

The European Union and fascism in France: a neo-Poulantzian analysis

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<https://youtu.be/Rz4dsY4AEI0>

My presentation will be focused on the effect of European integration and the effects of the EU on France and on fascism in France.

Ursula von der Leyen, the president of the European Commission, started a program to rearm Europe. She said, "This is Europe's moment." At a time when Trump is trying to negotiate peace with Ukraine - peace at his advantage, of course - Christine Lagarde from the ECB says: "This moment of change is an opportunity for Europe. It is a global Euro moment." So, we have, on the one hand, the desire for a European army and, on the other hand, a global Europe—two aspects of a state. In the press, the media all say that it is a pivotal moment for Europe. It is the moment for Europe's strategic independence. It was also an electroshock that Europe needed, as Macron said. It was a European defence shift. All the press welcomed this very, very positively as an moment of emancipation of Europe from the United States.

In the meantime, the U.S. is very happy with this kind of new policy, this new European state. Thanks to the European defence fund, the U.S. will be able to send more arms. The questions I'm asking are:

How much autonomy does Europe have from the U.S.? And what are the consequences regarding democracy and fascism in France?

The thesis I'm putting forth is that there is no significant contradiction between U.S. and European big capital in this process of European state-making. The far right in France is representing more and more the transatlantic bourgeoisie. I will demonstrate my thesis in three points. The first is the EU's structural preference for big capital. The second part is that big capital is the transatlantic bourgeoisie. In the third part, we will analyze the effects of this on democracy and fascism in France.

Very briefly, this is the Lisbon Treaty, and these are the competencies of the European Union. We can see that the exclusive competencies of the European Union are customs unions, competition policy, monetary policy, and common commercial policy. The competencies that states have are social policies, basically. This means that economic competencies, the competencies that interest employers, the capital, are in the hands

of the European Union, whereas social competencies, which are of the interest of workers, are in the hands of states. However, in the EU, there is a hierarchy of norms stipulating that European law prevails over national law. For the EU, this means that there is structural selectivity in favour of employers' interests and not in favour of workers' interests.

Can we conclude that the European Union has overcome nation-states? It's more complicated because if we look at informal decision-making, we can see that, for example, in the economic sectors, states are also participating. The euro working group is made up of different eurozone ministries of treasury, as well as bureaucrats from the ECB and bureaucrats from the Commission. Its level of activities has increased after the crisis, and during the crisis and after the next crisis, it remains very high. Essentially, we have a common dynamic between European institutions and states going in the same direction. For European defence policies, it's the same. There is no opposition between states and the EU. For example, "Rearm Europe" was a dynamic from the Commission.

Keeping in mind that there is no opposition between states and EU institutions, the question I'm asking is: what is the political economy of this? Does that mean that European and national technocrats condense the interests of a European bourgeoisie, a bourgeoisie organized at the EU scale? We could imagine that, yes, we are seeing the formation of a European bourgeoisie.

We could also imagine this in the context of unilateral U.S. policy. For example, during the huge war that the U.S. is waging without the approval of Europe, during the Kosovo war, some Italian interests were actually destroyed, as illustrated by the example of the Fiat factories. During the Iraq war, Total, the most important French oil firm, lost lots of contracts, including the contract for the exploitation of the Majnun oil fields. During the Ukrainian wars, German capital is losing. Here you can see the different German companies that are losing due to sanctions against Russia. Yes, we could imagine that the EU and this common dynamic with European states represent a kind of European bourgeoisie.

In this moment of unilateralism from the U.S., when the U.S. affects European capital, we can hear some speeches, some discourses coming from European member states that actually criticize the United States. For example, during the Iraq war, there was a summit organized in April 2003 with France, Germany, Belgium, and Luxembourg—countries that did not agree with the U.S. Iraq war. They expressed concern that the European industry could be reduced to the state use of subcontractors to major American contractors. Here we have a way to envision an autonomy of European capital from the U.S. Today, in the rivalry with China, we have Macron, the President of France, stating that the new paradigm in terms of defence is a credible defence of the European continent. We must build a Europe capable of demonstrating that it is never a vassal of the United States of America. Again, we can hear some criticism from European leaders, suggesting that it is because their own capital, their European capital, is affected by U.S. unilateralism. However, the reality is quite the opposite.

If we look at the most important European lobby, called the ERT (European Round Table of Industrialists), founded in 1983 by the Commission, we can see that it includes some of the biggest European multinationals in the industrial sector, such as Philips, Sofiat, Volvo, etc. However, if we examine this lobby and the political economy of this lobby now, we can see that it is neither industrial nor European. The different companies of the ERT show that 25% of the capital is owned by U.S. investment funds. 25% may not seem significant, we could debate that. One indicator that we cannot debate is a Marxist and Pulanzasian indicator to measure imperialism: foreign direct investment. Between 1982 and 2020, the share of U.S. direct investment directed toward Europe increased from an already solid 44% to 60%. We can see that foreign direct investments are increasing in Europe. We have very significant transatlantic integration in terms of capital.

Let us consider what this means for European foreign policy with the example of Rearm Europe. We can see that the European defence fund is open to U.S. arms subsidiaries. The transatlantic bourgeoisie is in favour of Rearm Europe. For example, the president of Google EMEA, which is a Google subsidiary in Europe, supports the European defence fund, as does the ERT, the lobby of European multinationals. These are two indicators of the transatlantic bourgeoisie: U.S. subsidiaries and the integration of European capital into U.S. finance. Now that we have seen that European integration and the European Union condense the interests of a transatlantic bourgeoisie, what about workers?

Let us take the example of the crisis in 2008, we can see that the crisis has a different temporality in the economies of the countries. The crisis started at the end of 2008 in Germany, for example, in the centre of Europe. By the end of 2008, it affected central countries. By 2010, it affected southern European countries. The crisis affected different parts of the European space at different times.

What about social movements? Social movements also have different temporalities. The social movement began in the north, then it reached the east, and finally affected southern Europe. This makes it very difficult to envision a European social movement addressing the European Commission simultaneously, as social movements have different temporalities and different subjectivities. In the east, there are more right-wing subjectivities, whereas in the south, there are more left-wing subjectivities. Thus, it is challenging to imagine a common social movement at the European level. The European Union does not represent the interests of workers in its policies, while we saw that the EU does condone the interests of a transatlantic bourgeoisie. This means that the European Union is an open road for the transatlantic bourgeoisie to advance its interests in opposition to workers' interests.

Now we will examine the effects of this political economy in France and within the political spectrum. The European Union being an open road for the transatlantic bourgeoisie means that protests will never be listened to. This is exemplified by the referendum in Europe that has never been respected. In France, this was the case in 2005 with the European Constitutional Treaty, which asked the people to express themselves, and they said no, but it was obviously condensed in the Lisbon Treaty.

Consequently, the majority of people in France are Eurosceptic. France is the second most Eurosceptic country after Greece. The graph on the right shows France. The most important reason why French people are Eurosceptic is not racism, but rather their opposition to globalization. The third graph indicates how many people vote for Eurosceptic parties, with the violet colour showing votes for more Eurosceptic parties. The basic consequence of this is that people in France vote for Eurosceptic parties. We have a restructuring of the political spectrum in France. The current opposite is not right or left, but against or for globalization. A and B are the blocs that defend the European Union, while C and D are the blocs that contest the European Union. A is the right and pro-European Union, which includes Macron, the president of France. B is the left, which is pro-European Union, including the Socialist Party and the ecologists. C is the far right, the RN (Rassemblement National), before the 2020 elections, as it has changed since then, and D is La France Insoumise, the left, which criticizes the European Union.

But what happened in the last election? In the last European election in France, Macron actually lost. The extreme center of Macron, which is represented by his party Renaissance (LREM), lost in the election because the people who had voted for Macron before now voted for Marine Le Pen and the RN, the far right. If we examine the social composition of this electorate, we can see that the people who previously voted for Macron were predominantly wealthy individuals, mainly managers and employers. These individuals are now voting for Marine Le Pen, the far right. These voters are pro-European people. Essentially, with the European Union, we have a transformation of the Marine Le Pen party, which is becoming increasingly trans-class and welcoming former voters of Macron, who are pro-Europeans. Consequently, the RN now has a social base corresponding to the transatlantic bourgeoisie in Europe. As we always say, "Better Hitler than the Front Populaire." In conclusion, we saw that the European Union was a condensation of contradictory interests—contradictory but not so much.

In conclusion, the European Union condenses the interests of the European transatlantic bourgeoisie, whereas social movements cannot express themselves, leading this transatlantic bourgeoisie to ultimately choose fascist parties, such as the RN or other far-right parties, to protect its interests in the face of the rivalry with China and the power of the left in France. Thanks.