



Nationalist Extremism in Europe Today and the Gospel of Jesus

2083: A European Declaration of Independence is not a widely read nor a well-known text. It was distributed electronically on the 22nd July 2011, the same day that a 36 year old Norwegian murdered 77 people, including 69 participants of a Workers Youth League Camp in Norway.

Its author, Anders Breivik, espoused a far-right, nationalist extremism that rejected multiculturalism, Muslims, 'cultural Marxists' and feminists. In it he declares himself '100 percent Christian' though not 'excessively religious' and 'not necessarily in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and God.' He believed that only the 'Christian cross' would unite Europe in opposition to Islam.

Breivik's views would be considered by most to be extreme and the manner in which he was prepared to take the lives of others to publicise his *Declaration* leaves one searching for words to express the enormity of his crimes.

Forms of Extremism

Breivik's was a peculiarly individual, narcissistic, form of nationalist extremism. More commonly, nationalist extremism tends to be collective, usually focussed around a particularly charismatic and persuasive leader. In order to try and understand extremism, it's important to understand the forms it tends to take. It's not uncommon to boil these down to a form of political extremism.

However, in most contemporary examples, national, ethnic, or religious extremists gain political influence or power and use this to target those of other religions, ethnicities, and/or nationalities. The extreme political right has simply developed a compelling narrative that weaves a dystopian mythology around the themes of ethnic dilution, conspiracy, migration, religious terrorism, and resource scarcity.

Six Characteristics of Extremism

Whilst contemporary forms of extremism are largely motivated by either ethnic or religious convictions, are there

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EDITORIAL

Nationalist Extremism in Europe

When we first began to plan this issue, concern about nationalist extremism was rising across Europe, fuelled by the Charlie Hebdo attacks in Paris.

The UK was about to have a general election, with UKIP expected to do well in the polls, and elsewhere in Europe rising numbers of voters were appearing to favour politicians with more extreme views.

The summer brought a tide of immigration, with compassion fuelled by images of the human cost of trying to enter Europe. But there is no guarantee that once the refugees and migrants settle, their presence will not be yet more fuel to the nationalist fire.

This issue of Vista explores the issue of nationalism in Europe, and challenges us to think through our response.

Darrell Jackson leads with an overview of the common features of extremism. While these could describe Islamic or other brands of religious extremism, they are equally relevant to extreme nationalist views. Jim Memory describes four forms of nationalism that can be found in Europe today. And Rosemary Caudwell challenges us to consider our missiological response to this crucial issue.

Finally, with the migrant crisis in mind, we have printed a recent press release from the EEA, calling Christians across Europe to step out of our comfort zones and welcome the stranger—whatever their nationality.

We hope you find this issue of Vista thought-provoking and insightful—please do get in touch with any comments or ideas for future issues.

Jo Appleton





Supporters of anti-immigration movement Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the West (PEGIDA) hold flags during a demonstration in Dresden, January 12, 2015, following the Charlie Hebdo attacks. REUTERS/Fabrizio Bensch

nevertheless things that can be said that are of a general nature about extremism? In general, extremist movements reflect most of the following characteristics:

- a. **Convictions and objectives** that are claimed to be obvious to all, irrespective of one's personal or subjective opinions. By definition these lie at, or beyond, the edges of what is usually considered to be politically or religiously acceptable by the majority.
- b. A **totalising view of the world** in which notions of 'purity' and right conduct will guarantee a better way of life for all. This forms the basis of an ideological worldview that brooks no alternatives.
- c. The perception that there is a **dangerous and conspiratorial enemy** with evil intent and a wide reach. One's enemy has typically corrupted minority groups and these must be resisted and eradicated.
- d. An **unyielding refusal to compromise** or modify their views or their judgement about their enemies. Extremists refuse to see any value in the opponent's position and religious extremists certainly can't because they're driven by convictions concerning divine edict.
- e. Goals sought must be achieved immediately and in full and, if necessary, this involves a willingness to use **extreme measures** (violence, protest, limiting the rights of opponents, etc.)
- f. **Organization into movements** that will work towards the shared objectives. Such movements provide the necessary moral legitimization, especially of the violent means necessary to compel complacency or punish divergence.

Charles Taylor ('Nationalism and Modernity' in Robert McKim and Geoff McMahan, eds, *The Morality of Nationalism*, 1997, p51) concludes that nationalist extremists, above all else, issue a 'call to difference in the face of homogenizing forces' (Breivik's characterised this as 'Eurabia') that are global in nature and which assume that the nation-state is deeply implicated in various global conspiracies.

Gerard Delanty (*Community*, 2nd Ed., 2009, p151) adds that the success of nationalism lies in its capacity to imagine forms of community that nurture national belonging, commonality, independence and self-determination; those things that are perceived to have been destroyed by nation-states, undermined by political parties, and weakened, we might add, by Islamic migration.

Far-right nationalists resist Islamic presence in Europe because they imagine it as a globalising tendency that undermines the nation-state. Similarly, nationalist Eurosceptics are frequently convinced that the European Union is wittingly or unwittingly facilitating its own undoing by failing to regulate the entry of Muslims.

To resist these globalising tendencies, most nationalisms use alternative narratives that are mythological. These can include 'frontier' myths (common, for example, in the USA); 'sacred origin' myths (such as the primordial Magyar myths of the far-right parties in Hungary); 'heroic' myths (such as the ANZAC mythology that is so important to contemporary Australian identity); 'creation' myths (common among the indigenous peoples of the world); and myths of 'manifest destiny' (again including, though not limited to, the USA).

Of course, I'm very aware that writing in this way will offend some of my friends in

countries where these myths are credited with greater historical veracity than I may appear to concede. This fact alone illustrates the power of myths; their capacity for mobilising public opinion, galvanising action, and ultimately motivating nations to terrible deeds.

Evangelicals may choose on occasion to express solidarity with their country or their Government and it is not always wrong to do so. However, they are well advised to keep in mind the counsel of British theologian, Esther Reed,

"It is not possible to work with an account of [...] nation and nationhood [...] if this means a moral partiality or politics of superiority that would deny to others the same human rights as those of its members, is marked by hostility towards and suspicion of other nations, and condones the violence and destruction that results from these attitudes."

This perspective reflects a biblical theology of the nations that portrays them as the pinnacle of God's creative acts (Gen 10:32), laments their incredible hubris (Gen 11:4), declares them to be at the centre of God's missionary purposes (Gen 12:2-3), that excludes not a single nation from the body of Christ (Rev 6:9), and which concludes with an eschatological picture of the nations in submission and under judgement (Rev 19:15).

Christian allegiance can only ever ultimately be to Christ. All other forms of loyalty are temporal and will pass away, finally exposed as pale reflections of the real thing by the Judge of every tribe and every nation.

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The Schuman Declaration of May 1950 which led to the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community, the forerunner of the European Union, had the unequivocal purpose of avoiding a future conflict between France and Germany, to "make war not only unthinkable but materially impossible". Peace in Europe was bought at the price of weakened national sovereignty.

Over the subsequent decades the idea of a common European identity has been central to the treaties and institutions that have emerged. The economic benefits of greater European integration have been significant and have led to an expansion in membership of the European Union. Economic prosperity, or at least the promise of it, was the honey that drew nations to join and the glue that held the EU project together. Yet since the onset of the financial crisis in 2008, as the hope of

future prosperity has dissipated, so has confidence in the European project, and almost inevitably, nationalism has returned to Europe.

Nationalism is a complex phenomenon and it manifests itself in different forms across the whole political spectrum yet all forms of nationalism have one common characteristic: fear. To illustrate this it is helpful to see how this common dynamic is present in different forms of European nationalism.

Right wing nationalism

History has shown us that, at times of social upheaval and economic hardship, people look for straightforward answers to complex problems, and migrants often become the scapegoats. Right-wing populist parties first re-emerged in Europe in Austria following the fall of the Berlin Wall blaming Romanian migrants for taking their jobs. Today right-wing nationalist parties can be found across Europe and in some cases with significant political influence and control (see table).

As confidence in distant political elites in Brussels has waned, these right-wing populist parties are able to present themselves as men and women of the people and fear is their most potent weapon. The fear of losing jobs to migrants, of losing national traditions, values and identity, and ultimately of losing autonomy. As Ruth Wodak has put it, "they arbitrarily define or construct a homogenous in-group and demonize pluralism, pitting the "real" and "authentic" Hungarian, Brit or Austrian, for instance, against everyone else".

Wodak, an authority on right-wing populist discourse, has observed how "some parties gain support via an ambivalent relationship with fascist and Nazi pasts (e.g., in Austria, Hungary, Italy, Romania, and France). Others focus primarily on a perceived threat from Islam (e.g., in the Netherlands, Denmark, Poland, Sweden, and Switzerland). Some restrict their propaganda to a perceived threat to their national identities from ethnic

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Country	Party	Ideology	National Parliament		European Parliament	
			% vote (year)	Order	seats/total (2014)	Order
FYR Macedonia	VMRO-DPMNE	Conservatism	43% (April 2014)	1st		
Switzerland	Swiss People's Party	Conservatism	27% (Oct 2011)	1st		
Denmark	Danish People's Party	Anti-immigration, Euro-scepticism	21% (June 2015)	2nd	4/13	1st
Austria	Freedom Party	Anti-immigration	21% (Sept 2013)	3rd	4/18	3rd
Hungary	Jobbik	Anti-Semitism, Greater Hungary	21% (April 2014)	3rd	3/21	3rd
Belgium	New Flemish Alliance	Independence, Conservatism	20% (May 2014)	1st	4/21	1st
Finland	Finns Party	Anti-Immigration	18% (April 2015)	2nd	2/13	3rd=
Latvia	National Alliance	Conservatism	17% (Oct 2014)	4th	1/8	2nd=
Norway	Progress Party	Anti-immigration	16% (Sept 2013)	3rd		
Estonia	IRL	Conservatism	14% (Mar 2015)	4th	1/6	2nd=
France	National Front	Anti-immigration, Euro-scepticism	14% (June 2012)	3rd	23/74	1st
Sweden	Sweden Democrats	Anti-immigration, Euro-scepticism	13% (Sept 2014)	3rd	2/20	4th=
UK	UKIP	Populism, Euroscepticism	13% (May 2015)	3rd	24/73	1st
Montenegro	SDP	Left-wing Nationalism	11% (Oct 2012)	3rd		
Netherlands	Party for Freedom	Anti-Immigration, Anti-Islam	10% (Sept 2012)	3rd	4/26	2nd=
Ireland	Sinn Fein	Left-wing Nationalism	10% (Feb 2011)	4th	3/11	2nd
Estonia	Conservative PP	Euroscepticism	8% (Mar 2015)	6th	0/6	NA
Lithuania	Order and Justice	Populism, Euroscepticism	7% (Oct 2012)	4th	2/11	1st=
Bulgaria	Attack	Ultranationalism	7% (May 2013)	4th	0/17	NA
Greece	Golden Dawn	Anti-Immigration, Neo-Nazi	7% (Sept 2015)	3rd	3/21	3rd

Table 1: Parliamentary support for nationalist parties across Europe who have seats in the European Parliament

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_active_nationalist_parties_in_Europe#cite_note-Bugajski1995-13
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/European_Parliament_election,_2014

minorities (e.g., in Hungary, Greece, Italy, and the United Kingdom). Still others endorse a fundamentalist Christian conservative-reactionary agenda (e.g., in Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Ukraine, and Russia)."

Left wing nationalism

Whilst far right nationalism re-emerged some decades ago, left wing nationalism is a more recent phenomenon. Radical left wing politics has always been suspicious of the neoliberalism of the Single European Market. In that there is nothing new.

What is new is how openly and firmly the radical left are playing the nationalist card, as across the EU anti-austerity parties rail against the imposition of economic restrictions of the ECB as an attack on their sovereignty: SYRIZA in Greece, Podemos in Spain, Anti-Austerity Alliance in Eire, and others. As Krupa has put it, "Left-wing nationalism has emerged condemning the EU as the cold-hearted perpetrator of endless neoliberalism".

If the scapegoat of the far right is the migrant, the scapegoat of the far left is the Euro. At a recent meeting Jean-Luc Mélenchon, the leader of the French Left Front, affirmed that the Euro was a threat to French independence: "faced with the choice between the Euro and sovereignty, we choose sovereignty". And though Alexis Tsipras, the Greek Prime Minister

and Syriza party leader, convinced the Greek parliament to agree to a third bailout which kept Greece in the Euro, 25 of his MPs left the coalition to set up a new party calling for Greece to exit the Euro in order to regain economic sovereignty.

Increasingly nationalists on both side of the political spectrum are painting the European Union and its fundamental structures like the Euro and the ECB as fundamentally anti-democratic. For them, only nation states have democratic legitimacy. As Krupa observes, "'Brussels does not dictate to us!' is now a slogan that unites right and left-wing nationalists".

If the scapegoat of the far right is the migrant, the scapegoat of the far left is the Euro.

Self-determination Movements

Over the last eighteen months two European states have faced votes on self-determination by regions wanting independence from their EU member states, namely Scotland and Catalunya. Whilst neither of these processes prospered the Scottish National Party achieved extraordinary results in the subsequent UK General Elections in May 2015 winning 56 of the 59 Scottish constituencies. Interestingly both of these movements are fiercely pro-EU, applying precisely the same anti-austerity rhetoric and fears of their national governments that is commonly applied to Brussels.

Russian Nationalism

Any treatment of nationalism in Europe would be incomplete without at least a

mention of the threat that is posed by Russian nationalism. The historical grievance that Russia suffered following the collapse of the Soviet Union when its status as a superpower was lost is fertile soil for resentment and the idea that Russia is surrounded by enemies bent on destroying her and her people. Russia's annexation of the Crimea and military presence in East Ukraine is driven by nationalist rhetoric. Once again we observe how fear is the common denominator in nationalisms of whatever flavour.

Fear and Love

I am reminded of the words of John the Apostle "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear" (1 John 4:18). Europeans from Finland to Cyprus, from the Atlantic to the Urals need to hear in word and deed the message of hope and love in the Christian gospel. It was, is and always will be the only secure ground of peace for Europe.

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Wodak (2014), "(Re)inventing Scapegoats" in The Mark News, <http://www.themarknews.com/2014/03/03/reinventing-scapegoats/>

Krupa (2015), "Nationalism on the Left" in Zeit Online, <http://www.zeit.de/politik/ausland/2015-09/left-wing-nationalism-europe>

A MISSIOLOGICAL RESPONSE TO THE CHALLENGE OF NATIONALISM IN EUROPE- ROSEMARY CAUDWELL

The Christian's response to the cultural context should be faithful to Christ's example, and relevant to changing cultural contexts. This means that in some situations, we can identify with our nations and affirm our national identity in as much as they are diverse and particular expressions of a God-given humanity, for example, where in our nation's culture or relations with other nations, something of the created image or revealed purpose of God for humanity is expressed.

However, to the extent that nations and nationalism express idolatry and reject God's image and purpose, our calling is to separate ourselves from those aspects of culture, and to live as members of the holy nation of God's people in the midst of the nation. As God's ultimate purpose is to restore all things in Christ, in many

situations, we must seek to transform a culture in the light of the gospel, so that tangible signs of the coming Kingdom of God may be expressed (Storrer, 1990, pp. 163-173).

If we are to succeed in this, we must first have a very clear understanding of our identity and mission as a holy nation (1 Peter 2.9-10). If we lose our sense of identity and become complicit in the idolatry of the nation, our prophetic voice to the nation will be lost. Within the Christian community, our standing has nothing to do with national identity, and we should be passionate about the unity of the church, which transcends ethnic and cultural boundaries. In our engagement in the nation, we should promote values that include the just treatment of minorities, hospitality towards migrants, and solidarity with neighbouring countries, not division or conflict. We must be prepared to challenge a state that does not comply with these principles and to



A Belfast loyalist street mural with the slogan 'For God and Ulster'

oppose those advocating an exclusionary or nationalistic agenda. At the same time, we should show compassion to those who feel dispossessed or fearful, and are attracted to nationalism, by advocating a just society and by engaging in incarnational ministries that address the issues of those who are disadvantaged

In the European context, we are living in cultures that have an identity crisis, and many of us have yet to work out how to be faithful to our calling within that situation. Most European countries are pluralist democratic societies, many with a secular humanist hegemony, although some have a Catholic or Orthodox majority. Many have significant minorities belonging to other faiths, which have universalist identities such as Islam, raising issues of exclusion. As Taylor notes, 21st century Europe is largely secular in the sense that religious uniformity has ceded to a plurality of options (2007, p.3). This raises significant challenges both for believers and unbelievers; for Christians, who see other groups as a perceived threat to the "Christian heritage" of Europe, and for secular states and secular thinkers who see plurality and religious difference as a source of deep concern requiring control.

The concerns raised by Islam have been evident at EU level for many years, with the debate about Turkey's application for membership being particularly contentious. (Hogan, 2009, p.4). They are also evident at national level in many European countries where there is a debate about the extent to which a society should adapt its existing norms and legislative provisions to accommodate religious practices that are untypical of the host country (Silvestri, 2011, pp. 24-27). The views of Sayyid Qutb, one of the ideological authorities of radical Islamism, who seeks complete predominance in the form of the imposition of sharia law and the unequal distribution of political rights, is clearly not compatible with liberal democracy. (Biggar, 2009, Pp. 328-9). The response of secular humanists to the recent attacks in France by radical Islamists is to reinforce a policy of laïcité.

Although the approach of the UK, the Netherlands, and Belgium relies more on multiculturalism than assimilationism, in all European countries, there are increasing calls for Muslims to integrate. But it is not clear what values they are being asked to adopt. Furthermore, many secularists consider that all religion should be relegated to the private realm.

Our response should be a refusal to allow the Christian message to be banished from the public square and a rejection of the temptation to withdraw from engagement in society. As Hogan says, many issues that appear private are also political issues (Hogan, 2009, p.2). At the same time, we



In many European countries, membership of the established church is part of the national identity

must resist all attempts to attract them to nationalism, which is closely linked to authoritarianism, as a response to the hurt caused by the loss of social influence and of perceived Christian values in a society of ethnic and religious pluralism. A key question for Christians, (and also for Muslims) is to determine what principles of liberal democracy a religion which makes exclusive claims must affirm in a society in which there are other such religions (Wolterstorff, 2009, p.26) and, it should be added, a significant proportion of the population who do not accept the claims of any of them. Christian engagement should not be strident, neither seeking to dominate or to control. As Biggar says (2009, p. 192), even if fruitful debate in the public square does not need a uniform public reason, it does need a common manner or a public reasonableness, a shared ethic of communication, based on a recognition of the human dignity of those who do not share its views.

In their consideration of biblical principles, we should consider carefully before drawing parallels between the facts of a situation today in which a community of God's people finds itself in relation to a modern secular state, and features of specific periods of Israel's history. Christians in contemporary Europe are tempted to look at the past, and to seek to apply principles drawn from Israel as a theocracy. But Israel found God in all its circumstances; living under the oppression of Egypt, nation building, exile and living as a minority in Babylon. We need a balanced understanding of their political and social responsibilities within states that do not acknowledge God but are still part of His world (Wright, C., 2004. pp.246-7). For us this means

understanding that it is no longer the function of the state to promote the Christian faith. That is the responsibility of the church. It is part of the dignity of human beings, created in the image of God, that they are free to choose to worship God, or not, without coercion. (Wolterstorff, 2009, pp.33-36). Christian communities need to become more comfortable with being one of the players in society and promoting human flourishing from the social margins (Volf, 2011, p.79).

To conclude, nationalism poses a serious threat to the stability of nearly every country in Europe. At a time of economic and social crisis it attracts those who feel dispossessed. This includes Christians in countries that are majority Orthodox or Catholic who are anxious to maintain the influence of the Church against growing secularism and the competing claims of other religions, as well as Christians in western Europe dismayed by the perceived loss of Christian values. However, none of the nationalist movements in contemporary Europe advocate biblical values. Instead, they promote the national self-interest of a particular ethnic or religious group to the exclusion of others both within the nation and in neighbouring countries, and foster hostility and division. Christians must, therefore, challenge the idolatry of nationalism, maintain the unity of the church, and explore ways of engaging in public life that promotes the good of all.

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A Call to Action to the Evangelical Community across Europe EEA General Assembly, Germany, 8th October 2015

The following press release was produced as part of the EEA General Assembly in Germany. It reflects the response of the Evangelical Community to the influx of migrants in recent months, warning against the dangers of prejudice and nationalism. We will be specifically covering migration in the next issue of Vista. If you have any stories or experiences you would like to share, please email vista@redcliffe.org

Throughout history, there have been mass movements of people into, out of and across Europe.

As a result, we have seen invasion and conflict, prejudice and persecution, changing country borders and evolving and blending rich cultures. The present refugee crisis is frightening for many as rules and laws are laid aside, nations are overwhelmed, and the ethnic and religious make up of countries will change for ever. Many political leaders increase, rather than dissipate the unease.

However, the members of the European Evangelical Alliance rejoice at the spontaneous acts of generosity of so many ordinary citizens in response to desperate need. We are proud of countless brothers and sisters who have joined in this emergency effort as churches, NGOs and in partnership with others. At the end of our General Assembly titled "From Exclusion to Inclusion," we want to exhort the Evangelical community to embrace the stranger, be it the stranger newly arrived from outside Europe or the "stranger" of different ethnicity, culture or faith they have lived near for years.

Therefore,

Motivated and compelled by the love of Christ for us and for every human being, the undeserved grace He pours out to us and to all people,

Knowing we are strangers in this world and convicted by the repeated biblical command to welcome and bless the orphan, widow and stranger and not to be afraid, no matter the circumstances,

We commit ourselves and encourage other Evangelicals to step out of our comfort zones:

Allowing the Holy Spirit to examine and change our hearts and our Christian practice so that we might be cleansed of any fear or prejudice against those we perceive to be different,

Celebrating the cultural diversity of the one Body of Christ but not confusing our own cultural identity with theological essentials in order to be freely able to work, worship and witness with Christians of other cultures, including within our local faith communities. We look forward to our destiny of being a worshipping people from every tribe and tongue in the full presence of God. We rejoice whenever local Church is truly multi-cultural, celebrating our cultural richness.

Praying. We pray for all who flee war and persecution and especially remember our brothers and sisters in Christ. We pray for miracles of protection and provision for those who remain in danger and are destitute in countries of origin, particularly the Middle East. We pray for our nations and politicians, for peace and social cohesion. And we pray for the Body of Christ, that the Lord would give us love, wisdom and courage to offer His love.

Being examples of grace, hope and welcome in the immediate crisis. We call on Evangelical Christians to support financially the humanitarian work carried out in countries of origin. In our region, we call Christians to share the love of Christ through word and deed and generous giving as they work in partnership with others to serve the needs of those coming into our countries. We recognise we are part of an effort shared by the authorities, civil society and other faith communities.

Being peacemakers. We are not naïve about the enormity of the social, political and economic difficulties ahead. We demand a political solution to the conflicts causing the present exodus. Likewise, we stand firmly against the politics of fear and for the politics of grace.

Being good neighbours to all. Refugees will need help to feel at home in our societies. However, our nations are already made up of a blend of cultures, ethnicities and faiths. We commit ourselves to partnering with Christians of all backgrounds to befriend, build community and to witness to all.

<http://www.europeanea.org/index.php/a-call-to-action-to-the-evangelical-community-across-europe/>

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