

PVV Blog 10 ~ The Ideology Of The PVV (Party for Freedom) In Practice



With the arrival of the new Dutch cabinet under prime minister Schoof, we will witness the ideology of the PVV put into practice. How will the ideas of the PVV be realized in daily policy?

We previously started this series under the name “*The PVV in Power and Muslims*” and in this ‘new’ series, the focus will again be on the Muslim community in the Netherlands and the effects of PVV policy on them. However, it doesn’t really matter what the series is called, as every decision and action by PVV powerholders always has negative effects on Muslims, migrants, and anyone who is not Dutch.

Today, the kickoff: about the government statement and the subsequent debate.

The ‘Rule of Law Paper’

The Debate

Political enthusiasts likely followed [the debate](#) that ensued after the government statement of the Schoof cabinet on Thursday, July 4, with cringing toes, raised eyebrows, clenched buttocks, pricked ears, and weary eyes. The opposition rose up against PVV ministers

Marjolein Faber and Reinette Klever due to their statements about “replacement” and the wearing of headscarves. The opposition parties were outraged, arguing that the two mentioned PVV ministers, with their statements, had already violated the unity of cabinet policy on day one. Prime Minister Schoof responded by asserting that his cabinet was there for all Dutch citizens, and, to emphasize his point, he looked at Labour - Green Left Party [MP Lahlah](#), who wears a headscarf, and declared that he saw a person who is one of us.

On Paper, Everything is Correct

What is the issue here? Well, columnist Sita Sitalising articulated it strongly in

the Dutch newspaper [De Volkskrant](#) on Saturday, July 6. Everyone is lulled into complacency by the fact that the entire team of ministers, including the PVV officials, as well as the leaders of PVV and its coalition partners VVD, NSC, and BBB, have signed [a document](#) declaring their adherence to the principles of the rule of law and democracy. This paper reality is something the prime minister never fails to emphasize: “My team is there for everyone, and we all adhere to democratic rules.” As everyone knows, paper is patient, but the law, also written on paper, exists precisely to indicate how to act when someone breaks the rules. The document signed by the cabinet and coalition parties is a kind of law: it comes into effect because we can assume that the rules will be broken. After all, if there are no violations, there is no need for a law.

Reduce it ‘a bit’

In the debate, the following discussion took place. DENK (Islamic party) MP Stefan van Baarle told Wilders, “Those people in djellabas, that Islamic butcher, that is the Netherlands. That belongs to the Netherlands. Get used to it, I say to Mr. Wilders.” Wilders, however, responded, “We have gone too far. People are rightly worried about it (i.e. foreigners living in the cities; he said earlier). And I say: guys, we can’t handle it anymore. We need to reduce it a bit. That is finally going to happen now. That’s really good.” The attentive listener hears Wilders use the word ‘reduce’, albeit ‘a bit’, but still reducing, and in this fragment, he means to say that he looks forward to ‘people who feel strange in their own neighborhood and city’ feeling at home again because ‘reducing that is going to happen now’ and ‘that’s really good.’

The House paid little attention to these words, especially not the leaders of the other coalition parties, nor the prime minister. This, despite these words being a violation of the solemnly signed rule of law document. After all, does ‘reducing’; not mean an ethnic cleansing of the neighborhood and city?

Football match Turkey-Netherlands

And there were more violations of the document of the rule of law by the leader of the largest party. On Saturday, July 6, the European Championship football match between Turkey and the

Netherlands took place, with the Netherlands winning. Wilders posted [this tweet](#) online, and this was the text: “They curse us and hate us. Leave for Turkey, no one is forcing you to stay here!

This is why the PVV is the largest party in the Netherlands." Legally, this

statement is undoubtedly allowed in light of freedom of speech, but morally it stands in stark contrast to the rule of law document also signed by Wilders, which has already been degraded to a rag.

Patriots for Europe

[Another action](#) Wilders took was aligning his party with the new group in the European Parliament, 'Patriots for Europe,' an initiative of Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán. This

group consists of similar parties to the PVV, with Orbán's Fidesz party being the most prominent. Orbán has reduced his country to the democratic pariah of Europe, and one of his first actions,

now that Hungary holds the EU presidency for this half-year, was to visit Russian President Vladimir Putin: [My goal was to open the channels of direct communication and start a dialogue](#)

on the shortest road to #peace ,said Orbán, whom I consider a useful idiot who has likely never signed a 'rule of law document'. Meanwhile, Dutch Defense Minister Brekelmans (VVD) and Foreign Minister Veldkamp (NSC) visited Kyiv around the same time to support Ukraine: the new Dutch cabinet continues to back the country. But how credible is that when the now most powerful man in the Netherlands aligns himself even more closely with Putin's friend Orbán?

What does the rule of law document say about this?

Use the 'Rule of Law Paper' Against the Cabinet

The opposition would do well to challenge this cabinet primarily on ideological grounds: address the ideological principles underpinning its actions; do not attack the individual PVV ministers

personally, as that is ineffective. Confront the government with the 'rule of law paper' knowing that it functions like a law and also knowing that laws exist because they are broken. The prime minister still believes in the paper, but we now know better (and perhaps he does too), and the more often the paper is violated, the greater the pressure on the other coalition parties, aside from the PVV, to ideologically expose the PVV faction. For my part, I will continue to do this in this series, and I fear there will be many more parts to come.

[The debate about the government statement \(it only takes 11 h and 54 min\)](#)

See: <https://rozenbergquarterly.com/pvv-blog-introduction>

Neoliberalism Fueled Far Right Win In First Round Of France's Snap Election



C.J. Polychroniou

07-04-2024 ~ The far right led in the first round of France's parliamentary elections. The second round takes place July 7.

President Emmanuel Macron's risky gamble to call a snap legislative election after his party suffered a humiliating defeat at the European Parliament elections on June 6-9 did not pay off. In fact, it backfired in a big way as voters, who turned out in [record numbers](#), abandoned the center and cast their ballot for the far right and the left-wing parties that came together to form a new "Popular Front." But arrogance, such as ripping up labor law and making it easier for companies to fire employees, has defined Macron's long-term tenure in power (he won office in 2017 and was reelected in 2022) and his political legacy will be as the president who made the far right National Rally the dominant French political party, opening the path that would lead the fascists to power.

Marine Le Pen's far right National Rally (RN) party came first in the first round of France's parliamentary elections by securing 33.1 percent of the vote. The leftist New Popular Front (NPF) followed in second place with 27.99 percent, while

Macron's center-right Ensemble alliance came third with just 20.76 percent of the vote. RN did not cross the 289-seat mark for an absolute majority, but as Macron's prime minister Gabriel Attal said, noting the obvious, the far right is now "[at the gates of power](#)" and the second round will indeed be decisive.

According to France's complicated political system, if no candidate reaches 50 percent in the first round, the top two finishers automatically qualify for the second round, as well as those with over 12.5 percent. Thus, the second voting round, which takes place on July 7, will be a three-way contest, and this will work to the advantage of RN. But indicative of the fear that has spread across the rest of the political spectrum of the prospect of a far right government taking power in Paris, [Gabriel Attal](#) said that candidates from the Ensemble alliance that qualify for the second round but have no chance of winning will be withdrawn so as to give non RN candidates the best chance to win, and Jean-Luc Mélenchon, the veteran leftist who leads the NPF, will withdraw all its candidates who placed third in the first round. The strategy is to block RN from gaining any more votes. Even the European Trade Union Confederation chairperson called for a "blockade" of the far right.

Having said that, it must be acknowledged that the first round's results are nothing short of historic. This is the first time that the far right has won the first round of a French parliamentary election and the prospect of the 28-year-old RN party leader [Jordan Bardella](#) being installed as prime minister looms quite large. Indeed, RN is projected to win between 230 and 280 seats once the run-off election is over, a huge bump from the 88 that it had before the National Assembly was dissolved by president Macron on June 9.

Macron is expected to stay on as president until his term expires in 2027, so France will experience yet again one of its political cohabitation moments. The last time France had a divided government was under conservative president Jacques Chirac, with socialist prime minister Lionel Jospin, from 1997 to 2002. The two men clashed openly many times on domestic issues, especially around combatting unemployment. The second round will likely yield a forced "cohabitation" between Macron and a prime minister from another political tendency, so the risk of political paralysis should not be underestimated as the government will surely seek to implement policies that conflict with the president's plans.

The critical question here is this: How could a party that is a “political heir” of the Vichy regime (i.e., the French government that ruled in collaboration with the Nazis during the occupation) become so popular to the point of becoming the dominant French party? After all, France has a grim colonial legacy but is also a country with long-established progressive values and traditions (for example, unlike in the U.S., in France there were never laws prohibiting interracial marriage, even back in the 18th and 19th centuries) and a rich history of revolutionary politics.

Up until a few decades ago, the far right was a political pariah in France as it was widely regarded to be a danger to democracy. In 1973, the National Front (FN), which was founded a year earlier by Marine Le Pen’s father, Jean-Marie Le Pen, and presented itself as an ultranationalist, anti-communist and xenophobic movement, garnered less than 1 percent of the vote. Back then, the French public would not tolerate an apologist of French colonialism and someone who insisted on the rehabilitation of the Collaborationists. Accordingly, even nearly a decade later, Jean-Marie Le Pen failed to secure enough support from elected officials to run for the presidential election of 1981.

Nonetheless, slowly but gradually, and thanks to deteriorating socioeconomic conditions under President Francois Mitterrand who by 1983 had made a radical neoliberal U-turn and subsequently abandoned his previous commitment to a break with capitalism, the National Front began to make inroads into mainstream French politics, and in 1986 gained its first seats (35 in total) in the National Assembly by winning [9.65 percent](#) of the votes. The party’s electoral success in the 1986 legislative election was also helped by the change made in 1985 by President Mitterrand in the French electoral system from a plurality voting system to a party-list proportional representation system, which made it easier for smaller parties like the National Front to win seats in legislative bodies.

In addition, Mitterrand had also relaxed immigration policy, which led to a substantial increase of immigrants from North Africa, a development that Jean-Marie Le Pen fully exploited. Fearmongering about Islam and Muslim immigrants became one of National Front’s main political priorities, helping Le Pen to win 14.4 percent of the votes in the 1988 presidential election.

In the 2002 presidential election, Le Pen won 16.9 percent of the votes, enough to qualify for a second round of voting. However, this sent shockwaves across

French society and sparked a massive anti-FN mobilization. Right, center-right and left politicians came together in order to block Le Pen from winning the second round. Moreover, in one of the largest turnouts on [May Day](#), an estimated 1 million people took part in anti-Le Pen protests across the country. On May 5, Chirac won 80 percent of the vote in the run-off.

In 2007, Le Pen felt confident about that year's presidential election, especially after he had seen his approval rating in public polls increase after the [2005 riots](#), but he finished fourth with 10.4 percent of the vote. This was the FN's weakest showing in a legislative election in over twenty years, and it was not simply because of the criminal investigation that the French authorities had launched against Le Pen two years earlier for [antisemitic comments](#) he had made about the Nazi occupation of France during World War II; it was due mainly to the fact that Sarkozy had run on a hard-right campaign based around "law and order" and immigration. In other words, Sarkozy had "[stolen Le Pen's clothes](#)" in his campaign and effectively made the far right's program and rhetoric integral components of the mainstream right.

In 2011, the National Front's leadership was transferred to Marine Le Pen, who renamed it the National Rally in 2018. She said that the party had evolved and that it had left behind her father's racist and fascist ideology. In fact, she had [expelled](#) her father from the party in August 2015 after he had reiterated his comments about the Nazi gas chambers. But identity built around the idea of the nation remains at the core of the RN's ideological framework and the obsession with immigration is still there. Nonetheless, Marine Le Pen has succeeded where her father failed, which is to normalize the vision and politics of the far right, by basically turning down the volume and by also doing impressive ideological somersaults such as her 2017 promise to take France out of the eurozone. And shortly after Steve Bannon spoke at the National Rally congress in 2018, in which he told the audience to wear as a badge of honor the charge that they are racists, Le Pen distanced herself from Donald Trump's former aide by describing him as an American, not European, with no role to play in the battle to "[save Europe.](#)"

But none of these image management tactics would be working if it wasn't for the appeal that Marine Le Pen's plans for the economy have for a broad audience. For starters, she opposes free trade and globalization and vows to turn the page on Macronism on key issues and policies which are unpopular with voters, such as labor market reforms and raising the retirement age from 62 to 64. Le Pen

champions public services — for French citizens — and presents herself as a protector of workers and farmers. But with regard to nationality and immigration, RN's policy objectives haven't really changed since the days of Jean-Marie Le Pen's National Front: French nationality will be restricted to blood, migrants will be stripped of social benefits, undocumented migrants will be deported, and immigration levels will be cut dramatically.

Le Pen pairs her attacks on immigrants' rights with an economic vision for France that seeks to transcend the traditional left-right divide on economic policies, and findings before the election showed that [French voters trust RN more than any other party](#) when it comes to running the economy. It should not be surprising, therefore, that support for RN in the first round of the snap election surged "[in nearly every city, town and village in France.](#)"

Of course, counting on Marine Le Pen to turn her plans for the economy into actual policies in the event that RN forms a government is a risky proposition. [Jean-Philippe Tanguy](#), head of RN's economic policy, has already gone on record promising fiscal discipline and a pro-business stance. Fascism is a form of capitalism, and fascists have always had a cozy relationship with big business.

Be that as it may, there is hardly any doubt that Macron's neoliberalism has been the key factor behind the electoral success of RN in the first round of the snap election and in the actual legitimization of the program of the extreme right. Macron embraced neoliberalism with untamed passion once he became president. Not only that, but he adopted authoritarian politics (such as using constitutional tricks for bypassing the power of the parliament) for the implementation of his unpopular policies and even [banned protests](#) and authorized the use of state violence against protesters to the point that made fascism the next logical step. At the same time, Macron and his inner circle have gone to extreme lengths to [demonize the left](#) (which, incidentally, faced accusations of antisemitism during the campaign on account of some problematic remarks made by Jean-Luc Mélenchon), yet they begged the left to protect democracy from the surge of the far right.

It is unclear how the General Assembly will be shaped before the second round of voting has been completed. What is clear is that the Macron era is over, as his hold on domestic policy will be severely diminished with a prime minister from the opposition in government. We can also say with a degree of confidence that

what lies ahead for French politics, with far-reaching effects across Europe and even other parts of the globe, is a war between the left and the far right. And in such momentous political moments, one has to take sides. As historian Howard Zinn, who had a fondness for French radical politics, used to say: “One can’t be neutral on a moving train.”

The New Popular Front, a coalition of left-wing parties that includes Jean-Luc Mélenchon’s France Unbowed, the Socialist Party, the Communist Party and the Greens, has an ambitious economic program that if implemented, will put an end to the dominance of neoliberal orthodoxy in France. Among other things, it calls for raising the monthly minimum wage to 1,600 euros (from 1,398 euros), imposing price ceilings on all basic necessities, investing massively in the green transition and public services, and lowering the retirement age to 60. It’s a [realistic agenda](#). While in opposition, NPF is expected to play a crucial role in limiting the damage of a far-right government. With labor unions as allies, strikes will undoubtedly become the primary tool used by NPF to send a message to the government that no decisions that harm workers will be accepted as *fait accompli*.

In sum, any way you slice it, NPF is the political force most likely to halt the right-wing lurch in French politics.

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Political Economy of Saving the Planet (with Noam Chomsky and Robert Pollin as primary authors, 2020); *The Precipice: Neoliberalism, the Pandemic, and the Urgent Need for Radical Change* (an anthology of interviews with Noam Chomsky, 2021); and *Economics and the Left: Interviews with Progressive Economists* (2021).

The Growing Weaponization Of Open-Source Information



*John P. Ruehl -
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07-04-2024 ~ *Open-source information and intelligence are fueling global participation in the war in Ukraine and other global hotspots, changing how the private sector, the public, and governments influence conflicts.*

[Within a day](#) of the June 2, 2024, release of a video documenting the abuse of prisoners of war by a Russian soldier in Ukraine, open-source intelligence (OSINT) researchers had identified the Russian citizen and his involvement in Ukraine going back a decade. [Ukrainian officials subsequently sent letters](#) to the International Committee of the Red Cross and the United Nations to document the abuse for potential use in a future criminal trial.

This case is just one example of how OSINT is influencing the war in Ukraine. Online platforms have allowed citizens to broadcast updates to the world, democratizing information and intelligence dissemination. Powerful commercial satellites enable both sides to constantly detect troop and vehicle movements, while [georeferencing](#) allows internet users to pinpoint targets through photos and videos. Additionally, social media analysis can track public sentiment and propaganda efforts, providing crucial local and international insights into the psychological nature of the war.

Though the Russia-Ukraine war has shown the latest innovations in wartime OSINT, online platforms and global technologies have [increased](#) public involvement in conflicts for years recently. OSINT is being used to shape perceptions of wars, aid in military operations, provide insight into military performances, and expose wrongdoing. Driven by innovations from the private sector, the public, and governments, the growth of OSINT is expected to pose increasing risks to [national security](#) and personal privacy.

Foreign maps, news, and propaganda sources have been gathered for centuries to gain insights into the capabilities, preparedness, and strategies of foreign militaries. However, the establishment of the [BBC Monitoring Service](#) in 1939 marked a major application of OSINT centralization to gather information about World War II. After the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, the U.S. created the [Research and Analysis Branch](#) to serve a similar purpose, and as the information age has rapidly progressed since then, OSINT has evolved into a crucial element of modern conflicts.

While [Publicly Available Information \(PAI\)](#) makes up part of OSINT, it also [includes](#) commercial data that can be bought or obtained, data about network functions, and algorithms to organize information. Additionally, [effective OSINT usage](#) depends on access to data sources, the effectiveness of storing and organizing the data, and reliable and constructive communication to share and debate the findings. Today, individuals thousands of miles away from the front lines play major roles in the fighting, planning, and perception of conflicts, with governments and private actors similarly seeking to exploit OSINT in their own ways.

The Russia-Ukraine War continues to show the critical role of OSINT in modern conflict, building on its application in Ukraine over the past decade. Investigative

journalism group Bellingcat used OSINT [to expose Russia's involvement](#) in the 2014 downing of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 over Ukraine and [released another report](#) in 2016 documenting Russian artillery attacks against Ukraine. Additionally, OSINT researchers were able to [unmask the identities](#) of numerous Russians working for private military and security companies operating in Ukraine from 2014 onward.

In the weeks leading up to the 2022 Russian invasion, organizations like Conflict Observatory [amassed large amounts of public and commercially available data](#) to help identify potential targets and attack points by Russian forces. Hours before Russian forces rolled across the border, Jeffrey Lewis of the Middlebury Institute of International Studies used [traffic reports on Google Maps in Russia to indicate](#) Russian action was imminent. Some of the first images of the invasion then came from [civilians livestreaming](#) Russian tanks crossing the border.

Since the start of the invasion, OSINT has increasingly favored Ukraine. Social media posts featuring vehicle license plates [helped researchers](#) determine what types of military vehicles Russia had deployed and where. Viral images and videos of large numbers of destroyed Russian vehicles [helped convince Western countries](#) to support more aid to Ukraine, together with other OSINT that has helped [expose potential war crimes](#), [debunk Russian claims](#), and [identify war criminals](#). Meanwhile, Russia banned U.S. social media platforms shortly after the war began, limiting the ability of Russian internet users to coordinate, disrupt, and influence discussions on major global platforms.

Cross-referencing Google Street View photos, viral images and videos, and [public satellite data](#), online researchers have tracked Russian missile launchers. [Commercial satellites have helped provide damage assessments of Ukrainian attacks on](#) Russian air bases. Russian soldiers have been targeted through their phones and fitness trackers after connecting to [Ukraine's telecoms network](#), [dating apps](#), [geotagged social media posts](#), and other smartphone features, [resulting in fatalities](#).

A web scraping website, [Call Russia](#), meanwhile collects publicly available data on Russian citizens and allows Russian speakers from around the world to call and talk to them about the war. OSINT relating to the war has also spread to Europe. Bellingcat used OSINT to identify a Russian spy with a fake identity [working in Italy](#) in 2022, and Ukrainian OSINT group Molnar subsequently unmasked 167

Russian spies working across Europe [in 2023](#).

Governments were quick to recognize the utility of OSINT in the war and organize it effectively. The U.S. State Department gave immediate [support to the Conflict Observatory](#), and Europol [launched an OSINT](#) task force to assist in investigating Russian war crimes. The Ukrainian government [created an app](#) for citizens to provide information on military movements and illegal activities, and Ukrainian citizens [have been able to direct Ukrainian attacks](#) on Russian positions through their phones.

Nonetheless, Russia has enjoyed some balance in OSINT's application throughout the war. Various [sources](#) use OSINT to document Russian and Ukrainian military equipment losses, as well as [update daily maps](#) that [document troop movements and changes](#) to the frontline. Chatbots continuously scour the internet for data and update receivers with real-time OSINT analysis to identify and alert [soldiers to potentially valuable information](#). U.S. satellite companies are also suspected of [providing images to Russian forces](#), resulting in damaging and deadly attacks that show the vulnerabilities of the West's more open business and internet standards.

Other recent conflicts, particularly in the Middle East, have seen extensive use of OSINT. Throughout the Syrian Civil War, the [Live Universal Awareness Map](#) has primarily used social media posts to map current military movements, unrest, destruction, and violence. [In 2016](#), social media users combed through satellite data and located a terrorist camp in the Syrian desert, which was bombed by Russian forces [hours later](#).

OSINT serves as a force equalizer for militant groups with limited access to advanced technologies, and they have [drastically increased](#) their use of OSINT in the 21st century. Since the start of the Saudi-led intervention in Yemen's civil war in 2015, Houthi militants have used [social media](#) and [satellite images](#) to monitor and target the movements of the Saudi-led coalition, though the Saudi coalition has also relied on social media information to [target Houthi forces](#) as well. Following the onset of the Red Sea Crisis in late 2023, the Houthis, in coordination with Iran, have used [commercially available](#) maritime intelligence services, such as [Marine Traffic](#) and [ShipXplorer](#), to track and attack ships through the narrow body of water.

Hamas has employed OSINT against Israel [for decades](#), capitalizing on Israel's

open media environment to monitor Israeli policy changes, troop movements, and public sentiment. Since Israel's military bombardment of Gaza began in 2023, the Washington Post's Visual Forensics has [mapped Israeli advances](#) using videos, photos, and satellite imagery. Al Jazeera's fact-checking unit Sanad [disproved Israel's claim](#) of a Hamas tunnel under al-Shifa Hospital, and additional OSINT [proved that Palestinian civilians](#) had been killed by Israeli forces along the safe routes advised by Israel.

Contrastingly, OSINT [was used by Israel to challenge](#) reports by Hamas, and repeated by global media outlets, about an Israeli strike that destroyed a hospital. Bellingcat investigators [analyzed](#) footage from the sites of two Hamas attacks in Israel on October 7 [to piece together the assault](#). Additionally, Israeli intelligence actively monitors Hamas [on social media](#), as well as using OSINT in other ways to track Hamas activities.

Outside of active conflict zones, OSINT is also increasingly used as a geopolitical tool. [In 1992](#), the deputy director of the CIA stated that over 80 percent of the agency's analysis was based on OSINT, and the U.S. actively uses OSINT against adversaries and allies. However, the availability and commercialization of data in the West has undermined U.S. global military power. In 2018, for example, the [Strava fitness app's](#) user map exposed the positions and movements of U.S. military personnel in Iraq and Syria.

Algorithms can now [instantly detect](#) the presence of a ship using global port webcams, while U.S. military aircraft can be tracked on programs like [Flightradar24](#), helping map the U.S. global military presence in real-time. Additionally, [WarshipCam](#) and [ShipSpotting](#) contain extensive image databases of almost all warships and onboard system configurations. A 2023 report by the University of California's Berkeley Risk and Security Lab stated that China is using various OSINT images of U.S. warships [for AI training datasets](#) to build highly detailed computerized images of U.S. and allied vessels.

Additionally, machine learning has made it easy to [analyze social media](#). [Lexical analysis](#), web scraping, and sentiment analysis provide information on language usage and demographics of social media posters. Russia's history of [using social media](#) to inflame the U.S. public over divisive issues is well documented, and other states are employing similar tactics to influence the U.S. and Europe. OSINT is also being [increasingly used in DNA analysis](#). China's [Beijing Genomics](#)

[Institute](#), which works on the Human Genome Project, has amassed millions of people's genomic data for use in studies of populations.

Just as governments and groups use OSINT abroad, they are adapting to its deployment domestically. [During the Arab Spring](#) protests in 2010 and 2011, regional governments faced vulnerabilities from protests organized online, with live maps, government atrocities depicted on social media, and other forms of OSINT used. In recognition of this, Beijing acted quickly to pressure foreign companies to remove the HKMap.live app tracking police forces from their platforms and put restrictions on communications during the [2019 and 2020 Hong Kong protests](#). Western governments may find it challenging to employ such measures amid widespread unrest, [resorting instead](#) to tactics such as event barraging by overwhelming the information space with a flood of content to distract and obscure valuable information, misinformation campaigns, trend hijacking, and other methods to undermine OSINT and prevent effective data analysis.

There is also a natural incentive for governments to use OSINT against their populations. By aggregating and analyzing publicly available information and other data, governments can gain valuable insight into citizens' lives, behaviors, and opinions. However, this comes at a significant cost to personal privacy and can make individuals and groups vulnerable to unwarranted surveillance. Law enforcement agencies are increasingly using OSINT [in criminal investigations](#). Moreover, OSINT can be manipulated to shape public opinion, as demonstrated by the "Ghost of Kyiv" during the Russia-Ukraine conflict, which highlighted the potential for OSINT to be [hijacked for propaganda purposes](#).

OSINT is increasingly a major component of the surveillance economy, with companies selling personal and public data for profit. [Major names](#) in the OSINT industry include Palantir Technologies, Recorded Future, and Babel Street, among others. These companies, along with numerous smaller firms, continue to drive market growth and innovation. These applications of OSINT extend beyond traditional intelligence gathering, with the increasing sophistication of [targeted marketing](#) being one result.

Instances of public misuse of OSINT are widespread, ranging from researchers [falsely identifying war criminals](#) to hackers exploiting OSINT for profit. But OSINT has significant positive impacts, including coordinating evacuations and

humanitarian aid, alerting civilians to threats, and allowing them to document their experiences that can counter or complement traditional media.

However, much of OSINT continues to be focused on conflict and domestic surveillance, and its capabilities are [rapidly expanding](#) as it integrates with [machine learning technologies](#). As OSINT becomes increasingly weaponized and commercialized, the evolving landscape will require increased attention to the ethics of large-scale data accumulation and the threat to personal privacy.

By John P. Ruehl

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Source: Independent Media Institute

Far-Right Surge Or Status Quo? Understanding The 2024 European Elections



07-04-2024 ~ *Last month's European Parliament elections did not bring about the ultimate breakthrough of the far right*

as some had feared. They are gaining influence though, especially because the lines between them and forces in the political center are blurring. Consequently, we will have to look to the left to stop their surge.

Between June 6 and 9, residents of the European Union (EU) [went to the polls](#) to

elect a new European Parliament. There were fears in advance of a breakthrough by the far right, which was not surprising given the recent electoral successes of extreme nationalist, conservative, and elitist parties, often with xenophobic tendencies and fascist roots or inspiration.

Six of the 27 EU countries—Italy, Finland, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, and the Czech Republic—have far-right parties in government. Sweden’s minority government relies on the support of the nationalist Sweden Democrats, the second-largest force in Parliament.

In the Netherlands, the Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV) of Geert Wilders won 37 seats in the 150-seat Parliament after a campaign filled with xenophobia and anti-Islam sentiment. His parliamentary group is much larger than those of the red/green alliance of European Commissioner Frans Timmermans and the liberals of former Prime Minister Mark Rutte, who won 24 and 25 seats respectively. At the time of the European elections, Wilders was busy forming the most right-wing government in his country’s recent history.

The Netherlands is a relatively small country, but the surge of the extreme right caused concern in the large countries of Europe as well. In Italy, Giorgia Meloni’s Fratelli d’Italia, a party that traces its roots back to the fascist movement of Benito Mussolini, has been in power since October 2022. In France, the Rassemblement National of Marine Le Pen [topped the pre-election polls](#), while the AfD, Alternative für Deutschland, the extreme right force in Germany consistently [scored better in opinion polls](#) than any of the three governing parties.

This Europe-wide success of far-right parties was indeed confirmed by the [European election results](#). The party of Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni won more than 28 percent of the national vote. In France, Marine Le Pen’s Rassemblement National was the party of preference for almost one in three voters, humiliating President Emmanuel Macron’s Renaissance party, which garnered only half as many votes. In Germany, the AfD won almost 16 percent. This might be less spectacular than the Italian and French extreme right, but it’s still better than each of the three members of the current traffic light coalition: the Social Democrats, the Greens, and the Liberal Party.

But has the European Parliament indeed been taken over by the extreme right? Not really.

Their electoral successes in a number of countries is undeniable, as the examples of Italy, France, and Germany have already illustrated. The surge of the far right has been [at the expense of traditional centrist parties](#). In the European Parliament, the Greens and Liberals lost about one-fourth of their seats each. The Social Democrats seem to remain stable, though, losing only four seats.

But the center-right [European People's Party \(EPP\) Group](#) is even growing and remains by far the largest group in the European Parliament. Together, these four traditional political groups still have a majority in the European Parliament.

Besides, although the extreme right parties did make progress in the June 2024 elections, they are hopelessly divided among themselves on key issues such as economic policy, foreign relations, and EU integration. For example, while some advocate for complete withdrawal from the EU, others support renegotiating membership terms.

As a result of these divisions, there are two parliamentary groups that contain far-right parties. On the one hand, there is the right-nationalist [European Conservatives and Reformists](#), dominated by the Fratelli d'Italia and Poland's Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (PiS) Party. On the other hand, there's the far-right [Identity and Democracy Group](#), whose members include France's National Rally but also the Austrian Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs and Geert Wilders's PVV. The AfD was a member of this group until it was expelled weeks before the European elections following a series of scandals.

And then, there are a number of far-right parties that do not belong to any of those parliamentary groups because they are not deemed acceptable or have already been expelled. Hungary's Fidesz party became the largest among them when they quit the center-right European People's Party in 2021. There's also a whole range of smaller parties. The AfD joined their ranks just recently, as it is unaffiliated to any parliamentary group.

There are two reasons, therefore, why the extreme right is not able to dominate the European Parliament. On the one hand, the centrist parties, and especially the EPP Group, remain relatively strong. Besides, the far-right groups are too divided among themselves to become dominant.

The fear of a takeover of European mainstream politics by fringe, extreme right parties seems to be unfounded, at least for now. Nevertheless the influence of the

extreme right is growing undeniably. The real danger might come from the blurring of the lines between mainstream parties and the far right.

We have seen recently how extreme right parties have started to emulate [center-right parties](#) in exchange for a seat at the table, especially if they can join the government. Interestingly, Giorgia Meloni's party is the only one of the three major Italian far-right parties that is unequivocally [in favor of NATO and support to Ukraine](#). Once in government, she became an outspoken supporter of military support. Geert Wilders, from his side, was ready to swallow much of his extreme party program in exchange for his ascension to government. The French Rassemblement National is also undergoing rebranding, and rallies with slick firebrand Jordan Bardella do not resemble the nostalgic National Front meetings of Jean-Marie Le Pen, the party's founder.

This is not the only way the lines between the mainstream and the extreme right have become blurred. The center-right is also moving slowly but surely to the right. The shift of center-right parties towards the right can be seen in [the EU's new migration pact](#), defended by European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen, which includes measures originally championed by the far right such as tougher deterrence through border control and stricter asylum procedures. Likewise, it also reinforces the extreme right's framing of migration as a threat to European values. The real danger, therefore, might not be that of a takeover of European politics by extreme-right parties but of the alliance between the old center-right with the 'new', supposedly more moderate, extreme right.

The only remedy to the rise of the extreme right is therefore to be sought not in the center but to the left of the political spectrum. The left is positioned to counter the far right because of its commitment to inclusive and egalitarian policies, which directly oppose the exclusionary and nationalist rhetoric of the far right.

Unfortunately, the left is also divided and is missing a clear strategy. There is the new phenomenon of Bündnis Sahra Wagenknecht in Germany, which is combining restrictive proposals on immigration with a more progressive economic program, although with 6.2 percent in the European Parliamentary elections they scored less than anticipated. La France Insoumise (France), the Kommounistikó Kómma Elládas (Greece), and Partij van de Arbeid van België / Parti du Travail de Belgique (Belgium) scored well, winning the support of some 10 percent of their

countries' electorate. The left is showing resilience in other countries as well. Eventually, it's these parties and the social movements they are rooted in that will have to provide an answer to the rise of the far right in Europe.

By Wim De Ceukelaire

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Source: Globetrotter

The Ultra-Right Is Governing Argentina. Who Is Javier Milei And What Is He Doing?



*Lucía Converti -
celag.org*

07-04-2024 ~ On December 10, 2023, Javier Milei was elected president of Argentina with 55.6 percent of the vote. The eccentric president has attracted global attention for his outrageous media style, his extreme ideas like “blowing up” the Central Bank of Argentina, and a mixture of messianism and mysticism

with religion and [canine esotericism](#). Beyond the media show, Milei represents a radical shift in a country governed by progressivism during the last twenty years—Néstor Kirchner (2003-2007), Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (2007-2015), and Alberto Fernández (2019-2023)—except for the interval of Mauricio Macri (2015-2019), when it was clear that the institutions of the public (for health care, for education, and more) were considered to be inviolable.

Javier Milei's public appearance began as a commentator on different [television programs](#). He was one of the promoters of the protests against the mandatory isolation imposed during the pandemic, alleging the restriction of individual freedoms, and based on his popularity in social media, he was [elected national deputy](#) in the legislative elections of 2021 for his party "La Libertad Avanza" (Liberty Moves Forward). In 2023, with a strong erosion of the ruling party due to a dragging and poorly managed economic crisis, and an alliance with the conservative right "Juntos por el Cambio" (Together for change), he became President of the country.

Javier Milei defines himself as an anarcho-capitalist and a disciple of the Austrian economic school. What does this mean? Contrary to global practices of economic protectionism, Milei proposes unrestricted market freedom. He also proposes it not only as a foreign trade policy but also as a domestic policy.

Based on [Murray Rothbard's philosophy](#), Milei considers the state an illicit association that appropriates taxpayers' money to sustain the privileges of the "political caste." He believes in the market as the "natural" regulator of life in society and, therefore, public ownership and administration of services as an aberration. For instance, he believes public education and public health should not exist. This philosophy vindicates the "Law of Talion," or an "eye for an eye," as a valid practice of justice.

From this perspective, he intends to position himself as one of the leaders of the global ultraright that discusses [combating](#) "cultural Marxism." This is the way in which they characterize progress for rights, women, sexual diversity, migrants, and those excluded from the system in general. Milei also adopts a [denialist position with respect to climate change](#) and the scientific evidence for it.

From Political Philosophy to Government Practice

From his role as economic columnist, and presidential candidate, Milei promised

the end of inflation, which averaged 8.6 percent monthly in Argentina in 2023 until Milei took office, and the dollarization of the economy.

Since he took office, as part of his economic policy, he has caused a devaluation of more than 100 percent of the local currency and embarked on a strong deregulation of economic activity, which implied an increase in the prices of basic goods and services. Additionally, as administrator of the state's resources, he slowed down investment in public works and [cut expenses](#) at all functional levels.

These measures provoked a great redistribution of income from the working class to the sectors that live off the economic and financial income it produces as well as big businessmen. They also created an economic recession that equals and in some sectors exceeds the levels reached during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In this context, the government celebrates that inflation has been reduced monthly since it took office (from 25.5 percent in December caused by the devaluation to 4.2 percent in May), and boasts of a fiscal surplus (which hides the actual debt of the country). But the purchasing power of the minimum salary (considering a total basic food basket) was 30 percent, poverty reached [55 percent](#) of the population in the first quarter of 2024 (with an increase of approximately 11 percent in the first 3 months of government), and an increase in the unemployment rate is expected due to the magnitude of the recession and the layoffs that have already taken place.

This economic arrogance is spread from the executive power to the rest of the powers of the state, especially toward the legislature and the federal governments; such arrogance pressures and extorts the institutions of the state so that whatever decrees and laws are proposed by the executive have to be approved without discussion. Given the impossibility of such power to the executive, it had to negotiate with its political allies and give them ambassadorships in exchange for their support.

The official discourse and public policy persecute and target the [freedom of the press](#), the institutions of national culture, those rights that guarantee the [lives of women who have been raped](#), those laws that promote non-discrimination in terms of [sexual orientation](#) and xenophobia, and institutions such as public universities, [social movements](#), and human rights organizations.

Milei's foreign policy is torn between the attempt to obtain dollars to maintain its

anti-inflationary policy and its [ultraright](#) ideological positioning. For instance, it exaggerates positions against China but later renegotiates [a swap](#). It [defends the state of Israel](#) from charges against the genocide Israel is perpetrating in Palestine, but always from behind the cloak of the Western empire.

How Long Will It Last?

One of the most heard phrases in Argentina, once Milei entered the presidential balloting, was “He is not going to do everything he says.” This phrase served both to justify voting for him and to protect the voters emotionally from the disaster that would follow if he won the presidency. However, Milei is doing quite a lot of what he said.

The other most frequently heard phrase is “How long will it last?” Although the politically correct answer is “four years” as in every democratically elected government in Argentina since the reestablishment of democracy in 1983, the economic and social crises experienced do not leave room for such an accurate answer and even less so with the application of policies so extremely detrimental to the majority.

If we look at his economic plan and review Argentina’s history, we can find similarities with two recent historical moments. The first is Carlos Menem’s government (which for Milei was the best in Argentina’s history) and the second is Fernando De la Rúa’s government.

Menem’s government (1989-1999) applied structural changes at the economic level (neoliberalism). It had a boom moment (which allowed Menem to be reelected) by curbing inflation achieved by the exchange rate parity with the dollar. This was sustained at the beginning of the policies of privatizations of services and public goods as well as of foreign indebtedness. However, it resulted in the closing of many national companies and industries and an increase in unemployment that exceeded 20 percent at the end of his second term in office.

De la Rúa’s government (1999-2001) followed the policies of Menem’s government. Although it entered power to carry out a “radical” change, it ended up in multiple debt renegotiations with the World Bank and the IMF. This resulted in strong fiscal adjustment programs and increasing poverty levels. De la Rúa ended his term of office declaring a state of siege, resigning, and leaving the Government House by helicopter.

Within this framework, Milei has begun to implement an economic plan that reduces inflation and reactivates economic activity as Menem did if he obtains new IMF loans, privatizes companies, and obtains dollars to liquefy Argentina's banking system; such policies will have similar consequences in terms of economic activity, employment, and poverty in a shorter period of time. Or, if he does not manage to access the necessary funds in dollars, he will have to rely on ever greater economic adjustment and repression with a government closer to that of De la Rúa. Helicopters should be on standby.

For the time being, for six months the streets of the City of Buenos Aires and the central squares of all the provinces of the country have been the [epicenter of constant mobilizations](#) against the policies applied and the laws promoted by the government. Among the government's adherents, though, the situation continues to be justified under arguments such as "We are in bad shape, but we are doing well," "We have to let it govern," and "Who did you want to vote for?" Those who still support Javier Milei cling to the fall in the inflation rate, but the latest polls also reflect [a fall in his positive image](#), especially in the provinces of the interior of the country where Milei received strong support to reach the presidency.

By Lucía Converti

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Source: Globetrotter

Greece Just Became The First European Country To Impose A 6-

Day Workweek



C.J. Polychroniou

07-02-204 ~ Years of brutal neoliberal capitalism combined with the left's betrayal have led to widespread political demoralization.

Just when one thought that the neoliberal dystopia created in Greece since the eruption of its debt crisis could not get any darker, the current right-wing government of Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis has replaced the nation's five-day workweek with a six-day workweek and flexible working hours. The controversial new law kicks into effect July 1, as Greeks have accepted it with little resistance.

The six-day workweek applies to both the public and the private sector. Specifically, the new labor law affects businesses, organizations and continuously operating enterprises that currently use the five-day workweek model and enables employers to compel their employees to work six days a week. The additional working day will be paid with an additional 40 percent of the daily wage.

As a poster child of neoliberal transformation, Greece is the first country in Europe to introduce the six-day workweek, and it comes at a time when other European countries have already adopted or tested, [with overwhelmingly positive results](#), a four-day workweek system.

What is even more ironic about the new labor law is that Greeks already work the [longest hours in Europe](#) (while earning lower wages than at the beginning of the

country's financial crisis), while labor productivity, defined as real gross domestic product per hour worked, is approximately [61 percent of the European Union average and 55 percent of the eurozone average](#). In fact, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Economic Outlook, [labor productivity has actually fallen in recent years](#), revealing the moribund state of the existing economic model in Greece.

The new labor law, which was approved last September by a Parliament dominated by conservatives, was allegedly designed with the intent of putting an end to skilled labor shortages. This is complete gibberish, as virtually all of Europe seems to be facing skilled labor shortages. Roughly [75 percent](#) of employers in 21 European countries reported having difficulty finding workers equipped with the right skills in 2023, while [82 percent](#) of German employers reported experiencing problems with finding qualified candidates for open positions in 2024. Yet, only Greece's right-wingers seem to think that making a transition from a five-day workweek to a six-day workweek is the way to address skilled labor shortages. Moreover, they are aloof from the anxieties of citizens everywhere who demand better work-life balance, as well as oblivious to the empirical evidence available that a shortened workweek results in [increased employee productivity and company performance](#).

The change is motivated by a deep-seated desire on the part of neoliberals and the domestic capitalist elite to further degrade the position of workers and to maximize labor exploitation. True enough, international creditors (the so-called [troika](#) of the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund) had recommended back at the height of the debt crisis that Greece should adopt a six-day workweek, but the new labor law is the work of former Minister of Labor and current Minister of Health Adonis Georgiadis, whose long and rich history of antisemitism and political involvement in far right politics is [well documented](#). Georgiadis, who also serves as vice president of the right-wing New Democracy party, has in fact gone on record saying that it is the "right" of workers to work 16 hours a day.

In practice, the new labor law may very well realize this ultra-reactionary vision for the future of workers and work in Greece. It allows workers to work eight hours a day in two different business establishments and includes a series of highly flexible employer-employee arrangements such as allowing the former to offer new workers a six-month probationary period and release them without

compensation during the first year. Employers can also call an employee into work on their day off with just a 24-hour notice.

In a different era, such reactionary labor measures would have at least encountered massive waves of public anger and protests. Konstantinos Mitsotakis, the father of the current Greek prime minister and a Thatcherite, managed to stay in power for only three short years (1990-1993) on account of the large-scale opposition by trade unions, socialists and communists to his ambitious plan for structural reforms of the Greek economy based on deregulation policies, market liberalization and wild privatization schemes of all public sector enterprises and all social services. Even members of his own New Democracy party opposed his radical privatization schemes.

Unfortunately, today the social reordering in Greece is so deep and profound that public pain for private gain has become the new norm as many years of brutal neoliberal capitalism combined with the left's betrayal have resulted in a condition of political demoralization among the citizenry that makes it difficult to see how the country can wriggle out of its ongoing neoliberal nightmare.

Greece may be the first country in Europe to institute a six-day workweek, but employees in many companies in China already work six days a week and a [number of companies in the U.S.](#) also plan to mandate a six-day workweek in 2025. Undoubtedly, the erosion of labor rights and increased labor exploitation are easier to realize in conditions where trade unions have been weakened and the anti-capitalist left is feeble or nonexistent, for they are both essential to effectively challenge the irrational and inhumane project of neoliberal capitalism.

The Path From Debt Crisis to Neoliberal Dystopia

During the course of the infamous bailouts that took place between 2010 and 2015 following the outbreak of the Greek debt crisis in late 2009, the small southeastern European country was converted by the troika into a neoliberal laboratory.

Leaning on [the myth of Greek profligacy](#), the troika pushed a ruthless neoliberal policy agenda that comprised massive budget cuts in health care and education; major wage adjustments, with wages in the private sector falling even faster and lower (by over 23 percent) than in the public sector; [pension reforms](#) (pensions paying over 2,000 euros per month were cut by more than 40 percent, while

pension paying less than 1,000 euros per month were cut by 14 percent); sharp cuts in social protection systems; massive tax increases; [privatization](#) of all state assets in the form of a fire sale; and draconian labor reforms that essentially demolished the whole system of collective bargaining and turned the labor market into a jungle.

The country's main political parties (the social democratic PASOK, the conservative party of New Democracy, and the Coalition of the Radical Left, aka, Syriza) all took turns at governing during the debt crisis and all three of them ended up signing bailout agreements and, subsequently, consenting to the transformation of Greece into a neoliberal dystopia.

Shockingly enough, but hardly surprising, very little of substance has changed in Greece since the bailouts. The economy functions on the same deficient model, with tourism and low wages acting as main drivers of growth. The state (including the judicial system) suffers from the same old pathologies of [corruption](#) and inefficiency (though the use of new technologies in administrative affairs serves to create the illusion that a new era has dawned in state-citizen relations). Meanwhile, the shadow economy continues to thrive, amounting to about one-fifth of GDP; the average monthly wage is [20 percent lower than 15 years ago](#), unemployment is still over 10 percent, and the second-highest in the EU; and the debt-to-GDP ratio is much higher now than it was during the pre-crisis era. Indeed, all the bailout agreements managed to do vis-à-vis the allegedly unsustainable debt-to-GDP ratio at the end of 2009 was increase it. In 2009, the ratio of public debt to GDP stood at [115.1 percent](#). At the end of the fourth quarter of 2023, it was at [161.9 percent](#) — though it is expected to start declining from 2024 to 2029 and Greece is now [repaying earlier loans](#) from the first bailout.

The sadistic neoliberal measures introduced by the troika and obediently implemented in turn by the country's three main political parties have left Greece unable to pursue an alternative economic model. Consequently, socio-economic inequalities widened, democracy suffered severe blows, and the citizenry seems to have given up all hope for meaningful social change after [Syriza's](#) rise to power ended in a total fiasco. As evidenced by the [record-low voter turnout](#) in last month's European Parliament elections, Greeks today appear to feel helpless in the face of the crude realization that the country's political establishment unequivocally places the interests of the euromasters and the domestic corporate and financial elite above those of working people.

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