

## Analysis

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## 80 years after 1939, Europe's far right scents power again

Last week, as Europe commemorated the eightieth anniversary of the outbreak of World War Two, the far-right Alternative for Germany became the most popular choice for young voters in the east German state of Saxony. Along with a strong performance in local elections the same day in Brandenburg, the results were a reminder of just how dramatically far right political parties have resurrected themselves in modern Europe. Trading off economic frustration and disquiet over migration, they are weaponizing technology and social media, international networks and widespread frustration with the political status quo.

Such parties do not necessarily need outright power to achieve their goals - as shown by Italian right-winger Matteo Salvini when he became interior minister, turning away migrant rescue ships and arresting one of the captains. Italy's example, however, also points to the challenges faced by such groups. After bringing down the government earlier this year, Salvini was widely expected to become prime minister. Instead, he has found himself kept out by an alliance of more moderate parties.

The lesson of the thirties, however - another era of dislocation, change and paranoia - remains stark. Adolf Hitler's Nazis never won more than a third of the votes in a democratic election, but that was enough to give them a stranglehold on power, given the proportional representation-based German constitution. Some far-right leaders continue to be plagued by scandal and ineptitude. Austria's Freedom Party was forced from government in May after its leader, Heinz-Christian Strache, was filmed in a video sting known as the Ibiza tapes, promising government contracts to a woman he believed to be a Russian oligarch's niece. Nevertheless, the party looks set for a strong showing in the resulting Sept. 29 election.

### Rebranded

France's far right appears similarly resilient. Having lost to President Emmanuel Macron in 2017 presidential elections, Marine Le Pen's National Front rebranded itself last summer as the National Rally - and won European parliamentary elections this May with a ticket fronted by 23-year-old Jordan Bardella. Le Pen - whose father founded the party in 1972 and lost a presidential runoff against Jacques Chirac 30 years later - remains firmly in control, with another chance of seizing the Elysée Palace at the next opportunity in 2022.

"The point is that they are going mainstream," says Julia Ebner, a research fellow specialising in the far right at the Institute for Strategic Dialogue think-tank in London. "They are playing a very long game, and targeting the next generation." As in France, it's a strategy that has seen rightwing political parties in Spain, Denmark and elsewhere field candidates in their late twenties high on the slate, seeing young white male voters in particular as their path to greater power. Figures such as 26-year-old Belgian Dries Van Langenhove helped Belgium's right-wing Vlaams Belang to its best-ever showing in simultaneous May regional, national and European elections.

There are limits to the trend. Even amongst young men, far right parties still often struggle to get much more than a third of the vote. Geographical support remains patchy. As they become more radical, parties can shed moderate followers even as they gain new ones - Alternative for Germany may be rising in the country's more economically marginalized east, but it appears losing support in richer western areas. Female voters remain particularly sceptical - prompting growing discussion in right-wing circles over how to win them over.

### Sophisticated

Van Langenhove, Bardella and others are part of an increasingly sophisticated continent-wide movement, tying together social media, real-world demonstrations and rallies and a single-minded determination to seize political office. Well-resourced campaigns include "Generation Identity", a largely youth-facing movement that began in France but has also seen its popularity grow in Austria, Germany, Italy and elsewhere. It's a sign of how increasingly coordinated such movements are - perhaps ironic, given their often nationalist agendas. Many take explicit encouragement from both US right-wingers and white supremacists as well as Russian President Vladimir Putin, seen by many on the right as what a national leader should be - ruthless, macho and untroubled by principles such as human rights or political correctness. Such groups and their leaders are also often the main beneficiaries of suspected Russian hacking, trolling and other online activity, supporting the suggestion that the Kremlin would like to see a more fragmented, right-wing dominated West.

Far-right messaging - which includes online videos - is widespread and varied, not all of it branded to associate with the far right. Behind talk of the need to confront Islamist fundamentalism and protect women's rights, however, is a wider message - that mass migration and multicultural liberalism are destroying Europe, and only the right can stop it.

Right-wing governments in Hungary and Poland shine a light on what the far right might look like in office - more state media control, rhetoric against not just migrants and foreigners but other minorities such as the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community. Many supporters, however, would like to go further - online discussion of "re-migration" includes not just repatriating new arrivals, but deporting families who have spent generations in Europe. —Reuters

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A visitor touches an interactive glass display showing a projection of Aziz Kaddan (second right), Israeli-Arab entrepreneur and CEO of Myndlift, a mobile app developed to treat ADHD, with others showing Israeli drip irrigation inventor Rafi Mehudar (left) and Israeli-Arab scientist and engineer Hossam Haick (right), inventor of "electronic nose" and "electronic skin" sensors, at the Peres Center for Peace and Innovation in the Israeli coastal city of Tel Aviv on Sept 3, 2019. —AFP

## Israeli high-tech looks to future - whoever wins

Inside a sleek, gleaming building with views over the Mediterranean, the co-founder of the navigation app Waze appears on a life-sized screen with words of advice on his red T-shirt. "Fall in love with the problem not the solution," Uri Levine's shirt says in the exhibit at Tel Aviv's Peres Center for Peace and Innovation, which serves in part as a shrine to Israel's long list of technological accomplishments. With all due respect to Levine, his native Israel has done both when it comes to high-tech.

The success of Israel's high-tech industry is one of the few subjects not up for debate ahead of September 17 elections, and those involved are looking at ways to build on the achievements of the "start-up nation" no matter who wins. With the world's most start-ups per capita, Israel has carved a niche. It has served as an incubator for brands like Waze - now owned by Google - web-publishing firm Wix and Mobileye, an autonomous driving company bought by Intel in 2017.

Giants such as Intel, Facebook and Google also have operations in the country, helping form its "Silicon Wadi", or valley. But with those feats behind it, the industry is looking towards new challenges: increasing

employment in the sector, having more firms grow in Israel rather than being acquired abroad, and maintaining an edge as competition increases. "As a small country, you have to work extra hard to be on the radar screen," said Eugene Kandel, a professor at Jerusalem's Hebrew University and CEO of Start-Up Nation Central, a non-profit that promotes Israeli innovation. "In some sense, we have no luxury of staying on a plateau, which a much bigger country could afford."

### 'We try to survive'

Beyond economic effects, the sector and innovation more generally have served as a calling card. It has allowed Israel to incorporate offers of technological cooperation to countries with which it is seeking to build relations. That technology has often come in the form of defense equipment and arms, while spy software developed in Israel has attracted deep controversy. Israel's more than 50-year occupation of Palestinian territory is also a major source of criticism from the international community.

But programs in such areas as agriculture and water recycling have served it well. As one example, Prime Minister Benjamin

Netanyahu talks up Israel's advancements in tomato cultivation. The government has played a role with tax advantages and through its Innovation Authority. Mandatory military service for most Jewish Israelis contributes since many receive technological training there, particularly those in the elite Unit 8200 for signal intelligence.

But some also name two aspects of the Israeli ethos: the need to innovate in a country in the desert and chutzpah, or audacity. "In Israel, we try to survive," said Revital Hollander of Interdisciplinary Centre Herzliya, an Israeli university that recently hosted business students from Canada's McGill University to collaborate and participate in a hackathon. "Basically we are always in a situation where we need to solve problems, and this is our state of mind."

Employment in high-tech rose in 2018 to 8.7 percent of Israel's total compared with 8.3 percent the previous year, according to figures from the government, which is seeking to increase that number. Those involved in the industry talk about encouraging start-ups to "scale-up" - grow their businesses - rather than cash in on lucrative acquisition offers from abroad. To spread the wealth,

Israel has been seeking to turn the city of Beersheba in the country's desert south into a major tech hub, including through the relocation of military tech units there.

### 'Our responsibility'

But reverence for what Israel has already created is plentiful. It could be seen recently in Herzliya near Tel Aviv, where the Canadian and Israeli students collaborated. Jiro Kondo, a professor at McGill's Desautels faculty of management, said the "ecosystem" Israel had created was unique considering its starting point. "The only example in the last 40 years where I can think of something that went from zero to something that's successful not just in dollars invested but value created... is in Israel," he said. At the Peres Center, founded by former Israeli prime minister Shimon Peres, the story of the country's innovation begins even before its 1948 founding, told through virtual reality and interactive presentations. Its focus is less on its economic aspects than on how it can improve lives. "And innovation is a tool for that," deputy director general Yarden Leal said from Peres's former office, still housing his books and Nobel peace prize. —AFP

## Mugabe polarises Zimbabwe in death as well as in life

Zimbabwe's founder Robert Mugabe is proving as polarizing in death as he was in life, with a fight over where he will be buried threatening to embarrass his successor and deepen divisions in the ruling ZANU-PF party. President Emmerson Mnangagwa's government wants Mugabe, who led Zimbabwe from independence in 1980 until the Nov 2017 coup that ousted him, buried at a national monument to heroes of the liberation war against the white minority Rhodesian regime.

But some of Mugabe's relatives have pushed back against that plan. They share Mugabe's bitterness at the way former allies including Mnangagwa conspired to topple him and want him buried in his home village. Mnangagwa has taken the threat to snub a burial at National Heroes Acre sufficiently seriously that he has dispatched a delegation to Singapore, where Mugabe died in a hospital on Friday, to negotiate with the family, government sources said.

The body is expected to arrive in Zimbabwe today, adding time pressure to Mnangagwa, who is under fire over an economic crisis and clampdown on dissent that has drawn parallels with the worst excesses of the Mugabe era. Both men have blamed Western sanctions and accused the United States and Britain of driving opposition protests. "Mugabe has always been a controversial figure, in life as it is now in death," said Eldred Masunungure, a politics professor at the University of Zimbabwe. "If the founding father of Zimbabwe wasn't buried at National Heroes Acre, it would set a very bad precedent and tarnish the image of the head of state."

In public, senior ZANU-PF officials express confidence that Mugabe will be buried at the monument on

Sunday, after a state funeral in a sports stadium a day earlier. In private they say the feud with Mugabe's family could have been handled better. One factor that could help Mnangagwa's delegation, which is led by Vice President Kembo Mohadi, is that Mugabe's family is divided over where the former president should be laid to rest.

Leo Mugabe, Mugabe's nephew, is leading a group of relatives who want the former president to be buried in his home village of Kutama, some 85 km from Harare, two relatives who have attended planning meetings for Mugabe's burial said. That group is also backed by some members of the faction within ZANU-PF that is closely aligned with Mugabe's wife Grace and wants to get back at Mnangagwa.

Other family members, including Mike Binha, who is from Grace's side of the family, think it would be best to mend ties with Mnangagwa by burying Mugabe at National Heroes Acre, the relatives said. Yesterday, a tour guide at the monument said he was sure Mugabe would be buried there. A place has been left next to his first wife Sally's grave within the grandiose structure, which North Korean architects helped design soon after independence.

### Divided land

Mugabe left behind an economy wrecked by hyperinflation, dollarization and deeply entrenched corruption, and a raging political rivalry between the country's two largest political parties, ZANU-PF and the opposition MDC. But many Zimbabweans also remember Mugabe as their country's liberator from white minority rule and for broadening people's access to education and land. Mnangagwa, Mugabe's former deputy whose power base mainly lies in the military and security sectors, has tried to associate himself with the successes of the Mugabe era and distance himself from his ruinous economic legacy. —Reuters

## In Zimbabwe, hospitals battle Mugabe legacy

For Zimbabwe's doctors, few institutions reflect their country's decay under Robert Mugabe than their public hospitals, once vaunted but now under-equipped and crumbling. Latex gloves serve as urine bags, operating rooms lack light bulbs and patients are often required to refuel their own ambulances, medics say. Mugabe, who died last week in Singapore at age 95, may have swept to power as a liberation hero, but his rule was marked by economic collapse that left his people scrambling to survive.

Zimbabwean doctors note the symbolism of Mugabe seeking treatment 8,000 km from home in Singapore's gleaming Gleneagles clinic, where the cheapest suite costs around US\$850 a day. "It is very symbolic that the former president who presided over all the system for three decades can't trust the health system," said Edgar Munatsi, a doctor at Chitungwiza, 30 km from the capital Harare. "It says a lot about the current state of our health system."

Mugabe's death has left many debating the legacy of a man who ended white minority rule and was initially lauded for advances in public health and education. In his nearly four-decade rule, Mugabe later brutally repressed opponents and oversaw a catastrophic mismanagement of economy that led to hyperinflation, food shortages and misery. Mugabe was not alone in seeking overseas care. Current Vice President Constantino Chiwenga is away for several weeks of treatment in China.

It is not hard to see why. In Chitungwiza hospital, a glowing sign promising "Quality Health" welcomes patients, but conditions inside say otherwise: Operations are often cancelled for lack of anaesthetic. Munatsi says. The hospital recently issued an internal memo warning its poorly-paid staff against "eating food made for patients."

### Two-decade crisis

The situation is equally dramatic in pediatrics at Harare Central Hospital, one of Zimbabwe's top clinics. Cleaning is done only twice a week, for lack of staff and detergents, doctors told AFP. The operations are often postponed for lack of running water and nursing staff, in a country mired for two decades in economic crisis. "In theatre, we have linen full of blood and feces and you

can't do the laundry," said one doctor. He requested anonymity, like many of his colleagues, for fear of reprisals from President Emmerson Mnangagwa's government.

Only one of three pediatric operating rooms at the central hospital is working. "We have a four-year waiting list for inguinal hernias, the most common condition in children," says one of the specialists. Without treatment, this hernia can cause male infertility. Drug shortages, obsolete equipment and lack of staff: the mix is sometimes deadly. "It is heart-breaking when you lose patients who are not supposed to die under normal circumstances," Munatsi said.

### 'Pathetic'

Since the early 1990s, the public health system has steadily deteriorated, whereas before, people came from overseas to be treated in Zimbabwe, recalls one senior doctor. That is a legacy of the Mugabe years as the country was tipped into endless economic crisis - three-digit inflation, currency devaluations, and shortages of commodities. In hospitals, patients and loved ones who experience the situation daily, are resigned. "It's pathetic," says Saratiel Marandani, a 49-year-old street vendor who had to buy a dressing for his mother. Given her age, she should receive free healthcare. But the reality is starkly different. "Only the consultations are free (...) if you need paracetamol, you need to buy it yourself." His mother will have to do without the ultrasound she needs. At 1,000 Zimbabwean dollars or 100 euros, it's beyond his reach.

Doctors say they sometimes have to pay out of their own pocket for patients' medication, or even just their bus ticket home. At Parirenyatwa Hospital in Harare, Lindiwe Banda lays prostrate on her bed. A diabetic, she was given the green light to go home. But on condition she paid her bill. "But I do not even have five Zimbabwean dollars (less than one euro) to pay for the transport," she said in tears. "I can't reach my relatives. I think they have dumped me. They don't have money, but they should show some love."

If hospitals and patients are penniless, doctors too cannot escape Zimbabwe's ruin. Medics have just begun their latest protest to demand a pay rise after salaries lost 15 times their value in a few months and consumer prices spiralled out of control. "We are incapacitated," says Peter Magombeyi, a doctor whose salary is the equivalent of \$115 a month - a pittance that requires him to do odd jobs to get by. "We are very aware" of the problems, says Prosper Chonzi, the director of health services in Harare. "The health system reflects the economy of the country." —AFP

