

The European Extreme Right and Religious Extremism

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Abstract: The ideology of the Extreme Right in Western Europe is rooted in Catholic fundamentalism and Counter-Revolutionary ideas. However, the Extreme Right, like all other political families, has had to adjust to an increasingly secular society. The old link between religion and the Extreme Right has thus been broken and in fact already was when Fascism overtook Europe: Fascism was secular, sometimes even anti-religious, in its essence. Although Catholic fundamentalists still retain strong positions within the apparatus of several Extreme Right parties (Front National), the vote for the Extreme Right is generally weak among regular churchgoers and strong among non-believers. In several countries, the vote for the Extreme Right is stronger among Protestant voters than among Catholics, since while Catholics may support Christian-Democratic parties, there are very few political parties linked to Protestant churches. Presently, it also seems that Paganism is becoming the dominant religious creed within the Extreme Right. In a multicultural Europe, non-Christian forms of religious fundamentalism such as Islamism also exist with ideological similarities to the Extreme Right, but this is not sufficient to categorize Islamism as a form of Fascism. Some Islamist groups seek alliances with the Extreme Right on the basis of their common dislike for Israel and the West, globalization and individual freedom of thought.

Key words: Antisemitism, Catholic fundamentalism, Extreme Right, Islamism, Paganism

Introduction

The Extreme Right in Europe is often associated with religious extremism, especially with the theocratic ideas of the fundamentalist Catholic thinkers and, in parts of Eastern Europe and the Balkans, with a blend of chauvinistic nationalism, xenophobia and Orthodox (Pravoslavie) mysticism. Indeed, the counter-revolutionary school of thought that opposed the ideas of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution of 1789 was deeply linked to the fundamentalist wing of the Catholic Church in countries such as France, Spain, Portugal and Italy, at least until the 1960s. However, the growing secularization of Western societies and changes within the Church itself after the Second Vatican Council have marginalized the political influence of Catholic fundamentalism. The Extreme Right has become mostly secular, to the extent that, at least in Western European democracies, those who vote for the populist, nationalist and xenophobic parties are often those citizens who are not affiliated with any church and do not affirm

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themselves as observant/believing people. There is, therefore, a new phenomenon in the emergence of “free-thinking” voters and militants on the Extreme Right, with another new phenomenon presented by the widening gap between parties/groups still influenced by Catholicism and parties/groups claiming the Pagan heritage of Europe. A Pagan renewal is a definite reality, although it is not clear whether the Extreme Right refers to Paganism as a philosophy or to Paganism as a religion.

Nevertheless, the imprint of Christian values (or rather, of those values as interpreted by the extremists) is still strong on many European Extreme Right parties which, even though they do not ground their policies in religion, refer to Europe as a “Christian”, or “Judeo-Christian” continent. Therefore, one of the major (if not the major) topics of discussion and internal strife within the Extreme Right today, is how to react to the presence of “non-European” religions on European soil. This is a complex problem simultaneously involving the pronounced hostility of the Extreme Right to Islam and the long tradition of anti-Semitic prejudice in this ideological family. As we shall show, the Extreme Right today is divided between a faction which first and foremost promotes Islamophobia and even finds itself capable of supporting Israel and the Jews as “bastions of Western civilization”; another faction which, on the contrary, sees Islam, and even political Islam, as an ally in the fight against “US imperialism”, Israel and “Zionism”; and a third faction, which does not take sides but combines a staunch anti-immigration and anti-Muslim agenda with solid, if sometimes veiled, anti-Semitism. In any case, those who take sides are often motivated by something other than ideology: several Extreme Right groups have become tools of “rogue states” propaganda, most notably of Iran, Syria and Saddam’s Iraq.

Finally, there is the problem of whether political movements grounded in non-Christian religions, which were born in non-European contexts, may be labelled “Extreme Right”. In the post 9/11 controversy on radical Islam, several authors have argued that Islamism is indeed a new brand of Fascism, and coined the terms “Islamofascism” (Ruthven 1990, Hitchens 2001, Schwartz 2001), or even “Nazislamism”. There are political groups today in Europe which operate within their countries’ immigrant communities, and which retain several features of Extreme Right movements: the Turkish nationalist “Grey Wolves”, the most radical faction of the Hindutva movement or, arguably, small Jewish self-defence groups with a racist anti-Arab agenda.

The marginalization of the Catholic fundamentalist Extreme Right parties

In the years 1990–2000, parties of the “third wave” of national-populist movements succeeded in coming out of the narrow political ghetto of fringe groups to which the rejection of Fascism, National-Socialism and Right authoritarian models had confined them after 1945. In order to do so, they were obliged to change their style and, at least in public discourse, their ideology, since it was necessary for them to adapt themselves to the context of modern, post-industrial societies. One of the major changes between the pre-World War II era and the post-1945 era is secularization: the proportion of citizens affiliated with a Church and, more importantly, the number of voters who cast their ballot according to the teachings of their religious hierarchy, has been continuously dwindling. Therefore, parties which have an agenda heavily influenced by an authoritarian, anti-pluralistic, theocratic or at least anti-democratic version of Catholicism have been unable to emerge or retain their past glory.

Indeed, if one looks at the map of Europe in search of countries with no, or only marginal, Extreme Right parties, the names Portugal and Spain are obvious, and those are places where the nostalgic Extreme Right failed to jettison its outdated fundamentalist rhetoric at the time of the “democratic transition” (1974–1976). In the two former dictatorships, the Extreme Right has clung to the fundamentals of the Franco and Salazar era, eventually becoming no more than “cult movements” worshipping the defunct national-corporatist State. In Spain, the strong Catholic fundamentalist flavour of Fuerza Nueva, led by Blas Pinar, and of the so-called “bunker” Phalangists was totally out of tune with the expectations of the Spanish electorate, since the more pragmatic former Franquists in the technocratic Right had the wisdom to accept democracy and launch new parties such as Manuel Fraga’s Aleanza Nacional, which later became Partido Popular. The same process took place in post-Salazar Portugal, where many supporters of Estado Novo switched to Partido Popular and CDS (the Christian-Democratic Party). This explains the bad fortunes of the Extreme Right in those countries: in the 2005 general election, the Partido Nacional Renovador polled 9 374 votes and, in 2004, the five parties which took part in the Spanish general election polled 0.18 %.

It is also clear from the experience of Ireland and Poland that, in those countries where the Catholic Church retains a strong influence over the people’s daily life, the more conservative and even extremist Catholic voters cast their vote for a mainstream conservative party, because their vote was not a protest but rather an affirmation of values shared by many and supported by an important part of the church hierarchy. Significantly, the 2007 general election in Poland saw

the League of Polish Families losing its parliamentary representation, and the influential Radio Maryja backed Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (PiS), not the LPF.

The fact that Catholic fundamentalism hampers the chances of a party to become successful does not mean, however, that there are no voters for those parties who vote according to their religious beliefs. There is an ongoing debate among political scientists as to whether being a practising Catholic restrains citizens from voting for the Extreme Right or not, and the situation seems to vary from country to country. For example, according to Jaak Billiet, “in Flanders, regularly practicing Catholics are less likely to hold pronouncedly negative attitudes towards Muslim immigrants (Moroccans and Turks) than are marginal members of the Church and some categories of non-Catholics” (Billiet 1995). In France, a survey conducted by the Catholic daily *La Croix*, showed that 20 % of Catholics said they would vote for Le Pen or Villiers in the 2007 presidential election, against 14 % in the overall population (La Croix 2007). However, Nonna Mayer’s research gives a much more balanced picture: according to her, the relation between being a Catholic and voting for FN depends on the period of time (when the Catholic hierarchy warns against the FN ideology, such as in 1988–1997, the FN vote among Catholics drops to lower than average); the level of religious practice (regular worshippers are less prone to vote for FN than irregular worshippers, and Fundamentalist worshippers, especially those of the St. Pius X Fraternity, who vote heavily for FN), and the area of France (see Mayer 1999).

The Protestant faith and the Extreme Right

The common belief is that while there is a structural link between Catholic fundamentalism and the Extreme Right, worshippers of the various Protestant denominations are immune from voting for extremist, national-populist and xenophobic parties. But indeed both history and political science suggest that the reality is more complex. As regards history, Armin Mohler’s seminal study *Die Konservative Revolution* demonstrated the presence of a strong Protestant component, built upon a specifically Lutheran conception of the authoritarian State and derived from the Two Kingdoms theory (*Zweireichelehre*) (cf. Lienemann 1996); a specific tradition of social-Christian values and the movement of one segment of Protestant churches towards a “German national” ideology (see Mohler 1993). The present situation in Western Europe also proves that the Extreme Right is strong in several predominantly Protestant countries, such as Denmark and Norway, in which the “third wave” of Extreme Right parties started in the mid-1970s. One can also point to the personal background of the Schweizerische

Volkspartei leader, Christoph Blocher, who is the son of a parish minister, or that of the vice-president of the Hungarian MIEP, Lorant Hegedus, a Protestant minister. Nevertheless, these are individual cases of militancy: the reality is that there is not a single case of a Protestant Extreme Right political party anywhere in Europe. The only exception is that of the Ulster Unionist Party in Ulster, whose Euro-MP, John Taylor, was a member of the European Right Group² in the years 1987–1989, possibly because he was attracted to the strongly anti-EU stand of the Extreme Right parties of which it was comprised,³ under the guidance of the French Front National.

What is remarkable is not that Protestants as individuals can play a role in Extreme Right parties, but that wide segments of the Protestant electorate can vote for such parties in a proportion exceeding that of their Catholic fellow citizens. The explanation for this phenomenon has been given by Bernard Schwengler (2005) in his study on the comparison between the Catholic and the Protestant vote in religiously mixed areas of the Alsace region (France), in Switzerland and in the land of Baden-Württemberg in Germany. Schwengler explains that Catholic voters cast a kind of “group vote” for Christian-Democratic parties such as the French Centrist parties, the Swiss Christlichdemokratische Volkspartei and the German CDU. Protestant voters, on the other hand, do not have such a confessional party to vote for and consequentially split their vote between various competing parties, which means that those who support the Right are not restrained from voting for the Extreme Right. Schwengler shows that in Alsace the Front National, in Switzerland the Schweizerischer Volkspartei and in Germany the Republikaner are supported by Protestants more than by Catholics.

Finally, there are two mistakes that are frequently made regarding the relationship between the Protestant denominations and the Extreme Right. The first one is to label “extremist” those arch-conservative parties which derive their ideology from a fundamentalist reading of the Holy Scriptures. Such parties exist in the Netherlands, where the Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij (SGP)⁴ is usually seen as representing the “ancient right” but not the Extreme Right. The second misconception involves the few attempts at building Protestant pressure groups in line with the ideology of the American Moral Majority. The Moral Majority may be criticized as reactionary; part of it promotes a kind of bigotry which is certainly a problem and may even at times lead to intolerance, but in America, it is more of a pressure group lobbying the Republican Party than a faction of the Extreme Right.

² The European Right Group existed in the European Parliament in 1984–1989.

³ On the anti-EU stand of the Ulster Unionists, see Picard 1992.

⁴ On the SGP, see Hippe, Kroeze, Lucardie, Walle, Voerman 2007.

Is Paganism the new religious creed of the Extreme Right?

The decline of monotheistic faiths has created a vacuum partially filled by “New Age” philosophies, the growth of conversions to Buddhism or Hinduism in a more or less “westernized” form and by the renewal of Paganism. This phenomenon is more visible in the Extreme Right subculture, where Pagan creeds are often mixed with racist or at least ethnocentric ideas, so much so that the major rift within the Extreme Right in Europe is perhaps that between neo-Pagan “völkisch” nationalists and Catholic fundamentalist nationalists, the former supporting the idea of a European federation of ethnic states, the latter clinging to the concept of the multi-ethnic Nation-State.

The relationship between Paganism and the Extreme Right is a complex one. On the one hand, not all Pagan movements are oriented toward the far right, and many of them are even influenced by anarchism, ecology and alternative thinking. On the other hand, it is obvious that many Extreme Right groups promote Paganism, mostly as an identitarian, anti-egalitarian outlook on the world, which they see as a tool in their fight against the egalitarian and universalist ideas of Christianity, described by many Extreme Right Pagans as “Jewish”. This is obvious in the ideology of the Identity Churches or the World Church of the Creator, which were created in the United States and later became popular among the European neo-Nazis, including the skinheads. But it is also the core of the ideology of the so-called “New Right”, a movement which has its roots in the French think-tank, GRECE (Groupement de Recherches et d’Etudes pour la Civilisation Européenne), launched in 1968, which later spread across Western Europe.⁵ For the New Right, the rebirth of authentic European values is only possible if the peoples of the continent go back to their roots by refusing multiculturalism and dropping the Christian values which were imposed upon them, without totally uprooting the pagan customs that still live among the unspoiled “folk”.

Who exactly are the Extreme Right pagans? The ethnologist, Christian Bouchet (1998)⁶, defines six sub-categories within Paganism: the denominational and non-denominational Pagans; the reconstructionists and the creationists, the volkisch and the universalist. According to him,

⁵ For an example of an appraisal of the Pagan revival from a New Right point of view, see Marlaud 1986 (past president of GRECE). However, the movements which are usually labelled New Right diverge on the issue of religion. The German weekly newspaper Junge Freiheit echoes the activities of both pagan and conservative Christian groups, and its Austrian counterpart, Zur Zeit, is conservative Catholic, as is the Portuguese sister publication, Futuro Presente.

⁶ Bouchet is the leader of the national-revolutionary Réseau Radical.

the radical Right wing of the pagan movement is to be found among the non-denominationalists, that is, among those for whom Paganism is a philosophy rather than a cult.⁷ This finding is, however, highly questionable: there are Pagan cults which are not far-right oriented, such as the Asatrufélagid in Iceland, where it is an official religion; and there are non-denominational Pagans who support a völkisch ideology and are active in Extreme Right politics, such as Pierre Vial and the late Jean Mabire in France. In fact, there are extremists in all sub-groups of the Heathen faiths, and the opposition between denominational and non-denominational Pagans lacks substance simply because Christianity is so much the ground on which European identity is built that Europeans can no longer revive the ancient Pagan cults except as a parody. Therefore, Paganism nowadays is no more than the “second religiosity” which Oswald Spengler saw as the sign of “The decline of the West”.

This can also be said of another trend within the Extreme Right spectrum: the interest in the occult, the paranormal and even satanism.⁸ Among the ideologues of “occult neo-Nazism” one may mention the names of such European activists as David Myatt in the United Kingdom and Savitri Devi (aka Maximiani Portas, a French citizen), not to mention non-European thinkers who have an influence in Europe like the Chilean diplomat, Miguel Serrano,⁹ as well as two American cults, the Church of Satan (founded by Anton Szandor La Vey) and the Temple of Seth (founded by Michael Aquino). These authors generally describe Adolf Hitler as the Messiah of the white man’s natural religion, often called “Aryanism”.

Finally, there is a long-lasting interest by many Radical Right activists, in the writings and lifestyle of the British occultist, Aleister Crowley (see Pasi 2006). One possible explanation for this is that the multiple failures of the Neo-Nazis to achieve any political significance in Europe, have led them to move away from political activism and take refuge in some kind of a political religious cult, which they think is accessible only to an elite of cognoscenti. The mix of occultism and Extreme Right ideology also exists within the narrow musical subcultures of Black Metal/Death Metal (see Dornbuch, Killguss 2005), Industrial Music/Dark Folk (see François 2006) and skinhead “Oi” music, which in the last decades have enabled some extremists groups, most

⁷ A Pagan cult may be defined as a non-monotheistic religion, complete with a divinity, rituals and clerical hierarchy.

⁸ On this topic, see Goodrick-Clark 2001: 215-217.

⁹ Some books in this vein or of these authors: Serrano 2001; on S. Devi see: Goodrick-Clarke 2000; Bolton 2003; Myatt.

notably within the skinhead scene, to make money they would be unable to raise by other means, and to use part of this money for political activities.¹⁰

This same concept, that only a handful of gifted individuals can understand the real motives ruling the evolution of the world, is shared by another subfamily within Extreme Right culture: that of the Traditionalists, who usually refer to René Guénon and Julius Evola¹¹ as their spiritual masters. Traditionalism, which is very popular among the national-revolutionaries and some segments of the New Right, is a doctrine of the decline of the West. Traditionalists are very critical of progress and democracy, which they despise as being the rule of the mob, which lacks access to the knowledge of the hidden truths. They also think that the West is in a continuous process of decadence since, at least, the period of the Enlightenment, and certainly since the end of the Middle-Ages. In the religious sphere, they pursue the quest for the perennial "Tradition", that is, a set of beliefs which include the cyclical evolution of world history; the necessity of a government of knights and priests; a caste conception of social hierarchy. The Traditionalists usually repudiate Christianity as a religion infected by modernism which is the vehicle for a lower spirituality. Instead they are fascinated by Islam and Hinduism to which many of them have converted, while others promote various brands of theosophy. In all cases, the fascination of a segment of the Extreme Right for those traditionalist philosophies can be interpreted as a repudiation of political activism and as an isolation from the reality of a world they feel no longer able to change by means of politics, or which they do not want to change yet, because they believe that a New Order can only be established after the complete collapse of the present order, a collapse they wish to hasten by way of the "Umschlag" attitude so central to the notion of the *Konservative Revolution*.

Is Islamism a Fascism? Can Islamism be an ally?

As has been stated, since the start of the second Intifada in 2000 and the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, a new polemical concept has emerged in the media and in would-be scholarly research: that of "Islamofascism" and "Nazislamism". It is not the subject of this article to explain why the use of these terms are not relevant to describe the content of Islamist ideology: let it be said only that Islamism, that is, the political project of fundamentalist Muslims to build an Islamic State ruled by the sharia, lacks most of the criteria selected by serious scholars

¹⁰ The sale of CDs as well as the organization of concerts seems to bring huge financial resources to such skinhead multinational groups as the Blood and Honor and Charlemagne Hammerskins networks.

¹¹ On Guénon (1886–1951) and the Traditionalist movement, see Sedgwick 2004; on Evola (1898–1974), see Boutin 1992.

in order to characterize a movement as “Fascist”. Islamism does not strive to impose a State-regulated economy and is not hostile to free-market economics, nor is it anti-conservative; it does not match Stanley Payne’s definition (Payne 1980). It is not a palingenesic attempt at bringing in the rebirth of an ethnic Nation, as characterized by Roger Griffin (1995), nor is it a “sacralization of politics by totalitarian methods” as writes Emilio Gentile (1996). The list could go on and on. However, this is not to say that Islamism is not a Totalitarianism: indeed, it is; nor does it mean that Islamism has nothing in common with the Extreme Right ideology, in fact, quite the opposite.

The similarities are quite a few: the Islamist parties want to build a State which although not ethnic gives different and non-equal civil rights to people on the basis of their religion, and discriminates against non-Muslims and women, who, in a sharia-State, are second-class citizens; the Islamists refuse secularism and are very suspicious of democracy; they despise the West and its values, to the extent that an Islamic thinker such as Sayid Qutb built his political system after a stay in the United States, where he lamented the corrupt mentality, materialism and evilness of everything non-Muslim (Qutb 2003). As a consequence, most Islamists share, to some extent, the belief that Jews are especially evil and should be annihilated, along with other non-believers, by way of jihad. Another feature shared by most factions within political Islam is the belief in various conspiracy theories¹² which are used to explain the plague of the Palestinians; the terrorist attacks of 9/11; the war in Iraq and even the spreading of AIDS. Those conspiracy theories are built on prejudices also popular with the Extreme Right: anti-Americanism; opposition to Freemasonry; belief in a “Zionist plot” in a fashion much reminiscent, and sometimes even referring to, the Protocols of the Elders of Zion. All in all, Islamism and the Extreme Right share what Richard Hofstadter (1996) called “the paranoid style” in politics.

When one writes about the *political* situation in Europe, however, the problem of Islamism is not at the forefront, because there are very few Islamist political parties. Where they exist, they are groupuscules whose media notoriety far exceeds their significance. The Islamic Party of Britain, formed by converts in 1989, disbanded in 2006 and never polled more than a few hundred votes in a general election. In Belgium, three parties have competed for the Muslim vote: Noor (the Light), the Parti Citoyenneté Prospérité (PCP) and its splinter group, Parti Jeunes Musulmans (PJM). In the 2007 general election in the Brussels-Hal-Vilvoorde

¹² Such theories are often shared also with the secular, Arab nationalist movement, including Christian thinkers such as Michel Aflak and Antoun Saadé, who are quite popular within the European Far-Right because of their unabashed anti-Semitism.

constituency, PJM polled 0.51 %. What is interesting to note is that the party, led by a convert who is close to Salafism, took part in a demonstration on September 17, 2005 against gay parents' rights organized by the Catholic fundamentalist leader of Belgique et Chrétienté, who is one of the major figures on the Belgian francophone Extreme Right scene. The same sort of joint demonstrations have taken place in France, where a minuscule Parti des Musulmans de France (PMF) exists. In 2003, a PMF delegation led by the chairman Mohamed Latrèche visited Iraq in order to show its support for Saddam Hussein's regime. Among the delegation were Hervé Van Laethem, the leader of the Belgium neo-Nazi group, "Nation", as well as French and Italian members of the Réseau Radical (see Vick 2003). Recently, when the PMF organized the first observation in France of al Quds Day, a worldwide demonstration set up by Imam Khomeini to spread "anti-Zionist" anti-Semitism, the Holocaust denier Pierre Guillaume was among the attendees.¹³

What do these contacts between Islamists and Far Right radicals prove? Some authors such as Alexandre Del Valle (2002)¹⁴ have suggested that there exists a "Red-Brown-Green" alliance of the Far Left, the Far Right and the Islamists, based upon a common hatred of Israel and the Jews, of Liberalism and the United States, and of the West in general. Such a concept contains some truth, if one is cautious enough to say that such an alliance does not include all these groups and individuals belonging to the aforementioned political families, that it is not a *permanent* alliance and that it is an ideological *convergence* rather than an alliance, for an alliance means that the allies conclude a pact, set common goals and common means to achieve them, something which is not the case here, unless one believes in conspiracy theory.

Nevertheless, relations with Islam have become a point of conflict within the Extreme Right and are worthy of study for their own sake. Succinctly put, the European Extreme Right today is divided into three opposing "families". One considers Islam to be an ally in the fight against the West (but the *ultima ratio* of this attitude is in fact, opposition to Judaism, for the United States and other countries are seen as "Jew-controlled"); another family is strongly Islamophobic and therefore considers Israel and the Jewish communities in the Diaspora as allies in the fight against the threat of what they imagine to be the Muslim take-over of Europe; and a third group opposes both Islam and Israel/Judaism, calling both alien to the European culture. This attitude is best exemplified by the French Bloc Identitaire, whose slogan is "Neither keffieh

¹³ The French "Journée Al Qods" took place on 6 October 2007 near Paris. During his speech, Latrèche proposed to those present to visit Iran at a cost of about 450 USD a week. Source: author's own observations.

¹⁴ For a more convincing approach to the problem, see Taguieff 2003.

nor kippa" (see Lebourg 2004), a motto which does not mean those who adhere to it have repudiated anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim racism.¹⁵

The rift between those tendencies within the Extreme Right is certainly most acute in France and the United Kingdom – in the French case, because of the country's colonial past in the Arab world and the presence of important Jewish and Muslim communities. Today, most Extreme Right political parties in Western Europe are more anti-Islam than they are anti-Jewish. This is one of the themes which clearly separate the Italian Alleanza Nazionale from its neo-Fascist rival group, Movimento Sociale-Fiamma Tricolore or the Rome newspaper, *Rinascita*. Other parties, such as the French Front National and the Flemish *Vlaams Belang*, still tolerate anti-Jewish and anti-Israeli prejudice but at the same time, given the respective impact of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia on their voting constituency, have chosen to approach the Jewish community in their country with gestures of goodwill, with very limited success.¹⁶

A few Extreme Right parties, which are not linked to the pre-Second World War fascist movement, and which are on the fringe of the Extreme Right party family like the Norwegian *Fremskrittspartiet* may even be said to be genuinely free of anti-Semitic prejudice. But the more one moves towards the fringe of the neo-Nazi or National-Revolutionary Far Right, the more one is likely to find parties which are totally committed to supporting militant Islam and anti-Semitism, such as the German *Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschland* (NPD). In fact, one of the lesser known aspects of the German neo-Nazi ideology is that it has likely broadly influenced the current Iranian government campaign in support of Holocaust-denial. Support for this is given by the fact that Mohammad Ali Ramin, president Ahmadinejad's adviser in charge of organizing the Holocaust-denial conference in Tehran in December 2006 was educated in Germany, where he became friends with the NPD activist Benedikt Frings and frequently refers to a pamphlet published in 1974 as source material. The pamphlet was written by the neo-Nazi Hennecke Kardel, who rambles on about Hitler's alleged Jewish origin (Kardel 1974). This kind of connection between the neo-Nazi Far-Right and the Muslim world is nothing new: in the 1980s, members of the *Wehrsportsgruppe Hoffmann* and independent German Nazis fought alongside the Palestine Liberation Front, with the obvious motivation of hatred of the Jews.¹⁷

¹⁵ For a good example of a racist and anti-Semitic formulation of the "neither keffieh nor kippa" political line, see Vial 2006 (leader of *Terre et peuple*).

¹⁶ See for example *Vlaams Belang* leader Filip Dewinter's interview to the American Jewish newspaper as reproduced on Dewinter's personal webpage.

¹⁷ For a fascinating account of such a militant's life, see Winterberg 2004.

However, what is new since the beginning of the Second Intifada, and the more so since Hamas came into control of the Palestinian Government (in January, 2006) and Hizbullah confronted the Israeli army (July 2006), is that the Extreme Right supports religious fundamentalist movements, both Sunni and Shia, whereas before it supported secular, Arab nationalist movements or States, such as Saddam's Iraq, Ghaddafi's Libya, the various factions of the Palestinian resistance, the Baath party or the Syrian Social Nationalist Party.¹⁸ There are reasons to believe, however, that the Radical Extreme Right does not much care about the subtleties of the Arab world: in its quest for alliances, it simply pursues the old goal of helping whomever may contribute to the destruction of Israel, to harming the Jews and undermining the Western world, which it sees as being ruled by a "Jewish plot".¹⁹ In conclusion, it may be said that the Extreme Right has little interest in Islam or Judaism as such: for it, supporting or opposing one or the other is merely a way of taking sides in the two major battles its adherents believe will shape the future of Europe: the fight against Muslim immigration and that against the assorted variants of the Jewish conspiracy theory, be it the "One-World Government" scheme, the fight against the "Zionist Occupation Government" or the domination of the United States.

Fascism within religious/ethnic minorities in Europe?

A panorama of the relations between the European Extreme Right and religious fundamentalists would not be complete without asking this question: are there religious fundamentalist movements other than Islamist and Christian which are active within the ethnic and religious minorities now present in Europe, and which may be labelled "Fascist" or Extreme Right? In other words, do we have reason to think that the old paradigm equating the Extreme Right with Christian fundamentalism and the newer paradigm equating Fascism with Islamism are only partially relevant? There are different answers to this question.

First of all, there are, within some of the ethnic immigrant groups now residing in (mostly Western) Europe, imported ideologies with a distinct religious and totalitarian flavour, and which have some Extreme Right connections. This is true of the Hindutva movement which is active among Indian expatriates of Hindu religious/ethnic stock, and which is represented in Europe by

¹⁸ Movements which have a record of supporting those States are the British-based International Third Position, the French Réseau Radical, the Italian publications Orion and Rinascita, the Libreria di Ar. This trend is mostly strong in Italy and within the extra-parliamentary movements in Germany and also, to a lesser extent, in France.

¹⁹ This certainly explains the interest of many Right Extremists in the various conspiracy theories which have blossomed after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and which attribute them to a "neo-Conservative", or Mossad-led (or both) plot, the conspiracy theorists insisting on the Jewishness of many prominent neo-Conservatives in the US.

the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) or the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP), which are active in the UK; the Netherlands and Germany. Both groups are nationalist, rabidly hostile to Islam and follow a strictly communal, sectarian and religious agenda. Both have raised an interest within the circles of the Extreme Right, mostly because of their anti-Muslim (not anti-Islamic) agenda. One of the major propagandists of Hindutva in the Western world is a Flemish far-Right activist, Koenraad Eelst, a neo-Pagan would-be scholar who is popular in India,²⁰ and who was an editor of the New Right Flemish journal, *Teksten, Kommentaren en Studies* between 1992 and 1995.

Another much discussed topic, not only within the Extreme Right but also, from a different perspective, within the pro-Palestinian Far-Left, is that of the existence of a Jewish Extreme Right. In Israel, there exist several parties and movements that have several of the characteristics of the Extreme Right, including an ethno-nationalist conception of identity and the State, the use of violence, contempt for democracy and sometimes an outright racist agenda calling for the deportation of Arabs. The outlawed Kach Party, founded by the late rabbi Meir Kahana, fits exactly into this category.²¹ However, the most extreme nationalist parties in Israel have an ethnic conception of Jewishness that does not always carry a religious ideology: Avigdor Lieberman's Israel Betainu party, for example, is strictly secular, while the Ihoud HaLeumi (National Union) party, led by Benny Elon, is a strange mix of national-religious Zionism and secular nationalism, advocating the transfer by force of the Palestinian population to neighbouring Jordan.

All the Israeli political parties have more or less permanently organized groups of supporters in the European countries where a sizable Jewish community lives. The same alliance between religious Zionists and secular nationalists does exist in the Diaspora: the National Religious Party (Mafdal) have increasingly moved to the Right, and so has the Likud,²² but small activist groups that have emerged to the Right of those parties, as a result of the resurgence of anti-Semitism after 2000, are mostly set up by secular Jews. For instance, the Jewish Defence League, founded in the United States and which has achieved media fame in France under the name *Ligue de Défense Juive*, is a self-defence organization led by non-religious people who have

²⁰ Eelst's magnum opus is undoubtedly *The Saffron Swastika: The Notion of Hindu "Fascism"* (2001).

²¹ On Kach, see Epstein 1990.

²² The Likud party, which has sections in most European countries, is based on the Revisionist Zionism of Vladimir Zeev Jabotinski (1880–1940). The myth of Jabotinski's fascination for Fascist Italy is extensively used by the far-Left, and sometimes by the Extreme Right itself, in order "prove" the existence of a Jewish "fascism". However, the Zionist Revisionist movement is more of a Jewish variant of the *Konservative Revolution*.

left the youth wing of the Likud (named Betar) and whose only concession to religious observance is that they do not stage activities on Saturday (the Jewish Shabbat).²³ This may not seem very coherent, but it is very much an expression of the difficulty faced by Jews who are active in communal life when it comes to defining themselves as either an ethnic/minority group or a religion.

In any case, it must be remembered that in the context of the sometimes hysterical controversy surrounding the debate on the Middle-East issue, the existence of very tiny movements of Jewish Extreme Right activists, mostly in France, has been the excuse for the Extreme Left and part of the pro-Palestinian movement to label the entire Jewish Right as "Fascist", and to equate Zionism with Fascism.²⁴ What they do not understand is that the only serious, although marginal, attempt at finding common ground between Jews and the Extreme Right has come from ultra-Orthodox, anti-Zionist fringe groups, who think their belief in race separation, in communalism and in opposition to the very existence of Israel will build bridges between them and the Black separatist, Muslim fundamentalist and White supremacist movements.

One key figure in this attempt is the American rabbi Mayer-Schiller, a teacher at Yeshiva University in New York, whose first contact with the Extreme Right goes back to his association with the British Third Way movement²⁵ at the beginning of the 1990s, and who summarized his thinking in an interview with the *Ulster Nation* (no. 32, July 2000) national-revolutionary magazine: "There are two things that threaten the West. One is liberalism, which is the destruction of faith and values and culture. The other is multi-racialism or multi-culturalism, which is essentially a peaceful invasion and take-over of these countries. Both of these things are hard to turn back the clock on once they have been done." Needless to say, this odd alliance has never borne fruit, although some segments of the European Extreme Right presently have an

²³ Interview with Eliahou N., leader of the Ligue de Défense Juive (LDJ), in October 2007, Paris.

²⁴ For a critique of the Extreme Left, see Sarfati 2002.

²⁵ Third Way described itself as "a nationalist and separatist movement ... committed to the preservation of our national and ethnic character". *Third Way* magazine 17, n.d. (1993). In June 1992, it organized a conference in London, where a Black American supremacist, Osiris Akkabila, represented the Pan-African International Movement; Mayer-Schiller shared the platform with him and an official of the Algerian Front Islamique du Salut, Ahmed Mesai, was also announced.

interest in the Neturei Karta sect, some of whose London- and Vienna-based dissident members attended the Holocaust denial conference in Tehran, in December 2006.²⁶

Finally, the Extreme Right is also present within Turkish immigration in Europe. This is a very interesting case of ethnic ultra-nationalism blending with religion (in this case, Islam). There are two political parties from the Extreme Right in Turkey: the Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi (MHP) and its youth wing, Bozkurtlar (Grey Wolves), and the Büyük Birlik Partisi (BBP), led by Muhsin Yazıcıoğlu. The former, which is very active in Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany, and to a lesser extent in France, is secular and mostly concerned about the ethnic essence of the Turkish Nation, although some experts within the German Verfassungsschutz believe that there is one "Turkish nationalist" and one "Turkish-Islamist" wing within MHP.²⁷ The latter split from MHP in 1993 precisely because it felt the party's Islamist credentials were "weak". It received 1.02 % in the 2003 general election and did not contest the 2007 election. It operates in Europe under the name of Avrupa Türk Birliği, or Verband der Turkischen Kulturvereine E.V. in Europa, and promotes a mix between the Atatürk tradition of nationalism and the Koran. Although BBP seems to have failed politically, while its rival MHP has become Turkey's third political force with 14.29 % of the vote, the movement is worth monitoring, because of its extreme anti-Kurdish and anti-Armenian propaganda, and also because of its alleged involvement in violent activities.

General conclusion

The Extreme Right, at least in Western Europe, historically takes its roots in the alliance between the Roman Catholic Church and the counter-revolutionary ideology of opponents to the Enlightenment. However, and despite the fact that this Extreme Right family remains active in Latin countries, the Extreme Right in general is today a largely secular movement. Fascism, with a few exceptions such as Falangism, the Iron Guard and Rexism, was secular. National-Socialism was predominantly anti-Christian. And if one tries to find a connection between Christian values and politics today, it is the tie between those values and the conservative, democratic Right, or between progressive Christian thought and the Left.

The Extreme Right retains an interest in religion, because it sees it as one of the components of national identity; the more so, since the presence of Islam in Europe has become

²⁶ The Neturei Karta group is, however, mostly put at the forefront by the European Extreme Left, which shares those Ultra-Orthodox Jews' extreme anti-Zionism and says that they represent the "authentic" Jewish religious tradition.

²⁷ On the MHP and BBP, see Verfassungsschutz des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen 2004.

the major concern of most Extreme Right political parties with significant electoral success. So, on the issue of religion, the present-day Extreme Right may be split into three families. One, best exemplified by the Dutch politician, Pim Fortuyn, seeks to defend free-thinking and libertarian values from what it perceives as the assault of Islam on the European tradition of separating Church and State. Another, by contrast, promotes “European civilization” against the threat of Islamization and immigration, and although it is not theocratic, sees Christianity as a cultural cornerstone of European civilization. This family, which lies at the crossroads of the ultra-conservative Right and the Extreme Right, is opposed, within the Extreme Right, by another family which has totally set aside any reference to religion and promotes a European identity based upon ethnicity and “racial awareness”. This is just another formulation of the old controversy between the “pro-Western” and the “Third Way” families of the Extreme Right.

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