

## Forum: Special Political and Decolonization Committee (GA4)

### Issue: Addressing the rise of far-right and populism in Europe and America

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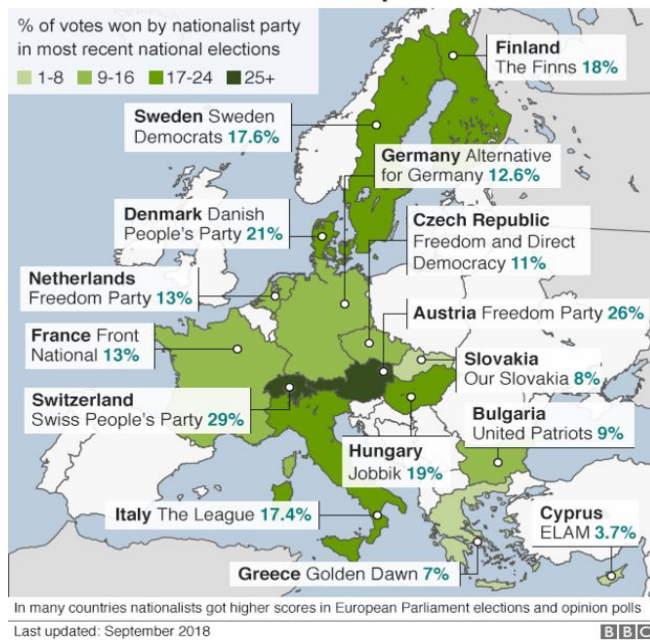
## INTRODUCTION

The rise of far-right populism is not a new phenomenon in the course of European and American politics. Far-right movements, such as the Ku Klux Klan being established in 1865 in the United States of America and the state nationalisms leading nations into two World Wars, are proof of what tremendous effects far-right populism can have.

<sup>1</sup>Although this political movement has always existed, never before did it record victories of such magnitude in Europe and America after World War II. This can be attributed to the financial crisis of 2008 which resulted into inequalities between the classes, displeasure among nations and loss of trust to public institutions, such as the tax authority, which were accused of inability to distribute public wealth effectively. Furthermore, huge refugee waves due to the Syrian Civil War gave rise to prejudice and xenophobia mostly in Europe with far-right populists discriminating against immigrants.

With far-right governments being established all over Europe and America and with

### Rise of nationalism in Europe



This picture depicts the latest percentages of votes in favor of far-right parties in all European countries.

<sup>1</sup> Hedgecoe, Guy. "Spanish Vox Party: Nationalists Vow to 'Make Spain Great Again'." *BBC News*, BBC, 1 Nov. 2018, [www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-46043427](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-46043427).

the United Nations Secretary General, António Guterres, urging member states to collaborate together against the threat of far-right populism, it is important that the international community responds to this risk. World leaders should work together so as to uphold human rights and protect democratic values in accordance with the main principles of the United Nations.

## DEFINITION OF KEY-TERMS

### Populism

Populism is based on the notion of an existing antagonism between the ordinary, pure people and the corrupt elite. Populist leaders claim to be supporting the silenced majority of people whose claims are not heard by the established regime. They claim that the elite is responsible for creating such a regime as it has taken decisions on most major issues without considering the needs of the majority.

### Far-right

Political parties or movements can be described as far-right when their ideology is based on the upholding of old traditional and Christian values. Far-right parties also use minorities in the society as scapegoats claiming that they are responsible for financial crises and high unemployment rates. They characterize them as an external threat that needs to be tackled for the sake of national sovereignty.

### Nationalism

Nationalism is the belief that one's nation is superior and should be prioritized over all others. Far-right parties often internalize nationalistic ideas. They advocate for the state's sovereignty saying that it should be protected from all dangers at any cost. They often make people believe that immigrants and other minorities pose a threat to the state as they carry their own values which are not the same with the state's values and can, by that way, affect the traditional principles of the state.

### Islamification

Islamification is the idea that a state or a region will ultimately lose its primary identity and follow the values of Islam.

### State sovereignty

State sovereignty is the power that a state has when it is able to decide independently on internal matters without foreign factors influencing the outcome. A sovereign state can implement measures independently on matters such as taxation and law enforcement. This means that it does not have to follow the regulations of intergovernmental organizations, such as the EU.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In order for someone to fully understand the threat of far-right populism, one must look at the historical background of this political movement as history tends to repeat itself.

### Nazi Germany

After World War I the severe provisions of the Versailles Treaty with regard to Germany led the country into a deep financial crisis. Following the American crash of 1929 and the political instability in the country, the National-socialist German Workers' Party under the leadership of Adolf Hitler started gaining momentum which signified the despair and displeasure of the German people. On 30th January 1933, Hitler swore in as the new chancellor of Germany.

Under article 48 of the German constitution the National-socialist German Workers' Party could rule by decree which they utilized in order to establish their authoritarian state. The police could prohibit demonstrations as well as supervise telephone communications and the correspondence. Furthermore, many civil servants, such as judiciary officials, were appointed by Hitler's party so as to ensure that all threats to the current regime would be combated adequately.

The ideology of far-right supporters at that time was focused on the high numbers of Jewish population arriving from the Eastern European countries after the establishment of the Soviet Union. National socialists used Jews as scapegoats to justify their defeat in World War I. They claimed that Jews were responsible for the high inflation and unemployment rates as they were trying to live at the expense of the German population.

Scapegoating minorities is a common technique for far-right populists who justify hardships in such a way that the wider community feels that its actions are right and minorities cause the problems. Consequently, people do not feel guilty but actually



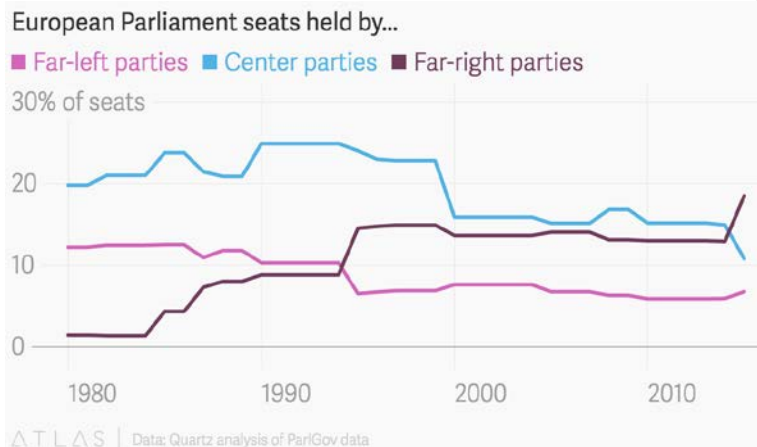
This is a propagandistic poster of Hitler's party with the title "The everlasting Jew". The Jew, having the physical appearance of a poor man, is seen to be a communist only interested in money.

underprivileged, which ultimately generates the popularity of the far-right. This is what Hitler actually did and far-right parties nowadays still do.

### Current situation of far-right populist movements in Europe and America

Although far-right populist parties existed in the 1990s, such a success in the parliamentary representation of far-right populist parties has not occurred since the end of the Second World War. The roots of such a phenomenon can be traced back to the existing inequalities originated from the Great Recession of 2008, the Syrian refugee crisis and the poor management of the refugee waves as well as political uncertainty.

Financial crises, bailout situations, mostly in Europe, and globalization created an atmosphere of uncertainty in society. Middle class people, in fear of having their economic status deteriorated, are thought to have been voting for far-right parties. As countries fell into inevitable in-debt situations, the welfare system worsened and social inequalities have increased significantly, the rhetoric of far-right populists blaming the elite for the far-reaching implications of the poor management of institutions and public capital seemed appealing. However, the rise of far-right populism is not only to be seen in countries torn by the financial crisis.



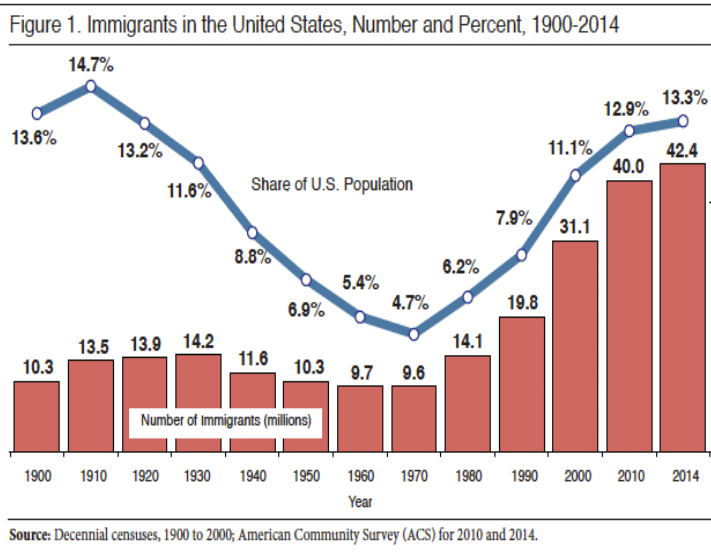
This picture shows how far-right parties became more popular after the Great recession of 2008, during which they started to enter parliaments and occupy seats.

Citizens of more well-off countries in the European Union seemed to disagree with the aid being provided to less well-off countries. They thought that their financial assistance was excessive without being effective and that their country's financial status should be protected and not be put at stake. On the other hand, economically deprived European countries perceived the imposed fiscal austerity measures not only as strict and unbearable but also as worsening the already-existing situation. These thoughts generated a feeling of dissatisfaction and despair among people.

Furthermore, not only did the financial crisis give rise to such parties, but also the huge migrant waves and especially the Syrian refugee crisis. Huge waves of migrants could not be well managed by the European Union. That was interpreted by the

population as a lack of an efficient government and public system resulting into further political uncertainty. Far-right populists exploited the then existing political landscape advocating that migration would bring about further unemployment of the middle classes, unequal prosperity distribution as well as higher taxes and a further deterioration of the welfare system resulting into a rise of prejudice. Nevertheless, that was not the only problem arising. A cultural identity crisis started to take place. Along with globalization and the loss of jobs due to multinational corporations, the fear of Islamification and a loss of identity have been widely spread. People associated refugee waves with the decay of Western culture and, as a result of the integration of the refugees, the establishment of a new culture. Some even thought that the Westerns would be ultimately replaced by the immigrants. Consequently, xenophobia has been on the rise.

What differentiates the rise of far-right populism in America from that in Europe is the fact that, besides the financial crisis that affected both continents, America had also high crime rates. Many people preferred to have a government that would crack down on crimes and violence and make them feel secure again. Furthermore, political



This figure depicts the constant rise of immigration to North American countries, namely USA in this picture.

corruption, such as embezzlement scandals, prompted people to lose trust in the current political regime and to start seeking for other solutions. Consequently, the use of radical language and big words proved efficient to soothe the betrayed population. Moreover, due to financial hardships, many people opted to immigrate to North American countries. That influx, together with the high unemployment rates and globalization, resulted into xenophobia as citizens now thought

that immigrants create considerable antagonism in the job market and that their culture was under threat due to the latter's influence.

Exploiting this stream of events, far-right populists have been trying to normalize exclusion and appear legitimate in the eyes of their voters even for those that would not normally opt for a far-right party. Their focus is on ideological rather than biological

criteria. They segregate minorities such as immigrants on the basis that those minorities do not espouse the state's traditional values. Moreover, they accuse the elite of supporting such minorities and they promise to their followers that they will preserve the state's cultural identity and the will of the people should always prevail. They argue that the focus should be always on upholding the traditional values and cultural identity as well as on limiting intergovernmental interaction so as to solely focus on the state's prosperity.

Their wish to establish a welfare state only for the ordinary simple people involves infringement on human rights and further worsening of the already bad financial situation of the country. Their promise to eradicate poverty is utopian leaving the state in a harsher condition as their suggested measures are off-budget and hardly implementable. Furthermore, not only are the human rights of the minorities violated but also those of their voters'. Far-right governments try to establish an authoritarian state and their strong will to cling to power drives them to use violence and undemocratic measures, such as police surveillance and imprisonment of people seemingly against their regime. Taking a look at the course of history, countries, after the fall of the far-right governments, are left indebted, while people feel even more insecure after the constant discrimination and surveillance they endured as they could not freely express themselves.

## MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

### United Kingdom (UK)

In 2015, the prime minister of the United Kingdom, David Cameron, organized a referendum regarding the UK's membership in the European Union. The then governing Conservative party campaigned for the country remaining in the EU. However, the United Kingdom's Independence Party (UKIP) with their former leader Nigel Farage advocated for the United Kingdom leaving the European Union as they believed that the country should regain its independence and sovereignty. The aforementioned party was characterized by a strong far-right populist agenda blaming the EU for substantial immigration waves towards Britain and for having imposed superfluous regulations on the country preventing its



Graffiti found in a suburb of the UK

prosperity. Furthermore, the EU was accused of depleting UK's financial resources through its needs of funding. The UKIP's 'Leave' campaign proved to be efficient as 51.9% of the electorate voted to leave the EU. In the recent EU elections of 2019, the new party of Nigel Farage, namely the Brexit Party, secured a 31.5% of the votes after guaranteeing to prevent the pro-remain parties from blocking the Brexit deal.

### Hungary

Viktor Orban has been governing Hungary since 2010. Although he was a Liberal Democrat in the 1990s, Viktor Orban now is a hard-right populist accusing immigrants of sexually harassing women and has already adopted strict measures against immigration such as the construction of a fence at Hungary's borders. Through the use of slogans, such as "Let's stop the immigration" and propaganda television programmes, Viktor Orban has internalized a full anti-immigrant policy opposing the principles of the European Union. Since his election in 2010, Hungary's prime minister has amended the constitution in such a way that independent judiciary organs and press freedom have been dramatically weakened.

### Austria

In Austria the far-right populist Freedom Party established by a former Nazi in 1956 was in coalition government since December 2017 until June 2019 after a scandal about its leader and vice chancellor of Austria erupted resulting in his resignation. However, the scandal did not seem to hinder the Austrian community from revoting it as in the current European Union elections of 2019 the Freedom Party was the third biggest party with 17.20% while the party with which it has recently formed coalition, also accused of scandals, remained the first party with 34.55% of the ballots. The Austrian government has been accused of opposing immigration, with the former Chancellor campaigning for the closure of the eastern European borders between Greece and F.Y.R.O.M. Furthermore, his government has passed legal amendments prohibiting external funding of Islamic organizations and closing of mosques. Last but not least, the Freedom Party has allegedly backed financially far-right organizations such as the Generation Identity.

### France

During the presidential elections of 2017 in France, the Rally National formerly also known as Front National came second with 33.9% of the electorate voting in favor of it. Its representative, Marine Le Pen, has openly criticized immigration claiming that immigrants should adopt the French culture if they wish to live in France. She has also suggested in the past that France should abandon the European Union and focus on rebuilding the state's sovereignty rather than aid other countries in their struggle of overcoming financial recessions. However, what's even more interesting is the fact that during the last European elections Marine Le Pen's party came first ahead by 0.9% of Emmanuel Macron's, the current president of France.

### United States of America (USA)

In the United States of America, current president Donald Trump won the 2016 presidential elections on the promise to make America great again. He attacked illegal immigration occurring between the US-Mexico border characterizing it as an invasion of drugs and crime and immigrants as job stealers of the hardworking and honest people. He promised to build a wall along the American-Mexican borders with Mexican government's money and accused the media of spreading fake news and twisting his words. Last but not least, on the 27th of January 2017 he signed a travel ban restricting citizens of seven Muslim-majority countries to entering the United States of America over a period of 90 days.

### Italy

On June 1<sup>st</sup> 2018 Italy welcomed its new far-right populist government formed by the Five Star Movement of Di Maio and the League of Matteo Salvini. Both politicians are skeptical towards the EU and wish to combat the huge migration waves in Italy. After the financial crisis of 2008 and the migration crisis, Italy's population found the claims of both political parties for lower taxation and the expulsion of migrants tempting. Both politicians are anti-systemic and want to reform the EU regarding its policy towards indebted countries as well as its assistance to refugee torn areas. Furthermore, they aspire to create a coalition with other like-minded governments, such as the one in Poland and Hungary, so as to exert pressure on the EU. Their policy seems to be successful as in recent EU elections Salvini's party came first.

The infographic features two circular portraits at the top. A green checkmark is positioned above a horizontal line that connects the two portraits. Below each portrait is the name of the politician, their party, and their main goals. The text is as follows:

Luigi Di Maio (Five Star)	Matteo Salvini (League)
Biggest party in March vote	Biggest party in centre-right coalition
<b>Main goals</b>	<b>Main goals</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tackling immigration</li><li>• Minimum income for poor families</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tackling immigration</li><li>• Job reforms</li></ul>

This picture shows the main policy of both parties which prompted them to form coalition government in June 2018.

### Brazil

Brazil, after having experienced recession crises and several corruption scandals, voted for far-right populist politician, Jair Bolsonaro. Exploiting the current political and economic landscape, Bolsonaro has seemingly committed himself to fighting against the corrupt politicians in the name of the people. Furthermore, he has opposed himself to



modern values such as same-sex marriage and encourages the weaponization of Brazil so as to fight the high crime rates. He focuses on Brazil's sovereignty and the eradication of the Chinese impact on society. Through the implementation of those measures, he promises people lower taxation and more vacancies.

### Turkey

Governing Turkey since 2003, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is a modern example of a right-wing populist leader. Having been raised in a working class family, Erdogan has in many of his speeches used his ancestors to persuade people that he is fighting against the corrupt politicians who are unjust to people like him. He upholds old traditional Islamist values and has many times used the European Union and other internal minorities, such as Kurds, to justify problems of the Turkish economy, such as the devaluation of the Turkish lira last year. Furthermore, by utilizing the emergency situation in Turkey after the unsuccessful coup of 2016, the Turkish president has dismissed several public officials, such as judges, while media outlets criticizing the current regime have been shut. Moreover, he tries to amend the constitution so as to control the state as much as he can. According to the Transparency International's democracy rankings, the country is "not free".<sup>2</sup>

## TIMELINE OF EVENTS

DATE	DESCRIPTION OF EVENT
3 October 1999	FPO is the second largest party and forms coalition government with the Austrian People's Party.
25 September 2005	The Polish far-right party called Polish Law and Justice (PiS) enters coalition government.

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<sup>2</sup>McKernan, Bethan. "From Reformer to 'New Sultan': Erdoğan's Populist Evolution." *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 11 Mar. 2019, [www.theguardian.com/world/2019/mar/11/from-reformer-to-new-sultan-erdogans-populist-evolution](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/mar/11/from-reformer-to-new-sultan-erdogans-populist-evolution).

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29 June 2010	Viktor Orban wins the presidential elections.
24 May 2015	In Poland, the PiS forms majority government.
23 June 2016	The people of the UK vote to leave the European Union during the Brexit referendum.
27 January 2017	Donald Trump signs travel ban on seven Muslim-majority countries, namely Syria, Yemen, Iraq, Iran, Libya, Somalia, and Sudan.
12 December 2018	During its 73rd session, the General Assembly adopts four resolutions regarding the elimination of far-right populism.
19 December 2018	The United Nations Global Pact for “Safe, Orderly and Regular migration” is signed.
23-26 May 2019	The European elections take place resulting into many countries electing far-right parties with the highest percentages.

## RELEVANT UN RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

### United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/73/L.48 “International Day of Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace”

On the 12th of December 2018 the General Assembly adopted this resolution with 144 votes in favor, two against and zero abstentions. The resolution called for member states to advocate for the advantages of multilateralism and peace diplomacy by raising awareness on that specific day.

United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/73/L.52 “Enlightenment and religious tolerance”

This resolution of the 12th December 2018 encourages member states to safeguard and campaign for the rights to freedom of thought, religion or belief as well as conscience.

United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/73/L.55 “Promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace”

Through this resolution of 12th December 2018 member states engaged themselves to promote interreligious and intercultural dialogue and collaborate so as to raise tolerance and oppose any form of religious hatred.

United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/43/150 “Measures to be taken against Nazi, Fascist and neo-Fascist activities and all other forms of totalitarian ideologies based on apartheid, racial discrimination, and the systemic denial of human rights and fundamental freedoms”

This resolution of the 8<sup>th</sup> of December 1988 proposes possible actions to be taken so as to limit the activities of hate groups and discriminative political parties whose activities infringe on human rights.

## PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

Seeing that far-right populism has been on the rise, many prominent figures as well as the European Union have taken measures in order to combat it. For example, in 2000 Austria allowed the Freedom Party to be led by Joerg Haider whose parents were accused of being Nazis supporting Hitler’s authoritarian regime. The European Union then decided to sanction Austria so as to indicate its disapproval of the situation.

However, that was not the only response Austria received from the European Union. In 2017 after the newly elected chancellor of Austria, Sebastian Kurz, decided to form a coalition government with the Freedom Party, Jean-Claude Juncker expressed his condemnation of the situation during one of his visits to Austria. He explicitly stated: “When stupid populism and narrow-minded nationalism march toward the future, one must get up and stop it while there is still time.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Shuster, Simon. “Sebastian Kurz Is Bringing the Far-Right into the Mainstream.” *Time*, Time, 29 Nov. 2018, [time.com/5466497/sebastian-kurz/](https://time.com/5466497/sebastian-kurz/).

Furthermore, the European Union decided to implement Article 7 on Hungary and Poland. Article 7 can be activated against a member state if its policy is thought to be impeding the work of democratic institutions and it can trigger sanctions as well as suspend a state's right to vote. It was firstly enforced on Poland after the Polish government tried to take control of the state's judiciary. Following allegations of attacks against the democratic judicial system as well as restrictions on press freedom by the Hungarian government, the EU voted in favor of activating Article 7 on Hungary as well.

Although the EU has attempted to halt far-right populist governments, the results are ambiguous. In the case of Austria in 2017, the condemnation of the European Union did not seem to affect the current political regime of the country. Austria's Freedom Party is still the most popular party and establishes its authoritarian state. Poland as well as Austria denies the claims of the EU saying that all of its actions are democratic. However, in May, the Hungarian government, being afraid of the possibility of EU sanctions, postponed the reform of judiciary so that the EU sanctions would not be implemented.

## POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Being a recurring problem for many years, far-right populism is a complex and difficult issue to be tackled. However, there are many measures that the international community can take so as to restrict and ultimately eradicate it.

Education is the key to tackle the problem. Seeing that there are many young adults opting for far-right parties, civic and political education should be introduced into the syllabus. Through this measure students will be able to better understand the political system of the country as well as comprehend what each party proposes. Students should be encouraged to discuss in class about politics and democratic values as well as ask questions so as to avoid misunderstandings. Furthermore, projects could be designed and implemented on the matter and historical examples of this movement, such as Nazi Germany and prejudice against African Americans in the 1800s, could be used so as to indicate the far-reaching implications of the problems, such as the infringement of fundamental human rights.

Moreover, campaigns on raising awareness should be organized so as to educate the population on the importance of democratic values and on how far-right populist governments capitalize on their fears so as to establish authoritarian regimes which then deteriorate even more the state's financial situation. These campaigns could also focus on the positive effects of globalization so as to break already-existing misconceptions and make people be less insecure about this phenomenon.

Last but not least, conferences and conventions should be hosted among nations so as to find ways to put an end to the problem through international cooperation on

matters such as stricter border controls and also through the exchange of data on the issue as well as the proposal of solutions. By these means, countries will have better relations showing that they can cooperate with each other and that people could trust international cooperation institutions such as the EU. Furthermore, since there is a lack of trust in public institutions and people feel that their demands are not heard, member states should create mechanisms through which people could directly express their opinion such as the right to petition or establishing an internet-based system so as to achieve that. Moreover, countries should try to reduce social inequalities and this can be achieved through reforms to their taxation system and the introduction of subsidies, for example to people living in rural and isolated areas, to families with more than two children or to the unemployed.

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