

European issues

n°516

21st May 2019

Sylvain Kahn

# Far right: its conversion to Europe!

French President Emmanuel Macron and his LREM party explain that since 2018 they have wanted to federate parties who would oppose the nationalists in Europe. Quite explicitly they name two political leaders as their main adversaries: the first is Viktor Orban, the historic leader of the FIDESZ, who has been the Prime Minister of Hungary since 2010; the other is Matteo Salvini, the Italian Interior Minister, leader of the Lega, a far-right movement, allied and rival of Luigi di Maio, the Italian Minister for Economic Development, Labour and Social Policy, leader of the Five Stars Movement (M5S), which stands as “not being either on the left or the right” but as an “anti-system” movement.

These two deputy leaders of the Italian government, who entered office in May 2018, are lending themselves to this game and regularly challenge French voters, calling on them to make the European elections one of contest, against the LREM and Emmanuel Macron. Matteo Salvini sends messages of support to the National Rally, whose MEPs sit in the same parliamentary group as the Lega: Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF). Luigi di Maio, whose M5S sits in Strasbourg in the Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD), has for his part sought to identify with the “gilets jaunes” social movement, which he supports, with political correspondents and even future MEPs with whom he might join forces in the European Parliament after the elections on 23rd-26th May 2019.

## THE EUROPEANISATION OF THE RADICAL AND FAR RIGHT

These facts mark a Europeanisation, not just of, but within the national political lives of the family of radical and far right groups. Sometimes in the past, coalitions of national parties have already existed at European level. These coalitions, the best known of which is the one between the European People’s Party (EPP, Christian Democratic right) and the European Socialist Party (PSE), have structured life in the European Parliament. The leaders of the national parties which they federate take part in the congresses of these movements, including when they

are the heads of government. But it is the first time that political leaders have mobilised institutional and political resources that they have at their disposal to this extent as leaders of national executives, in a European electoral campaign in a bid to mobilise the electorate against other government leaders on the grounds of their partisan affiliation and their ideological doctrine. Inter-state diplomacy has fallen to second place, to the benefit of a common, European political arena. What better way to illustrate that political society is deploying at European level. It is the sign that there is indeed a European society and that the European Union has become a country, the country of Europeans[1].

The mobilisation of the family of radical and far right groups in this battle is a novelty in itself. In the previous decades, these parties did not really try to structure their cause at European level due to their respective nationalisms and their disdain for all cross-border, supranational political life. This is why the European elections of 2019 will be different from the eight which have preceded them since 1979.

The next European elections clearly crystallise the front lines which, as the national elections have taken place over the last ten years, have gradually evolved. Indeed, the family of the radical and far right – whether they are nationalist, ultraconservative or antisystem – is typified by its rejection of European integration. This is a rejection that feeds on the idolisation of national

[1] Kahn S. et Lévy J. *Le Pays des Européens*, Odile Jacob, 2019

sovereignty – there can be only one sovereignty: that of the Nation-State – and the hatred of the elites. In the radical and far right sovereignist ideology, all of the players in the so-called “Brussels” political life are doubly blighted. Yet, the present electoral campaign has thrown light on a major development: the radical and far right no longer deem the European Union an entity to flee or destroy, but a resource to use from within, to take their values forward, with which to deploy their political programmes. This development is more notable and deeper than the speculation over an electoral tsunami by this family which, although it has been anticipated and announced by many observers since the British referendum in June 2016, will not occur in May 2019.

Several weak signs have indicated over the last five years that this remarkable bifurcation in nationalism and sovereignism has been taking place, but they have been masked by the intuitive certainty, which of course is not very rational, that Brexit would have a domino effect and that an centrifugal unravelling of the European Union would definitely occur. Not only has this domino effect not taken place, but the radical and far right parties, who made the exit of the euro or the Union a marker of their doctrine, have almost all given up these ideas. In France this development emerged in the awkward hesitations on the part of the Front National candidate during the debate between the two rounds of the presidential election of 2017, then with the ousting of Florian Philippot and finally, the disappearance of Frexit and the return of the franc from the party’s European programme.

### EURO PERSUADERS

This doctrinal development is part of a change in direction on the part of the entire radical and far right family; it applies to the Dutch PVVD, the Austrian FPÖ and the Italian Lega, all three co-founders, with the FN, of the far-right parliamentary group ENF. In Germany, Alternative für Deutschland (AfD), which joined the EFDD, has almost given up the idea, whilst the challenge made to the euro zone was the basis of its creation. The parties in the nationalist family

have realised that the electorate is not ready to quit either the European Union or the euro zone. In the Eurobarometer polls, we note that the euro is popular in most Member States. Whatever the political party for which they vote, all Europeans understand that if they leave the euro zone, there is a major danger that their currency will be devalued, likewise their revenues and savings, as well as the risk of an increase in all debts and loans taken out in euro. Some economists explain that if Germany and the Netherlands left the euro zone, the German and Dutch currencies would suddenly gain value. In this hypothesis both countries would face inflationist tension and a destabilisation of their external trade, which is enough to make most German and Dutch public opinion sceptical about the advantages of leaving the euro.

This development is one of the features of the “urbanisation” of European political life. Viktor Orban started implementing this within the radical and far right group on his return to office in Hungary 2010-2014. Since Hungary is not in the euro zone, the exit of the latter was of course not on the agenda. But the Hungarian Prime Minister’s ultra-conservative, nationalist, anti-Roma, extremely critical discourse of the European Commission already co-existed alongside the Economic and Monetary Union. Hence, unlike the Czech Republic whose President is Milos Zeman, Hungary ratified the TSCG without any resistance.

The radical and far right, Eurosceptic movements that have entered government in Hungary (2010) and Poland (2015), are leading countries which are amongst those which receive the most funding from Europe. The European funds paid to Hungary, as part of the regional policy represent 4% of the Hungarian GDP yearly. Poland is one of the first beneficiaries of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). In this regard it is significant that the Law and Justice party in office in Poland is over-represented in the small town and countryside. In Italy the Lega decided to nationalise its electorate and no longer be the party of the rich North which, constantly criticised what it claimed to be the “socially assisted” citizens of the Mezzogiorno. This is notably how Matteo Salvini succeeded in raising

the score of his movement from around 5% nearly ten years' ago to 18% in the general elections of 2018. The polls now credit it with 30% of the vote in the European election. To widen his electoral base of citizens living in the south of Italy, it was wise on his part not to brandish the exit of the euro or the European Union, since this part of Italy benefits largely both from the regional policy and the CAP. It was also by removing from its programme, mid electoral campaign, all hints of the "Italexit" and the exit of the euro zone that the M5S, which made countering the corruption of the elites and the introduction of a universal minimum wage the focus of its electoral battle, became the political party with the greatest number of votes in the southern provinces of Italy in the general elections of 2018. Hence, the European Union represents hard cash budgetary and institutional resources. This new nationalist Euroscepticism is a little like "biting, and yet licking the hand that feeds".

### ECR, EFDD, ENF: A 'MÉNAGE À TROIS' WITH 20%

In the European Parliament, elected in 2014, these eurosceptic, nationalist, ultra-conservative or anti-system political movements were spread over three parliamentary groups, which were extremely critical of the European Union.

The Europe of Nations and Freedom (ENF, far right) notably rallies French and Dutch MEPs from the RN (National Rally) and the PVVD (The People's Party of Freedom and Democracy). Both in the opposition in their respective countries aspire to govern, to have as much influence as possible over their national political lives and are no longer content with the tribunician function adopted to date. They have been encouraged by the success of the two parties in the ENF group, which have reached government in their respective countries, the Italian Lega led by Matteo Salvini and the Austrian FPÖ led by Heinz-Christian Strache. With around 30% of the vote and up to 27 seats, Matteo Salvini's Lega might become one of the three leading national delegations in the future Parliament. It would become the pivot in the ENF and the biggest group in

the European radical and far right family, ahead of the PiS (which sits with the ECR) and the RN.

The parliamentary group of Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD) is also symptomatic of this development. This group is based on two pillars: the Italian M5S, an anti-system movement, which is in office with the Lega and the UK Independence Party (UKIP). The score forecast for the M5S, which has suffered because of its alliance with its charismatic Lega rival, is due to be lower than in the general elections in March 2018 (33%), but equal or higher than that won during its breakthrough in the European elections of 2014 (21%, 17 MEPs).

Led by Nigel Farage, UKIP has been campaigning since 1973 for Brexit; its role was decisive in the promise made by David Cameron, the Conservative Prime Minister, in the organisation of the 2016 referendum, then in the victory of the Leave vote. UKIP's value as an example no longer lies however in the ability to achieve exit from the Union. For the other movements in the radical and far right family it lies in Nigel Farage's ability to turn an anti-conformist, initially marginal party, into the central point of political life of a country reputed to be the cradle of parliamentary democracy. Nigel Farage showed that it was possible for a monothematic, anti-elite, xenophobic movement, challenging the venerable British Parliament alone, to change the established order and with that the course of history. He withdrew from political life after the vote on Brexit. Since the participation by the UK in the European elections has become likely, he has made a come-back and founded a new movement to defend the Brexit and his achievement. Barely had it appeared in the polls, the Brexit Party is now credited with nearly 30% of the voting intentions, ahead of Labour and the Conservatives. In the meantime UKIP, which has drawn closer to the ENF has fallen to below 7% in the voting intentions.

The AfD is also part of the EFDD group. Founded on the contestation of the political and economic elites, and based on a challenge to the euro zone, the AfD, which since then has absorbed the Islamophobic movement

Pegida, is increasingly identifiable as a far right party, because it is increasingly xenophobic, antisemitic and critical of the rule of law and also of pluralism. Credited with 10 to 12% of the voting intentions, it might contribute significantly to increasing the influence of the ENF group in Parliament, if it joins that group, after becoming the third parliamentary group in the Bundestag in the wake of the general election in 2017. Finally, the European Conservative and Reformist group (ECR) is the one which is more in line with the legacy of the sovereignist political trend of the 1980's and 90's. Hence we have the British Conservatives, who decided to organise the Brexit referendum; they sit alongside the Polish PiS, the ultraconservative party, which has been in office since 2015, the xenophobic, the self-rule Flemish N-VA, a party which governed in the Belgian coalition 2014 to 2018, the True Finns, a Eurosceptic, populist party, which has been in government for two years, Debout la France and the Democrats of Sweden, a far right party that came second in the general elections in Sweden in 2018.

#### **INFILTRATION RATHER THAN A TSUNAMI**

The ECR group is the biggest of these three groups. It is also the most assiduous and most invested in parliamentary work. Just a few weeks from the end of this legislature the ECR had 76 MEPs, the EFDD, 42 and the ENF 36. The family of radical and far right movements elected a total of 154 MEPs in 2014, occupying 20% of the 751 seats in the outgoing Parliament. This snapshot is significant. Indeed, the European Parliament is a dynamic, changing reality. And the coalition of national delegations from different parties in eight parliamentary groups does not systematically obey clear, defined front lines of battle. There are gaps, interfaces, modulations, mobility and bridges.

Hence the British Conservatives are affiliated with the ECR. Although they are Eurosceptic, they do not belong to the family of radical, far-right movements. Since 1979 their affiliation has oscillated: sometimes with the EPP, then with the ECR (under changing names).

Within the EPP there is at least one national delegation that belongs to the radical, far-right: the FIDESZ in office in Hungary since 2010 with Viktor Orban. His exclusion from the EPP is a recurrent question within the group. In March 2019, for the first time, a majority formed in the EPP – not to exclude, but to suspend the FIDESZ and its 12 MEPs for six months. There is also Forza Italia, which, in office on several occasions since 1994, has taken liberties with certain aspects of the rule of law, notably with the guarantee of the pluralism of the press and the independence of the judicial authorities.

Developments in national political life has created bridges between the EPP, and this or another of three parliamentary groups in the family of the radical and far-right movements. Hence Forza Italia has governed Italy on several occasions with the Northern League (now Lega). During the electoral campaign in 2018, these two parties formed an alliance which included the Fratelli d'Italia, a small, post-Fascist party, affiliated to the ECR. This alliance is still in office in several Italian regions and town councils.

In Austria the government in office since November 2017 is the result of a coalition between the ÖVP, an EPP member and the FPÖ, an ENF member. Chancellor Sebastian Kurz, who is also the leader of the ÖVP, chose to give to the FPÖ the ministries of the Interior and Defence. What better way to illustrate how the Austrian right is embracing the far right doctrine regarding issues of freedom, security, the rule of law, migration and asylum. And this is not just happening in Austria: the Ministry of the Interior is also led by the far right in Italy and by the ultra-conservative, xenophobic right in Hungary and Poland. The radical and far right movements are therefore already succeeding in wielding a certain amount of influence over several European policies, in the Council of the European Union which co-legislates with the Parliament.

It is in this way that the development in the distribution of MEPs within the parliamentary groups, as well as the reshaping of these, might have a decisive effect on the legislature that emerges after the election on

23rd-26th May. This aspect will count more than the progression in the number of MEP seats held by the family of radical and far right movements. Contrary to some campaign declarations made for electoral ends, the probability of seeing this family win a blocking minority (not to mention a majority) is almost zero.

According to the seat forecasts undertaken by these polls, MEPs from the radical and far right elected in 2019 might lie at around 170 representing between 22 and 25% of the seats. It is within the European Parliament and for the next five years that a true political battle will be waged: that of the ideological influence over public policy, which will be effectively drafted by the European legislator and implemented by the European and national executives. In other words: how many divisions will there be in each parliamentary group, how will institutional resources be distributed and how will work be organised, within the framework of which there will be geometrically variable alliances: i.e. will there be negotiations and possible ad hoc and even sectoral agreements? By brandishing the spectre of a far-right tidal wave during the campaign, we might deflect public opinion from the effective field of influence of ideas and policies of the radical and far right family.

This is why we would like to hear the candidates explain to the electorate, during the different national electoral campaigns, which groups they are going to join, and why; which alliances they are planning to make in the Parliament and which policies and which compromises. Otherwise we shall again see a discrepancy between declarations made during the campaign and the reality of European legislation and its public policies – a discrepancy which year after year, helps lend credence to the populist discourse people are being betrayed by the élites, which is so typical of the family of movements on the radical and far right, and which also inspires the radical left, whose influence is due to remain stable via the parliamentary group (GUE/NGL) at 6.5% more or less.

The constitution of a real political parliamentary force on the radical and far right – that can effectively influence

the public policy agenda and European laws, to become a vector of European nationalism and a programme to erode human rights and the rule of law, is therefore one of the issues at stake in the European election. But there is nothing to say that the various forces that make up this movement will succeed in organising to achieve an optimal efficacy in the European Parliament, but there is nothing to say that they will not succeed either.

### A NEW MODEL: ORGANISATION

In the outgoing Parliament these forces are therefore spread amongst three parliamentary groups: the ECR, the EFDD and the ENF. This is often presented as a sign of fragmentation, of division even, and an intrinsic impossibility of unification. This is true from one point of view: united, this family might have had much more influence than it has had during the legislature that is now coming to an end. However, from the point of view of time, we can see that the spread over three groups has tended to organise and regroup in comparison with the previous legislature. Prior to 2014 most of the far-right MEPs were non-attached. The creation of the ENF by Marine Le Pen in 2015 was one of the first signs of a change in doctrine on the far right regarding European integration, which is being progressively considered as a resource and not just a model to be rejected.

We should especially note the extent to which the European policy of the Hungarian Prime Minister opened the way to the family of radical and far right in Europe. Viktor Orbán had turned membership of the Hungarian nation the alpha and omega of the life of each of his fellow citizens. In the name of the purity of the people, which make up a nation, necessarily homogeneous, he is a xenophobe, against the Roma and an anti-Semite. And yet his nationalism is a 21st century brand: he does not pitch nations against each other or rank them, but he wants to prevent them from mixing. He deems that the nations of Europe must join forces to prevent the arrival of migrants from the Afro-Arab-Muslim world, individuals he reduces to a set, cultural and religious essence – who might contaminate and dissolve European societies, who themselves are also

## Far right: its conversion to Europe!

---

set in a timeless essence, in his opinion, given to us by Christianity. In his vision of the world like a shock between communities and civilisations, his nationalism is European. He is a man of his time and not of the 1920's or 30's.

Viktor Orban also advocates community sovereignty. Traditionally, nationalists and xenophobes in Europe have been so attached to their national sovereignty that they have detested European integration, which is supranational and pools sovereignty. If as a good populist he criticises violently the elites in Brussels on the grounds that they betray the people, he does not challenge his country's membership of the European Union. He thinks it fantastic that thanks to the latter, Europeans are stronger and more supportive of each other in the face of what he considers to be an external threat, even if this means "shopping around" in public policies – that of competition and the area of freedom, security and justice in particular. In Hungary, in some sectors presented as emblematic (such as telecoms and the media) and in government procurement, European standards give way to nepotism, oligopolies, corruption and the embezzlement of European funds.

It is not just in the Hungarian economy (moreover governed by rules that pay little respect to workers' rights, which are extremely favourable to foreign subcontracting investments, and which encourage little investment in the future) that Viktor Orban and his majority scorn pluralism. Since 2014 he has become the eulogist of illiberal democracy. Coined by American publicist Fareed Zakaria, this concept defines a regime in which multi-partisanship and elections are free, but the ecosystem of political liberalism, embodied by the separation of powers, the checks and balances and the rule of law are purged and watered down. This has what has been happening in Hungary since 2010. For example, there is no censorship, but due to a lack of means there is no opposition press. In a documented work, which is thorough and full of courage, a team of academics led by Balint Magyar qualifies the government system introduced by Viktor Orban and his party "a mafia State".

By retaining his social and electoral base, winning three successive elections (including the distortion of the rule of law, pluralism and the separation of power), by turning xenophobia into government policy, by detesting the European Union from within, so as to influence it and take advantage of it, and yet remain affiliated to the EPP, Viktor Orban, has built a model whose objective success obliges the admiration of all the other leaders of the radical and far-right parties and is an inspiration to them. This is why I have suggested that this doctrinal and political development should be typified by the term "orbanisation" which is now being deployed across Europe on three levels: European nationalism, community sovereignty, and illiberalism. Between 2014 and 2019, the radical and far-right have entered office in Poland, Austria and Italy. They have participated in coalitions in Latvia, Finland, Denmark and in Belgium. They have become notable forces in the political and parliamentary landscapes of Germany, the Czech Republic and Spain. This was already the case in France, Greece, Bulgaria and the Netherlands. Now there is only Ireland, Portugal and Luxembourg, where this family has remained marginal.

"Orbanisation" offers a framework for convergence and Europeanisation. The creation of the ENF is one of the signs of this, much more than a sign of fragmentation. For the far-right nationalists, uniting in the European Parliament by forming a third group, where once there were two and many non-attached, is already the beginning of participation in European policy and the Europeanisation of politics. The difficulties experienced with Brexit play in favour of this development and of "orbanisation". If we adhere to the emblematic facts, we might say that Orban and Salvini's strategies are much more profitable long term than those of UKIP and M5S. Even if the Brexit Party scores highly on 23rd May, its future is now limited by the very fact that it has side-lined itself from the European political arena. What interests most of the political family to which it belongs in Europe is not really to bring the European Union down or to get their country to leave it, but rather to deflect it towards their own political programme. Even if this means reducing it down to the smallest common denominator: the closure of the borders to citizens

from countries which are not European, discrimination towards foreigners and nationals who descend from immigration or who are Muslim.

## RADICAL AND FAR RIGHT: REASONS TO CONVERGE

It is via this part of the programme that is common to the parties of the family of the radical and far right that an increasingly shared tolerance for the relativization of the rule of law and pluralism has grown. In Finland and Denmark this relativization takes the shape of discriminatory policies towards certain citizens who belong to a specific community (nationality, religion or difficult suburb), thereby eroding the universal nature of the rule of law. This is also the case in Austria; in Hungary with the violation of the independence of the judicial system and constitutional freedom; and in some respects, in Poland too. The present Italian government has started relativizing the rule of law via the discrimination of foreigners on the grounds of their nationality and, as the case may be, the fact that they do not have a visa. Since May 2018 in the European Union we have had a government which freed itself of international maritime law and the Geneva Convention regarding the protection of asylum seekers, and which has succeeded in having the Union take the blame for this policy!

In this sense Matteo Salvini's government action finds inspiration (or is paving the way) in the precedent created by Viktor Orban's government policy. As of 2015 the latter abolished the protection it owed to any asylum seeker, via the erection of a hard border – a barbed wire fence between Hungary and Serbia. This convergence is almost as important as the divergence often noted by observers over the distribution in all Member States of asylum seekers and the territory in which they first arrived (Italy being one of the biggest ports of entry). The pictures of the visit paid by Mr Salvini to Hungary on 2nd May 2019 bear witness of this. We see the two leaders in full discussion with their followers in front of a portion of the said border. What better illustration of their political convergence regarding asylum and migration? What better

illustration that for each of them it is at European level and together that they have to act? According to Mr Salvini this means protecting Europe from becoming an "Islamic caliphate".

We must take this convergence between the movements of radical and far right seriously. Without over defining it we must note that the reasons to converge to structure this important family in the European Parliament are no fewer than their usual divergences.

Since the end of January 2019 there have been surveys (and no longer intuitions) regarding the shape that the next European Parliament might take after the upcoming election. It is highly likely that for the first time since 1979 the EPP and S&D (the PSE and the centre-left parties) will no longer occupy the majority of seats. We have spoken about the fact that the political family of radical and far right will not enjoy a tsunami in 2019 in Parliament. This analysis has been confirmed by the polls on voting intentions. For 15 years, election after election the populist, the radical and far right and Eurosceptics parties have gained ground in the European Parliament. The present estimates forecast that this family will win between 160 and 185 seats, i.e. 20 to 25% of MEPs after the election in May 2019. The European hope of this political family might therefore be to form a third parliamentary group. It might then chair several parliamentary committees or draft important parliamentary reports. It might also influence the Parliament's agenda and table draft resolutions. If this family gains institutional influence like this, then it might pretend to play an influential role in the appointment, of if not the President of the European Commission, at least that of the European Parliament, whilst strongly influencing the negotiations now forecast between the European political families, between the branches of the Union's political power, between the States and between all of the those involved in the concomitant renewal of the leading posts in Parliament, the Commission, the European Council and the ECB!

The problematic relationship with the Other and foreigners, this is clearly the point that is common to

## Far right: its conversion to Europe!

---

all in this family – even the British Conservative Party, affiliated to the ECR, has made discrimination between nationals and foreigners a part of its programme. We have possibly forgotten this, but prior to the referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union, David Cameron successfully achieved a stupefying derogation on the part of the 27 other Member States and the Commission: the possibility to discriminate between the citizens of the Union and British citizens regarding the payment of social allocations and healthcare services. The Austrian government is introducing a similar measure – even though it is not quite the same, regarding one specific detail (the modulation of family allowances according to the country of residence of the children of the benefit receiver).

European policy towards Russia is a divisive point. We might note that Orban and Salvini have both been benevolent towards V. Putin and have criticised the sanctions taken by the Union against Russia since the annexation of Crimea. However, although they criticise the policy they have not used their veto.

Matteo Salvini's visit to Viktor Orban four weeks before the elections was not fortuitous. Indeed, on 8th April 2019 he launched his project to extend the ENF parliamentary group by founding it in a new, bigger group for which he has already put forward a name: the European Alliance of European Peoples and Nations (AEPN). This hand extended by the ENF to the parties affiliated to the EFDD and ECR groups has met with a certain amount of success. If we consider the hypothesis of the AEPN and the declarations of intention made within the parties on the radical and far right running in the European elections, we can already forecast a group of between 80 to 95 MEPs. The Italian Lega might be the biggest national delegation, followed by the French National Rally, which at present is the biggest delegation within the ENF, although weakened by around 6 departures during this legislature and the indictment of several of its leaders for the embezzlement of European funds. Mr Salvini and his friends' goal is to snatch the place of the potential third parliamentary group from the future new ALDE, the centrist, liberal group chaired by Guy Verhofstadt, who has said he is prepared to change its name to integrate the twenty or

so MEPs who might be elected in France on the LREM list.

In this political battle the M5S would be a collateral victim, which would not displease the Lega. Indeed, several parties have already announced they intend to leave the EFDD to join the AEPN. The more the AEPN promotes its political diversity, the more attractive it will be for those who are put off by the markers of the historic far right, who suspect the FPÖ and RN of not having made a clean break with from Nazism, collaboration and anti-Semitism. The greater the flexibility and variety of this potential AEPN, the more it will become a competitor with the EPP, this grand group of right and centre-right parties, typified by an extreme plasticity and variety. As much as the FIDESZ has no interest in joining the ENF, and not a great deal to gain by joining the ECR, it might have an interest in quitting the EPP from which it has been suspended to join this potential new parliamentary group. Beyond the 13 MEPs that it might add to the basket and who might make the difference in the rivalry for third place that will provide resources, it would especially be a stunning blow and a symbol of the erosion of the EPP to the benefit of a new, more dynamic European right. However, the balance of power does not depend on this type of transfer from one group to another. Whether the FIDESZ is on one side or another, this movement remains a marker and broker of the extreme shift to the right of the right in Parliament. The doctrinal development of the British Conservatives regarding the free movement of workers in the Union, just like the change in attitude of the UMP (now the LR) towards migrants, Roma and national identity since Nicolas Sarkozy, and also the appropriation by the Austrian ÖVP of the FPÖ's doctrine regarding the discriminatory treatment of foreigners, migrants and Muslims, is enough to show the radicalisation of the EPP, or at least its great fragility caused by its permeability to xenophobic representations from the radical and far right in the face of the erosion of the rule of law. Whether the FIDESZ is in the EPP or not will not change this trend which for some, like the German CSU, is a double-edged temptation: an attraction as much as it is a culpability.

And yet the ALDE is not immune to this type of development, as shown by the Danish People's Party's (DF) support to the centre-right government led by the Liberal Party of Prime Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen, a support without which he would be in the minority and the populist ambiguities of ANO, the party of Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babis.

### **A SPUR FOR EUROPEANISM**

The scenario of an increasing influence by the radical and far right's ideas in the European Parliament elected in 2019 is therefore highly likely. Indeed, it corresponds on the one hand to national dynamics at work in many Member States. On the other, it falls in line with the logic of a traditional parliamentary rationale in representative democracy: historically it is common for parties on the right to adopt far right ideas (a comparable phenomenon also exists between the left and far left) when they are doing well, on the grounds that the electorate has to be heard and understood and that that it is the best way to contain and control them. The nationalist, xenophobic and Eurosceptic radical and far right might have a certain influence over European policy without having more than a quarter of the seats after the elections. It is likely, because it is already an ongoing trend and some of its ideas and practices will filter into the EPP, even the S&D and the ALDE, and the Union might adopt some extremely severe laws against foreigners and otherness, and laws that will erode its legislation, reputed around the world, for being supportive of human rights.

But this new shape might also encourage greater creativity and more inventiveness on the part of the MEPs who are convinced of the effectiveness of supra-nationality and who support European integration founded on pluralism, the rule of law and cosmopolitanism. The functioning of the European Parliament, more than that of the national parliaments, fosters majorities of ideas. Faced with the rise of radical and far right movements, their will to have new influence and transform their rival nationalisms into European nationalism, the pro-European parties might agree on projects and ideas stimulated by a will to cut the ground away from the nationalist populists, i.e. European integration that is both strong and optimistic based on clear values, vectors of progress, urban life, freedom and solidarity, and which asserts itself amongst the different forms of communitarianism. The impossibility of the EPP and S&D to adopt texts alone in the future Parliament will force them in this direction; they will be obliged to work together with the new ALDE and the Greens to achieve their goals. In this sense the Europeanisation of the radical and far right, just like the dynamic of the organisation of Europe could be a stimulus and a powerful spur for the pro-Europeans and humanists within the European Parliament.

---

### **Sylvain Kahn**

Geographer and historian, professor at Sciences Po. Most recent publications: *Le Pays des Européens*, Odile Jacob, 2019, written with Jacques Lévy. *Histoire de la construction de l'Europe depuis 1945*, PUF, 2018, prize winning book of *Mieux comprendre l'Europe*.

You can read all of our publications on our site :  
[www.robert-schuman.eu](http://www.robert-schuman.eu)

Publishing Director : Pascale JOANNIN

---

**THE FONDATION ROBERT SCHUMAN**, created in 1991 and acknowledged by State decree in 1992, is the main French research centre on Europe. It develops research on the European Union and its policies and promotes the content of these in France, Europe and abroad. It encourages, enriches and stimulates European debate thanks to its research, publications and the organisation of conferences. The Foundation is presided over by Mr. Jean-Dominique Giuliani