

Book Review: Mobilizing on the Extreme Right: Germany, Italy, and the United States

by Blog Admin

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***Mobilizing on the Extreme Right** is a very welcome addition to the literature on the topic and a highly recommended book for students of the extreme right and contemporary society in general, writes **Alexandros Nafpliotis**. This book describes the discourse, action, and organizational structures of the extreme right in Italy, Germany, and the United States, and explains these on the basis of the available discursive and political opportunities. Substantive chapters address the framing of protest events, the definition of 'us', and old and new forms of racism.*

Mobilizing on the Extreme Right: Germany, Italy, and the United States. Donatella della Porta, Manuela Caiani, Claudius Wagemann. Oxford University Press. February 2012.

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David Cameron is not used to receiving a lot of praise from European politicians; and he surely did not intend to achieve that last month, when he went to Ipswich to give his [immigration speech](#). Apparently, though, his statement that he would stop immigrants receiving welfare benefits after six months [was greatly appreciated](#) by France's National Front (FN), a far-right party whose leader (buoyed up by, among other things, Mr Cameron's promise of an in/out referendum on EU) has called for a referendum on France's membership of the European Union at the beginning of next year.

The fact that the British PM's immigration plans resonate among extreme right wing politicians is yet another link in the chain of events which indicate that the third wave of right wing extremism continues unabated and that ultra nationalist parties are here to stay. This is most notably evidenced in Greece with the meteoric rise of Golden Dawn, in Nordic countries with the [rise of right-wing populist parties](#), and in the UK with the [emergence of 'counter-Jihad' groups such as the English Defence League](#)).

In this context, the authors of *Mobilizing on the Extreme Right* should be highly commended for the opportune publication of their book. [Donatella della Porta](#) is an accomplished political sociologist who has published extensively on collective action in society and political violence. [Manuela Caiani](#) has taught and researched on the subject of European and US right-wing extremist groups, and has collaborated with Professor della Porta in comparative studies of those groups on quite a few occasions (her book on [radical right-wing groups' use of the internet](#) has just been published). For this book they teamed up with another European University Institute connection, Prof. [Claudius Wagemann](#), who is an expert on Qualitative Comparative Analysis, thus forming a very competent team of researchers to analyse the extreme right as a social movement in a comparative perspective.

The goal of the book is to study the context, action repertoires, and identity formation of extreme right parties, organizations, and subcultural groups, by making specific reference to two European countries with long, and well-known, totalitarian history – Italy and Germany – and the United States. In this analysis, the role of populism, conservative values, old and new forms of racism, as well as discourses on globalization, is taken into consideration in order to present a comprehensive picture of how the extreme right acts, expresses itself, and influences the politics and societies of these three quite distinct cases.



In the opening chapter of the book, after a brief but succinct introduction on the definition and the themes of the extreme right, the authors set out their original approach in studying the subject; that is, the examination of the extreme right by using concepts and methods usually associated with the study of social movements. More specifically, the empirical methods of frame analysis, network analysis, and protest event analysis are employed, in what is an insightful and informed way of using social movement studies (often used to scrutinize left-wing groups) to elucidate the actions and discourse of extreme right organizations. As is made clear from the beginning, frame analysis examines the cognitive mechanisms that are relevant in influencing organizational, and individual behaviour network analysis deals with the organizational structural characteristics of these organizations, and protest analysis concentrates on the actions of the extreme right organizations. This is done quite impressively, with specific reference to three different types of organizations, namely political parties, political non-party organizations, and subcultural groups, in Italy, Germany, and the US.

One of the strongest aspects of *Mobilizing on the Extreme Right* is the extensive use of tables to illustrate the points made in the text, and that is aptly demonstrated in the chapter that deals with the concept of populism when applied to the extreme right. The authors put forth the idea that in the framing of the people by these organizations, there is “a rather exclusive vision that refers to a strongly hierarchical and elitist conception of society” (p.203). Differences between countries are identified in the emphasis on the ethno-nationalist component in Germany (where politicians are blamed for the stigmatization of the country for its past), the prevalence of ‘racial populism’ in the US (where international politics also have a special place), and the preponderance of elite and party corruption in the case of Italy. According to the authors, these differences are explained if the differing political and discursive opportunities are taken into consideration, with the level of mistrust towards politicians being lower in Germany than in Italy, for example.

Throughout the book, the authors make a rather persuasive case, putting forward compelling, and in most cases, novel arguments, substantiated with a copious amount of evidence, thus making *Mobilizing on the Extreme Right* a very welcome addition to the literature on the topic and a highly recommended book for students of the extreme right and contemporary society in general.

Dr Alexandros Nafpliotis is a Research Associate at the Hellenic Foundation for European & Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP). He completed his PhD in International History at the London School of Economics and was recently a Visiting Fellow at LSE’s Hellenic Observatory. As well as working as an academic, he has worked as an Attaché at the High Commission of the Republic of Cyprus in London, and has been involved in research for the Army History Directorate in Athens, Greece. His research interests include Mediterranean and Balkan history and politics. He is the author of [Britain and the Greek Colonels: Accommodating the Junta in the Cold War](#) which was recently published by I.B. Tauris. [Read more reviews by Alexandros](#).

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