VARIETIES OF RIGHT-WING EXTREMISM IN EUROPE

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THE IDÉES-FORCE OF THE EUROPEAN NEW RIGHT

A new paradigm?

Joan Antón-Mellón

Introduction

This chapter explores the axioms and core beliefs, or idées-force,1 of the European New Right (NR)2 and analyses their internal coherence. In doing so, the aim is to contribute to the ongoing academic debate regarding the movement’s ideological affiliation.3

My main hypothesis is that this affiliation should be situated, unequivocally, in the area of the extreme right or the radical right; and that the NR’s own analysis, which claims that the movement has established a new theoretical and political paradigm beyond the left and the right, should be dismissed on the grounds that it is tendentious and false. In order to test my hypothesis, I describe the analogies and divergences between the core concepts of the NR and those of classical fascism (1919–45), the most important variant of the European radical right of the first half of the twentieth century.

My analysis is based on a study of the writings of the NR,4 paying special attention to four main questions. The first is how they define themselves – their self-definitions. The second is their diagnosis of the current historical situation. The third refers to their aims and means, their aspirations, their utopia, and also what they reject; and the last comprises their worldview and their conception of man, nature and history. The chapter ends with a comparison of the similarities and differences between the NR and classical fascism.

To test the internal coherence of the NR’s ideas, Alain Bihri’s theoretical model is particularly useful. In this model, the three decisive factors in the ideologies of the extreme right in the West are the defence of ultra ethno-nationalist ideas, elevating the collective identity to the category of a fetish, the insistence on inequality as a fundamental ontological and axiological category, and the defence of a bellicose conception of existence that glorifies combat as one of the supreme elements of existence.5
The sources consulted for this chapter include a selection from the abundant theoretical works of the orthodox French NR, in particular the writings of Alain de Benoist, and of the breakaway NR headed by Guillaume Faye; second, editorials and articles from GRECE's official magazine *Éléments pour la culture européenne* (first issue September/October 1973); articles from the publications of the Italian NR *Transgressioni* (first issue May/August 1986) and the Spanish NR *Hespérides* (1993–2000); and finally works such as *Manifiesto: La Nouvelle Droite de l'an 2000*, by de Benoist and the current editor of *Éléments*, Charles Champetier, and the Spanish NR’s *Manifiesto del Proyecto Cultural Alwa; ¿Qué hacer? Elementos para un discurso de contención*, published at the end of the 1990s, and *El Manifiesto contra la muerte del espíritu y de la tierra*, published in 2002.

The NR comprises a group of cultural associations that subscribe to a particular ideology. Since the 1960s, the movement has tried to reinvent the classical discourse of the European radical right of the early twentieth century in order to influence the various groups on the right: extreme, moderate, populist and neo-traditionalist. In the democratic post-1945 West, the NR faces massive opposition from the mainstream, which it defines as the product of Christianity and the political thought of the Enlightenment in a new modern guise. However, the decline of the radical left has created a political and cultural vacuum that the NR aims to occupy by presenting ideological alternatives to what it sees as the stale technocracy of conservative liberalism and social democracy. The NR savages the dysfunctions of postmodernity (anomic, hyperindividualism, ultra-materialism, problems of identity) and offers its remedies for society’s alienation and decadence, all of which involve, as a sine qua non, the recovery of the authentic ‘European identity’.

The NR’s flagship is the association *Groupe de Recherche et d’Études pour la Civilisation Européenne* (GRECE) founded in January 1968 in Nice and, at the same time, in Paris and Toulouse, by roughly forty people from the French extreme or radical right. Inside this group, dissidents such as Faye, Steuken and Vial made their own proposals regarding strategy that diverged significantly from the party line.9 The NR’s influence is limited to the traditional areas of support of the European radical right, thrown into disarray by the defeat of classical fascism and the collaborationist governments of occupied Europe and the subsequent repudiation of the ideology of the radical right under the political and cultural pressure of anti-fascism in the second half of the twentieth century. The existence of GRECE has propitiated the creation of associations or groups in Italy, Belgium, Great Britain, Spain and Russia, whose efforts to establish themselves have met with varying degrees of success. GRECE’s journal *Éléments*, for example, inspired similar publications in all these countries, even reproducing the name in four cases (the exceptions being *Hespérides* in Spain and *The Scorpion* in Britain).

The movement’s cultural influence in France reached its apogee in the 1980s although it has gradually lost ground since then. The rest of the European groups have not expanded outside the social base of the radical and extreme right, although some of them have managed to contribute to the ideologies, doctrines and proposals of populist parties of the radical right such as the Forza Nuova/Mouvement National Républicain (FN/MNR) in France, the Freisinnige Partei Österreichs (FPÖ) in Austria and the Plataforma per Catalunya (PxC) in Catalonia.

Because of its insistence on maintaining a metapolitical option (and its scorn for mainstream politics) GRECE has lost several of its leading figures at regular intervals, most of whom have left for populist parties on the radical right such as the FN or the MNR, or even for liberal-conservative parties. The medieval historian Pierre Vial, for example, one of the founders of GRECE, joined the FN and later supported the splinter group, the MNR, led by Bruno Mégret (another founder member of GRECE) in 1996: Vial created a neo-Nazi cultural movement *Terre et Peuple* in the same year.9

Another leading dissident is Guillaume Faye, together with Benoist, GRECE’s most important intellectual voice until his departure in 1986. A typical product of the right-wing version of May 1968, on his return to the intellectual arena in the late 1990s he analysed the reasons for GRECE’s loss of influence, dismissed the metapolitical option as pointless and reaffirmed the NR’s earlier positions rejecting the politically correct euphemisms so profusely used, in his view, by the orthodox NR. Echoing Nietzsche, Faye calls for the rejection of Enlightenment values and advocates the institution of a heterogeneous world formed by large ethnically homogeneous territorial units with radical inequalities in the social and productive structure to guarantee the ecological sustainability of the system and the progress of its peoples.10

The self-definitions of the European New Right

Throughout its history the European NR has seen itself as a radical, and special, variant of the right and as the contemporary representative of revolutionary conservatism. In 1994 Benoist defined the NR as a ‘disseant’ group at odds with the ‘institutionalized Right’.11 For his part, J.J. Eaparza, one of the leaders of the Spanish NR, stated that the movement had gone through a series of stages that had signified as a continuous distancing from the conventional right.12 Advocating metapolitical action, the European NR defines itself as a ‘laboratory of ideas’, a ‘school of thought’, a ‘community of the spirit’, a ‘space of resistance against the system’.

This metapolitical option derives from Gramsci and his concept of hegemony (although Faye considers this reading of the Italian communist thinker superficial, and his breakaway NR rejects the metapolitical position). The orthodox view is that the conquest of political power must be preceded by victory – hegemony – in the ideological and cultural conflict. This stance is quite revealing. It shows that, as far as theory is concerned, the NR is pragmatic and eclectic: it uses anything that might be useful for the defence of its core concepts, whether the argument in question comes from the right or the left: Nietzsche, Heidegger, Evola, Gramsci,
Schmitt, Lorenz, Dumont, Kocztler, Locchi, Dumetre, Roubier or the revolutionary conservatives of the early twentieth century are all called upon at different moments. In the NR’s exhaustive search for intellectual endorse (obviously from a political perspective rather than a scientific one) the inconsistencies and contradictions that inevitably arise from this approach are conveniently ignored.

The European NR aims to raise awareness of the deep-seated causes of the decline of European civilization, in three stages: first, via ideological and cultural engineering to influence public opinion; second, by providing intellectual leadership in the task of reversing this decline; third, via the construction of a harmonious, powerful European political community that acknowledges the authenticity of its identity going back into the past and builds its future in the present. This means that its struggle is cultural but also political. Faced with powerful opponents and enemies, it has had to start at the most elementary level: in its own words, to create ‘a space of resistance against the system’. Gradually this space will grow, and eventually the disastrous political and sociocultural consequences of the Enlightenment and modernity will be overcome. But the main problem is a hangover from an earlier time: the triumph of Christianity.

Significantly, in the year 2000 the orthodox NR, defined itself as ‘based on community, based on citizenship, European, and pagan’. The ideals of the Enlightenment are merely a lay version of Christianity; for its part, Christianity is a noxious foreign body totally alien to the Indo-European roots of our culture. Liberalism and socialism are merely negative epiphenomena of the Enlightenment and Christianity.

According to the NR’s analyses, its ‘laboratory of ideas’ performs the vital role of achieving radical cultural change in the decadent world of the bourgeois West. The latter, led by the US, has imposed its Judeo-Christian ideals as the predominant doctrine of human rights (the lowest common denominator of egalitarianism). To use Nietzsche’s term, this is the morality of the herd, destined to alienate the masses in the West, stultified by consumption and infantilized by the welfare state. The NR sees itself as ‘a promise of renewal in the depths of a cold, grey winter ... an adventure of the spirit’ of ‘active pessimism’ during the interregnum. The age of Kali-Yuga, in the Sanskrit terminology used by Evola and Eladé, is a period in which the truth lies buried by ignorance and awaits its redeemers.

And it is as redeemers that the NR’s thinkers see themselves, visionaries who, following Nietzsche, believe that the future belongs to those with the longest memory. The NR’s thinkers are revolutionaries in a context, Europe, which is plagued by the bourgeois materialist values of mercantilism, individualism, egalitarianism and universalism, primarily because of a misapprehension of the nature of man. In contrast, the NR, advocates the hegemony of politics over economics, of the community over the individual, of hierarchy over equality and of heterogeneity over universalist homogeneity. Benoist quotes Carl Schmitt: ‘the essential contents of democracy is a people not humanity. If democracy has to continue to be a political form, there are only democracies of peoples, and not democracies of humanity.’

Diagnosis

The NR’s diagnosis of the West could hardly be more pessimistic. With the triumph of individualism and the economy and the abandonment of spirituality, the West has reached the point of exhaustion. At the end of the 1990s the Spanish NR denounced the existence of ‘a progressive and inexorable tendency towards death;’ in June 2002, it proclaimed a new Manifesto against the death of the spirit and the land mentioned above. For its part, the French NR speaks of the ‘threshold of sterility’, and the ‘sensibility’ of European or Western civilization. A profound sense of loss has invaded contemporary society. In the NR’s apocalyptic vision:

As Konrad Lorenz noted, Western civilization is dragging us along to a slow death. Its ways of life have psychological, neurotic and pathogenic effects: we become domesticated, fragile beings. Demographic decline, weakness of character, the genetic degradation of the Westerners, are facts confirmed by medical practitioners.

Hypermaterialism, productivism, egalitarianism and hedonism smother all forms of transcendence, spirituality and beauty. The individualistic cult of well-being alienates and corrupts, incapacitating men for the task of developing their potential both as members of their community and as individuals. This cult was engendered by Christian dualism in defending the view that the true life was the future life in heaven. The liberal creates heaven on earth, in the belief that the sole aim of human life are to amass material goods and to achieve a more comfortable existence – the only individual satisfaction possible in a society understood as a depoliticized aggregate of isolated, unconnected units.

The corollary of this alienating reality is the role played by the state (seen as a ‘technocratic organism at the service of the economy’). Its mission is to safeguard the individual rights that guarantee the maximum yield on the investments made. Meanwhile, egalitarian values triumph in the ‘public capitalism of the welfare state’ (repeatedly described as the ‘dinosaur state’), dressed up in the garb of the universalist declaration of human rights. Even the nation-states today are being supersedes by a worldwide techno-structure which is the entity that truly governs the world (albeit indirectly). This ‘system’ functions through the internalization of its objectives; it needs minimal political coordination, since everyone subscribes to the ideology that underpins it. Economics prevails over politics; the people equate personal happiness with the acquisition of material possessions, and are profoundly alienated from what should be their most prized value: their capacity to form part of a community through their individual will. The society in which they live is dominated by the economy and the market, in which goods produce yet more goods in a constant, circular process.

The government of men is replaced by the government of objects at the service of production, a world of producers, consumers and false needs, a process of homogenization and of the destruction of ethnic difference. The alchemy of this
cancerous growth always comprises the same ingredients: supranational techno-economic structures, the universal and egalitarian ideology of human rights, and rampant mass consumerism. For the NR, the true political frontier is not between the right and the left, but between a ‘plurivocal, polycentric, diverse, polytheist’ perception of the world on the one hand, and the old ‘Manichean’ and ‘monothecist’ mentalities on the other.

In this bleak scenario, the NR raises the banner of a mythical European (not Western) civilization and ethnic biodiversity, the right to difference, and the subordination of the economy to political and social ends, in a society that teaches that sacrifice for the community is the highest honour that an individual can achieve.

Since the fall of communism as a political model, the NR’s principal enemy has become liberalism, as an ideology and a system of values, and the US – deemed the new Carthage – as the leader of the West, a country born bourgeois, lacking an aristocracy or tradition. For the NR, liberalism is a wholly misguided political philosophy and ideology, because it makes the abstract individual the lynching post of the system. In the political arena, liberalism bears a certain resemblance to anarchy. It imposes as little authority as possible; at the social level it denies the holistic principle and the notion of collective interest, making the society the sum of all individual interests. To quote the NR:

[I.] Liberalism is a machine that produces disenchantment . . . never has social apathy been as strong as it is at present . . . liberalism destroys collective identities and established cultures, and creates uniformity . . . to fight liberalism is to fight the root of the evil.

In spite of the gravity of the current historical situation, however, there remains some room for hope. According to Guillaume Faye, the twenty-first century will bring a succession of catastrophes – economic, social, political, ecological, migratory, and so on – that will sweep away the current system and usher in a new civilization. In earlier years, Faye had already argued that, beyond a certain limit, the regulation of a system in crisis is impossible. With the collapse of a civilization, the values and ideas that legitimize it come crashing down; Faye calls for revolutionary alternatives oriented towards organic visions of the world.

**Aims and means**

The main objective of the NR is, in its own terms, ‘to take over from the dominant ideologies . . . after reconstructing a vision of the world’ and, given their diagnosis of the situation outlined above, ‘to bring ideas to a world which has none’. For the NR, ideas constitute arms at the service of a project; its ambition is to propose ideas that will rouse people to action: ‘But this ambition is combat. We fight because not to fight is to die, because the world that surrounds us is a world of passivity and slumber, where the energy of the people has faded away.’ The NR claims to have created a sophisticated new theoretical paradigm that leaves behind the traditional categories of right and left: an ideological and political Third Way. In their eyes, the real political division of the twentieth century was not between right and left but between universalists and identitarians. In opposition to the slogan of the left-wing social movement ‘SOS Racisme’, they devise their own: ‘SOS Racism’ – ‘SOS Roons’.

The NR’s vision is of a heterogeneous world comprising of ethnically homogeneous units – union without confusion, to quote Benoist. The movement defends the right to difference and the rights of peoples. Like de Maistre, the NR holds that mankind does not exist in the abstract, but comprises individuals forming different peoples, races and culture. So one must ‘take the side of ethno-national doctrines, against parfum and humanitism’.

Faced with the decadence of modern times, the strategic and tactical objectives of the NR are pan-genetic. The most important are: to promote the concept (at once ancient and modern) of freedom inside a community; to replace the hegemony of bourgeois values with aristocratic values; to revive Europe – or, in the case of Spain, to recover the nation’s soul (in the opinion of the Spanish NR, the two aims are perfectly compatible); to revitalize the idea of community and to keep the legal concepts of nationality and citizenship separate; to place ethno-nationalist criteria at the forefront of political activity and to make the peoples of Europe aware of their true historical identity; to fight egalitarianism and universalism; to subordinate the economy to politics; to achieve harmony; to preserve biodiversity; to defend ecology; and to promote a ‘genuinely participative, radical and plural democracy’ that turns the citizens of European communities into agents of their own history.

The achievement of these objectives will redeem society, restore the individual’s true essence as a non-atomized being, and open the way for a glorious destiny in place of neutered, hypercommercialized banality. A future of this kind is possible: to achieve it, the ideas of the NR must become the basis of society and create broad national movements inspired by its ideas of ‘regeneration’.

The future belongs to cultural, spiritual and national revolutions. In the future the international economic order will be destroyed and replaced by an idea that is already making its way forward today: the concentration of autonomous economic spaces around large cultural nuclei.

**The NR’s worldview: the conception of man, nature and history**

The NR’s worldview revolves around a series of primary principles that are worth outlining here. The first is the conviction that there are laws of nature that govern all living beings and can be extrapolated to individuals and human communities: selection, inequality and hierarchy are phenomena as natural as the land and the sea. The second is the paramount importance of the
philogenetic information that human communities pass on from one generation to the next. The third is the idea that conflict is another of the laws of nature; to fight is to live and weakness is a prelude to death, and the fourth is the idea of the importance of the will to the living of an authentic, fulfilling existence. As Benoist claims in a famous article that was published widely in the European NR literature, the aim is not to find an objective truth, outside the world, but to create one voluntarily, on the basis of a new values system: a neo-Paganism that allows the development of a full, authentic mode of existence.

The NR’s vision is empiricism: only nature (including man) is observable, therefore either God does not exist or God is nature and therefore man is, or can be, God. The NR concludes that human life aspires towards transcendence, an aspiration that is alien to Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment rationalism. Out of fear, reason rejects everything that is not logos. Reason is constantly at war, but rejects war as a concept; it denies that law is force, it proclaims equality, but never achieves it; it rejects any authority that is not based on utilitarian arguments.

The NR’s worldview spurs rationality and offers an alternative to the ‘pensée unique’ of modernity. The disappearance of aristocratic values has been a catastrophe for Europe, only comparable to the replacement of Paganism in Indo-European communities by the dualist, universalist and egalitarian Christianity. The NR, points to what it sees as a glaring contradiction: on the one hand, Western society is based on a capitalist system that leads the survival of the fittest, but on the other it insists on advocating human rights – an absurd product of the corrupt modern age, grounded on the conviction that all human beings are equal and free.

The NR rejects out of hand a vision of individual freedom, the belief that men hold a series of inherent, inalienable rights by virtue of their humanity and not granted by any higher authority. The NR’s conception of freedom, stated explicitly by Julius Evola, holds that there is no general and abstract freedom, but a series of freedoms articulated in accordance with the nature of the beings involved. Freedom belongs to a practical and political plane, not to a philosophical or moral one. It must be conquered. No one is born free, but some, either individuals or groups, attain freedom through action.

As an individual, then, one is free via membership of a community. And, as the whole is greater than the sum of the parts and possesses qualities that are characteristic of it (holism), the state should promote not the prosaic objective of the material well-being of its citizens, but that of guaranteeing their existence and of their power in history. So happiness is no longer an individual matter but a collective concept, since – and this is another core belief of the NR – the protagonists of history are peoples, communities, nations and/or cultures in a constant dialectic of confrontation. Rather than nature, man has culture and history which develop from certain constant biological characteristics. There will always be hunters and warriors, strong and weak, superior and inferior, say the ideologues of the NR, however much the supporters of human rights reject these distinctions. The NR’s vision of the world is organicist, pluralist and differentialist.

For this reason the NR’s legal conception of individual rights is non-universalist. It proposes that each political, historical and cultural community should be entitled to establish the rights of its members; this is the basis of its criterion for distinguishing between citizenship and nationality. And, obviously, rights are granted by the community to the individual. Therefore, if men cannot be considered equal, have different needs and belong to different human communities, why do we establish the same universal and abstract rights for all on a ‘one size fits all’ basis?

The NR blames this on the triumph of bourgeois Christian values: individualist, economicist, egalitarian and universalist, the values of Christianity are based on a misconception of the world and man. It is the mission of the NR to alert the world to its errors and to spread an alternative worldview, one that is visionary with respect to the future and lucid with respect to the present and past.

So lucid and powerful is the NR’s vision that it is able to harmonize opposites (just as classical fascism had sought to do): instinct and culture; rationality and irrationality; hypermodernism/postmodernism and tradition; ecology and technological development; nation and supranational community (Europe); the maximum sovereignty of the state and individual economic freedom; right and left; individual sacrifice and freedom and/or collective happiness. Kant and Marx were wrong and Nietzsche, Heidegger and Evola were right. Blood is worth more than gold.

The NR’s worldview is the antithesis of bourgeois-liberal views and values. Exalting the sacred, the irrational and the spirit of adventure, it urges Europeans to shake off the alienating domestication that is the legacy of Christianity and liberalism. It calls for generosity of spirit instead of calculation, idealism and altruism instead of materialism and pragmatism, sacrifice instead of hedonism and collective adventure instead of selfish conformism. In the European NR, with its political and ideological unity, this ideal way of ‘being in the world’ replaces the absurd, aimless way of life of modernity.

Therefore the worldview of the NR reflects the prototypical convictions of the radical right, advocating inequality, the idea of life as combat, the importance of tradition and the organic conception of ethnically homogeneous communities. The aristocrat confronts the bourgeoisie. Benoist himself confirms this hypothesis in revealing to us in the preface to his Le grain de sable that the origin of his most frequent pseudonym, Robert de Herte, is a tribute to a maternal ancestor, Charles-Germain de Herte, an aristocrat and lieutenant in a regiment of musketeers who was guillotined during the French Revolution at the age of thirty-eight.

Conclusions
The defeat of fascism in 1945 meant the political and cultural rejection of its ideas in the liberal countries and the victory of democratic values. Fascism became a demonized ideology for all but a few minorities and was prosecuted by the
authorities. Its fall from grace and from power obliged its adherents, both old and new, to seek refuge in the realm of ideas, in culture and in philosophy. After the collapse of the ‘authoritarian compromise’ of the 1930s and the ‘preventive counterrevolution’, the European NR aims to be the ideological leader of the radical right. In this setting, it has emerged as the most sophisticated modern version of fascist ideas (Griffin 2007; Spektorowski 2003).

The continuity between inter-war fascism and the NR is expressed in six main ways. The first is the homogeneity of the core of the ideological and philosophical foundations that the two schools share: their conception of man, nature and history. Their vision of man begins with the radical rejection of the Enlightenment view that all men are born free and equal. Their concept of freedom follows Nietzsche: only the select few become free, because their acts reflect their greater will to power, and it is they who must rule over the weak, impotent masses. Combat reveals superiority and puts each individual (or nation, or even firm) in its rightful place.

The authentic, natural essence of human beings is aggressiveness, inequality, hierarchy and territoriality. Clearly, anti-Enlightenment and social Darwinism are features of the NR, that follow on directly from classical fascism, as are its respect for capitalism and certain cultural reference points such as the radical conservativism of the early twentieth century.

Second, with regard to their conception of history, both schools of thought hold that the protagonists are ethnically homogeneous peoples: this is the root of their anti-universalist ultra-nationalism. This ultra-nationalism is cultural and political or biologically based racism in classical fascism, or differentialist (a new form of cultural racism) in the NR. One major novelty in the NR is the replacement of national myths by the myth of Europe as the imagined community and the replacement of ‘state’ nation-states by the Empire. As a larger sovereign political unit, a federalist ‘Europe of the peoples’ would be compatible with the (ethnically exclusive) identity of the continent’s historical nationalities.

Third, their diagnoses and their prime objectives are the same: society is decadent, in crisis. Only paligensis, promoted by the healthy part of the community, can create a broad-based movement able to achieve regeneration. The paligentic and nativist character of their political proposals highlights another of the key aspects of the two ideologies: the vital importance of the idea of community in ultra-nationalist thought. Both classical fascism and the NR champion a homogeneous community with a collective destiny: racially or culturally pure in the case of classical fascism, and respecting ethnic differences and avoiding universalism and multiculturalism. In the case of the NR, a position that has been termed differentialist or culturalist racism.

Fourth, recalling the positions of the 1930s, the NR proposes that this broad movement should unite and harmonize the community. It must be above party politics, social divisions and ideologies. The NR defends a third way, neither right nor left wing: what they call ninisme (from ‘ni . . . ni . . .’, ‘neither . . . nor . . .’).

In Eatwell’s analysis: ‘the Fascist “matrix” … At the heart of Fascist thinking was the creation of a new elite of men, who would forge a holistic nation and build a new third way state.’

Fifth, the rejection, common to both ideologies, of liberalism as a political philosophy, together with the acceptance (from a social Darwinist perspective) of capitalism as an ideal productive system provided that it is subordinate to political guidance.

Sixth, fascism and the NR both propose political and cultural change, but not economic or social change; their axiology is organicist, metaphysical, transcendental and spiritualist.

Taken together, these six factors highlight the great homogeneity between the idées-force of classical fascism and of the NR. Following Bihr’s model (Bihr 1999), we can conceptualize these two models as extreme right/radical right, with their fatalistic concept of the collective identity, their defence of inequality and their conception of life as eternal struggle.

Finally, fascism constituted a ‘right-wing extremism’ that offered a remedy for the miseries, contradictions and problems of modernity. It was a political and cultural alternative, not a social or economic one. In much the same way, the ideas of the NR are a political and cultural response to the ills of the postmodern world from the perspective of the post-war extreme right (Antón-Mellón 2007), but they leave social hierarchies and capitalist production systems in place. This disposition highlights the tactical differences between classical fascism and the NR, and indeed certain strategic differences, such as the acceptance or rejection of totalitarianism and the movement’s adaptation to the prevailing historical conditions in order to safeguard its idées-force.

The NR’s leaders want to be the revolutionary conservatives of the twenty-first century. To quote the dissident NR theorist Guillaume Faye, their utopia is an ‘archaofuturoïst’ world, divided into ethnically homogeneous blocks, with vast socio-economic differences between the inhabitants of the technologically developed cities and the inhabitants of the primitive towns on the periphery, in order to ensure an ecologically sustainable society. The idea is obviously perverse: in fact Faye’s theory (which he proposes in the interests of ‘sustainability’) is pure classical fascism.

Above all else, the NR believes that the protagonists of history are ethnically homogeneous communities, and that freedom is only within the reach of a few select human beings. A harmonious human society is one in which the states define themselves as aggressive, hierarchical and territorial – the very antithesis of the Enlightenment conception in which human beings are born free, equal and rational – and develop a political theory and political institutions in consonance with this definition. There is little here that distinguishes the NR from classical fascism. In fact, the NR’s position is aptly summed up in the words of an old Buenos Aires tango:

The worst kind of nostalgia is missing things that never happened.
Notes

1 For Martin Seligier, there are the fundamental nucleus of an ideology: see "Fundamental and operative ideology: The two principal dimensions of political argumentation", Policy Sciences, 1 (1970). Seligier distinguishes between an ideology's fundamental and operative nuclei. For another definition, see Michael Freeden, "Political concepts and ideological morphology", The Journal of Political Philosophy, 2, 2 (1994).

2 Both its orthodox version (de Benoist, Charpentier), and its heterodox version (Faye, Vial and Steuckers). Studying the core concepts of the NR, will help us to understand the ideological framework of the extreme or radical right from its beginnings in the early twentieth century until the present day.


4 A small part of the empirical material used here was presented in an earlier study: Jean-Antón-Mellón, 'Las ideas-fuerza de la Nueva Derecha Europea (ND) y su continuidad/discontinuidad con el Fascismo Clásico (1919-1945)', in Ajudidades. Revista de literatura y pensamiento, 33 (2010).

5 Alain Bihl, L'actualité d'un archétype, Éditions Page deux, Lausanne, 1999. The applicability of this model is demonstrated in its assessment of the core concepts of classical fascism: see Jean-Antón-Mellón, 'Las concepciones nucleares, axiomas e ideas-fuerza del Fascismo Clásico (1919-1945)', in Revista de Estudios Políticos, 146 (October-December 2003)


12 José Javier Esparza, 'La Nueva Derecha en su contexto', Hospitèides, 16/17.

13 Manifesto of the Spanish NR, ¿Qué hacemos? Elementos para un discurso de la contestación.

14 To quote Benoist: "The promotion of the individual requires a long process of disaggregation from society which leads to atomism and atomization. With modernity, the social connection becomes pure contingency." Alain de Benoist, Más allá de la Derecha y la Izquierda/Anthology to a cargo de Javier Ruiz Portella, Altera, Barcelona, 2010, p. 164.

15 'Entrevista a Charles Charpentier', Hospitèides, 16/17, 701.

16 What is it that all the hyperhumanitarian, hyperegalitarian, hyperdemocratic harangues from the supporters of the welfare state are hiding?... Isn't it their aim to construct a 'human occidenta', existing in an 'Americanosphere', in which the difference between socialism and liberalism only has any meaning during the change of the electoral period?

de Benoist, Alain (2010), *Más allá de la derecha y la Izquierda/Analogía* (edited by Javier Ruiz Portella) (Barcelona: Altera).
de Benoist, Alain and Faye, G. (1983), *Contre l'Etat providence*, *Éléments*, 44.
Griffin, Roger (2000), *Between metapolitics and apolitique*: The Nouvelle Droite’s strategy for conserving the fascist vision in the *interregnum*, *Modern and Contemporary France*, 8, 1, 33–53.
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FASCISM TO THE NOUVELLE DROITE

The quest for pan-European empire

Tamir Bar-On

Introduction

Led by Alain de Benoist, the French Nouvelle Droite (ND) is a cultural movement distinguished from extreme-right political parties and extra-parliamentary formations of the revolutionary right (see also Virchow in this volume for the revolutionary right). Created in 1968, the ND has ultra-nationalistic, pro-colonialist roots. It is a response to the loss of French Algeria, the growing ascendency of liberalism and the New Left (NL), and the weakness and divisiveness of the extreme-right and neo-fascist milieu in an ‘anti-fascist’ era (Bar-On 2007b). In line with the prevailing neo-fascist post-war trend led by French writer Maurice Bardèche (1907–98), the ND superseded narrow nationalism and embraced pan-Europeanism. Yet, there were earlier pan-European strains on the extreme right: the monarchial, counter-revolutionary tradition of Joseph de Maistre (1753–1821) and Donoso Cortés (1809–53) (Schmitt 2002: 100–15) to elements within the Italian Fascist Party (PNF) (Ledeen 1972: 104–32; Griffins 2005: 72–88).

The goal of this chapter is to trace historical continuity in the ND’s primordial attachment to a homogeneous notion of pan-European identity. Early post-war neo-fascism and significant fascist elements in the inter–war years were similarly obsessed with the decline of homogeneous pan-European or Western identities. It is my thesis that despite the ultra-nationalistic origins of historical fascism, early post-war neo-fascism and the ND in different historical periods, the thread tying them together is the notion of a unified, homogeneous, pan-European empire regenerated in defence against the dominant ‘materialist’ ideologies from liberalism to socialism. All three political outfits argued that superpowers such as the former Marxist–Leninist Soviet Union and liberal democratic United States (US) embody a common egalitarian, ‘materialist’ and ‘decadent’ ideological framework, which seeks to impose itself globally to the detriment of homogeneous, rooted European