

THE POLITICAL DISCOURSE OF EXTREME RIGHT
IN WESTERN EUROPE IN THE LIGHT OF “CLASSICAL” FASCISM:
THE CASE OF THE FRONT NATIONAL IN FRANCE

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ABSTRACT

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The prime objective of this thesis is to grasp the terms of continuity and discontinuity between classical fascism and the contemporary extreme right in Western Europe. With respect to a hypothetical ideal type of fascism, the study will exclusively focus on French Front National case and try to unveil its historical and ideological linkages to the fascist rules in Italy and Germany during the inter-war years. While doing this, the transformation (if any) which certain elements of the extreme right rhetoric went through, will also be examined.

Keywords: Fascism, Nazism, extreme right, anti-Semitism, anti-immigration

ÖZ

“KLASİK” FAŞİZMİN IŞIĞINDA BATI AVRUPA’DA AŞIRI SAĞIN SİYASAL SÖYLEMİ: FRANSA’DAKİ MİLLİ CEPHE VAKASI

Usta, Utku

Yüksek Lisans, Siyaset Bilimi ve Kamu Yönetimi Bölümü

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Bu tez, klasik faşizm ve günümüz Batı Avrupa aşırı sağ arasındaki devamlılık ve/ veya devamsızlık arz eden noktaların ortaya çıkarılmasını amaçlamaktadır. Hipotetik bir faşizm kavramsallaştırmasının ışığında, Fransa’daki Milli Cephe temel alınarak günümüz Batı Avrupa aşırı sağının tarihsel ve ideolojik anlamda faşist mirasın ne ölçüde taşıyıcısı olduğu sorgulanmaktadır. Bu sorgulama esnasında aşırı sağ retoriğin kimi öğelerinin süreç içinde geçirdikleri (varsa) dönüşümler de ele alınmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Faşizm, Nazizm, aşırı sağ, anti-Semitizm, göçmen karşıtlığı

To my mother and brother

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

FANE	Fédération d'Action Nationale et Européenne
FLN	Front de Libération nationale
FN	Front National
FPÖ	Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs
GRECE	Groupement de Recherche et d' Etudes pour la Civilisation Européenne
MSI/AN	Movimento Sociale Italiano/ Alleanza Nazionale
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NSDAP	National Sozialistische Deutsche Arbeiter Partei
OAS	Organisation de l'armée secrète
ON	Ordre Nouveau
OND	Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro
PNF	Partito Nazionale Fascista
RPR	Rassemblement pour la République
SA	Sturmabteilung
SS	Schutzstaffel
UDCA	Union de Défense des Commerçants et Artisans
US	United States
VB	Vlaams Blok later Vlaams Belang

CHAPTER I

1. INTRODUCTION

Fascism has been a controversial topic due to its multi-dimensional nature and its frequent recruitment within the ever-chaotic spheres of political rhetoric.

Scholars from different branches of social science who found a food for thought in this phenomenon contributed considerable volumes of labour; covering its past occurrence, present resonance and possible future projection. Yet, we are still very far from a solid position which can utter an all-encompassing definition.

Fascism is a demanding concept; that might be considered as the prime source of controversy among researchers. Firstly, it necessitates a categorically-flexible outlook which must take its ideological connotations into account as much as its historical practice. In this sense, fascism carries a dual identity; both as a movement and as a regime where stored a vast amount of discontinuity in-between. Secondly, it pressures upon the value-free position of the researcher by revealing its irrationality in thought and action. The crimes committed by fascist regimes against humanity narrows the margins within which a scholar is opt to speak objectively. Therefore, a research on fascism is always faced with the threat of an immediate “for/against” type of political alignment which at best

overshadows the notion's multi-dimensionality for the merit of researcher's peace of mind.

The modest aim of this thesis is to examine the terms of continuity and discontinuity, in other words the political kinship, between classical fascism and the contemporary extreme right. For reasons to be explained accordingly, the term classical fascism will refer to a cross-manifestation of the totalitarian movements and regimes in Italy and Germany during the inter-war period, while contemporary extreme right will particularly cover the "Le Pen Affair" in France.

The organization of the thesis will be parallel to the expected scheme of developing ideas: it will start off from the assumption that a generic fascism is possible to define. Once this assumption is grounded, a list of possible features of a "fascist ideal type" will be articulated. This sort of an ideal type will serve no more than a methodological tool-at least that is what has been intended-whose emphasis will be upon the functionality rather than the truthfulness. Hence, the components of *this* ideal type should not be perceived as the "absolute conditions of fascism" but as a list of guidelines that are suggested for drawing a hypothetical frame in which one can make comparisons or generalizations about this phenomenon. In order to make this attempt clearer, there will also be a sub-heading, namely "Why religion is not a component of the fascist ideal type" at the end of this chapter. By examining this single *non-*

component, it will supposedly turn out much easier to grasp the idea behind the determination of a *component*.

Once the fascist ideal type is introduced, it would be plausible to proceed onto its components one by one. As can be guessed, this chapter will be where the conceptualization of classical fascism through Italian and German cases, is going to take place. While working on this conceptualization, classical fascism's phenomenological and functional aspects will be held together as long as the amount of politico-historical data collected permits. In other words, Chapter 3 will not limit itself with the depiction of this phenomenon in two countries but will also exclusively cover both "fascism as a movement" and "fascism in power".

In the fourth chapter, it is aimed to give conceptual understanding about the relative rise in extreme right movements across the European continent, focusing primarily on Le Pen's Front National in France. Methodologically, this chapter will feature the analysis of this particular case within the framework provided by its predecessor. Hence, the major question of the thesis will be ratified at this point and we can see to what extent Le Pen fits in our previously constructed "fascist ideal type".

However, this chapter will also possibly host an important drawback within the organization of the thesis. Since the world has not yet encountered a “Le Penian” government as such, a data upon what objectives he pursues when in power is completely non-existent. Therefore, a comparison between the functional aspects of classical fascism and contemporary extreme right will definitely be missing. Still, the author strongly believes that this kind of a leakage in his formulations occurs beyond the boundaries of a scientific research and will not undervalue the basic argument of his thesis.

The 5th and the last chapter will cover a brief summary of what has been put forward so far, by paying an extra attention to the terms of continuity and discontinuity between yesterday’s Mussolini-Hitler axis and today’s Le Pen line. The conclusion that is supposed to be drawn at this stage will enable forming an opinion about contemporary extreme right’s political positioning with reference to the fascist ideal type.

CHAPTER II

2. GENERIC FASCISM: IS THERE A FASCIST MINIMUM?

2.1. Fascism as a generic term

The only thing which has the privilege of having the approval of everybody about fascism is perhaps the word's Italian origin. The term "fascism" was derived from *fascio*; which simply meant the members of the political group led by Mussolini. "*Fascio* was, in turn, derived from the Latin word *fascēs*, the bundle of rods containing an axe carried by the lictor in Ancient Rome as a symbol of authority" (Whittam, 1995: 6).

In line with this etymological statement, fascism, as a political notion too, showcases an obvious Italian tone. Constituting an important chapter in the history of modern Italy, it can be defined as the name given to "the political force headed by Mussolini between March 1919 and April 1945 and which became the official ideological basis of a dictatorial regime established by him between 1925 and 1943" (Griffin, 1991: 1). Clear as it is, the word is chronologically remarked at both ends so that it can signify a fixed period of time lived within the boundaries of a particular territory. Hence, given a definition as such fascism becomes "essentially" Italian and starts to be equated to a historical experience unique to Italian people. However, the volumes of political literature offer a wide array of examples where this word has been complemented with other national names as well. German fascism, Spanish fascism, Hungarian fascism, Japanese fascism and even- gaining a continental

character sometimes- Latin American fascism happened to be concepts that are frequently uttered in political texts, not only polemically but also academically. At this very point lies the controversy.

If we admit the essential Italianness of the word fascism, it will be of limited significance and utility to the researchers whose task is to examine the dynamics of similar movements or regimes, because of the word's inapplicability to anywhere except Italy. Conversely, if we ever choose the other way that is to apply it to phenomena outside Italy, "the status of the word changes: it becomes a generic term" (Griffin, 1991: 1).

James Strachey Barnes, a member of the Royal Institute of International Affairs and one of Britain's most important apologists of Fascism, has once declared "Fascists in each country must make Fascism their own national movement, adopting symbols and tactics which conform to the traditions, psychology and tastes of their own land" (Barnes in Griffin, 1995: 256). This quotation clarifies two distinct facts that are equally considerable for understanding the nature of fascism. First, as it is openly meant, fascists hardly ever hesitate to consider themselves as a part of an international project and fascism as a concept "open to any country", in other words *generic*. Secondly and more significantly, the presentation of fascism as *a general principle applicable to any country* here, highlights its eclectic and heterogeneous character which to a certain extent explains the popular success of fascist discourse but also makes it a difficult

terrain for scholars to explore. For Mercer, Fascism was and never has been a coherent philosophy or doctrine. In a sense it never had to be, precisely because of its (earlier declared) allegiance to ‘irrationalism’ and the centrality of a certain philosophical pragmatism in relation to its ideology (Mercer, 1986: 222). As a result of this difficulty or *allegiance to irrationalism*, some writers are more than reluctant to assign any categorical meanings to this phenomenon and tend to handle the issue within its own historical context. According to Watson, “polemical and inexact use of the word has inevitably discouraged scholars. Some may be tempted to argue that it can only usefully be applied to one party and regime which have a limited but important place in the history of one country, Italy” (Watson, 1989: 542).

Furthermore, it has even been denied that there ever was fascism in a global sense at all. Advocators of this view insist that there were stark differences between German National Socialism, Italian Fascism, the Spanish Falange, and similar political phenomena that a generic concept was not applicable (Griffin, 1995: 283).

2.2. Can a “fascist ideal type” be constructed and what can be the components of it?

Among the views on *generic fascism* presented so far, it remains a sensible option to take a position which is equally distanced from all-including or all-excluding definitions. Fascism *is* a generic term, which makes it applicable to

contexts outside of Italy. Yet, it still hosts a particularity in itself which avoids calling each and every authoritarian regime or military dictatorship simply as fascist and which makes the term inapplicable when it comes to countries like Spain, Austria, Hungary, Chile et cetera. As Okyayuz argues, except for the cases where fascism's prerequisites and, later, agenda have been fully realized, that are Italy and Germany, it equals to a flaw to expand the term's boundaries so much. (Okyayuz, 2002) Kitchen shares the same view: "Contrary to the minority held belief, the dictatorships of the underdeveloped world, although they have clearly learnt much from fascist practise, are not themselves fascist" (Kitchen in Griffin, 1995: 285).

During the period between two world wars, it is commonly stated that fascist movements and the mindset behind them gained momentum and enjoyed a serious extent of popular support. This eventually resulted in the duplication of the principles and practice of the regime in Italy which has the privilege of offering world *the original* in this field. Watson's remarks on this *trend* are of great importance and will help us proceed onto the next stage of this thesis' argumentation:

The 1930s and 1940s were the period of fascist success. Inevitably fascist policies and institutions were aped by others. Obvious examples are Hungary under Gömbös, Yugoslavia under Stojadinovic and Rumania under King Carol. But in these cases no fascist revolution took place. The existing regimes were only superficially changed, and even the anti-Jewish measures were comparatively mild. (Watson, 1989: 546)

He continues with another stark example: The regime of Dollfuss in Austria was supposedly copied from the Italian model yet it was introduced from above,

without any forcible seizure of power, and it never managed to enjoy a real mass support (Watson, 1989: 546).

Progressing from Watson's views, there can be mentioned a set of factors that decides on the "fascistness" of a political entity. Out of the quotations above, one can derive the existence of a (fascist) revolution, anti-Jewish measures, forcible seizure of power and a genuine mass support as the sine qua non factors for fascism. Developing on similar factors, which are characteristic to both inter-war Italian and German cases but not to anywhere else, a fascist ideal type can be supposedly introduced. Methodologically, such a framework could make comparisons between different types of authoritarian-dictatorial regimes possible without favouring the view that equalizes fascist ideology's eclecticism and uniqueness to fascism's incomprehensibility. Henceforth, it is argued that a fascist ideal type can be constructed with regards to the following components:

Fascism as an eclectic ideology: Fascism rests not upon a coherent philosophical background as it is the case with Marxism, but on a pragmatic gathering of ideas coming from various veins of political thought. For instance, even if alone they are not compatible with any form of totalitarian application; it is believed that Italian fascism has managed to articulate so many features of Syndicalism and Futurism. Such contradictions are immanent to fascism.

Fascism as a golden age myth: Fascism demands its legitimacy straight out by referring to a golden age in history thus the movement enjoys the privilege of presenting itself as a “rebirth” attempt of the nation. That is exactly why the Germans were eager to denote their regime with numbers (Dritte Reich) whereas Italians were willing to resurrect Roman Empire.

Fascism as a mass movement: Both in Italy and Germany, the movement and later the regime were dependent on a solid popular support (mostly of middle class origin) which differentiates fascism from other types of authoritarian rules where the power has been seized by a specific, narrow cadre by force usually via a coup.

Fascism as a leader cult: Fascism depends on the personification of power at extreme levels. The Duce or Führer belongs to a higher standard than a charismatic statesman and often associated with a saviour who is holding the destiny of the nation in his hands.

Fascism as a totalitarian ideology: Unlike the category of authoritarian regimes, fascism demands the contribution of every single individual to its agenda. For this, the fascist regime takes extreme measures to control the life and organization of the society. Not only working time but also leisure is submitted to the grand command of the State. Since the nation is acknowledged

as an organic unity with *body* metaphor, there is neither a need for a distinction between state and society in fascism, nor one for individual privacy.

Fascism as a counter-revolution: Even though it rhetorically addresses the interests of a middle class man whose adversary is against both proletariat and the big business, fascism has always got close and organic contact with capitalism. Both Italian and German fascisms represent a break from liberal democratic regime however this break hardly ever exceeds the political and arrives at economical sphere. Fascism questions not the key suppositions of capitalism such as private ownership, but indeed combats the view that questions them, that is revolutionary left.

Fascism as an imperialist project: War, as a part of the golden age myth, is considered a medium of rebirth for the nation. Fascist regimes constantly reclaim their historical *lebensraum* not merely for the sake of their ideological coherency but also for realizing the economic merits of an expansion as it has been promised to the nation.

Fascism as a scapegoat philosophy: Fascism's answer to "What went wrong?" is always provocative and addresses a particular grouping *within* the society. Portrayed as a part of a big plot, or better a conspiracy; these scapegoats are considered as the cause of all evil and decadence. Therefore, fascism is essentially racist.

2.3. Why religion is not a component of this ideal type

Despite all of its peculiarities and eclecticism, the ideology of fascism can still be filed within the conservative line of thought in politics. However, unlike many forms of conservatism, fascism hardly granted religion a central role in its rhetoric or practice. Progressing from the Italian and German cases, it can be argued that Christianity served as an ideological supplement and was submitted to the totalitarian mindset of the Duce or the Fuhrer. Devoid of their former supremacy and/or autonomy, the church in both countries had been subjected to the pragmatic interests of the regime thus were never allowed to pass beyond a certain line of popular influence, which was of course drawn by the very governments.

Beside their common distance to religious conservatism as such, the Italian and German ways of articulating Christianity in fascist discourse differs greatly from each other too. As it was partially mentioned above, fascism regarded religious affiliation as an important value within the fabric of society but was not equally eager to let it become an alternative source of authority. The relations between the regime and the church took shape more or less with reference to this tension. And not surprisingly, the extent and the content of this tension nurtured different circumstances in Italy than the ones in Germany.

Having Vatican as the supreme head of world Catholicism inside the provincial frontiers of its capital, Italy is expected to be sensitive more than anywhere else when it comes to religion. This might explain why Mussolini acted as early as 1929 to sign the Lateran Pacts with Cardinal Gasparri (Whittam, 1995: 77) in order to regulate relations between the church and the state. Indeed, given the growing obsession of the fascists with the myth of ancient Rome, it begins to look less surprising how the state nominated itself as the chief transmitter of Catholic values and was willing to come to terms with these values' official reproducer. The Vatican, in return for this approach, "did not press for the restoration of the old Papal State, but it did demand a sovereign state to ensure the independence of the pope and to be a visible symbol to the outside world that he was master in his own house" (Whittam, 1995: 77).

Although a relative autonomy was supposed to be granted to the church, fascists were unlikely to withdraw completely from the realm of religious affairs. Most Italian nationalists, while not always personally religious, saw the Catholic Church as a monument of Italian genius, and a large number of fascists were practising Catholics (De Grand, 1996: 54). Therefore, evoking Christian sentiments in public became one of the major components of fascist rhetoric. "Mussolini himself, in a similar fashion, acting the part of 'prodigal son', had his children baptised, married his wife in a church ceremony in 1925 and placed crucifixes in schools and law courts" (Whittam, 1995: 76). The church was granted additional funds and the Catholic Bank of Rome was saved from

collapse. Corresponding to these efforts, clergy continued to bestow legitimacy and approval to the regime especially on common grounds like combating Bolshevism and the promotion of traditional Christian family life even if there is still room for tension in terms of principles. This mentioned room later gained space and turned into a primary front of conflict where the interests of the state and the church clashed severely. It was the introduction of the legal procedure which was to enable racial segregation in Italy that threatened the former condition of mutuality. The church objected to the racial laws and for the first time since 1931 there was serious tension with the state. Generally, the pope disapproved doctrines of racial segregation as unchristian, and in particular he condemned the banning of mixed marriages. “He accused Mussolini of breaking the Concordat¹ and he ridiculed him for copying the Germans and for misunderstanding the true nature of the Roman Empire” (Whittam, 1995: 99). As can be seen, the alliance between the pope and the Duce had ceased leaving not only fascism’s passions about Catholicism but also those about the resurrection of the ancient Rome in void.

In Germany, the situation was quite different. For Nazis, it was rather difficult to align themselves with the church as it was the case with their Italian counterparts because the role and the weight of religion in German society has been a complex and questionable issue. It is true that, much before Nazis marched to power had already existed a nationalist- culturalist recitation of

¹ The Lateran Pact of 1929

history in the minds of many Germans that was later to be called *völkisch* thought. When it comes to Christianity, there appeared two peculiar movements that were embedded in this *völkisch* mindset. The first was that of the ‘German Christians’, who wished to purge Christianity of its Judaic origins and restore it in its original “purity”, to those whom it had always been destined -namely the German People. The second, smaller movement was that of the ‘German Believers’, “who denounced the idea of purging Christianity and return to the ancient religion of the Germans, a pantheism that did not recognize any ideas of original sin or love for one’s neighbour” (Burrin, 2005: 34). Clear as it is, religion in German case happened to be elaborated together with a racial identity and accordingly carried an anti-Semitic tone in varying degrees. In other words, unlike Italian fascism’s embrace of Christian values as the cement of the nation, Germans were sceptical and had always had the idea of putting them in trial or revision if necessary. Such a dissatisfaction if not a direct confrontation against Christianity within the public mind has served incredibly as the major determinant of Nazism’s (ir)religious policies.

Even though, like Mussolini, Hitler signed a concordat with the Vatican in 1933 to regulate relations between the church and the state (De Grand, 1996: 54) and “the Third Reich deliberately used Christian tapping in its ritual, symbolism and language, at the level of ideology mainstream Nazism was intensely anti-Christian” (Griffin, 1991: 32). Fuelled with Wagnerian romanticism and Nietzschean philosophy, Christian religion, that was supposed to carry the foul

birthmark of Judaism, was considered something alien, something inappropriate to the German society. As a by-product of this stark anti-Semitism which very much shaped the political climate of the inter-war years more than ever, the religion itself began to be perceived as a cause of decadence. Born and bred under such circumstances, indeed “none of the major Nazi leaders belonged to traditional Christian churches; many, including Hitler, were atheists; others, like Hess and Rosenberg, adhered to variants of Nordic pagan cults²” (De Grand, 1996: 55). Still, these cadres did not choose to denounce Christianity at initial stages and continued to invoke “Providence” and “the Lord” in public speeches. As the power was absolutely seized and the huge propaganda machine started to operate, Nazis managed to utter bravery in terms of their true intentions about Christian religion. Following the break of war, from the peaks of his milleniarist and prophetic vision, Hitler started to abuse several occasions to attack Christianity and the churches, speaking of his intention to destroy them after the war (Burrin, 2005: 82) and to replace with a genuine Germanic-Aryan belief system.

In the light of these two depictions of fascists’ approach to religion, it appears to be possible to draw a conclusion at this point. In order to sum things up, it should be underlined that there are two major reasons why previously mentioned ‘fascist ideal type’ will not feature a component such as “Fascism as a religious ideology”. First, in both cases, the religion is subordinated to the

² Hess and Rosenberg were members of an occultist circle called Thule-Gesellschaft (Thule Society) whose aim was to conduct so-called research on the origins of the Aryan race. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thule_society)

state that puts Christianity's position in doubt when talking about fascism as a historical and political category. In other words, if our task is to define a phenomenon called fascism, the churches both in Italy and Germany offer a lesser significance than we expect to find in a component of our mentioned ideal type. This is due to the fact that Christianity belongs to the "affected" side of the equation rather than the "affecting" one. Secondly, as can be derived from the lines above, the Italian and German approaches to religion originated from completely dissimilar motivations which later drove them to dissimilar sets of practice. For this reason, it becomes very difficult to employ this "religion" variable if the purpose is to list the common point in Italian and German cases for reaching a general meaning that could be able to define both at once.

CHAPTER III

3. AN ATTEMPT TO CONCEPTUALIZE CLASSICAL FASCISM IN THE LIGHT OF THE “FASCIST IDEAL TYPE”

Prior to getting into the detailed discussion of fascist ideal type, it appears to be meaningful to stress a series of important remarks.

Fascism is a concept which has legs both in abstract and concrete realms of political theory. First and the foremost, it is a special name assigned by Mussolini himself to define Italy under his rule, therefore carries a considerable historical particularity. Secondly, it is a generic term which can as well be applied outside Italy in order to denote a category of authoritarian regimes reminiscent of that of Mussolini. Thirdly, since not every fascist could make his way to the throne, we must mention another distinction between ‘fascism as a movement’ and ‘fascism in power’.

The following pages do not suggest an easy remedy for this conceptual load, nor do they intend to simplify or reduce the subject matter. Rather, the primary aim will be to take all three dimensions into account and hopefully develop a descriptive route progressing from the interconnection among them. In other words, this chapter is going to try modestly to derive useful hints out of ‘concrete’ fascism that had been lived and experienced in Italy and Germany during interwar years, in order to achieve a broad conceptualization of generic

or ‘abstract’ fascism. The possible, notable differences between the theory and practice of fascism will also be underlined, yet not under distinct titles but within their relevant context. For example, while examining the peculiar mode of relation in-between fascism and capitalism, first will be supplied the historical evidence drawn from Italian and German cases. Later will be presented how the fascists’ approach towards capitalism had changed during their march to seize absolute power. Lastly, a concluding assessment will be tried in the light of all this available data through which a general rule on fascism- capitalism relations might be generated.

What should also be stressed at this point is related to the spelling of certain important words. Throughout the entire document, unless otherwise noted, ‘fascism’ will signify a generic political category whereas ‘Fascism’ with capital F will stand specifically for the regime founded by Mussolini in Italy.

3.1. Fascism as an eclectic ideology

I warn you against the tendency to regard fascist ideology as something that is solidly formed, complete homogenous. Nothing more closely resembles a chameleon than fascist ideology. Don’t look at fascist ideology without considering the objectives which fascism proposes to reach at a given moment within given territory. Togliatti (Mercer, 1986: 213)

Fascism operates on an eclectic ideological framework which encompasses numerous assumptions, values and references derived from a wide array of diverse political and philosophical traditions. Therefore, it practically happens to be much more pragmatic than it is programmatic. As expected, this unique

feature of fascism bestows an immense manoeuvre space for its supporters in terms of appeal, utterance and discourse while it equally makes the situation demanding for a researcher, most visibly in his/her taxonomical attempts. Indeed, fascism's unfamiliarity with the word "rationality" is not at all a finding of its commentators. In Gentile's, who is considered to be one of the leading theorists of Italian Fascism, a close friend of the Duce himself and the minister of education of the regime, own words: "The Fascist conception is idealistic and appeals to faith, and celebrates ideal values (family, fatherland, civilization and human spirit) as superior to every contingent value" (Gentile, 2003: 35). In other words, on the grounds fascist ideology glorifies the will and the action over the intellect, it remains to be an uneasy prey for intellectual attempts that aim to exhume coherence out of this eclectic pile as it is the case with other theoretical positions in politics.

Throughout its formative years especially, in both Italy and Germany, fascism was more than eager in its endeavour to articulate any form of popular discontent for the sake of evoking an approval for their being "anti-establishment". This, consequently, led to a paradoxical co-existence of elements from different categorical sources. As a result fascism appeared to be both reactionary and revolutionary; both elitist and populist; plus equally traditionalist and modernizing.

Mussolini's own theoretical journey can alone offer a valuable reference for the heterogeneity of fascist thought in Italy. Started out his political career as a militant in Socialist Party ranks and syndicalist movement, he could be better placed on the left-side of the spectrum easily. Yet, a stark revision took place in his thoughts thereafter. Steadily drifting away from the original interpretation of Marxist class-war notion, Mussolini came into touch with the likes of Poppini, Prezzolini (Griffin, 1991: 60) and above all Sorel who apparently underlines the importance of "myth" as the driving force of history (Griffin, 1991: 194).

Gentile, one of the forerunner theorists of Fascism, correctly states that "many fascist including the Duce, himself, received their first intellectual education in the school of Marx and Sorel" (Gentile, 2003: 33). Indeed, Georges Sorel had already been a guideline for the Italian syndicalists who exercised a considerable influence upon the working class masses those days. However, through what kind of an appropriative mechanism his views happened to give inspiration to fascists, is worthy of examination. If we are to apply to Gentile again:

When Georges Sorel (...) defeated that materialistic theory of the German democratic epigones of Karl Marx – and educated syndicalism – young Italians turned to him, and found in syndicalism two things: (1) the rejection of that strategy of foolish and deceptive collaboration of socialism with the parliamentary democracy of the liberal state. In doing so, socialism succeeded only in betraying the proletariat as well as the liberal state. (2) As opposed to standard socialism, the proletariat found in syndicalism a faith in a moral reality, exquisitely ideal (or "myth", as was said at the time) for which one would be prepared to live, die and sacrifice oneself, even to the point of using violence was whenever violence was necessary to destroy an established order to create another (Gentile, 2003: 12).

As can be seen, Gentile is quite selective in terms of what should be added to the mixture of fascism. He borrows from Sorel, the anti-materialistic interpretation of history that is represented with the idea of “myth”. He also takes the principle of the revolutionary violence, in other words “violence as an expression of class war” (Versluis, 2006: 40) which is justified in order to sweep away the existing order. Nevertheless, he appears to be also rather reluctant to mention the internationalist character of workers’ struggle; plus the core demand of Sorelian syndicalists; self-governance. For the merit of nationalism and state chauvinism, Gentile like the rest of the fascists preferred leaving these two topics out of scope.

A similar situation is quite evident with futurism. In several sources, futurists are considered to be a stream flowing into the river of fascism as well. From 1909 – the year when their manifesto had been drawn up by Marinetti and a group of avant-garde artist – onwards, futurists’ aim was to shock the bourgeois world out of its complacency established traditions and all orthodox opinions. “They extolled the beauty of the new age technology and the dynamism of the modern world of machines, factories, furnaces and weapons of war. Obsessed by the concept of speed and motion, they glorified the motor car and airplane (Whittam, 1995: 21). Out of these set of arguments, fascists borrowed the exact commitment to the technology and the consequent idea of perfection through machinery. Those perceptions were pretty much in use while the Mussolini regime was modernizing production units, practicing large-scale propaganda

over the country and reorganizing the society according to totalitarian principles. However, when it comes to “ridicule of established traditions and all orthodox opinions”, Fascism was keen on retaining the status quo and even further strengthening those traditional and orthodox opinions as a part of its socio-cultural policy.

All in all, Italian fascism can be said to draw inspiration from a wide range of sources, “from the language of anarcho-syndicalism, the vitalist philosophy of Henri Bergson and Georges Sorel, the generalized ‘revolt against positivism’ and a range of popular prejudices and preconceptions” (Mercer, 1986: 218). What should be highlighted here is that, no matter how many socialists, syndicalists or futurists had been recruited to the fascist cadres, there was no a real intellectual effort to merge these veins into a coherent and complete synthesis.

In Germany, fascism’s ideological milieu was enriched by brand new additions although the motivation behind had remained quite akin to that of Italy.

First and foremost, the presumption that conceives Germany of something “to exist as a *Kulturnation* long before belatedly becoming a *Staatsnation*” (Griffin, 1991: 85) was very much alive and widespread in public mind. In other words, there was a notion of nation which was not conceptualized through legal or political terms but through culturalist and organicist ones. Although in varying measures, this very core of *völkisch thought* retained its principal status within

the mindset of its time and later served as a fertile ground where proto-fascist views could dawn and flourish.

Mostly visible among artistic and intellectual chambers, there was this constant recruitment of historical references, leading way to the manifestation of an authentic Germanic essence that managed to survive the centuries and was expected to do so in the future. Combining diverse philosophical and ideological positions, the task turned out to be the invocation of this essence and its protection from decadence. For example, Richard Wagner's vision of a regenerated German people blended Nietzschean¹ art theory with Romanticism, German paganism, anti-semitism and the Aryan myth, trying "to turn Bayreuth into the spiritual birthplace and powerhouse of the future *Germanic Volksgemeinschaft*" (Griffin, 1991: 87).

Beside this *völkish* interpretation of nationalism, there comes secondly of course the notion of socialism which made possible the utterance of that renowned abbreviation; Nazi². Devoid of its materialistic components, Nazis' socialism was eager to appoint nation to the post of historical agent, not class as it is the case with Marxism. For this reason, even though it, to some extent sympathized or at least flirted with proletarian revolutionary demands (Griffin, 1995: 160),

¹ Nietzsche was clearly an opponent of anti-Semitism and always discredited the vulgar worship of power spreading around after the Bismarckian "iron and blood" method's success in German unification. Yet, his famous concepts like *will to power* or *übermensch* were ripped from their philosophical context, reduced to slogans and later "Nazified" which he would have strongly disapproved. (Evans, 2004: 39)

² The term Nazi is constructed from the first syllables of the two words; national and socialist.

fascist movement in Germany never pushed working class interests beyond the line of opportunism. Instead, the Nazis suggested a third way between capitalism and socialism, where private ownership of the means of the production was not questioned but the economy should have been intensely supervised by the state. Even after this formulation, there remained a certain amount of rage against the rich among NSDAP cadres. However, in line with the *völkish* derivative of nationalism, it evolved into the simplistic scheme of confronting the Jewish capitalists.

Just like its Italian counterpart, German fascism hosted a paradoxical relationship with modernity as well. While glorifying rural sentiments as the genuine, traditional German lifestyle during its formative years, Nazism later transformed into one of the most urban-based ideologies and began to be associated with forced modernization especially in fields of propaganda and the re-organization of society through militaristic guidelines.

To conclude, fascism's existence as an eclectic ideology is quite evident in both Italian and German instances. Still, it should also be claimed that Nazis reached at a higher level of – so called – coherence than Mussolini and his followers in the South. There were a lot of questions with a lot of answers in Italy, however, in Germany; there were a lot of questions with a single answer that was the Jew.

3.2. Fascism as a golden age myth

Our Latin and Mediterranean race, that I want to exalt before us, because it is the race that has given to the world, among thousands of others, Caesar, Dante, Michelangelo, Napoleon. It is an ancient and strong race of creators and builders, individual and universal at the same time. Mussolini (Gillette, 2000: 45)

Stand young not on new territory, but on historic soil. Hitler (Kalli, 2000: 42)

Despite its eclectic nature which articulates numerous elements coming from diverse political or philosophical traditions, fascist ideology had always been very cautious to represent itself within a historical continuity. Stemming from a golden age myth which was mainly inflated by the glamour of an imperial past, fascists believed their actions were justified while reclaiming the status that had once been granted on their 'race'. Both in Italian and German cases, fascism pronounced the necessity of an intervention to the course of history which had been sadly interrupted by the conspiratorial acts of the other 'races' or big powers in international politics. In other words, history for a fascist was something to be adjusted to the 'natural' route it was destined to follow, so that the mission of national grandeur could be realized. Apparently, there is stored a decent amount of pragmatic historicism in the ideological armory of fascism which seeks psychological legitimation through direct references to a glorious distant past.

Griffin underlines this exact point by his remarks on 'the myth of palingenesis' while explaining fascism. Extending much beyond the concept of nostalgia or backward-looking positions, palingenesis denotes a national rebirth (Griffin, 1991:32), a phoenix rising from its own ashes, a community of people awaken

with the desire to overcome contemporary decay and reach the zenith of civilization as experienced by their ancestors. Not surprisingly, “the alleged Roman and Christian origins of the modern Italian state and the heritage of the Holy Roman Empire of the German nation” (Kallis, 2000: 42) are the most notable instances of such an appeal.

Talking about Italy, the legacy of the Roman Empire undoubtedly continued the touchstone of this palingenetic golden age myth where the currents of Romanita and Risorgimento merged into one.

Romanita, in its broadest sense, was the belief that “invited Italians to see themselves as having directly inherited the virtues of the Italic race” (Griffin, 1991: 73) and yet this inheritance featured missions as many as the virtues. According to Romanita, the historical significance and splendour of the Roman Empire bestowed upon the contemporary Italians, the right to dominate the Mediterranean basin “in search of both living space and a new period of national greatness” (Kallis, 2000: 48). Mussolini gladly accepted this right as the universal task of his ancestors yet waiting to be fulfilled. Soon the regime he founded became so obsessed with the Roman past that the Duce began to be considered not only as a heir but as a direct reincarnation of both Caesar and Augustus³ (Whittam, 1995: 87)

³ In 1926, the head of the Pres Office, Gaetano Polverelli even suggested converting Augustus’ tomb into a temple of fascism (Whittam, 1995: 87).

Risorgimento, on the other hand, signified what was “new” with the Italian people. Literally meaning ‘the revival’ or ‘the revolution’, this concept carried the hallmark of Italy’s unification and nation-state building period that took place in as late as 1860s. Even though, many scholars like Mercer preferred to see it as an Italian bourgeois revolution, roughly comparable to the English revolution of the 17th century and the French Revolution of 1789 (Mercer, 1986: 209), fascists tended to hail this movement with greater emphasis. For Gentile, the chief ideologue of Fascism, it was not a static concept but a permanent struggle for renaissance and grandeur where Garibaldian revolutionary and universalist vision joint forces with Mazzinian idealism (Kallis, 2000:37).

Together with Romanita, Risorgimento gave fascists an amalgam of a popular and national kind which had its roots in the past yet implementations in the present. The golden age represented by the legacy of the Roman Empire, and the rebirth notion at the core of Italy’s unification process, became the magnitude of Mussolini and company’s rhetoric hence they could make certain appeals to the public opinion but more importantly could represent their ideology within a quasi-historical continuity. As a result, “the demographic and spiritual regeneration of the Italian people became the *conditio sine qua non* for greatness and for fulfilling the historic mission of dominating the Mediterranean *mare nostrum*” (Kallis, 2000: 52) which in fact served as the apology of imperialism in the eyes of many.

In Germany, having labeled their regime with a numeric expression- Dritte (Third) Reich- Nazis were seemingly much more attentive about finding concrete historical references for the legitimization of their ideology.

According to the Nazi historiography, the First Reich is the so-called Holy Roman Reich of the German nation, founded by Charlemagne in 800 and dissolved by Napoleon in 1806 (Evans, 2004: 3) which is also important for marking the origin of a popular Nazi slogan: *a thousand-year Reich!*⁴

Second Reich in row, came to existence in the year 1871 when the Prussian Chancellor Otto von Bismarck achieved long-since delayed German unification by “iron and sword” (Stackelberg, 1999: 30) and baptized his newly founded state as “German Reich”. The recall of Charlemagne’s empire was not limited to a single word. The new Reich’s emperor was called Kaiser (a derivation of the Latin name Caesar), while its parliament took over the name Reichstag both of which were exactly of the Holy Roman legacy (Evans, 2004: 7). Still, Bismarck, the sole responsible for the coinage of the term *Realpolitik* in the world political literature, was more like a responsible, conservative statesman than an adventurer who was claiming Holy Roman’s territorial heritage along with being its namesake. In the end, Second Reich came into a collapse as a result of the First World War with a great historical record of unifying Germans under a single statehood and an equally important failure in pursuing the völkisch

⁴ Nazis were in constant eagerness to emulate this notion and always claimed that their Third Reich would live for a thousand years as well. For this reason, some scholars applied the term “millenarianism” while explaining Nazi phenomenon.

mission of *Grosserdeutschland* , that is the unification of all German speaking people throughout the entire Europe, especially the Austrians.

Hitler supposedly started where Bismarck left, declaring his task “as a continuation of Bismarck’s artificially interrupted and distorted vision of national grandeur” (Kallis, 2000: 37) and thus Nazi regime took over the name *Third Reich*.

Despite his criticism of the second Reich’s reluctance to create *Grosserdeutschland*, Hitler always hailed the personality of Bismarck in dignity and defined him as “the prophet, the precursor of Great Germany, the man who realised the destiny of the German *volk* and initiated the difficult process of its renaissance” (Kallis, 2000: 37). Furthermore, as early as mid-1920s, he personally chose the colours black, white and red for NSDAP’s flag⁵ paying sort of a tribute to the official flag of the Bismarckian Empire (Evans, 2004: 174).

As can be seen, Hitler was always willing to represent his leadership and his state as the direct inheritors of a historical line which was perceived as the natural course of the German people in history. With an obsessive commitment to the half-realized, long-since-delayed and always-disrupted mission of the unification of German *Volksgemeinschaft*, he always evaluated Weimar

⁵ According to Evans, the Nazi party flag symbolizes the synthesis of right and left in its ideology. The field was bright red which depicts socialism with the swastika, the emblem of Aryanism, outlined in black in the middle of a white circle at the centre of the flag. (Evans, 2004: 174)

Germany as an anomaly that was doomed to perish, therefore immediately after assuming power declared the birth of his thousand-year-Third Reich as the sole initiator of palingenesis. To put it alternatively, the Third Reich was believed to overcome the shortcomings of the second Reich thus could replicate the splendour of the First.

When examined together, it can be suggested that fascists of both Italy and Germany exploited a similar stock of palingenetic myths and tried to invoke similar conceptualizations of golden age nostalgia where Roman Empire roughly corresponded to the Holy Roman-German Reich and Mazzini to Bismarck. Still, these similarities point out more than an overlap between the Duce's and the Führer's perspectives, it, aside everything, highlights the significant likeness of Italy and Germanys as countries.

According to the 'late-comers' thesis, Italy and Germany, the two instances of late national unity and state formation in Europe, "had to copy the old imperial states such as Britain or France under great pressure of time and with severely limited political or geographical flexibility" (Kallis, 2000: 13). This, in turn, triggered the overemphasis on new territory, an aggressive foreign policy and above all the emergence of a palingenetic golden age myth to justify this entire set of outcomes. In a nutshell, the great power ambitions of the two 'late-comers' necessitated the dawning of a 'historical mission of grandeur' notion in

the public mind which was later revised, radicalised and put into practise by the fascists.

3.3. Fascism as a mass movement

Italian Fascism and German Nazism were certainly not the first and unfortunately not the last instances of authoritarianism in the world political history. However, they both enjoyed a genuine characteristic that distinguishes them from any other supposedly similar practice of power. Fascism can not be reduced to a form of coercive governing exercise where the power has been seized by those of superior in wealth or gun power, vice versa not every dictator or autocrat with a firm hand can be said to establish a fascist rule in the sense we assign to the world. Fascism is authentic in the way it depends on a substantial popular support and stems from a mass movement. The extent and the composition of this popular support were not content only to offer legitimacy for the policies of PNF or NSDAP but also pretty much determined the dose and the direction of their policies. Hence, understanding the small man behind is an essential step in order to grasp the big picture of fascism.

The portrait of both Italy and Germany in the aftermath of the First World War was marked by an extensive economic breakdown and a consequent social unrest. First defeated, then forced to sign somewhat “unfair” peace treaties; the two countries had already been hosting public opinion that considered foreign affairs overall a problematic issue. Furthermore, severe class conflicts and

concomitant legitimacy crises for the newborn post-war governments ruled the day in the interior. Broadly sketched, fascism emerged and ripened into such circumstances which not only granted it a fertile political space to operate but also an identity of its own.

According to Eley, Fascism may be best understood, “as primarily a counter-revolutionary ideological project, constituting a new kind of popular coalition in the specific circumstances of an interwar crisis” (Eley in Griffin, 1995: 288). As the part of counter-revolution will be examined thoroughly under another sub-heading, progressing from this suggestion of Eley’s, it is meaningful to underline the defining features of this popular coalition.

Within the highly fragmented societal and political climate of Italy and Germany, there appeared hardly a room for a fascist view to flourish and attract the attention of the ordinary man. Hence, the first stages of fascism’s journey were associated with marginal parties suffering a lack of ideological coherence and relatively weak capacity to mobilize votes beyond their small, core support. Yet, this fate had to be revised while the movement started to build up an affinity with middle class demands. As Linz proposed,

the appeal based on emotion, myth, idealism, and action on the basis of a vitalistic philosophy is initially directed at those least integrated into the class structure – youth, students, demobilized officers – to constitute a self-appointed elite and later to all those disadvantageously affected by social change and economic crisis (Linz in Griffin, 1995: 300).

What terrified the middle class most and drove them to the ranks of fascism was a sense of social insecurity caused primarily by an economical double pressure.

Arendt (1966: 36) summarizes this state of mind as follows;

Capitalist expansion on the domestic scene tended more and more to liquidate small property-holders, to whom it had become a question of life or death to increase quickly the little they had, since they were too likely to lose it all. They were becoming aware that if they did not succeed in climbing upward into the bourgeoisie, they might sink down into the proletariat.

Positioned under the organized bourgeoisie and over the equally organized working class, this sector of the society felt threatened by both capitalism from above and socialism from below⁶. However, when together taken into account with the latter events, it might be argued that anti-socialist appeals have got a certain weight over anti-capitalist ones which were mostly converted into a discourse of racism (i.e. the perception of the enemy shifted from capitalism to the Jewish capitalists) afterwards. The emergence of the institutionalized trade union activity uttered a much more immediate danger because it increased the pressure to redistribute political power and to include new groups in the social and economic balance. In Italy and Germany these demands were rejected by large sectors of the middle class (De Grand, 1996: 5). Not surprisingly.

Following the difficult times of war, Italian economy found itself in a further turmoil. “The cessation of wartime loans, the abandonment of government controls, the need for industry to revert to peacetime production and the return of four million soldiers, all contributed to an acute economic crisis” (Whittam,

⁶ The stress of the “Third Way” in fascist economy policy can be seen as a direct outcome of this feeling of double pressure.

1995: 17). This crisis deepened with an accompanying social unrest. By the end of 1919, there were two million unemployed, and due to high inflation the lira weakened leading a sharp rise in the cost of the living. “Industrial workers sought safety by joining trade unions and membership of the socialist General Confederation of Labour (CGL) rose from 250.000 to two million by 1920; the Catholic unions claimed over one million and syndicalists 300.000” (Whittam, 1995: 18). The increasing unification and the militancy of working class did not result only in strikes but also in large-scale political experimentations like the Biennio Rosso (to be explained later). This, equally, intensified the fears among the members of the middle class, which were later to be transcribed into political demands by Mussolini. In other words, the main class base for fascism was “in the traditional and, increasingly new petty bourgeoisie who formed the core of the PNF and provided its bedrock of explicit support in the new industries and the rapidly expanding administrative and service sectors”. (Mercer, 1986: 219)

The situation was quite similar in Germany. The level of social stratification was even higher than it was in Italy since Germany hosted a society that was much ahead in terms of industrialization.

The well-organized economic elites – the Central Verband Dutscher Industrieller for heavy industry, the Bund der Industrieller for light and export oriented industry, the Chambers of Commerce, the groups representing the military-industrial alliances like the Navy League and the Army League, individual production cartels and the Bund der Landwirte (Agrarian League) – were built into the governmental structures on the highest levels and had their parliamentary interest protected by the conservative and the national liberal parties (De Grand, 1996: 7).

Such was the case with working class. Tightly organized around the SDP, German labour was supposedly at the peak of its power. While their Italian “comrades” were taking over factories during the period called *Bienno Rosso*, the left in this country went further on leading a Spartacist revolution and setting up a Soviet-style Republic called *Räterepublik* in Munich in April 1919 (Griffin, 1991: 90). The intensity of this clash between classes, expectedly, brought forth a question of legitimacy for the regime founded after the defeat in WWI.

Weimar Republic with its all legal, political and economical institutions was subjected to a severe double critique. By the Marxist-Leninist left, it was considered as a bourgeois state created upon the remnants of a dying capitalist system. “By the extreme right, it was identified with left-wing revolution, treacherous surrender (the *Dolchstoß* or stab in the back) and national humiliation and rejected as a form of constitution foreign to German history” (Griffin, 1991: 9). Once the legitimacy of the system was purged and its ability to mediate diverse societal interests through the parliamentary mechanism was disturbed, it became easier for NSDAP, whose former success was limited to the exploitation of rural discontent and unemployment issues, to reach disappointed masses of the middle class.

To conclude; even though most European countries witnessed a proliferation of reactionary ideologies and political programmes that had proposed varied

mixtures of religious intolerance, historical myth, social utopia, nationalism and anti-Semitism, fascism differed from the bulk with its being a movement, based on substantial mass support (Watson, 1989: 546). Within this mass support, middle classes played a key role. Its heterogeneity coincided with fascists' eclectic discourse hence provided not only approval but also a series of ideological elements. By mobilizing these particular strata of the population, as Laclau claims, "fascism was able to go beyond class limitations and to represent itself not as a class form but as a popular one in so far as, for these strata, 'the identity as the people' play a much more important role than the identity as class" (Laclau quoted in Mercer, 1986: 219).

3.4. Fascism as a leader cult

My father is a blacksmith and I have worked with him. He bent iron, but I have the harder task of bending souls. Mussolini in 1922 (Mercer, 1986: 218)

Führerworte haben Gesetzeskraft Adolf Eichmann (Arendt, 1964, 148)

The unquestionable commitment and loyalty to the leader figure is probably one of the most striking features of fascism. Via the unparalleled supremacy assigned to the Duce in Italy and to the Führer in Germany, the regimes of both countries could enjoy arguably the most far-reaching and extreme instances of popular obedience that the world has ever witnessed throughout the modernity.

What makes the leaders so central in fascist ideology can be traced to his function both as an individual being and as a transcendental entity. According to Sternhell, behind the quasi-sacred figure of the leader lies the mythical

construction of the nation's organic unity. Thus, "the cult of a leader who embodied the spirit, will and virtues of the people and who was identified with the nation was the keystone of the fascist liturgy" (Sternhell in Laqueur, 1976: 347).

Following a line of thought whose origin might be marked with Plato's conception of "the philosopher king", the cult around the leader represents the assumption that some are born gifted and should have the right to rule. The fascist interpretation of this assumption can be said to equip the leader with a longer list of qualities than a single right to rule. Ducismo in Italy or Führerprinzip in Germany served as a categorical imperative, as a supreme law according to which each and every member of the nation should revise its own existence. The leader was in this sense, more than an ideology in flesh and blood, he was the chosen one with the prophetic vision, the master of fate and the higher court for all human behaviour, ideals and deeds.

Consulting Gentile again, "leader advances, secure, surrounded in an aura of myth, almost a person chosen by the Deity, tireless and infallible, an instrument employed by the Providence to create a new civilization" (Gentile, 2003: 33). As can be seen, Duce was not only expected to rule or to be the only direct link between the nation and the ideology; but also to create a new civilization, to act as the catalyst of a new era in the history of humanity. However, the adjective "new" here does not necessarily signify a complete break from the tradition

because, as it is previously mentioned, one of the major features of fascism lies in its almost obsessive invocation of a Golden Age myth. Therefore, it can be argued that, the leader received his legitimacy both from the remote past and from a future yet to come. Not bothered with time scales, his existence transcends.

In Italy, Mussolini was considered “the dux, a modern Ceasar, the restorer of the Augustan age, the heir of Mazzini and Garibaldi combined, the inaugurator of a new age.” (Griffin, 1991:75). More importantly, such a consideration was not limited to the members of the PNF who had to take an oath to the Duce saying that they would “believe, obey and fight” (Whittam, 1995: 66). Through totalitarian measures, it was also propagated upon the masses so that none was left outside the unity personified in Mussolini’s singularity.

Still, the leader’s task, in practise, tended to extend much beyond saying the last word on all important matters. In Italian case, Mussolini retained the last word on almost everything and through the rigid, vertical channels of power all issues somehow ended up on the Duce’s desk waiting for consideration. “Even the decision on when the Rome traffic police might switch to summer uniforms was passed through his secretariat” (De Grand, 1996: 30).

While he was dealing with an ever increasing workload in state affairs, the Duce’s forced-illustration in the public mind reached absurd degrees. For

example, “it was forbidden to mention any illnesses suffered by Mussolini, his birthday was to be ignored despite the fact that he had become a grandfather as the Duce must possess eternal youth” (Whittam, 1995: 90).

In Germany, the scenario was repeated more or less loyal to its Italian original. “Hitler embodied national unity and the common destiny of all Germans by symbolizing a grandiose future along with a promise of greater well-being” (Burrin, 2005: 109). Much before the seizure of power, Hitler’s self-appointment as a figure more than a mere political leader was to be found in the pages of his infamous “Mein Kampf”. This, among other things, will be thoroughly examined under the “Fascism as a Scapegoat Philosophy” subtitle because of the intense anti-Semitic tone in Hitler’s explanation of history and his own prophecy. Nonetheless, it appears to be logical to focus on how Führerprinzip worked its way in and on the entire German population.

As it was the case in Italy, Führerprinzip demanded total submission which had been portrayed as a natural obligation for all Germans as long as they were parts of the nation constructed in organicist, homogeneous terms. However, unlike Mussolini, Hitler did not approach the nation question within a state-chauvinist perspective; instead he placed the Aryan race in the core of every explanation. That, automatically, made him the leader of a race expanding much beyond the existing national borders. In perfect accordance with the Völkisch view, that described Germany as a Kulturnation than a Staatsnation, Führer’s leadership

and his promise of Reich appealed to a substantial population of European peoples which might be beyond Mussolini's imagination.

Führer's glorification as a racial saviour rather than a statesman enabled the emergence of two distinct outcomes.

Firstly, even though Führerprinzip necessitated a very disciplined chain of command and favoured appointment than election for official posts, the NSDAP cadres including Hitler himself hardly remained loyal to the bureaucratic procedures. As a result, "overall meddling and unbureaucratic 'leadership of men' coupled with a chronic underrating of professional skill, led to an uncontrolled hegemony of personal patronage at all levels" (Mommsen in Laqueur, 1976: 198). In the final analysis, access to a position to the Nazi regime meant nothing but the access to the Führer.

Secondly, this race notion contributed enormously to the prestige and charisma of Hitler which is clearly not comparable to any other dictator's in the world political history.

"Even when the war started going against the Third Reich, the Hitler myth (as opposed to belief in the NSDAP and its leadership) proved remarkably tenacious, and the commitment of many hardcore Nazis to the official utopia even survived after the suicide of their leader" (Griffin, 1991: 234).

This was made possible, without a doubt, due to close psychological ties developed between the Führer and his subject. If we are to quote from Wilhelm

Reich; “every National Socialist felt himself, in spite of his dependence, like a ‘little Hitler’ ” (Carstes in Laqueur, 1976: 422).

Hannah Arendt, adds another dimension to the Führerprinzip, in her comprehensive work called *Eichmann in Jerusalem- A Report on the Banality of Evil* where she reported the trial of the former Nazi official Adolf Ecihmann in 1961 by Israeli court. During his defense, Eichmann repeatedly declared that he had no particular hatred toward the Jews and did only what he had been told to do, in perfect accordance with the Führerprinzip.

“Under then existing Nazi legal system he had not done anything wrong, that he was accused of were not crimes but “acts of state”, over which no other state has jurisdiction (par in parem imperium non habet), that it had been his duty to obey.” (Arendt, 1964: 21).

Progressing from these remarks, it is possible to conclude that the relative success of Führerprinzip in taking over millions’ mindset lies in its capacity to merge two distinct modalities: the idea of little Hitlers and the idea of law-abiding citizens who just do what they are told.

3.5. Fascism as a totalitarian ideology

The party is totalitarian in law and in fact – because politically - law prevails over fact not vice versa (Gentile, 2003: 40)

Libro e moschetto, fascista perfetto (A book and a gun make a perfect Fascist) Mussolini (Griffiths, 2000: 153)

The issue of totalitarianism is perhaps one of the most notable definer of fascism, especially when it comes to a taxonomical attempt amongst numerous instances of authoritarian government forms seen in history. As long as the

volumes of political science literature persist, there are to be counted; single party rules, dictatorships, oligarchies, absolutisms, technocracies, tyrannies, autocracies, despotisms, military “transitional” regimes, all of which, to a certain extent, execute a firm hand policy over their societies. However, none could historically and can yet proceed as far as the Italian and German cases of interwar era did in terms of “widespreadness” and quality. The totalitarian states set up by Mussolini and Hitler respectively, not only introduced oppressive tactics upon those threatening the homogeneous unity of their nations, but also pursued systematic campaigns in order to sculpture this unity within the minds and lives of every individual.

In Fennema’s words (2004:7), “fascist ideology has developed as an anti-ideology, in polemical opposition to the democratic creed”. Yet their critique was much different than those of the conservative thinkers like Burke. Fascism glorified the “common man” who had been politically betrayed by the so-called democratic institutions. The people, for fascists, were in fact a monolithic totality, albeit artificially divided along the class or party interests within democratic systems.

Totalitarianism demands a complete subservience to the state on the justified grounds that one presumes individual liberty could only be found in the liberty of the state (Gentile, 2003: 30). This is exactly where the liberal conception of state-individual dichotomy comes to a collapse, as well as the public-private

one. Gentile (2003: 25) throws light upon this problematic, thus demarcates fascist point of view from its liberal or socialist counterparts:

For liberals and socialist, the individual is understood to be something that precedes the states, who finds in the State something external, something that limits and controls, that suppresses liberty, and that condemns him to those circumstances into which he is born, circumstances within which he must live and die. For fascism, on the other hand, the state and the individual are one, or better, perhaps, “state” and “individual” are terms that are inseparable in a necessary synthesis.

He further on, depicts in a Hegelian tone, “The Fascist Ethical State” whose ethical form is spiritual; whose personality is cognizant and whose system is will (Gentile, 2003: 55). As can be seen, even the most prominent ideologues of it, fascism is not eager to give a concrete definition for the state. Being in inseparable synthesis with the individual and dependent on the will, the fascist conception of the state does not represent a structure but more likely a direction in itself. Once this position is clarified, the violent – or better – terrorist tactics employed by the fascist cadres ceased to be mere functional actions, they rather represent a higher meaning, the will of the state.

Totalitarian measures had been introduced through mass propaganda and terror, which were in fascist sense never partial or implicit but total and explicit. Unlike many other forms of oppressive regimes, fascism did not practice violence only to clear its way but also to consolidate psychologically even after all the way was cleared. Hannah Arendt (1966: 344) highlights an important newcomer element in this use of violence:

The Nazis did not strike at prominent as had been done in the earlier wave of political crimes in Germany; instead, by killing small socialist functionaries or influential members of opposing parties, they attempt to prove to the population the dangers

involved in mere membership (...) It was valuable as what a Nazi publicist aptly called “power propaganda”: it made clear to the population at large that the power of the Nazis was greater than that of the authorities and that it was safer to be a member of a Nazi paramilitary organization than a loyal Republican.

Driven by will and loyal to their cause, fascists believed that theirs was the only single political truth and continuously employed terror both as a movement in form of street fights and killings, and as a regime in form of reorganization of the society through totalitarian blueprints.

In Italy, on 23rd March 1919, Mussolini founded the first Fascio di Combattimento in Milan (Gentile, 2003: 18) and lit the fuse of a four-year-period during which fascist squads illegally prepared the public mind for an unavoidable fascist power to come. Either by mass rallies or killings that went unpersecuted, the squads managed to terrorize the masses and registered their position with force as a component of Italy’s political algebra. Once the streets were conquered Mussolini went on setting up shadow organizations that would replace the existing ones in line with the goal of overlapping the party with the state.

The Fascist Grand Council and the Fascist Voluntary National Militia, which were both founded in 1922 only months after Mussolini’s assuming power, serve as two good examples for this.

“The Grand Council acted as a parallel Council of Ministers from which the non-fascist parties were excluded, and the militia represented the de facto legalization of the violence of the fascist squad by transforming a party army into one acting under state protection and at the disposition of the Prime Minister. The very existence of these two institutions presages a single party state” (De Grand, 1996: 25).

Totalitarian leanings peaked as soon as the single party state came into existence. In line with Gentile's remarks, Mussolini declared everything inside the scope of state affairs and immediately started to set up all-encompassing organization that were determined to "harmonize" lives of all Italians according to the fascist ideology. Based on professions and/or age groups, these totalitarian organizations triggered a boost in PNF membership and in turn created what had been long since desired; the unity of the party, the state and the individuals. Fascists were not even willing to leave the private sphere or the leisure out of the reach of their indoctrination. For example, the OND (Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro – National After work Agency) was set up with the ideological aim of providing 'the healthy and profitable occupation of workers' leisure hours by means of institutions for developing their physical, intellectual and moral capacities' which can alternatively be read as production of a 'totally reformed citizen-producer' (Mercer, 1986: 227).

Besides leisure activities, the reproductive functions of a body was yet conceived a part of statecraft. It was none but the Duce himself who arranged demographic campaigns urging every wife to 'breed rapidly' and personally awarding the most 'productive' woman at the presidential palace (Mercer, 1986: 235).

In Germany, Nazis walked on a similar path. SA took over the task of squadrista movement raging a brutal war upon all actual and potential opponents. The

process went on after 1933 with the ease and effectiveness of the legal bodies that Nazis finally managed to access.

The Communists had been banned after the Reichstag fire. In May 1933, the offices of the Free Trade Unions were occupied by Nazis and in June the SPD was outlawed. The same month the smaller bourgeois democratic parties (the State Party and the DVP), faced by Nazi threats and the collapse of their electorate, and were dissolved along with the DNVP. The last to go was the Catholic Center Party which self-liquidated in early July as part of the deal for a concordat between the Vatican and the Nazi regime. The completion of this process came on 14th July 1933 in the law against the Establishment of Parties by which Germany officially became a one-party state (De Grand, 1996: 27).

Then onwards, Nazis claimed total domination of the political-administrative apparatus either by appointing party members to the already existing posts or by setting up brand new state or para-state institutions under the command of party officials for a de facto undertaking of their missions. Concomitant to this, the recruitment of the ordinary Germans to the party ranks gained an extensive momentum. “By 1945, NSDAP membership had risen to over 8 million excluding the tens of millions who belonged to party’s side organizations” (Burrin, 2005: 106). It was, thanks to these side organizations, the Party could utilize its totalitarian views upon the masses. For instance, while the young people were being appropriated to the regime through Hitlerjugend, there was also another agency called Kraft Durch Freude (Strength Through Joy) which worked on a similar field as Italian OND, that is the reorganization of leisure time.

As can be seen, in both cases fascism can be said to have followed a similar pattern. First, they liquidated their nearest opponents with street violence. Secondly, as they marched to power through “legal” means they set the

foundations of a single-party regime. Third and finally, they tended to expand their influence over the entire population by infiltrating even the most capillary fabric of the societal relations. The extent of terror exercised for this objective was enormous and forced anybody to decide between being the executioners or the victims of the totalitarian, or -in Gentile's terms- the fascist ethical state, where violence was not seen an instrument but a value in itself.

Nevertheless, despite the almost flawless picture portrayed up to now, both Italian and German fascists had to meddle with the innate contradictions of a relation that is supposed to be built in-between a totalitarian movement and a totalitarian state.

According to Buchheim (1968: 91), "the 'movement' is the typical form representing the totalitarian claim to power in politics" and is determined to deprive the state of its existence as a sovereign legal institution by reducing it to a manipulate tool.

Hannah Arendt, in her influential work called *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, puts an emphasis on the same point. She suggests that a "movement" signifies a direction not exactly a "structure" (Arendt, 1966: 398) therefore totalitarianism is doomed to lose its utopian character as soon as it seizes power. For her,

every hierarchy, no matter how authoritarian in its direction, and every chain of command, no matter how arbitrary or dictatorial the content of orders tends to stabilize and would have restricted the total power of the leader of a totalitarian movement. In the language of the Nazis, the never-resting, dynamic "will of the Führer" – and not his

orders, a phrase that might imply a fixed and circumscribed authority – becomes the “supreme law” in a totalitarian state (Arendt, 1966: 365).

In other words, even if they represent the utmost examples of it, both Mussolini's and Hitler's regimes suffered from totalitarianism's inborn contradiction which was materialized as a tension between the state and the movement. According to Arendt (1966: 308), Mussolini avoided such a tension by compromise, by trading off his totalitarian views for the sake of state's *raison d'être* and contended himself with dictatorship whereas Hitler adopted a relatively harder line. Nazi regime in general tried to maintain that core of totalitarian movement by constantly multiplying offices, confusing authority centres and operating on verbal orders rather than the written ones. While doing this, they intended to disturb the rational hierarchical structure of the state on behalf of the Führer's capability to exercise arbitrary authority over all affairs. Such an intention has got a lot to do with both totalitarianism and the Führerprinzip accompanying it. Since, if the citizens were to be directly linked to the will of the Führer, there should naturally be no concrete mid-level mechanisms which would demand authorization as well. To put it broadly, in totalitarianism, leader gets jealous of even his own state for the loyalty of his people; and this was more or less the case with both Mussolini and Hitler, where the latter could do better.

3.6. Fascism as a counter-revolution

If I had been an Italian, I am sure I should have been entirely with you from the beginning to the end of your victorious struggle against the bestial appetites and passions of Leninism. Churchill 1927 (Griffin, 1995: 247)

Whoever is not prepared to talk about capitalism should also remain silent about fascism. Horkheimer (Griffin, 1995: 272)

The supposedly socialist or corporatist elements in fascism have long since been a source of controversy for those who try to examine this ideology with regards to the left-right spectrum. While there is little dispute that it should be placed on the authoritarian side of political compass, the position occupied by fascism on an economical scale is quite fuzzy in the eyes of many. As far as the discourse is concerned, fascism can be said to be in search for a third way, “between the anarchy of the liberal market economy and the strictures of the Bolshevik planned one” (Griffin, 1991: 71). This third way conceptualization implies the eagerness felt by fascists to distance themselves from both socialism and capitalism. Nevertheless, beyond the halls of rhetoric, in practise, it can be argued that fascism never really broke away from the latter or proposed an alternative to it.

Prior to focusing on fascism’s open and functional hostility towards revolutionary socialism, it might be a sensible option to mention the ideological background for this mindset.

Following the end of the First World War, organized labour movements gained considerable influence upon the political climate of entire Europe and started to

push harder for their radical demands. In this “period of revolutionary ferment and proletarian rising” (Griffin, 1995: 260) the nucleus of fascist thought emerged as an extraordinary by-product which embraced the idea of revolution while fiercely rejecting notions like class and internationalism. Consulting Gentile again, “A revolution had bred during the long post-war inertia-like disease bacteria – that undermined the living body from within (...). It was a negative revolution. It was said that it was Bolshevik” (Gentile, 2003: 19). As can be seen, the primary fascist objective was to adjust the revolution that had been going through the wrong direction for a while because of the ‘bacterial existence of Bolsheviks’. Gentile handles this task by uttering what is missing; nationalism and anti-materialism. He defines fascism as

“the most intransigent opponent of the myths and lies of international socialism, the myth and lies of those without a Fatherland and without duties, of those who offend the sentiment of right, and therefore of the individual, in the name of an abstract and empty ideal of human brotherhood” (Gentile, 2003: 56).

Considering the fact that first example of worker associations often used the term brotherhood, Gentile’s remarks give an idea on who was going to be the first targets for fascism. In order to make the revolution “positive”, Fatherland would replace human brotherhood, concomitantly it is the nation as a single united entity that should sweep – so called – class-society. The ideologue in chief, Gentile, is rather explicit about this topic as well: “Fascism combats the abstract class conception of society, rejecting the entire notion of antithetical class interests upon which the artificialities of class struggle rests” (Gentile, 2003: 60). Clear as it is, fascism, from its early days onward, offered a stark

negation of socialism by rejecting its fundamental principles. There was of course another political force already, which was not comfortable with class struggles and it did not take too long for fascist and bourgeoisie to join forces on behalf of a counter-revolution.

During 1919 and 1920, the period that was later to be called as Biennio Rosso (The Two Red Years), the militancy of Italian proletariat peaked and an explicit class war started to be waged across the industrialized northern regions of the country. Workers sought self-rule and thus lit the fuse of a socialist transformation.

The Factory Council Initiative(s) led to the occupation of the factories and the formation of temporary 'Soviets' in large, industrial towns like Turin, Milan and Genoa accompanied by massive agitation and unrest in the countryside by the militant braccianti, the day labourers (Mercer, 1986: 212).

Indeed, workers from the north were not alone on their radical quest, agricultural labourers from the south were also mobilized and started to threaten the status quo by land seizures and harvest time strikes. Looking at the big picture, it can be said that Italy had been pushed to the threshold of a revolution through the concomitant efforts of worker and peasants unions. The conditions were considered to be so ripe that the maximalist wing of the Socialist Party even called for an immediate revolution "as in Russia". However, as the situation led the alarmed upper and middle classes to an alignment within a reactionary front and the attempts to overcome ideological cleavages among numerous leftist fractions continued to fail, Biennio Rosso came to its bitter end. A revolution was lost while a counter-evolution began to be fought by

Mussolini and company. In André Malraux's words, "Every communism that fails, calls up its fascism" (quoted in Laqueur, 1976: 448) and so it occurred.

In line with Gentile's previously mentioned remarks, Mussolini -maybe still in favour of keeping in touch with his socialist past- continuously defined his as a revolutionary attempt whereas he repeatedly rejected "red" as its colour. "We are not against Labour" he said "but against the Socialist Party. In so far as it remains anti-Italian" (Mercer, 1986: 218). This state of being against, soon justified the purge of socialist activists across the country by fascist squads and a consequent liquidation of labour friendly legal framework in Italian politics.

Indeed, "Mussolini personally had long been in receipt of funds from the Perrone brothers of Ansaldo (the industrial cartel of northern Italy) and his black shirts were increasingly called upon to act as strike-breakers and security guards by frightened businessmen and bankers." (Whittam, 1995: 29). Once he seized power and became "il Duce", fascists' service to capitalism did not go through a major change. Cleverly, disguised under the term "corporatism", Mussolini declared the end of the conflicting class interests and proposed a state-led alternative which would mediate the demands of both the employers and the employees. Yet "private property and private enterprise remained largely sacrosanct" (Whittam, 1995: 60) and the regime never really questioned the fundamental premises of capitalism.

"This is not to say that there were no structural changes in the Italian economy and society under fascism but on the whole these were changes which were taking place in

other industrial economies anyway. Among these, we would count the shift from competitive capitalism towards the concentration of monopoly capitalism, the modernization of industrial production methods, the ‘taylorization’ of work processes following American model of scientific management and industrial welfarism, the co-ordination of the modalities of state intervention not only in industry but also, with the rise of new forms of mass communication, throughout the fabric of civil society”. (Mercer, 1986: 223)

Nazis in Germany, discursively at least, happened to be more hostile to capitalism when compared to their Italian counterparts which is partially due to the Jewish tone assigned to it. Much before Hitler’s march to Reichstag, there were radical cadres within the ranks of NSDAP who considered liberalism as equally alien as socialism to the German nation and who were mostly organized under the banner of SA, commanded by Röhm.

As expected from a movement that had been self-defined as “national-socialist”, during its formative years Nazism can be said to come up with a more explicit anti-capitalist emphasis than Fascism thanks to the “*Mittlestand*” and, lesser but still actual, worker presence in the NSDAP ranks. Nevertheless, akin to the Italian case, this anti-capitalism was far from being “red”. As a matter of fact, the counter-revolutionary elements were already in practise among Nazis, following the failed revolution attempt by the Spartacists. The experience of “Räterepublik”, which is characterized by “a wave of demonstrations starting in Berlin in January 1919 and their culmination into Soviet-style Republic set up in Munich in April” (Griffin, 1991: 90), can be said the German correspondence of Biennia Rosso in this sense. Nazi’s collaboration with the capitalist status quo did not remain limited to the combat against “reds” and eventually pushed

Hitler to a point of choice and a review in both ideological and organizational levels.

“When local party officials and the SA aggressively intimidated businessmen and attacked department stores in the name of radical Nazi economic principles, Hitler found himself deluged by protests. Convinced that the populist attacks on such a large scale provoked an adverse reaction in domestic and foreign public opinion, the Führer reined in the party base in mid-1933 and then purged the SA leadership at the end of June 1934” (De Grand, 1996: 36).

Historically called ‘Night of the Long Knives’, this event marked a crucial turning point in Nazi ideology. By Hitler’s personal initiative, the party abandoned its economically idealistic demands for the sake of ‘realpolitik’ and provided justification for its further collaboration with the upper classes.

Just like Mussolini, Hitler preached a corporatist strategy and tried to strengthen state’s initiative in the determination of national economy policies. His

“principle of centralized economic planning and industrial output found expression in Ley’s Labour Front, Göring’s Four-Year-Plan office, the Herman Göring Steel Works, the Todt organization, the ministry of Arms and Munitions, the Reich Economic Chamber and the Central Agencies of the Reich. But this ‘corporatist’ strategy coexisted with a policy of minimal intervention into large sectors of big business and heavy industry (...) As for the ‘socialist’ measures outlined in the ‘unalterable’ NSDAP programme, the only sense in which they were implemented was that Jewish property was systematically confiscated by the state or fell into private hands.” (Griffin, 1991: 108)

Apparently, pursuing radical and to a certain extent anti-capitalist demands in economy remained quite dysfunctional in Nazis’ programme and never became a topic-in-chief as anti-Semitism, racial purity or territorial expansion.

In conclusion, it appears meaningful to give a brief overview about the relationship between capitalism and fascism by paying extra attention to the counter-revolutionary function of the latter.

It is no secret that, during the initial stages of fascism in both Italy and Germany, the movement was not granted a warm welcome by the significant representatives of industrial bourgeoisie

“Politicians like Giolitti, Salandra, Orlando and Nitti were much better known in industrial circles; in Germany the same could be said of Brüning and Papen. But Mussolini with his socialist past, and Hitler, an ill-educated Austrian from nowhere, were distinctively outsiders. Moreover, their movements were filled with equally marginal types. To complicate matters further, the Fascist and Nazi programmes contained many fuzzy ideas about the economy” (De Grand, 1996: 29).

However, as the interest started to coincide in growing proportions, the first-sight suspicion turned into a close cooperation. Generally speaking, following were the grounds upon which such a political alliance could be constructed:

- Fascist were ideologically at the opposite ends with the internationalist and Marxist interpretation of socialism. Therefore, their war on “reds” was important for capitalist class in order to drive their countries away from the imminence of a revolution.
- Both the Italian and German business circles were in favour of a breakdown in the liberal-parliamentary system so that they could

exclude the Socialist party and trade unions from exerting influence over political and economic policies.

- Both in Italy and Germany, “big business immediately gained a number of favourable legislative and administrative rulings and eventually won the right to organize the industrial sector by forced cartelization.” (De Grand, 1996: 41) In other words, the transformation from competitive capitalism to monopoly capitalism was made possible under the extraordinary circumstances provided by fascists.
- Business circles not only benefited from the liquidation of unions or the newly introduced highly disciplined working conditions, they also had the opportunity to make huge revenues out of the economical boom that was triggered by rearmament and further expansionist military campaigns.
- More importantly, even though both regimes were eager to keep a “corporatist” seat in the managerial boards of factories for streamlining the production with national interests, neither of them questioned private property and initiative as the core of capitalist system.

To sum up, the fascist power was not only succeeded in suffocating the left revolutionary wave but also in providing bourgeois class the precious opportunity to retain its privileged status over the rest of the society. Still, it would be meaningful to stress that this success was not just thanks to the militancy of fascist cadres or to the generous support of big capital at all. In addition to these two, one should also mention the leftist failure to grasp the true nature of the phenomenon. As Poulantzas (1980) thoroughly examines in his influential work called *Fascism and Dictatorship*, the European left had been in a great fallacy of undermining the extent and the imminence of the fascist threat. The revolutionary left was apparently more interested in purging the social democrats in the light of the renowned “social fascism”⁷ thesis than paying attention to the advance of fascist movement. Hence, when intellectuals like Zetkin urged for the establishment of a united, popular anti-fascist front, the Comintern-led ideologues insisted that this was not necessary as they saw in fascism not a threat but the final agonies of a decaying capitalism. This blind-trust to the imminence of the revolution (that signifies a mechanistic variant of Marxism) inevitably resulted in a dramatic underestimation which gave way to the victory of the counter-revolution.

⁷ “Social fascism” is based on an argument developed by Stalin (and officially supported by Comintern later on) which sees social democracy as a variant of fascism. According to this thesis, the revolution was inevitable given the conditions were ripe for a proletarian transformation in capitalist societies and the only political force to confront it was an alliance of social democracy and fascism.

3.7. Fascism as an imperialist project

Entry into the war was necessary in order to finally unite the nation through the shredding of blood. (Gentile, 2003: 2)

Wherever we may have been born, we are all the sons of the German people. Hitler (Arendt, 1966: 224)

If the First World War laid the foundations of a historical context in which fascism could emerge, it is certainly the two fascist regimes that prepared the history for the outbreak of the Second World War. Both Mussolini and Hitler were representing the resentment felt by their nations in the post-Versailles period, and were, from the early beginning, determined to offset that so-called humiliating condition at all costs. Yet, fascism's agenda was somewhat more detailed than a simple national rhetoric that preached reclaiming what once was theirs. It was beyond all doubts an imperialist campaign aiming to conquer a 'vital space' upon which a new civilization could flourish and leader's prophecy could be fulfilled. In this sense, fascism's expansionist thought gets in touch with several other tenets of the ideology such as the glorification of violence, appointment of the national struggles as the driving force of history, reference to a remote imperial past and finally racism. When altogether examined, it becomes possible to argue that warfare was not a spontaneous consequence of fascist rule but was actually something willed and actively promoted.

It is widely recognized that, glorification of violence in particular and war in general occupies an important space in fascist ideology, granting the movement its adventurist character.

The cult of heroic virility, the endorsement of the right of the strongest, the rhetoric on the salutary nature of toughness: all show that violence was not only a means but in itself constituted a value, a kind of “law of nature” – in fact the only one able to guarantee survival and victory (Burrin, 2005: 118).

Hence it was more than expected for fascism that managed to dominate the interior with terrorist tactics, to build its foreign policy too, upon such aggressive accounts. War, at this point, as the only possible method for this aggression, was believed to serve two grand purposes. First, it is useful for cementing the nation under a single thought which transcends the particular interest of any citizen (Gentile, 2003: 2). Secondly, it “tests and guarantees the sovereignty of the single state within the system of history, in which all states compete. In war, the state demonstrates its power, which is to say, its proper autonomy.” (Gentile, 2003: 53). Moreover, in the light of stark Social Darwinism, Fascist believed in perpetual struggle and the survival of the fittest; as the two fundamental principles of history that would in turn justify the defeat of old and decadent states like France and Britain by the likes of Italy’s or Germany’s “youthful nations” (Whittam, 1995: 102).

In Italy, the revenge for the losses in the World War had long since been desired, and Mussolini was not alone while employing a popular analogy; “prisoner in the Mediterranean.” However, his was a different vision fully equipped with the civilizing mission of a great imperial power that is the Roman Empire. Indeed, when the geographical route of the military campaigns of fascist Italy is examined, the Adriatic and Africa; Duce’s intention of a

historical renewal could be understood better. The conquest of Ethiopia was justified by this very intention of resurrecting the Roman Empire while, equally, the Albanian and Greek campaigns were considered to be necessary steps in order to make the Mediterranean a Roman lake (Griffin, 1991: 74).

Still, it would be misleading to present Mussolini's vision as only limited to the Mediterranean Basin, for according to him even a full sovereignty over inland sea meant semi-independence. Whittam exactly underlines this point by saying:

“Mussolini's African adventure also led to the grandiose schemes for marching to the oceans—from Libya and through Sudan and Ethiopia to the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean or from Libya westwards through French and British territories to the Atlantic.” (Whittam, 1995: 114)

This advance in Africa, although less could be realized than planned, was also important in terms of introducing Italians the racist connotations, because when compared to its German version; fascism in Italy used not to give racism a central position within the ideology. In again Whittam's view;

“It Is certainly true that annexation of territories inhabited by Germans in the South Tyrol, by Slavs in the region of Trieste and Fiume and by Arabs in Libya, had sharpened national awareness, leading to brutal programmes of Italization; but it was Italian contact with the black tribes of Ethiopia which provided the greatest stimulus for the growth of racial prejudice and, indeed, the 'imperial' necessity for it.” (Whittam, 1995: 97).

As can be seen, influenced either by Romanita's idealism or by his period's realpolitik, Mussolini's expansionist views were of an extravagant fashion and clearly represented the bitterness of a country, which had been previously beaten by the big powers of Europe in the colonial race, underneath.

In Germany, the situation was no less similar. More than the defeat itself, it was the conditions imposed by the Versailles peace treaty that was constantly clinging like Democles' sword above the heads of many Germans. The country, devoid of its status of a great power, was officially trimmed off its considerable territory and forced to bear an enormous financial sanction. Still, much of the resentment and rage was directed towards the new countries like Poland, "whose right to annex some former German regions had been recognized but was almost unanimously rejected in Germany" (Burrin, 2005: 108).

In that sense, Nazi expansionism had already found a legitimate ground in "the traditional demands of a nationalist German foreign policy-return of territories ceded in the Versailles treaties, Anschluss⁸ of Austria, annexation of the German-speaking parts of Bohemia" (Arendt, 1966: 413). However, as it was the case with Italian fascists who extended their ideal Roman empire to the oceans, Nazis were in favour of defining a larger 'lebensraum' for their future march. As the concept of Aryanism had been introduced by Hitler, the Reich began to be conceptualized not only as the unity of populations with German language but also as the unity of all peoples of Aryan descent including Nordic ones like Scandinavians, the Dutch and the Flemish (Burrin, 2005: 32).

⁸ The union of Germany with Austria. The term has got to do with 1848 revolution when two possible concepts of Germany came into confrontation: "Little Germany" and "Greater Germany". The second concept implied bringing together all the Germans of central Europe in a single state, but it was the first concept that Bismarck adopted in 1871, leaving the Germans in Austria beyond the frontiers of Germany (Burrin, 2005: 30).

The impact of racism, whose blueprint had been deliberately drawn by Hitler in *Mein Kampf*, was decisive not only the direction of the expansion but equally on how the newly annexed lands would be appropriated. Those of German blood but not German culture were put through a relatively smooth process of indoctrination whereas mixed societies like the Polish were to face a new establishment that utilized apartheid policies. For the non-Aryan territories, like the ones from the Soviets, the third and the worst option was at hand, that is the formation of racist colonial administrative units (Burrin, 2005: 66). By the same token, all these new Eastern lands united to the Reich, served as the revenues that had been long ago promised by the Führer to the masses where they could realize their quasi-pastoral myth of authentic German lifestyle.

War, as a source of renewal and redemption, was utterly important for the ideological fulfillment of fascism. Nonetheless, it could be argued equally that the war also served as a feasible method of overcoming economical drawbacks. Just like the rearmament wave provided the fresh air industrialists had been craving for, the military campaigns helped the sustenance of an extraordinarily productive economy. In other words, the exceptional and profitable conditions created by the war “masked the acute shortcomings of autarchic policies and camouflaged the minimal progress being made towards a sustainable economic order” (Griffin, 1991: 108), which came to be labeled as the ‘Third Way’.

To conclude, there is more than a single impetus for the fascists to consider warfare as something beneficial and necessary. Both in Italy and Germany, the agents of fascism were, from the very beginning, the outspoken apologists of imperialist demands. They managed to exploit the traditional nationalist rhetoric in their countries which had already been on the rise since the Versailles, and were further succeeded in transmutating this popular resentment into an aggressive, outward and prophetic agenda of a racial “vital space”⁹.

3.8. Fascism as a scapegoat ideology

Some reproach me with being a Jew, some praise me because of it, some pardon me for it, but all think of it. Boerne (Arendt, 1966: 64)

For the Pope souls have no colour, but for us faces have colour. Mussolini (Gillette, 2002: 57)

Without a doubt, the images of Auschwitz and the Holocaust constitute the most striking illustration of fascism in the public mind. For the first time in history, a regime could go this far, claim this many people’s lives for the fulfilment of its ideology and more importantly develop this extensive a network which equalled genocide with almost a national campaign.

Under this extraordinary criminal record lies fascism’s being the most systematic and institutionalized expression of scapegoat philosophy, according to which it could legitimize, even if in general terms, the complete destruction of the “other”.

⁹ Lebensraum in German, Spazio Vitale in Italian.

Fascism's threat conception stems from an amplified and paranoid derivation of nationalism. Within this perspective, the nation is affirmed as the core value and the only conceptual origin available in history, for any socio-political view or mode of existence to be able to refer. Hailed with the analogy of "body", its formation is perceived in organicist terms and further signifies the paranoid state of mind can be summarized as the state of being under constant attack. Just like bacteria disturb the well-being of a body, the enemies outside and their collaborators inside pose a threat against the harmonious and homogeneous unity of the nation. The functionality of such a crude explanation owes a lot to the flexibility at hand during the determination of categories. For example, at a specific historical context, while "the nation" can expand to "the race", the scapegoat category can also be enlarged endlessly up until it contains an entire population of a group of people on earth. In its broadest terms, Jews suffered such an expansion of category. Practically, they were not the political rivals of the regime like communists, neither were they exactly like the bodily handicapped or mentally retarded people who were to be sacrificed in the light of the supreme eugenic law, "survival of the fittest". Rather, their posing a threat was not conditioned to any action more than being existent; Jews were simply guilty of being Jews. In this respect, the links between scapegoat philosophy and racism, racism and anti-Semitism were apparent and easy to construct. Emile Durkheim described racism as a scapegoat philosophy "which begins in a crisis or a dysfunctional society and targets a human group defined

by a representation that has nothing to do with its objective characteristics” (Gillette, 2002: 56).

Racism was never really an invention of fascism even if it constituted an enormous episode within its practise. The virulence of fascist racism lies in its dependence on contingent factors, “especially the prior existence of a tradition of xenophobic obsessions and racial persecution which the movement can incorporate as an integral part of its palingenetic vision and as an instrument of mass-mobilization” (Griffin, 1991: 48). In other words, fascism exploited what was already there, amplified it through mass propaganda¹⁰ and proposed a solution once and for all, whose one end was forced emigration whilst the other was total annihilation.

The dynamic history of racism in Italy during Mussolini’s rule offers a valuable set of data in order to examine the above mentioned flexibility of scapegoat philosophy as a concept. The Duce was extremely hostile towards political scapegoats like communists and equally suspicious about some specific ethnological groups who were historically in touch with Italians. Slavs for example, in his opinion, were “inferior, barbaric, unworthy of their territory but extremely dangerous in their continued demographic and territorial expansion in central and south Europe” (Kallis, 2000: 52) On the other hand, the possibility of a miscegenation between the black inhabitants of Ethiopia and white Italians

¹⁰ The first large-scale anti-Semitic cinematographic production was of a German origin and called “The Eternal Jew” (Burrin, 2005: 88) .

was invoking nightmarish visions in Mussolini's mind as well. This prompted him to issue severe law enforcements including the shipment of Italian prostitutes to the Italian soldiers there (Gillette, 2002: 57). Nonetheless, Italian fascists tended to adopt a relatively mild version of racism when compared to Germans and did not necessarily direct an organized hatred and a will to kill to this extent towards a particular ethno-cultural group as it was the case with Nazis.

Aaron Gillette (2002), in his book called *Racial Theories in Fascist Italy* suggests that there were in fact no single, determined racist agenda but a series of distinct racist veins all of which were in a constant competition for access the official state policies. Up until the end of the regime in 1945, the turmoil among those rival racist factions continued and the Duce himself was caught on several times, invoking different "racial" categories such as Latin, Italian, Mediterranean, and lately the Nordic/Aryan ones.

Anti-Semitism's arrival to the Peninsula was through the triumphant period of that Aryanist faction as well as the increasing German influence over the country. Prior to it Italian fascists credited a fusion of Roman Empire's civilizing imperial ethos and Roman Catholic Church's missionary aspects whilst anti-Semitism was a relatively weak sentiment. Given Italy's specific historical and sociologic conditions, two major reasons can be uttered for this. First, it was Vatican, the sole reference of world Catholicism, which

discouraged segregation and other forms of racial double standards. Secondly, “there were less than 50.000 Jews in Italy, all well assimilated, many of who had fought in the war, were intensely patriotic and had joined the PNF” (Whittam, 1995: 95)¹¹. However, the wind has turned by the year 1938 when Mussolini issued the first racial laws following the Manifesto of Racist Scientists, created a racial propaganda office in the Ministry of Popular Culture (Gillette, 2002: 9) and eventually started to define modern Italians as the descendants of “a pure Italic race, the Etruscans and the Romans, who were in fact Aryans” (Whittam, 1995: 98).

According to the newly introduced legal codes;

Foreign-born Jews granted citizenship since 1919 lost their right to reside in Italy. Jewish children were excluded from the school and not allowed to mix with Aryans; Jewish communities were allowed to provide their own schools. Mixed marriages were forbidden and if converted Jews were married in church the state would declare this invalid. Jews were purged from the party, the civil service, the armed forces, the professions and all cultural establishments. No Jews was allowed an Aryan servant, or to own a large business or a large estate (Whittam, 1995: 98).

The reasons for such a sharp move of Mussolini have been multiple. The first and most commonly recognized one, as summarized by Whittam, argues that these laws were “made in response to German pressure and integral part of the Axis¹², the close relationship established with the Reich since 1936” (Whittam, 1995: 96). Whereas, there are other scholars who tend to put an emphasis on Mussolini’s pre-1938 speeches linking Jewish finance to Bolsheviks in order to prove that Italian fascism was anti-Semitic too from the beginning. Gillette

¹¹ Mussolini’s mistress, Margherita Sarfatli was a Jewish, too (Whittam, 1995: 96).

¹² The Axis of Steel against Britain and France

(2002) joins the track by claiming Duce's installation of an anti-Semitic/Aryanist discourse was a matter of conscious decision. According to him, no matter how much threat he felt out that 'Prussian spirit' for his Latin and Catholic background,

Mussolini saw in German Aryanism a motivating myth that seemed to answer Italy's need for a militaristic model. Romanita and Mediterranean racial theories had apparently not been sufficiently inspirational. The Italians required a fiercer, more militaristic, model and presumably also one that existed in the present, rather than in the ancient past (Gillette, 2002: 55).

While Mussolini showcased sort of reluctance upon which form of racism to choose, Hitler in Germany had already mastered in anti-Semitism. Still, before getting into the details of this, it appears meaningful to open a brief parenthesis here for a general evaluation of the 'Jewish Question'.

As a matter of fact, "anti-Semitism was clearly far from a phenomenon that was particularly, let alone exclusively, German" (Burrin, 2005: 15). From antiquity, onwards, it is possible to detect a 'Judeophobic' strain around Europe whose intensity and causes are subject to differ in line with the related conjuncture. Christian religion itself, offers one of the foremost sources of such a stigmatization as the Jews are believed to be the assassin of Christ¹³. Furthermore, they are thought to represent the "rootlessness" which in turns means the "disintegration and decomposition of tradition, including indeed, above all – religious tradition." (Burrin, 2005: 59).

¹³ The phonetical affinity between "Jude" and "Judas the informer" is alone quite meaningful.

The “rootlessness” concept here is of greater importance because through it anti-Semitism gained a nationalist variant which consolidated Jews’ position as the eternal scapegoats in the eyes of those without much adherence to the Christian religion as well. Hannah Arendt, in the first volume of her book *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, provides the insight for this long-standing disclaimer against Jewry: “Both the political influence and the status of the Jews had for centuries been due to the fact that they were a closed group who worked directly for the state and were directly protected by it on account of their special services.” (Arendt, 1966: 97)

These special services had of course nothing to do with that infamous *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* – which was later proved to be nothing more than a tsarist forgery, but with more ‘earthly’ deeds like providing financial support. Throughout the decades, there developed a reciprocal relationship between the state elites of Europe and the (wealthy) Jews. The state treated the Jews as a special group and prevented their assimilation into class society¹⁴ so that it could always rely on the loyalty of Jewish assets which in return coincided with the Jews’ self-preservationist interests (Arendt, 1966: 13). Inside this immunity against the homogenizing attempts of nation-state and of the class society Jews could develop an inter-European character, which gradually gifted them with a

¹⁴ The fully developed class system meant invariably the status of the individual was defined by his own class and its relationship to another, and not by his position in the state or within its machinery. The only exception to this general rule was the Jews. They did not form a class of their own and they did not belong to any of the classes in their countries. As a group, they were neither workers, middle-class people, landholders, nor peasants. (...) In other words, although their status was defined through their being Jews, it was not defined through their relationship to another class (Arendt, 1966: 13).

considerable political influence regardless of the fact that they remained without territory and government of their own. As a result, whoever came into a clash with the state was to see the Jews on the opposite side, aligning themselves with the authority and commanding an enormous amount of international money.

Philip Burrin shares a similar point of view, yet adds another dimension:

For multiple reasons – in particular, their long-lashing urbanization, their socio-profession, specialization, their tradition of literacy, and their connections among the diaspora, the Jews were among the first to benefit from the advantages of modernization. (...) This provoked irritation and hostility on the part of not only the social strata adversely affected by modernization but also those who were upwardly mobile which found themselves in competition with the Jews. The Jews were thus identified first with liberalism, then with socialism, then with socialism and communism – in short, with everything that was undermining the hold of tradition and boding ill for stability (Burrin, 2005: 20).

The remark on “those upwardly mobile” here deserves an extra emphasis due to the fact that it signifies seemingly the most suitable transmitter of anti-Semitic sentiments in the society that is the middle class¹⁵. When taken together with fascist parties’ substantial middle class electorate and support, this fact starts to make sense.

Progressing from the mentioned dynamics of popular repugnance against the Jews, the initiation of Hitler triggered a completely new echo in the history of anti-Semitism. In *Mein Kampf*, he started with a rather expected style and repeated a ‘fashionable’ rhyme:

¹⁵ Same was not valid for working class for instance. In Arendt’s opinion, workers who were equipped with a Marxist explanation of history and class struggle never came into direct conflict with the state but only with another class, the bourgeoisie. And Jews were never a significant part of it. (Arendt, 1966: 25).

Positioned at the top of the hierarchy is the Aryan race, the sole creator of culture, as is proved by the great empires of antiquity, particularly those of Greece and Rome. Beneath, midway down the hierarchy, are races such as the Japanese, which preserve the fund of culture by assimilating that of the Aryans, particularly their technology, into their own lives. At the bottom of the hierarchy, according to this ideology, are the Jews, who create nothing, have no state or culture of their own, and are parasites living at the expense of the other peoples of the earth, which they inexorably destroy (Burrin, 2005: 41).

In the following lines he went on explaining the two grand laws of the nature, the law of racial purity and the law of selection (Burrin, 2005: 41). For him, while racial purity displayed the only possible route for the advance of a civilization and for the escape from decadence, the latter law disclosed the elimination of weak either by nature, in combat or through a eugenic policy. As a direct implementation of scapegoat philosophy, Hitler's defined "weak" category expanded its conceptual limits. During his reign,

The healthy, clean, hardworking, athletic Aryan man, married to a woman of the same race who produced many children for him, was set up as a model and a norm. Anything that deviated from this model was, by contrast, thrown into relief and soon became the object of measures of expiration: German suffering from hereditary diseases¹⁶ (about 400.000 of them) were sterilized; tens of thousands of 'asocial' individuals, and homosexuals were sent to concentration camps; Gypsies were segregated, and so on (Burrin, 2005: 55).

Needless to say, among all the ills Aryan race was supposed to suffer, for Hitler the biggest weakness were the Jews. Yet his was not a style which could settle with a repetition of generations-long rhetoric of Anti-Semitism, rather he made a unique contribution to it by exaggerating the- so called- threat posed by Jews to prophetic even apocalyptic measures. Just like a judgement day scenario, his

¹⁶ The method of gassing was invented for the killing of the handicapped, and first applied in 1941 as a part of "Euthanasia" programme, only later was it used for the extermination of the Jews (Burrin, 2005: 68).

vision foresaw a final battle between the Jews and Aryans whose result would directly determine the fate of entire humanity. This kind of a statement, for sure, signifies a revelation that is typical to religious discourse rather than the political one. And since there is always a prophet for every revelation, Hitler was willing to be that of this new apocalyptic – racist variant of anti-Semitism (Burrin, 2005: 48).

In one of his speeches, Hitler employed the same word exactly as it is:

Today, let me once again be a prophet: if international Jewish finance in and outside Europe again succeeds in plunging its people into a world war, this will result in, not the Bolshevization of the earth and victory for Judaism, but the certain extermination of the Jewish race in Europe! (Burrin, 2005: 69).

Once it is carefully examined, Hitler seems to have unveiled not one but two prophecies accordingly. First, a world-scale clash between Jews and Aryans was inevitable due to their incompatible interests which made the earth too narrow for both. Secondly, the battle was at hand but either Aryans won or lost, it would not be the Jews who were on the triumphant side. In other words, “A German nonvictory or even defeat was a possibility, but a new victory for the Jews was certainly not” (Burrin, 2005: 73)

In this sense; concentration camps, gas chambers¹⁷, crematoriums along with the precise network organization and coordination accompanying them can be considered within the schema previously outlined by the Führer himself.

¹⁷ Gas chambers were disguised as showering facilities. While the captives were waiting water to pour, an extremely poisonous gas called Zyklon B was released through pseudo-water pipes from above.

Therefore the 'final solution' for Jews was indeed a fulfilment of an oracle. Hitler and company knew that their policies would present history a new world war but even in that position they were in favour of putting its blame on Jewish shoulders in the light of this above-mentioned apocalyptic-racist variant of anti-Semitism. This, by far, constitutes the most outrageous instance how the limits of scapegoat representations can expand.

CHAPTER IV

4. AN ATTEMPT TO CONCEPTUALIZE CONTEMPORARY EXTREME RIGHT - THE CASE OF FRONT NATIONAL IN FRANCE

The rise of extreme right parties has been challenging the political topography in Western European democracies since the 1980s. After a long period of delegitimization and marginalization during which the post war consensus have denounced anything associated with fascism, it is for the first time that right-wing radicalism has experienced such a dramatic resurgence. While its arguments made inroads to the political climate of Europe once defined with words like “moderate”, “consolidated”, “liberal”; its related organizations have managed to come out of their ghettos and established themselves a position within the mainstream of European party system.

Politicians and scholars who were caught off guard by this sudden upsurge, initially preferred explaining it as an ephemeral phenomenon whose so-called success is dependent on the protest of a bunch of confused voters. Yet, further evidence shows this is not the case. Throughout the Western Europe, extreme right parties have not only proved their skills in solidifying their electoral base but also infiltrating the realm of national politics by forwarding certain issues that were previously not in the agenda of its major actors. This development soon provoked a set of questions about the identity and extent of the extreme

right. Who are they? What do they have in common? Is this a mere replication of the fascist malaise Europe has suffered before or completely a new occurrence? Why do people vote for them? As the curiosity provoked questions, questions aroused research hence a considerable literature started to take shape. Dependent on the perspective of the analyst and the aspect he/she has focused on most; a variety of terms have been uttered in order to define this new phenomenon. Scholars who examined the electoral strategies suggest “neo-populism” whereas others, who figured out an ideological link between these parties and the fascist ones of the past, insist on “neo-fascism”. In addition to these came “extreme right”, “far right” and “radical right” all of which eventually happened to result in an interchangeable use.

Among the listed, extreme right seems to be the most all-encompassing, therefore, the most reasonable term for employment. First, it signifies the position of these new parties on a basic measure we have in politics that is the left-right continuum. Secondly, according to Mayer’s survey on people who are affiliated to Front National in one way or another, “extreme right” is the most preferred term of self definition around their voters and cadres (Ignazi, 2003: 104).

Devoid of a rigid ideological uniformity, extreme right parties offer a very heterogeneous set of explanandum. They can differ from one another in terms of formation, program or appeals. For instance, while MSI/AN in Italy is alone assuming fascist legacy thanks to its being the direct successor of PNF, others

sharply reject any connection to fascist doctrine including Republikaners in Germany which have former Waffen SS officials in their higher ranks. Moreover, where French FN emerged as an umbrella organization for numerous extreme right factions, Austrian FPÖ inclined to the extreme right direction long after its foundation date. The differences intensify whenever the rhetoric is taken into account. While the issue of abortion has been one of the pillars of Le Pen's Catholicism, it is almost a dead issue for Scandinavian extreme right parties since it ceased long ago as a debate in the highly secularized societies of Sweden or Norway. Equally, while the *Vlaams Blok*¹ was pressing harder against gay rights in Belgium, *Pim Fortuyn* in neighbouring Netherlands blamed Muslim immigrants for being culturally incapable of integrating into Dutch society because they do not respect gays. Even nationalism, which is the *sine qua non* of an extreme right discourse, has been perceived differently: *Lega Nord* in Italy endorses an openly separatist position "for the creation imaginary northern state of *Padania* based on an invented cultural narrative of northern supremacy" (Rensmann, 2003: 98). Similarly, VB leads a secessionist campaign against Belgian sovereignty in favour of a genuine Flemish State.

As exemplified roughly, there are various policy currents flowing into the stream of extreme right. Still, one can speak about a common denominator, or an ideological core shared by all which makes it possible for a researcher to come to certain conclusions about the extreme right as a political category.

¹ Vlaams Blok converted itself into Vlaams Belang after put to trial by Belgian authorities in 2004.

The initial studies on the recent success of extreme right parties broadly offered four approaches of explanation (Karapin, 1998: 214):

The first proposes that extreme right parties are single issue parties whose impact is limited to the representation of a popular debate often neglected by mainstream parties, that is namely immigration.

The second approach focuses on voting behaviour specifically and explains extreme right parties' success in terms of their capability to attract protest votes of citizens who are alienated from the established party system thus want to send a signal to the major parties this way.

Third comes the approach which tries to unveil classical fascism's root in the contemporary extreme right discourse. According to this,

successful far-right parties today have organizational or personnel connections to pre-1945 Fascists or Nazis, adopt programs that are similar to fascism, and are attempting to resurrect or create fascist regimes. Hence they use quasi-fascist appeals to play upon current resentment, such as immigration and unemployment, and try especially to mobilize petty bourgeoisie support. (Karapin, 1998: 214)

The fourth approach puts a stress on extreme right's reactionary nature and explains this phenomenon as a rebound against left-libertarian political movements such as feminism, environmentalism, multiculturalism, gay rights and citizen participation that have been reshaping Europe's outlook on certain issues from the 1960s onwards.

These four approaches, all of which are valuable in particular, fails to illuminate the general dynamics behind the rise of extreme right parties entirely that extend much beyond the scope of single case studies.

The extreme right party family, if one is allowed to call so, is composed of diverse political actors with dissimilar interests, yet they are arguably attached to a common context which does not only give us opinion about certain ideological resemblance among them but also explains extreme right parties' formation and positioning toward the given national systems they operate within. It is therefore possible to define a three-dimensional-context here:

The economy of advanced (post-industrial) capitalism, according to Fieschi (2004: 14) has given rise to a new set of cleavages which cut across traditional cleavages. This is resulted in the emergence of two interdependent outcomes. First, the politics began to be conceptualized beyond the realm of material interests and the debates started to be pursued on value-based priorities not necessarily economical ones. As a result, new issues that have remained relatively outside the political affairs since then became problematized and politicized. Furthermore, the parties felt the urge to press harder to magnify their differences from one another which itself turned into a difficult task as the former cleavages withered. These two facts namely the politicization of new issues and the polarization of party systems created a brand new political niche that none of the former parties could dominate. Secondly, post-industrialism

“loosened the linkages between organized interests and political parties” (Ignazi, 2003: 203) while eroding the ground of class-based politics. Consequently, this led to a wave of de-alignment which came to be characterized by high electoral volatility and has created a new generation of voters unbounded yet open to new political offers. Not surprisingly, all these recent factors in turn served as an invitation for extreme right.

What is also worth mentioning is certainly the contribution of industrial factors. Since the vast majority of extreme right parties were/are small parties, they instinctively benefited from electoral systems which favoured small actors in principle. As Duverger’s well-known proposition suggests, proportional representation promotes multi-partism while single member district and two-ballot methods are likely to foster two-party systems (Jackman and Volpert, 1996: 506). Truly, extreme right parties perform much better in proportional representation procedures throughout Europe.

Back to our three-dimensional-context, it can be concluded that the success of extreme right parties owes a lot to the following set of factors:

- The niche opened by politization of new issues and polarization of party systems, both of which are the direct outcomes of post-industrialization. (Rydgren, 2005: 420)
- The opportunity granted by the increasing wave of de-alignment/re-alignment among the voter citizens, both of which are the outcomes

of the erosion of former class-based cleavages accompanied with a stark dissatisfaction toward the existing system.

- The conditions promoted by the proportional representation procedure during elections.

4.1. Why Front National?

“Le Shoc” was the headline for many newspapers in France, immediately after the declaration of the 2002 presidential election’s first round results. With his 16.86 per cent share of the vote, Front National candidate Jean-Marie Le Pen trampled all expectations, defeated socialist Prime Minister Lionel Jospin and managed to rival Chirac in the second round run-off. Alarmed by this dramatic march of Le Pen, French voters mobilized around an *anti-Front front* and sent Chirac to the presidential office with an overwhelming score of 82.15 %. (Neocleous and Startin, 2003: 145). This marked, so far, the most significant manifestation of the contemporary extreme right in Europe, being the second in a competition for the highest possible post in a democratic republic.

However, why specifically Front national has been chosen as a case for this thesis has got to do with more aspects than this single bright yet ironic achievement.

Indeed, there are already other extreme right parties which gained access to the governmental power. The first instance is MSI/ AN who took seat in Berlusconi’s short-lived cabinet in 1994 while the second is FPÖ’s participation

in the Schüssel government in February 2000 (Ignazi, 2003: 197). Yet Front National owes its significance to a series of other factors as well.

Founded in 1972, having its electoral breakthrough in 1984 Le Pen and his Front represent a long-runner among the extreme right parties in Western Europe. As the name suggests, it also signifies the frontal convergence of numerous radical right-wing fractions that have been dwelling in the French politics since the Revolution of 1789. In this sense, Front National can be considered the latest and the most fully-equipped representative of a tradition.

On the other hand, Front's journey can be read as a trial of a political formula which is eventually proved to be the winning one. Consolidated around the interval of 10-15 per cent, Le Pen does not only rest upon a substantial electorate but also manages to register himself as the originator of certain bitter issues such as immigration, insecurity, law and order.

Meanwhile, it is sound to argue that Le Pen's being a reference extends much beyond France's national borders. Through a process called cross-national diffusion (Rydgren, 2005: 429), Front National provides service as a prototype for all its counterparts across Western Europe. For Rydgren, "rather than playing the role of innovators, most extreme right parties play the role of adopters" (2005: 428) and in this process we see Front National's frame "was adopted by embryonic extreme right-wing groups and networks elsewhere in Western Europe" (2005: 432).

Progressing from these facts, FN's significance as a case to be studied can be said to lie in the combination of the following characteristics:

- FN as an extreme right party which established its position within the mainstream of national party system and consolidated a notable voter stock.
- FN as an extreme right party whose leader plays the role of a “trendsetter” on certain issues in national politics.
- FN as an extreme right party which managed to offer a “melting pot” for almost all ideologically-familiar fractions and networks in its country.
- FN as an extreme right party which “exports” tactical knowledge and know-how to the other extreme right groupings in Western Europe.

4.2. The eclectic nature of extreme right

The set of values, beliefs and arguments that are altogether filed under extreme right discourse has got a long tradition in France, and just like FN is doing all of France's past, it is also willing to accept all of this tradition. As the name Front indicates, the party from its inception has been designed as an electoral coalition of diverse activist groups already operating on extra-parliamentary levels. True, under Le Pen's leadership the priorities of these groups have been streamlined

through the party programme but it is still possible to argue that FN's ideological position is far from being homogeneous.

Though their size and extents vary, it is beneficial to give a brief overview about the notable extreme right groups in France whose political journey ended up under Front's umbrella.

“The pre-war, traditional extreme right is represented within the FN by quite elderly activists” (Lafont in Klandermans and Mayer, 2005: 95) who had been previously affiliated to Maurrassian monarchism, Vichyite collaborationism, Catholic fundamentalism or any other small militant fractions of the 1930s like *Camelots du Roy* or *Les Croix de Feu*.

Organized around the name *Action Française*, Charles Maurras and his followers urged for the abolishment of the (Third) Republic, which they called simply “slut” (Simmons, 1996: 16), in favour of a monarchy with sharp nationalist and anti-Semitic inclinations. Hopes became real when the “slut” had been slain by German occupation and the consequent foundation of the Vichy regime in the south-eastern territories of France by Marshal Pétain and Pierre Laval. Former extreme right cadres immediately joined in for the defence of the new regime against its enemy within and without. Some were recruited into Vichy Milice which was specialized in hunting down and torturing the members of the Resistance whereas others enrolled in the German SS Charlemagne armoured division to fight against the Soviets (Simmons, 1996: 16). Catholic

fundamentalism on the other hand, entered into the extreme right milieu through French Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre's sensational break from the Catholic Church. He and his followers retain the Latin mass and split with Rome in opposition to the liberal reforms of Vatican Council II (Marcus, 1995: 38) one of which stated that the Jews should no longer be condemned as the assassin of Christ. For the Catholic fundamentalist vein represented in FN this, "internationalist and Masonic" (Lafont in Klandermans and Mayer, 2005: 98) plot against Lefebvre's traditionalist and patriotic version of Christianity is still an important reference point. Needless to say, Le Pen regularly applies to this reference either by rejecting abortion or by attending Archbishop's memorial (Marcus, 1995: 37).

The years following Liberation were not the best for extreme right in France. General de Gaulles's combination of nationalism and Catholicism, which carried considerable respect and commitment to the principles of democratic republic, clearly left no enough space at extreme groups' disposal in the right-wing spectrum of politics. Hence, it was right after his retirement in 1953, French extreme right could make its first public appearance during the 1956 election campaign in the personality of Pierre Poujade and his party UDCA (Union de Défense des Commerçants et Artisans) (Simmons, 1996: 27). Poujadism was a populist, anti-tax, anti-establishment² protest movement with anti-Semitic tendencies appealing mostly to the small businessmen and rural

² It is equally possible to label this movement as anti-parliamentary because Poujade called for the abolishment of the Assembly in favor of Estates General.

masses who were threatened by the economic modernization (Marcus, 1995: 14). The movement faded away as quickly as it flourished leaving an important contribution to French politics behind that is “Le Pen as a Poujadist deputy in the National Assembly”.

The outbreak of Algerian conflict provided the extreme right a great opportunity to exploit through which they could “nationalize” their presence. The cause of “Algeire Française” had become an unanimous topic around these circles and a variety of new groupings came into existence around this theme thereafter.

“Meanwhile, the French army high command in Algeria was increasingly at odds with Fourth Republic politicians over the Algerian War. The generals suspected the politicians of engaging in secret negotiations with the Algerian rebels and warned the government that they would accept nothing short of complete victory over FLN. Behind the scenes, however, leading right-wing politicians in league with certain army generals were plotting the overthrow of the Republic” (Simmons, 1996: 41).

The crisis erupted in 1958 when General de Gaulle was called back from retirement to office for reconciliation and retaining of the order. De Gaulle, who blamed the existing political system in France for the crisis, responded that call by sending generals back to their barracks and by declaring the Fifth Republic under a brand new constitution.

While these events took place in metropolitan France, the conflict inbetween FLN and military or para-military French forces intensified in Algeria. However, it was the year 1960 when de Gaulle himself decided to start negotiations on Algerian independence (Simmons, 1996: 44). The news made a shocking impact on extreme right networks and enabled them to polish their

“Algeire Française” views with a stark anti-Gaullist tone. Yet, the General managed to complete his abandonment policy with popular approval³ after surviving one military coup attempt in 1961 and three successive assassination attempts by OAS (Organisation de l’Armée Secrète – Secret Army Organization) – a militant extreme right organization that was founded for “disrupting the peace process and assassinating those accused of having betrayed French Algeria” (Simmons, 1996: 45). Not surprisingly again, Le Pen’s personal affiliation with the ones behind these attempts came into public discussions later on.

The loss of Algeria did not only mark a dramatic turning point for French politics but also coincide with a new era for extreme right where the former activists could turn their attention inside, problematize new issues like immigration and labour for the unification of their highly fragmented standing. Emerging from the ashes of a violent neo-fascist group called Jeune Nation (Young Nation), the year 1960 witnessed the establishment of a new extreme right organization called *Europe Action* (Simmons, 1996: 47). The arguments defended by its leader Dominique Venner were important to the extent they outlined a new strategy for French extreme right; the defence of the cultural wealth of the fatherland and the superiority of mass propaganda over street battles.

³ In 1962 Referendum, nearly 65 percent of the electorate backed De Gaulle (Marcus, 1995: 15).

In the 1965 presidential elections, French extreme right could have the chance to test this new strategy along with the new procedure introduced by de Gaulle which sought to determine the president through popular vote. Jean-Louis Tixier-Vignancour, who was a renowned lawyer already having taking over the defences of various Vichyites and neo-fascists, appeared as the candidate of the extreme right and it was none except Jean-Marie Le Pen taking care of his campaign. Equipped with a harsh anti-Gaullist, anti-communist, xenophobic rhetoric, Tixier movement aimed to mobilize “free professionals, white-collar workers, owners of small and medium size business enterprises and the independent peasantry (Tucker, 1968: 91) who had been supposedly worsened by the state intervention to economy; along with the notable population of *pieds-noirs*⁴. Despite vast efforts, the campaign resulted in a disappointing electoral score. From this point onwards, French extreme right completely withdrew from the exploitation of “Algerie Française” theme and fixed its attention on the “enemy within” exclusively.

The 1970s hosted a series of important events for extreme right and offered new opportunities on the route to further moderation and sophistication. First took place in the organizational level. The major extreme fraction of the decade called *Orde Nouveau* (New Order), which was by the way the direct successor of another militant group named Occident (Ignazi, 2003: 90), made a historical move during its second congress in 1972 by setting up a political party under

⁴ Pieds-noirs stand for the European origin French citizens who had been living in Algeria but returned after this country's independence in 1961.

the name Front National (Marcus, 1995: 17). This happened to be a significant turning point as long as it signifies the French extreme right's approval of parliamentary means for the sake of breaking out from their political ghetto. Such an attempt had been previously tried by Italian MSI and became a successful model for FN⁵.

Second important event occurred within the intellectual terrains when Alain de Benoist founded GRECE (Groupement de Recherche et d'Etudes pour la Civilisation Européenne – Research and Study Group on European Civilization) and started to spread his ideas which were later collectively be called *Nouvelle Droite* (New Right)⁶. His was an aim to build up a think-tank which would challenge the philosophical superiority of the Left in other words would “take over the ‘laboratories of thinking’ ” (Griffin in Arnold, 2000: 222) by waging a hegemony struggle in exactly Gramscian terms⁷. Progressing from a neo-paganist standpoint, Benoist himself condemned Judeo-Christian tradition for being a totalitarian mode of thought “imposed on a noble Indo-European culture (Marcus, 1995: 25). Yet, his most famous contribution was related to another set of arguments. Benoist developed a notion called ethno-pluralism which, albeit traditional racism does not necessarily propose a hierarchical relation between ethnicities but which rather suggests they are all different, incompatibly different, so should remain unmixed (Rydgren, 2005: 427). As

⁵ FN did not even hesitate to copy MSI's emblem of the tricolour flame.

⁶ Not to be mistaken with the ultra-liberal Anglo-American strand called New Right headed by the likes of Reagan or Thatcher.

⁷ The members of ND was also commonly labeled as “right-Gramscians”

expected, Le Pen cheerfully embraced this idea as a part of his “differentialist – the right to be different” views while for many scholars like Taguieff, Balibar and Wallerstein this was a plain example of “new racism” or “cultural racism” (Balibar and Wallerstein, 2000: 30).

GRECE’s mission has been taken further and transmitted into the mainstream politics thanks to the Club de l’Horloge which was another right-wing think-tank founded in 1974 and had close personal ties with Front National (Marcus, 1995: 26).

Refreshed with the articulation of Nouvelle Droite’s cultural arguments, FN continued to be a constant centre of attraction for both unaffiliated voters and other extreme right factions. In the late 70s, early 80s the Front flourished by the rush of new blood into its ranks. In 1977, the *Union Solidariste* (an anti-American, anti-Marxist, anti-Zionist, anti-Arab, economically “third-way ist” militant group), one year after *FANE* (Fédération d’Action Nationale et Européenne- a virulent neo-Nazi sect) and finally Bernard Antony as the key figure of Catholic fundamentalism joined the party (Bréchon and Mitra, 1992: 72) (Marcus, 1995: 37).

As can be seen, the Front encompasses the entire list of extreme right groups in France as much as it materializes Le Pen’s long-standing obsession of “unifying the right” (Simmons, 1996: 59). Yet, it is equally sound to argue that a homogeneous ideological context could not come out of this heterogeneous

mixture, and there still exist different axes of conflict upon which Le Pen plays the mediator or the federator role.

For example, in terms of economy, “the Front’s policy seems to be torn between two poles- a sort of francophone Reaganomics on the one hand, and nationalist corporatism or protectionism on the other” (Marcus, 1995: 109). Owing a great debt of inspiration to the popular anti-tax, anti-statist sentiments evoked by Poujade and Tixier’s movements, the party embraced an ultra-liberal programme in 1978. Nonetheless, at the eve of the 1993 general elections it was replaced by a socially- minded agenda called *The 300 Measures for the Renaissance of France* (Ignazi, 2003: 100). Concomitant to an increasing profile in attracting working class votes, this shift even furthered the party to the point of self-denial. Le Pen, who used to be a staunch defender of FN’s “right” identity, from the mid-1990s adopted a *ni droite, ni gauche* (neither right, nor left) stance (Fieschi, 2004: 143) in order to define their nationalist- protectionist twist.

The case about Americanism is no less ambivalent. Mostly fuelled by a deep hostility towards communism, FN has always been among the foremost critics of de Gaulle’s foreign policy according to which France withdrew from the military wing of NATO. As “the Wall” fell and Cold War conjuncture ceased to be a determining parameter in politics, FN started to drift away from its former pro-American stand noticing US hegemony’s so-called destructive effects on French culture and sovereignty. In other words, yesterday’s socialism

found its mirror image in today's globalization as a chief threat eroding the very notion of the "nation". Consequently,

"The FN opposed, then, such measures as French participation in the 1990 US-led Gulf War and the NATO offensive in 1999 over Kosovo; US cultural hegemony (Hollywood, Euro-Disneyland, Mc Donald's) and the world trade talks (via the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade- GATT) precisely because they were deemed to undermine French sovereignty" (Hainsworth, 2000: 28)

The eclectic nature of FN manifests itself once again as soon as the single formative elements of its ideological backbone are taken into account. It is no secret today that Le Pen owns a following that is partly composed of people from both sides of the Second World War front, both Vichyites and the members of the Resistance (Marcus, 1995: 128). The party furthermore hosts quite a number of Gaullist cadres which indeed should be seen a bright record for a political organization with historical anti-Gaullist sentiments.

All in all, it can be concluded that the long-standing flexibility and eclecticism in FN's political discourse enabled it to gather diverse even rival positions under a single roof. For the time being, Le Pen seems to orchestrate a crowded list of interests which include both ultra-liberals and state-protectionists, both Gaullists and anti-Gaullists, both Vichyites and Resistance fighters, both Catholic fundamentalists and anti-Christians, both pro-Americans and anti-Americans, both monarchists and republicans, both anti-Arabs and anti-Semites...

Even though homogeneity has always been the hallmark of Le Pen's rhetoric, it becomes impossible to distrust Harris' following remark about the FN: "There

are as many differences of opinion as there were within Hitler's National Socialist Party" (Harris, 1994: 92).

4.3. Extreme right and golden age myth

Even though Le Pen mentions about the renaissance of France in a repeated manner, he does not refer to a specific time scale in history which could well be the golden age of the French people as it was the case with classical fascism. Instead of such a backward looking, he tends to accept the country's past as a whole and pursues a standpoint which yearns for cultural homogeneity within the existing borders not necessarily the completion of a once-interrupted historical mission of national grandeur.

4.4. Extreme right's mass base

Front National and the rest of the extreme right parties in Western Europe would not be of that much significance if they had not attracted such a substantial number of votes. Therefore, the growing interest on this kind of parties can be considered a minor episode in a larger context which aims to find the relations between the changing societal dynamics and voting behaviour.

What is worth to be underlined is, our case FN's great success in penetrating beyond the traditional voter stock of extreme right. It is clear that the FN seems no more like a party of conservative peasants and authoritarian petty bourgeoisie, on the contrary manages to derive support increasingly from urban

sectors who were previously affiliated to other parties, not necessarily right wing.

The protest-vote approach illuminates certain points. According to a survey, whose results have been carried by Ignazi onto the pages of his book, democracy is accepted as an ideal political system across Western Europe (95%) nevertheless, satisfaction with the way democracy works gains a much lower score (57%) (Ignazi, 2003: 213). Furthermore, a research held by Duhamel and Jaffré shows that the ratio of people who considers politics as ‘an honourable activity’, politicians as ‘honest’ or ‘sensitive to citizens’ problems’ has been declining constantly throughout the European countries (Ignazi, 2003: 99). As can be seen, one can speak of an overall trend where anti-party or even anti-system sentiments peaked and are to change the course of electoral politics.

Le Pen in this sense can be assumed to have profited from this tendency a lot. By repeatedly addressing the four established French parties as “the gang of four”⁸, he appeals to the mass of de-aligned and disillusioned citizens and highlights his “outsiderness” to that club in order to register a position as the defender of the small, ordinary man out there whom nobody else seems to care.

The protest motive is important yet it falls short to explain the close resemblance between FN scores in different elections. As Neocleous and Startin

⁸ He uses the phrase *la bande des quatre* to denote Communist, Socialist, Gaullist and moderate right parties.

put it rightly, people still tend to vote for Le Pen even if it is clear that he can not win, like the second round of presidential elections (Neocleous and Startin, 2003: 148)

The xenophobic drive can also be considered as an important factor which might have a role in mobilizing anti-immigrant voters. Still, this does not imply that the entire FN electorate is composed of racists or “bastards” as a then-Socialist politician Bernard Tapie put it in 1992 (Simmons, 1996: 169). It is indeed the aggregate of certain socio-economic conditions which makes the immigrant figure less sympathetic in the eyes of the majority of French voters.

According to Perrineau,

“the extreme right has managed to exploit electorally what one can call the popular despair of some sectors of the population that experience more difficulties than others in making the transition from an industrial to a post-industrial society” (Perrineau in Arnold, 2000: 260).

Front’s rhetoric fixes the excess number of immigrants as the sole cause of this despair without questioning the structural change in the mode of capitalist production and informs the North African as the thief of jobs. Still, surprisingly enough, FN’s electoral strongholds do not perfectly match with the areas of high immigrant concentration. Scholars mention a “Halo effect” (Simmons, 1996: 177) (Ignazi, 2003: 104) (Bréchon and Mitra, 1992: 70) (Perrineau in Arnold, 2000: 264) which proposes that FN maximizes its performance not in areas “overpopulated” with immigrants but in those neighbouring the former ones. Towns with high immigration enable daily contact that works at the expense of

xenophobia. Conversely, people who are living not “in” but “near” these towns constantly breed a fear towards the “other”. Therefore, support for the FN is somewhat, “the by-product of a ‘non-experimental’ xenophobia, that is to say the perception of a near while unknown threat” (Ignazi, 2003: 105).

The distribution of the Front voters is also of great significance which forces one to think beyond the common left-right dichotomy in politics. Besides the middle class segments like small business owners and “déclassé” masses like the unemployed who are believed traditionally likely to vote for extreme right, FN is able to mobilize a considerable amount of working class votes, even more than socialist parties can. Apparently, the initial arguments which saw the inevitable split of right votes in the advance of FN are proved wrong as the party made its unexpected impact on the left by stealing an important portion of its electoral base. Workers, who are adversely affected by globalization trend that already de-industrialized some of the former labour-intensive production branches or who feel threatened by international competition, job insecurity, EU enforcements and minimization of state’s economic functions; have increasingly started to seek refuge under FN’s tricolour flame. This, in turn, triggered a reciprocal process. On the one hand, working class voters traded off their condemnation of capitalism in favour of the condemnation of immigrants and became *gaucho-lepenistes* (Neocleous and Startin, 2003: 151). On the other hand, the FN revised its former Reagan style ultra-liberal programme for the sake of a more social, protectionist agenda that would not intimidate its potential blue-collar electorate.

By all counts, the FN as an extreme right party represents a peculiar case with its cross-class alliance of voters. The co-existence of blue-collar workers and the owners of small business as the two major supporters of Le Pen, signifies an unlikely coalition when taken into account their disagreement over most economic issues (Ivarsflaten, 2005: 465). How longer FN could rely on this populist convergence of working class, middle class and the “classless” is itself a question mark. What is certain is that extreme right’s message which suggests replacing the ‘insecurity’ brought about by poverty and waged labour with the ‘insecurity’ brought about by immigration, crime and the erosion of national identity (Neocleaus and Startin, 2003: 152) has been welcomed by no ignorable a population in France. Hence, it would be misleading to portrait Le Pen as an extreme right demagogue feasting on protest votes for he is indeed gambling for the post of “defender of the poor” in a country where “four million people officially exist below an internationally agreed poverty line and three million are unemployed” (Neucleaus and Startin, 2003: 151).

4.5. Leadership in extreme right

Even though he had voted against de Gaulle’s resume to power in 1958, General’s Fifth Republic and more precisely the 1962 referendum provided a valuable opportunity for Le pen to test the extent of his leadership skills. Once the linkage of Presidential election to the direct popular vote was introduced, supposedly a brand new framework of political competition came into foreground in France. The charismatic candidates began to replace official party

programmes as the main focus of electoral campaigns. As Fieschi accurately states, “the transition from ‘régime d’assemblée’ to ‘régime présidentiel’, from the Fourth to Fifth Republic signals an acceptance of rally⁹ politics, an institutional espousal of political personalism” (Fieschi, 2004: 149). Extreme right responded this transition by evolving its former ideological strategy into a more populist- toned one and found its perfect materialization in the personality of Le Pen whose oratorical talent had already been tried and approved.

Le Pen was born in 1928 in a fishing village of Brittany, lost his father during a French Navy campaign at the age of 14. He later joined the Resistance (which in fact never took place according to Libération’s 1987 dated investigation) and after the end of the war relocated in Paris to study law (Marcus, 1995: 30). As a staunch advocate of France’s colonial interests, he abandoned his education in order to join the army in its Indochina mission. Even though his troop landed when the French high command decided to withdraw from the battle, Le Pen has always presented himself as a fighter against the communist threat over free world. Following the return from Vietnam, he resumed his studies as well as activism among certain right wing associations which eventually led to his initiation to the politics under the patronage of Pierre Poujade. In 1956 elections, he was honoured as the youngest member of the French National Assembly. As the Algerian crisis dragged on, Le Pen parted ways with Poujade due to the latter’s failure in taking a stricter position toward the issue. In

⁹ A rally, for Fieschi (2004: 157), is not a political meeting around a politician but rather a coming togetherness of like-minded people around an exceptional leader.

response, he ended up volunteering to join the First Paratroops of the Foreign Legion in Algeria. Yet, Le Pen found himself in Suez Canal pursuing an Anglo-French-Israeli joint military campaign against Nasser's Egypt, which was abruptly disturbed by US and Soviet pressure. After the Indochina affair, this happened to be the second experience of national humiliation for him (Simmons 1996, 38). From Egypt, he was sent to Algeria finally in duty of interrogating FLN prisoners and other Algerian suspects. During this service, he is believed to take part in systematic torture sessions albeit there is no clear charge against him. Le Pen returned to Paris where he continued to rally for the cause of *Algerie Française*, was re-elected to the parliament as an independent deputy and developed stronger links within the extreme right milieu. In 1962, he was sent to court because of a Nazi praise printed on one of the records which was released by his own record company (Marcus, 1995: 33). It was the 1965 Presidential elections when Le Pen stepped once again into the front lines of politics in order to orchestrate Jean-Louis Tixier-Vignancourt's campaign. The election results were disastrous for many leaving the entire extreme right network in doubt and pessimism for future up until 1972 when exactly a brand new hope appeared in form of Front National.

Surprisingly enough, the first person to accuse Le Pen of imposing *Führerprinzip* over the party structure was not a left wing commentator but one of his fellow Ordre Nouveau members in 1973 when he decided to purge this group for strengthening the leadership position of himself in FN (Vural, 2005: 145). Yet, this must be considered a reasonable move for a person who

consistently pays homage to dictatorial figures such as Francisco Franco, Augusto Pinochet, Juan Peron, Antonio Salazar, Saddam Hussein and Anastasio Somoza excluding of course Mussolini and Hitler for guessable reasons (Simmons, 1996: 4).

Front National was originally designed as a heterogeneous coalition of diverse extreme right groups. Nevertheless, it gradually evolved into a huge, highly disciplined, seemingly monolithic and authoritarian party mechanism. Having links to both traditional extreme right ideology and Fifth Republic's presidential criteria, Jean-Marie Le Pen is more than the chairman of the party; he is by contrast serving a combination of different categories. He represents the leader, the last defender of French nationality, the ordinary and the visionary at the same time and finally the future president for whom the entire FN formation was to serve unequivocally.

No matter how eclectic its ideological backbone looks, it is strictly forbidden to constitute a faction or current within the FN ranks. As one of the official documents of the party states: "Internal criticism should in no case be spread across party organizational lines, there is an obligation not to bandy about differences which might exist between Front National members" (Simmons, 1996: 190). The party policies are determined at the top, almost completely by Le Pen and his handpicked, close lieutenants and later transmitted downward the hierarchy leaving no place for opposition. "Thus, in practise, the Front is a highly centralized machine with a strong, pyramid-like organization. Power is

held at the top and Le Pen dominates its internal life” (Marcus, 1995: 47). FN owes this structure to the immense labour of Jean-Pierre Stirbois, the party’s secretary general after 1980 (Simmons, 1996: 187). Quite akin to the Leninist democratic centralism model of the communist parties, it was none but Stirbois who established a nationwide organization with Departmental Federations in which the higher ranks appoint their lowers (cooptation) and they are all responsible to him personally. This scheme did not change after his death and prompted even his successor Carl Lang once to say: “The FN and the Communists are now the only militant parties in France” (Marcus, 1995: 42).

Even the FN members who enjoyed a parliamentary seat could not escape from this iron discipline and Le Pen’s grip. The deputies are expected only to serve an instrumental mission in the parliament that is being simply the mouthpiece of Le Pen where he himself is not existent. This lack of autonomy which levels a MP with a “foot soldier” (whose task is limited to spreading pro-FN leaflets, putting up Le Pen posters or spraying party slogans on the walls) naturally creates tension within the party structure. Yann Piat, the only representative of the party in 1988 National Assembly, for example had pulled the shortest straw by complaining about this pressure and was immediately thrown out (Marcus, 1995: 48).

Le Pen’s unquestionable leadership and its accompany, the rigid party discipline cost more than a series of personal resignations or expulsions to FN. Even though they set on road with an aim of unifying the highly- fragmented French

extreme right, there have been great splits within the Front which resulted in the formation of brand new political parties operating more or less on the same terrain. The former ON members, who were purged in as early as 1973, re-organized themselves under the name *Parti des Forces Nouvelles* (New Forces Party) which rivalled the FN up until the 1980s (Ignazi, 2003: 91). More recently, in 1999, this time the party lost one of its spearhead figures called Bruno Mégret who decided to establish a new party with his followers, *Mouvement National Républicain*. His was a suggestion of further moderation for the FN in order to make the party a part of mainstream right, which was seemingly refused by Le Pen (Fieschi, 2004: 175).

As can be seen, Le Pen's unaccountable singularity is not only reflected through the party's electoral propaganda¹⁰ but is also what the FN is all about inside. Though he does not decapitate his opponents as it was the case with Hitler's "Night of the Long Knives", Le pen is too deaf for an alternative voice within his ranks with fear of facing a challenge against his position in the future. That is probably why he places "personal attachment" over the political one while saying:

"If I were to disappear, a Congress would be held, and it would have the major task of keeping the Party together. It is still heterogeneous as the moment and it will be a most difficult task. I obviously have the charisma of being the founder. Lots of people have a personal attachment to me. It avoids them having to ask themselves difficult questions. It enables them to say- I don't agree, but that doesn't matter. What's important is the personal attachment I have to the (National front) President. So it will be a difficult time, but Gaullism has survived de Gaulle" (Marcus, 1995: 173).

¹⁰ "Le Pen, le Peuple" is a common alliteration used in NF posters (Perrineau in Arnold, 2000: 254)

Just as Gaullism survived de Gaulle, Le Pen dreams of a Le Penist ideal that would survive a possible absence of him too and the biggest candidate for this mission seems to be none except his daughter Marine Le Pen. The newspapers have recently reported that Le Pen is going to quit his presidential duty within a mere 3 years time and leave the command of the party to Marine who is backed by the overwhelming 81 per cent of the 20 000 FN members (Çakır, 2007).

4.6. Extreme right and totalitarianism

It is true that Le Pen once called for the abolishment of the Fifth Republic in favour of a Sixth, yet what he attached to this formation was an “organic” variant of democracy (Vural, 2005: 155). Albeit extreme right’s traditional hostility towards it, the Frontist rhetoric does not seem to opt for a complete withdrawal from democratic system and the consequent establishment of a totalitarian rule. On the contrary, Le Pen frequently pays attention to the denouncement of the historical instances of totalitarianism in his speeches; during an interview in 2002 he was to say “I always condemned communism, national-socialism and fascism. Incidentally, I define all of them as leftist movements that were spawned by the French Revolution” (Primor, 2002). True, the authoritarian tone of the party is in clash with many features of today’s perception of democracy and its leader Le Pen’s personal affirmation towards dictators or military coups has become a publicly-known issue. But still it might mean flexing the boundaries of political science upon the realm of speculations to outline the totalitarianism in FN provided that the party never gained access to the government of France.

4.7. Extreme right as a counter-revolution

The term “counter-revolution” has got a very significant usage in French politics. Dependent on an assumption that places modern France’s genesis in the year 1789, it signifies the advocates of the *ancien régime* who survived the Revolution and continued their political activities thereafter under the banner of “reactionaries”. Bréchon and Mitra (1992, 63) warns against a common misunderstanding concerning the meaning of this word. They rightfully argue that “nineteenth century usage distinguishes between ‘conservatives’, who wished to retain the status quo, and “reactionaries”, who intended to restore the status quo ante, if necessary by force”. Apparently, France has got a long history of both.

At the end of nineteenth century, the hostility of the French extreme right towards the three famous principles of the Revolution (Liberty, Equality and Fraternity) found a popular mouth in the personality of Charles Maurras. Organized around a magazine in 1899 and around a group called Action Française in 1905, Maurrasians struggled for a political line which was “characterized by Catholic integralism, by a nationalism that verged on xenophobia and anti-Semitism, and by anti-parliamentarism and hate toward the Republic (to be demolished in favour of a ‘national monarchy’) ” (Ignazi, 2003: 84). Maurras himself was an overt supporter of the restoration of the French monarchy which was for him the only possible way to evoke “the respect for

government necessary to hold together and legitimize the state” (Simmons, 1996: 19).

The torch has been transferred to Vichyites, who established a German puppet, highly national and xenophobic regime in Central-Southern France following the May 1940 defeat and was led by Marshal Pétain (Ignazi, 2003: 88). Though not necessarily from a royalist perspective, the Vichy government rejected basic premises of republicanism as harmful to the unity of French nation such as individualism, parliamentarism and egalitarianism. They even ridiculed the famous triad of 1789 by replacing it with “travail, famille, patrie (work, family, country)” slogan.

With the defeat of Germans in the Second World War and the consequent Liberation of France, Vichyites had been punished for collaborating with the Nazi occupation¹¹. Reactionary/counter-revolutionary views have been transmitted through the small-scale extreme right groupings in the postwar era and eventually arrived at the terrain of FN.

“Everyone is getting ready to celebrate the bicentennial of the revolution of 1789. Why not? France is 4000 years worth of European culture, 20 centuries worth of Christianity, 40 kings of and two centuries of Republicanism. The FN is willing to accept all of France’s post.” (Fieschi, 2004: 140)

writes Le Pen in one of his 1985 dated articles. Despite its common usage with capital R, his choice of writing “revolution” does not only coincide with his

¹¹ In French this period is called *l’épuration*, the purification, in which many collaborators were shot (more than 9000) or sentenced to life-time imprisonment.
(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epuration_l%C3%A9gale)

well-known cynical prose that aims to undervalue 1789's significance and to ascribe it sort of ordinariness in French history. This also coincides with the Front's overall ambivalence about the Revolution. In 1789, Le Pen further notes that "the love of liberty, equality and fraternity does not stop anyone, quite the contrary, from loving their family, their country or work that is well done" (Marcus, 1995: 103). As can be seen, by a clever word play, he refers to the Vichyite slogan mentioned earlier without taking an explicit stand against the 1789 and its republican virtues.

Yet, Bruno Megrét, the former *délégué général* and member of FN, prefers a more open type of speech while explaining his party's view on the same subject:

"The French Revolution was not as positive an event as people say and we don't believe that the history of France began in 1789. We believe that this revolution was a rupture which was damaging to France and that the ideas which flowed from it are not part of our outlook. Above all, the way they are currently put into practice, with what we call the 'ideology of the rights of man', is something that is very negative. Therefore we reject the rupture of 1789... and we reject the totalitarianism of the ideology called 'the rights of man' which it has generated today." (Marcus, 1995: 103)

Then, in the final analysis Front's manner can be read as a not-so-full-hearted approval for republic as the institutional outcome of 1789 along with an overt discomfort toward the universalistic ideals of the Revolution.

Talking about counter-revolution, we must bear in mind that the notion has been employed with a different connotation while mentioning "Fascism as a counter-revolution". During that passage, the word is used to signify a combat against workers' struggle and a probable left-wing revolution to accompany it in Italy

and Germany, yet the long history of modern statecraft and monarchism in France necessitated a double-meaning for counter-revolution as such.

Even if post-war France was not at the threshold of a socialist revolution as it was the case with both Italy and Germany in the interwar years, scholars like Ignazi still opt for the usage of “counter-revolutionary” in order to denote contemporary extreme right in Western Europe too.

This conceptualization rests upon the argument that the post-industrialization of Western European countries weakened the economic, class-based cleavage and produced new social “losers” who are open to a reactionary and populist message (Rydgren, 2005: 415). Ignazi himself defines this change as “epochal” and puts emphasis on a new value-based axis of conflict in politics that is “centred on ‘quality of life’ issues rather than acquisitive ones.” (Ignazi, 2003: 201). While politics for previous generations was primarily a debate on economic development and material well-being, the focus has shifted for new generation voters and activists onto the matters of identity, self-realization and participation. This has:

“encouraged new, left-libertarian movements and parties promote feminism, environmental protection, peace and disarmament, minority rights, international cooperation in development, and a radical decentralization and opening-up of institutional politics. The old left-right conflict over the state’s economic role has not disappeared from electoral politics, but patterns of political behaviour point to an emerging cleavage over post-materialist values.” (Veugelers, 2000: 20)

In this sense, the Left can be said to adjust itself to the newly emerging conditions by articulating a libertarian variant in its political struggle, hence

gained a positive, popular feedback that resulted in the formation of new style parties such as the Greens. Ignazi intervenes at this very point by saying:

“the Greens and the extreme right parties are, respectively, the legitimate and the unwanted children of the New Politics as the Greens came out of the silent revolution, the extreme right parties derive from a reaction to it, a sort of ‘silent counter-revolution’ (Fieschi, 2004: 9).

Indeed, FN’s programme touches upon this issue by exactly referring to the phrase “silent revolution” when it says “four pillars supported the national edifice: family, school, religion and the army. Since 1968, *the silent revolution* of anarchy and globalization has destroyed them” (King, 2007).

Clearly, what extreme right parties offer is a right-wing reading of post-materialist values that have started to dominate the nature of politics since the tide of post-industrial development hit Western European countries. In other words, extreme right started to consult a similar type of reasoning as the Greens or other left-libertarian positions. However, they arrived at a totally opposite political terrain. So, in conclusion, Front National as a prototypical representative of extreme right parties in Western Europe is counter-revolutionary, not because it actively fights against the imminence of a proletarian revolution but because it does against the left-libertarian dominance over the new post-materialist conception of politics.

4.8. Extreme right and imperialism

The lack of an imperialist ethos is considered to be one of the major dimensions that distinguish contemporary extreme right parties from their classical fascist counterparts. This is no different in Front National's case. Leaving aside an aggressive foreign policy which foresees military expansion for the capture of necessary 'vital space', the party's rhetoric is freed even from the resentment caused by the loss of Algeria. On the contrary, Le Pen is always willing to play the defender of France against the "imperialist" (even if he does not use the exact word) interests of Americanization, Islamization and "European Unionization" if one is allowed to call so. Therefore, progressing from the data available, it can be concluded that Le Pen is comfortable with France's current hexagonal shape.

4.9. Scapegoats of extreme right

As an influential orator who is specialized in what Bruno Mégret calls the "vocabulary battle" (Simmons, 1996: 217), Le Pen frequently addresses a demagogic set of scapegoats in his rhetoric as the sole responsible for the decadence of France. He condemns "politicians' establishment", "all-powerful oligarchy", "anti-French racists", "lobbies under orders", "mondialistes", "xénomaniacs", "Eurofederastes" (a play on the words Eurofederation and pederast) or "sidaïques"¹² in a repeated fashion without revealing the exact

¹² Sidaïque is a neologism coined by Le Pen himself in order to describe AIDS (the acronym for AIDS is SIDA in French) sufferers but the pronunciation of the word purposively reminds that of "judaique" (Judaics) used by the Vichy regime for describing the Jews.

identities that these terms might signify. Still, the leading two positions in this demonology belong to the Jew and increasingly now to the immigrant.

Along with the Freemasonry, the Jews have constituted the chief scapegoat category for the French extreme right since the end of the nineteenth century. This hostility was not always restricted to verbal or written assaults, but also occasionally turned into physical confrontation such as the mass riots during the Dreyfus affair in the 1880s or the deadly round up and transportation to the Nazi camps by Vichy regime in the 1940s (Simmons, 1996: 123).

However, following the end of the Second World War, the disclosure of the Holocaust and other related crimes against humanity discredited anti-Semitic views in public mind and led to the establishment of a legal framework which punishes openly racist or anti-Semitic utterances. Born into this climate in 1972, Front National too, has been pretty cautious about not taking the high risk of anti-Semitism even if it serves as cement among the diverse traditions of extreme right which altogether constitutes the party (Simmons, 1996: 132). Still, according to many writers, these statements are constantly expressed “backstage” (Rensmann, 2003: 109) or even publicly albeit in disguise.

The traditional stigmatization of the Jewish figure along with a paranoid obsession to “the powers that be” of an international Jewish conspiracy occupies a weighty place in FN’s world view. The Jew represents anything and everything that is non-French for he

“stands for modernity as opposed to tradition, the Republic as opposed to monarchy, equality as opposed to hierarchy, cosmopolitanism as opposed to rootedness, parliamentary democracy as opposed to authoritarianism, and capitalism as opposed to corporatism” (Simmons, 1996: 124).

Partly because of willing to avoid legal sanctions and partly because Jews in France do not constitute a vast demographic category, Le Pen and FN retain from blaming the entire community, rather they tend to pinpoint the singular Jewish presence in the major positions of key sectors like media, education and of course politics as an evidence for the so-called conspiracy (Simmons, 1996: 124).

This conspiratorial reasoning has its implications on FN’s foreign policy as well. Galvanized by what Taguieff calls “new anti-Semitism”¹³ Le Pen did not hesitate to support Saddam Hussein’s offensive on Kuwait in 1990, against the increasing US and Israeli domination over that region. “We want the Arabs to be masters in their own house” he said while adding “French nationalism meant supporting all nationalisms including the Arab one” (Simmons, 1996: 101-102). Meanwhile in Europe he severely rejected the Maastricht Treaty with quite similar justifications, that the treaty “is one of the keys of a true *mondialiste*”¹⁴ and internationalist plot against the nation” (Simmons, 1996: 129). In the final analysis, the Front is determined to figure out a Jewish finger in almost all historically significant events and further declares that yesterday’s

¹³ Taguieff argues that new anti-Semitism borrows from a set of left wing stances like Third Worldist anti-imperialism, anti-Americanism and critiques of neoliberal globalization (Taguieff, 2004: 67)

¹⁴ Whereas the term cosmopolitan is associated with the rootlessness and lack of commitment to any nation of the Jews, *mondialistes* represents individuals who feel commitment to international or transnational organizations like the United Nations or the European Union (Simmons, 1996: 128).

socialism was replaced by today's mondialism as the chief instrument of cosmopolitan fraud undermining all that is national.

There is also another dimension worth mentioning why FN meddles so much with the Jews. For Le pen and the vast majority of the Frontists, scapegoating the Jew served as a secure and profitable way of whitewashing or better rehabilitating the dark spots in their history. Consulting mainly to the revisionist school historians like Bardéche, Vichyite collaborators and even Hitler himself have been freed from their historically fixed burdens. Whereas collaboration with Nazis is justified¹⁵ for preventing the Sovietisation of Europe thus the extinction of French race (Harris, 1994: 71); the Holocaust is reduced to a mere *detail*¹⁶ in the history of the Second World War if not completely rejected as a Jewish bias, as a fabrication of evidence which in fact never occurred. As can be seen, either by negating or relativizing the facts, the Front is in constant eagerness to reproduce the anti-Semitic ethos.

The issue of immigration on the other hand, has gained the top most position in the demonology of FN since the 1980s. The Jew gradually lost its former rank leaving its place to the "immigrant" which is a "more visible, convenient and effective target" (Harris, 1994: 73).

¹⁵ In 2005 the extreme right newspaper Rivarol published an interview with Le Pen where he declares the German occupation was "not" inhumane (Milliyet, 14 January 2005).

¹⁶ During a television interview in 1987, Le Pen described the existence of gas chambers as a point of detail in the history of the Second World War. This statement naturally caused a massive criticism (Simmons, 1996: 126).

Indeed, during the 1973 legislative campaign, the word immigration was mentioned only once in the FN's programme but when 1993 elections came it was a whole chapter in *300 mesures pour la renaissance de la France* served with figures and charts to show the costs of this issue for the country (Simmons, 1996: 159). This period between the two years does not only signify the birth of immigration as a nation-scale problematic but also the rise of Le Pen and his ideas into the mainstream of French politics.

According to Pettigrew, there are seven basic immigrant statuses (Pettigrew, 1998: 80); national migrants returning "home", citizens of EU countries living in other EU countries, ex-colonial peoples from a large contingent, recruited workers from such non-colonial countries as Turkey, refugees or asylum seekers, accepted illegal immigrants and finally rejected illegal immigrants, still as far as the contemporary scope of politics is concerned, the first two categories are usually omitted while talking about this issue.

France was not alone while accepting immigration. Either to compensate the labour shortages during the times of economic boom or to offset the decline in the population caused by wars, many other Western European countries too applied this strategy. Yet, as the oil shock in 1970 hit the affluent economies of the West and later the post-industrialization process transformed the former modes of production, unemployment appeared as an acute problem. Immigrants then onwards started to be perceived not with their contribution but with their cost to the economy. Extreme right, more specifically FN in France did not miss

this opportunity and immediately owned and began to manipulate the subject as a part of their xenophobic discourse.

For FN, the immigrant represents the modern Jew, who unlike him does not propose a threat by organizing clever plots but rather by simply becoming demographically dominant over French soil and degenerating French culture. What lies beneath the infamous slogan of “2 million unemployed, 2 million immigrants too many” is a vulgar codification which stigmatizes the immigrant (especially the North African/ Maghrebian) as “the author and bearer of all evils” (Perinneau in Arnold, 2000: 254). Not just unemployment but also social ills like increasing crime rates, the feeling of insecurity and the loss of national identity are billed to the new scapegoat. Hence, while introducing the concept called “national preference”¹⁷ or urging an immediate expulsion of clandestine immigrants, the Front indeed strikes a popular chord of a country half of whose population (46 %) is of African origin actually (Perinneau in Arnold, 2000: 264).

True, Frontists can be considered the first investors of this once-virgin “problem”. In Jean-Pierre Stirbois’ words, “while the Socialists coddled immigrants and the mainstream right just avoided the issue, only FN had the courage to tackle the issue head on by developing specific policies aimed at coping with the immigrant ‘problem’” (Simmons, 1996: 73). That is exactly

¹⁷ National preference means putting French citizens first in their own country. They would have first call on scarce state provision like health-care, housing and welfare benefits (Marcus, 1995: 105).

why Le Pen often demands his “copyright”, accuses other parties of plagiarism and calls citizens to vote for the “original” not for the imitators.

It is important to note that once the issue was transferred to nation-scale debates, remaining parties felt the pressure for taking a position which sometimes falls short of suggesting a remedy and served exactly FN’s purposes. In June 1991 Chirac¹⁸ stated that he felt sympathy for the French worker who suffered from the “noise and smell” of immigrants “overdosing” the country and he was quickly followed by Giscard’s¹⁹ equalization of immigration with “invasion” (Simmons, 1996: 97). The left was no less offensive. It was the Socialist government which had deported sixteen thousand clandestine immigrants in 1982 and was a Communist mayor who had driven a bulldozer over a house inhabited by workers from Mali (Simmons, 1996: 156).

In addition to the pejorative statements or strict policies, the existence of immigrants as a new minority proposed new questions that French society has not handled before. For example in 1989,

“Three girls of North African origin, all of whom were pupils at a secondary school in Creil in the suburbs of Paris, claimed their right to keep their heads covered in the classroom in conformity with the requirement of Islam. Since French law prohibits all forms of religious propaganda in state schools, the headmaster, who considered the action of the Muslim girls to be provocative, asked the girls to cease wearing the headscarves in the classroom, failing which they would be forbidden to attend school altogether. The three girls insisted on wearing the scarf, were debarred from school for a few days, and were allowed to come back subsequently without the headscarf” (Bréchon and Mitra, 1992: 66).

¹⁸ Jacques Chirac, the leader of the Gaullist RPR (Rassemblement pour la République)

¹⁹ Valéry Giscard d’Estaing, the leader of the moderate- centrist right (UDF- Union pour la Démocratie Française)

As soon as the media carried the issue to the headlines, a widespread debate has been triggered catching most of the political parties off guard. Communists and feminists defended the ban in the name of secular education or women's liberation where a group of moderate Socialists including President Mitterand's wife disapproved it for the sake of tolerance and liberty of expression. The Right though was mostly favourable towards the ban, retained from taking a hard-line in order not to give way to a national polemic (Bréchon and Mitra, 1992: 67). Among all controversy and ambivalence, FN benefited from its solid anti-immigrant rhetoric and did not hesitate to exploit this theme for political propaganda which warned the ordinary citizen against the danger of Islamization of Europe.

Today, the mainstream French parties seem much more receptive towards Le Pen's remarks on immigration. It was none but Nicolas Sarkozy, the actual president of France, who created a new ministry under the name "Ministry of Immigration, Integration, National Identity and Co-development" immediately after his election (Ganley, 2007). By doing this, he does not only retain the state's right to say what national identity should be officially, but also recognizes there is a connection between the issue of immigration and that of national identity. As can be seen, Le Pen might not have a seat in the cabinet, yet his views are now welcomed by the top most positions of the Republic.

The representation of the immigrant as the new scapegoat apparently has its own philosophical background too. At this point, it does not appear

inappropriate to claim that Le Pen owes a great debt of inspiration to the works of Benoist and GRECE's "metapolitical" struggle against the intellectual dominance of the Left (Harris, 1994: 90).

"Deeply impressed by the sophistication of Marxist theories and moved by the idealism of the 1968 student revolutionaries, these mainly Parisian-based intellectuals (of GRECE) sought to adapt Marxism, and particularly the work of Antonio Gramsci's argument that the route to political power did not lie in winning elections or fighting in the streets, but rather in changing people's ideas" (Simmons, 1996: 209).

The most significant argument of this school can be filed under the term ethno-pluralism which roughly grants an absolute authenticity to all ethnicities without necessarily implicating a hierarchy among them but which equally claims that mixing of those different, unique, incompatible ethnicities will only lead to cultural extinction (Rydgren, 2005: 427). Hence, it becomes clear that when Le Pen says "Each nation has a right to be different and this right must be defended", argues that immigrants are completely inassimilable to the French culture or openly disavows Anglo-American multiculturalism and "melting pot" policies; he in fact echoes a familiar voice. Pierre-André Taguieff labels this voice as *neo-racism* which is "based on an absolutization of difference, that is, a defining of differences between groups in such a way that a merging of the two will lead to the disappearance of the unique qualities that distinguish between them" (Simmons, 1996: 163).

In conclusion, it can be argued that FN carries on the long-standing characteristic of the extreme right and addresses a scapegoat as the sole responsible for anything going wrong. Even though the traditional evil figure of

the Jew has lost its pivotal position to the more profitable immigrant, the reasoning and methodology behind remain the same as their interwar variants.

CHAPTER V

5. CONCLUSION

From the 1980s onwards, the extreme right parties have managed to establish themselves solid positions in most of the Western European democracies. Even though the initial comments tended to consider it as an ephemeral phenomenon, further evidence demonstrated that this uninvited visitor is not present just for a temporary stay.

The adjective “extreme” is alone quite important when taken into account together with the post-war consensus in Western European politics whose prime objective was to keep extreme views and ideas outside the door. After all, they are the ones which set the whole continent afire before 1945. Yet the door was literally forced, a certain set of prejudices succeeded in escaping from their long-since-locked closets and making their way to the mainstream of European politics again.

As the debates flourished, the issue of fascism has been recalled and brought to the foreground once more in the light of this newly emerging political actor. Do the fascists try to get even in disguise, or is the contemporary portrait of the extreme right a purely dissimilar phenomenon? No matter what position is taken, it has become obvious that a theory of fascism is needed for being able to

question and understand the ideological and historical “colour” of the current movement.

5.1. Arguments Revisited

The whole set of arguments presented in this study is dependent upon a single fundamental assumption: A generic definition for fascism can be conceptualized. This definition must not necessarily bear an all-encompassing sentence form and can as well be developed around a framework under which a list of distinct but decisive characteristics is examined. Progressing from the historical data derived from Italian Fascism and German Nazism, a hypothetical scheme for “fascist ideal type” is constructed. Once it is present, the task evolves into the trial of contemporary extreme right in Western Europe according to the blueprints provided by this ideal type.

Eclecticism: Under this sub-heading we have examined the diverse even contradictory traditions of thought which altogether merged into what is called the fascist doctrine. While doing this, the remarkable points of incoherence from both ‘fascism as a movement’ and ‘fascism as a regime’ have been displayed in order to prove the eclectic nature of this phenomenon. Later on, the case of Front National was introduced which showcased contemporary extreme right parties have been suffering / enjoying this ideological eclecticism and its consequent political flexibility as well / too.

Golden age myth: The notion of national rebirth plays a pivotal role in the formation of fascist world view. By referring to a fixed moment of gloriousness in history, fascism self-appoints itself as the only agent for the fulfilment of a historically ordained mission. Hence, the direct linkage to the Roman Empire or to the Holy Roman- German Reich was not only a tool of seeking legitimacy but also an excuse for the approaching fascist aggression on both enemies within and without. French Front National, in this sense, differentiates itself from the mentioned fascist appeal by applying a relatively forward-looking vision. Even though the word “renaissance” has been repeatedly mentioned in Le Pen’s speech, he is clearly far from evoking urgency for the good old days of Francophone imperial past.

Mass movement: Despite many other instances of radical and authoritarian views that favour military takeovers or elitist purges, fascism is based on a substantial mass support. Both Mussolini and Hitler assumed power through democratic procedures, yet it was democracy again which had been abandoned the day after. Mostly organized among the middle class sectors of the society, fascism could derive its legitimacy and later implement its agenda thanks to its populist appeal. Front National, as a party of parliamentary democracy, enjoys a popular support as such. Though not extensive enough to lead it to power yet, the party manages to mobilize an important portion of the population with its rhetoric and could this way create a significant pressure upon the political climate of the country in general. Moreover, it manages to infiltrate a notable

working-class vote which was not exactly the case with 'classical fascism' where the vast majority of proletariat had been left-wing oriented.

Leader cult: Leadership was not an institutional but almost a philosophical state in classical fascism, which had granted super-human qualities to the personalities of the Duce and the Führer. Those were supposedly equipped with a prophetic vision and expected to lit the sparks of a new civilization which is by definition something more than a political and economical well-being. Hence, the leader- subject relations were of a cultist kind where everybody felt directly responsible to the Duce or the Führer himself and were obliged to act in perfect submission. Le Pen's leadership style has got similar tones yet lesser in extent. He is the final authority on any party affair and values direct, personal commitment to the leading figure over the one to the party structure or the programme.

Imperialism: Warfare was not an unintended but an intended consequence of classical fascism. Galvanized with the resentment caused by the First World War and the golden age myth, the fascist rhetoric from the very beginning declared its disapproval with the existing national borders. For both regimes in Italy and Germany, it was just a matter of time to engage in military expansionist campaigns. Nevertheless, this does not seem a priority for Le Pen's Front National. The party, in their own words, does not wish to "invade" but rather to strengthen national demarcations against various forms of "invasions", mostly cultural.

Totalitarianism: If one is allowed to consult a common political idiom, democracy was not an end but a means for classical fascism. From the early moments on, fascists have been the most prolific mouthpiece for the “alienness” of the democratic principles hence immediately after seizing power; they put forward various measures to abolish it. With an obsessive commitment to the idea of a homogeneous unity, they first castrated the political system by establishing a single-party rule and then re-organized the society through the totalitarian guidelines. On this task, the terror and propaganda were not partial but total making sure that every individual even in his/her leisure has been submitted to the grand wisdom and authority of the state. Given these features of totalitarian thinking, it is quite difficult to label Le Pen as such; partially because he does not propose the abolishment of the parliamentary-democratic Fifth Republic in France and partially because he has never been to the power. In this sense, there is no enough data available but a set of speculations.

Scapegoat philosophy: The classical fascist ideology has been heavily dependent on a scapegoat philosophy, in which certain categories are fixed with illness, alienness, erroneousness or disorder. They are perceived as the threat against the unity and well-being of the nation thus held responsible for anything that goes wrong. For fascists, leaving aside all other minor scapegoats like the leftists, Gypsies, blacks, freemasons, homosexuals, Jehovah’s Witnesses or the “handicapped” people; the Jew represented the evil in chief. Progressing from the anti-Semitic sentiments that have been flowing within Europe’s veins for

centuries, fascists could implement a purely racist agenda which had passed through purges, pogroms, expulsions and finally arrived at genocide. Contemporary extreme right behaves pretty cautious when it comes to anti-Semitism, probably because of not willing to share the fascist guilt. Yet, as it is demonstrated with Le Pen, it is still a strand very much alive. Furthermore, one can speak about the anti-immigrant discourse as the brand new feature of the scapegoat philosophy. It is true that the (Muslim) immigrant took the place of yesterday's Jew for being the sole responsible for all societal ills ranging from unemployment to insecurity. However, we should highlight the fact that contemporary "scapegoating" does not work on the former set of phenotypical racist prejudice. It rather employs a cultural variant of racism which hides the superior/ inferior dichotomy under the veil of a "differentialist" rhetoric claiming cultures are absolutely diverse and incompatible so shall be kept away from interaction. As can be seen, the scapegoat philosophy can be said to inherit directly from classical fascism to the contemporary extreme right even if it has been recently "revised" in the light of an anti-immigrant approach.

Counter-revolution: During its formative years as a movement, fascism in both Italy and Germany advocated a break from capitalism as well as from socialism. What it offered instead economically was a 'Third Way' which was characterized by the establishment of a corporatist structure for mediating the interests of the state, the workers and the capital. However, as the years proceed, fascist cadres abandoned this idealistic scheme for the sake of a closer collaboration with the bourgeoisie against the revolutionary demands of the

organized proletariat. Therefore, fascism was primarily a counter-revolutionary project. Moreover, even if fascists can be said to benefit from the relative autonomy of the state, they neither questioned the foundations of capitalism nor exercised any policies to challenge the existing class structure of the society. Since none of the Western European countries seems to be at the threshold of a socialist revolution, it remains quite problematic to apply the same scheme to Front National's case. Yet, if we ever accept Ignazi's notion of "silent revolution" as the Europe-wide impact of post-materialist, left-libertarian views in politics, it becomes possible to name extreme right parties' manoeuvres as counter-revolutionary. Concomitant to this, in a context where capitalism's validity has been less and less questioned, extreme right can be said to abandon its 'third wayist' appeals completely once and for all.

5.2. Further Assessments

Where should we go from here? In the light of the comparison between classical fascism and contemporary extreme right in Western Europe that has been presented so far, one can easily detect continuity as well as discontinuity. If we accept "being a fascist" is measured according to the resemblance to the programmes of NSDAP or PNF, we can rightfully conclude that there are marginal "neo-fascist" organizations throughout Europe but the mentioned extreme right parties clearly do not fall into this category. Hence, many writers claim that these parties "are a new political form completely disconnected from fascism and for whom fascism does not even constitute an analytical vantage

point from which they can be examined, analyzed or labeled” (Fieschi, 2004: 9). Yet this study happened to arrive at a contrary conclusion.

According to Bourderon (1989), a political party is not necessarily obliged to pursue exactly the same practices as their fascist counterparts since what matters most is the display of certain ideological features characteristic to them. By the same token, fascism still constitutes an analytical vantage point for researches on the extreme right, especially in those which aim to unearth the old relics in the new outlook, like this one. Progressing from the hypothetical ideal type of classical fascism, we can conclude that Front National shares a common ideological core with its inter-war counterparts (even if we failed to apply three out of eight dimensions mentioned in that ideal type due to the fact that Le Pen has never gained access to the power yet so nobody knows what a FN government could bring). True, the differences are a plenty but still these differences do not signify a shift in the components of our ideal type but a categorical change within the existing component. For example, from Hitler to Le Pen scapegoat philosophy remained quite intact while the “scapegoated” category has taken a new shape, that of the immigrant. Therefore, seeing the “Maghrebian” instead of the Jew does not essentially prove that contemporary extreme right broke away from classical fascism.

Given their eclectic natures, contemporary extreme right might as well be a new (not neo) form of fascism which has succeeded in articulating different elements than its predecessor. It is certain that political parties like FN do not replicate

the past, neither does the world. This in turn means, there is still sense in arguing that contemporary extreme right might represent the fascism of the 21st century.

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