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Kommentare (0)

The shifting shape of the European far right



This is the second article in our series *Trouble on the Far-Right*. For more information on the series, please click [here](#).

by Liz Fekete

Since 2011 signs have been multiplying in Europe of a far right grassroots insurgency in the making. And there were signals, too, of a racist insurrection: arson attacks, petrol bombs, paramilitary and vigilante activities, and the stockpiling of weapons. The first major indication of the far right's capacity for mass murder came from Norway on 22 July 2011. Anders Behring Breivik killed 77 people, mainly teenagers, whom he shot dead at the Labour Party youth summer camp on Oslo's Utøya Island. At his trial, Breivik described the youngsters he so cruelly murdered as 'traitors' who had embraced immigration in order to promote an '**Islamic colonization of Norway**'.

Breivik's actions, set against the backcloth of his 1,500-page manifesto, *2083: A European Declaration of Independence*, sent out to 1,003 people he considered fellow travellers ninety minutes before he embarked on his killing spree, should have alerted people to the dangerous ideological underpinnings of Europe's defence leagues, pro-identity and anti-Islam movements that were mushrooming across Europe. These cheerleaders for more and more wars in the Muslim world, which can broadly be described as counter-jihadism, began to emerge during the Gulf War but became more visible and vocal after the events of 11 September 2001. For a variety of reasons, the threat posed by these ultra-patriot movements was not taken seriously enough nor was there any reflection on the wider political context that was nourishing the far right.



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Neoliberal economic policies, emergency laws, a permanent war culture and the securitization of migration have all inflated the cause of the far right. And of course it finds echoes of its racist politics in the prevailing rhetoric against migrants, Muslims, Roma and the indolent poor, the 'scroungers' that hold the 'strivers' back. Yet the far right is insurgent. Its growth represents a

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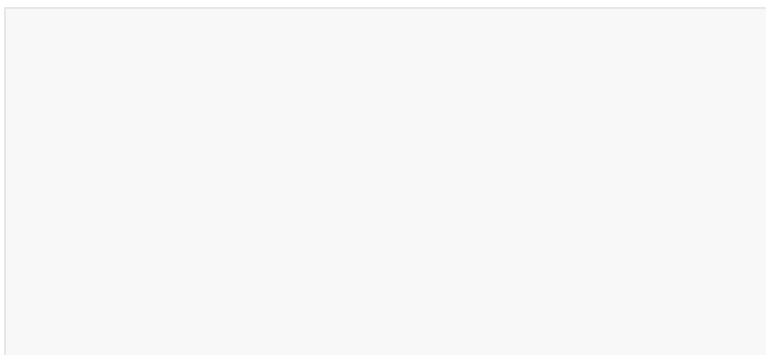
challenge to the neoliberal status quo inasmuch as the far right sees neoliberalism as antithetical to a hierarchical, nationalist, monocultural society with a strong state. But who are the political actors holding such views? In a chapter I have written for the Socialist Register Annual Yearbook¹, I provide an anatomy of the far right, from its various currents and mutations to its web of relationships, fanatical fronts, criminal subculture, provocations and violence.

Anatomy of the far right

It is hard to delineate precisely Europe's far right. It comprises a fluid, constantly mutating, evolving scene. The different ideological factions are loosely linked in a web of relationships, sometimes splitting off, sometimes coming together in the spaces provided by specific subcultures — around music and sport, for example. Football firms are now an integrated part of the far right. For instance, Hooligans Against Salafists (Ho.Ge.Sa), which first emerged in 2014 in Cologne, describes itself as a temporary fighting alliance between rival football firms and the ‚resistance against the true enemies of the homeland‘.

The various factions include the anti-capitalist CasaPound in Italy as well as the Autonomous Nationalists, which started in Germany but are now moving both westwards and eastwards. Their long hair and black clothes stand in stark contrast to the Free Forces, whose middle-class and professional supporters in Germany are sometimes referred to as the *Krawattennazis* (Tie Nazis). Easier to pinpoint are the white supremacists (Blood & Honour, KKK, Stormfront, White Aryan Resistance), the National Socialists (the most high-profile of which include the NPD of Germany and the Party of the Swedes), the pro-identity movements (such as the Bloc identitaire in France), and the defence leagues (such as the notorious English Defence League). More complex, because more hybrid, are the identity movements amongst the non-white dispossessed, particularly in France and Belgium, where the anger and sense of persecution amongst young people from the suburbs has been manipulated by demagogic figures (such as Alain Soral, Dieudonné M'bala M'bala and Laurent Louis) and directed towards anti-Semitic gesture politics, as epitomized by the giving of the **inverted Nazi salute**, the *quenelle*.²

Amongst the more traditional ideological brands on sale in the modern far-right marketplace are **Strasserism** (some argue that the Autonomous Nationalists are a continuation of the Strasser brothers' worker-based strand of National Socialism that was rejected by Hitler) and **Third Positionism** (anti-capitalist and anti-Marxist), a modernized variation can be found in the Italian '**fascists of the third millennium**'. Then, of course, there is counter-jihadism, which is best understood as a spectrum with street fighting forces at one end and cultural conservatives and neoconservative writers at the other. Riding all the tendencies and bringing the mutants together over specific causes are the nebulous and fanatical fronts that spring up from time to time, seemingly spontaneously, as vessels for discontent.



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Credit: Heiko Koch

Examples of the activities of these fanatical fronts abound — from the **summer 2013 protests** which swept through Bohemia in the Czech Republic of the so-called ‚decent citizens‘ against ‚inadaptable citizens‘ (i.e., Roma), to Printemps Francais, a homophobic network of Catholic fundamentalists and the far right which brought 150,000 people out on the streets of Paris against the proposed same-sex marriage law (the largest far right demonstration in France for thirty years). More recently, it was Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the Occident (Pegida) that swept on the scene, seemingly out of nowhere. They are racist mobilizations from below, swelling up from anger, fear and machismo at the grassroots, which is manipulated by the far right inasmuch as fascism flows from the same springs of racial hatred and social anomie.

From community politics...

They often start out as nebulous Facebook virtual protests around some specific local social tension (such as the housing of refugees or Roma, or a planning application for a mosque). From here they are elevated via social media into national causes. So-called ‚citizens initiatives‘ are organized, uniting the various fascist mutants with the so-called ‚decent, ordinary citizens‘ in a frenzy of aggression which is expressed through angry demonstrations in minority neighbourhoods. The violence is well captured in many short films on YouTube, such as **‘Captive Audience’** (an account of the anti-Roma mobilizations in the Czech Republic). Much is made of the ‚ordinariness‘ of the people who attend the demonstrations of Pegida. But their very ordinariness does not take into account the fact that neo-Nazis are considered ordinary in many parts of eastern Germany.

A close examination of its programme and activities shows that for Pegida, Islam merely serves as a convenient code word; its anti-Islam agenda, as Anthony Fano Fernandez so rightly pointed out, is an act of ‚sly, tactical opportunism‘. Pegida is a classic far-right anti-immigration movement. Throughout 2013-14 in Saxony there were ‚citizens‘ initiatives‘ against refugees, with protests outside asylum reception centres in towns such as Chemnitz and Schneeberg in the Ore mountains and Borna near Leipzig. Pegida’s supporters want to keep this part of eastern Germany white, free from immigrants. They are particularly angry that the federal government is dispersing asylum seekers from Syria to the region, and want to force it to reverse this stance.

... to criminality and paramilitarism

The far right may consist of various strands, but it has a common rendezvous in criminality. Today’s far right scene offers apprenticeships in pimping and extortion, money laundering, drugs and arms running, human smuggling, vigilantism and armed combat (**Scandinavian neo-Nazis are fighting in the**

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Ukraine). Major trials involving far right criminal conspiracies have either recently taken place or are ongoing in many countries: Germany (NSU), Spain (Anti-System Front – FAS), Austria (**Objekt 21**), Italy (New Order) and Hungary (Roma serial murders by neo-Nazis who formed their own private militia). All reveal collusion, either direct or indirect, between the neo-Nazis, the police, the military, the intelligence services, or a mixture of these elements. The year 2015 will see the trial of 72 members of Golden Dawn (including 18 MPs) on charges of forming a criminal organization, weapons procurement and soliciting murder; the trial of the Golden Dawn supporter who murdered **Pavlos Fyssas**; and the trial of three skinheads for the killing of the French 18-year-old anti-fascist **Clement Méric** in Paris in June 2013. The three defendants are allegedly linked to Troisième Voie (Third Way) and the Jeunesses Nationalistes Revolutionnaires (Young Revolutionary Nationalists), which were both banned immediately after Méric's murder on the grounds that they constituted a private militia and operated paramilitary training camps.

The far right has also taken it upon itself to impose its law, namely vigilante justice, with its own private militia and paramilitary squads. In Greece, prior to the arrest of its MPs, black-clad Golden Dawn supporters armed with clubs were in the habit of sweeping through migrant areas on motorbikes, beating everyone in sight. This took place under the watchful eye of the Hellenic Police, which between August 2012 and February 2013 were involved in their own sweep against migrants in the form of the racial profiling exercise Operation Xenios Zeus, which led to almost 85,000 suspected foreigners being forcibly taken to a police station for verification of their immigration status (it was found that 94 per cent had a legal right to remain in Greece). The court in the **trial of the Golden Dawn members** will be shown video evidence of party members dressed in paramilitary uniforms carrying out weapons training, their faces covered by motorcycle helmets.

In examining this record, it is important to remember that far right groups have not emerged in a vacuum. Nor are they entirely disconnected from the more respectable right and anti-immigration parties now represented in the parliaments and municipalities of every European country. It is important to acknowledge that far right violence grows when state institutions fail. A pattern of collusion, direct or indirect, between the military, the police and the intelligence services (or a mixture of all three) with the far right can be detected not just in Greece but all over Europe.

Fascism does not just hatch eggs on the margins of society. It breeds within existing authoritarian structures, within those spaces most shielded from public scrutiny, such as the police and intelligence services, which provide the perfect incubators.



Liz Fekete is the Director of the London based Institute of Race Relations and head of its European Research Programme. She writes and speaks extensively on aspects of contemporary racism, refugee rights, far-right extremism and Islamophobia across Europe and is author of the study *Pedlars of Hate: The violent impact of the European far Right*.




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1. This blog post is an edited extract of the book chapter: Fekete, Liz (2015): Neoliberalism and popular racism: the shifting shape of the European right. In: Leo Panitch und Greg Albo (Eds.): *The Politics of the Right*. Socialist

Register 2016. London: Merlin Press, 1–23. We are grateful to the publishers to permit the reuse of the material. [↗](#)

2. Alain Soral founded Reconciliation in France and in Belgium Laurent Louis heads up ‚Debout Les Belges‘. Soral, once a member of the French Communist Party, joined the Front National which he left in 2000. Jean-Marie Le Pen is godfather to Dieudonné’s son. [↗](#)

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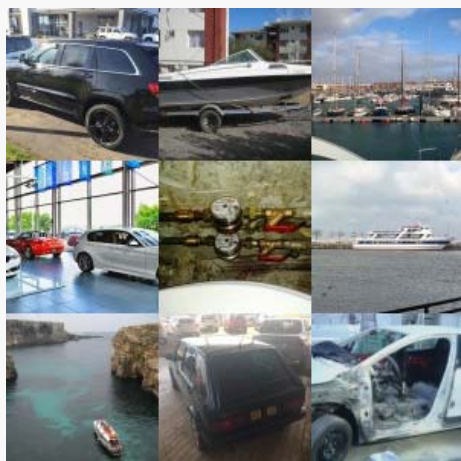
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