

# The Resurrection of the Radical Political Movements

**Abstract:** *In the last decade the radical political movements became a important threat to European democracies in the conditions of decline on popularity of main political ideological parties all across the Europe. Especially nationalist radical movements seems to became more popular between the citizens after they took from the populist parties the Euroskeptical message and the radical message against minorities or immigrants. The extremist message of those parties or radical movements it's pretty much the same even they are located in different counties or cultures. The radical message of Golden Dawn in Greece – an Christian Orthodox culture – is similar with the Magyar Hajnal (Hungarian Dawns) in Hungary – a Catholic and Protestant culture – or Progress Party from Norway – a more secular culture than religious based.*

*Our paper is focused on the origins of those parties in Europe and their radical message against immigrants or social/ethnic minorities. We argue that such parties succeed over the long term only when they both 1) build on pre-existing nationalist organizations and networks and 2) face a permissive rather than repressive political environment. Those parties develop themselves on the fertile ground of far right wing populism and assume a very narrow to the fascist discourse of the beginnings of the XXth century in order to contest the economical and democratic order. By adding factors such as historical legacies, party organization, and interactions between mainstream parties and far right challengers to the study of radical right parties, we can better understand their divergent trajectories*

On July 22<sup>nd</sup> 2011 in Norway, one of the most safe and socially just society, Andreas Breivik killed 77 people of whom 69 were attending a Social-Democrat youth meeting. The impact was enormous and suddenly the interest in the European extreme right surged. The massacre was not only carefully planned but justified by a long manifesto written by the attacker himself. The hate speech and xenophobia had been for years practiced on obscure Internet sites and forums but not it was out in the open.

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The Breivik manifesto is a glossary of the European and American extreme right discourse, exposing the hate and discontent of a white average person projected against the world in which he was born and raised. Breivik is the latest visible figure in a current which runs deep in the European history, originating in its modern form in the interwar period and resurrecting across the continent after the end of communism. How was that possible? Or more exactly how was that still possible after the Second World War in which the Third Reich and its extreme ideology was defeated?

Breivik's manifesto called 2083 – *A European Declaration of Independence* (Breivik, 2011) is a mixture of common sense ideas, intellectual resentment against a society failing to recognize his worth and re-

actions against the political and intellectual European mainstream. It also contains a guide to urban guerilla warfare whose principles were put in practice during the attack. The first public reaction after the tragedy was that the person was mentally deranged. Yet, the forensic psychiatrists evaluating Breivik judged that he was mentally sane.

The manifesto would have probably go unnoticed if not followed by the attack. And it would have been not so relevant if it was just a singular work. Texts and manifestoes, groupings and actions are multiplying of this type were multiplying in the last 20 years. His German counterparts also killed Turkish and Arab immigrants in the name of white supremacy (Breivik, 2011). Moreover, Beate Zschape, member of the National Socialist Structure, involved in the killing of 10 immigrants, was in direct contact with Andreas Breivik. These contacts show that the European extreme right has the capacity to formulate a transnational ideological program and to carry out violent attacks motivated by it.

For decades the European extreme right is promoting ideas and principles related to the racial white domination of other groups, in conjunction with the American one. But the groups were usually marginal and had no major political relevance. The dominant political model after 1945 was built on the tradition of the Enlightenment and universality of human rights. It had central values – equality, tolerance and non-discrimination but also a method – rational and public debate as opposed to identity clashes based on differences. After 1989 the only challenge left was to disseminate the model to the former Communist states taking the consolidated European democracies as stable and safe. Those expectations were expressed by Fukuyama (Fukuyama, 1994) and all others who revived the study of democratization and consolidation in the new context.

Yet, the reaction of the extreme right against political correctness after the fall of communism was particularly strong. Political correctness became a ‘soft totalitarianism’. As example, the Christian Conservative movements in US and Europe, using the momentum of the fall of the ‘atheistic’ Communism, reacted against political correctness as a form of Marxism and attempt to dissolve the stability of the bourgeois society. The political correctness was also questioned from the radical left. With the contestation from all sides it became increasingly difficult to preserve political correctness as a viable model.

The fall of communism and the apparent economic development associated with globalization triggered a discourse opposed to the political left, traditionally building on Enlightenment and equality and individual liberty as cardinal values. Loosing their adversary – the Soviet style communism, Western democracies also lost their purpose and identity. Soon after the celebratory euphoria phased out the lack of direction was keenly felt, both elites and citizens being unable to find an uniting democratic narrative.

The Western political left, in its dominant Social-Democratic form was also in a state of confusion. Its main economic narrative was based on absolute economic liberty and the retreat of the state as part of the globalization megatrend. They had replaced the working class with the middle class as preferred historical agent and configured their politics to bring in this class the relative deviants – lower middle and upper middle classes. The social groups who for various reasons were not able to join the middle class – extremely poor, uneducated, marginal skills, disabled, turned into misfits of the new globalized world.

Reading the works of Anthony Giddens (Giddens, 2001, 2001) and Tony Blair (Blair, 2001) one realizes how social democracy gave up on trade-unionism, equality of chances and strong economic regulation. This turn had also a historical significance – deprived or vulnerable social groups, especially ethnic, were abandoned as constituents of a future progressive society.

The official mainstream discourse maintained the centrality of equality, human rights and multiculturalism. Later on, multiculturalism was officially abandoned by European centre – right key leaders. In 2010 the German Chancellor Angela Merkel affirmed that multiculturalism was a complete failure. David Cameron, the British Conservative Prime minister was equally critical: “Under the doctrine of state multiculturalism, we have encouraged different cultures to live separate lives, apart from each other and the mainstream. We have failed to provide a vision of society to which they feel they want to belong. We have even tolerated these segregated communities behaving in ways that run counter to our values” (Cameron, 2011). The French President Francois Sarkozy agreed: Multiculturalism failed in Europe and France because we took too much care about the identity of the ones who came and not enough care about the identity of the country receiving (Sevilla, 2012).

Abandoned in the retreat of the political Left and the governments, the vulnerable social groups, especially ethnic, cultural, gender and economic minorities, became the targets of right wing populisms and nationalisms of all sorts. Paradoxically or not, those taking advantage of the retreat of the Left were not the Conservatives but the right wing populists who promoted a rather ambiguous doctrine – supporting capitalism and globalization but strengthening of the nation state and the Judeo-Christian traditions against it. This ambiguity ended with the 11<sup>th</sup> of September attack and the War on Terror. The civilization fault lines materialized and the enemy gained a name and a face – the Foreigner, and especially Islam.

Right wing ideas became more widespread as the mainstream politics transformed itself, providing opportunities for development. Right wing populists are surprisingly well represented in the European politics. The current European Parliament structure following the 2014 elections reflects the shifts in opinion, attitude, organization and reach of the right wing. What makes these new movements so appealing? What kind of expectations are these movements produce and meet? A part of the answer is that they successfully create myth-based political narratives. A myth is an idealized pattern of behavior whose realization or re-enactment gives sense to individual life and provides orientation for social action.

Apart from *homo sapiens*, *homo faber*, *homo ludens* or *homo religiosus* there is a *homo mythologicus*. *Homo mythologicus* needs to believe in what he or she does, constantly looking for sense, explanations and utility. Myths organize these needs and supply to individuals and communities convincing narratives (Cassirer, 2001). As they are projected in the past, myths provide a measure of success by approximation and imitation. They also depict not real history but an imaginary one, describing the past not as it was but as to fit in the narrative. Myths can have a mobilizing role thus playing important social and historical roles. But it also can function as delusional devices, hiding real history and isolating the individual from present realities. It can also act as refuge for those who are unhappy with the real world and seek a sort of symbolical safety within it.

Myths can be tribal or archetypal. The first use a differential and confrontational logic. The later propose a uniting scope which summons individuals around a superior idea and common good. It features a project that resembles the initial exemplary model (the archetype). The archetypal myths are used as engines for reaching common goals. It is a more “contractual” type, based on common interests and less emotional. The tribal myths are the preferred choice for populists. They have four constitutive elements: the damned enemy; the chosen people who can and must be saved; providential savior; and the salvation solution – simple, accessible and convincing.

The enemy can be anyone identified as the *Other* (Girardet, 1997): neighboring societies, competitors, regions, empires, social categories, minorities, professions. It can be America,

Europe, Russia, Arabs, Jews, Muslims, immigrants, corrupt, poor, rich, politicians. The list is endless and subject to continuous change. The enemy is equally vicious and guilty. The *Us* is a virtuous collective victim, ready to cede power in order to attain the common goals. Access to happiness is conditioned by sacrifice. But inaction can turn some of *Us* in accomplices of the enemy so the situation invites continuous scrutiny over the motivation and fidelity. The *Savior* – in fact the populist leader it is not only the one wishing the defeat or disappearance of the enemy but the one accepting the sacrifice for saving the collective *Us*. The sacrifice is to be happily accepted by the group who avoids taking personal risks. The solutions given by the savior are not evaluated in regards to their capacity to solve the problems but in their success meeting the expectations of the group. Thus the failures are never attributable to the leader. As the mythical behavior is based on the confusion between real and possible, the group is satisfied by the indication of a remedy and preferred course of action coming from the leader. The satisfaction of having the dream confirmed is enough. (Girardet, 1997)

Members of the group not even wait for the dream to materialize. The lack of fulfillment doesn't kill of the dream or its supporter. A dream can be killed by another dream and a myth by another myth. Until then the solutions apparently efficient only fail to reach the desired goals. For such failures a democrat leader would be sanctioned by the people. The populist leader is not responsible for the concrete results but for the maintaining the comforting sentiment that they are attainable. In practice he is not responsible at all. The populist and populism can only be defeated by the symbols that they created, when they loose control over them or the myths and symbols that replaced them.

As David C. Art highlights, radical right movements were born following this particular populist pattern (Art, 2001). After the fall of communism radical right movements were deeply marginal. The general populist turn in European politics provided a window of opportunity for the extreme right. Golden Dawn in Greece, Jobbik in Hungary, and the National Democratic Party in Germany are hybrids of right wing ideology and populism. But whereas many populist parties remain only rhetorical the right wing ones move into action. Coming back to Norway, the Progress Party which is nationalistic and xenophobe calls for the limitation of migration and does not incite for the mass murdering of immigrants and socialists. But Andreas Breivik took the ideological model and acted violently against the Enemy.

The set of right wing ideas are very similar in the European political space, all of them being founded on what Erich Fromm called '*escape from freedom*' (Fromm, 1998) even though they all claim that they are liberating and the leader sees himself as a liberator. The oppressive element that they fight is not a colonizer as is the case of tiermondisme but a diffuse cultural invader spreading insidiously his influence trough cultural channels many of them new and pervasive.

The enemy is the Other – completely foreign and impossible to be assimilated (Art, 2011), whose actions weakens the "Self" (national/religious/cultural). Thus the extreme right is xenophobe even though its form and targets differ from society to society. The French and North European extreme right is islamophobe while the Eastern one – Czech and Hungarian is anti-Rroma. They display an instinctual rejection of alterity in its biological form – skin color, smell, etc. The Slovak and Hungarian Rroma are Catholic but this commonality fades before the dominant prejudice against them. In Western Europe, religion is a key factor in reinforcing the distance. In the Bulgarian case –ATAKA, the right wing party is against the Turkish minority and as a consequence developed an islamophobe dimension. The Muslim Turks in Bul-

garia are treated as Hungarian or Czech Roma, whereas the Bulgarian Roma, despite their Orthodox religion share the position of the Muslim Turks.

These variations show that there are major differences in how the Enemy is defined and approached – culturally, religiously and politically. It is a common error to assimilate all these currents with the interwar fascism and Nazism. There is a certain fascination with the hierarchy, uniforms, colors and symbols (see the rune on the Golden Dawn logo). Yet, the majority of right wing movements reject this connection, taking on instead the right wing populist discourse and adding a violent militant attitude. Michael Bruter and Sarah Harrison (Bruter, Harrison, 2011) showed that it is difficult to identify a direct link between these movements with Nazism, the extreme right being more the violent form of the European right wing populism.

The European right wing is build around strong xenophobic attitudes, as islamophobia, anti-immigration or anti-minority. Xenophobia is sometimes doubled but a mythology of white man's superiority – European and/or Western, but this is less racial but grounded in culture and economic factors. The interwar has had an impact, the European extreme right importing through the US (see Bauer Schmitter, 2001) a strong social Darwinism. This social Darwinism values certain societies which were able to innovate and develop as opposed to backward societies whose relative development and modernization is attributed to the influence of the first category through colonization. This is the base for the discontent with the immigrants who in principle recognize the superiority of the receiving society but do not want to change their customs and their cultural model ending in conflict with the majority. To the three streams of xenophobia we might add another one, the rejection of the intra-European immigrants mostly Romanians and Bulgarians, whose presence is deemed corrosive to the safety and economic status of western Europeans.

The last type of xenophobia is also a reaction against socially defined categories – economically vulnerable and in need of social assistance (Golden Dawn referring to them as to "social parasites"). Thus the radical groups in Greece and Hungary do not attack immigrants only but also their co-nationals viewed as economically or socially useless. The reactions against those at the fringes of society become a key mark in recognizing the extreme right movements.

The obsession with superiority can be traced back to the Italian fascist vitalism rooting in Nietzsche's philosophy (Conway, 2002). Their perceived superiority is based on nationalism and Arianism (not in racial but cultural terms) in equal measure. Geert Hofstede asserts that there is a significant influence of the national cultural model on individual behavior. In his work *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the mind* (Hofstede, 1991) the cultural model of the organization (nation) is determining the behavioral, work, and leisure individual patterns including the base structure of values and ethics. This perspective is highlighting national differences in individual values. Hofstede was not of course concerned with offering to the extreme right a justification for its ideas but his work was misused including in Breivik's manifesto (Breivik, 2011)

The extreme right twists Hofstede's model considering that some cultures are superior to others and not simply different. For its supporters the most successful cultural model seems to be the Western/Christian capitalist one. During modernity and post-modernity it allowed unprecedented technological innovation, economic development and social modernization. This is the reason the extreme right is not following the anti-capitalist interwar doctrine but the populist extremism which supports capitalism. A social Darwinist perspective opposing not individuals but collectivities/nations struggle for survival in which foreigners are a weakness.

The relation between the extreme right and the economic crisis is not entirely clear. The crisis disrupted the social stability of the European societies and the consensual character of their politics. In the crisis, the extreme right presented itself as a way to return to older values and a model to protect the middle classes whose position was threatened by the various strands of the radical left including anarchist. Appealing to the cultural tradition, work and capitalism – ideological key constructs in the last 30 years, the extreme right became the guardian dog of the capitalism as described by Naomi Klein. The extreme right is essentially a reactionary ideology, aiming at preserving the status quo in this case the well-off position of groups reaping the benefits of capitalism. Thus, the extreme right must use consensual myths as unity and savior and to generate the fear of conspiracy and foreign invasion (Klein, 2008).

The extreme right movements gained more influence during and being opposed to the European socialist governments. The later were considered corrupt, unable to solve social problems and too hospitable to immigrants especially ones coming from the outside of the European space. For this reason it was possible to merge the ideological critique and the attack on multiculturalism and political correctness. In parallel the return to “tradition” meant the revival of spiritual/religious and national culture values (Albrecht, 2013). In the Orthodox societies – Greece, Bulgaria, Cyprus and Romania – there is a strong tendency to return to the agrarian moral community, fearing God and dully accepting the crisis and twists of history in general. The Church is taken as partner in the attacks on political correctness and multiculturalism, as a reaction to modernity and postmodernity. In the Catholic and Protestant societies the dominant churches are not part of the grand battle against multiculturalism.

With or without the support of the Church the extreme right is becoming more violent against sexual minorities, feminism and liberty of conscience, all considered and forms of socialism and multiculturalism. The extreme right is trying to become an ideology of the reaction of middle class against the changes produced by the transition from modernity to postmodernity. And here is a paradox of extreme right ideology. By asserting the political and moral stability of the middle class it attacks the very foundations it was built after the second world war: liberty, tolerance and dynamism.

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