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# LEVIATHAN

## WE THE PEOPLE

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# *Dear readers,*

I am pleased to present to you the first issue of Leviathan for the 2022-23 academic year. You may already be familiar with the idiom to which this issue takes its name: 'We the People' forms the opening words of the Preamble to the Constitution of the United States (1787) and, perhaps less commonly known, the Preamble to the Constitution of India (1950). It is a phrase one associates with themes of liberty, equality, justice, and general prosperity – all central tenets of what many contemporary societies strive towards. Yet, when confronted with such a phrase today, we might contemplate what 'We the People' signifies linguistically, politically, and so forth: Who is 'We'? What is meant by 'the People'? Indeed, is 'We the People' now an empty marker of a lost sense of community or civility between individuals, even nations?

Supported by the Edinburgh Political Union, myself and the team at Leviathan have tried to encourage wide-ranging and rigorous academic debate, providing students with a platform to discuss the indeterminate subject of 'We the People.'

We begin with Jay McClure's piece concentrating on coups in the Sahel, which discusses how France has used economics to perpetuate colonial structures in the Sahel and what the future looks like for this region. Remaining within a similar thematic boundary of contemporary conflict and its colonial roots, Aleksandrs Skulte considers the growing role of Russia's imperial identity. Skulte's piece discusses the historic roots of this imperialism, the failure to build a strong nationalist identity in Russia, and the factors driving imperialist resurgence in the present-day. Isabela Prendi then considers how present-day Kosovo has failed to combine state building with human security following conflict, stifling sustainable progress and long-term development.

Against a backdrop of increasingly populist tendencies within politics globally, Sara D'Arcy Shepherd writes about the momentous election of Giorgia Meloni as the Prime Minister of Italy, and the implications this has for Euroscepticism and the European Union going forward. Following this, Nicholas Hurtado discusses the future of UK-EU relations. Hurtado presents the European Political Community as the potential framework for evolving the benefits of both parties, whilst analysing the consequences of the post-Brexit British agenda.

As the effects of anthropogenic climate change increase in both severity and frequency, our last two pieces place this reality into a broader consideration of responsibility and sustainability. Gabriel Sanson Gomez employs Post-Growth Theory to reflect on the current energy crisis, whilst Sophia Georgescu dissects responsibility, calling for the restructuring of 'people' in addressing the climate emergency.

This issue comes as a result of a great deal of work by myself, my Deputy Editor-in-Chief Ethan Morey, and the rest of the team at Leviathan. I would like to thank you all for your continued hard work and input, not just during the semester but over the holiday period. I would also like to thank the Edinburgh Political Union and especially the Executive Committee for their continued support.

If you like this issue, I want to encourage you to write for us in the future. Our next issue, 'Sexual Politics', will be open for submissions soon. This theme is one that I am particularly excited for our writers to explore.

I hope you enjoy reading this issue as much as we have enjoyed producing it.

Sincerely,

Liv Billard
Editor-in-Chief

# *Meet the team*

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# Coups in the Sahel: *France's Role in the Recent Failure of Democracy in North-West/ Northern Africa*

Jay McClure

Jay McClure discusses how France has used economics to perpetuate colonial structures in the Sahel and what the future looks like for this region.

The Sahel – the region of North Africa that spans from Senegal to Eritrea – has recently seen an unprecedented wave of military-led coups: there have been seven in and around the Sahel over the past two years (Nama and Sany 2022). This marks a considerable increase from previous figures that put the average number of coup attempts per year in Africa from 2000 to 2020 at two (Harkness 2022). Additionally, many of these democracies were considered relatively stable and enjoyed strong international support. Mali, for example, was previously known as the "poster child" of democracy in the region and enjoyed a strong relationship with France (Gorman 2019). After two separate coups in 2020 and 2021, a military junta now controls Mali and receives support from Russia (The Economist 2022). This is not a recent trend. Due to various imperial structures imposed on the region, democratic weakness has plagued Sahelian states for decades. Specifically, France's 'françafrique' posture has sought to maintain the colonial relationship that exploited Africa for raw resources while enriching France through systems such as the CFA franc zone. Françafrique has hollowed out democratic institutions, ensured Western African dependence on France, and generated widespread distrust in Sahelian governments. France may have formally given up its empire decades ago, but through complex economic, military, and political structures it has retained its imperial power. Under this neocolonial system, France continues to enrich its economy while West Africa's state institutions remain underdeveloped. As long as these structures persist, democracy is doomed to fail in the Sahel.

*"The legitimacy of democratic systems relies on a state's response to popular demands. Forced to align with French interests, however, African democracies are frequently unable to address the concerns of their body politic."*

## France's Continuing Empire

One of France's most controlling and imperialistic policies in the Sahel is undoubtedly the franc of the Financial Community of Africa (CFA francs). Composed of two currencies (the Comorian franc operates similarly as well) the CFA francs are used throughout France's former colonies in Africa known collectively as the 'Franc Zone' (Pigeaud and Sylla 2021). The currencies have a fixed exchange rate to the French euro set by France, with 100 CFA francs equating to 1 French franc. The French treasury also manages the accounts of African states and French representatives exercise functional vetoes on the boards of African regional banks (Ibid 2021). This system greatly hampers economic development within the franc zone. The free movement of currency leads to a massive scale of 'capital flight' - the rapid outflow of a country's assets. From 1970 to 2010, capital flight was around 117.4 percent of the franc zone's aggregate GDP (Sturgess 2013). Today, most of these profits go to Western and especially French companies (Pigeaud and Sylla 2021). Additionally, pegging the CFA francs to the euro greatly inflates their value and reduces the competitive edge of West African exports in global markets as they become comparatively more expensive than goods priced in less valuable currencies (Ibid 2021). This ensures a low level of industrialisation that preserves the market for French goods. Consequently, the economic situation during colonisation persists: French companies acquire raw materials from dependent countries without depleting their foreign currency reserves and sell the resulting manufactured goods back to the same countries. The relationship is extractive. It keeps West African states poor and enriches France. Ten states of the franc zone experienced their highest levels of average income before the 2000s, a clear example of neo-colonialism's efforts to suppress African development (Ibid 2021).

West African states have repeatedly attempted to resist these imperial practices. In response, France has often punished these states by engaging in coups to install pro-French governments. Jacques Foccart, the chief advisor to French presidents on African matters from 1960-1974, admitted in his memoirs that there was extensive French involvement in West African governmental affairs (Yigit 2022). Foccart claimed that France had some level of involvement in a majority of the 214 coups that took place in Africa (Ibid 2022). Although decolonisation occurred decades ago, France still occupies much of West Africa with over 3000 troops and numerous military bases (Bender 2015). France also controls West African countries financially. Guinea was the first country to challenge France on the CFA Francs and served as an example to France's other former colonies. After Guinea created its own currency in 1960, France conducted a series of missions aimed at coercing Guinea back into the Franc Zone, including operations with armed mercenaries and the printing of counterfeit Guinean bank notes to collapse the Guinean economy (Pigeaud and Sylla 2021). Although these failed to draw Guinea back into the franc zone, the policies sent a clear warning. Very few West African countries have attempted to curb French influence since.

## Democratic Weakness as a Symptom of Imperialism

The legitimacy of democratic systems relies on a state's response to popular demands. Forced to align with French interests, however, African democracies are frequently unable to address the concerns of their body politic. In West African countries, attitudes towards the CFA francs have become increasingly hostile (Landry Signé 2019) and general anti-French sentiment has grown (Melly 2021), but government policy has failed to realign with public opinion. The most recent 'reform' is clear evidence of

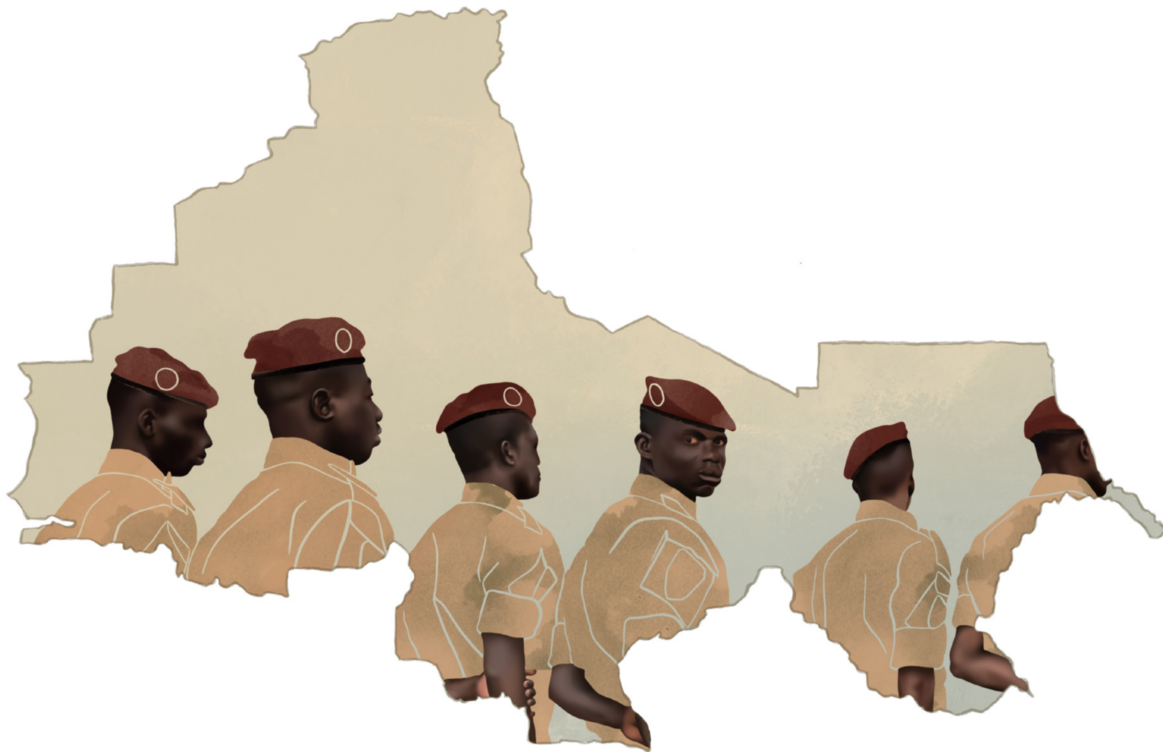

Illustration by Alexander Dalton

this. The Eco, which will replace the Western African CFA franc, is still ultimately pegged to the euro, and guaranteed by France (Keita and Gladstein 2021). Should the Eco enter circulation, France could simply refuse to guarantee convertibility, collapse an entire state's economy, and retain disproportionate control over the currency. Additionally, the Eco seems increasingly unlikely to ever enter circulation. It was originally planned to circulate in 2020 but has now been pushed back to 2027 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and general economic instability (Mugabi 2021). Overall, the CFA franc system remains fundamentally unchanged since its implementation in 1945 (Pigeaud and Sylla 2021). The consistent failure to seriously reform neo-colonial structures in the face of public outcry is a clear demonstration of the continuing influence France wields over West Africa.

A democratic government's persistent disregard of its citizens may result in a complete overthrow and reform of the system. But in the franc zone, France routinely intervenes by supporting pro-French governments and crushing grassroots movements. Between 1962 and 1995, France conducted nineteen direct military interventions in Africa (Hansen 2008). The defence agreements signed between all former colonies and France during decolonisation allowed African rulers to request assistance if their regime was threatened (Martin 1985). These agreements still exist to this day, albeit with slight rewordings (Gasinska et al 2019). In 2008, France sent air force reinforcements to Chad to support the government of President Idriss Deby, who himself seized power in a 1990 coup, against rebels, despite Deby's long history of authoritarianism (Munshi and Pilling 2021). Deby was an important leader in France's fight against terrorist groups in the region, offering significant troops and supplies for support giving France incentive to keep him in power regardless of his popularity or authoritarianism (ibid 2021).

When governments are completely insulated from even the most extreme public demands, they inevitably fail to deliver. The result is a system where African democracies shirk their responsibility to their people, who in turn increasingly view their government as a tool for French interests. Even if a West African democratic government seeks to reform, it must be careful not to upset France lest it be the target of an engineered coup. This double bind significantly hampers democratic success in West Africa. Even the most populist governments are unable to enact radical change and remain reliant on French security to stay in power. This dependence on France seems to be the goal of 'françafrique' but can be devastating if French intervention fails to improve security.

The economic dependence created by French imperialism also hollows out West African states and further corrodes their democratic strength. To defend the CFA francs' attachment to the euro, West African states must exercise extreme fiscal discipline. As a result, franc zone countries cannot rely on devaluation during economic shocks and must resort to loans and budget austerity measures (Pigeaud

and Sylla 2021). For example, the various West African countries that turned to the IMF to secure loans to finance emergency health measures during the COVID-19 pandemic must now pursue budget cuts in the ballpark of $26.8 billion over the next few years (Trépanier and Thériault 2022). These “Structural Adjustment Programs” (SAP) are the primary tool of the World Bank and go far beyond austerity measures (Ismi 2004). SAPs also target subsidies that privatise national industries and reduce barriers to trade (Ibid 2004). Fledgling domestic West African industries are forced to compete with highly developed industries across the world as a result. Simultaneously, the CFA francs system attracts international development organisations that are overwhelmingly managed by the global north (Woods 2003). The development loans they provide hollow out African economies and public services. Austerity wreaks havoc on the governing capacity of states as it frequently targets public services. In Africa, every dollar spent servicing debt results in a 29 percent reduction in the health budget (Boyce and Ndikumana 2011).

The ramifications of SAPs are twofold. Firstly, these programs gut public services and wipe out domestic industries in African states. West African governments are increasingly unable to handle crises because of this. This further entrenches negative views of the democratic system of government. Secondly, the underfinanced governments of West Africa become even more dependent on foreign aid to function. This is the goal of ‘françafrique’: to ensure African states are too weak to operate on their own and must depend on France.

## In the Sahelian Context

These destabilising elements of French imperialism are particularly evident in the Sahel. Whilst the ongoing conflict in the Sahel was caused by long standing democratic failure and neo-colonialism, it has also been a major contributor to further democratic collapse. Violence began in northern Mali in response to poverty and longstanding regional neglect by the Malian government (Chauzal and van Damme 2015). Since decolonisation in 1960, Tuareg populations in northern Mali have viewed the government as distant and unresponsive, and anti-democratic sentiment has thus increased in the region (Ibid 2015). The perpetual poverty in northern Mali is largely the result of neo-colonialism. Migration, a core aspect of the Tuareg lifestyle, was severely hindered due to the borders drawn and enforced by France and Western institutions (Kisangani 2012). Their resulting experience of environmentally degrading lifestyles, where Tuaregs are encouraged to grow cash crops that continually degrade the soil and accelerate climate change, leads to a precarious and increasingly unviable lifestyle (Ibid, 2012). French resource extraction, such as uranium mining in Niger, has further degraded the environment while Tuaregs receive little of the economic benefits – a clear example of the capital flight that occurs within the franc zone (Hibbs 2013). Additionally, northern Mali has received little development assistance from the central government due in part to extreme austerity measures and democratic unresponsiveness (Chauzal and van Damme, 2015).

All these grievances are in some way or caused by persisting neo-colonial structures. Theoretically, in a truly democratic system, official institutions would address the grievances of the Tuareg population in a peaceful manner. However, the security provided by France ensures that the Sahelian governments do not have to respond to their electorate’s demands (Pezard and Shurkin 2015). The Tuareg Rebellion of 2012 is a clear attempt by the community to force the Malian government to address their grievances. As violence spread across Mali, the French intervened and forced a peace agreement that eventually failed, another example of a Sahelian government’s unwillingness to respond to democratic pressures (ICG 2020). The consistent pattern of groups resorting to violence can be clearly traced back to the unresponsiveness of Sahelian governments and security provided by France. However, the most recent instance of this cycle has uniquely disrupted democratic governance in the Sahel.

The outbreak of conflict and a worsening regional security situation further entrenched hostility towards the democratic governments of the Sahel. This gives potential autocrats the opportunity to seize power. Shortly after the outbreak of violence, an alliance of rebels and terrorists swept through the north and seized major cities (Center for Preventative Action 2022). The Malian government was completely unable to stop the advance and turned to France for help (Ibid 2022). This is a common pattern throughout contemporary West African history: weak governance creates a crisis that requires French involvement to stabilise the situation. However, this time French military intervention corresponded to the spread of violence throughout the region (The Economist 2022). This change is essential to understand the high frequency of recent coups. Previously, regardless of how poorly African states handled crises, France would usually prevent a complete collapse of state legitimacy by restoring order. In Mali, France failed to suppress the violence. As a result, the government appeared to be aligning with French interests over those of the Malian people. Similar events have taken place throughout the Sahel, with governments requesting French involvement in the face of escalating violence. Even with increased regional scope, with operations targeting the entire Sahel instead of just Mali, and the large amounts of resources used in counter-terrorism operations, France has failed to mitigate the situation (Ibid 2022).

For ambitious military leaders, this presented a perfect opportunity to seize power. Limited entrenchment of democratic norms and a genuine hostility towards the previous governments (Westcott 2022) guaranteed public apathy if not support for the takeovers. Some of these seizures are unique in their hostility towards the French government. Both Mali and Burkina Faso’s current military governments have taken tough positions against France (Lebovich and Murphy 2022). It is likely that France’s failure to stop

the conflict encouraged the current autocrats to take explicitly anti-French positions. Additionally, the nascent Malian regime ultimately stabilised the coup by filling France's security vacuum with Russian military aid.

## Looking Towards the Future

France's long history of intervention in Africa that has guaranteed multiple failures of democracy seems to finally be coming to an end with multiple Sahelian states turning to Russia. Not only have Russian media campaigns strengthened France's colonial association in the minds of the general African population, but France's poor performance in counterterrorism has also caused many of the new regimes to turn to Russia as a better security provider (Byrant 2022; Adeoye 2022). Sahelian governments have an opportunity to tear down French neo-colonial structures with less fear of reprisal as a result.

No governments have done so thus far. Mali, the most pro-Russian state in the region, remains within the franc zone despite heavy sanctions from France that include asset freezing (Reuters 2022). Mali has replaced the overt French military presence but has left less obvious neo-colonial structures untouched. Whether Sahelian states further challenge France's neo-colonialism remains to be seen. Indeed, France recently suspended development aid to Mali, marking a substantial shift in the dependency relationship (Le Cam 2022). This suspension will not lead to a stronger Malian state, however, if the underlying root causes of weakness caused by imperialist structures, of which the CFA francs system is the most obvious, remain.

If the Sahel overcomes French imperialism, Russia may prove to be yet another obstacle to true democracy. Historically, the Soviet Union supported many African anti-colonialist struggles against the West (Stronski 2019). Yet, contemporary Russia has repeatedly leveraged its position as a security provider to extract resources from Sahelian countries. For example, witnesses allege that Russian mercenaries forcefully extract gold from mines along the border of Sudan and the Central African Republic (Burke and Salih 2022). A more overt form of neo-colonial misuse of authority than the French, it seems as though Russia is likely to similarly entrench itself in the Sahel through equivalent imperialistic structures. The consequences may manifest in the same bloodshed that has marked French influence; in Mali, Russian mercenaries are widely believed to be responsible for a massacre of almost three hundred civilians (Doxsee and Thompson 2022).

The extension of Russian influence into Africa has already paid off. In partnership with Russia, twenty-nine African countries voted against or abstained from the General Assembly resolution against the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014 (Stronski 2019). The current war in Ukraine has shifted the geopolitical landscape. Although diplomatically committed to remain in the Sahel region, France has been forced to formally terminate its anti-insurgent Barkhane operation and transfer its military assets to Europe (Corbet 2022). Russia's strategy seems less clear, although its continuous military failures in Ukraine suggest a similar refocus on Europe (BBC 2022). If these two competing powers distance themselves from the region, the Sahelian states are faced with a clear opportunity: they might be able to implement major reform under the radar of its distracted neo-colonial supervisors. The development of domestic structures managed and protected by the Sahelian governments themselves is the only realistic alternative to the neo-colonialism they are currently trapped in. Democracy will continue to fail in the Sahel as long as foreign governments maintain their extractive neo-colonial systems.

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# An Empire, Remade: *Russia's Reconstituted Imperial Identity*

Aleksandrs Skulte

Aleksandrs Skulte's piece considers the growing role of Russia's imperial identity. It discusses the historic roots of this imperialism, the failure to build a strong nationalist identity in Russia, and the factors driving imperialist resurgence in the present-day.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has brought Putin's historical revisionism to the forefront. Just three days before the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Putin appeared on Russian television. He claimed that Ukraine is "not just a neighbouring country for Russia" but rather "an inalienable part of [their] history, culture, and spiritual space" (Putin 2022). These latest events represent a wider aim: to promote Russia's imperial identity at its most extreme. This identity is primarily based on the nineteenth century imperial Russian identity with Soviet elements. This article explores the origins, aspects and implications of this imperial identity and its reception in Russia today.

## The Tsar and the Count: The Nineteenth Century Ideological Roots of Russia's imperial Identity

The Russian identity promoted by Putin largely rests on the nineteenth century Russian imperialist ideology of 'Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Nationality'. This tripartite concept was formulated by Count Sergei Uvarov, the Minister of National Enlightenment under Tsar Nicholas I. 'Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality' became the modern identity of citizens in the Russian Empire to prevent revolutionary threats as the it required absolute loyalty in Russia and by extension, in the Tsar (Chamberlain 2020).

## Orthodoxy

Orthodox Christianity was a fundamental facet of the nineteenth century Russian imperial identity. It legitimised the rule of the Tsar as the head of the Church – as he was said to be appointed by God. The Orthodox component of Russian imperial identity has similarly been used to legitimise Putin's rule. In a striking parallel, Patriarch Kirill congratulated Putin on his 70th birthday by proclaiming, "God put you in power", thereby making clear his support for the Russian president and Russia's invasion of Ukraine (Moscow Times, 2022). On the 25th of September 2022, Patriarch Kirill declared that sacrificing yourself in the war in Ukraine "washes away all sins" (RFE/RL 2022). Such messages are particularly effective considering Orthodoxy's popularity in Russia has only increased under Putin's rule. The number of Russians identifying as Orthodox rose to 72 percent in 2007, up from 32 percent in 1991 (Pew Research Center 2014).

Although Orthodox Christianity had been central to Imperial Russia for centuries, nineteenth century Russian Orthodoxy had a new feature. It contained practices previously forbidden in order to appeal to common people. This included allowing icon processions and involving common people in religious life, such as religious societies and choirs (Freeze 2015). Similarly, modern-day Russia has used popular appeals to Orthodoxy to reinforce its imperial identity. The Cathedral of the Armed Forces best illustrates this; located in a military theme park, Patriot Park, it is a grand khaki-green cathedral adorned with mosaics of soldiers of Soviet and Russian armies throughout history. Religious imagery is blended with mosaics that celebrate Russia's military victories and its leaders, including Putin and Stalin. The Cathedral represents the concept of the 'Russian World': the idea of Russia as a spiritual, cultural, and political centre that is supposed to counter the unholy and liberal West (Harned 2022). The result is a blend of militarism, patriotism, and Orthodoxy (Walker 2020).

## Autocracy

Throughout most of its existence, the Tsar was the sole authority of Russia, said to embody the people's will in the Russian Empire. However, in the second half of the nineteenth century, the absolutist nature of the Russian monarchy became clear, a stark contrast to the constitutional monarchies of Europe (Madariaga 1982). The uniquely autocratic nature of Russian rule was emphasised as the Tsar became ever more reactionary, culminating in the refusal of Nicholas II to yield to democratic reforms, contributing to the Russian Revolution (Figes 2017). Apart from a very short interval under the Provisional Government in 1917, one-man rule has remained the norm in Russia. Stalin was in power for twenty-nine years, Brezhnev for eighteen. To this end, Putin has acted as the sole arbiter of Russian governance since his ascent to power twenty-three years ago, and receives consistently high approval ratings, reaching 79 percent in October 2022, despite the war in Ukraine, increasing repression and sanctions (Statista 2022). Further, Putin has sustained his hegemonic rule by promoting autocratic leaders from Russia's past. A statue of Ivan the Terrible, a sixteenth century Russian ruler notorious for his oppressive rule, was unveiled in 2016, signifying ongoing support for his legacy in modern-day Russia (The Guardian 2016). Russia has also seen a resurgence in support for Stalin with a partial acknowledgement of his crimes, while also viewing him as a strong leader who defeated Nazi Germany (Roth 2022). Putin has likened himself to Peter the Great, emphasising his conquests rather than westernising reforms. In doing so, Putin seeks to draw a parallel by 'taking back what is rightfully Russian' from Ukraine, just as Peter the Great did from Sweden three centuries ago (Roth 2022).

## Nationality

Nationality is another crucial tenet from the nineteenth century imperial identity of the Tripartite Nation that Putin has reintroduced. The Tripartite Nation is a model of one all-Russian nation with different 'tribes' – Great Russian, Little Russian (Ukrainian), and White Russian (Belarussian) (Plokhy 2018). Although this model had been around for a long time, it became the dominant model of Russian nation-building following the Polish Uprising of 1863-1864 (Plokhy 2018). It served to counter Polish nationalism while accommodating the Ukrainian national movement (Plokhy 2018).

In his infamous treatise On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians, Putin explicitly refers to this Tripar-

tite or Triune model: “If you are talking about a single large nation, a triune nation, then what difference does it make who people consider themselves to be – Russians, Ukrainians, or Belarusians” (Putin 2021). As with the Imperial Tripartite ideology, Putin subsumes Ukrainian culture and language within the Russian identity. According to Putin, both nations were united until they were forced apart by the West and Ukrainian nationalists (Putin 2021). The promotion of this Tripartite model as part of the Russian imperial identity has been used to justify the invasion of Ukraine.

## The Cult of the Great Patriotic War

Russians refer to the Second World War as the Great Patriotic War. This constitutes a vital part of Putin's revamped imperial identity, demonstrating that although much of the basis of this identity stems from the Russian Empire, elements are also drawn from its successor, the Soviet Union.

The Great Patriotic War established a sense of continuity between the USSR and Russia, helping to create a sense of Russian identity and belonging following the collapse of the Soviet Union (Brunstedt 2021). Increasingly, the Great Patriotic War was presented as a victory of the Russian people rather than one of the State and the Soviet Communist Party (Malinova 2017). With the induction of the Great Patriotic War into the Russian national psyche following the Soviet Union’s collapse, Russia began to see itself as the sole defender against fascism (Lushnycky 2022; Malinova 2017).

Commemorations of the War are now used to promote Russian militarism and nationalism in grandiose proportions. Massive military parades and rallies are held every ninth of May to rally the nation. The theme of 'denazification' has often appeared in Kremlin narratives, most recently in Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Imagined parallels have been drawn between the Great Patriotic War and the war against Ukraine, based on the implication that Ukraine is a Nazi country (Booth 2022). This mix of imperial and Soviet elements is demonstrated in the Ribbon of Saint George. Though initially popularised in the Tsarist era, it made a comeback in the 21st century as a symbol of commemoration for fallen Soviet soldiers in World War Two. The Ribbon of Saint George is also now used as a symbol of support for the War in Ukraine, an effort by the Kremlin to link the war against Ukraine to Russia's triumph against Nazi Germany. Therefore, the Kremlin uses the Great Patriotic War to promote and justify Russian imperialism.

## The Fall of the Soviet Union and the Failure of Russian Civic Identity

In 2005, Vladimir Putin famously remarked that the collapse of the Soviet Union was the "greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the twentieth century" (BBC 2005). Following this collapse, Russia failed to build a new Russian civic identity following the dissipation of its empire.

Russia was an empire before it was a nation: Russia has historically associated with its empires and only recently became its own separate country. To this end, Russia’s imperial identity views Russia’s boundaries as extending well beyond the official borders of the state. This has encour-

Illustration by Alexander Dalton

aged myths that have caused Russia to lay claim to the land of its former subjects, as it seeks to relive its past 'glories' rather than to build a new future (Plokhy 2018).

At one point, many hoped for a different Russia. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union Yeltsin, the new national leader, sought to promote the idea of a Russian civic national identity made up of all citizens of the Russian Federation regardless of ethnicity or culture (Plokhy 2018). Yet the result has been a civic identity that is weak (Goode 2018).

This failure can be attributed to several factors. First, democratic institutions are crucial for the promotion of a civic national identity. Yet Russia in the 1990's can be described as a personalist regime – one where all power is held by a single person (Goode, 2018). Additionally, Yeltsin's government had an ambivalent and contradictory approach towards the promotion of civic identity. Though the 1993 constitution enshrined the equality of Russian citizens regardless of ethnicity or religion, at the same time Yeltsin promoted the idea of Russian exceptionalism, with ethnic Russians as the state bearers of the Russian Federation (Goode 2018). While ethnicity was removed from Russian passports in 1997, by the latter half of the 1990s, civic identity fell out of favour (Goode 2018). Yeltsin avoided expressions of non-Russian ethnicity while forwarding the cause of ethnic Russians (Goode 2018). Further, the appointment of Nikolai Egorov as nationalities minister encouraged discrimination against ethnic minority groups, as the idea of civic identity was subsumed into the ethnic Russian identity (Goode 2018). The failure of this civic identity meant that an imperial model, one that associated Russia proper with ethnic Russians, including those outside its own borders in countries such as Ukraine, once again became the focus of Russian leadership under Putin (Plokhy 2018). The failure of this civic identity and the re-emergence of an imperial identity has played a crucial role in Russia's imperialist war against Ukraine.

> *"Russia's great tragedy is that it has not been able to break from the identity of its imperial past"*

## The Problem with the Realist Interpretation

The Realist school of thought is often at odds with the argument that Russia's war against Ukraine is essentially a continuation of its historical imperialism. Realism is a school of thought of International Relations that stresses the competitive and conflictual side of International Relations (Korab-Karpowicz 2017). Realists, and the most prominent among them – such as John Mearsheimer – have long argued that the war in Ukraine is the West's fault. They put the conflict in terms of a great power rivalry between the West and Russia rather than an imperial war, arguing that Russia's war against Ukraine is an understandable pushback to the expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the European Union (EU), with the implication that Ukraine is within Russia's sphere of influence (Mearsheimer 2014).

Yet the Realist perspective on the war in Ukraine is deeply flawed due to its heavy colonial undertones. The concepts of great power competition and spheres of influence are outmoded ideas from the late nineteenth century that help justify Russia's imperialism (Specter 2022). Central and Eastern European countries, including Ukraine, which were formerly occupied by the Soviet Union are portrayed as buffer states without any agency, viewed as mere pawns in a great power conflict rather than real countries with their own desires (Mälksoo 2022). For example, the idea of NATO 'expansion' might conjure up images of the West forcefully expanding NATO to encroach on Russia. Yet it was the Eastern European countries who most vehemently pushed for NATO membership. According to a Pew Research poll in 2020, public support for NATO is high in the region, and it is likely even higher following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine (Pew Research 2020).

The Realist interpretation – which saps agency from Central and Eastern European countries, justifying Russian imperialism – stems from the all too theoretical approaches to International Relations where wars in the region are seen as minor squabbles, only to be labelled as conflicts between great powers. (Mälksoo 2022). Such views also arise because of the neglect of Central and Eastern European voices and the failure to approach Russian colonialism in the same manner as Western colonialism (Mälksoo 2022).

## The Popular Appeal of the Imperial Identity

The Russian public seems to be supportive of this imperialist resurgence. According to a poll, 58 percent of Russians support the actions that Putin has taken, or Russia's "own special way" (Moscow Times 2022). Putin's nationalistic celebrations are also popular. In 2017, it was estimated that 750,000 people in Moscow and more than eight million in the rest of the country went out onto the streets to celebrate the anniversary of the Great Patriotic War (Prokopyeva 2017). In 2014, 31 percent of Russians disagreed that it is natural for Russia to have an empire, while 44 percent agreed (up from 37 percent) on the eve of the Soviet Union's collapse (Poushter 2014). Ultimately, these figures indicate that a significant proportion of the Russian public shares the imperial views promoted by its government. However, it is important to emphasise that opinion polls tend to be inaccurate as many dissenters do not participate, especially when any opposition leads to jail.

Russia's great tragedy is that it has not been able to break from the identity of its imperial past. Such an imperial identity visualises Russia as having no clear borders. This has led to numerous imperial wars, including Russia's most recent war against Ukraine. Putin has promoted this impe-

rial identity in line with Count Uvarov's nineteenth century concept of Orthodoxy, Nationality and Autocracy, but with important elements derived from the Soviet era, such as the Cult of the Great Patriotic War. It has also seen the rehabilitation of infamous Russian leaders, used to promote the regime and the nation's imperial identity. Russia's inability to diverge from this imperial identity and create a national identity that centres around the state has led to countless tragedies. Therefore, a non-imperial, liberal Russia is possible only by uprooting its imperial identity and fostering a new national identity that envisions the State as existing within its own borders, rather than extending into others.

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# Lessons in Security: *The Case of Post-Conflict Kosovo*

Isabela Prendi

Isabela Prendi considers how present-day Kosovo has failed to combine state building with human security, stifling sustainable progress and long-term development.

The state of Kosovo has been something of a test bed for the design of modern international security since the Conflict of 1999 and its turbulent aftermath. The state of affairs demanded a delicately struck balance between immediate military intervention and comprehensive human development. Essentially, both the Kosovan state and the Kosovan citizen demanded securitisation – a feat that is extensively deliberated within literature but has not been put into much practice by the international community.

The international peacebuilding mission in Kosovo has been a long and arduous process, yet its relative progress remains undermined by permeating social and economic insecurity, political corruption, and ethnic fragmentation. The efforts of NATO and the UN were largely centralised around a top-down state building program, a third-party enterprise in institutionalising democracy surmounting over three billion Euros in foreign aid. Electoral manipulation, early elections, and intimidation tactics nonetheless continue to characterise Kosovan 'democracy'. The real victim, however, is the population whose basic needs remain largely forsaken by the government's 'progress limbo' (Kabashi-Ramaj 2017).

Despite immense injections of financial and diplomatic aid into Kosovo, what has prevailed is 'short-term security at the price of long-term sustainable peace' (Montanaro 2009). This article seeks to trace the discrepancy between the technocratic third-party approach to state building and the authentic needs of the Kosovan population. It concludes that Human Security, an essential instrument in the construction of a stable post-conflict state, has suffered substantial neglect, resulting in a lack of sustainable progress and development in post-conflict Kosovo.

*“ 'human security' is as difficult to define as it is to administer”*

## Defining Human Security

'Human security' as a concept is often criticised as ill-defined and obscure. In broad terms, it challenges the supremacy of traditional security and 'embraces far more than the absence of violent conflict. It…[ensures] that each individual has opportunities and choices to fulfil his or her potential' (Annan 2000). Traditional security is largely synonymous with militarism and territorialism that frames the state and its borders as its referent object. The security of a state, in traditional terms, has historically relied on the defence of sovereignty. Human security alternatively holds that humans should be considered the highest object of security and is best disseminated from the bottom up by promoting personal agency and arming citizens with a 'freedom from want' as well as mere 'freedom from fear' (European Parliament 2004). The first authoritative definition of human security may be traced to the 1994 UN Development Programme which identified seven components of human security as economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political security (UNDP 1994).

Indeed, 'human security' is as difficult to define as it is to administer; democratic institution-building, economic development, human rights promotion, and the fortification of civil society demand grassroots interaction over a lengthened period.

## Background

The Kosovan War constituted an ethnically charged conflict between the former Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Kosovo-Albanian rebel group, the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA). At the axis of the conflict was Serbia's persecution of ethnic Albanians in Kosovo, which culminated in a comprehensive program of ethnic cleansing instigated by the Serbian state under Slobodan Milošević. On the 24th of March 1999, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) launched a series of airstrikes in response to Serbian genocidal manoeuvres, an act that has marked the beginning of the international community's lasting presence in Kosovo. A peace accord on the 11th of June 1999 formally terminated the war but regional tensions remain unhealed, perpetuating what has been labelled 'The Conflict That Won't Go Away' (BBC 2019).

For a conflict that lasted little under a year, the Kosovan War endures in legacy. The state of Kosovo is at present recognised by just 117 countries. Beyond a status-centric perspective lies a grave socioeconomic reality. Poverty is endemic, with 45 percent of the Kosovan population living below the official poverty line, and 17 percent regarded as extremely poor (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2022). Ethnic tensions between Serbians and Albanians are driven by deep religious, cultural, and historical divides that remain highly volatile and culminate frequently in violence. Periodical 'flare-ups' in the region remain. Territorial skirmishes and ethnically motivated attacks continue to demand military deployment. The most recent of these disputes occurred in August 2022, wherein peace was restored by the 3,700 NATO troops that remain permanently stationed in the region. As opposed to supporting the strengthening of the social contract through civilian welfare, the international administration has cultivated a dependency on fast military fixes wherever conflict arises.

## The Securitisation of Kosovo

The administrational approach to security in post-conflict Kosovo lacks a formal explanation in conceptual terms by an authoritative source (Beha & Visoka, 2010). The post-conflict approach to security in Kosovo emerged as a confusing amalgam of various 'peace-building' instruments, most of which were born out of the primary commitment of strengthening the Kosovan state itself. On the grounds of the liberal conviction that civilian safety is best secured through a system of relatively strong states, the international peace-building mission thus embarked on

Photograph edited by Alexander Dalton
Image: United States Army (WikiCommons)

An M2 Bradley Fighting Vehicle stood guard over the village of Stublina as KFOR soldiers searched the houses below.

a third-party state building operation in Kosovo. Paris and Sisk define state building as 'the strengthening or construction of legitimate governmental institutions' (Paris and Sisk 2009) Much scholarship on state building in Kosovo, however, has stressed the disempowering effects of externally defined agendas and their incongruence with urgent local needs (Kostovicova 2012). Moreover, the tendency for liberal peace keeping to militarise solutions to security is demonstrated in other post-conflict arenas such as Afghanistan, Iraq, or Libya, where interventionist violence has been employed as the necessary first step towards achieving peace.

In 1999, Security Council resolution 1244 confirmed the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) as the ultimate authority in Kosovo, conferring it executive power in the administration of the state. The UNMIK mandate was structured on four pillars. The first pillar dealt with public and judicial security and the second pillar managed Kosovo's domestic public administration. The third pillar dealt with facilitating the process of democratisation in Kosovo by strengthening its institutions, civil participation, anti-corruption, electoral salience, and municipal authority. Responsibility for the administration of this third pillar was delegated to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). The fourth pillar involves economic reconstruction and was mandated to the European Union (EU). UNMIK administration was thus broadly mandated over three different institutions and their own various substrates - a venture which ultimately 'suffered from having too many masters' (King 2006).

UNMIK's top-down design of securitisation fell short in many areas, yet it proved chiefly deficient in its attention to local ownership and participation which could be achieved through partnership at grassroots levels. Direct engagement and consultation with civil society was neglected at the expense of top-down institution building across an awkward spectrum of authorities, resulting in the issue of 'uncoordinated multilateralism' (Beha & Visoka 2010). What prevailed was a widespread lack of public conviction in the United Nation's venture. 2002 UNDP polls showed that over 60 percent of Kosovars were satisfied with UNMIK work, whilst by 2009 this figure had decreased to 10 percent. As of present day, UNMIK is no longer regarded as a functional authority in Kosovo (UNDP 2009). Kai Eide, the Special Envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General in Kosovo, raised concerns that 'the international community in Kosovo is today seen by Kosovo-Albanians as having gone from opening the way to now standing in the way' (Eide 2004).

UNMIK long hesitated to begin the processes of power transferral to local institutions for fear of provoking Serbian elites and opponents to an independent Kosovo. This approach led to the alienation of democratically elected representatives from state responsibility, and made the international presence a requisite to stability as opposed to an instrument in facilitating a self-sustainable peace (Dulic 2007 and Zaum 2009). Kosovo's continued dependence on international support since its unilateral declaration of independence in 2008 has seen the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) supplant the UN Mission.

This 'liberal' model of securitisation through state-building has attracted vast criticism on the grounds of its tangible efficacy in achieving and sustaining lasting peace. Collier notes that almost '50 percent of all countries receiving assistance slide back into conflict within five years, and 72 percent of peacebuilding operations leave in place authoritarian regimes' (Collier et al. 2003). Restoring a state demands measures beyond the reconstruction of public institutions and government, thus state-building can be seen as a contradictory process to peace-building, despite the fact that both processes are typically invoked in synergy (Dulic, 2007).The collective efforts of the UN, OSCE, EU, and NATO created a structural dependency on its administration. As Garrido writes, 'it is possible that Kosovo would profit more from locally generated peace-making rather than elite-oriented and externally-influenced liberal peacebuilding and state-building' (Garrido 2019).

## Security from the Bottom Up

Kai Eide recalls being told by a young Kosovar Albanian 'you gave us freedom, but not a future' (Eide 2004). At the helm of the liberal peacebuilding mission is the conviction that the construction of liberal institutions and market-orientation of national economies form the bedrock of a stable

state. This ultimately fails to equip and engage local actors - the sustenance of peace must be understood as a task which only national stakeholders can undertake (Simangan 2020). The recent discourse on peacebuilding in Kosovo and beyond has thus placed strong emphasis on normative local involvement - the UN itself has acknowledged that 'international actors can accompany and facilitate the process, but not lead it' (United Nations Security Council 2015). Local involvement includes consulting local stakeholders, offering supplementary assistance in local civil society, and appointing local counterparts to work in synergy with international actors.

Progression into the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) has certainly marked the beginnings of a departure from the intrusive liberal model of state building. A chief diplomat of EULEX admitted 'we, Western institutions, thought we were right. We arrived with a clear package and wanted to impose peace' (EULEX Official 2016). EULEX has since introduced local ownership into all institution building mechanisms since Kosovan independence in 2008, but there remains a long way to go (Bargués 2020). Immense benefit would be derived from prioritising the status of local research, particularly when much of the authoritative scholarship on the Kosovo and wider western Balkan region has had the tendency to dismiss local agency (Simangan 2020). As Kaldor notes, 'people who live in zones of insecurity are the best source of intelligence' (Kaldor 2006). It is only through consensus and dialogue with those in need of security that it can be most effectively implemented.

> *"Human security is not in contention with state security; it is an instrument in the permanence of fortified institutions, healthy democratic processes, and human development."*

## Conclusion

Human security is not in contention with state security; it is an instrument in the permanence of fortified institutions, healthy democratic processes, and human development. It measures the quality of peace building through quality of life and access to basic needs as opposed to indicators of macroeconomic growth and liberal governance. The legitimacy of a state ultimately lies in its ability to provide for the needs of its citizens (Newman 2011), a demand which requires dissemination of resources and social education from ground level. Kosovo remains fixed in a state of volatility twenty years after its war. Citizens remain disillusioned as they face intense unemployment, a loss of personal rights and poverty which risks continued 'flare ups'. Where frail socioeconomic conditions are coupled with delicate ethnic relations, third party mandates and marginal local ownership undermines the primary goal of sustainable peace. Citizens can only be expected to commit to peaceful norms and accept institutional legitimacy when they themselves are protected by human security. As an old Albanian idiom goes 'only the owner can pull the donkey from the mud' ('Vetim i zoti mund ta nxjerre` gomarin nga balta').

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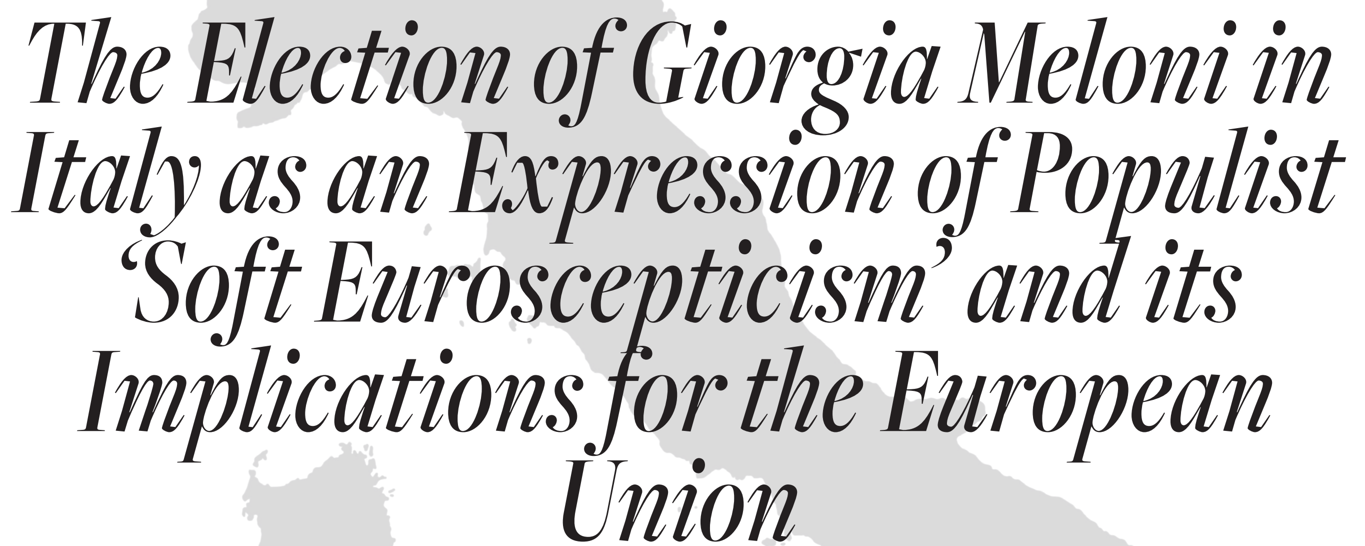

# *The Election of Giorgia Meloni in Italy as an Expression of Populist 'Soft Euroscepticism' and its Implications for the European Union*

Sara D'Arcy Shepherd

Sarah Shepherd writes about the momentous election of Giorgia Meloni as the Prime Minister of Italy and the implications this has for Euroscepticism and the European Union going forward.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and the current energy crisis, Europe is again facing a period of uncertainty. The Italian September 2022 election was won by Giorgia Meloni, leader of the right-wing populist Fratelli d'Italia (FdI, or Brothers of Italy). This victory is the most recent sign of the rise of right-wing populism among European Union (EU) member states. Populism has dominated headlines for years; a trend exemplified by Victor Orban leading Hungary into an increasingly authoritarian regime, one which the European Parliament no longer considers a democracy (Bayer and Gijs 2022). Moreover, the electoral success of the populist right wing radical Sweden Democrats Party has proven newsworthy this autumn (Polk 2022). This proliferation of right-wing populist ideologies is considered a symptom of EU citizens' distrust in their system of supranational governance. This article will discuss the recent election of Giorgia Meloni as an exemplification of a wider rise populist Eurosceptic parties. Does the rise of populist parties across member states mean the end of the European Union? Not necessarily, but in the context of Russian encroachment and economic instability from the impending energy crisis, there is a need to address the impact the populist party proliferation has on the unity of the EU member states.

These concerns about the growing presence of populism highlight the necessity of identifying why Europe continues to elect Eurosceptic populists. The recent election of Giorgia Meloni is an indication of the continued persistence of right-wing populism in Italian politics and may have ramifications for wider Europe. The consequences of 'soft Eurosceptic' leaders on EU policy making also deserves discussion, especially since the populist agenda has now developed into a willingness to 'change the EU from within'.

## The Rise of Fratelli d'Italia

The most recent Italian parliamentary election on 25 September 2022 saw far-right leader Giorgia Meloni, and her party Fratelli d'Italia, gain the largest share of the votes. Meloni is now Prime Minister of what has been deemed the most right-wing government since the fall of Benito Mussolini's fascist party in Italy (Adler 2022). The party's apparent ties to the post-fascist Italian party Movimento Sociale Italiano, or MSI (Italian Social Movement), has alarmed certain experts (Sondel-Cedarmas 2022: Newell 2022). Similarities between the parties range from their nationalist policies to aesthetic similarities between their logos, both featuring a flame in the colours of the Italian flag. Even Fratelli d'Italia's former name: Alleanza Nationale (National Alliance), is an allusion to MSI. Meloni removed the latter part of the name, attempting to appeal to the mainstream electorate in pursuit of electoral success (Puleo and Piccolino 2022).

The political programme of Fratelli d'Italia is characterised by socially conservative and economically liberal (or pro-

Illustration by Alexander Dalton

tectionist) policies (Sondel-Cedarmas 2022). Driven by the desire to strengthen Italy's welfare system, the party is also opposed to increased immigration. The party's motto, which has been articulated both as 'God, freedom, nation' and 'God, fatherland, family' emphasises the party's social conservatism with a focus on 'family values' and Christianity (Sondel-Cedarmas 2022). This emphasis on 'family values' includes opposition to LGBTQ+ rights such as same-sex adoption and proposes to introduce higher family benefits and increase childcare services provided by the state (Kirby 2022). The nationalist focus on 'nation' or 'fatherland' in FdI's motto is further expressed by the party's intention to form a naval blockade in the Mediterranean Sea to block the arrival of migrants and refugees. The nationalist ideology of the party is also reflected in their foreign policy, as they aspire to be a more protectionist sovereign state, with a strong focus on putting the Italian economy and political autonomy first, while remaining a part of the EU and NATO. The FdI's current position on European Union membership highlights their critical role in European institutions allegedly run by 'Brussels bureaucrats' that disregard the will of the member states. However, Meloni has expressed a will to remain a member of the Union to receive the EU's COVID-19 recovery fund and to be better equipped to face the impending energy crisis (Adler 2022). Therefore, while FdI expresses a strong criticism of the EU as a supranational organ, there is a recognition that remaining a member of the EU provides economic stability for Italians in times of uncertainty (Newell 2022).

## Populism and Euroscepticism

While right-wing populism garners the most attention, it is important to note that populist parties can exist on both the right and left sides of the political spectrum. Because of this, the literature on populism argues that populism is a 'thin-centred' ideology largely dictated by the host ideology (Mudde 2017). In the case of European populist parties, the 'host ideology' is often characterised by social conservatism and economic liberal protectionism. Regardless of ideological differences, populist parties share strategies to maximise electoral gains. Therefore, some scholars choose to categorise populism as a political strategy in explaining populist electoral success (Weyland 2017).

As has been showcased, scholars in the field define the term populism differently. However, for the purposes of this article, it is worth noting that scholarship often broadly defines populism by key themes and discourse utilised by populist actors that set them apart from 'traditional' political parties. Populism on both the right and left-wing is characterised by a dichotomous discourse of 'us versus them'. This creates a divide between a group they often deem 'pure people' versus an 'evil' elite or class (Mudde 2017, 33). However, the division of social classes is dictated by their host ideology. In the case of right-wing populism shaped by a nativist host ideology, divides are often drawn between the nationals of a country and 'outsiders' such as immigrants, which instils a negative image of supranational influence such as the EU.

Additional common features of populism are an emphasis on being anti-establishment and highlighting the populist party's position as being a political 'outsider' to not be associated with the policies and positions of the political establishment or elite (Puleo and Piccolino 2022, 5). This anti-establishment sentiment is often embodied by a desire to create a 'pure' form of democracy, arguing that the 'political elite' only acts in their own interests (Mudde 2017, 33). Similarly, it can be argued that Giorgia Meloni's victory is a prime example of how utilising a party's reputation as the 'true opposition' can gain widespread electoral success in a rare case, virtually all other established parties supported the coalition government of previous Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi (Puleo and Piccolino 2022). The former Prime Minister was forced to resign in July 2022 due to difficulty in coming to a political agreement within his government. This paved the way for new leadership from political opponents such as Meloni who claimed that her party alone could represent the 'real Italian people' (Kirby 2022: Newell 2022).

*" The election of Giorgia Meloni's party is evidence of the increasing role populist parties play in domestic politics in Europe, with electorates all over Europe voting against increased multiculturalism and diversity – factors which constitute the foundation of European integration (Donà 2022). "*

The greater reliance on Eurosceptic discourse among populist actors has been deemed to follow the trajectory of crises and significant changes to the EU in recent years (Kneuer 2019). The 21st century has seen significant changes to the EU with the great expansion of 2004, the Eurozone crisis and Migrant crisis in the context of Arab Spring and Syrian Civil war (Kneuer 2019). Therefore, populist Euroscepticism proliferated as a reaction to these events and thus became a defining feature of European politics. Populist nationalist governments in Italy, Poland, and Hungary have embraced 'hard Euroscepticism', defined as a willingness to leave the European Union altogether (De Vries and Edwards 2009). However, contemporary populists like Georgia Meloni or Victor Orban, have expressed extensive criticism of aspects of EU integration, especially its mandatory nature (such as the monetary union), but acquiesced with continued membership as a whole. This is categorised as 'soft Euroscepticism' (Taggart and Pirro, 2021). Taggart and Pirro (2021, 292) have pointed to a pattern of increased 'soft Euroscepticism' among populist parties in Europe during the COVID-19 pandemic, and

theorised that this may lead to an erosion of isolationist populist foreign policy in the period after the pandemic as well and increased consensus on the benefits of regional cooperation. This could explain the increased use of a 'softened' Eurosceptic discourse among populist actors such as Giorgia Meloni, in advocating for EU integration when there is an economic benefit.

The relationship between Populism and Euroscepticism can be explained by three principal features: anti-establishment sentiments, democracy, and nationalism (Kneuer 2019). Populism often frames supranational organisations such as the EU as an extension of the 'political elite' on the national level. In a member state where the mainstream political parties are in favour of EU integration, parties on the political fringe are more likely to be Eurosceptic to appear as a political 'outsider', or simply to stand in opposition to the parties of the 'establishment' (De Vries and Edwards 2009). Furthermore, populist parties utilise and criticise the fact that policy decisions are made in Brussels which affect citizens of the member states on the grounds of nationalism and democracy (Kneuer 2019). For instance, Meloni has previously proposed removing any reference to the EU in the Italian constitution (Sondel-Cedarmas 2022). This proposal illustrates key aspects of populism, expressed through Euroscepticism. Firstly, populists believe that the EU suppresses democracy by proposing to delegate less power to unelected legislative bodies which directly impact Italy. Secondly, Meloni wishes to strengthen the sovereignty of the Italian legislature, at the expense of EU bureaucracy (Donà 2022). This explains why Euroscepticism has been said to work in 'tandem' with populism, especially right-wing populism, as is the case with Fratelli d'Italia and might also explain their electoral success (Kneuer 2019).

*" The notion of a divided European Union due to the rise of populism is a matter of concern for many. As the third largest economy in the EU, Meloni's policies have consequences for the rest of the European Union. The potential cooperation between member states governed by populist parties could undermine the culture of consensus-driven compromise within The Union. "*

## The Importance of the Italian Election for Europe

The election of Giorgia Meloni's party is evidence of the increasing role populist parties play in domestic politics in Europe, with electorates all over Europe voting against increased multiculturalism and diversity – factors which constitute the foundation of European integration (Donà 2022). Furthermore, the electoral success of Fratelli d'Italia indicates a lack of trust in 'mainstream' parties (Puleo and Piccolino 2022). This is significant for the EU as it demonstrates a reduction in support for the parties that have traditionally been the most pro-EU. In Italy, the rejection of the government of Mario Draghi, considered to be a symbol of the political establishment as the former head of the European Central Bank, was considered a powerful indication of a wider rejection of political elites (Kirby 2022). During her time in opposition and as a member of the European Parliament (EP), Meloni expressed strong Eurosceptic tendencies and a desire for institutional reform within the EU. In September, Meloni indicated her ambition to make the EU more socially conservative and focus on protecting their borders from migration and on improving the "real economy" for European citizens (Sondel-Cedarmas 2022). She has also argued that member states should have a more prominent role in EU decision-making, instead of the European Commission and other non-elected bodies). This would ensure the autonomy of member states, emphasising the notion of national sovereignty, which is a key tenant of Euroscepticism. Now that Meloni is the Prime Minister of Italy, she is in a better position to use her coalition building expertise (formerly used in creating coalitions between right-wing led states) to impact the policies of the European Council. She has previously expressed her intention to cooperate with other EU member states like Poland, Hungary, Czechia, and Slovakia (the Visegrad states), most of which are currently governed by populist right-wing parties or have a strong populist presence. This intention to reform the EU and cooperate with other right-wing member states has already been observed in votes in the European Parliament (EP), with the erosion of traditional partisan voting practices, since lines have been eroded to prevent populist right-wing parties from gaining a majority. Meloni's EP party group, the centre-right European Conservatives and Reformists party, has created coalitions with an even more populist right-wing group, the Identity and Democracy Party Group, to enact populist policies in the European Parliament. This is a threat to the more mainstream groups (Sondel-Cedarmas 2022).

While Meloni might have the ambition to transform the EU, this is not something that will be observed for a while. In her most recent speeches since coming into power, she has indicated that her government will work closely with the EU to grow the Italian economy post-COVID 19, especially in the wake of the current energy crisis. Furthermore, Meloni has expressed both strong support for Ukraine in the fight against Russia and taken a stance away from the previous party's fascist sentiments (Roberts 2022). Therefore, while Meloni might wish to reform the European Union along with her populist allies, she

has indicated her willingness to work on problems at a supranational scale within the current framework of the EU (Pagliarello and Tedesco 2022). The underlying reason for this and its consequences for the party is still unclear. Her shift in political rhetoric could be explained by the need for political flexibility in uncertain times or a sign of normal populist whitewashing, which often happens when populists gain executive power (Capaul and Ewert 2021). Nevertheless, Meloni tries to show that she is a pragmatic politician willing to alter her stance for economic or political gain. This political pragmatism is frequently seen among populist actors and shows why populism is often deemed a "thin-centred ideology" (Mudde 2017).

While there is evidence that many moderate their approaches once in power, the reasons why these parties attract enough support from the electorate to reach power remain relevant even in the presence of party moderation (Capaul and Ewert 2021). The reasons behind party moderation are nuanced. Populist parties in different EU member states might moderate or develop in different ways even if the parties initially had similar political platforms. Therefore, taking a comparative approach to studying the development of populist party stances among EU member states has been popularised in recent years (Capaul and Ewert 2021). When populist party moderation is studied in such a way, patterns or variations might occur. While this essay has focused on the party stance of one EU member state and its evolution since gaining electoral success, this case study can be situated into a broader context of populist party development.

Additionally, due to the thin-centred nature of populist ideology, the timing of moderation or adaptation of these parties can be critical in explaining their reasons for moderating their policies in a certain way. As previously mentioned, political crises can be a significant driver of change in political stances (Kneuer 2019). Therefore, a change or moderation in the stance on the EU might be a response to a crisis, a development that is worth investigating.

## Conclusion

The notion of a divided European Union due to the rise of populism is a matter of concern for many. As the third largest economy in the EU, Meloni's policies have consequences for the rest of the European Union. The potential cooperation between member states governed by populist parties could undermine the culture of consensus-driven compromise within The Union. Therefore, further research on the coalitions of the EP and dynamics within EU institutions is necessary. This research could investigate the impact of political moderation or 'mainstreaming' of populist actors such as Meloni on issues such as Russia and EU integration. This 'mainstreaming' could be explained by a party gaining a position of power or due to the wider concerns of the current energy crisis and Russia's ongoing war to acquire Ukraine. Europe's future in the midst of an ongoing war fought on the continent is uncertain, and it is worth paying heed to whether Europe becomes more united or divided as a result.

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# Continental Lifeline: *The European Political Community*

Nicholas Hurtado

Nicholas Hurtado discusses the future of UK-EU relations. He presents the European Political Community as the potential framework for evolving the benefits of both parties, whilst analysing the consequences of the post-Brexit British agenda.

Brexit continues to alter the interactions between the European Union (EU) and the UK. While Europe is not as intertwined as it once was in this circumstance, an essential aspect of the relationship between both unions is that of reciprocal influence. Much like how the UK shaped EU policy during its time as a member-state, the EU now impacts the post-Brexit British agenda. Consequently, the new European Political Community (EPC) presents an opportunity for the EU-UK relationship to improve and evolve in a manner that mutually benefits both parties and their respective peoples. The UK's relations with France and Germany have the potential to recover from the turbulent post-2016 years.

Following its entrance into the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1973, the UK exercised notable influence in the European integration process (Cini and Verdun 2018). In terms of promoting the European project, the UK actively facilitated a relaunch of the single market in the 1980s and helped lay the foundational structure of the Economic and Monetary Union of the European Union (EMU) (Cini and Verdun 2018). In terms of restricting the integration process, the UK procured special arrangements for itself during the negotiations over the Maastricht Treaty concerning aspects of integration such as the EMU (Cini and Verdun 2018). During the creation of the Maastricht Treaty, domestic political debates within the UK linked efforts to create a common currency with an undermining of national identity through surrendering sovereignty to EU bureaucrats (Adler-Nissen 2014). To avoid the Maastricht Treaty being blocked, the UK was granted opt-out clauses, including being able to avoid joining the euro currency (Adler-Nissen 2014). While being debated in Westminster even after securing the currency opt-out, politicians argued as to whether the Maastricht Treaty would affect the UK's position within the global economy alongside British sovereignty (Baker 1995 in Adler-Nissen 2014).

Following Brexit, Britain's pursuit to further limit European integration has the potential to exacerbate divisions between remaining member-states (Cini and Verdun 2018). Central and Eastern European states that show open hostility towards efforts for deeper integration, such as Hungary, tend to adopt similar arguments found in the UK's Leave campaign (Cini and Verdun 2018). Furthermore, the EU now faces increased challenges in its international objectives when navigating its relationship with the UK. The EU may welcome possible future offers by the UK to endow limited support to its defence ambitions should this support the UK's overall commitment to European security (Hadfield and Wright 2021). Afterall, the UK did constitute twenty percent of EU defence capabilities and 25 percent of its defence budget (Hadfield and Wright 2021).

Brexit has also been a source of contention in the post-referendum relationship between the UK and Germany. Since it became a member of the EEC in 1973, Germany has offered the UK many concessions, often to the detriment of France (Paterson 2018). This led Prime Minister Cameron, before the 2016 Brexit vote, to assume that Germany would not risk having the UK leaving the EU by refusing to grant sufficient concessions needed on migration and sovereignty issues (Thompson 2017). This manifested in the Prime Minister assuming Chancellor Merkel would offer compromises on treaty renegotiations to keep the UK within the EU

Illustration by Alexander Dalton

(Thompson 2017). Incentives for Germany to offer further concessions could be seen from a view of self-interest, as the EU without the UK would leave the Germans with greater budget contributions and with one less northern European ally on economic matters (Thompson 2017). Such sentiments were evident in a joint press conference given by both European leaders in 2015, whereby David Cameron (2015) stated that he believed the EU badly needed reforms to meet the interests of Europe and the British relationship with the EU (Cameron and Merkel 2015).

During the speech, Chancellor Merkel was thanked for showing "willingness to work with us to find solutions" (Cameron and Merkel 2015). Subsequently, Chancellor Merkel (2015) continued by reiterating the belief on the German side that "where there's a will there's a way" to reach common solutions (Cameron and Merkel 2015). This continued up to the prelude to the 2016 Brexit vote, whereby the German government felt it had gone as far as it reasonably could in negotiations with the British Prime Minister (Paterson 2018). Over the course of the post-Brexit years, Anglo-German relations were aggravated by the UK's support for President Trump, a confrontational figure in Germany especially following Trump's open criticisms towards Angela Merkel at the 2017 G20 summit (Paterson 2018). This resulted in sentiments of 'bafflement and annoyance' towards the UK amongst many Germans (Paterson 2018).

Leaving the EU has also further complicated the UK's foreign affairs in Europe and abroad. Under Prime Minister Boris Johnson, the UK sought relationships beyond Europe despite an expressed desire to work with European partners whenever EU-UK interests aligned (Hadfield and Wright 2021). Large increases in defence spending, a temporary decrease in overseas aid, and the merger of governmental bodies into the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office demonstrate the motivations for a 'Global Britain' beyond Europe (Hadfield and Wright 2021). The success of the UK's "post-Brexit FSDP [Foreign, Security and Defence Spending] agenda" remains uncertain because being outside the EU creates a blind spot for the UK which presents capacity limitations (Hadfield and Wright 2021). Furthermore, the UK's weakened reputation from Brexit impedes its intention to re-engage on the international stage and retain its role as a global leader (Hadfield and Wright 2021). An example of the UK's weakened reputation is its deliberate ignorance of post-Brexit treaty obligations with the EU, such as the Northern Ireland Protocol and, because of this, the UK's status as a reliable international partner has been called into question (Hadfield and Wright 2021).

Domestically, Brexit may fundamentally alter the composition of the UK and future relations with the EU via Scotland. Political parties have been divided along the lines of the Brexit vote since the referendum. Currently, the Scottish National Party (SNP) and Scottish Greens support Remain and independence. On the other hand, the Scottish Conservatives and Scottish Labour support unionism and Brexit. The Liberal Democrats are the sole party in Scotland that is both pro-Union and pro-Remain (Hughes 2019). In the 2016 referendum, Scotland was the most pro-Remain region of the UK with 62 percent of Scots voting against Leave (Hughes 2019). Additionally, the Scottish Parliament voted 92 to 0 in support of looking for avenues that would keep Scotland in the EU or the EU single market only one week after the referendum (Hughes 2019). Disagreement between Edinburgh and London over the results of Brexit has weakened devolution as Westminster did not consult Holyrood during the Brexit process (Hughes 2019). One area in which this was evident was the UK Government's challenge of the Scottish EU Continuity Bill that sought to return EU powers to devolved areas, following concern that the UK's Withdrawal Bill would not rightly honour devolution (Hughes 2019). Although not as internally divided by Brexit as other areas of the UK, Scottish voters may become further alienated as political differences with England and debates over Scottish independence intensify (Hughes 2019).

With Brexit posing challenges for both the EU and UK, the European Political Community (EPC) represents an opportunity to bring much-needed stability to both unions. Former French President François Mitterrand envisioned a similar arrangement following the Cold War that would bring EPC members, Central and Eastern European countries, and Russia together, though it failed to gain sufficient support (Droin and Martinez 2022). More recently, French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz have stated the need to "re-design" relationships within the EU (Mayer, Pisani-Ferry, Schwarzer, and Vallée 2022). Since Brexit, for instance, President Macron has been trying to reincorporate the UK into EU discussions on security issues (Droin and Martinez 2022). European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen during her State of the Union address in September expressed a need to reach out to countries beyond the EU (George 2022). Indirectly appealing to the UK, President von der Leyen reminded Europeans of the Late Queen's words: that the future was constructed upon "new ideas and founded in our oldest values" (George 2022).

*"With Brexit posing challenges for both the EU and UK, the European Political Community (EPC) represents an opportunity to bring much-needed stability to both unions."*

The EPC intends to bring EU and non-EU member-states together and may foster soft law agreements to cooperate on issues of security, defence, climate, energy, and economic and social convergence (Mayer, Pisani-Ferry, Schwarzer, and Vallée 2022). The EPC may respond more rapidly to European issues than the EU by combining EU treaty reforms with agreements between the EU, non-members, and current member-states (Mayer, Pisani-Ferry, Schwarzer, and Vallée 2022). Membership may be open to countries that share fundamental values, similar rules of law, democratic governments, and a respect for international law (Mayer, Pisani-Ferry, Schwarzer, and Vallée 2022). However, the EU maintains that the EPC is only a platform for political coordination and that it does not replace existing political structures or processes (European Council 2022).

European countries most affected by Russia's invasion of Ukraine are largely non-EU and non-NATO members and are hence particularly motivated for a new European forum beyond the European Union (Droin and Martinez 2022). In the "spirit of unity," leaders from across the European continent met in Prague on October sixth at the inaugural meeting of the EPC (European Council 2022). To European Council President Charles Michel, the EPC exchanged valuable dialogue and achieved mutual understanding at a moment when European security and stability is under intense threat (European Council 2022). The summit primarily focused on the issues of peace and security involving the Ukraine-Russia war and the energy crisis (European Council 2022).

Re-engagement and possible thawing of post-Brexit UK-EU relations may occur in future convenings of the EPC (European Council 2022). A joint statement on the initial EPC was released by the UK and France reaffirmed the long-standing ties between both countries. In addition, President Macron and former Prime Minister Liz Truss agreed to a renewed bilateral agenda at the 2023 UK-France Summit (Truss 2022). Notably, Truss and Macron also discussed one of the most prominent issues made by Brexiteers: migration (Truss 2022). While in Prague, they agreed to deepen cooperation to tackle illegal migration, human trafficking in Europe, and crossings across the English Channel (Truss 2022).

Such possible rapprochement between the UK and EU came following the then-Foreign Secretary Liz Truss's comments that the UK was uninterested in joining the EPC as a replacement for participation in NATO or the G7 (George 2022). It also followed assertions made during Truss's campaign for Prime Minister that the 'jury was out' as to whether Macron was a "friend" or "foe." Yet, after the EPC, in the presence of reporters, she called him a 'friend' (Droin and Martinez 2022). When talking about the UK's exit from the EU, Prime Minister Truss asserted that the referendum was not a decision taken by Britons to have the UK retreat from its 'proud and historic role' as a leading European nation (Pierini 2022). She continued by stating that the UK would find new avenues of cooperation that would align with shared interests and values (Pierini 2022). This seemingly materialised on the same day as the Prague summit of the EPC when the EU defence initiative known as PESCO, which oversees sixty projects, voted unanimously to invite the UK as a third country participant (Pierini 2022).

Brexit challenges the UK's new global agenda as well as the future of the Union itself. It has also caused the EU to lose one of its most powerful member-states and has consequently altered the dynamics between the remaining members. While no longer bound through the formal institutions of the European project, the EPC exists as a potential avenue for a warming of relations between the two to achieve common interests. Should anything be drawn from the inaugural summit in Prague, it is that the post-Brexit EU-UK relationship remains volatile with a chance of improvement.

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# Energy Crisis: *Delusions of Growth-Obsession, and a Post-Growth Vision*

Gabriel Sanson Gomez

Gabriel Sanson Gomez employs Post-Growth Theory to reflect on the current energy crisis.

On an unusually warm October morning in Birmingham, the newly elected United Kingdom (UK) Prime Minister Liz Truss stood before the Conservative Party Conference, looking to convince her party, the markets, and the country of her economic plans. She argued that, despite the disruptive impact of the plans, in the context of a cost-of-living, currency, and climate crisis, they would create 'growth, growth, and growth' (Mason 2022). Greenpeace activists interrupted, asking, 'Who voted for this?' (Mason 2022). While she dismissed them as representing the 'anti-growth coalition', the protest, and response, embodies the present fraught dynamics between government, people, and the planet. Economic, social, democratic, and environmental outcomes were side-lined on one promise: growth would save us. Symbolic of realities buried under party rhetoric or promises, by the end of the month – October 2022 was the UK's seventh warmest since 1884 – the cost-of-living crisis left millions vulnerable, and Prime Minister Liz Truss resigned (Met Office 2022; Pandey 2022).

Neoliberalism has shaped the UK's growth-obsessed policies. This paradigm saw increasing emissions, deregulation of unsustainable industries, as well as globalisation and the normalisation of market-driven logic. While not exclusively attributable to the UK, this country has been a willing and active participant. Neoliberalism compels an expansive view of the energy crisis, identifying long-term causes linked to growth-obsession. Fossil fuel dependence was intended and tolerated when sustainably transitioning was possible.

*"Fossil fuel dependence was intended and tolerated when sustainably transitioning was possible."*

Through the acknowledgment of the growth paradigm as complicit in an unsustainable lock-in, we begin to transcend it. Post-growth theory enables this, giving new perspectives on wellbeing, challenging the assumptions our institutions preach, and showing how the fight for a just world can be fought now before it is too late (Jackson 2021).

## 'Growth, growth, and growth'

Under the growth-paradigm, there is a two-sided strategy developed for the UK's sustainable transition. One is characterised primarily by internal pressures, institutional aims aligned with neoliberal objectives, as deregulation and privatisation place non-state actors in positions to guide policy (De Carvalho 2018). The other is oriented at profitably addressing external pressures to reform sustainably (Gough 2017). Combined, these establish a dynamic of selective responsibility, where the UK presented itself as a climate leader, without implementing policies in line with targets, and remaining within a market-led approach.

Privatisation has seen sustainable agency pass from the people to non-state actors. This has weakened state intervention in energy policy and strengthened private sector influence. Successive governments from Thatcher to Blair oversaw the restructuring and privatisation of the Central Electricity Generating Board, demonstrating how neoliberalism has infiltrated both major political parties. This consequently laid the foundations for a 'slow jump on the bandwagon of energy transition' (De Carvalho 2018). Thus, private-sector interests had flexibility in guiding reform, reflected in a strong gas infrastructure lock-in, and a powerful concentration of actors on the supply side (Gough 2017). In research and development, a lack of government funding emphasised private sector sources. This has slowed research into and substantially hampered the development and growth of emerging wind and nuclear fission technologies, because private actors prefer short-term returns (De Carvalho 2018). Concerns have existed since the mid-2000's over the privatised electricity sector's ability to match the targets of the energy transition. However, despite these concerns, the non-interventionist government has tolerated this strategy (De Carvalho 2018). These structural changes became reflected in the type of climate policy the government would subsequently begin implementing. Author and activist Naomi Klein noted in a discussion with a former UK climate envoy that there was an apparent tolerance or apathy towards the shortcomings that existed between pledges and policy (Klein 2015).

The UK government has delayed a sustainable transition from immediacy to a future where they suggest it could be made profitably, setting the scene for the energy crisis. This strategy has seen much of the emissions associated with its consumption, a quarter of UK trade-adjusted emissions, offshored and discounted from its reduction responsibility (House of Commons Energy and Climate Change Committee 2012). In addition, this has encouraged a practice that sacrifices the global carbon budget for the domestic budget (Gough 2017). In this limited capacity, the government remains guided by market forces, promoting profitable carbon trading schemes, which benefit its financial sector (Gough 2017). These schemes, as well as containing unreliable claims to providing reliable additional emission offsets, are also not complemented by adequate domestic policy aimed at making energy greener and more efficiently used (Cames et al. 2016). While the UK is not directly dependent on Russian gas, which accounts for only 4 percent of its gas mix, it is involved in international gas markets through its own production, and imports from Norway, that have seen volatile prices in part due to the war in Ukraine (Department for Business, Energy, & Industrial Strategy 2022). Once again, rising gas prices have coincided with the government implementing policies aimed at promoting a transition away from increasingly expensive gas, by providing grants for heat pumps (ONS 2022; BBC News 2022). However, the heat pump scheme appears inadequate for the government's ambitious plans, with the size of grants raising concerns on the accessibility of such a transition, compared to unsustainable alternatives. Only 55,000 heat pumps were installed in 2021, compared to the 2028 annual target of 600,000, and in contrast to the 1.7 million gas boilers sold a year. Thus, it represents what we need to be turning away from and presents a sizable rift between the climate leader rhetoric projected by the government and policy realities (BBC News 2022).

The UK's energy system is not on track to meet its targets. Its market-led dependence at the expense of time for a gradual transition leaves the non-interventionist

Illustration by Alexander Dalton

state unsuited for the challenges ahead (Gough 2017). To escape neoliberal assumptions, and glimpse a strategy with ambition and scope fit for the climate crisis, the growth-paradigm must be transcended.

## Transcending Growth

Post-Growth, or De-Growth, radically reforms the world, with wellbeing at its heart. It escapes the growth-shackled paradigm and envision a society centred on wellbeing, reforming anthropocentric conceptions with an understanding of humanity's limits. It involves radical reforms to our governments, economies, and societies, enhancing each to promote wellbeing and flourishing, in harmony with the environment. In short, it is not merely saving us from the brink, it is guiding us towards a better place than where we started. It starts by challenging the foundational assumption of the growth-paradigm: growth is intrinsically linked to progress and wellbeing. Growth proponents point to increases in wellbeing and life expectancy outcomes globally in recent centuries as proof (Hickel 2022). Whilst growth exists across ideologies, capitalism and growth are particularly interlinked, with labour productivity growth appearing to legitimise capitalist claims to social progress and prosperity (Jackson 2021).

Several worrying realities force this argument to come to terms with its consequences, too often overlooked. Pursuing productivity growth has relied on mass-extracting fossil fuels, unviable today (Jackson 2021). Yet, some suggest upcoming technological innovations and efficiency gains will preserve growth, accommodating green demands. 'Green Growth', however, relies on technology and efficiency maintaining pace with the necessary transition, and occasionally theoretical solutions existing in time and at a scale to save us (Jackson 2021). A risky, convenient gamble for profit driven actors; if the crisis is averted, chances are they have adapted and protected their interests. If it is not, then much the same remains true. This denial and the unfounded trust ignores the inevitable: 'There is no growth on a dead planet' (Jackson 2021), and growth is killing it.

There are many consequences of this growth ideology in our deeply divided world and through this we can ask: what does post-growth mean for the Global South and why deny those least responsible for the climate crisis the chance to escape poverty? These concerns highlight a key distinction that endless economic growth ignores: after a certain point, growth loses value. Tim Jackson cites Ronald Inglehart, who compared wellbeing with GDP per capita, and found that while higher incomes in the Global South increased well-being through the standard of living, in the North, impacts were indirect and dependent on other metrics, such as freedoms and happiness (Jackson 2017). This suggests that eventually, further growth no longer best promotes wellbeing; instead, providing the tools to promote 'human aspirations and societal needs' becomes the priority (Jackson 2021).

How do we get there? Thinkers focus on three interlinked types of radical reform: social, economic, and political. Countering pursuing growth, wealth redistribution promotes well being for the most disadvantaged; and inequalities reduce through focusing on sectors 'in the service of

each other', instead of productivity gains (Jackson 2017). A post-growth economy is a steady-state economy, which would emphasise 'reproduction, not production, investment, not consumption, more discretionary time, not more commodities, more equality and redistribution, not less' (Gough 2017). Some see a steady-state economy defined more closely with its ecological boundaries, relying on two simple principles: 'Never extract more than ecosystems can regenerate… Never waste or pollute more than ecosystems can safely absorb' (Hickel 2022). Combined, these outline a paradigm shift: from an individualised, anthropocentric, and consumer-driven society to one thinking collectively, existing within natural boundaries, and valuing common wellbeing. The political dimension evolves, challenging structures that allow unsustainable interests to fester in decision-making. Thinking horizontally, integrating disparate agencies on areas such as energy, social policy, and finance would create more holistic policies; whilst vertically, power would be dispersed locally, and focus placed on appropriate supra-national cooperation (Gough 2017). Power distribution raises questions on post-growth democracy. This connects theory and present realities, showcasing how the post-growth fight is playing out.

## 'By the people, for the people'

Although the critics of Post-Growth argue it doesn't translate criticisms into viable alternatives, concrete solutions are clearly visible. Returning to Jackson's discussion on Inglehart, he highlights that wellbeing is statistically, more closely associated to democratisation than economic development (Jackson 2017). Democracy, however, is not understood as static, instead in constant evolution, and requiring further development to achieve its post-growth potential. To Jackson and Klein, it remains broken, with decision-makers tied too closely to wealthy business interests, and less with the people and environment (Jackson 2021; Klein 2015). A post-growth world empowers us with the tools to hold our leaders to account, through direct, grassroots action.

*" The goal is not just survival, but improvement."*

Jackson highlights how thinkers from Hobbes to Gandhi place importance on civil disobedience when governments act against the people's interest, this being not just 'a failing at the heart of a particular government, but rather an incompleteness in our framing of the state itself' (Jackson 2021). Currently, it appears that those with power across parties are keen to undermine the rights of citizens expressing concern proportional to the scale of the crisis. Keir Starmer has called for tougher sentences on climate protesters, while his party's climate strategy remains shackled to the promise of growth (Gayle 2022; Labour Party 2022). This is a sobering indication of the degree to which institutionally rooted growth-rhetoric acts in direct opposition to the planet and those protecting it. Echoing Jackson, it is little surprise to see that one of the leading climate civil disobedience groups, Extinction Rebellion, campaigns around three key demands: Truth from government, immediate climate action, and strengthening democratic principles through deliberative government (Extinction Rebellion 2022). These reflect the principles lost in growth-addiction, and those regained in a post-growth world.

The energy crisis is directly linked to an absence of climate action, relying on foreign fuels until a sustainable transition could be economically convenient, instead of ecologically necessary. The government's unwillingness to act responsibly, whilst championing itself as a sustainable leader encapsulates the hypocrisy besetting the climate crisis.

Post-growth perspectives escape the shackles of growth-obsession, guiding our societies and economics instead towards not only a consideration of our home's limits, but also understanding this can be done in a way that promotes human wellbeing. The goal is not just survival, but improvement. Our window to transition, however, narrows every day, and the post-growth fight is ongoing.

In many ways, our reluctance when discussing these radical changes is understandable. However, our tendency to cling to the familiar blinds us to what will become impossible to ignore when it is too late: our world has already changed and will never be the same again. The longer we take to acknowledge this, the less time we have to ensure it changes in a way we can control.

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# The Responsible "People" of the Anthropocene: *Is Climate Action Universal?*

Sophia Georgescu

Sophia Georgescu dissects who is responsible for anthropogenic climate change and calls for the restructuring of 'people' in addressing the climate crisis.

In November 2022, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released their updated report on the progression of climate change. Warning that the planet will warm by 1.5 degrees Celsius within the next twenty years even with the most drastic cuts to carbon emissions. It concluded that the current phase of climate change the planet is experiencing is irrefutably anthropogenic (IPCC 2022). Additionally in 2021, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) conducted an international survey and found that two-thirds of the 1.2 million respondents acknowledge climate change as a 'global emergency' (UNDP 2021). In many Global South countries, the climate crisis is already a reality through accelerating natural disasters (Sen Roy 2018). In July, Scotland recorded its highest documented temperatures (BBC 2022). The world has seen decades of failed climate negotiations, erasure of activist voices, and misinformation campaigns by fossil fuel companies (Dmitrov 2019). However, we see that climate change is affecting almost every region around the world in some way now. Perhaps this will prompt more action to be taken by the institutions and private corporations who have spent so long doing the opposite. Within this changing political landscape, questions will arise when decisions are made and delivered through these existing institutions. Who will (and should) act? Who exactly are the people included within the 'Anthropos' of anthropogenic (human-caused) climate change?

In 2016, the Anthropocene Working Group advocated for the adoption of the Anthropocene as a new geological epoch to the International Geological Congress (Bonneuil 2015). This idea has been widely adopted, with a proliferation of academic and popular texts discussing how this new age of humanity impacts the Earth and the 'human-centred planet' where we have accelerated planetary systems to an unprecedented level. The current condition of anthropogenic climate change is conceptualised as 'the human imprint on the global environment' that is a 'radical…and fatal break' from the previous epochs as an unprecedented catastrophe (Bonneuil 2015). It is a powerful statement on the urgency and scale of anthropogenic influence on Earth. However, this presentation of global and universal change is worth investigating more closely to examine who 'people' are in conceptions of the 'Anthropos.'

In A Billion Black Anthropocenes, black geographer Katherine Yusoff traces the racialised history of geological classification of the earth and its entanglement with extraction, racialized labour, and capitalism. Yusoff points to the 'violence and erasure' in attempting to date the onset of the Anthropocene and the human-induced climate emergency over previous planetary cycles. An impartial,

Illustration by Alexander Dalton

scientific geological exploration of the climate emergency deploys universal terminology. This centres around a timed departure from the 'natural' planet, thereby erasing the histories of slavery, extraction and colonialism that allowed emissions to accumulate towards the current global conditions (Yusoff 2018). The naming and dating of the geological Anthropocene draws upon the same erasure and racial-extractive logic that justifies the extraction of human bodies, labour, and foreigners in the expansion of capitalism and colonial legacies.

This homogenising narrative of 'Anthropos' also obscures the binary between who acts on the climate emergency, and who is impacted by it the most. Establishing a responsible and universal 'people' reinforces this binary through obscuring the power differences in action and responsibility (Cripps 2022). Drawing on climate justice scholarship, those individuals and geographic areas that have contributed the least to the climate crisis feel the heaviest weight of catastrophic impacts (Meyer and Roser 2010). While greenhouse gas emissions and global climate change do not discriminate between borders, their impacts intersect along lines of unequal power and agency to have the greatest effect on members of the Most Affected People and Areas, or MAPA communities (Fridays for Future 2021). Around 80 percent of the world's remaining forest biodiversity is located within Indigenous territories, yet they emit at least 73 percent less carbon than land managed by all other groups (Robinson et al 2021). Despite protecting some of the world's most vital ecosystems for planetary health, indigenous communities are amongst some of the most economically deprived and democratically excluded groups in the world (UNDP 2016). At a national level, the countries most vulnerable to climate change are likely those on Pacific islands, which are facing the loss of their entire land within the century despite being the lowest per-capita state emitters in the world (Nand and Bardsley 2020; IPCC, 2022). Yet these nations are unable to adapt economically due to their levels of debt-to-GDP ratios exceeding 70 percent (Nand and Bardsley 2020). The legacies of colonialism and debt are having devastating effects on Island economies, leaving them highly vulnerable to increasingly common extreme events and rising sea levels without the financial capabilities to build infrastructure for adaptation (Weatherill 2022). The Pacific island of Tuvalu has been dubbed the "canary in the coal mine" in international climate negotiations due to its high vulnerability (Parks and Roberts 2006). A former British colony, Tuvalu's economy is structurally dependent on a single export crop of copra from coconuts. This is the result of colonial policy focussing on land allocation for copra on the island at the expense of any other economy and infrastructure building (Ogden, 1989). Presently, Tuvalu's imports of necessary goods for its population exceed 20:1 of imports to exports (Parks and Roberts 2006). This legacy has forced the island to rely on aid and loans in order to build its postcolonial infrastructure- a deficit made worse by the cost of recovery from increasing natural disasters (Parks and Roberts, 2006). The Pacific Islands and other MAPA communities face stark economic and climate conditions without having contributed through per capita pollution, and yet they are the most vulnerable to severe impacts. Hidden beneath a universal 'Anthropos' and a human-induced 'global' emergency is an unequal burden on MAPA communities of both economic disempowerment and climate degradation.

*"Hidden beneath a universal 'Anthropos' and a human-induced 'global' emergency is an unequal burden on MAPA communities of both economic disempowerment and climate degradation.*

*A universalizing narrative of "people" in relation to climate change doesn't just erase injustice, it also has real political impact in its use."*

A universalizing narrative of "people" in relation to climate change doesn't just erase injustice, it also has real political impact in its use. Messaging around the climate crisis as an issue of individual responsibility has allowed large scale polluters, such as British Petroleum (BP), to divert attention away from their increased extraction during a climate emergency (de Freitas Netto et al 2020). In 2004, British Petroleum released their carbon footprint tool, allowing consumers to calculate their individual carbon emissions across their daily lives and travel (de Freitas Netto et al 2020). This successfully framed emissions as personal responsibility, which can be reduced through better decision making and investment in schemes such as carbon offsetting and the development of eco-products (Kolcava 2021). However, 70 Percent of greenhouse gas emissions are produced by just 100 companies globally, with oil and gas companies such as BP at the top of the list (The Guardian 2017). Devastating conclusions from the IPCC's 2022 reports show that limiting warming to 1.5C suggests that individual actions have failed to achieve the necessary reductions in emissions. With attention diverted away from the practices of oil and gas companies, they can continue to resist halting extraction and resist paying loss-and-damage to the communities they have extracted from. A key barrier to global action on climate change has been the resistance mounted by fossil fuel companies against governments, mainly located in the Global North (Hansen 2022). Three-quarters of stranded assets, or fossil fuels that will remain in the ground and not be burned if policy changes, are owned by governments (Hansen 2022). Individual consumers who rely on

oil and gas to live and work are not the actors who hold the political and economic power to overcome short-term commercial interests. Reducing responsibility for climate action down to individuals presses feelings of responsibility onto them without acknowledging differences in financial and democratic power. It also distracts from ongoing fossil infrastructure expansion and its effects on state decision making.

'People' needs to instead highlight the power of connection. While communities have long resisted against the extraction inherent in colonialism, the climate crisis has 'rescaled' international politics and the global Anthropocene by how it intersects with existing inequalities and disempowerment (Shiva 2016; Andonova and Mitchell 2010). Tackling the climate crisis is not an individual or universal responsibility of the 'Anthropos', but one of justice across various levels of financial and political disempowerment. Despite facing financial, legal and democratic barriers, MAPA communities have led the way in demanding a different course of action. In 2019, more than 1.5 million children and young people participated in the Global Climate Strike (The Guardian 2019). Children are sharing stories of threats to the ways of life and communities they hoped to grow up in, evoking emotive responses to their stories of climate change and worries about their futures. Following childrens' participation in Scotland's Climate Assembly, adult participants reported higher rates of positive emotions and motivation around collective action which dropped again once the Assembly process ended (Andrews 2022). Collective action has also influenced state and international decision making, when 25 children successfully sued the Colombian government for their failure to protect rights to life and a healthy environment (De Justicia 2018).

*"Reducing responsibility for climate action down to individuals presses feelings of responsibility onto them without acknowledging differences in financial and democratic power."*

However, it also is not the responsibility of those most affected by the climate crisis to overcome barriers to politically organise and tackle the climate emergency. Climate justice is social justice, and the dignity of frontline communities and children and young people in decision making needs to be the starting point (Sultana 2021). The burden of responsibility can take a serious toll. In a 2021 survey of 10,000 young people internationally, sixty percent reported feelings of climate anxiety (Hickman et al 2021). Over 50 percent felt anxious, powerless, and guilty (Hickman et al 2021). As famous youth activists have criticised institutions for 'youth-washing' and co-opting their time and energy, Greta Thunberg's powerful accusation at the 2019 UN Climate Action summit claimed that institutional action is 'stealing childhoods with empty words' (The Guardian 2022). People power and grassroots organising cannot place the burden and rely on the energy of vulnerable groups and communities.

Beyond participation, against binaries and universalities such as the 'Anthropos', the structures that have accumulated power and pollution need to be unpicked. Attention can be re-oriented away from the 'universal people' towards connections that do not have to always move towards progress (Tsing 2021). Drawing on many methods and perspectives, action to tackle the climate emergency can be a collection of tools and processes and a 'living democracy' where human activities integrate with Earth systems instead of enclosed in a binary between nature and culture (Shiva 2016). In 2019 and 2022, the UK government announced moratoriums on fracking following years of Frack Free Lancashire protest camps at Cuadrilla's Preston New Road fracking site (UK Government 2019). This protest camp imagined a different kind of community by building their movement around non-hierarchical communal spaces (Lloveras et al 2021). Beyond the UK, indigenous environmental activists at the sites of 'accumulation by dispossession' have fought for the incorporation of these connections through traditional land knowledge and caretaking through integration (Harvey 2004; Shaw 2002). While recognition at both state and international policy levels have often relied on narratives of indigeneity that are based on levels of 'traditional' culture and subsistence levels, communities are asserting their rights as political entities by pressuring settler colonial states in their environmental governance (Procter 2020). To challenge this narrative of enclosed indigeneity, in Canada the NunatuKavut Inuit Community Council has used direct actions since the 1990s to pressure the Nunavut federal territory to recognise that spatial boundaries are porous, especially in relation to the connection between the community, water, and its wildlife (Procter 2020). This forced the federal government to revoke corporate mining permissions in the community in 2016 (Procter 2020). A shift from understanding the climate crisis as the 'Anthropos' towards connection can create tangible challenges and alternatives to uneven accumulation.

Messaging around the 'Anthropos' as a universal 'people' erases the uneven extraction and histories of violence that lead to the current conditions of the global climate crisis. People in MAPA communities have contributed the least to global emissions yet may feel the impacts most heavily. The placement of responsibility on individuals to take climate action therefore distracts from both colonial history and ongoing capitalist expansion. The logic of accumulation that justified the extraction of both land and people shows how the current conditions of the climate crisis have been both created and reproduced. However, bottom-up connection challenges an 'Anthropos' narrative and its intersection with structures of power and state governance. A universal 'people' are not the answer to the climate crisis, nor the responsible future.

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# *Sexual Politics*

Kate Millett's Sexual Politics (1970) devoted itself to the proposition that 'sex has a frequently neglected political aspect.' In many ways an antecedent to this, in a 1968 essay - also entitled Sexual Politics - Millett defined politics as 'power-structured relationships, the entire arrangement whereby one group of people is governed by another, one group is dominant and the other subordinate.' Over five decades later, Millett's words remain as relevant as when they were first written.

The next volume of Leviathan endeavours to explore how themes such as sex, gender, sexuality, and so forth, influence the contemporary global political landscape. With recent controversies such as the UK government's decision to block Scotland's Gender Reform Act, the promotion of Anti-LGBTQ+ zones in certain Polish provinces, and the revision of Indonesia's penal code which could disproportionately impact women and the LGBTQ+ community, personal freedom in the domains of sex and gender appears to be increasingly under threat.

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