

# *Journal of Right-Wing Studies*

## **Special Issue: Psychoanalytic Social Psychological Perspectives on Contemporary Authoritarianism**

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### **Call for Papers**

We are currently witnessing the proliferation of far-right parties and authoritarian regimes all over the world. In Europe, such parties have gained footing in the parliaments of most national governments. The US has become a persistent example of the wide appeal of an authoritarian leader and movement. One of the key tasks for scholars working on the far right is to understand the success of authoritarian movements.

From a progressive standpoint, electoral behavior that gives rise to parties of the far right seems hard to comprehend. The (re-)vitalization of power structures demands a focus on affective and psychosocial dynamics: What constitutes the affective attraction of the far right? What draws subjects to authoritarian movements and leaders?

While authoritarianism must be analyzed through its political, economic, cultural, and historical preconditions, its psychosocial aspects need to be considered as well. The social sciences have much to gain from a psychoanalytic approach that helps us understand subjects' internalized conflictual relation to society and analyze how these mostly unconscious and latent dynamics influence social phenomena. In this special issue of the *Journal of Right-Wing Studies*, we want to focus on psychoanalytically based social psychological approaches to understanding authoritarianism. How can psychoanalysis help theorize contemporary societies and the psychosocial preconditions that lead some to become part of the far right and/or subject to authoritarian leadership?

These questions have a long tradition. While early Marxist scholars and movements had expected a proletarian revolution to be the logical reaction to the capitalist mode of production, these very masses joined nationalist forces in the First World War. In the wake of twentieth-century fascism, scholars focused on why people were drawn to such movements and what made something as horrendous as the Shoah possible. The Frankfurt School demonstrated the necessity of using psychoanalytic methods and insights, and this approach has since been further developed and adapted to include changing social developments in various regions of the world.

With this special issue, we want to continue a psychoanalytically inspired debate about authoritarianism. Based in Berlin and Vienna, we are involved in psychoanalytic social research on authoritarianism, and we are interested in discussing with an English-speaking audience how to use psychoanalytic theory and practice in regard to authoritarianism. We invite contributions in English analyzing contemporary authoritarian phenomena from a psychoanalytic perspective. We are especially interested in research addressing the questions listed below. But suggestions for psychoanalytically inspired writings that go beyond these are welcome too.

- From a psychoanalytic social psychological perspective, what parallels and differences are found when comparing different historical and social contexts in terms of authoritarianism?
- What psychoanalytically inspired theories developed against the background of a different historical moment can be helpful to understand contemporary authoritarianism? What modifications are necessary?
- How are power structures (based, for example, on race and gender) intertwined on a psychosocial level with regard to authoritarianism? What role does capitalist class structure play for authoritarianism?
- What is the psychosocial appeal of contemporary antisemitism, especially in its anti-Zionist form? How can we psychoanalytically understand contemporary antisemitism as an authoritarian dynamic also within the left (without playing into the right's efforts to instrumentalize charges against the left)?
- How does the threat and reality of ecological destruction influence psychosocial and therefore political dynamics (e.g., climate change denial)?
- Which authoritarian tendencies are there within the broad field of psychoanalysis?
- What conclusions can we draw from our psychoanalytic social psychological findings for political action? How can we address and prevent authoritarian dynamics? What psychoanalytic pedagogical concepts exist? When is governmental suppression, for instance of antisemitism and racism, necessary?
- Which parallels and particularities are there when psychoanalytically studying authoritarianism in different parts of the world? Can we adapt methods developed in different social contexts—and if so, how?
- How can we methodically reflect on our own entanglements with authoritarianism and use them for a productive understanding of our research object?
- What methodological and ethical challenges do scholars face when researching authoritarianism and the far right from a psychoanalytic social psychological perspective?

According to Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, understanding one's own unconscious enables change. One aim of psychoanalytic social psychology, therefore, is to enable change on a social scale. To do that, we ask the authors of this special issue to write in an easily accessible style. In addition to research articles, we also encourage the submission of essays, book reviews, and even interviews. For submission guidelines, please see the journal's website: <https://escholarship.org/uc/jrws/submissionGuidelines>.

Please send a 500-word abstract about your proposed contribution and a short CV to [jrwsspecialissue@gmail.com](mailto:jrwsspecialissue@gmail.com) by **July 15, 2026**. We ask the authors of the selected proposals to submit the full drafts by **January 15, 2027**.

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact the guest editors:

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