

Interview with Professor Tamir Bar-On

Tamir Bar-On is one of the world's leading experts on the European New Right. He is the author of [Where Have All the Fascists Gone?](#) (2007) and [Rethinking the French New Right: Alternatives to Modernity](#) (2013) and is currently a professor of political science at Monterrey Institute of Technology and Higher Education in Queretaro, Mexico, and a fellow at the [Centre for the Analysis of the Radical Right](#).

Note: Extensive interviews with Professor Bar-On were conducted by Benson Cheung, Political Capital's intern and student at the Munk School of Global Affairs at the University of Toronto, ON. The interviews were recorded in three sessions between August and October 2018. The following article is an abridged, condensed, and edited version of those sessions for the purposes of clarity, coherence, and readability.

What is the European New Right, and what are some of their major ideological tenets?

I would say that the European New Right is used interchangeably with an intellectual movement that's called the French New Right, or the Nouvelle Droite. This intellectual movement emerged in 1968 in France. It was a group of forty intellectuals who created one of the major think tanks of the Nouvelle Droite called GRECE, which is Group for Research in the Studies of European Civilization. Their aim was essentially to rethink the sterile legacy of the right. 1968 (when they're founded) is the heyday of the New Left and the major demonstrations in France, and so these New Right intellectuals seemed to have some envy for the New Left at the time. They seemed to think that they controlled the laboratories of thought, the universities, the mass media, and they argue that for the right to be ascendant again, it, like the New Left, needs to work on the terrain of culture. It needs to capture the laboratories of thought, it needs to capture the mass media, it needs to capture peoples' consciousness in respect of issues that concern them, issues like national and regional identity, immigration, multiculturalism, views of the past in respect of Vichy or fascism or collaborationist regimes. So, they essentially decided that "we need to kind of capture the laboratories of thought" (as they would put it) and that becomes a prelude to a larger anti-liberal revolution.

Now, you asked about the ideological tenets of the New Right. First of all, there are a lot of anti's. They are anti-liberal, meaning root-and-branch they want to destroy liberalism. They're anti-capitalist, [and] there have been traditions on the left and on the right that have been anti-capitalist, including fascism. They're anti-communist and anti-socialist. Actually, they believe that liberalism and socialism emanate from the same logic of egalitarianism, and that logic of egalitarianism has its roots in what they consider the egalitarianism of the Judeo-Christian tradition. Anything that's egalitarian they're against, because they want to create, as a movement on the right, more anti-egalitarian, hierarchical societies based on what they consider is global diversity.

Some other tenets they believe in: paganism, which is very interesting because if we were to think of the right in general, we would think that the right is more traditionalist, maybe (depending on the country) more oriented towards Catholicism or Protestantism and its

traditions, and here you have a right that is actually pagan, that rejects the Judeo-Christian tradition because for them, it [creates] the seeds of egalitarianism.

If you're very interested in the tenets they uphold, as well as in a positive sense, you can look at the manifesto they wrote, the "New Right in the Year 2000", and it was written originally in a French journal called *Éléments* in 1999, actually a Nouvelle Droite journal. It was written by Alain de Benoist, the leading thinker of the French New Right, and Charles Champetier, another thinker of the French New Right who's much younger. I could highlight some of the positive tenets they're in favour of.

They claim they're in favour of "small is beautiful", that is ecological sustainability, regional diversity, so they believe in the notion of (and this is from Yann Fouéré, a Breton nationalist that they adopt) "Europe of a Hundred Flags." Currently, they would argue that there are many peoples under the thumb of the assimilationist logic of the nation-state, and so in order to enhance the diversity of the European continent, you would essentially have to give autonomy or independence to more peoples, whether they're Bretons, or Basques, or Catalans, or Chechens.

You mention they brought two major innovations to the ideological toolkit of the right: the "right to difference", and metapolitics. Is that correct?

Sure, and this is as well in the positive sense, meaning that they're not always a collection of antis. The "right to difference" would essentially mean the end of multiculturalism, and the creation of a heterogenous world of homogenous communities. This is what they would like. In terms of global power relations, it would mean a multipolar world, and they argue this would enhance the "right to difference" as well, because if you have a superpower, it will tend to impose a uniform, homogenized model. They would replace the capitalist system with a system in the service of the people as well. They are fans of direct democracy as well. You know, some people have suggested that this direct democracy is a kind of mechanism to allow titular majorities to get rid of minorities, like immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers.

You mention metapolitics as well. I think this is positive also in the sense that it kind of took a long time before the right achieved some respectability, but now we see that it's become quite standard that the right is doing well all over Europe. The right has entered coalition governments, including the extreme right, in numerous countries. It got close to 37% of the popular vote in France, it's in coalition government in Austria and Italy. [Sarah de Lange](#), who's a scholar of the right, mentions lots of countries in which, since the 1990s, the far right or extreme right has entered coalition governments, including Norway, Slovakia, Poland, in addition to the ones I mentioned, like Italy and Austria.

Maybe I should mention one more and this is quite interesting, but I said that the names are used interchangeably, French New Right and European New Right. In their manifesto, that at the lowest levels possible (that is, at the local and regional levels), control would be by the peoples of the regions, but at the supranational level, there would be control in terms of matters of banking, common defence, currency, by Europe. Now it wouldn't be a European Union as it's currently constituted, because for them, the European Union undermines national sovereignty. It is too liberal, too capitalist, and too technocratic. It would be a different type of pan-European

union that they would propose. This is not necessarily novel: there were fascists just after WWII, as early as 1951, proposing something similar, that is [at] a conference in Malmo in 1951, including one of the key figures there, a guy called Oswald Mosley, who was a British fascist.

Since you brought up fascists, can you explain further what are some of the connections between the classic interwar fascists, the postwar fascists like Mosley or [American fascist Francis Parker] Yockey, and the French New Right?

You know, this is a question that's really been difficult, and I have to confess sometimes I've oscillated on this question in terms of how to classify them. I have to admit as well that I've recently undergone some changes on that view, in the sense that I think we have this tendency when we see the right to automatically say "oh well, let's make the connection with Nazism, fascism". We tend to hype it more than maybe necessary. Now, the title of my book (*Where Have All the Fascists Gone?*) doesn't help, so you know, I contribute to this, I would acknowledge.

In terms of differences between the interwar fascists, the postwar people like Yockey and Mosley, and people like de Benoist and the French New Right, I would say that a major difference is the focus on metapolitics, and I would say that here people like Yockey and Moseley contribute to this, as do others like [Belgian neo-fascist Jean-Francois] Thiriart. But de Benoist takes it to another level. He says, "we have to create an intellectual right, a respectable right, and we we're not going to do this if we're fighting amongst each other and we're engaging in violence on the street. We need to present an intelligent face to the right."

This is not to say that the fascists of the interwar years completely negated metapolitics, but they were more about using violence, about violence as a hygiene, as a cleansing [force that was good] for the nation, the martyrdom of death. While de Benoist might be sympathetic to those ideals, that's not something that he focuses on, so what he's trying to do and what the French New Right's trying to do is, in a way, to comment on all the issues of the day, to also create a body of work that is philosophically and politically coherent, and to give a very respectable face to the right as a prelude to eventually capturing power.

Now, another major difference between the interwar fascists and people like de Benoist is this worldwide ethnopluralism. Fascists in many instances were, as Stanley Payne points out, crudely imperialistic, and so the idea of valorizing ethnic diversity would not have been something they would have necessarily supported, although some fascists would have supported different kinds of routes towards fascism for each country. I think that's another difference.

I think that having said that, there are also quite a few similarities. Now, de Benoist would not identify himself as a fascist and doesn't think he is, although he's been accused by many people (including by myself) of something close to that. But, if you look at all his...for example, that he wants to get rid of [liberalism root and branch], that he's anti-socialist, anti-liberal, anti-capitalist, that he's in favour of...for example, he's valorized ethnic homogeneity within states (although he claimed in an interview that he did not), all these things actually are very similar ideologically to the interwar fascists. The obsession with anti-materialism, that is, the type of

society they're creating is actually spiritual and anti-material, was something that's very similar to the fascists.

The authors that he cites all the time, and the mental gymnastics that he engages in, to support the likes of Carl Schmitt (the crown jurist of the Nazis), suggest to me sympathy for that worldview. [Marco Revelli](#), who's an Italian scholar, one time suggested that the vast pantheon of the works cited by the Nouvelle Droite (you just have to look at their website) are from the 1920s and 1930s, and in particular the Conservative Revolutionary thinkers, people like [Arthur] Moeller van den Bruck, Ernst Jünger, etc.

It's not an easy question. Part of the problem as well is what type of definition are you're going to use for fascism? And then there's lots of historians of fascisms. For example, one of the things I try to do in *Where Have All the Fascists Gone?* is to try to use Stanley Payne's definition and then try to see how that fits with the French New Right today. But it's interesting: you do see a kind of evolution from kind of more violent blackshirt/brownshirt of the interwar years to kind of slowly an acknowledgement of the postwar thinkers of the growing importance of metapolitics and the kind of growing recognition that violence isn't going to be as acceptable, and also the growing recognition (remember the French New Right grew out of the experience of the loss of [French] Algeria) that peoples around the world no longer want to be ruled by others, that the epochs have changed. And so, if you're a person of the far right, you have to adapt to those circumstances and I think the French New Right did this very well. De Benoist says in one of his books, "I am for white power, but I'm equally for black power and yellow power", and he says, "I am for France for the French, and Algeria for the Algerians." I mean, it is slightly different from interwar fascists, but at the same time, that type of worldview has problems with questions of internal diversity within a society. That is, what are you going to do with people in a society that's France for the French, or Algeria for the Algerians, that are not French-French or Algerian-Algerians? I think this is a problem that is difficult for the French New Right to resolve.

You point out that there's this loophole of not explaining what they're going to do with the minorities there, and that this is a potential loophole for more violent measures to occur.

I think we could say that for example the French New Right calls for more referenda. Imagine a referendum on issues like "do you want refugees in your country?", "do you want more immigrants into your country?", or questions of referenda that affect minorities already there in the country. Imagine in these referenda that people vote for massive expulsions. I think that the French New Right would have no problem with that because they would say that the people have spoken. They are these proponents of direct democracy, and they would say, you know what, finally the true values of the people have spoken against the elites, the political elites, the EU elites, that are imposing this fake multiculturalism on us, these open borders, valorization of immigrations and refugees. So what they say has happened is that ultimately the people have spoken, that is the titular majorities have spoken. Although very different from blackshirts attacking trade unionists or leftists or other political opponents through open violence, obviously there is a type of violence there if those measures come into fruition, that people would be uprooted. Now I'm not suggesting that people can't have borders or have different views of who comes in and who doesn't come in. I think that's the right of all sovereign states. Obviously the

French New Right takes this to another level, if I might say, to a Trumpian level where you really have to change how it is that you control your borders, who comes in and who doesn't come in.

On the issue of immigration and race, how does the European New Right's racism and chauvinism differ from more mainstream contemporaries during the Cold War, like Charles de Gaulle or Enoch Powell?

Some people have referred to it as a kind of cultural racism. De Benoist swears that he's not a racist. He actually claims that he's for the "right to difference" between societies, and within societies, because I questioned him about this in a debate I had with him in the *Journal for the Study of Radicalism*. Except, what I see again is their problem with diversity within societies. I would differentiate between their valorization of diversity of older established titular groups, groups that have been submerged by the assimilationist logic of the nation state (groups like the Bretons, Basques, or Scottish), because they argue that those people should have at minimum a lot of autonomy or independence, and then diversity in terms of immigrants and refugees, which they don't seem to valorize. They're very heavy critics of multiculturalism within societies. I think that this is their key problem in terms of the question of diversity. If they valorize diversity in a worldwide sense, worldwide ethnopluralism, why not also valorize diversity within societies, and I don't see that because I see, for example, one of the main planks of that manifesto is being against immigration, and another main plank is being against multiculturalism. So, obviously being critics of refugee policies of the EU countries, I'm sure they are supporters of Orban's policies on refugees in the sense that he doesn't let them in, and some other Central-East European countries.

I think there's a bit of a contradiction in terms of their valorization of worldwide ethnopluralism, and the fact that within societies, they really do have problems with people that somehow don't fit the mould, whether it's French-French or Breton-Breton, that is, whether it's a Jew or a Vietnamese coming to France, or a North African coming to France, or a Kurd coming to Germany. I think with those questions, in terms of how those people fit into the nation or region, that's something they have more problems with.

In the super-unlikely event that their utopia actualizes on Earth, what's going to happen to not just the immigrants (whom you can box into a neat category), but also for existing mixed ethnicities people?

What we realize...in places like Italy and Hungary, where the far right is quite strong or in power, is that it does have a serious effect on immigration policies. Now that doesn't mean that illegals aren't going to stop coming; that's very clear. We've already seen for example the Northern League [in Italy], they've actually in a sense supported internment camps even for refugees. What I suppose that could happen is more referenda in which people are removed from the body politic, people who don't fit into the mould of the body politic. That's quite difficult to do with people who are citizens; that's going to be very, very difficult and I'm sure there's going to be a lot of barriers. I don't see that happening. But in terms of people who are non-citizens, I think that's the way to go if the Nouvelle Droite could do it. It would be through a kind of legal, democratic means. The metapolitics has worked so much that people believe that these people

are so fundamentally different from us that they shouldn't be here, that they dilute our identity, they undermine our identity, and we legally vote to get them out of here. That's the way I see that could happen. De Benoist has not openly supported violence, so that is a serious change from the period of the interwar years, where there was a lot of violence, obviously by the far right and fascists, but also by the far left.

Can you talk a little about where the concept of metapolitics came from?

The way I see it is that metapolitics that the French New Right use comes from their reading of [Italian communist intellectual Antonio] Gramsci. De Benoist is a big fan of Antonio Gramsci, he's written a lot on Gramsci. I think the reading of Gramsci and the events of 1968 and the cultural power they see of the left of the period, convinces them that this is the best route to take. That is, the long route through the wilderness for the right will be first to capture the laboratories of thought. That is, Gramsci pointed out that in fact, the capture of cultural power is the precondition for the capture of political power, and that the terrain of civil society is the terrain of counter-hegemonic contestation, and it's there that we could in fact create the dominance of our ideas that eventually will create a kind of schism between the hegemonic ideas in support of capitalism and liberal democracy, and our ideas, which are distinctly anti-capitalist and anti-liberal, and that eventually, people will come to see the logic of our ideas, whether it's on capitalism, whether it's on immigration, whether it's on national and regional identities, worldwide ethnopluralism, etc.

Why did the original generation of New Right thinkers believe they could successfully implement metapolitics in the form of complete abstention from worldly political affairs?

[Metapolitics] is a different route towards politics. Metapolitics is not an abstention from politics, it's not going into realm of memoirs or poetry. It's not even Evolian. You know, [Italian fascist intellectual Julius] Evola had the idea of riding the tiger, and you had to wait for the right kind of period before you challenge the system. No, I think this is a kind of activist politics but that focuses on the cultural realm, that focuses on the battlefield of ideas, and if [the European New Right] win the battlefield of ideas, [they] will eventually, as the right in general, come to power.

I think they had a very astute strategy and understood very well this [disdain] for violence... Remember, 55 million people died in WWII, so they understood that a different approach was needed by the radical right, or by the revolutionary right. [TBO adds: Yet, it does not change the fact that the *Nouvelle Droite* only tactically supports liberal democracy.] They are actually root-and-branch against the entire system.

One of the novelties (or thing that makes the New Right "new") is that they took a page out from the Left, they read Gramsci. In your book you've gone on at some length about whether that makes them actually left-wing in a sense. You also talked about how their mission is to transcend the left-right spectrum. In that sense, why is it significant that they want to transcend that left-right spectrum?

If they actually can do that, so they can actually claim to be really new. Now, you know that spectrum has been around since the French Revolution. The other thing I think why they engage in that discourse is that they truly believe that they're actually beyond right and left. I think a third reason is that they believe that there are issues that they focus on that really transcend right and left, and that they can really get to these constituencies, whether they're right or left. Meaning, for example, issues like immigration, national and regional identities, multiculturalism. They believe that rightists and leftists will equally perhaps reject multiculturalism, or the idea of completely open borders.

As for their relationship to the New Left, there's the case of whether the [formerly New Left] journal *Telos* argues that the New Right is actually part of the New Left. Can you speak about this curious horseshoe convergence between them? And what makes the New Right not part of the New Left, contrary to what *Telos* believes?

I was actually quite shocked when I saw this journal issue. It was in 1994, and it actually got me studying the French New Right, when I saw that double issue of *Telos*. [*Telos* editor Paul] Piccone asked a question in that issue, whether the French New Right was actually the New Left now, and whether they actually had common cause. He came to the conclusion that they're basically 95% like the New Left. I kind of had problems with that, and one obvious way in which they're different is that the French New Right opposes the idea of administrative equality. This is a big thing; if you're a woman, if you're a minority, if you're from a different cultural community, that you have this administrative equality that's backed by the state, or if you don't have it. I see that that's what, in a sense, keeps them as right as opposed to left.

In terms of the anti-imperialism aspect of the New Right, whereas the pre-WWII far right was all about expansion, empire and *Lebensraum*, the European New Right believes in regionalism and federalism, but at the same time, you also have pointed out that they believe in a transnational or supranational empire of a hundred flags. Can you elaborate a bit more on how they reconciled these?

How do they reconcile this kind of pan-European project with a kind of defence of the regions? I think it goes back to the notion of federalism, and thinkers like Alexandre Marc that influenced de Benoist, that were federalist in the interwar years and that believed that on the one hand, Europe had to be a major power in relation to other powers or emerging powers. But at the same time, that Europe was a collection of different nations and peoples, and it needed to preserve that diversity. For the French New Right, I don't think there's a contradiction there, that is, they are realists in the sense that they're going to be world powers, and the tendencies as well towards kind of larger regions is part of world history, and we should be aware of this. Like one of their major identities is being Europeans, but there are other identities as well. De Benoist says he's a European, but he's also French, but he's also from his region [Normandy], so there is this possibility to support multiple identities. The project of European Union integration, I think he would say, is a problem in terms of merely the type of integration it is, and the type of project it is. That it shouldn't be liberal, it shouldn't be capitalist, it shouldn't be technocratic, but there might be good things about European Union integration, for example, the idea of a European Union bank. I think he would be in favour of a European Union currency, I think he would be in

favour of European Union police force as well, or military force. So long as it respects the diversity of the nations and the regions.

But from what I understand, not everyone in the New Right agrees with that, and that brings me to an assumption that you've acknowledged in the beginning of the interview, that the French New Right and the European New Right are synonymous. But every country has their own schools of thought. In Germany you have [Götz] Kubitschek, in Belgium you have [Robert] Steuckers, in Russia you have a distant cousin in [Aleksandr] Dugin, and even in France itself, there's schisms between de Benoist and Guillaume Faye and the Club de l'horloge. What are the major differences between these different sub-schools of thought?

In general, they agree on the general contours of the worldview, a very coherent right-wing worldview that's provided by de Benoist, but for example, with Steuckers they disagree on tactics. Steuckers has criticized the French New Right for being overly cerebral, overly intellectual, and overly metapolitical, saying that, "you know what, we have to get our worldview colliding with reality, with getting our ideas in unions, in government; our metapolitics would not be very useful if we don't have a direct impact on the institutions around us." So that's been one kind of dispute about metapolitics and more activism.

The other thing is, I would say, that although you might agree on the general contours of the French New Right worldview, that is, if you're an intellectual in other parts of Europe that follows the tendency, you might disagree on some specifics because of different national tendencies and national traditions, whether it be in Russia or in Germany, so there are different dynamics in these countries. What matters to a thinker in France is different from what matters to a thinker from Germany or from Russia.

One thing that I've noticed very clearly in terms of a chasm between Dugin and de Benoist is that Dugin almost has no problems in a sense praising fascism, whereas that's more difficult for someone like de Benoist. Dugin tends to be much more traditionalist, much more anti-Semitic, so this speaks to the different national tendencies as well as the idiosyncrasies of each thinker.

Do you see these schisms as particularly significant?

I don't think that it prevents pan-European cooperation. I think that there's still enough in which they're against in Europe as it's currently constituted that they can cooperate. If anything, I think with people like Steuckers, it's more like, "we need to pick up our game in lots of different realms to expand our ideas. We need to really collide with all political parties, and get our people in there, with the unions and the armies and the police, and get our people with our ideas in there." I think that's something that you see a lot, and I think that a guy like de Benoist might be in theory interested in that, but he sees his role as different almost. Like, I put these ideas out there, and let's wait and see their impact, and let's wait and see who picks them up and hopefully it helps to change the kind of cultural landscape, which then will change the political landscape one day.

In terms of the more practical aspects of the European New Right, can you talk a bit about how in practice these ideas from the New Right filtered outwards from GRECE and other associated think tanks into party discourse, into parliaments, into the mainstream?

There's an interesting scholar named Anne-Marie Durantou-Crabol. She [wrote in the late 80s](#) about the French New Right. She points out that they, in a sense, were interested in getting their ideas out to people across political parties, even to the army, to the police, the mass media. So that is generally proselytizing the French New Right worldview to different realms of society and the state, so that eventually it would challenge the existing hegemony. Now, in terms of political parties, de Benoist claims that he hates the Front National. They're too openly xenophobic, they're too traditionalist, they're too Catholic, although there have been some changes with Marine Le Pen. But for example, a lot of the radical right-wing parties, the anti-immigrant themes, the notion of the right to difference that they uphold, the ethnopluralism they uphold, the fact they're against multiculturalism, their anti-EU stances. Certainly some of these have come from the French New Right. There have been some studies as well about, for example...each political party has different factions, and certainly the Front National have different factions. In one study, it was estimated that 35% of Front National supporters were sympathetic to the ideas of the French New Right, so this is a way in which those ideas and what they're reading can come into the party. Obviously there were former Nouvelle Droite people ([scholar Tom] McCulloch [explains] this in [one of his articles](#)) that entered into the Front National.

Personally, I think that one of the most interesting personalities of the Nouvelle Droite is Guillaume Faye, if only because of the stuff that he wrote talking about archaeofuturism and seemingly anticipating the Crusade or Reconquista discourses that the far right now uses, especially in the case of Breivik. Can you talk a bit about the Guillaume Faye faction of the Nouvelle Droite? How did the schism between de Benoist and Guillaume Faye come about?

First of all, de Benoist recently claimed (and I had an exchange with him in the [Journal for the Study of Radicalism](#)) that Guillaume Faye is no longer part of the French New Right. I have my issues with that. I think essentially that the clash between them was that these were two major personalities and de Benoist in a sense was worried that Faye would be the main figure of the French New Right. So I think this is part of the problem.

The other issue is that Faye in a sense was interested in promoting the French New Right ideas, but in a way that was more accessible to more people, which I think in fact the French New Right, even with de Benoist, is doing now. You know, they have websites in many different languages, so I think this is helping to disseminate their ideas to more people and to different parts of Europe.

A major question I see of difference between the two now is over the approaches that they take. Faye seems to be really anti-Muslim, anti-immigrant, but he's kind of very overt about it. Whereas de Benoist...I mean, if you look at their manifesto, they're anti-immigrant, but he doesn't really like the optics of the scapegoating, and that's why de Benoist also doesn't like the Front National, because they're very obvious and conspicuous about who they don't like. I think this is something that de Benoist doesn't want.

On the question of Israel, de Benoist hasn't written a lot about it, but what I can glean from it is that I'm not too sure he's too pro-Israel, whereas Faye seems to think that in fact, Israel is an ally of the right and it's an ally because it makes common cause against the Arab and Muslim worlds. The right makes a mistake historically by being anti-Jewish or anti-Semitic, whereas our real enemies are Islam and Muslims that are trying to Islamicize Europe and trying to change the demographics of Europe, and that one day, they're actually going to create Islamic states within the heart of Europe.

I should reiterate that it's actually interesting that de Benoist claims that Faye is no longer part of the New Right, whereas I think that's very hard to say something like that, because the New Right is about metapolitics. It's not just about personalities and their titles, but it's also about how like-minded ideas are transmitted into the body politic and also into civil society. I think this is something Faye does, and this is something de Benoist does.

In a [December 2017 profile](#) of de Benoist in Buzzfeed, [Buzzfeed News] called him the father of the alt-right. In one section, they mention Faye and briefly talked with him. I think Faye emphasizes that their major schism is in part what you said, but also about the necessity of civil war. Like Faye believes that they need civil war and violence in order to purify Europe, and de Benoist doesn't and that's one of the things that he and the writers of the article picked up on as particularly significant. What do you think?

I think this is significant. In fact, very significant. Obviously Faye is much more apocalyptic, not very afraid of potential violence. I think that violence is essentially, should it come, would be an opportunity for people like Faye to get rid of people they don't like, in particular Muslims. So he doesn't have a problem in terms of upping the ante and potential violence on both sides. He would see it as an opportunity. Whereas de Benoist would see it as a kind of distraction from creating a New Right, from having a more intelligent right, from having a right that is divorced from the jackboot nationalism of the interwar years.

You have to remember as well that de Benoist controversially said that he was in favour of the right of Muslims in France to wear their veils, trying to prove that he was for the right to difference, because basically these Muslims, by wearing their veils far away from their cultures and their territories and nations, are actually showing the French what they have lost. That is, "they're preserving their identities far away from their homes, and we French have completely lost our identities. We're consumed by capitalism, by big technology, by American films. We completely became colonized, and they've been able to maintain their difference and maybe we should learn from them." Faye takes this as, "he's actually promoting difference in French territory whereas I really want to get rid of these people, they're like a mortal danger." But, if you look at the manifesto, I think Faye would be happy about it in the sense that it's very anti-immigrant, and it's very clear that it doesn't want more immigrants or refugees or asylum seekers.

I think Faye is even more revolutionary in the sense that he has a problem with those already there, and even those would be citizens, but would have greater loyalty to something called Islam or pan-Islamism than to France. Although, I do see Faye as more radical, more revolutionary on

that question. But for example, on many questions, they completely unite, on capitalism, on liberal democracy, on socialism and communism, on the desire for a kind of revolutionary change to the system, change in the European Union root and branch.

At the same time, you also see the rise of far right social activists, far right movements, who really capitalize on this conspiracy theory of Eurabia. In fact, at one point in your second book, you suggest that Anders Behring Breivik isn't really all that different from the European New Right, I think...

I think I might have exaggerated, but my point is that they do share a lot of things in common: the culture of despair, the apocalyptic assessment of European societies, the view that there will be a clash of civilizations, that violence will rise if they don't pay attention to the warnings of the European New Right, etc. So I think some of these things show an affinity between this terrorist and the leaders of the European New Right.

Do you think that the kind of Christian crusader mentality of the counter-jihad movement that Breivik's part of and is now being taken up by other far right groups in Europe? Do you think that movement is directly descended from the New Right (and specifically, Faye), or do you see these as parallel movements possibly with some ties but not direct causation?

Yeah, more the latter: parallel movements but not direct causation. Because I see it as incompatible, the pro-Judeo-Christian positions, even pro-Israel positions of Breivik, and kind of more critical attitudes towards Israel of the French New Right; pagan, anti-Judeo-Christian positions, so I see that as very different. Where I did see some connection is the apocalyptic and pessimistic assessment of where Europe is going, that violence is coming and it's already here and it's going to get worse, the clash of civilizations is going to get worse as we are demographically being swamped by non-whites, non-Europeans in their worldview. I see that especially in Faye, but you know, the French New Right manifesto is very clearly against the existing immigration regimes. It says that very clearly, and it lays the blame on capitalist societies, interestingly.

On the point about religion, given that right wing populist parties, and also far right figures and organizations, on both sides of the Iron Curtain have wrapped themselves up in a Judeo-Christian civilizational discourse (recall a few weeks ago, Orban talking about introducing a Christian illiberal democracy and all that), do you see this as a sort of sign of decline for the European New Right? And likewise, a party like the Lega Nord to pivot from a regionalist or separatist ambitions to a more national one? Do you see the real-world political movements as undermining the objectives of the European New Right? Do you see this as a failure for de Benoist?

I think as he has put it himself, "my role is to assess the ills of the continental right, coherent and philosophical views of the world, and to put my ideas out there which set processes in motion that I have no idea"—and I'm paraphrasing him—"where they would end up." So I don't think that he completely cares about that. I think—and this is what I understand—for example in his desire he said in the 80s that he would vote for the Communists or vote for the Greens. It doesn't matter how the system falls and from which ideological camp helps it fall the most. All the anti-

liberal, anti-capitalist forces are objectively, for him, allies that would help the system to further be undermined and eventually one day fall. That's his view, and I don't think he would concern himself with kind of small successes or small failures. I don't think that's the way he thinks of things. I think he thinks of things in terms of a long-term transformation of mentalities, elites, and ordinary people.

On the point about identity then: you obviously know about the Identitarian movement that rose in France in 2002 and has since spread to both sides of the Atlantic. And the Identitarian movement ostensibly claims de Benoist as their ideological godfather, and on their website they claim they're practicing metapolitics, but this time it's on the streets. Can you speak to how and why the Identitarians rose, and do you know why the new generation decided to reinterpret metapolitics from an academic sense to a street activist sense?

I think this has origins in various figures in the European New Right, including de Benoist, Champetier, Steuckers from Belgium. Steuckers was a real proponent of a kind of really colliding with reality, and really getting our ideas, our worldview, or distinctively right-wing worldview out there, kind of in unexpected places, like in unions, political parties, really making sure that those ideas actually have political players and important political players that can advance them. So the Identitarian movement is doing that, they're saying "you know, metapolitics is not enough. It's not enough that we have this excellent theoretical corpus on the right that's de Benoist been a big force in creating that. Those ideas need to find a home in the political realm, in the cultural realm, in peoples' minds. That we should work on (and this is Steuckers' idea) different tracks. It's not enough that we leave it to the intellectuals and to the realm of ideas or to the universities." I mean, the future of Europe for them is at stake and these ideas are too important and time is running out. And essentially, they want to win, they want their ideas to triumph and that can only happen with the collision with real political institutions, political figures, political parties, unions, intellectuals, mass media, the masses... I mean, everything is metapolitics.

I remember seeing on social media how some other comparative political scientists have basically dismissed the Identitarians as overrated, and that they're not really the leading force of this cultural change that they purport to be. Would you agree with that assessment?

I'm not an expert on the Identitarians as much as on de Benoist, and unfortunately, and even some of their major figures, so what I can say is that they have work to do. And really, no one has been able to supersede de Benoist in that regard, if you look at his body of work and influence. Even the countries he's able to go to in terms of conferences. Sometimes you'll see him in Iran, influence in South America, in North America with the alt-right, all over Europe in terms of the influence of the ideas of the Nouvelle Droite, including in Russia. I think that in that sense, they (that is the French New Right) are still the number one player, I think. You know, that might change in the future, I don't know. [TBO adds: And we should not overestimate the importance of ND ideas,] because in some senses it's a movement that had its day as well, but it works on different principles. It's interesting, you know, and so the fact that these people are

around and carrying some of that torch actually speaks to the way the New Right does their politics. It's fine, it's all helpful, in de Benoist's estimation, for example.

How about the alt-right? To what extent would you say that the alt-right is an extension or a sub-school of the European New Right? And what are some of the major differences between the Europeans and the alt-right?

No, I don't see them as an extension of the European New Right, although I do see them as heavily influenced by the ideas of de Benoist and the French/European New Right, and they state this very clearly, even on Richard Spencer's website. So, some points of differentiation I would say are that they tend to be more "American" if I might say. So a bit more kind of critical of state bureaucracies and of the role of the state in the market economy.... I'd also say that they're way more openly racist. Spencer, for example, has defended the white man as something that de Benoist no longer does, in the sense that he's in favour of worldwide ethnopluralism. Spencer has defended the benefits of kind of the imperial project and colonialism, and this is only possible with the genius of the white man. I don't see de Benoist any longer doing that, although historically de Benoist would have been a supporter of colonialism, and even a supporter of French Algeria. The alt-right takes inspiration from the French New Right, but I would also say that those points (and some of them are quite serious) are points of differentiation between the movements. And the other thing I would say is that the alt-right is far too early, so it's quite new, it's very Internet-based, it's very much revolved around the figure of Richard Spencer and some websites, and I would say that in a sense, the French New Right is much older, more intellectually developed. It has a body of work that's quite impressive compared to the alt-right.

Why would you say that Dugin is considered a messenger of the New Right, whereas Spencer might not be?

I don't see Dugin as concerned with the rights of the individual. This seems distinctly American that you have with the alt-right. Or interested in gun culture. But, I see Dugin for example following most of the contours of the worldview highlighted by de Benoist and the French New Right on immigration, on identity, on ethnopluralism. Of course there are points of differentiation as well. Dugin might be more openly anti-Semitic, he definitely is. But I see that the chasm is much greater with the alt-right than with Dugin and the French New Right.

I just want to probe this a little more because I'm still struggling to see how Dugin's Eurasianism is part of the French New Right but the American alt-right isn't.

I'll tell you something explicitly that did occur: Alain de Benoist was on the board for a period of time on *Elementy*, which was the Russian equivalent of *Éléments*, which was a big French New Right journal. Then at a certain point, de Benoist claimed to pen a letter in which he criticized Dugin's imperialism, his extreme anti-Semitism and his extreme nationalism. He's done this as well with the Front National, and not only him, but the ex-[GRECE] president [Jacques] Marlaud also attacked the Front National for being too moralistic, for being too Catholic and integralist, for being too ultranationalist, for being too scapegoat-oriented in relation to immigrants. This isn't something that's new, right? You have schisms as well.

There's a [scholar] named Anton Shekhovtsov, who's written a book. It's a book basically about the radical right and its influence in Russia. He has written a few pieces in which he has claimed that Dugin is a Russian variant of the French New Right, and he's one of the leading experts on Dugin. So yeah, this is where I'm making that claim that they're part of the same umbrella movement, which is the French New Right or European New Right.

And that's despite the fact that Dugin is more overtly racist than de Benoist?

Yeah, despite that fact. It is interesting. For example, it'll be interesting to know in Russian what Dugin considers himself. But I don't know enough about Dugin. But this [scholar], Anton, he can probably tell you. But it is interesting that with Spencer, he doesn't call himself French New Right, but he calls himself the alt-right. He came out with the Charlottesville Manifesto, the alt-right manifesto, in August 2017, where he says on his website that he is influenced by the French New Right but he's creating a different type of movement which is called the alt-right.

But you would not consider the alt-right to be part of the same umbrella movement?

No, you know why? Part of the reason I say that is in the sense that there are some things in the manifesto that are very peculiarly American. For example, in relation to the right to bear arms. That doesn't strike me as having anything to do with the French New Right, in the sense that the French New Right... what some people have said about the French New Right is that it's very anti-American, so they wouldn't like things that are particularly American in there. I think they have things in common, without a doubt, lots of things in common. But they're slightly different.

There is definitely a lot of overlap. The fact that they're both revolutionary as well is important. It's not like they're reformist. They root-and-branch want to get rid of liberal democracy, so that links them as well. But yeah, I compare the manifestos of the French New Right, which is way more substantive, way more philosophically involved, and the Charlottesville Manifesto, the alt-right manifesto, which is like some twenty points.

And if you look at the Charlottesville Manifesto, the first two points are on race and the Jews. Those are precisely points which the French New Right would try to avoid, because the French New Right has said that it's anti-racist, and yet for Spencer, the first point of his manifesto is that race is the preeminent category to study history and politics. And so he's a racist. He believes that race is fundamental in the movement of history. De Benoist has criticized the racialism now associated with colonialism, explicit racism. That's not to say they don't practice cultural racism, as some have pointed out, like Taguieff. And the second point is the Jews, another thing that the French New Right would not say explicitly. That connotes to me very Old Right-type of thinking: "we are a white race and we need to defend ourselves against other races, wherever white people are, whether it's North America, Argentina, Uruguay, Russia, Western Europe."

In terms of the Jews, again, very Old Right as well. Spencer is basically conspiratorial in the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* vein. He basically thinks that Jews are there to subvert the white race, that Jews are there to impose liberalism and socialism and capitalism and all these egalitarianisms. And de Benoist would only say it in a kind of roundabout way, that he's against the Judeo-Christian tradition. The Jews are the ones that initially brought this egalitarian ideal,

and that was then transplanted to Christianity, which was then transplanted to liberalism and socialism. Actually, in a piece he wrote way back in 1981, he says explicitly that this egalitarian ideal comes from the Jews. That's the closest thing he comes to the Jews, but this is an argument that I wouldn't say is explicitly anti-Semitic, because Nietzsche made a similar argument about egalitarianism. Some might consider it as such, whereas Spencer is explicitly racist and explicitly anti-Semitic.

It strikes me that the French New Right is trying to move away from that; what's important to them is having the image of a New Right that's divorced from the violence, the imperialism, the racialism, and the anti-Semitism of the Old Right. Although Spencer does say (I was reading one of his interviews in *The Atlantic*) that "we have to look good. Alt-right people have to look good." That's different from what he actually says. What he says doesn't make him look good!

Can the formula you set out in your second book (CL + NL = ND) be considered your version of a New Right minimum a la Roger Griffin's [fascist minimum](#)?

Because this was such a syncretic school of thought, that is the French New Right, I said that what is it in a minimalist sense that really defines them? Which schools of thought are they heavily impacted by? Sure, they're heavily impacted by different schools of thought, but which ones are the most fundamental? And those are the ones that I came up with. Because I found that the Conservative Revolutionary thinkers constantly repeat in their writings, particularly in de Benoist. Moeller van den Bruck, Ernst Jünger, Carl Schmitt... And these are from the 1920s and 1930s, all the while they're claiming to be the New Right. So they have a problem there themselves in their very foundation. If I'm correct, that is one of the big pieces of their worldview. And yet, the other part, the New Left part, is the part that takes them away from all that. It's the part of cultural hegemony, a part of an opening to the left, the New left, an opening to a critique of capitalism and colonialism.

Yeah sure, there are other influences. De Benoist mentions anarcho-syndicalists, he mentions non-conformist thinkers of the 1920s and 1930s. Sure they're quite similar to the counterrevolutionaries. One of them that's very famous is Alexandre Marc, and de Benoist has been influenced by him. There's a book by a historian named [\[John\] Hellman](#), who looks at the links between the nonconformist thinkers like Alexandre Marc and Alain de Benoist. But I see the nonconformists as really close to the Conservative Revolutionaries, with the exception that the nonconformists were both pan-European and regionalist, which is the worldview that they go for today. There are other influences, but I try to do an Occam's razor about what is it that's most fundamental to them. De Benoist can say it's ridiculous and everything, but it's just what I see. So I don't hold by it as correct, but it's these two fundamental aspects of their worldview.

Would you say that that formula is a minimum definition? Or do you have a minimum definition? Or do you even believe in a minimum definition?

No, I think that they're very complex and I think that I'm not sure if it's enough, but having said that, I think that it embodies very fundamental characteristics of their worldview. It's the New Left and the Conservative Revolutionaries. And if you ask me which one is more fundamental, it's hard to say but my intuition would be that the Conservative Revolution part would be even

more important to them. Because they define themselves as a right-wing movement; they don't define themselves as a left-wing movement.

I think you said that you don't stand by any one definition of fascism when you're analyzing the New Right, right?

Yeah, it's a bit of a problem that I say it. But, what I'm actually trying to say is that it's a complex phenomenon. There are lots of historians that have studied this. I'm not a historian myself; I defer to them on these questions, and there are different answers to that, and different types of historians would define fascism [in different ways]. For example, when I teach my students, I like them to know different definitions, and I don't feel that if I were to provide them a single definition a la Griffin (like minimalist), that's sufficient to understand the complexity of fascism. That's why I like, for example, Stanley Payne, because he has [thirteen characteristics of fascism](#). He says, "you know, in the interwar years many of the movements met all of those, but you don't necessarily have to meet all of them to be a fascist." And you know, I have my liking for some more than others. For example, [Umberto Eco's](#) I find a bit more superficial, precisely because he's not a historian, whereas a Stanley Payne or an Emilio Gentile, I find their stuff kind of richer, or even Gregor. Even Griffin, without a doubt. Just I'm not sure if that minimalist definition is enough.

Do you know if de Benoist or any of his associates have made contacts in Eastern Europe? Do you know if they've commented much on Orban or Kaczynski or any of the other Eastern European populists?

I mention the contacts with Dugin, but I think the better person to contact would be Anton Shekhotsov. He knows a lot about connections with Eastern and Central Europe, and Russia. But I don't know, to be honest with you, more recently about links with Orban. You know, you might take a look at the webpage of de Benoist because he often writes articles of the day about particular issues and he might have commented there, but I haven't seen [anything] recently about Orban or the Polish leader. [TBO adds: De Benoist has, however, commented about the resurgence of populism in general.]

So moving on to the topic of defence against the New Right. One question that you raised in your first book that I thought was really interesting was whether the European New Right shift towards metapolitics was a stroke of genius. Do you think they were prescient in that regard? Do you think that they anticipated the culture wars? What can studying the European New Right tell us about the contours of the culture wars that are happening today?

So yeah, I think it's very intelligent, and I think that they're not the first. I think fascists were very interested in culture. Mussolini was interested in culture, I think even Hitler was interested in culture. Numerous fascists were interested in culture. I think without the cultural intellectual groundwork, there cannot be fascism and Nazism. So it appears that it comes out of nowhere. You know, I think [Israeli historian [Zeev Sternhell](#)] does this quite well, he shows how these anti-liberal ideals and for example, the kind of revision of Marxism along nationalistic lines that eventually became the fascist synthesis. It kind of had a long history dating back to the 1880s

even, among very diverse movements. So I think that the fact you see the radical right parties doing well today, whatever you want to call them (radical right, radical right populist, populist, extreme right), you know, it's complex and related to numerous factors, but certainly I think that the ideas that have been out there since '68, in part put out by the French New Right, do play a role in terms of changing the consensus towards one that is critical of liberalism, of multiculturalism, of egalitarianism, of the EU as it's currently constituted. So I think without a doubt, they have played a role in changing the political landscape towards one that is less liberal, less tolerant, less in favour of multiculturalism, and more in favour of a return to harder, homogeneous regional, national and even pan-European identities.

You've mentioned that you've debated de Benoist before. I know you've written very extensive critiques and rebuttals to de Benoist, so from debating him, what insights have you gained about how to challenge the power of the New Right?

I don't know if debating him was a good idea. This has happened to other intellectuals too, in a sense with [Pierre-André Taguieff](#) as well with de Benoist. He's a French intellectual who studies the French New Right. It happened. I think it's something that a lot of colleagues in academia would look at with horror, and that says a lot about those colleagues. It says that they're not interested in real discussion, even if the debate was sometimes very polemical on my side and his side. That I could admit. I also would caution that although a school of thought like the French New Right is based on metapolitical concepts and slow change of mentalities, there are different ways in which neofascism can arise. Yeah I suggested that that's one way. Some people might disagree on that, some people might say, "well that's very different from the violence that existed in the interwar years amongst real fascists, and you know, we should basically label fascists real fascists, those that do violence, those that are ultranationalistic and corporatists, those that more resemble the blackshirts and the brownshirts in their quest for power." You know, part of the problem is that there are different definitions of fascisms. De Benoist even says that, "yeah I acknowledge that, so how can you call me a fascist or a neofascist?" Let's just say that that became very polemical but what I can say is that his ideas and they're essentially have [been influenced by] the Conservative Revolutionary thinkers, so it depends on how you view them as well. They're certainly anti-liberal and certainly anti-capitalist and certainly closer to all sorts of traditions of fascism than anything. Whether that's the label you give them, that is fascism, maybe it's not. Maybe they're their own separate right-wing category, that I can acknowledge, but certainly very, very similar. These are difficult questions, and even despite my writings and my discussion with him, or debate, or polemical back and forth, you know, I don't claim that I'm a... you shouldn't look at my work alone, or that I'm completely right, you know, there's lots of views on these things.

In terms of more concrete points, based on your experience debating de Benoist, what kind of advice would you impart to the people of either side of the debate with the campus free speech?

You should get more liberal and more democratic. If he's not calling for violence against me... yeah I don't like his ideas... I mean, what are you afraid of? Now, I'm not sure if I want to talk with a Holocaust denier. I'm not sure if I want to talk with a conspiracy theorist who says that Jews rule the world or that Jews and some other groups rule the world. Or a supporter of

Ahmadinejad who says, “I want to destroy Jews in the state of Israel”. In terms of having a debate that would be out there. I’m sure you come across these people but you don’t know it even, or eventually you’d know it just by some comments they make. But yeah, I think people should be definitely more open. Don’t be afraid of it.

So combat those ideas in the battlefield of ideas. There are lots of fascists out there. They exist, you know. There’s lots of Islamists. There are Green thinkers, there are feminist thinkers, there are syndicalists, so yeah, I mean, that’s going to happen. [Spencer] wants to do that and he’s taking advantage of free speech, but he’s allowed to do that. And yeah, again as I’d say, I have more disdain for his worldview or just as much, yeah I think maybe more. But I would have no problem talking to him even.

In that case, then, if you do go up to debate them, what are some sort of things that people should be aware of in order to protect themselves from Trojan Horses, to properly call them out, to cut through their armour of respectability? How would you identify New Right talking points from legitimate ones?

Part of their respectability is actually merited. When they become a metapolitical movement and they say they’re going to jettison the jackboot nationalism of the past. Now obviously there are some connections with some figures (that I mention in the book) with others that are more violent, there are some connections. But in general, it might be merited. Now, the other thing I would say is that (and this is where someone like [Israeli political scientist [Alberto Spektorowski](#)] would be interesting) [Spektorowski’s] maybe suggested that there has been some change because of the addition of ethnopluralism, the right to different, some of their new left ideals, their direct democracy ideals. Some people might suggest that they’re not what they used to be back in ‘68. That’s a question up for discussion. But if you’re against their ideas, so just present better ideas than their ideas. If you are a critic of their hatred of multiculturalism, well, present good arguments in favour of multiculturalism. If you are a critic of their ideas of homogeneous societies, present better arguments in favour of why we might be interested in heterogeneous societies. So I think it’s incumbent on us to challenge them with better ideas.

What are some of the gaps in far right and European New Right scholarship that you think should be addressed?

There are two things; I can say gaps or biases. One gap is that almost all scholars who study the far right are from the left. That’s probably a bit of a problem. Probably you don’t have anything comparable in any other ideology that’s studied, I don’t know, but I would find that that’s kind of odd. So, to me that probably biases the way we all look at the far right. So that’s one thing.

And then the other thing is: why are the literature on Islamism and the literature on the far right totally two separate things? And why do you sometimes see Christian rightists classified that way, as on the right, but you often don’t see Islamists classified as radical right-wingers? I think there’s room for some discussion on that, or room for some scholarship on that kind of stuff. I’m actually working on a piece right now with [Jeffrey Bale](#) a little bit about this.

The other thing I'm working on right now is something on comparing Islamism and fascism. I'm actually thinking about a book about that. I've written some papers on it, including a critique of the concept of Islamofascism. I'm not one of those people who say they're the same. But it strikes me as an interesting comparison.

Taking the entire existence and the entire phenomenon of the European New Right, and its Russian and American cousins, together, what are the biggest lessons that mainstream politics and society can learn about from the phenomenon as a whole? Anything from the conditions they arose from, to what we just talked about combatting them.

I think what's most interesting about them is their origins in 1968 and that time period in 68, with May student and worker movements and rise of the New Left in the US and also in Europe, and the fact that they were able to learn from these movements, and the fact that they were able to borrow and mimic these movements, and the fact that they make a concerted effort to focus on the terrain of culture, and to focus on a long term change in long term worldviews and mentalities...they're able to in a sense to reinvent a right, especially a far right or a radical right or some might call it a revolutionary right (probably a revolutionary right in this case), that has been tainted by some pretty bad legacies like colonialism, fascism, Nazism, extreme anti-Semitism, and slowly made itself quite respectable.

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