



# The Spanish and French Far Rights in Their Quest for a New Traditionalist Order

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## Abstract

*The French and Spanish far rights are going through a period of intense joint activity. In both countries, a renewed ideological framework is narrowing the gap between the moderate right and the extreme right, creating even more radical hybrids. Organized around diverse reactionary ideologies, mainly stemming from the European New Right school of thought and conservative Christianity, these two countries are part of a larger international coalition trying to establish a new civilizational order. These forces are targeting different social minorities, progressive movements, and, ultimately, the very principles of liberal democracy. This article provides a socio-historical analysis of the ideas that structure these radical geopolitical constructions in order to trace the continuity between the past, present, and potential future of important sectors of the far right in France, Spain, and beyond.*

Keywords: French far right; Spanish far right; European civilization; Christian Nationalism

As intertwined as their long histories, France and Spain's reactionary movements, organizations, and minds share common traits. While constantly influencing each other, at some points they have come to merge. Today, the exchanges between certain sectors of the French and Spanish far rights are finding points of convergence. Through ideas, authors, and political formations—gathered around publications, conferences, and think tanks—actors in both countries are building a common ground that was, heretofore, not so easy to find. During the 1980s, the French New Right influenced important authors and politicians in Spain, but its impact was limited.

Nowadays, as the remains of the New Right are being subjected to reconfigurations, partly fostered by a new wave of conservative Christianity that reinvigorates their reaction against secular Modernity as well as Islam, these far-right realms are being attracted to one another from opposite sides of the Pyrenees. This offensive is articulated by political and social elites, guided by an aristocratic claim to tradition. Furthermore, the French and Spanish far rights are playing a key role in the conception and construction of a civilizational yearning based on the union of Western Christian (mostly Catholic) nations and ostensibly including certain countries on the opposite coast of the Atlantic. Focusing on the constant struggle between progressive forces and reactionary responses, this article explores the efforts of the latter to fight back.

It is no secret that the process of defining and labeling a reactionary movement or political party is far from simple and univocal. When it comes to the subject of this article—that is, the ideological synergies structuring relations between the French and Spanish far rights—the concepts here deployed might be more useful if understood as Weberian ideal types. Ideologies related to the far right, radical right, illiberalism or conservatism, already entangled on a conceptual level, once embodied tend to dialogue and merge. Given that this article focuses on the syncretism of apparently independent—and even contradictory—political actors and discourses, restricting the individuals, publications, and institutions mentioned to rigid categories can be more obstructive than enlightening. Regarding the evolution of this subject of study, in the light of a socio-historical approach, it is convenient to conceive it as a process of continual restructuration, without cutting any of its ideological threads.<sup>1</sup> In any case, to lay certain bases that will allow for proper comprehension of the actors discussed, they will be associated with the radical right, as they navigate above the waters of liberal democracy while challenging it,<sup>2</sup> together with espousing an ideology that stems from a dialectical conversation between illiberalism and conservatism. As far-right ideologies echo the past, the role of crossed historical references, still used as sources of inspiration for today's reactionaries, will also be analyzed.

A cultural device based on conservative Christianity—mostly built up around anti-abortion and homophobic discourse—that envisions our current society as decadent brings the French and Spanish radical rights together. This rooted Christianity has become a prolific meeting point for ideologies related to the French New Right, the reactionary school of thought that is structured around racist ethnopluralism and a rejection of Modernity.<sup>3</sup> This results in a globalist far right that rallies a strong sense of nationalism, mainly opposed to Islam and framed under a civilizational

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1 Nigel Copsey, "Historians and the Contemporary Far Right. To Bring (or Not to Bring) the Past into the Present?" in *Researching the Far Right: Theory, Method and Practice*, ed. Stephen D. Ashe, Joel Busher, Graham Macklin, and Aaron Winter (London: Routledge, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.3224/zrex.viii.14>

2 Cas Mudde, "The Far Right Today," in *Paper Knowledge: Toward a Media History of Documents*, ed. Lisa Gitelman (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41269-020-00157-5>

3 Stéphane François, *La Nouvelle Droite et ses Dissidences. Identité, écologie et paganisme* (Lormont: Le Bord de l'eau, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.4000/lectures.50284>

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order, around different geopolitical devices, including “the West,” “Europe,” “the *Hispanidad*,” and “the Latin alliance.” Stéphane François has delved into these Christian geopolitical alliances, where religion—inscribed, in an identitarian manner, in the continuity of the counterrevolution—becomes a bridge between different actors of the radical right.<sup>4</sup>

As tempting as it may be to spuriously attribute particular thinkers to a reactionary movement, it is noteworthy to expose, in the case of France and Spain, the existence of several connected authors, active during the same period of history, whose ideas are being deployed by today’s far right. In France, the royalist thinker Charles Maurras, leader of the journal and sociopolitical movement *Action Française*, actually talked about the notion of “Latin forces” in the prologue of a book recounting the collapse of the Spanish empire at the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>5</sup> There, Maurras argued: “Let’s not talk about Spain, America or France. Let’s talk about the Latin world as the same body to organize.”<sup>6</sup> As stated by the conservative and leading expert on the *Action Française* Olivier Dard, Maurras’ civilizational project relied strongly on the defense of a deeply rooted latinity and the Catholic Church.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, in Spain, a group of intellectuals founded in 1931 *Acción Española*, a magazine inspired by the aforementioned French royalist publication. One of their main contributors, Ramiro de Maeztu, in his *Defensa de la Hispanidad* (1934), developed a civilizational concept close to the Maurrasian “Latin forces,” namely “Hispanidad.” Maeztu’s geopolitical notion is a racist and national-Catholic doctrine that revives the Hispanic Empire of Philip II (1527-1598) in the Americas, established at a time when Spain and Portugal were part of the same kingdom, as Spain’s sphere of influence.<sup>8</sup> Maeztu’s *Hispanidad*, a traditionalist and elitist idea based on a hierarchy of races, is indebted to French integrism.<sup>9</sup> The descendant of British diplomats, Maeztu worked for more than a decade as a correspondent in London. It was in England that he discovered Maurras’ royalism through authors like T.S. Hulme and G. K. Chesterton.<sup>10</sup> The latter, a Catholic conservative, is the main exponent of distributism, a Catholic socioeconomic system premised on finding a third way between socialism and capitalism.

Until recently, references to Maurras, Maeztu, and Chesterton were limited to marginal domains of the far right. Nevertheless, these national-catholic authors, along with the New Right, are arousing growing interest among the French and Spanish radical rights today. Indeed, reimaginings of these authors’ civilizational projects are often found in this milieu. In 2020, Marion Maréchal, who has on numerous occasions demonstrated her sympathies with Maurras,<sup>11</sup> mentioned a “Latin Alliance” at a congress in Rome, picturing a “Southern Visegrad Group” that

4 Stéphane François, *Géopolitique des extrêmes droites. Logiques identitaires et monde multipolaire* (Paris: Cavalier Bleu, 2022).

5 Charles Maurras, « Les Forces latines ». Preface to the work of Marius André, *La fin de l’Empire espagnole d’Amérique* (Paris: Nouvelle Librairie nationale, 1922) Édition électronique réalisée par maurras.net et l’Association des Amis de la Maison du Chemin de Paradis (2011).

6 Ibid.

7 Olivier Dard, “Charles Maurras, le fascisme, la latinité et la Méditerranée,” *Cahiers de La Méditerranée* 95 (2017): 59–70, <https://doi.org/10.4000/cdlm.8880>

8 Gonzalo Álvarez Chillida, “Epigono de la Hispanidad: La españolización de la colonia de Guinea durante el primer franquismo,” *Imaginario y Representaciones de España Durante El Franquismo* 142: 103–125, <https://doi.org/10.14201/gredos.83344>

9 Luis Ocio, “La configuración del pensamiento reaccionario español: el caso de Ramiro de Maeztu durante su etapa de embajador en la Argentina,” *Historia contemporánea* 18 (1999): 347–382; Juan Olabarria Agra, “Las fuentes francesas de Acción Española,” *Historia Contemporánea* 3 (1990): 219–238.

10 Eugen Weber, *L’Action Française* (Paris: Stock, 1964).

11 Charlotte Blanc, “Réseaux traditionalistes catholiques et ‘réinformatio’n sur le web: mobilisations contre le ‘Mariage pour tous’ et ‘pro-vie,’” *Tic&société* 9, no. 1–2 (2015): 1–21, <https://doi.org/10.4000/ticetsociete.1919>.

would be composed of France, Spain, Italy, and Portugal as well as close to the US and Russia.<sup>12</sup> The ideological foundations of Vox, the Spanish political party created in 2013 as a right-wing faction of the PP, date back to the end of the nineteenth century, the period that would impact Maeztu's work.<sup>13</sup> Santiago Abascal, leader of Vox, has also praised Maeztu's work, specifically *Defensa de la Hispanidad*.

As Laruelle notes, illiberalism and conservatism share a large common ground, namely their advocacy for morality and their pessimistic view of progress.<sup>14</sup> Corey Robin accurately exposes how the conservative mind operates by focusing on its ability to adapt and evolve. According to Robin, conservative elites do not limit their ideology to the defense of the status quo, but rather commit to the Leopardian aristocratic principle "If we want everything to stay as it is, everything has to change." Change usually comes in the form of superficial assimilation of progressive discourses and practices.<sup>15</sup> The main leaders of *La Manif pour tous* (LMPT), the social movement that emerged in France in 2012-2013 to oppose the legalization of gay marriage, portrayed their upheaval as a "May 68 backwards" or a "French Spring" (drawing parallels with the Arab Spring of 2011).

Yann Raison du Cleuziou rightly affirms that LMPT is part of a conservative revival, expressed through an alleged heroic reaction to—often verging on adolescent rebellion against—what is perceived as a decadent, rootless society.<sup>16</sup> This revival is grounded in a combative Christianity, an ideology that usually serves as a meeting point for the moderate right and the far right and can occasionally lead to further radicalization beyond the far right.<sup>17</sup> When threatened by the deprived or the oppressed, conservatives mimic the underprivileged, portraying themselves as equal victims or the only true victims. They have deployed a fruitful victimization discourse according to which progressive voices—usually misrepresented as "neo-feminists," "indigenists," "cancel culture," "political correctness" or "the woke"—haunt and censor them as totalitarian. Thus, conservatives disguise themselves under a rebellious varnish to claim they are victims of injustice, a discourse commonly associated with reactionary conspiratorial narratives.<sup>18</sup>

Conservatives also, as claimed by Louie Dean Valencia-García, weaponize history. Presenting facts in a distorted manner to assert their authority, they go so far as rewriting history and making up the past to legitimize their ideology.<sup>19</sup> Historical revisionism is widespread among far-right parties and authors. Nostalgia, mythologization of the past, and other revisionist devices are a key part of what the

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12 "Le discours de Marion Maréchal à Rome devant les conservateurs européens," *Valeurs Actuelles*, February 4, 2020, <https://www.valeursactuelles.com/politique/info-va-le-discours-de-marion-marechal-a-rome-devant-les-conservateurs-europeens>

13 Xavier Casals i Meseguer, "De Fuerza Nueva a Vox: de la vieja a la nueva ultraderecha española (1975-2019)," *Ayer*, 118, (2), (2020) 365-380, <https://doi.org/10.55509/ayer/118-2020-14>

14 Marlène Laruelle, "Illiberalism: a conceptual introduction". *East European Politics* (0) (2021): 1–25, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21599165.2022.2037079>

15 Corey Robin, *The Reactionary Mind: Conservatism from Edmund Burke to Donald Trump* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

16 Yann Raison du Cleuziou, "Un renversement de l'horizon du politique," *Esprit*, No. 438 (October) (2017): 130-142; Yann Raison du Cleuziou, *Une contre-révolution catholique. Aux origines de La Manif pour tous* (Paris: Seuil, 2019), <https://doi.org/10.4000/rhr.11434>

17 Gaël Brustier, *Le Mai 68 conservateur. Que restera-t-il de la Manif pour tous?* (Paris: Les éditions du CERF, 2014).

18 Elsa Gimenez and Olivier Voirol, "L'Internet des droites extrêmes. Présentation du numéro," *Réseaux 2* (202–203) (2017): 9–37, <https://doi.org/10.3917/res.202.0009>

19 Louie Dean Valencia-García, "Far-right Revisionism and the End of History," in *Far-right Revisionism and the End of History. Alt/Histories*, ed. Louie Dean Valencia-García (London: Routledge, 2020).

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far right understands as metapolitics.<sup>20</sup> If the concept of metapolitics stems from Antonio Gramsci's notion of cultural hegemony—the necessity to take over the intellectual and cultural debate prior to gaining political power—for the far right it is mostly about manipulating public opinion in order to share essentialist messages.<sup>21</sup> Historical consensus, usually embodied by academic historians and memorial laws, is one of the main targets of the far right today.<sup>22</sup> This is nothing new: far-right formations throughout history have manipulated historical facts to idealize their mythical past with an aestheticizing and political purpose. As Nicolas Lebourg has stated on several occasions, “the far right isn't a program but a cosmivision.”<sup>23</sup>

### **The Genuine Origins of the Spanish New Right: A Political and Spiritual Hybrid**

Following the end of the Spanish dictatorship in 1975, a group of renowned members of the tardo-Francoist right began to take great interest in the French New Right. At the beginning of the 1980s, several Spanish authors and politicians started publishing books and organizing around journals that echoed this reactionary school of thought. One of the main promoters of this ideological endeavor was Jorge Verstrynge. Born in Tangier in 1948, the son of a Belgian sympathizer of Léon Degrelle, Verstrynge grew up in France before moving to Spain to pursue his university studies. After embarking on a political career, he quickly became general secretary of the People's Alliance (Alianza Popular, AP), the main conservative right-wing party after the democratic transition and the predecessor of the current People's Party (Partido Popular). Verstrynge tried to bring to the party some of the core principles articulated by the New Right. At that time, the Club del Sable, a society of intellectuals and politicians linked to AP, hosted a conference with Alain de Benoist, leader of the New Right. Yet de Benoist's ideas did not permeate the conservative formation; indeed, Verstrynge has consistently stood up for social democracy, as well as defended a “mitigated humanism”—certainly difficult to find within the philosophical parameters of the New Right in France.<sup>24</sup> Nor has his political career been anything close to those of the vast majority of the members of the French New Right: Verstrynge left AP in 1986, joined the Socialist Party in 1993, and ended up becoming a member of the left-wing populist party Podemos in 2014.<sup>25</sup>

In 1984, through AP, Verstrynge promoted *Punto y Coma*, a journal disseminating the ideas of the French New Right.<sup>26</sup> In charge of the editorial board was José Javier Esparza, a key figure of the Spanish far right to this day. Although AP soon ruled out further theoretical rapprochement with the New Right, Esparza remained their point of contact in Spain. As a journalist, he has contributed to a vast number of publications on the right wing and far right, including *ABC*, one of the leading conservative monarchist newspapers in Spain. From 1995 to 2000, he also directed

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20 *Ibid.*

21 Stéphane François, *La Nouvelle Droite et ses Dissidences*; Stéphane François, *Géopolitique des extrêmes droites*.

22 Gérard Noiriel, *Le venin dans la plume* (Paris: La Découverte, 2019).

23 “L'extrême droite est une vision du monde, pas un programme,” *Le Monde*, October 31, 2021, [https://www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2021/10/31/l-extreme-droite-est-une-vision-du-monde-pas-un-programme\\_6100478\\_823448.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2021/10/31/l-extreme-droite-est-une-vision-du-monde-pas-un-programme_6100478_823448.html)

24 Diego Luis Sarromán, *La Nueva derecha: Cuarenta años de agitación metapolítica* (Madrid: Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas, 2008).

25 That being said, he maintained differentialist stances characteristic of the New Right even after joining Podemos. See “Otra Vuelta de Tuerca - Pablo Iglesias con Jorge Verstrynge,” YouTube video, 28:06, posted by “Basadísimo,” October 20, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Il3TPtJ6SpM>

26 José Luis Rodríguez Jiménez, “Historia de un fracaso y ¿de una refundación?: de la vieja a la nueva extrema derecha en España (1975-2012),” *Studia Historica. Historia Contemporánea* 30 (2012): 231–268.

*Hespérides* magazine, the official publication of the Proyecto Cultural Aurora, the most successful intellectual movement in Spain addressing the ideas of the New Right. However, while de Benoist's acolytes were eminently anti-Christian and neopagan, having adopted the anti-Modern precept that enlightened universalism is just a secular version of Christian humanism, Esparza has not given up on Christianity. Some of his Spanish counterparts, such as the director of *Punto y Coma*, Isidro J. Palacios, have even defended Christianity as a fundamental part of Europe's identity and cultural heritage.<sup>27</sup>

Yet this cleavage has not proved to be insuperable: the Spanish New Right has kept building a genuine doctrine combining Christianity with the ideas of the French New Right. Following the end of Aurora in 2002, the cultural supplement of the liberal-conservative journal *El Mundo* published a manifesto loaded with tropes of the Nouvelle Droite that was signed—together with other intellectuals and even public personalities coming from the left wing—by journalist Javier Ruiz Portella. The manifesto, which was well received, drew the attention of several authors linked to Aurora, including Esparza, which led to the creation of the Grupo Manifiesto in 2004. This platform took over as the new melting pot for the French and Spanish Nouvelle Droite and certain members of the Spanish People's Party, among them Alejo Vidal-Quadras, who would become the first leader of Vox, and José María Lassalle,<sup>28</sup> then a professor at the Catholic university Centro de Estudios Universitarios (CEU) San Pablo.<sup>29</sup>

Esparza was later hired by the TV channel *Intereconomía*. Since 2010, he has held the important role of their political and historical commentator. The channel, recently renamed *El Toro TV*, is the flagship of the media conglomerate Grupo Intereconomía, the main media platform of Catholic ultramontanism in Spain.<sup>30</sup> Its major shareholder is Julio Ariza, who is close to Opus Dei, an ultraconservative organization in Spain belonging to the Catholic Church. Pedro Carlos González, a researcher of the Spanish far right who also embraces far-right ideologies, once stated during a debate presented by Esparza: "I have to express gratitude that *Intereconomía* exists because it is one of the groups that has facilitated the existence of Vox."<sup>31</sup> The relationship between the far-right party and Grupo Intereconomía is based on political understanding and investment opportunities, with Vox recently having taken over *La Gaceta*, the main media outlet of the Grupo Intereconomía. Renamed *La Gaceta de la Iberosfera*, it has become the official publication of the Disenso Foundation, a think tank affiliated with Vox.

This online publication, whose slogan is a quotation from Maeztu, regularly receives contributions from erstwhile members of the Grupo Manifiesto, such as journalist Fernando Sánchez Dragó. Its purpose is to lead a loose coalition of far-right forces under the umbrella of what they call "Iberosfera," essentially a group of countries related to the Spanish imperial and colonial past, as well as some other like-minded actors in Europe. In October 2021, Disenso organized the Madrid Forum that ended with the signature of a manifesto, "The Madrid Charter," by right-wing politicians

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27 Sanromán, *La Nueva derecha*.

28 Both Vidal-Quadras and Lassalle were at the time key members of FAES, a think tank that served as a vehicle for the ideas of the hardline wing of the PP.

29 Javier Muñoz Soro, "Sin complejos: las nuevas derechas españolas y sus intelectuales," *Historia y Política* 18 (2007): 129-164

30 Ibid.

31 "El profesor Pedro Carlos González Cuevas presenta en el 'El Gato al Agua' su libro dedicado a Vox," YouTube video, 15:13, posted by "Redacción La Tribuna del País Vasco," March 7, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0FudilIlgG4M>

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from several South American countries—including José Antonio Kast (Chile), Javier Milei (Argentina), and Antonio Ledezma (Venezuela)—together with the president of Chega, André Ventura (Portugal); the president of Fratelli d'Italia; Georgia Meloni; and Marion Maréchal. When asked about this event by *La Gaceta de la Iberosfera*, the latter replied that “[I] ha[ve] always had this objective of developing the project of the ‘Latin Union,’ i.e., Portugal, Italy and Spain.”<sup>32</sup> At the second edition of this event in October 2022, former U.S. President Donald Trump spoke via video call and Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki attended in person.

*Intereconomía* has often hosted professors from private Catholic universities, including University Francisco de Vitoria (Madrid); the University of Navarre, controlled by Opus Dei; and CEU San Pablo University (Madrid), founded by the Catholic Association of Propagandists (ACdP). These universities are developing a similar discourse around theological traditionalism. At the same time, thanks to some affiliated historians, such as José Luis Orella from CEU San Pablo, they nourish a revisionist vision of the Spanish historical consensus.<sup>33</sup> Orella belongs to this Spanish traditionalist far right, but he is not far from the New Right sphere. He has co-authored *De Le Pen a Le Pen. El Front National camino al Eliseo* (Schedas SL, 2015) on the National Rally, which has a preface by Arnaud Imatz, a French-Spanish enthusiast of the Spanish Falange and member of the French New Right. Orella is the president of the Arbil forum and a member of the editorial board of the journal *Arbil*. Currently inactive,<sup>34</sup> this journal was close to the school of thought of the Spanish New Right, although influenced by Catholic traditionalism, Spanish ultra-nationalism, and pan-hispanism.

One of the members of its editorial board, Fernando José Vaquero Oroquieta, has published in *Elementos*, the Spanish equivalent of the French New Right journal *Éléments*. Vaquero Oroquieta has also authored a book on Spanish populism with a prologue by Arnaud Imatz<sup>35</sup> and recently participated in a conference organized by Vox.<sup>36</sup> Another author associated with the Nouvelle Droite, the Argentinian Peronist Alberto Buela, contributed regularly to *Arbil* during its life and was also a member of its advisory board. Among the subjects he addressed, he dedicated several articles to the notion of *Iberoamérica*, a neo-imperialist syncretism between the ancient South American colonies and the metropolis.<sup>37</sup> Quoting Carl Schmitt, Buela envisions an anti-liberal, inter-continental superpower, inevitably evoking the concepts of Hispanidad and the Iberosfera espoused by Vox:<sup>38</sup>

The theme of this article is based on an undeveloped intuition for Ibero-America of the philosopher Carl Schmitt: “Against the universalism of Anglo-American world hegemony we affirm the

32 José Antonio Fúster, Rebeca Crespo, and Diego Vaquerizo, “Marion Maréchal: ‘VOX tiene razón en no caer en la moderación. La derecha que se une al centro acaba absorbida por la izquierda,’” *La Gaceta de la Iberosfera*, March 31, 2021, <https://gaceta.es/entrevistas/vox-tiene-razon-en-no-caer-en-la-moderacion-la-derecha-que-se-une-al-centro-siempre-acaba-absorbida-por-la-izquierda-20210331-0750/>

33 Soro, “Sin complejos.”

34 Even if *Arbil* magazine is no longer publishing new issues, there is some activity on the Facebook page *Foro Arbil*.

35 Fernando J. Vaquero Oroquieta, “Populismo en España? Amenaza y promesa de una nueva democracia. (Barbarroja, 2015).

36 “Conferencia Fernando Vaquero // ‘Aportación navarra a la empresa hispánica,’” YouTube video, 40:57, posted by “VOX Navarra,” May 24, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GrxHtZFN6WU>

37 See Alberto Buela, “Movimientos nacionales en Iberoamérica (siglo XX),” *Arbil* 113, <http://www.arbil.org/113bue1.htm>; Alberto Buela, “Nueva Estrategia Suramericana,” *Arbil* 44, [http://www.arbil.org/\(44\)buel.htm](http://www.arbil.org/(44)buel.htm); Alberto Buela, “El barroco: una clave para la identidad iberoamericana,” *Arbil* 58, [http://www.arbil.org/\(58\)buel.htm](http://www.arbil.org/(58)buel.htm)

38 Thus far, it has not been possible to establish whether it is more than a coincidence that Buela’s magazine and Vox’s initiative share the name *Disenso*.

idea of an earth divided into large continental spaces” [...] To the thalassocratic world power—that empire whose power lies in the domination of the seas, enunciated by G. Bush (father) in the U.S. Parliament in 1991 and framed in the one world project—this New South American Strategy (NES) proposes the creation of a “bridge with the European Union” and in particular with the nations that are related to us both by cultural ties—Spain, Portugal, Italy, France—and by the immense investments they have made in our region.<sup>39</sup>

### The French New Right: Renewed Interest in Spain

The French New Right has been subject to reconfigurations that have brought it closer to its Spanish counterparts and their political realm. What is left of this school of thought is in part organized around the Institut Iliade, a think tank conceived in 2013 after the suicide of Dominique Venner, one of the main exponents of the Nouvelle Droite.<sup>40</sup> The most renowned authors related to the Institut Iliade include Renaud Camus, one of the main figures currently espousing the Great Replacement conspiracy theory; Jean-Yves Le Gallou, a former advisor of the National Rally and more recently of Éric Zemmour’s *Reconquête*; and Philippe Conrad, former director of the New Right history journal *Nouvelle Revue d’Histoire* and current director of the Institut Iliade. The political figures that orbit around Iliade also include Marion Maréchal, a former member of the National Rally who is currently siding with Zemmour; and Hervé Juvin, a member of the National Rally and Marine Le Pen’s advisor on reactionary ecology.<sup>41</sup>

The Institut Iliade is engaged in an aesthetic and metapolitical struggle rather than a political one: it subscribes to the Great Replacement conspiracy theory, with a particular interest in reactionary environmentalism. Holistic cults like Hellenism or esotericism, which belong to the Indo-European tradition, are also espoused by their main authors, in the tradition of the French far right. Nevertheless, there is an open dialogue with other spiritual traditions, especially Catholicism. Julien Langella,<sup>42</sup> from the Catholic identitarian groupuscule *Academia Christiana*, is read with interest at Iliade. Javier Portella, who is also close to this New Right revival, recently published an article on Iliade’s portal about the Spanish Holy Week (*Semana Santa*) that sums up this dialectic between Catholicism and neo-paganism:

This is what it’s all about: the miracle that takes place every year, at the beginning of spring, in the streets of so many towns and villages in Andalusia and almost all of Spain (except for most of Catalonia today): the miracle by which, under the forms and auspices of Christianity—in its Catholic version: the thing would be unthinkable under Protestantism— what resurfaces, what is reborn, alive for so many centuries, for so many persecutions, is

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39 Alberto Buela, “Iberoamérica como gran espacio político,” *Arbil* 119, <http://www.arbil.org/19buel.htm>

40 Stéphane François and Nicolas Lebourg, “Dominique Venner et le renouvellement du racisme,” *Fragments sur les temps présents*, May 23, 2013, <https://tempspresents.com/2013/05/23/dominique-venner-renouvellement-racisme-stephane-francois-nicolas-lebourg/>

41 Stéphane François, *Les vert-bruns. L’écologie de l’extrême droite française* (Lormont: Le Bord de l’eau, 2022).

42 Langella’s book *Catholique et Identitaire. De La Manif Pour Tous À La Reconquête* (Poitiers: Éditions Dominique Martin Morin, 2017), after being published in English by the far-right Arktos publishing house, was translated into Spanish by *La Tribuna del País Vasco*, a far-right media outlet where Vaquero Oroquieta is influential.



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nothing but the old sediment of “pagan idolatry,” as they called it.<sup>43</sup>

The Institut Iliade and certain members of the Spanish New Right have developed common topics that have come to overlap. One of these is the historical revisionism of Al-Andalus, the Arabic and Islamic country of southern Europe that existed between the arrival of Berber and Arabic populations in the Algeciras Bay around 711 and the Conquest of Granada by the Catholic monarchs in 1492.<sup>44</sup> An idealized revival of medieval confrontations between Christianity and Islam was evoked by Dominique Venner, founder and former director of the *Nouvelle Revue d'Histoire*, during his lifetime. Venner portrayed Muslims as the absolute Other of Europe, which was, by contrast, an alleged land of heroes and knighthood.<sup>45</sup> After Venner's death, Philippe Conrad took over the direction of the magazine from 2013 until it ceased its activities in 2016.

A special issue from that year includes an interview by Arnaud Imatz with Serafin Fanjul on the mythical conception of Al-Andalus as a heaven of tolerance. A former member of the Spanish Communist Party, Fanjul is an Arabist and honorary member of DENAES, a far-right ultranationalist think tank founded by PP leader Esperanza Aguirre in 2006 and used as a base for the later creation of Vox. Fanjul's work has been widely criticized by his peers. First, because he presents this myth as part of the academic consensus when it is in reality barely accepted by novelists and a small group of historians. Second, because of the rationale underpinning of this revisionist endeavor—in other words, its legitimization of the concept of Reconquista, as used in Francoist national-Catholic propaganda.<sup>46</sup> And, ultimately, because of his weaponization of history using concepts like the *dhimmitude*, to falsely argue that non-Muslims were subject to apartheid in Al-Andalus. In the 2016 special issue, Conrad also dedicated an article to the *dhimmitude*, a term abundantly discussed by radical-right and conspiracy theorist Bat Ye'or.<sup>47</sup> Although this concept pretends to describe the subjugated status of religious minorities in Muslim countries, not only does it do so in an essentialist and biased way, but it also serves today as a key tool among the far right for drawing false parallels with the present day.

The Institut Iliade followed a similar path to that of the *Nouvelle Revue d'Histoire* when Conrad stopped directing the magazine. After Fanjul, it was Darío Fernández-Morera's work that added fuel to this revisionist discourse: the Cuban-born associate professor at Northwestern University published a book on the issue in 2016.<sup>48</sup> Fernández-Morera's book has also been severely criticized on account of

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43 Javier Portella, “La Semaine Sainte en Espagne : ou quand le paganisme et le christianisme s'entremêlent,” Institut Iliade, <https://institut-iliade.com/la-semaine-sainte-en-espagne-ou-quand-le-paganisme-et-le-christianisme-sentremelent/>, accessed May 24, 2022.

44 Alejandro Garcia Sanjuan, “Serafin Fanjul, Al-Andalus, l'invention d'un mythe. La réalité historique de l'Espagne des trois cultures,” *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale* 243 (2018): 299–301, <https://doi.org/10.4000/ccm.4733>

45 José Pedro Zúquete, *The Identitarians: The Movement Against Globalism and Islam in Europe* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2018).

46 Garcia Sanjuan, “Serafin Fanjul, Al-Andalus, l'invention d'un mythe,” <https://doi.org/10.4000/ccm.4733>

47 Sindre Bangstad, “Bat Ye'or and Eurabia,” in *Key Thinkers of the Radical Right: Behind the New Threat to Liberal Democracy*, ed. Mark Sedgwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

48 See Darío Fernández Morera, *The Myth of the Andalusian Paradise* (Delaware: ICI Books, 2016).

its methodology, which cherry-picks idealized versions of Al-Andalus,<sup>49</sup> as well as contributing to strengthening far-right and conservative Christian narratives.<sup>50</sup> All the same, the text met with approbation at Conrad's Iliade. When the French edition came out in 2020, it was reviewed on their portal, praised for its reactionary tropes and false equivalences between past and present: "D'al-Andalus à l'Etat islamique, une même terreur..." ("From Al-Andalus to the Islamic State, the same terror").<sup>51</sup> That same year, Conrad published his own book on the subject, *Al-Andalus, l'imposture du "paradis multiculturel"* (La Nouvelle Librairie, 2020), which was subsequently translated into Spanish and published by the far-right publishing house Fides. Conrad also organized a conference about Al-Andalus, inviting Fernández-Morera, Fanjul, Imatz, and Rafael Sánchez Saus. The latter is a medievalist who serves as honorary dean of CEU San Pablo and is close to Vox. In 2019, he published *Por qué Vox* at Homo Legens, a publishing house owned by Grupo Intereconomía SA, in which he echoes the discourse of Vox and praises Falangist writer Rafael García Serrano, "who has been made to disappear from memory, like the love of his life, the Falange, by dint of contempt and concealment."<sup>52</sup>

Quite apart from the reactionary narratives evoking interreligious dynamics within Al-Andalus, the issue of the Reconquista is frequently discussed by Iliade, its Spanish counterparts, and others. In his *Histoire de la Reconquista* (Presses Universitaires de France, 1998), Conrad writes about the period during which the Visigoths fought the forces of Al-Andalus on the Iberian Peninsula. To support his argument, Conrad cites Claudio Sánchez-Albornoz, a Spanish historian and one of the main defenders of this national-Catholic narrative. Sánchez-Albornoz, repeatedly criticized for his fervent Catholicism, patriotism, and even racism, is described in Conrad's book as "the greatest Spanish medievalist of this century." This national-Catholic propagandistic narrative, no longer supported by the majority of academic historians, has become a rallying cry for European identitarians against what they see as a new Muslim invasion of Europe.<sup>53</sup>

Calls for another Reconquista serve diverse interests in the pan-European far-right milieu: allowing Christian countries to federate against Islam by invoking national episodes like Pelagius' victory at the Battle of Covadonga in Spain (722) or that of Charles Martel at Poitiers (732) as part of a larger struggle;<sup>54</sup> inculcating a message through an aesthetical and metapolitical discourse loaded with epic imagery and heroism; and portraying themselves as the victims of a Muslim invasion to legitimate their reaction against Islam.<sup>55</sup>

With a view to invigorating the Christian-European alliance in the face of a so-called Muslim invasion, the Institut Iliade has already held several conferences abroad: at

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49 Arabists defending the thesis of the interreligious utopia, like Américo Castro, are equally criticized by those historians who refute the reactionary lectures of Al-Andalus. See Alejandro García Sanjuan, *La conquista islámica de la península ibérica y la tergiversación del pasado. Del catastrofismo al negacionismo* (Madrid: Marcial Pons Historia, 2013) and S. J. Pearce, "The Myth of the Myth of the Andalusian Paradise: The Extreme Right and the American Revision of the History and Historiography of Medieval Spain," in *Far-right Revisionism and the End of History*. *AltHistories*, ed. Louie Dean Valencia-García (London: Routledge, 2020).

50 Pearce, "The Myth of the Myth of the Andalusian Paradise," <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003026433-3>

51 Dario Fernandez-Morero, "Le mensonge d'al-Andalus," Institut Iliade, <https://institut-iliade.com/le-mensonge-dal-andalus/>, accessed May 24, 2022.

52 Rafael Sánchez Saus, *Por qué Vox. El Despertar de la Derecha Social en España* (Madrid: Homo Legens, 2019), 86.

53 Zúquete, *The Identitarians*. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvvpj775n>

54 See Emma Demeester, "Charlemagne, l'empereur d'Occident (768-814)," Institut Iliade, <https://institut-iliade.com/charlemagne-lempereur-doccident-768-814/>, accessed May 24, 2022.

55 Robin, *The Reactionary Mind*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:osobl/9780199793747.001.0001>

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least two in Spain and one in Italy. Needless to say, even if the historical dimension of this metapolitical venture is key, other issues that fit within the same framework are also evoked, including the Great Replacement conspiracy theory and the role of transmission for the survival of “ethnic Europeans.”<sup>56</sup> The first meeting in Spain was held in November 2021 in Madrid, where Iliade was introduced to its Spanish audience. The event was organized by *La Emboscadura* magazine, specifically its director, José Alsina. It was hosted at an establishment owned by Raúl Pajas, from the Ohka cultural association. In addition to Alsina and Pajas, Javier Portella from *El Manifiesto*; Philippe Conrad, Pierluigi Locchi and Solenn Marty from Iliade; and José Javier Esparza were among the speakers. The main contributors, Conrad and Esparza, had the opportunity to talk about their publications, the former presenting the Spanish edition of his book on Al-Andalus and the latter *No te arrepientas* (La esfera de los libros, 2021). In his book, described on Iliade’s portal as “anti-woke,” Esparza revived old Francoist ideas envisioning Spain “as the defensive wall of European civilization.”<sup>57</sup> Months later, Conrad and Esparza met again in Oviedo, in northern Spain, to commemorate the 1300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Covadonga. Heimdal Lesage<sup>58</sup> from Iliade dedicated an article to this event:

The example of this fight pushes us to insubordination, to courage, to the rejection of all defeatism, to train ourselves and to give the best of ourselves. Because now it’s our turn. It is up to young Europeans to be worthy actors in this long history, to be the fierce guardians of our heritage. Songs that keep the memory of past heroes alive remind us that no fight is ever lost.<sup>59</sup>

Iliade remains marginal. But there are many more popular French and Spanish actors who defend similar ideas, some of them moving between different spheres, including political parties, media or think tanks. Reconquête, the party of the latest newcomer to French politics, Éric Zemmour, belongs to this universe. Through allusions to the Great Replacement and with members close to Iliade, such as Marion Maréchal and Jean Yves Le Gallou, the party seduced voters from both the French far right (the National Rally) and the conservative right.

In Spain, it goes without saying that Vox capitalizes abundantly on this narrative. The party launched its campaign for the 2019 general election in Covadonga, using an image of Don Pelayo and the slogan “Espíritu de Reconquista.” On several occasions, they have called for the official day of Andalusia to be changed to January 2, the day of the Conquest of Granada by the Catholic monarchs. Notable members of the People’s Party (PP) have also reproduced these narratives. In 2017, Esperanza Aguirre affirmed that January 2 “was a glorious day for Spanish women,” who “would not have freedom with Islam.” More recently, the president of the Community of Madrid, Isabel Díaz Ayuso, close to Aguirre, listed such national episodes as “the Romanization, the Visigoth monarchy, [and] the loss of Spain to Muslim invasion” as having “made us persevere for almost eight centuries to continue being European, free, Westerners,” as well as praising the Spanish Crown for being “universal because Catholic.”

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56 Philippe Conrad, “El Instituto Iliade para la larga memoria Europea,” *La Emboscadura*, November 22, 2021, <https://laemboscadurarevistas.com/2021/11/22/el-instituto-iliade-para-la-larga-memoria-europea/>

57 Institut Iliade, “L’Institut Iliade à Madrid,” <https://institut-iliade.com/institut-iliade-madrid/>, accessed May 24, 2022.

58 Just like Solenn Marty, Heimdal Lesage is a young member of Iliade. Both are part of the institute’s broader strategy of educating young leaders.

59 R. Heimdal, “Dans les pas du noble Wisigoth Pelayo,” Institut Iliade, <https://institut-iliade.com/dans-les-pas-du-noble-wisigoth-pelayo/>, accessed May 24, 2022.

## Conservative Christians Rise in Spain and France

While the main theses of the New Right have gained some acknowledgment within the French radical right (this has been more limited in the case of Spain), a conservative renewal, influenced by Christian political values, is emerging and reinvigorating them. A new political-religious wave surfaced in both countries around 2005, with the nomination of Pope Benedict XVI, and gained great momentum during the first half of the 2010s.

In Spain back in 2005, a massive demonstration of around 166,000 people rallied against the Socialist Party's (PSOE) passage of a law permitting gay marriage.<sup>60</sup> A similar, though less massive, protest followed in 2009, this time opposing progressive reform of abortion rights. The two events were organized by the Christian traditionalist lobby HazteOír, close to far-right personalities mentioned above, like Julio Ariza and José Javier Esparza; ex-PP hardliners like former Interior Minister Jaime Mayor Oreja and María San Gil, former president of the PP in the Basque Country; as well as future leader of Vox Santiago Abascal. Following their scission, Vox took over the main demands of conservative Christians that were no longer defended by their old party, namely the rejection of gay marriage and abortion.<sup>61</sup>

On the French side, Nicolas Sarkozy's presidential campaign, starting in 2006, and subsequent administration (2007-2012), hyped up Catholic discourses related to identity and nationalism. Trying to seduce voters from the National Rally, Sarkozy spoke during meetings about "France's Christian heritage" and deployed key Christian references like Joan of Arc alongside typical far-right tropes like Maurice Barrès' uprooting (*déracinement*) or *décadence* in places charged with religious symbolism (his first rally took place outside Paris at the Mont Saint-Michel). Advised throughout his tenure in office by Patrick Buisson, a current advisor to Éric Zemmour, Sarkozy altered substantially the terms of the public debate.<sup>62</sup>

By the end of Sarkozy's quinquennium, as well as for other less salient reasons,<sup>63</sup> France had become the breeding ground for a Christian militant reaction against what they saw as the degradation of their traditional moral values and institutions: family, life, and transcendence. In this context, between 2012-2013, La Manif pour tous (LMPT) emerged to oppose gay marriage. Although LMPT portrayed itself as a secular movement, it lost its non-confessional character soon after its creation and won the support of such well-known traditionalist groupuscules as Civitas or Action Française. Other groups associated with neo-paganism, such as Generation Identity, swapped to conservative Christianity during LMPT, "going from Thor's hammer to the Nazarene's cross."<sup>64</sup> In fact, just after the emergence of LMPT, a group of former members of Generation Identity left the organization to found the traditionalist group Academia Christiana. In the same hybrid vein, the Antigones, a feminine collective close to the Nouvelle Droite and Iliade, was established by Catholic members. The editors of *Limite*, a publication focused on ecology and degrowth born during LMPT,

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60 Marta Arroyo, "Una multitud pide que se retire la ley del matrimonio homosexual," *El Mundo*, June 20, 2005, <https://www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2005/06/18/espana/111911135.html>.

61 Casals, "Del Partido De Masas Al Partido Institucionalizado."

62 Brustier, *Le Mai 68 conservateur*; Aurelien Mondon and Aaron Winter, *Reactionary Democracy: How Racism and the Populist Far Right Became Mainstream* (London: Verso Books, 2020); Raison du Cleuziou, "Un renversement de l'horizon du politique."

63 Raison du Cleuziou, *Une contre-révolution catholique*.

64 Brustier, *Le Mai 68 conservateur*.

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were also Catholic leading members of the movement. They included Eugénie Bastié and Gaultier Bès, the latter of whom had been interviewed by *Éléments* magazine.<sup>65</sup>

When LMPT abandoned its non-confessional and allegedly apolitical nature, conservative voices gathered to provide the movement with an ideological and theoretical framework. Editorialists, politicians, and intellectuals came together to claim that what the movement fundamentally rejected was not gay marriage, but secular Modernity and the phantasmatic, libero-totalitarian system of thought (inherited from May 1968) that underpinned it.<sup>66</sup> Among the main theoretical spokespeople of LMPT are at least three conservative authors who are greatly acknowledged: François-Xavier Bellamy, Chantal Delsol, and Fabrice Hadjadj.

While a young member of Les Républicains, François-Xavier Bellamy proclaimed himself the emissary of a generation that does not praise “It is forbid to forbidden” and disdains May 1968.<sup>67</sup> Chantal Delsol is a disciple of Julien Freund, a Christian Gaullist philosopher who introduced Alain de Benoist to Carl Schmitt’s work and contributed to enriching the theoretical foundation of the New Right.<sup>68</sup> Delsol belongs to the antimodern entente that strives to restore a Christian Catholic approach to philosophy and politics.<sup>69</sup> During LMPT, she echoed some of the landmark tropes of conservatism, namely transmission and “preservation of the future,”<sup>70</sup> and would later develop recurrent far-right notions such as “uprooting.” Together with the late Roger Scruton, Delsol is currently a patronage committee member of the Pont Neuf foundation, a conservative think tank founded by Charles Beigbeder to serve as a meeting point for conservatives at the crossroads between the conservative right and the far right. Finally, Fabrice Hadjadj, a philosopher and playwright who was born into a Tunisian Jewish family and later converted to Catholicism, has described LMPT as a “revolt against the techno-liberal order.”<sup>71</sup> This attitude is similar to that of *Limite* magazine, in which Hadjadj was also involved. After accusing Christianity of becoming “effeminate” in the aftermath of the Paris terrorist attacks in 2015, Hadjadj called for a “Christian warrior virility” to fight against Islamic terrorism.<sup>72</sup>

The main reference points and ideas of LMPT did not go unnoticed in Spain. Years later, top member of Vox Francisco Contreras coordinated the compilation of a volume of essays about LMPT.<sup>73</sup> The presentation of the book took place at CEU San Pablo with contributor Jaime Mayor Oreja. The release followed an interview at the *Actual*, a media outlet owned by HazteOír, during which Contreras posited a relationship between the sexual revolution of May 1968, demographic decline in Europe, and the Great Replacement conspiracy theory.<sup>74</sup> The book included

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65 Arnaud Gouzague, “Médias: La nouvelle tribu réac,” *L’Obs*, October 31, 2016, <https://teleobs.nouvelobs.com/actualites/20161031.OBS0563/medias-la-nouvelle-tribu-reac.html>.

66 See Daniel Lindenberg, *Le rappel à l’ordre. Enquête sur les nouveaux réactionnaires* (Paris: Seuil, 2016).

67 BÉllamy 2013, cited in Raison du Cleuziou, *Une contre-révolution catholique*.

68 Stéphane François, “Les paganismes de la Nouvelle Droite (1980-2004)” (PhD diss., Université Lille II, 2005).

69 Pierre Birnbaum, *Sur un nouveau moment antisémite. Jour de colère* (Paris: Fayard, 2015); Yann Raison du Cleuziou, “Un ralliement inversé?” *Mil Neuf Cent* 34, no. 1 (2016): 125, <https://doi.org/10.3917/mnc.034.0125>.

70 Raison du Cleuziou, *Une contre-révolution catholique*; Robin, *The Reactionary Mind*, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:osobl/9780199793747.001.0001>.

71 Hadjadj 2013, cited in Raison du Cleuziou, *Une contre-révolution catholique*.

72 Hadjadj 2015 and 2015b, cited in Raison du Cleuziou, *Une contre-révolution catholique*.

73 Francisco José Contreras, *La batalla por la familia en Europa: La Manif pour Tous y otros movimientos de resistencia* (Sekotia, 2017).

74 Alfonso Basallo, “Francisco J. Contreras: ‘El Islam lleva las de ganar en el choque de trenes con la izquierda en Europa,’” *Actual*, February 27, 2017, <https://www.actual.com/entrevista/familia/francisco-j-contreras-islam-lleva-las-ganar-choque-trenes-la-izquierda-europa/>.

contributions from French authors linked to the movement, such as Ludovine de la Rochère and Jean Sévillia. Chief editor of the conservative *Figaro Magazine* and a revisionist historian,<sup>75</sup> Sévillia was invited in 2018 to a congress at Francisco de Vitoria University to discuss the legacy of May 1968. He was joined by Hadjadj and Tugdual Derville; Contreras and Alfonso Bullón de Mendoza, president of the ACdP, were among the Spanish panelists. For her part, Delsol was invited to the first International Congress “The Church and Culture in the Twentieth Century,” organized by CEU San Pablo in 2017, and her work first appeared in a Spanish publishing house in 2015.<sup>76</sup> Christian publishing house Encuentro edited in 2018 the first Spanish-language book by François-Xavier Bellamy, in which he discussed transmission.<sup>77</sup> As for Hadjadj, although he had been introduced to Spanish readers years before by the Christian publishing house Nuevo Inicio, he released three books between 2018 and 2019 with the Vox-linked Homo Legens.<sup>78</sup>

### The ISSEP: A Node of the French and Spanish Far Rights

The Spanish and French far rights took a further step toward solidifying their relationship when Marion Maréchal opened in 2020 a branch of her private school and metapolitical endeavor, the Institut des sciences sociales, économiques et politiques (ISSEP), in Madrid. Founded in 2018 after Marine Le Pen’s niece left the National Rally, the ISSEP serves as a home for different figures from the worlds of business, academia, and politics. First established in Lyon, Maréchal’s center includes on its scientific board former spokesmen of LMPT,<sup>79</sup> such as her close friends Jacques de Guillebon and Thibaud Collin; the right-wing paleoconservative author Paul Gottfried; Martial Bild, linked to the New Right; and Pascal Gauchon, a former member of the neofascist Parti des Forces Nouvelles. Close to Christian conservative media pundits like Geoffroy Lejeune, chief editor of *Valeurs Actuelles*, or the aforementioned de Guillebon, chief editor of *L’Incorrect*, Maréchal tries to influence the public debate and impose its metapolitical agenda, partly Christian conservative and close to the New Right, on the French mainstream.<sup>80</sup>

The ISSEP’s Spanish branch has been rather more successful. Early on, it seduced the leaders of Vox, who passed their Madrid headquarters on to Maréchal in 2020 as a venue for her project. Although she affirms that her initiative is apolitical, Santiago Abascal and Jorge Buxadé, Vox’s spokesman in the European Parliament, attended the inauguration, as did Orella and Esparza.<sup>81</sup> The latter has been a lecturer at the ISSEP, alongside Mayor Oreja and Ariza. Just like his French counterpart, the Academic Director of ISSEP Madrid, Miguel Ángel Quintana Paz, has close ties to conservative media outlets such as *The Objective*.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>75</sup> Blanc, “Réseaux traditionalistes catholiques et ‘réinformation’ sur le web.”

<sup>76</sup> Chantal Delsol, *Populismos, una defensa de lo indefendible* (Barcelona: Ariel, 2015).

<sup>77</sup> François-Xavier Bellamy, *Los desheredados. Por qué es urgente transmitir la cultura* (Madrid: Encuentro, 2018). Prior to that, Encuentro published in 2008 *En defensa de España*, DENAES’ foundational manifesto, authored by Santiago Abascal and Gustavo Bueno.

<sup>78</sup> Fabrice Hadjadj, *Últimas noticias del hombre y de la mujer* (Madrid: Homo Legens, 2018); Fabrice Hadjadj, *99 lecciones para ser un payaso* (Madrid: Homo Legens, 2018); Fabrice Hadjadj, *Juana y los poshumanos o el sexo del ángel* (Madrid: Homo Legens, 2019).

<sup>79</sup> Marion Maréchal’s involvement in LMPT marked one of her first points of disagreement with Marine Le Pen, who wanted to distance herself from the movement.

<sup>80</sup> Geva and Santos, “Europe’s Far-right Educational Projects and Their Vision for the International Order,” <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iab112>.

<sup>81</sup> “Evento ISSEP Madrid,” YouTube video, 2:44, posted by “ISSEP Madrid,” September 15, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qAC0Jzh1r4>.

<sup>82</sup> In the meantime, Spanish conservative media outlet Voz Pópuli is also developing close ties with the ISSEP.

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The ISSEP functions as a think tank rather than a training school, as it specifically focuses on digital propaganda, narrative production, and top-level networking.<sup>83</sup> Its main concern is to connect ideas and people transnationally around common topics such as the defense of “European civilization” and its “Christian heritage.” According to its French portal, the ISSEP offers a *rooted* curriculum and its staff is committed to “transmit[ting] to their students the taste for their history and civilizational heritage.”<sup>84</sup> In Madrid, Quintana Paz puts forward a similar message, although his is explicit in that it emphasizes the role of Christianity in Western civilization.

In Spain more broadly, Quintana Paz’s stances are part of a public dialogue that is emerging around Christian conservative voices, bringing together political forces from the right to the far right and channeled through Catholic academia.<sup>85</sup> Among the main contributions to this cause is a Spanish translation of Scruton’s *Green Philosophy* (2021), with an introduction by Quintana Paz and a prologue by Abascal. For the metapolitical entrepreneurs of ISSEP, enemies laying siege to the European Civilization present themselves in different shapes and forms: “political correctness,” “cancel culture,” and, specifically, “woke ideology.” All of these blurred ideological constructs aim to downgrade and criminalize progressive social movements—usually organized against systems of oppression beyond class, namely race, gender and sexual orientation—by making a straw man out of them.<sup>86</sup>

Occasionally, ISSEP’s metapolitical strategy takes the shape of a conspiracy theory, describing a scenario where political and academic elites are the leading advocates of intersectionality and any dissenting voice is censored. In France, these reactionary discourses began to impregnate the public debate with LMPT.<sup>87</sup> In the words of Édouard Husson, a far-right historian and lecturer at the French ISSEP, “woke goes against academic freedom.”<sup>88</sup> Even if the government of French President Emmanuel Macron has also led an important campaign against “woke ideology,” when Maréchal joined Zemmour’s party, she stated that she did so to fight Macron “paving the way to woke ideology.”<sup>89</sup> In Spain, Quintana Paz is the main critique of “woke ideology,” an “invisible ideology” whose objective is “to replace the Judeo-Christian and Greco-Latin world.”<sup>90</sup>

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83 It is telling that when asked about his reluctance to invest in the ISSEP, conservative Catholic businessman Charles Beigbeder answered, “I already have a think tank project.” See Thiébaud Dromard, “Charles Beigbeder: ‘pourquoi je soutiens l’école de Marion Maréchal,’” *Challenges*, May 24, 2018, [https://www.challenges.fr/politique/l-homme-d-affaires-charles-beigbeder-pourquoi-je-soutiens-l-ecole-de-marion-marechal\\_589349](https://www.challenges.fr/politique/l-homme-d-affaires-charles-beigbeder-pourquoi-je-soutiens-l-ecole-de-marion-marechal_589349).

84 ISSEP, “Présentation,” <https://www.issep.fr/presentation/>, accessed May 24, 2022.

85 After a string of publications in conservative media outlets, some authored by Catholic intellectuals, reflecting on their role in society, a congress hosted by the University of Navarre took place to further develop the topic. Diego Garrocho, a lecturer at the Autonomous University of Madrid, traditionalist writer Juan Manuel De Prada, and Miguel Ángel Quintana Paz were among the panelists. See “¿Dónde están los intelectuales cristianos?” *Nuestro Tiempo* 710 (June-August 2021), <https://nuestrotiempo.unav.edu/es/campusuniversitario/donde-estan-los-intelectuales-cristianos>.

86 Alex Mahoudeau, *La panique woke. Anatomie d’une offensive réactionnaire* (Paris: Textuel, 2022).

87 Brustier, *Le Mai 68 conservateur*.

88 “Discours de Édouard Husson – Partenariat ISSEP / Collegium Internarium,” YouTube video, 2:58, posted by “ISSEP Lyon,” October 1, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PzsfTJ970Qg>.

89 During the same speech, Marion Maréchal praised France as the “eldest daughter of the Church.” See “Présidentielle : Marion Maréchal officialise son ralliement à Eric Zemmour,” *Sudouest.fr*, March 6, 2022, <https://www.sudouest.fr/elections/presidentielle/presidentielle-marion-marechal-officialise-son-ralliement-a-eric-zemmour-9545836.php>.

90 Similar statements have been made by Quintana Paz in the columns of *El Debate*, a media outlet controlled by the ACdP, as well as in such intellectual spaces as the Círculo de Bellas Artes of Madrid. See José María Sánchez Galera, “Quintana Paz: ‘Para el pensamiento ‘woke’, la reconciliación no existe,’” *El Debate*, February 16, 2022, <https://www.eldebate.com/religion/20220216/miguel-angel-quintana-paz-pensamiento-woke-reconciliacion-existe.html>; and “Wokismo, emotivismo hipertrofiado y nuevos abolicionismos,” YouTube video, 2:12:36, posted by “Círculo de Bellas Artes,” May 7, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZZRMjUzcmNI>.

## Reactionary Synergies around the *Asociación Católica de Propagandistas*

One organization linked to this milieu has recently experienced a period of intense activity: the Asociación Católica de Propagandistas (ACdP). Created in 1908 to tackle the secularization of Spanish society, the ACdP founded an in-house journal, *El Debate*, in 1911, and the CEU in 1933. The latter, an academic body, currently brings together the universities CEU San Pablo (Madrid), CEU Abat Oliba (Barcelona), and CEU Cardenal Herrera (Valencia). Most of their founders were Catholic bourgeoisie and noblemen, some of whom came from the Carlist movement, a counterrevolutionary and nationalist sociopolitical movement born in the nineteenth century.<sup>91</sup>

In fact, Carlism is still present in the ACdP, providing a broad meeting point for the Spanish far right around Christian Traditionalism and Hispanidad. Alfonso Bullón de Mendoza,<sup>92</sup> president of the ACdP since 2018, is the director of *Aportes*, a history journal specializing in Carlism whose approach has been described as “Manichean and similar to that of conspiracy theories.”<sup>93</sup> *Aportes* brings together renowned members of the New Right sphere in France and Spain, including Imatz, Orella, and Javier Barrycoa. The latter is a professor at CEU Abat Oliba and member of the Carlist Traditionalist Communion, one of the few remaining parties espousing Carlism. Another member of the Spanish New Right, Fernando José Vaquero, praises *Aportes*’ devotion to Carlism.<sup>94</sup> Vaquero, who identifies the current period of crisis that Carlism is experiencing as the same as that facing Spain and the Church, is one of several authors of the New Right who dialogues with Carlism.<sup>95</sup>

Since Bullón de Mendoza, a nobleman and descendant of generations of conservative politicians, took over as president of the ACdP, the organization’s activities have increased remarkably. On the occasion of the exhumation of Franco’s body in October 2020, CEU San Pablo organized an act that was attended by the dictator’s great-grandson, Louis de Bourbon. This Franco-Spanish aristocrat, linked to the French royalist movement, represents the legitimist branch of the French crown. During the act, Louis de Bourbon told the audience, sobbing, how they had dug up the coffin of his great-grandfather, affirming that they left the basilica “Cara al Sol,”

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91 At that time, the Carlist movement was divided into two main currents: integrism and possibilism. While the first mostly brought together hardliners who rejected any secularization of political bodies like unions or parties, possibilists defended an approach that was more in tune with their time—one that was more concealing of the anti-clericalism emanating from the government and the workers’ movement. The founders of the ACdP were rather close to possibilism. See Pablo Sánchez Garrido, “Génesis e identidad del grupo fundacional de la ACN de JP (1904-1909),” *Hispania Sacra* 69 (139) (2017): 389–400, <https://doi.org/10.3989/hs.2017.026>; Feliciano Montero García, “La Acción Católica, Ángel Herrera y la Asociación Católica de Propagandistas,” *Latincismo y Catolicismo. El Conflicto Político-Religioso En La Segunda República. Alcalá de Henares* (2009): 159–179.

92 Bullón de Mendoza has recently coordinated, through the CEU Foundation, a seminar of historical studies on Carlism funded by the Ignacio Larramendi Foundation. This institution was conceived by Ignacio Larramendi (1921–2001), a Carlist militant who was the head of the multinational insurance company MAPFRE and one of the most influential Spanish businessmen of the twentieth century. See Fundación Ignacio Larramendi, “Celebrado el Seminario Internacional sobre Ignacio Larramendi y los estudios históricos sobre el Carlismo,” <https://www.larramendi.es/fundacion/celebrado-el-seminario-internacional-sobre-ignacio-larramendi-y-los-estudios-historicos-sobre-el-carlismo/>.

93 Jordi Canal, “El Carlismo en España: interpretaciones, problemas, propuestas,” in *O liberalismo nos seus contextos: un estado da questão*, ed. X. R. Barreiro Fernández (Santiago de Compostela: Universidad de Santiago de Compostela, 2008).

94 Fernando José Vaquero Oroquieta, “Carlismo: el movimiento de un pueblo católico por su rey,” *Geopolitika*, May 31, 2016, <https://www.geopolitika.ru/es/article/carlismo-el-movimiento-de-un-pueblo-catolico-por-su-rey>.

95 See “Manifiesto del Carlismo catalán: ‘La Moreneta llora por sus Requetés’ (versión castellana),” *Somatemps*; “Dossier: ‘El Carlismo,’” *Nihil Obstat* (June 2015), <https://culturatransversal.files.wordpress.com/2015/06/nihil-obstat-24-dossier-carlismo.jpg>. The interest is mutual: French-Spanish aristocrat Prince Sixtus Henry of Bourbon-Parma, leader of the Traditionalist Communion, attended a meeting in Vienna in 2014 organized by the Russian traditionalist oligarch Konstantin Malofeev; other attendees included New Right thinker Aleksandr Dugin and Marion Maréchal (see Anton Shekhovtsov, *Russia and the Western Far Right: Tango Noir* [London: Routledge, 2018]).



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evoking the Francoist anthem.<sup>96</sup> Former Interior Minister Jorge Fernández Díaz was also among the panelists. In September 2021, CEU San Pablo organized an event hosted by María San Gil to receive Isabel Díaz Ayuso, whose family policy for the Community of Madrid is held in high regard by the ACdP.<sup>97</sup> The following month, the ACdP relaunched *El Debate*, the publication of which had ceased at the beginning of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) and never resumed.

Certain key figures linked to the French traditionalist sphere have been granted a space at *El Debate*. Fabrice Hadjadj was one of their first interviewees, criticizing Christian communitarianism and praising proselytism.<sup>98</sup> Chantal Delsol's book *La fin de la Chrétienté* (Éditions du Cerf, 2021) has been reviewed by Jorge Soley at *El Debate*.<sup>99</sup> Because Delsol foresees in her work the end of Christianity as a civilization and due to its condemnation of communitarianism, it is read critically.<sup>100</sup> Erwan de la Villéon, director of the Puy du Fou<sup>101</sup> in Spain, also relayed an essentialist discourse about Spanish history and its identity through an interview with this media outlet. According to de la Villéon, the park do not have any ideological bias, showcasing, for instance, the Spanish Civil War "without leaning toward either side."<sup>102</sup>

During the month of November 2021, the ACdP organized a congress on political correctness that resulted in the publication of a manifesto. At a conference prior to its release hosted by María San Gil, she stated that Christians must rise up against political correctness. The manifesto compares political correctness to a pandemic and a new form of totalitarianism against Christianity. Mimicking the introduction of Karl Marx's *Communist Manifesto*, it states:

A pandemic is haunting the world, the pandemic of political correctness [...] It is a new kind of pseudoreligiosity that, together with postmodern secularism, proposes the construction of a world in which Christianity is reduced to the condition of a memory, a bad memory.<sup>103</sup>

This initiative preceded a larger propagandistic campaign on similar premises. While the Spanish government, led by the Socialist Party and the left-wing coalition Unidas Podemos, was debating new legislation on abortion that included a prohibition on

96 "'Salimos de la Basílica cara al sol': Luis Alfonso de Borbón recuerda la exhumación de de Franco," YouTube video, 3:44, posted by "El Independiente," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PcuB2C2etYM>.

97 Raquel Tejero, "El plan de natalidad de Ayuso considerará a los concebidos como nacidos y miembros de la familia," *El Debate*, January 24, 2022, <https://www.eldebate.com/espana/madrid/20220124/plan-natalidad-ayuso-considerara-concebidos-nacidos-miembros-familia.html>.

98 José María Sánchez Galera, "Fabrice Hadjadj: 'Puede resultar más difícil ser cristiano en el cristianismo que en el mundo moderno,'" *El Debate*, October 19, 2021, <https://www.eldebate.com/religion/20211019/fabrice-hadjadj-cristiano-cristianismo-mundo-moderno.html>.

99 Jorge Soley, "Chantal Delsol: la filósofa que anuncia el fin de la civilización cristiana pero no del cristianismo," *El Debate*, February 12, 2022, <https://www.eldebate.com/religion/20220212/chantal-delsol-filosofa-anuncia-civilizacion-cristiana-cristianismo.html>.

100 In the article, Soley mentions another interview to Delsol at *El Manifiesto*, carried out by Arnaud Imatz, in which the two dissect in greater depth the philosopher's book. See Arnaud Imatz, "El fin de la cristiandad. Entrevista con Chantal Delsol (I)," *El Manifiesto*, January 5, 2022, <https://elmanifiesto.com/entrevistas/73118535/El-fin-de-la-cristiandad-Entrevista-con-Chantal-Delsol-I.html>.

101 The Spanish *Puy du Fou* is a branch of a French theme park recreating the history of the Vendée counterrevolutionaries that was founded by Philippe de Villiers, Zemmour's personal advisor.

102 María Serrano, "'Queremos que los héroes de nuestros hijos sean Isabel la Católica, Séneca y los reyes godos, no Pikachu y Superman,'" *El Debate*, March 12, 2022, <https://www.eldebate.com/cultura/20220312/queremos-heroes-nuestros-hijos-sean-isabel-catolica-reyes-godos-no-pikachu-superman.html>.

103 ACdP, "XXIII Congreso Católicos y Vida Pública. Corrección política: libertades en peligro," <https://alfavomega.es/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Manifiesto-23-CCyVP.pdf>.

praying next to abortion clinics, the ACdP embarked on a massive campaign advertising on the public transportation systems of several Spanish cities. The message “Praying in front of an abortion clinic is great” was displayed next to a QR code that directed users to the website *cancelados.es*. On this website, in videos featuring various symbols related to popular culture and protest—like Guy Fawkes masks from the film *V for Vendetta* (2005)—personalities linked to the Spanish far-right milieu, including José Luis Orella, criticize the alleged censorship of certain discourses in the public sphere: fundamentally anti-abortion, revisionist, and, *in fine*, far-right discourses.

Among the most recent events organized by CEU San Pablo, the international congress “Toward a Christian Renewal”<sup>104</sup> stands out. According to its director, Elio Gallego, the aim of this international meeting was to make Europe aware of its need to return to spirituality and overcome rationalism in order to remain part of history.<sup>105</sup> Among the main panelists were François-Xavier Bédaride, Isabel Benjumea (PP), Alfonso Bullón de Mendoza, Jaime Mayor Oreja, María San Gil, Francisco Contreras (Vox), Miguel Ángel Quintana Paz (ISSEP), Chantal Delsol, and David Engels, as well as other personalities from the worlds of politics and the media in Italy, Hungary, and the United States. Engels, a far-right historian and expert on Oswald Spengler, has edited *Renovatio Europae: For a Hesperialist Future for Europe* (Blue Tiger Media, 2019). This compilation—which includes the work of several European authors, among them Chantal Delsol—advocates for a new European integration called “Hesperialism,” based on the affirmation of conservative values, to face the current challenges haunting Europe, including “mass immigration, the aging of society, the radical transformation of values or demographic decline.” During a panel at that meeting, CEU San Pablo history professor Alejandro Rodríguez, in criticizing atheist ideologies such as nationalism and communism, argued that secularization leads to violence and even genocide.

## Conclusion

Considering the exchanges between the French and Spanish far rights mentioned here—around different reactionary ideologies that seem to reach variable equilibriums and, fundamentally, a civilizational project based on the notions of Latinity, *Hispanidad*, and Christian universalism—it cannot be denied that the French and Spanish far rights have similar projects. On the basis of a conservative renewal, combined with the reinvigoration of the French New Right school of thought, these projects may arouse the political and social sympathies of the moderate right and the far right. Truth be told, the political wing of this movement has suffered several major setbacks: the defeat of José Antonio Kast in Chile, the victory of Gustavo Petro in Colombia, the return of Lula da Silva in Brasil, and the poor result of Reconquête in the French presidential and legislative elections. Nevertheless, Giorgia Meloni, leader of an organization key for this entente, Fratelli d'Italia, became Italy's new Prime Minister in September 2022. Regarding Spain, Vox will face general elections in November 2023 with promising predictions according to the polls. In any case, the cultural and ideological foundations of these formations still seem relatively solid, as their intertwined trajectories continue along a well-trodden path that is historically rooted.

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<sup>104</sup> Since the congress was held shortly after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, some participants had to be absent, such as the Russians Yuri Vasylenko and Andrey Kordochkin, and the president of the Board of Trustees of the Mathias Corvinus Collegium of Hungary, Balázs Orbán.

<sup>105</sup> Nazione Futura, “‘We Need a Christian Rebirth of Europe’: An Interview with Elio Gallego García.” *The European Conservative*, February 28, 2022, <https://europeanconservative.com/articles/interview/interview-with-elio-gallego-garcia/>.