a demise in the Catholic faith (by-products of globalization and modernity) has given way to uncertainty and disenchantment (Graham, 2007). This has paved the way for the growth and expansion of more right- wing nationalist parties, who profess a commitment to nationalism and the preservation of the traditionalist Irish state. Playing on the fears, concerns and growing uncertainties of the people of Ireland, and using the power of 'nostalgia' as a sentimental reference to the past, far-right parties have repeatedly been involved in 'scaremongering' tactics in an effort to intensify the mobilization agenda against direct provisions centres, immigration policies, vaccinations and reproductive rights. Protests

have become common place, and in the build up to the 2018 referendum to repeal the 8th amendment to the Irish Constitution, (the 8th amendment acknowledged the right to life of the unborn, while having due regard to the equal right to life of the mother, and the referendum called to change this, granting equal rights to both) *Síol na hÉireann,* an Irish Catholic Nationalist Party, held widespread demonstrations claiming that '*Abortion is Murder',* while strongly opposing women's bodily autonomy (Askew, 2023). More recent protests have been directed against (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer/questioning, asexual, non-binary, pansexual and others), whereby libraries have been targeted and staff have been intimidated for including LGBTQIA+ literary material in the children's section of the library (Kearns, 2024). In Leinster House (Ireland's parliament building) in Dublin, political representatives were the subject of physical and verbal abuse and intimidation, when 200 or so protesters gathered near the main entrance to protest against transgender rights and migration. A number of arrests were made by Gardaí (Loughlin and Sherlock, 2023), however, questions remain as to whether adequate measures were taken by Gardaí to enforce law and order whilst balancing freedom of expression and fundamental human rights, in line with article 40.6 of the Irish Constitution.

This is not the first time far-right groups in Ireland have protested against LGBTQIA+, in fact, numerous protests have taken place in recent months. Since 2022, protests have taken place in various libraries throughout the country, including Dublin, Louth, Leitrim, Cork, Kerry and Mayo, among others. On Saturday, 29 July 2023, Cork City Library was closed to the public as a consequence of a far-right protest. With a banner proclaiming LGBTQIA+-refugee, anti-immigration, anti-Semitism and anti-climate policies. Earlier in July in the rural town of Tralee, CO. Kerry, a similar event took place, as far right protestors invaded the library building wherein a drag story-time event entitled *'Prince and Knight'* was taking place as part of Kingdom Pride Week, intimidating those present. As one gay attendee pointed out, 'it was the most frightened I've ever been as a gay person' (Fernane, 2023: np). Another eyewitness explained how the protesters 'did their best to disrupt, including becoming violent and storming the room where children were listening to the story … I refused to be scared of being Queer and celebrating my culture with my son' (Fernane, 2023: np).

Reports in *The Journal,* suggest that one of the key figures responsible for the ongoing protests is Andy Heasman. Defined as a 'hard-line Catholic', he is well known in Irish circles for publicly refusing to wear a mask during the COVID-19 pandemic and for initiating a number

of anti-vaccine protests. Another notable figure engaged in ongoing library protests is Ross Lavine (previously convicted for breaching COVID-19 restrictions), known for sharing false and mis-leading data on online media sites including *the Epoch Times.* Lahive has actively engaged in ongoing library protests, some of which have been filmed and shared on international far-right media and conspiracy theory websites, including *InfoWars,* a US based website linked to conspiracy theorist Alex Jones (Fitzgerald, 2023). In a recent report by the European Union (EU) (2021), it is claimed that the COVID-19 pandemic, given its obscure nature has been the catalyst for the advancement of conspiracy theories[1], providing a platform for right wing extremists to advance and popularize their agendas while recruiting vulnerable followers.

According to the European Commission, conspiracy theories are consistently used by extremist groups as a mechanism for recruiting and advancing their political agenda. In contemporary society, conspiracy theories are an expanding global phenomena, advanced through complex social and/ or political events and enacted through various forms of radical behaviour, racist and/ or authoritarian attitudes and extremist ideologies, with negative and severe societal consequences. In their extremist form they are used as an apparatus to spread propaganda and hate speech, unsettle relations between society and governments, mobilize violence and contribute to radicalization and extremism (Farinelli, 2021). They are 'a powerful recruitment tool for extremist ideologies and, conversely, extremist ideologies can be conducive to conspiracy theories' (Farinelli, 2021: 6). They have a wide remit and are frequently manipulated for political gain, through the spread of misinformation, under the auspices of a 'noble mission' (Farinelli, 2021). Oftentimes, as the EU points out, it is 'conspiracy theory consumers' (ibid) who are duped into a maze of ideological artefact, in the context of marginalization, deprivation, disadvantage and adversity.

Understanding the background of the Library Protests in Ireland

As noted in *the Guardian* newspaper, recent library protests against LGBTQIA+, have emerged as a consequence of advancements of the far-right movement in Europe and the world more

[1] Conspiracy theory: Difficult to define, given its broad origins which evolves around life and literature, fact and fiction, science and pseudoscience. Based on a mixture of factual truths and historical events, often exaggerated, deceptive and/ or invalidated. The European Commission define it as; 'the belief that certain events or situations are secretly manipulated behind the scenes by powerful forces with negative intent (2021, p. 6).

broadly. Fuelled by a desire to curb the sharing of LGBTQIA+ information among children and young people, far-right conspiracy theories related to LGBTQ+, refer to a process of 'dictatorship' and 'indoctrination', wherein publications containing data related to LGBTQIA+, serve as a 'grooming' ground for the intensification of paedophilia, a false and mis-leading anti-gay and anti-trans rhetoric, historically adopted by far-right protestors.

However, it is not just in Europe that far-right protests against LGBTQIA+ have evolved and intensified. In the United States, numerous protests have taken place, particularly since 2022, including demonstrations, political violence and the widespread dispersal of online propaganda. According to *The Armed Conflict Location and Event Data* (ACLED) a non-profit organization, which gathers real-time data on various types of political violence and global protests, in excess of 200 anti-LGBTQIA+ demonstrations were reported in 2022, three times the number reported for 2021, and 12 times the number reported for 2020. Research suggests that the LGBTQIA+ community are more exposed to higher risks of interpersonal violence, violent crime and political violence, as opposed to the non-LGBTQIA+ population. According to ACLED, online media platforms have also been used as an outlet to spread and intensify anti-LGBTQIA+ propaganda, and as a consequence, political violence has escalated, with targeted numbers of the LDBTQ+ community increasing threefold in 2022 compared to 2021. Primary locations for demonstrations were California (22 events), Texas (17 events), Florida (nine events); Pennsylvania, North Caroline, New York and Illinois recording (seven events each. Additionally, far-right militant social movements including *The Proud Boys* and *Patriot Front* have increased their involvement in anti LGBTQIA+ demonstrations, from 16 events in 2021 to in excess of 52 events towards the end of 2022 (Bump, 2022). Spiralling far-right protests in the United States culminated in the November 2022 mass shooting at a gay club in Colorado Springs, Colorado, resulting in the deaths of five people. Nineteen others were injured during the attack, which was carried out by 22-year-old Anderson Lee Aldrich, who subsequently submitted a guilty plea and was sentenced to five consecutive life terms in prison, without the possibility of parole. The attack drew similarities to the 2016 shooting at another LGBTQIA+ club in Orlando, Florida, where 49 people were killed and 53 others were injured. The escalation of far-right protests in the United States has led human rights campaigners to declare a 'state of emergency warning', (Schoenbaum, 2023: np).

The situation in Europe is equally polarized and violent, as attacks on gay communities have rocketed in recent times. According to a 2023 report by the International Lesbian, Gay,

Bisexual, Transgender, Transsexual and Intersex Association of Europe, violence perpetrated against the LGBTQIA+ community has reached its highest level in ten years. Violent attacks have been recorded in Norway and Slovakia, among other European countries. In Norway in 2002, two people were killed at a queer venue and 21 others were injured. In Slovakia, two others were shot dead in Bratislava by a right-wing extremist (Riera Bosqued, 2023). In Italy, the rise and influence of the far right has consequences for same-sex parents, and the government has instructed that children born to same-sex parents cannot be registered. Meanwhile, Naquera, an eastern Spanish town, located 19 miles north of Valencia, has initiated a ban on displaying the LGBTQIA+ rainbow flag on public buildings.

Media Representation of the LGBTQIA+ Community

Recent protests have primarily been framed against LGBTQIA+ and gender related reading material and protestors are calling for an end to what they refer to as the 'indoctrination' of children on gender identity and sexual orientation (Carter, 2023). One of the primary publications targeted by protestors is a book entitled *This Book is Gay,* by British trans writer Juno Dawson. First published in 2014, the book provides pertinent information about being lesbian, bisexual, gay, queer or transgender, and is listed as being suitable for adolescents aged between 14 and 17 years old. While the publication covers a range of topics relative to aspects of LGBTQIA+ life and culture, it also explores LGBTQ+ sexual relationships.

On Friday 20 October 2023 Ms. Dawson appeared on RTÉ[2]'s The Late Show[3], and talked candidly about people's hatred of her book, why she felt she had to write it and her very real concerns about 'society's' repulsion of what she referred to as 'a minority group', that is the LGBTQIA+ community, whom she claims are mis-represented and voiceless in the arena of politics and the media. These concerns have been raised previously by groups including *Action for Children,* who highlight the importance of reinforcing positive media representation of diverse identities, particularly among young people. According to them, this can lead to acceptance of 'commonly marginalised groups' (Action for Children, 2022: np), shaping not

[2] Radió Teilifís Éireann, is an Irish public service broadcaster. It produces and broadcasts programmes on television, radio and online.

[3] An Irish chat show, broadcast on Friday nights at 9.30pm between September and May.

only how they perceive themselves but how others perceive them. Shows, including *Heartstopper, The Owl House* and *Julian is a Mermaid,* which focus on the lives/ lifestyles of LGBTQIA+ people help to alleviate harmful stereotypes and promote positive media representation. Further, as Mocarski et al. (2019) point out as part of their research on *The Rise of transgender and gender diverse representation in the media: Impacts on the population,* media representation provides an insight into and understanding of the different experiences and life journeys of transgender people, seeking to eliminate the shame and negative stereotyping surrounding the transition. Also, while they acknowledge the positive representations in the media by celebrities including Caitlin Jenner and Chaz Bonner, according to Mocarski et al (2019), their socioeconomic status and social privilege depicts a relatively seamless transition, when in reality, the general transgender population pursue their journeys with limited familial and/ or financial support. Also, according to one of the participants in the research (participant 2) Caitlin Jenner's emergence as transgender has led to a multitude of insidious media commentary, to the detriment of the trans community overall: 'Then Caitlin coming out also led to a lot of jokes at her expense and so seeing that very public backlash against her coming out could also lead to people feeling really terrible about themselves … what are the people around me going to say about me' (Mocarski et al, 2019: np). This is not to understate the significance of positive role modelling, particularly among young people setting out on the pathway of self-identity discovery. As participant 22 pointed out; '9 or 10 is when I started realizing that I wasn't the same as everybody else … I remember seeing something on TV … they called it like a sex change operation' (Mocarski et al, 2019: np). For this participant, their initial introduction to gender disparity and/ or transgender was by way of a TV programme, and in that regard it is essential for stimulating identity awareness. Positive media representations can also inform family and friends, creating a deeper sense of understanding and acceptance, enabling them to seek support where necessary.

According to the Centre for Research on Extremism (C-REX) at the University of Oslo, far right actors are currently at the forefront of online 'attention hacking' through various forms of offensive speech, abhorrence campaigns, memes and mis/ disinformation, using a variety of online media services; including their own websites, blogs, and/ or alternative news media sites. In the Western context, far right groups disseminate and re-contextualize information and news stories on immigration, gender, abortion and LTBTQIA+, often resulting

in the publication of misinformation and propaganda (C-REX). Social media platforms have by far been the most useful in the spread and dissemination of far-right ideals. *Facebook, Twitter* and *YouTube* have been frequently used to illuminate day-to-day activities of far-right groups, as well as more extremist and provocative content. Extreme actors use non-censured forums such as *4chan, 8kun, Voat* or *Grab to* discuss and to garner support for their campaigns and activities. More recently, *Telegraph,* an encrypted communication channel has been one of the preferred mediums of communication for intensifying anti-gay rhetoric given the complexities involved in monitoring membership.

How the media responds to the far-right

A critical question which consistently emerges is the extent to which far-right ideologies/ philosophies and/ or demonstrations should be represented in mainstream and popular media. Previous research has suggested that mainstream media has given too much visibility to far-right actors, and played a key role in regularizing and mainstreaming far right ideals, especially in countries such as Brazil, Hungary, India, Israel and the United States (Ihleboek et al, nd) arguing that media visibility can be used to exaggerate levels of support and can facilitate legitimacy and political momentum among the far right. Far-right groups are even more dependent on online media as a mechanism for communicating their ideologies and extending exposure. Since the early 1990s, far right actors have been linked to various forms of digital technology to sustain and enhance their popularity, widely sharing incidents of aggressive and violent behaviour and sensationalist and emotive content as it occurs (Zhang and Davis, 2022). *Stormfront,* one of the earliest and foremost internet hate forums was established in 1995, by a former Alabama Ku Klux Klan grand wizard and white supremacist Don Black*,* and came to prominence in the United States in 2000 as the subject of a documentary, *Hate.com.* Inevitably, collaborative and net-worked production and distribution practices such as these fulfil core media and news objectives and entice and procure large media audiences, much to the detriment of those who do not, cannot, or should not conform to the gendered standards expected of them (Jetter, 2017).

Mainstreaming LGBTQIA+ hate

According to Katelyn Burns, a journalist for Vox Media, an American news and opinion website, the most serious media backlash to transgender visibility emerged in the 2010s,

particularly after the Supreme Court ruling in 2015 that same-sex couples could legally marry, the religious and supremacist backlash to which created what she refers to as the 'culture wars'. In Burns' view, this inevitably led to a major shift in far-right extremism, geared specifically toward the transgender community, resulting in the vile and frequently used narrative that 'trans women are really just creepy men' (Burns, 2015: np). This, together with the 'bathroom bill' in Houston, Texas, wherein, a 2015 referendum relating to the city's LGBTQIA+ non-discrimination ordinance, permitted transgender people to use bathroom facilities according to their lived gender, created a massive outcry among conservative and far-right supremacists. Thereafter, in 2016, North Carolina enacted the 'bathroom bill', requiring transgender people to use bathrooms in publicly owned buildings according to the gender specified on their original birth certificates. It is Burns' view that the media was most influential in advancing the anti-trans gender activist movement.

Brennan Suen, an LGBT+QIA analyst for Media Matters reported to Vox Media that the existence and portrayal of transgender people in the media presents a threat to the 'gender hierarchy pushed by cultural and religious conservatives', particularly Christian fundamentalists and white far right supremacists (Burns, 2019: np). The transgender community are perceived as destabilizing the structure of the 'so-called' normative family, that of father, mother and child(ren). This, coupled with political changes in the United States, particularly since the election of former President Donald Trump in 2016, were key turning points in the war against LGBTQIA+ and transgender communities more broadly. Suen explains that Trump orchestrated a widespread anti- LGBTQIA+ and transgender campaign, seeking to eradicate trans rights and people from all government documents. This plan of action included banning trans troops from serving in the US military, revoking employment protection laws and affordable health care plans for transgender patients, while, precluding transgender people from accessing homeless shelters and requiring prisons to accommodate transgender prisoners according to their assigned sex at birth. This resulted in an online media backlash, cultured and supported by right-wing media networks, with the intent and purpose of sharing false and mis-leading information about the LGBTQIA+ and transgender communities. According to Suen, increasing online anti-LGBTQIA+ and transgender sentiment can be linked to the unification of the US right-wing with British anti-trans feminists, resulting in a catalyst of online harassment and misinformation.

Recruitment, membership and funding of far-right organisations

Even if their demographic is changing, far-right movements are predominantly comprised of male members and supporters, with a strong and forceful emphasis on masculinity and an impetus used to intensify the global recruitment of young men's involvement in far-right organization. According to former sociologist Michael Kimmel, young males are enticed by extremist far right ideals in an effort to reclaim what he terms 'aggrieved entitlement' or a sense of masculinity (C-REX). Frustrated and emasculated by political and economic developments and the demise of male privilege, membership of a violent extremist organization leads to a shared sense of identity and provides the cultural and political impetus for social violence.

While the far right has predominantly been male-dominated and misogynistic, female support, membership and leadership of extremist groups has continued to escalate and grow in recent times, especially in Europe. Primarily engaged in support and activist roles, women are also known to hold positions of power and authority, particularly in Europe the United States and India (C-REX). Well-known women in far- right political parties include *Marine Le Pen in France, Alice Weidel in Germany, Giorgia Meloni in Italy and Pauline Hanson in Australia.* Meloni, who has been serving as prime minister of Italy since October 2022, and is the first woman to hold the post has consistently lobbied against the LGBTQIA+ community, women's rights and immigration and has been likened to Mussolini[4] for embracing the philosophy of 'God, homeland and family' (Hume, 2022). Recent research in Poland, Greece, Hungary, Germany, Sweden and France suggests that growing concerns about the economy and political dissatisfaction has led to an increase in the numbers of women embracing far-right ideologies and holding positions of power and leadership (Hume, 2022). According to Seyward Darby, editor-in-chief of *The Activist* magazine and author of *Sisters in Hate,* 'women play a huge, important role in mainstreaming more radical ideas … they are crucial to spreading the ideology with a smile and making it seem palatable' (Hume, 2022: np). Meanwhile, in the United States, Lana Lokteff, a far-right, antisemitic conspiracy theorist and white supremacist is a key activist in recruiting women to the movement. In a 2017 interview she claimed: 'It's easier for people to hear a hard message when it's a … good looking woman saying it', and in

[4] Dictator of Italy and founder of the National Fascist Party, he served as Prime Minister of Italy from 1925-1943 and was strongly engaged in and support of the fascist movements

a subsequent interview that same year she complimented high profile females like herself for their crucial role in attracting women to join far right parties. She explained that it is one of the key reasons why women are 'flocking to our side' (Hume, 2022: np). Equally, she is known to spread her message and intensify far right propaganda on a media company she operates with her husband, where she also claims that 'women are too emotional for leading roles in politics' but should instead use their 'special power and influence over men to give them a reason to fight (Hume, 2022: np). While clearly adhering to a patriarchal ideology, Lokteff, epitomises the fragility of women on the one hand with their demure and 'virgin' like traits which can be used to the best advantage when promoting and recruiting new members, on the other she blatantly claims that women are 'not politically a monolith now or in history' (Hume, 2022: np).

Funding for far right campaigns has proved to be a profitable resource and between 2016 and 2022 alone, in excess of US$6.2 million dollars was raised in the United States from crowdfunding sites, according to a report published by the Anti-Defamation League. Sites include *Fundly, GoFundMe* and *GiveSendGo,* the latter (a Christian crowdfunding site) generating the majority of these funds – US$5.4 million or 86 per cent. Crowdfunding has also been used to support the activities of the *Proud Boys* and *Patriot Prayer,* two far right extremist groups who promote and endorse misogynistic, Islamophobic, transphobic, supremacist, anti-immigration and antisemitic ideologies. Also, according to *Time Magazine,* financial contributions (fundraisers) to these mainstream crowdfunding platforms generate vast amounts of money. In 2017, in excess of 8,000 fundraisers donated $2.6 million in voluntary tips/ gifts to the *GiveSendGo* platform.

Speaking to PBS News in the United States, writer and researcher J.M. Berger, whose work focuses on extremist ideologies, believes that the LGBTQIA+ community are targeted by far-right white supremacists because of what he refers to as a culture of 'toxic masculine identities', wherein extremist groups are intently focused on gender conformity. Individuals who 'transgress' from standard sexual practices or sexual orientations experience what Berger refers to as a 'visceral kind of hatred'. Also, in the context of new right wing media outlets, Berger raises concerns about the hateful rhetoric directed at LGBTQIA+ communities, added to which is the fact that far right extremist groups are no longer on the 'fringes' of society. He, among others, estimates that between 10 and 30 per cent of the American population are sympathetic to the aggressive and potentially violent views of the far right, particularly in

relation to gender identity and sexual orientation (Hastings and Warsi, 2022). According to Berger, this is a major cause for concern, given the current political volatility, and it is likely that gender and identity driven violence will continue to in increase and intensify.

In the European context since 2019 investigations are underway into apparent financial support of far-right organizations via the budget of the European Parliament (IJ4EU). According to RUE89 Strasbourg, a French news website established by a group of former French journalists, concerns remain as to whether politicians are engaged in a 'double speak' wherein they critique EU expenditure on the one hand and on the other they consistently expand the maximum expenses rules in order to obtain funding for various political parties. Prior to this in 2018, two far-right European political parties officially registered for the opening European parliament funding call for 2019 (Nielsen, 2018). The irony in all of this is that far right parties are known for their strong critique of the EU, yet they benefit substantially from the European process of integration and as members of the European Parliament they are also entitled to benefit financially from EU funding. Writing for the London School of Economics as part of the European Politics and Policy multidisciplinary academic blog, Maria Lorimer makes the point that the EU continues to provide far right parties with the 'symbolic and material resources to become more prominent' (London School of Economics, 2020: np). As a consequence, existing and emerging far right parties have the potential to establish appealing political positions that entice both traditional and new voters alike.

The future of the far-right

Early predictions indicate that far right parties are likely to do well in the forthcoming European Parliament elections in June 2024. Thus, it is almost inevitable that Europe's sacred agenda toward the law, human rights, climate action and immigration policies will be impacted (Wax, 2024). Also, given growing global insecurities and increasing threats of war, as well as socio-political instability, it looks more and more likely that far- right parties will use whatever means necessary, including exploitative measures to grow their presence more broadly. Using conspiracy theories such as the right and protection of the traditional family unit, the nation state, law and order and constitutional independence, far right parties such as *Ireland First* (The Common Sense Nationalist Party) will inevitably seek to bolster political support through stoic principles such as '*The Nation of Ireland Belongs to the Irish People'.*

This and other such ideologies heighten people's awareness of the parties' desire to promote Irish culture and preserve Irish identity by reclaiming full independence. That means; leaving the EU with its restrictive and compromising policies and embracing an education system that reflects parents' values and beliefs, particularly in relation to gender identity and sex education which should only be included in the education system with the full consent of parents. As Hastings and Warsi (2022) point out more broadly, there is little tolerance for difference and diversity, nonconforming genders presentations, sexual practices or sexual orientation (Hastings and Warsi, 2022). The future is one of concern, however, the time is ripe to raise awareness of and educate people about the intricacies of far- right ideals, the efforts they will go to eradicate what they perceive as 'threats to the nation state', by using whatever means possible to achieve the desired agenda.

References

Action for Children (2022) LGBTQ+ portrayal in the media: Are young people seeing themselves represented?', 24 June. Available at: https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/ /blog/representation-matters-are-lgbtq-young-people-seeing-themselves-represented-in-the-media/ (Accessed on 24 October 2023).

The Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) (2022) *Update: Fact Sheet: Anti-LGBT+ Mobilization in the United States,* available: https://www.acleddata.com/ 2022/11 /23/update-fact-sheet-anti-lgbt-mobilization-in-the-united-states/ (Accessed on 9 October 2023).

Askew, J. (2023) Keep Ireland Irish: Say hello to Ireland's growing far right, *Euronews*, 13 March and 28 April.

Bergengruen, V. (2023) How extremists raised more than $6 million on crowdfunding sites. *Time,* 31 January, 2023, available: https://www.time.com/6251612/extremism-crowd funding-report/ (Accessed on 17 October 2023).

Bump, P. (2022) The proud boys keep popping up at LGBTQ events. *The Washington Post,* 22 November 2022. Available: https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/ 11/22/proud-boys-keeping-popping-up-anti-lgbtq-events/ (Accessed on 10 October 2023).

Burns, K. (2019) The internet made trans people visible. It also left them more vulnerable. *Vox,* 27 December, 2019. Available at: https://www.vox.com/identities/ 2019/27/21028342/trans-visibility-backlash-internet-2010 (Accessed on 24 October 2023).

Carter, A. (2023) Thousands gather in GTA for more protests over gender, sexual identity in school curriculum, 1 Arrested. *CBC News, 20* September. Available at: https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/gta-sexual-education-protests-1.6972566 (Accessed on 3 October 2023).

Cooney, J. (1999) *John Charles McQuaid Ruler of Catholic Ireland.* The O'Brien Press.

Cronin, J. (2021) *Voluntary Childlessness in Contemporary Ireland: Women's Experiences.* Peter Lang.

European Commission (2021) *Identifying Conspiracy Theories.* Available at: https://commission.europe.eu/strategy-and-policy/coronavirus-response/fighting-disinformation/identifying-conspiracy-theories_en:-:text=The%20belief%that%20certain%20events%20events%20or%20situations%20are, 'Evidence'%20that%20seems%20to%20support%20the%20conspiracy%20conspiracy%20theory (Accessed on 13 May 2025).

Fanning, B., and Mutwarasibo, F. (2007) Nationals/non-nationals: Immigration, citizenship and politics in the Republic of Ireland. *Ethnic and Racial Studies,* 30(3), 439-460.

Farinelli, F (2021) '*Conspiracy Theories and Right-Wing Extremism – Insights and Recommendations for P/CVE'.* European Commission. Available at: https://www.home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-04/ran_conspiracy_theories_and_right_wing_2021_en.pdf (Accessed on 27 October 2023).

Farrell, E. (2023) 'Why is the Far Right Targeting Ireland's Libraries?' *The Guardian,* 8 August 2023, available: https://www.thejournal.ie/library-protests-ireland-6135746-Aug2023/ (Accessed on 1 September 2023).

Fernane, S. (2023) Children terrified as anti-LGBTQ+ protestors storm Kerry library: It was the Scariest I've Ever felt as A Gay Person', *Irish Independent,* 13 July 2023, available: https://www.https://www.independent.ie/regionals/kerry/tralee-news/children-terrified-as-anti-lgbtq-protesters-storm-kerry-library-it-was-the-scariest-ive-ever-felt-as-a-gay-person/a776927836.html (Accessed on 1 August2023).

Fitzgerald, C. (2023) 'Explainer: Why is the Far-Right Targeting Ireland's Libraries?', *The Journal,* 8 August 2023, available: https://www.thejournal.ie/library-protests-ireland-6135746-Aug2023/ (Accessed 10 October 2023).

Graham, G. (2007) *The Re-Enchantment of the World: Art Versus Religion.* Oxford Academic. doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199265961.0002.

Hastings, D., and Warsi, Z. (2022). Why far-right groups are increasingly targeting the LGBTQ Community. *PBS News Hour,* 14 June. Available at: https://www.pbs.org/news hur/shw/why-far-right-groups-are-increasingly-targeting-the-lgbtq-community (Accessed on 19 October 2023).

Hume, T. (2022) Right's Trump Card? *Vice News.* Available at: vice.com/en/article/4ax7jn/far –right-women-giorgia-meloni-marine-le-pen (Accessed on 15 October2024).

Ihleboek, K., Figenschou, T., and Haanshuus, B. (nd) What is the relationship between the far right and the media?', C-REX-Centre for Research on Extremism, University of Oslo: Available at: https:https://www.sv.uio.no/c-rex/english/groups/compedium/what-is-the-relationship-between-the-far-right-and-the-media.html (Accessed on 10 October 2023).

Inglis, T. (1987) *Moral Monopoly: Catholic Church in Modern Irish Society.* Gill and Macmillan.

Jetter, M. (2017) Mediated terrorism: US news and Al-Qaeda attacks. CESIFO Working Papers. Available at: https://wwwcesifo.org/DocDL/cesifo1_wp6804.pdf (Accessed on 17 October 2023).

Kearns, D (2024) New research highlights fears of troubling rise in anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric and violence across Ireland. *UCD*, 9 October. Available at: https://www.ucd.ie/newsandopinion/news2024/

october/09/newresearchhighlightsfearoftroublingriseanti-lgbtqrhetoricandviolenceacross ireland/roub (Accessed on 21 January 2025).

New research highlights fears of troubling rise in anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric and violence across Ireland - University College Dublin

London School of Economics (2020) Europe as ideological resource: How far right parties can benefit from European integration', 15 May. available: blog.lse.ac.uk/euro ppblog/2020/05/15/Europe-as-ideological-resource-how-far-right-parties-can-benefit-from-european-integration/ (Accessed on 13 February 2024).

Loughlin, E. and Sherlock, C. (2023) Protesters bring gallows to demonstration outside Leinster House. *Irish Examiner,* 20 September. Available at: https://www.irishexaminer.com/news/ politics/arid-41230465.html (Accessed on 25 September 2023).

Mocarski, R., King, R., Butler, S., Holt, N.R., Huit, Z. T., Hope, D.A., Meyer, H.M. and Woodruff, N. (2019) The rise of transgender and gender diverse representation in the media: Impacts on the media'. *Communication, Culture and Critique,* 12(3), 416-433. Available at: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6824534/ (Accessed on 24 October 2023).

Mudde, C. (2019) *The Far Right Today.* Polity.

Nielsen, N. (2018) Far-right parties re-register to access EU Funds. *Euobserver.* Available at: euobserver.com/eu-political/140987 (Accessed on 27 October 2023).

Pope, C. (2022) The secrets of Ireland's lunatic asylums. *The Irish Times,* 31 January. Available at: https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/the-secrets-of-ireland-s-lunatic-asylums-1.4789773 (Accessed on 10 October 2024).

Riera Bosqued, L. (2023) Rise of the far-right undermines LGBTQI+ rights in Europe. *Euronews,* 30 June. Available: https://www.euronews.com/2023/06/30/rise-of-the-far-right-undermines-lgbtqi-rights-in-europe (Accessed on 8 October 2023).

Schoenbaum, H. (2023) LGBTQ+ Americans are under attack, human rights campaign declares in state of emergency warning. *PBS News Hour.* Available at: https/www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/lgbtq-americans-are-under-attack (Accessed on 8 October 2023).

Skjelsboek, I., Leidig, E., Segers, I.B. and Thorleifsson, C. (nd) What role does gender play in the far right'?', *C-REX – Centre for Research on Extremism,* University of Oslo. Available at: https://www.sv.uio.no/c-rex/english/groups/compendium/what-role-does-gender- /play-in-the-far-right.html (Accessed 17 October 2023).

Wax, E. (2024) This time, the far right threat is real', *Politico.* Available at: httpps://www.politico.eu/article/brussels-braces-for-far-right-wave-as-eu-election-looms/ (Accessed on 13 February 2024).

Zhang, X., and Davis, M. (2022) E-extremism: A conceptual framework for studying the online far right. *New Media and Society,* 26(5), 2954-2970. doi.org/10.1177/14614448221098360.