SOCIAL AND IDEOLOGICAL PRECONDITIONS FOR THE FORMATION OF EUROPEAN NATIONALISM AMID THE RADICALIZATION OF POLITICAL PROCESSES IN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES IN THE EARLY 21ST CENTURY

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Abstract

This article explores the rise of sovereignism in European countries amid the radicalization of political discourse and the ongoing crisis of the European integration project, which has struggled to address the socio-economic and political challenges facing European societies. The research highlights a notable shift in electoral preferences toward nationalist parties, which continue to gain political legitimacy and expand their influence within both national and supranational institutions. The study investigates the underlying causes of the growing ideological confrontation between liberal-integrationist and nationalist forces, the latter of which now represent a significant and organized political presence in Europe. Key characteristics of contemporary nationalist ideology are identified and analyzed. Sovereignism is conceptualized as a socially constructed phenomenon, rooted in evolving national self-awareness and symbolic narratives shaped by historical and political contexts. While the expression of nationalist sentiment varies across regions, its radicalization can contribute to destabilizing political dynamics. In response, European policymakers and scholars are actively seeking strategies to mitigate the rise of polarizing nationalist rhetoric. The author argues that the political legacy of Gaullism offers a potential framework for reconciling national sovereignty with European cooperation and for fostering a more balanced and inclusive political trajectory for the continent.

Keywords: *nationalism, ideology, radicalization, party, electorate, integration, conservatism, Euroscepticism, Gaullism*

1. Introduction

Relevance and Research Objectives. At the turn of the 21st century the transformation of global civilization into a single structural-functional system set a new pace and quality of human existence. This period, marked by the acceleration of transnational integration and technological universalization, initially appeared to mitigate historical challenges such as armed conflicts and resource scarcity.Transnational corporations, the universalization of technologies, the development of scientific and information spaces, the dominance of the internet, and the rise of digital communications made the process of civilization more dynamic. However, humanity has not resolved the problems of the past and is now facing new challenges. Previously dormant issues have resurfaced, posing unpredictable threats that require fundamentally new approaches to counter them.

One such threat is sovereignism or nationalism, a complex phenomenon of a socio-political nature, based on the interaction of national self-consciousness with the socio-political, demographic, and economic conditions in a particular region of the world. This phenomenon significantly affects the national worldview, formed through the dichotomy of "us versus them," shaping the level of national unity and electoral preferences, party structure, and political landscape, and determining the developmental trajectories of nations and states.

In this article, "sovereignism" or "nationalism" in Europe refers to the political ideology and movements within EU Member States that prioritize national sovereignty, cultural identity, and resistance to supranational integration, as opposed to a pan-European nationalist ideology.

Currently, nationalist forces are dominant political actors in many parts of the world, but their influence is most prominent on the European continent, challenging the integrative efforts of European states and questioning the very existence of the European Union as it has developed over the past thirty years. Unlike various reactionary and extremist forces of the far-right political spectrum, European nationalist forces have legitimate political structures in the form of political parties, a coherent and consistent ideology, and a substantial electoral base that allows them to hold positions in the legislative bodies of European states and the European Union.

This situation has specific socio-political preconditions that create favorable conditions for the formation of nationalist movements within Member States amid the radicalization of the political landscape in European countries. At present, the study of the problems of nationalism Europe is particularly relevant for several reasons: first, the growing influence of nationalist parties on European politics reflects changes in citizens' political preferences, prompting a reevaluation of the prospects of European integration, and even the very necessity of this integration; second, the rising political influence of nationalist parties affects on the domestic and foreign policies of European states and the European Union, which will inevitably have a decisive impact on the global political landscape in the coming decade; third, the

theoretical and practical implications of the problems and opportunities posed by nationalist ideology are becoming increasingly recognized in European countries, as it is difficult to form a unified opinion on what is most critical for Europe's political development, liberal-globalization projects or conservative-nationalist approaches; fourth, finding ways to reduce tensions and radicalization in European politics is essential to prevent further destabilization of the European integration project, as the political conflict in Europe poses a risk of exacerbating the political and economic situation worldwide.

The search for answers to these questions defines the scope of this article, whose goal is to examine the social and ideological preconditions for the formation of sovereignist movements amid the radicalization of political processes in European countries in the early 21st century.

2. Materials and methods

The materials for this study include statistical data characterizing the electoral growth of nationalist parties in European countries. The research methodology applied in this article includes general scientific methods: a retrospective analysis of political processes shaping the development of nationalist ideology in European countries and its impact on current political situations. The author also identifies the causes for the rise of nationalist sentiment in European countries amid the present political and socio-economic circumstances. Additionally, the study employs specific methods such as the analysis of statistical data, political concept analysis, and the structuring of politico-ideological phenomena and processes.

3. Literature review

In a historical context, nationalism emerged in the 17th century, after the end of the Thirty Years' War and the signing of the Peace of Westphalia (1648), which marked the beginning of the formation of nation-states within clearly defined borders, reshaping Europe's geopolitical landscape by institutionalizing national identity and sovereignty. The term "nationalism" was first introduced into scholarly discourse by Johann Gottfried Herder in the mid-18th century, who examined issues related to the development of national states (Herders, 1785).

Subsequently, scholars such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1782), Ernest Renan (1882), and Max Weber (1923) studied nationalism in the context of the historical development of statehood in Germany and France, as well as the process of uniting diverse peoples into singular national entities. In the mid-20th century, the historical context became secondary, and the problem of nationalism was analyzed through its origins, particularly focusing on the role of national education systems in fostering nationalist consciousness (Hayes, 1941), the ideological foundations of nationalism, and the regional differences in its development, as in Western and Eastern nationalism. Researchers also studied the penetration of nationalist ideas into mass consciousness through

media and communication channels capable of influencing national identity formation (Deutsch, 1966).

From the 1960s to the 1970s, the focus shifted to the political analysis of nationalism, particularly its role in shaping the modern state and its ideologies. Scholars such as Hannah Arendt (1973), Michael Mann (1993), G. Poggi (1978), and Charles Tilly (1975) examined the development of nationalist ideology in connection with the need for state control over political processes, the relationship between nationalism and separatism, the role of ethnic minorities in forming nationalist ideologies, and the interaction between nationalism and totalitarianism.

During this time, scholarly engagement with nationalism deepened significantly. Many researchers came to view nationalism as a historically conditioned, multifaceted phenomenon grounded in national self-consciousness and shaped by symbolic, cultural, and political narratives. Its manifestations, however, vary depending on factors affecting the national-ethnic political, social, and economic situation within a state (Anderson, 1983; Gellner, 1983; Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983).

A significant contribution to the understanding of nationalism was made by Anthony D. Smith (1998), who, in his work *Nationalism and Modernism: A Critical Survey of Recent Theories of Nations and Nationalism*, conceptualized nationalism as a revolutionary movement spurred by modernist tendencies in societal development.

At this stage, the methodological aspect of studying nationalism also actively developed, relying on data from statistics, sociology, psychology, and ethnography. Today, research on issues related to nationalism continues to grow in connection with the rise of nationalist manifestations in European countries, the growing popularity of nationalist ideology, and the strengthening of nationalist parties on the European continent. Therefore, studying the problems of nationalism using new scientific data presented in the works of researchers such as Anderson, 1983; Bastasin, 2019; Bento, 2022; Deutsch, 1966; Eriksen, 2010; Garner, 2022; Gellner, 1983; Smith, 1998; Tilly, 1975 is highly relevant.

4. Conceptual approaches to the phenomenon of "Nationalism" and the content of nationalist ideology

The problems of national unity and the possibilities for achieving it have been at the center of scientific interest for the past two hundred years. Numerous international and interethnic conflicts, which often lead to the disintegration of states, are the result of the exacerbation of interethnic relations, connected to nationalist manifestations that were not addressed in time by political leadership (Gingrich & Banks, 2006; Krastev & Leonard, 2024; Pierini, 2018; Tikhomirova, n.d.).

In the academic and encyclopedic discourse, nationalism is defined as a political ideology and practice based on the idea of the nation and its interests as the highest values. Depending on the understanding of what constitutes a

nation, nationalism takes on two main forms—civic (or state) and ethnic nationalism. Civic nationalism arose during the bourgeois revolutions and the establishment of modern states, based on the concept of the nation and the people as a citizenry with a common self-consciousness and historical-cultural heritage. This form of nationalism aims to legitimize the state by consolidating the civic nation, though it often includes elements of discrimination and assimilation of minorities, as well as tendencies toward state expansion (messianism) or, conversely, isolationism. This type of nationalism is widely used by states through official symbols and ideological institutions, such as education, social sciences, media, to promote civic loyalty or "service and love for the homeland", "respect for the country and the past", and spread common state legal norms and moral-cultural values.

The extent of the spread of civic nationalism in different countries depends on multiple factors, including demographic composition, historical legacies, political institutions, and the international status of the state. This diversity allows us to understand nationalism not as monolitic phenomenon, but as a heterogeneous and evolving ideological construct that manifests differently across political contexts.

Anthony D. Smith (1998), one of the most prominent theorists of nationalism, interpreted nationalism as a defining element of "classical modernism", emphasizing that nations are products of modernity and emerge through processes of cultural and political transformation. This perspective remains relevant, as modern nationalism in Europe, though often conservative or traditionalist in tone, nonetheless employs transformative strategies to reshape trajectory of the European civilizational project.

However, in current political discourse, the term "nationalism" often carries a negative connotation, frequently associated with exclusion, ethnocentrism, or conflict. This perception reduces nationalism to a synonym for radical or reactionary politics, overlooking its more complex and multifaceted dimensions. For example, Vladimir Lenin once asserted that nationalists and the right-wing shared the same ideological space: "the distinction between them [nationalists] and the right is negligible: in essence, they are not two, but one party"[1] (Lenin, 1980, p. 280). Such interpretations, while historically grounded, risk oversimplifying the ideological spectrum of nationalist thought.

The foundational studies of Anderson (1983), Gellner (1983), Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983), Gingrich and Banks (2006), and Smith (1998) demonstrate that nationalism is best understood as a form of collective political consciousness—a doctrine, ideology, and movement that is socially constructed and historically contingent. The cultural and political narratives that shape nationalist movements arise from the interplay of memory, tradition, institutional structures, and collective identity. We acknowledge that contemporary nationalist agendas may include radical elements; however, these movements are fundamentally distinct from extremist ideologies such as

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[1] All translations from Russian to English are by the author unless otherwise indicated.

fascism and Nazism. Whereas the latter are grounded in imperialism, repression, and racial supremacy, nationalism, when oriented around civic values, aims to protect cultural autonomy and political sovereignty. In its democratic forms, nationalism respects the languages, customs, and traditions of others while advocating for the preservation and recognition of its own. Ultimately, nationalism can function as a form of political expression grounded in shared historical experience and identity, shaped by the socio-political conditions in which it arises.

As for nationalist political parties, they share common features, including:

1. Political orientation towards the principle of the nation's right to self-determination. According to nationalist ideology, all nations have the right to form their own state, which should unite the people based on the provision of citizenship (Sidjanski, 1992). For each territorial-administrative unit, political boundaries should coincide with cultural-ethnic ones. Thus, the nation possesses supreme sovereign power over a clearly defined territory, within which a relatively homogeneous population resides.

2. Postulate of the nation's primacy in the state-building process. The nation is the source of political power. The only legitimate type of government is national self-government. Every citizen who identifies as a member of a particular nation has the right to participate directly in the political process. Therefore, nationalism symbolically equates the indigenous population with the national elite.

3. Orientation towards the formation of national self-identification. Nationalism stems from the necessity of cultural-linguistic unity among the population residing within a single administrative-territorial unit, fostering unity and forming the basis for national self-identification through the principle of "us – them." As a result, a clear perception is formed that every member of an ethnic group belongs to a certain nation, which differs from others (Gat, 2012).

4. Creation of conditions for the solidarity of the people. National cohesion is achieved through the unification of people around the common idea of national development. It is crucial that members of the nation feel they are part of a socio-political group striving toward a specific goal (Eriksen, 2010).

5. The assertion of the idea that the nation is the highest value. Loyalty to the national state is above individual or other group interests. The task of citizens is to uphold the legitimacy of their state. Strengthening the national state is the primary condition for universal freedom and harmony.

6. Populism and radicalism. The radicalism of nationalist parties is linked to their "revolutionary" nature, as noted by Anthony D. Smith. Nationalism always appeals to an electorate that feels vulnerable, whether socially, politically, or nationally. The populist, simple program of nationalist parties is close and understandable to such voters (Garner, 2022).

The last feature, populism, is now a hallmark of diverse political movements across the ideological spectrum (Hawlins et al., 2019). However, nationalist parties tend to gain political recognition primarily within democratic

regimes, where pluralism allows for the competition of diverse identity-based platforms. In contrast, in countries with authoritarian forms of government, nationalist movements, especially those that promote ethnic, regional, or religious identities outside the official state narrative, are frequently suppressed. This repression typically occurs when such movements are perceived as a threat to regime stability or contradict the dominant ideological framework (V-Dem Institute, 2023; Levitsky & Way, 2010).

Thus, in our view, nationalism is a historically and socially constructed form of collective identity, expressed through nationally oriented ideologies, political and organizational structures (such as nationalist parties and movements), and forms of political mobilization shaped by the specific historical, cultural, and socio-political contexts of a nation's development.

At the same time, the rise of nationalist ideas and parties in contemporary European politics reflects a complex set of preconditions. Rather than a simple resurgence of radicalism, this trend is rooted in a deeper tension between two competing political projects: the national-conservative and the liberal-globalist. These projects mirror broader global dynamics. On one side, some countries pursue deeper integration into transnational frameworks aligned with the Global North. On the other, there is a growing aspiration among certain societies to preserve socio-economic stability and cultural autonomy within the framework of sovereign nation-states (Inglehart, & Norris, 2016). This ideological divergence contributes to the polarization of political life and the radicalization of public discourse in many European democracies (Judis, 2018).

At the same time, it is necessary to recognize that nationalism in Europe, being an objective political and ideological phenomenon, is a construct that openly opposes the ideas of globalization. It forms the foundation for "Euroscepticism" and challenges many of the principles and approaches that drive European integration. Historically, however, the political foundations of nationalism in Europe in the 20th century did not emerge from a shared vision of unity. Following World War I, Europe experienced a surge in national self-determination, the collapse of multiethnic empires, and a reassertion of state sovereignty. The dominant political atmosphere was one of fragmentation rather than convergence.

Amid this landscape, the vision of a united Europe was articulated by a small group of intellectuals, most notably Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi (1894–1972). In his manifesto Pan-Europa, Coudenhove-Kalergi proposed a comprehensive economic, political, and cultural integration of European states. Such integration was aimed at maintaining the geopolitical influence of Europe in the face of the emerging dominance of the Soviet Union and the United States, both of which sought to bring European geopolitics into their respective spheres of influence. His proposal emphasized spiritual and cultural unity over ethnic or racial divisions, asserting that the creation of a "European nation" would allow Germans, French, Poles, and Italians alike to identify as Europeans without erasing their national identities (Coudenhove-Kalergi, 2019, p. 51).

This idealistic project, however, was far from mainstream. It lacked broad political support in the interwar period and was largely overshadowed by

nationalist rivalries, economic crises, and the eventual drift toward World War II. While Coudenhove-Kalergi envisioned a federated Europe modeled on the United States or the Soviet Union, his ideas would only begin to influence European integration much later, after the devastation of World War II made clear the costs of division and conflict. It was then, through the joint efforts of France and Germany, that the foundations of a new European order began to emerge, not as a "sixth project of the European nation," but as a pragmatic response to the continent's urgent need for peace and stability (Sidjanski, 1992).

The subsequent course of European history demonstrated the practical feasibility of creating a united Europe. Deep integrative processes in post-war Europe led to the creation of the European Union in 1993. However, it cannot be said that the creation of a united Europe was unanimously accepted as an absolute good by all representatives of European politics or citizens of European states. For instance, Charles de Gaulle had a somewhat different view on the development of post-war Europe. His political interest was focused primarily on France, which he considered exclusively as a national state, part of Europe. The model of the "national state" became the basis for the formation of the concept of "Gaullism".

In almost all of his public statements regarding the European question, de Gaulle emphasized his disbelief in the feasibility and desirability of a supranational union capable of erasing the differences that define the diversity of European nations and peoples. Those who advocated for such a model of unification were called "myth-makers" by de Gaulle, as he defended his own worldview, characterized by a synthesis of conservative nationalist and Bonapartist ideas (Cautrès, Chopin, & Rivière, 2020; Ratushnyak & Gusev, 2019).

The most vivid expression of his ideas on preserving national identity in European countries can be found in de Gaulle's address to the Romanian parliament in May 1968: "We believe that sovereign nations are the foundation of the future configuration of the European geopolitical space" (Institut national de l'audiovisuel (INA), 1968).

It is also interesting to note that de Gaulle's political position, which rejected, for example, the possibility of France's participation in NATO, did not exclude cooperation with the Soviet Union. Despite the fact that communist ideas found no resonance in de Gaulle's political thinking, his relationship with the Soviet Union was pragmatic. He viewed the Soviet Union as "eternal Russia," relations with which should be considered one of France's national priorities.

Against the backdrop of ideas of European integration, globalism, and the post-industrial society articulated in the works of Daniel Bell, Alvin Toffler, Jean Baudrillard, and Jean-François Lyotard, the voices of the then "Eurosceptics" were not particularly convincing, while the prospects of European integration were so enticing that, until the 1980s, nationalist ideas were considered a marginal political phenomenon. Right-wing radicalism in the

European political process was stigmatized as a fringe occurrence, lacking significant electoral prospects.

The promise of a new "civilizational project", which was to become the basis of new European thinking and identity, captivated the political and public consciousness of Europeans. As a result, the integrationist ideas were incarnated, culminating in the creation of the European Union, which, at first, indeed met the expectations of most Europeans. At the time of the Union's creation, European liberals, conservatives, social democrats, and communists could express their views on the future of a united Europe. Despite existing differences, European politicians recognized that nationalism posed an existential threat to the realization of the European project (Timbro Authoritarian Populism Index (TAP), n.d.).

At the same time, awareness of the "nationalist threat" mostly existed at the expert level, while the political establishment and the broader public did not feel the significant presence of nationalist ideology in the political space of European countries.

The direct rise in nationalist electoral preferences began in the 1990s, coinciding with the expansion of the European Union through the inclusion of countries from Central and Eastern Europe.

5. The dynamics and causes of growing nationalist tendencies in European countries

The assessment of the European Union's expansion through the inclusion of peripheral European countries and economies by the core EU countries of Belgium, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and France was mixed. Many Europeans were highly skeptical about the prospects of creating a new Europe based on the principles of globalism.

The arguments that geopolitical stabilization and economic revival of European border regions would ease nationalistic conflicts and make illegal immigration more manageable, and that expansion would enhance the EU's influence as a global geopolitical player, increasing its standing in the eyes of the United States, Russia, and Asia, were not viewed by the electorate as sufficient reasons for opening borders and involving underdeveloped economies in the formation and distribution of the pan-European budget. Opponents of EU expansion directly appealed to nationalist concerns, demanding, for example, the resolution of issues regarding ethnic Germans expelled after World War II from territories now occupied by post-Soviet states. Specifically, Bavarian Prime Ministers Max Streibl and Edmund Stoiber insisted on addressing the issue of Sudeten Germans within the context of the future enlargement of EU territory.

Thus, the EU expansion in the 1990s marked the starting point for the rise in electoral popularity of nationalist parties in Europe. Subsequently, the practical implementation of multiculturalism concepts became a contentious

issue for many Europeans, leading to concerns of "dilution of cultural identity," the Islamization of Europe, increasing crime rates, drug trafficking, and the degradation of European values.

Additionally, the rise of nationalism in Europe at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century was facilitated by economic crises, persistent social inequality, demographic changes, and concerns about terrorism, the loss of national status at the group level, the degradation of traditional values, and inequalities in access to material resources. In this context, voices grew louder, asserting that "at this historical stage, the strength of nationalism is also due to the fact that the nation-state seems to be the only available effective structure of governance. At the same time, its weakness lies in the fact that this very nation-state is clearly incapable of addressing the challenges of modernity. Ironically, people are willing to overlook this weakness out of disappointment with the EU's inability to solve their pressing problems" (Karagiannis, n.d.).

Moreover, the realization is becoming more deeply ingrained in the minds of Europeans that "the current strength of right-wing nationalism in Europe is undoubtedly linked to the deep crisis of the European project. For more than ten years, many have come to believe that Europe is unable to successfully address the acute problems its citizens face. Many view the restoration of the nation-state as a way to regain control over their lives" (Karagiannis, n.d.).

Similar sentiments can be observed in European countries outside the EU, though they face the same problems that "spill over" from EU countries into those united with the Union by a common European destiny.

If we objectively assess the electoral dynamics of nationalist parties in Europe, it becomes clear that from 1946 until the early 1990s, nationalist ideology held limited appeal, and support for such parties remained low. Data from the Timbro Authoritarian Populism Index (TAP) (2024) confirms that in post-war Europe, nationalist ideas had minimal influence on the electoral landscape. The substantial rise in support for nationalist parties occurred in the 1980s and coincided with the expansion of the European Union in 1981 and 1986 through the admission of new members and the signing of the Schengen Agreement in 1985, which removed visa formalities and stimulated the migration of Europeans to countries with higher levels of socio-economic development.

Further growth in nationalist sentiment in European countries is linked to the fourth, fifth, and sixth EU enlargements (1995, 2004, 2013), the overall crisis of globalization, and the exacerbation of migration and socio-economic problems in Europe. As a result, nationalist parties gained significant electoral support, becoming a powerful political force in European politics. An analysis of the data presented in Table 1 and Table 2 demonstrates the results of the European Parliament elections in 2014, 2019, and 2024, confirming this fact.

Table 1. Distribution of Members of the European Parliament by Faction in 2014 and 2019

No	Faction	**Number of MEPs in 2014 (% of total)**	Number of MEPs in 2019 (% of total)
1	European People's Party (EPP)	216 (28.7%)	182 (24.23%)
2	Progressive Alliance of Socialists & Democrats (S&D)	187 (24.9%)	154 (20.51%)
3	Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE)	69 (9.2%)	108 (14.38%)
4	Greens/European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA)	52 (6.9%)	74 (9.85%)
5	Identity and Democracy (ID) (before 2019 – Europe of Nations and Freedom)	36 (4.8%)	73 (9.72%)
6	European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR)	77 (10.25%)	62 (8.26%)
7	European United Left–Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL)	52 (6.9%)	41 (5.46%)
8	Non-attached members	20 (2.65%)	57 (7.59%)

Source: European Parliament (2019).

European statistics confirm the significant electoral progress of nationalist parties, a result of the challenges faced by the populations of EU member states and other European countries.

Following the results of the 2014 and 2019 European Parliament elections, the European Parliament saw the formation of a far-right faction, Identity and Democracy, whose members, including Alternative for Germany, Austria's Freedom Party, and France's National Rally. shared nationalist ideas.

More moderate views were expressed by members of the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR), a moderate right-center Eurosceptic faction that included Poland's Law and Justice, Poland Comes First, Brothers of Italy, Romania's New Republic, and the UK's Conservative Party. In 2014, these two factions held 13.6% of the seats in the European Parliament, increasing to 18.0% in 2019.

Overall, the 2019 European Parliament election results indicated significant growth in the electoral support of nationalist forces in Europe. This rise alarmed political experts, who argued that nationalist ideas are destructive for European integration and will negatively affect Europe's political landscape until the cause of the rise of sovereignist movements within Member States is acknowledged and addressed. To address this, European politicians must create a political foundation for a new, powerful, and comprehensive revival of support for European integration, recognizing the need for social and political change (Bastasin, 2019; Kvashnin, Kudriavtsev, Plevako, & Shveitser, 2019).

Following the most recent elections, the far-right parties based on nationalist ideologies formed factions such as "European Conservatives and Reformists" and "Identity and Democracy", collectively holding 18.0% of the

seats in the European Parliament, not even considering the moderate right-wing parties (see Table 2).

Table 2. Distribution of Members of the European Parliament by Faction in 2024

Faction	Parties in the Faction	Ideology	Number of Seats in the EP	% of Seats in the EP
European People's Party (EPP)	European People's Party	Christian democracy	176	24.96%
Progressive Alliance of Socialists & Democrats (S&D)	Party of European Socialists	Social democracy	139	19.72%
Renew Europe (RE)	Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe; Renaissance; other parties and individuals in the liberal group	Liberalism	102	14.47%
Greens/European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA)	European Green Party; European Free Alliance; other parties and individuals in the green group	Environmentalism	72	10.21%
European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR)	European Conservatives and Reformists Party; other national conservative parties and	National conservatism	69	9.79%

	individuals in the conservative group			
Identity and Democracy (ID)	Party of Identity and Democracy	National conservatism	58	8.22%
The Left (GUE/NGL)	Party of the European Left	Socialism	37	5.25%
Non-attached Members (NI)	Various	-	52	7.38%
Total as of May 2024	-	-	**705**	**100.00 %**

Source: European Parliament (2024).

The rise of the nationalist sentiment in Europe is also reflected in the impressive results achieved by far-right nationalist parties in recent national elections. For instance, in France in 2024, the far-right conservative nationalist party *National Rally* (formerly *National Front*) became the third-largest party in the French parliament. Additionally, the far-right *Alternative for Germany* (AfD) achieved historic victories in the regional parliaments of Saxony and Thuringia, while the far-right made significant gains in the Swedish elections of 2022, with the *Sweden Democrats* gaining a substantial foothold in national politics. In Hungary, the far-right nationalist party *Jobbik* achieved the third-highest number of seats in the 2022 parliamentary elections. The *People's Party*, which adheres to positions of Spanish nationalism, won the 2023 parliamentary elections in Spain, while the *New Flemish Alliance* of Belgium, a conservative nationalist party, saw significant success in the 2024 elections. There has also been a notable surge in nationalist sentiments in the United Kingdom.

The popularity of nationalist ideology in European countries is largely explained by the fact that these parties offer simple answers to complex questions. Modern nationalist rhetoric is straightforward and attractive: closing borders, deporting foreigners, and creating conditions for economic and social equality among the indigenous population of European countries (Bastasin, 2019).

Such populist ideas provide fertile ground for nationalist parties to continue increasing their political influence, especially if the European political establishment fails to find effective solutions to the challenges posed by nationalism in Europe.

At the same time, this rhetoric aligns well with the political worldview of the average European citizen, who does not necessarily perceive nationalism as a threat to their existence. On the contrary, many see nationalist political

forces as capable of channeling liberal ideas of social justice, equal opportunities, and protection of the vulnerable into practical policies.

6. Political prerequisites for solving the nationalism issue in modern European countries

Today, the political situation in modern Europe is characterized by the radicalization of political life, driven by the conflict of proponents of neoliberalism, who continue to promote the globalization agenda based on economic dominance, multiculturalism, supranational governance, and a left-liberal interpretation of human rights with political forces advocating national conservatism, traditional values, and the nation-state as the foundation for citizen-oriented governance. In such a state, the citizen is regarded as the foundational element of the entire structure of a nationally oriented state (van Apeldoorn, Drahokoupil, & Horn, 2009).

Resolving these contradictions within the existing model of European development is almost impossible, given the presence of supranational governance bodies, open borders, religious diversity (which overwhelms Christian morality), and the absence of a political will to resolve acute international problems fairly, while taking into account the interests of all participants in international relations. These contradictions clash with the economic interests of European countries themselves, compounded by the "subordinate position" of Europe in relation to the dominant American "worldview".

In this context, European political experts and politicians are searching for ways to counteract "nationalist expansion" and restore political and inter-ethnic harmony in Europe. In practical terms, a number of recommendations are being proposed to address these issues. These recommendations are summarized in a program article published by the independent analytical center *Friends of Europe* (Bento, 2022).

The analysts at this center propose finding a compromise between two ideological concepts, considering that the European project will only benefit if the debate over "integration vs. nationalism" is shifted from the ethnic and religious spheres to the political one, with a focus on compliance with European laws and principles.

From this position, two recommendations follow. First, proponents of European integration, from EU institutions and national civil society organizations to the media and ordinary citizens, must adjust their stance and attitude towards the political forces and citizens who support nationalist ideas and advocate a nationalist perspective on social, political, and economic development in European states. In this regard, it is necessary to stop portraying nationalists as misguided anti-Europeans and start engaging with them through dialogue, respecting their political views (Bento, 2022).

Second, supporters of integration must recognize that national identity can and should be preserved, even in cases where sovereignty is partially transferred to supranational bodies. This distinction will allow Europhiles to

pursue deeper integration without denying many people their legitimate attachment to their homeland.

Third, an analysis of the "costs and benefits" of European integration conducted by a member state may reveal that integration at a given moment does not align with its national interests. This is not an anti-European position but an expression of sovereignty and a signal that the country is not yet ready to transfer part of its sovereignty to a larger political entity. Therefore, decisions about membership in the European Union should be viewed as sovereign rights, which should be respected as a basis for further development. In the current political and economic environment, the main task of Europhiles should be to demonstrate the undeniable benefits of integration that outweigh the costs associated with it (Bento, 2022).

These recommendations are undoubtedly to be welcomed, as they broadly outline directions for interaction between the currently opposing political forces. However, the above recommendations do not propose a clear strategic initiative capable of practically resolving the problem of nationalism within Member States in a positive political light. Nevertheless, European political history provides examples of times when liberal-integrationist and nationalist agendas coexisted peacefully within a single political system.

Such a political model was created through the efforts of Charles de Gaulle, who, as discussed earlier in this article, developed a political ideology known as "Gaullism." In the current historical context, this ideology, if adopted as a guideline for action by all European political parties and leaders, could promote the consensual development of the European political project.

Let us outline the key ideological positions of Gaullism, which are highly relevant for solving the problem of political dialogue and interaction between European liberal and nationalist forces:

- **Orientation toward the interests of the nation-state**, based on the principles of national sovereignty and the "greatness of the nation", which should reconnect with its historical roots and national traditions. It should strive to restore the "national cultural and historical code" in the consciousness of its citizens. This idea was a central tenet of de Gaulle's political project and helped unite civil society and political parties around the recognition of the nation's "greatness" in its historical path. It appealed both to the right-wing political forces, who cherished the events of the monarchical period, and to the left, who embraced the revolutionary tradition.

- **Commitment to moderate conservatism**, which appealed to the ethical, religious, and cultural foundations of national development, and shaped the historically developed identity narratives of the nation and its public consciousness.

- **The "absolutization of legality",** combined with the possibility of using plebiscitary forms of political advancement. This allowed for changes in various areas of national development based on broad popular support. This approach was particularly relevant in conditions where a significant portion of society demanded political equality and political diversity.

- **Establishment of the "strong presidency" institution**, where the head of state assumes full responsibility for the country's affairs, ensures citizens' rights in various areas of socio-economic life, and bears personal responsibility to the people for the decisions made. At the same time, national stability requires not only the strengthening of presidential power but also expanding and consolidating executive power while limiting the powers of legislative bodies (Ducastel, 2015). Such a political construction is rather controversial in the modern European political landscape, as it closely aligns with an authoritarian model of governance. However, de Gaulle created exactly this system, running the state and economy just as a general commands his army (Ducastel, 2015). At a certain historical stage, this was a quite effective tool for state management. French political scientist François Choisel (2016), a researcher of de Gaulle's political legacy, argues that the term "military model of state power" best reflects the essence of Charles de Gaulle's leadership. It is worth noting that de Gaulle rejected the idea that national sovereignty could be limited. He also disagreed with political and public figures who advocated the creation of a European Confederation, although he did accept the idea of forming an association of European nations that would include sovereign states cooperating for the sake of national development.

- **Support for international peace** and a commitment to universalism, which does not contradict patriotism or nationalism. The acceptance of universalist and nationalist ideas in society contributes equally to the necessary balance of political life (Choisel, 2016);

- In the **socio-economic sphere**, Gaullism was based on the ideas of **social conservatism and dirigisme**, according to which the state is obliged to maintain sufficient economic growth to ensure the rising living standards of citizens (Ducastel, 2015);

- In the area of **international relations**, the state's policy should be characterized by absolute independence and autonomy, with a multi-vector orientation equally directed toward both the West and the East (Rizzo, 2021).

Comparative analysis suggests, the above core ideas of Gaullism represent a political program that has the potential to reduce the tension between liberal and nationalist forces in Europe. It could elevate the European continent to a new level of integration, allowing for the sovereign development and interaction of the countries and peoples that make up the European community.

While Gaullism emerged in post-war France (1945–1969) as a response to decolonization, Cold War bipolarity, and the need for national reconstruction (Choisel, 2016), its principles require careful adaptation to address contemporary geopolitical realities. Three key factors distinguish today's context: (1) the rise of digital globalization, which complicates sovereignty claims (Zuboff, 2019); (2) the EU's institutional entrenchment, making supranationalism harder to bypass (Palacio, 2023); and (3) heightened polarization that risks weaponizing Gaullist-style nationalism.

To guard against authoritarian drift, modern applications of Gaullism would need to incorporate robust checks and balances through constitutional

safeguards such as term limits - exemplified by France's 2008 reforms - combined with strong judicial review of executive actions (Feretti, 2024). Equally crucial would be mechanisms for civil society participation, including regular citizen assemblies modeled after Ireland's successful deliberative democracy experiments (Farrell et al., 2021), which could effectively counterbalance strong presidential systems. At the transnational level, EU oversight mechanisms would need to monitor nationalist policies to prevent democratic backsliding (Scheppele et al., 2020). The feasibility of such adaptations finds support in empirical cases like Portugal's 1976 constitution, which successfully blended Gaullist-style presidentialism with socialist participatory elements to maintain political stability through multiple crises (Lobo, 2001). These examples demonstrate that while a nationalist-liberal synthesis remains possible, its implementation requires carefully designed institutional firewalls to prevent autocratic tendencies.

7. Conclusion

The research conducted allows us to formulate the following conclusions:

1. Nationalism—or more accurately, sovereignism or nationalism within EU Member States— should be understood not as predetermined or universally fixed mental state, but as a historically and socially constructed form of political identity. It is expressed through nationally oriented ideologies, political and organizational structures (such as nationalist parties and movements), and through forms of political mobilization that reflect specific historical, cultural, and socio-political contexts. The degree of expression of nationalist tendencies, however, may vary, depending not only on the nationalist beliefs of peoples but also on the ethnic, socio-economic, cultural, and political situation in which national development occurs. Modern nationalist political platforms are indeed radical, but they differ sharply from the ideology of the most reactionary right-wing forces (Nazism, fascism).

2. The rise of sovereignist political movements in Europe is largely a response to the to the perceived shortcomings of the European integration project. At the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st centuries, unresolved socio-economic issues—such as unemployment, immigration, regional inequality, and democratic deficits—coupled with cultural and security anxieties, created a fertile ground for the growth of nationalist electoral preferences. Nationalist parties gained momentum not because of nostalgia or extremism alone, but because they offered populist, emotionally resonant, and politically clear alternatives to supranational governance.

3. The contradictions within the current model of European integration—especially between liberal-globalist and national-conservative paradigms—continue to deepen. However, European political history offers precedent for ideological coexistence. The example of Charles de Gaulle and his political project of Gaullism illustrates how national sovereignty and European cooperation can be balanced without undermining the legitimacy of

either. In today's context, revisiting this framework may offer a path forward. Gaullism's commitment to state-led development, legal order, national identity, and pragmatic multilateralism provides a potential model for reconciling nationalist aspirations with European unity.

In summary, this paper contends that the future of European political development hinges not on suppressing sovereignist discourse, but on creating conditions where diverse political identities—rooted in national self-determination—can coexist within a shared legal and institutional framework. This requires rejecting outdated essentialist narratives and embracing more nuanced, democratic, and pluralistic interpretations of national identity.

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