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978-0-521-54784-0 - Illiberal Politics in Neoliberal Times: Culture, Security and Populism  
in the New Europe

Mabel Berezin

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## Illiberal Politics in Neoliberal Times

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The rise of rightwing populism has brought into question prevailing assumptions in social science about multicultural Europe. In this compelling study of populist politics, Mabel Berezin argues that the emergence of the movement in the 1990s was a historical surprise rather than an expected event. She questions whether rightwing populism would exist in the absence of the Maastricht Treaty and the subsequent intensification of cultural and economic Europeanization. Using an innovative methodology, Berezin analyzes the French National Front in relation to the broader context of Europeanization and globalization. She unpacks the political and cultural processes that evoke the thin commitments characterizing citizen support, and shows that we cannot make sense of rightwing populism without considering the historical legacies and practices, both national and international, within which it arises. This book makes a novel argument about the relationship between democracy and political and social security.

MABEL BERZIN is Associate Professor of Sociology at Cornell University. She is the author of *Making the Fascist Self: The Political Culture of Interwar Italy* (1997) which was awarded the J. David Greenstone Prize for Best Book of 1996–1997 in Politics and History by the American Political Science Association and named an Outstanding Academic Book of 1997 by *Choice*. She is also co-editor of *Europe Without Borders* (2003) and has written numerous articles on European politics, culture and history.

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For Richard Swedberg

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## *Acknowledgements*

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*Illiberal Politics in Neoliberal Times* is a comparative political and cultural analysis of the salience of illiberal politics in France and Italy in the past twenty years. First begun with my work on Italian fascism and interwar Europe, this book continues to elucidate my professional and personal conviction that illiberal threats to democracy lie in the interstices of ostensibly democratic procedures and regimes. In short, challenges to democracy lie in the ordinary not the extraordinary – the banal not the egregious. The book also reflects my methodological conviction that political analysis without cultural analysis provides only a partial image of the collective forces that mobilize leaders and citizens. In short, the thick narrative description of public events is central to excavating the meaning of politics – new and old.

This project took longer than I would have expected to bring to fruition. In the course of its gestation, I have accumulated myriads of debts – large and small.

Since 1984, when the book narrative begins, I have lived and worked in various European venues. Spending periods from as little as a week to entire academic years when resources and time permitted, speaking two European languages, I have gained valuable ethnographic knowledge of Europe – writ large. An initial grant from the German Marshall Fund of the United States while I was completing *Making the Fascist Self* (Cornell University Press 1997), permitted me to spend a year at the European University Institute in Fiesole, Italy. Subsequent invitations to speak in various European venues provided additional opportunities for research abroad. I thank Gianfranco Poggi and Bo Stråth for invitations respectively to the Department of Political and Social Sciences and the Robert Schuman Centre at the European University Institute in Fiesole, Italy; Bernhard Giesen for inviting me to the University of Konstanz in

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One writes books alone. Yet, they are always in some measure a collective enterprise and I have been exceedingly fortunate in this regard. Riva Kastoryano was an invaluable friend and interlocutor when I made my early trips to Paris, although I am sure that she would never go anywhere near the National Front! On a very early research trip, Michel Wieviorka and Pascal Perrineau pointed me in directions that would eventually be crucial to constructing the narrative of the book. During the French presidential elections of 2007, Michèle Van de Walle provided “local knowledge” as she emailed to me humorous web postings from her family and friends in France.

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Ted Perlmutter helped me edit and fact check. He brought his own extensive knowledge of French and Italian politics (as well as language) to the manuscript – constantly chiding me when he thought a fact was off, an idea overstated. He was my fellow traveler in the book’s opening vignette, who was edited out of the final version of the manuscript. We have learned that we will probably never agree as to the meaning of May Day 1984 in Turin. I am nonetheless grateful for his insights and sense of humor.

While it may seem banal to speak of life as chapters, especially at the beginning of a book of many chapters, all banalities contain more than partial truths. This book began in one chapter of my life and has ended in another. I want to express my joy and gratitude to those who have helped me turn the pages – at least metaphorically.

While they were not directly involved in the book production, Gail Kligman and Ruth Milkman were staunch and loyal colleagues as well as delightful friends who provided endless hours of sisterly discussion as this book, as well as the vicissitudes of life, took me from here to there.

I am deeply appreciative of the friendship, intelligence and generosity of Jeffrey C. Alexander who has been supportive intellectually and professionally in ways large and small since we first met at UCLA in 1996. Victor Nee has my unbounded appreciation for making it possible to begin yet another chapter of my life when he brought me to Cornell in 2002. He also made it possible for me to meet all those aforementioned wonderful Cornell colleagues and students who read and commented as I conceptualized, wrote and rewrote.

Richard Swedberg’s devotion has enriched my life immeasurably. He introduced me to a new nation-state! He read the manuscript twice. He has continually shared his insights as a Swedish national and convinced European with me – although as a European he is always slightly perplexed as to why an American would find so interesting what he found routine. Now that the book is finished, I may have to make good on my promise to learn Swedish. As a hedge against that promise, I am dedicating this book to him. He is without doubt the best chapter!

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## Acronyms

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ATTAC	Action pour une Taxe Tobin d'Aide aux Citoyens
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CEVIPOF	Centre d'Étude de la Vie Politique Française
CFTC	Confédération Française des Travailleurs Chrétiens
CPE	<i>Contrat première embauche</i>
CPNT	Chasse, Pêche, Nature et Traditions
DL	Démocratie Libérale
ECB	European Central Bank
EDF	Électricité de France
EU	European Union
FN	Front National = (French) National Front
FRS	Forum des Républicains Sociaux
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LCR	Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire
LDH	Ligue des Droits de l'Homme
LO	Lutte Ouvrière
MDC	Mouvement des Citoyens
MNR	Mouvement National Républicain
MPF	Mouvement pour la France
MSI	Movimento Sociale Italiano
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PACA	Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur
PACS	<i>Pacte civil de solidarité</i>
PCF	Parti Communiste Français
PRG	Parti Radical de Gauche
PS	Parti Socialiste
PT	Parti des Travailleurs
RPF	Rassemblement pour la France



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RPR	Rassemblement pour la République
SOS Racisme	French group against racism
TNS-Sofres	Taylor Nelson-Société Française d'Enquêtes par Sondage
UDF	Union pour la Démocratie Française
UMP	Union pour la Majorité Présidentielle