

The Identitarian Movement – renewed idea of alternative Europe

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ECPR General Conference, Glasgow, UK, 3 - 6 September 2014

DRAFT VERSION

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Identitarian Movement has been spreading across the European nationalist stream in the last few years. In some countries this phenomenon is manifested by nationalistic radicals as protest movements, in some using neo-Nazis themes. Identitarian Movement voices the need to renew national identities and in particular European identities in their opposition to the European Union integration process. The nation is seen as an organic pre-modern community and homogeneity is defended by promoting difference and exclusivity. The European Union by definition ruins the mission of nationalists whose priority is to protect the nation against foreign influences. Hence their policies are against immigration, labour or cultural mobility. (Halikiopoulou, Nanou, Vasilopoulou 2012: 510) Being aware of the fact that opposing immigration only at the national level is not enough, Identitarian Movement has broaden its interest also at the European level and European identity. Xenophobia and racism are embedded in their call for a unified Europe, which is offered as an alternative Europe of free European nations. National ethnic uniqueness is celebrated and historical heritage of European citizens is used as a way to justify the exclusion of outsider groups (Fligstein, Polyakova, Sandholtz 2012: 114).

Theoretical roots in Alain de Benoist

The Identitarian Movement represents so called “new radical right” and we can call it as grass root movement as well (Steiger 2014), following the ideas and theses of the father of new

radical right Alain de Benoist. It means that this movement actually does not bring anything new at the radical right. It renews ideas and thoughts from the second half of the 20th century. The Identitarian Movement reopens ideas that have been already expressed. Alain de Benoist as a member of GRECE (*Groupement de recherché et d'étude pour la civilisation européenne*; founded in France in 1969) has been supporting the anti-egalitarian ideology. His position is built on the premise that no single human being is the same, each human being is original. This stands against Christian universalism. More, Benoist has believed in laws of nature and imperatives of social organisation. From this position, egalitarianism in society is not possible. The European society should return in times before Christian times, in Pagan times. In these times Europe can find itself again and can restore old orders. (Milza 2005) The ideology of GRECE also supported the biological differences based on genetics. According to genetics human beings are unique, not equal. GRECE did not promoted the idea of biological racism, the members were very careful do not mention anything about superiority of the Indo-European race. But the belief in Aryan roots and fascination by social Darwinism and social organisation according to laws of nature was obvious.

In 1999 Alain de Benoist published together with Charles Champetier a document called "New right of the year 2000". They mentioned liberalism as the main enemy. In the period of globalisation, liberalism means all-over-the-world system of production and reproduction of people and goods. Hyper-moralism of human rights is above all of this. They continued with proclamation about partly free human beings in today times. This freedom is based on genetic determination. But, as they said, these biological differences are significant only in context of cultural and social environments. Cultures differs from each other, they give different answers on the same question. So it means, that any unification of different culture, as universalism tries, means destruction. The idea of universal law determining moral, religious or political choice has no justification. (Milza 2005, Weber 2004: 151)

Benoist also says that human being does not exist in the form of universal and abstract entity. We cannot separate existence of human being from society and social groups they belong into. Modernity destroyed ties of individuals with family, local, corporative or religious community. Modernity made people more lonely and vulnerable. This can be "repaired" only through return to communities and organic society.

From this comes the idea of post-modernist conception of new radical right which stresses respect to differences which is seen as an opposite to universalistic racism and also as an opposite to "racist anti-racism". Benoist makes parallel between "genocide" caused by racists and "ethnocide" caused by so called anti-racists (Weber 2004: 152). The right way goes

through rejection of exclusiveness and assimilation as well. This leads to the promotion of ethnopluralism. Ethnopluralism negates any hierarchy in races. (Weber 2004: 151) It is based on acceptance of existence of different cultures, nations or societies in the world, but not interconnected in the sense of mixing of the cultures or nations. They should stay separated.

The idea of ethnopluralism we know already also from earlier times. For example Carl Smitt promoted ethnopluralism as a part of so called identitarian democracy (*identitäre Demokratie*). He opposed to pluralism of interests and pluralistic democracy. Instead of it he promoted democracy based on identity. Smitt defined himself as an opponent of universal human rights and replaced it by ethnopluralism. (Gessenharter 2004: 37 – 40). He saw homogeneity as a needed element for promoting interests of the state and nation. Homogeneity (inner homogeneity) was understood by him as an element belonging to democracy. Pluralism meant danger for the state and its sovereignty. From this comes the idea of distinguishing between democracy and parliamentarism. Democracy can exist without parliamentarism. (Pfahl-Traugher 2004: 85 - 86)

Alternative Europe

The *Identitarian Movement* represents an entirely new phenomenon in contemporary European radical right which has gained visible support both outside anti-system movements (we can call them as protest movements) and within the extremist camp and, in some countries, directly in the neo-Nazi movement. It should first be noted that lively discussions are underway among scholars as to how to classify the Identitarian Movement in a democratic context and how close it lies to extremism. The Identitarian Movement is also shaped by the context of individual countries, especially in terms of the type of person actively involved in it. The following section provides a more detailed explanation.

Simply put, the Identitarian Movement represents a stream whose aim is to draw attention to the threat of the Islamization of Europe and to renew the identity of European nations. It originated in France, where it attracted its first supporters in 2003. In recent years, it has been gradually spreading to Germany and Austria (where it has been operated since 2012), as well as to Spain, the Netherlands¹ (since 2012), Scandinavia² and the Czech Republic

¹ Here it operates under the name of Identitair Verzet (Identitarian Resistance). The Netherlands' movement draw attention to itself in June 2013 when its members locked the gates of Ibn Ghaldoun, a Rotterdam Muslim secondary school with a secure chain.

² In Scandinavia, the Identitarian Movement was introduced by Nordiska Förbundet (Nordic Alliance).

(Barenakedislam.com 2013). The newest groups were recognized during the year 2014 also in Slovakia. It uses the Greek Lambda letter as its symbol³ depicted in black and yellow.

The Identitarian Movement defines its ideological approach as one of ethnopluralism. It recognizes freedom of every nation and the opportunity for self-realization of every nation and culture, but never at the expense of another nation. It demands the separation of individual nations and hence rejects immigration. Externally, towards the public, members offer the following slogan: “0% racism 100% identity.” The Identitarians’ vocabulary includes the term “Alter-Europeans” which they use to demand a unified but not standardized Europe (Dělský Potápěč 2013a). The group is critical of the European Union and calls for an alternative Europe composed of free European nations. They reject the European Union bureaucracy and also ideological setting which promotes liberalism, capitalism, globalization and universalism. Based on ethnic nationalism and euroscepticism the movement opposes the European Union as a source and active supporter of globalization which is understood as the moving force for multiculturalism and immigration. The European Union causes by this melting of nations and national identities.

The movement calls for renewing identity at both levels – the national and the European. As protectors of the national and European identity, Identitarians protest the influence of the United States and the Muslim world (in what they cite as American and Islamic imperialism attempting to take over Europe). They speak of renewing identity because, in their eyes, European nations and Europe itself have been gradually losing their identity and we, as Europeans, are not far from losing it altogether. This attitude is defined by Markus Willinger in his manifesto “Generation Identity: A Declaration of War Against the “68ers”⁴.

³ Using a letter from Greek alphabet is a reference to Spartan warriors who fought against the Persians at Thermopyl. Spartan warriors have a positive image within the neo-Nazi environment because the battle they conducted against barbarians (these being the Persians who are considered a metaphor for the current non-European immigrants by neo-Nazis) makes them heroes. The Spartan warrior motif is also tied to the specific positive response given to Zack Snyder’s 2007 film entitled “300” (Richter 2007: 15).

⁴ The most frequently cited passage is as follows:

Do you want to know who we are? Where we come from? What drives us?

We’ll tell you.

We’re time flowing, the wind rising, the new generation.

You surrendered us to the world, uprooted and disoriented, without telling us where to go or which direction our paths lay in. You destroyed all our opportunities to find a direction. We’re your answer because we’re your children.

(...)

You should finally realise we don’t live in a unified world or a global village. War victims, the poor and the repressed will always be with us. This world will never be a paradise on Earth.

Your delusions have achieved only one thing: you’ve uprooted your own children.

We’re lost and homeless. “Who are we?” we ask ourselves. “Where are we going?”

(...)

We look for our identity and find it in the ruins of your destructive fury. We have to dig deep to rediscover ourselves.

Identitarians thus believe that the period of decline must be halted. Such movements designate themselves as a third string, lying between capitalism and communism (Caiani, della Porta, Wagemann 2012; Eatwell 1996).

According to Markus Willinger (Revolta.info 2013), Europe is dying and the current generation is the most important because only it can save Europe from suicide. He points his finger at the 1968 generation as the generation which gave rise to all of our current problems, because it was the generation that rebelled against the order of the time. It stood against everything that created identity. According to Willinger, the 1968 generation adopted a mission of preventing future wars and eliminating inequality among people, i.e., eliminating differences. Multiculturalism was an experiment in how to achieve this. Thus they took away everything that could give identity to the current generation. He does not consider the Identitarian generation to be a movement, but claims it is the entire (current) generation. He states that a multicultural society does not function. As a result of multiculturalism, the current generation is lacking a European identity and this must be renewed. The discrepancy articulated between the old and the present generation in terms of a fight for values represents an interesting element. He claims that “the decision whether Europe survives or not is up to us.”

The Identitarian Movement rejects multiculturalism and criticizes globalization. In terms of economics, it sets economic protectionism and localism against the global free market⁵. Protectionism and localism are prerequisites for Europe’s ability to transcend the current global dichotomy with the USA on one side and China on the other. (Dělský Potápěč 2013a)

According to a number of political scientists focused on right-wing extremism (e.g., Alexandr Häusler, Germany), the Identitarian Movement is a mix of racism, islamophobia and extreme nationalism. Race has already been replaced by culture (see the shift from biological to cultural racism) and is now being replaced by the word “identity”. Häusler understands the Identitarian Movement (at least its German variant) as an ideologically modernized action-oriented form of the extreme right wing – a new label for old content (Lüpke 2013).

The Identitarian Movement is perceived in this manner because of the type of people who are active within it. In Germany, they are, to a great extent, supporters of neo-Nazi movement. In the Czech Republic, too, the Identitarian Movement started to be promoted by neo-Nazis. It

Our history, our homeland and culture give us what you took away from us.

We don’t want to be cosmopolitan. We’re happier in our own countries (Dělský Potápěč 2013b).

⁵ Localism is defined as a combination of ecology and economics focused on making economics local.

should nevertheless be noted that based upon current characteristics and the activities it has engaged in, the Identitarian Movement cannot be clearly designated an anti-democratic or extremist movement. It is instead an expression of protest, but it will be interesting to track its further development. One section of the Identitarian Movement truly is not racist in nature, but simply strives to revive traditions, and in so doing build a relationship to country and nation in a search for identity. Some supporters profess racist theses and are connected to or stem from the neo-Nazi environment. It is thus a question of which approach will win out in the future and whether the movement will eject – or be interested in ejecting – such members. Identitarians perceive their roots in the context of country, blood and identity. (This they share in common with the neo-Nazi movement, which also perceives the white race and individual nations in the context of blood.) They disseminate an apocalyptic vision of racial and cultural deterioration in Europe. Their message is that the current generation is the last to be able to alter the course of deterioration and thereby save Europe.

The movement is primarily active on the internet and social networks such as Facebook and Youtube. They draw the public's attention by demonstrations near mosques and in front of Arabic fast food restaurants. A demonstration which took place in Poitiers, France in 2012 is probably the best-known event in the movement's history. The Identitarian Movement contextualized the demonstration historically by making reference to Charles Martell who in 732⁶ halted the expansion of Muslims to Europe at the battle of Poitiers (CBN 2012). The movement now attempts to build upon this event. After the demonstration in Poitier, there was a public declaration of war against multiculturalism (Brücken 2013). The declaration took the form of a video recording placed on the internet and quickly spread to other European countries, thus significantly contributing to the dissemination of the concept across Europe. The video speaks of the total deterioration of European culture and all that has ever been identified with it. It indicates there is one last chance to save the continent and for this reason, war is openly declared on multiculturalism and a wish is expressed to revive traditions and return to national historical models and principles. Cohabitation between European and non-European nations is perceived as utterly impossible.

In France, its country of origin, the Identitarian Movement is represented by Bloc Identitaire and Génération Identitaire, a students' movement. They sponsor various sports clubs, cultural organisations, charity associations, bands, publishing houses, etc. The French movement has endeavoured to create “bastions” and showcases of the Identitarian Movement. In Nice, for

⁶ The numeral 732 became the symbol for the movement.

example, in a district where Identitarians live, they have opened shops and started local institutions (neighbourhood autonomy, parents' and retailers' associations) (Dělský Potápeč 2013a).

Solidarité Identités (SOLID), which is by itself perceived as a humanitarian organisation providing help and support to nations in their struggle for survival, maintaining culture and safeguarding identity, also endorses the Identitarian Movement. It collects funds and materials and goes to areas where local inhabitants need help. Activity by other humanitarian organisations is considered a modern form of colonialism. SOLID's activity supports the freedom of nations who wish to be autonomous and rooted in their land. For this reason it supports, for example, the Karen people in Burma, whom it refers to as a nation suppressed by the military junta funded by Western multinational corporations⁷. Also supported is the Serbian minority in Kosovo, with the rejection of an independent Kosovo (in accord with the entire right-wing) and support expressed for the Boers in South Africa. The common denominator is a will to live in the country of one's forebears, according to one's own rules, laws and traditions. The major enemy is capitalism, which destroys ethnocultural homogeneity (Dělský Potápeč 2011; Dělský Potápeč 2013a).

Transnationalisation of the Identitarians

In autumn of 2012, after war was declared on multiculturalism, the Identitarian Movement started to spread to other European countries, as well. Steiger (2014) calls it "open-source ideology". The content of web pages can be easily copied and pasted. National mutations of web pages are basically the same, using the same graphic, pictures, posts etc. The first of these was Germany (where the movement is known as Identitäre Bewegung) which, up to that time, had always been the inspiration source for the entire right-wing. The movement took root in Germany very quickly. Once the video had been published on YouTube, the first Identitarian groups appeared on Facebook. On October 30, representatives of the Identitarian Movement were physically present at an intercultural week in Frankfurt. In early December, 50 fans of the Identitarian Movement met in Frankfurt on their own and have since been making regular public appearances (Brücken 2013).

⁷ The Karen people are an attractive topic in general for the entire national socialist movement. European national socialists see in them the personification of the fight against communism and global capitalism, both of which are considered anti-identitarian.

German Identitarians, too, support the defence of Europe against immigrants and are interested in reviving the ethnic and cultural identity of European nations. They demand a Europe of nations and regions. Identitarians have great potential in Germany if they join forces with the pro-Bewegung movement⁸. Some German scholars see the Identitarian Movement as a greater risk than neo-Nazism because its antidemocratic elements are hidden behind a search for identity. The public is thus able to recognize its true motives and objectives only with difficulty (Lüpke 2013). All the movements dealt with to this point generate fear among the public as part of their presentation. The approach of the Identitarian Movement, to a greater extent, builds upon a positive approach: a search for common identity, traditions and roots. The dark side of the search – the negative attitude expressed towards immigration and the attendant xenophobia – appear secondary but natural. Europe is filled with various elements which are breaking up our identity and which must be ejected. This is considered a natural process, just as when a body recovers from illness. The nation is still perceived as a living organism. The German Identitarian Movement also speaks of Volkstod (the death of the nation) (Brücken 2013).

And it is the German movement which is made reference to by neo-Nazis. In 2013, the Office for the Protection of the Constitution in Bremen stated that the Bremen Identitary Movement group was driven by people from extreme right-wing environment. (Brücken 2013)

In the neo-Nazi scene within the CR, the Identitarian Movement is represented by the Radical Boys Brūx (who use the movement's logo on their website's homepage banner) and Revolta. First group of the Czech Identitarians called Identity Generation appeared in autumn 2013. For these entities introducing as they are new concepts to the CR, the Identitarian concept of the general issue of protecting European nations represents an attractive approach and provides a way to get a bit closer to the public and attract new supporters.

The same applies to Czech Identitarians as noted for French and German supporters of the movement. They believe in a European identity and the need to protect European civilization, as a Europe of nations, from inappropriate foreign (that is, non-European) elements. They promote the protection of the white race, European culture and civilization. They also call for an end to capitalism, and in place of the global market, demand a return to national economies so that the maximum possible is produced in the home country (Revolta.info 2013a). The aim

⁸ The pro-Bewegung movement is a civic anti-Islamic movement characterized by populism and a hate-oriented frame. It is a single-issue movement, one which stands on a single topic. Any others which may come up are only secondary. Pro-Bewegung originated in 2010 as an umbrella platform joining a number of movements and associations whose main focus was on the issue of Islam in Europe, construction of mosques, etc. Its most significant member groups are pro-Köln, pro Deutschland, pro-NRW (North Rhine - Westphalia) and pro Berlin (For details see Sager, Peters 2008).

is to be self-sufficient and provide for national consumption. The debate has been simplified to a single mandatory decision: Europe or capitalism.

The Czech Identity Generation follows Smitt's and Benoist's ideas about Identitarian democracy and ethnopluralism. It proclaims that they are against all totalitarian ideologies and they are for the democracy, but not for today liberal and parliament democracy. They support direct democracy, organic democracy coming from the ancient traditions, which can be reached only in homogenous nations. (Generace Identity 2013)

The Czech Identitarian movement has started to be active within international scene very quickly. In April 2014 in Prague they organized seminar with Philippe Vardon and Jean David Cattin, leading persons of the French Identitarian movement. In May 2014 they took part in the identitarian march in Vienna, first international meeting of national Identitarian movements.

Ideologically they agree with Benoist and Willinger on the necessity to reject egalitarianism. They reject any effort to eliminate differences among people. Universal human rights and freedoms and the universal values deriving from them are simply abstract terms empty of content. There is no universal person. This is a term as empty as universal human rights and freedoms (Revolta.info 2013b).

Benoist welcomes every drop of resistance in the sea of globalisation. He characterizes the contemporary world as unipolar, uprooting entire communities and all their members, absconding with their identity and trying to replace it with a religion of money. Such a situation leads to the uncontrolled flow of money and people around the globe: "The eradication of collective identities, termination of nations and cultures in favour of a large homogeneous global market is, in my opinion, one of the greatest current threats. Humanity is truly rich only through its diversity," states Alain de Benoist (Revolt.info 2013c). The universe of globalization should be supplanted by the universe featuring a multipolar global civilization.

The rhetoric so the Identitarian Movement employs the term "Homo Economicus", also used by the Czech neo-Nazis. Benoist uses Homo Economicus as the label for a new type of person brought into being by globalization. He makes reference to Nietzsche, who spoke of a new type of person, the so-called Übermensch, whom the Nazis referred to in their racial policy with the aim of creating a purely white race. According to Benoist, the destruction of all national, cultural and tribal ties leads to the rise of a new type of person but, unfortunately for humankind, this person is nothing of the sort Nietzsche had envisioned. Homo Economicus is

defined as a person with no ties, fully individualised, preferring market relationships to national solidarity and making cold calculations based on market logic (ibid.).

Conclusion

The Identitarian Movement across Europe reacts to the consistent, ever-present need of individuals to discover their identity and find a sense of belonging. Globalization, migration and processes related to it, along with a rapidly changing world, can intensify this feeling for some individuals. This is the driving force for the entire contemporary extreme and radical right-wing, which promotes a struggle against everything not related to the white race / nation / European civilization that might endanger it, while at the same time it reaches out to a broader public to become involved in its struggle.

Hannah Arendt drew attention to similar processes. She maintained that contemporary society has become atomized, with individuals having been uprooted and now confronting the sense that they are losing their identity and sense of belongingness (Císař 2004: 96 - 102). It would seem that it was only a matter of time before the entire contemporary extreme and radical right would begin to react to the identity theme.

Identitarian movement can be also understood as a follow up of so called silent counter-revolution, defined by Piero Ignazi in his article "The silent counter-revolution" from 1992, in which he argues that one of the factor causing rise of the radical right in Europe is growing dissatisfaction with post-materialist political system producing new demands, mainly unforeseen by the established conservative parties. These demands include law and order enforcement or immigration control (Ignazi 1992: 25). Conservative political parties are not able to react, so radical right movements and parties can use these feelings of society. The identity is used in contemporary times of migration and fluctuation of everything as a key to peoples' hearts and minds. Identitarian movement presents itself as an attempt to get back to the roots, to the identity that we have been losing because of globalisation and capitalism.

At the same time, similar themes have great potential to support the unification of individual national extreme / radical right groups into a single European movement built upon a common European identity. They allow potential disputes arising due to national affiliation or historical experience to be overcome. A common European identity may be defined as the strong glue of a European extreme / radical right movement. The Identitarian Movement has great transfer potential within Europe. It is currently remembered only because a huge number of right wing extremist groups altered their image and created a new profile based on novel

post-materialist themes. Understood correctly, it represents the path to the public. It offers a positive image of people interested in creating a community in which everyone is aware of his or her identity and the meaning of life. Negative images (“bogeys”) of the decline of European culture and civilization and the Islamization of Europe, of homosexual couples bringing up children, etc., seem to enter only as Step Two. In that sense Identitarian movement mobilizes public support using traditional concepts of identity, collective identity, roots, family, nation, brotherhood and the feeling of belonging into something that can be defined and identified very easily.

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