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The Extreme right in 21st-Century Portugal: the *Partido Nacional Renovador*

Riccardo Marchi

1. The extreme right at the dawn of Portuguese democracy

After the fall of the authoritarian Salazarist regime following the military coup of April 25, 1974, the Portuguese extreme right did not manage to maintain a presence on the political scene. This was partly a consequence of the wave of repression that followed the event and the reluctance of Salazarist “barons” to advocate a united front among like-minded groups. However, it was also due to the fact that the various nationalist factions, which were rather fragmented during the final years of the deposed regime, were unwilling to coalesce around a shared project. Instead, these factions opted to organize autonomously into a handful of small parties, which corresponded to some of the right-wing radical and less radical circles that had been active in the regime’s final years. National-revolutionary student groups that opposed the technocratic government of Salazar’s successor, Marcelo Caetano, formed the *Movimento Federalista Português-Partido do Progresso* (*Portuguese Federalist Movement-Progress Party*, or MFP-PP); conservative Catholic forces from the Salazarist school founded the *Movimento Popular Português* (*Portuguese Popular Party*, or MPP) and the *Partido da Democracia Cristã* (*Christian Democratic party*, or PDC); and radicals from the regime’s repressive and paramilitary organizations (the political police or PIDE/DGS, the Portuguese Legion, and Portuguese Youth) and the tiny intellectual circles inspired by counter-revolutionary or fascist ideas came together in the *Movimento de Acção Portuguesa* (*Portuguese Action Movement*, or MAP).

Although each party claimed to have its own specific profile, this alleged independence was not manifested in particularly original political proposals. Instead, during the first years of the transition, all the parties on the extreme right focused their efforts on two main objectives: defending the Portuguese empire, including advocating federalist solutions, and preventing the imposition of a Communist regime in the country. By late 1975, the first of those goals had been rendered obsolete by the rapid conclusion of the decolonization process, which reduced Portugal to just its European territories, while the second had been achieved: The *Partido Comunista Português* (Portuguese Communist Party, or PCP) and extreme left were cut down to size, although the main beneficiaries of that development were moderate anti-Communist forces, particularly the Socialists, led by Mário Soares.

During the tensest period of the transition to democracy (1974–1975), the extreme right – in its fragmented, weak, and marginalized condition – was easily swept aside by the repression exercised by the military, which was reacting to presumed or genuine counter-revolutionary endeavors. The extreme right remained fragile even during the normalization ushered in by the democratization process, which began between the end of 1975 and the first few months of 1976. The three extreme-right parties that were active in the second half of the 1970s – the PDC, General Kaúlza de Arriaga's *Movimento Independente para a Reconstrução Nacional* (Independent Movement for National Reconstruction, or MIRN), and the short-lived *Frente Nacional* (National Front, or FN) – all failed to attain the objectives they had set for themselves. They did not succeed in uniting activists from the Portuguese radical right; on the contrary, they lost voters, who increasingly either opted to abstain from electoral politics completely or voted tactically to support the two moderate center-right parties, the *Partido Social Democrata* (Social Democratic Party, or PSD) and the *Centro Democrático Social* (Democratic and Social Center, or CDS). At the same time, important leaders defected, such as José Miguel Júdice, who – disappointed by the radical forces' limited prospects of success – joined the PSD-CDS government coalition, called the *Aliança Democrática* (Democratic Alliance, or AD). In the elections of 1976, 1979, and 1980, the radical right never

won more than 1.2% of the votes cast (achieved in 1979), and its share of the vote slumped to 0.4% in the 1980 legislative elections. Paradoxically, that was the only time that it presented a united front, in the form of a coalition among the three extreme-right parties that aimed to counteract the attraction that the AD exerted on their traditional supporters.

Its hopes of assuming an institutional role as a parliamentary political force having been dashed, the Portuguese extreme right experienced the Eighties as a long period in the wilderness, with the PDC winning only around 0.5% of the vote in both legislative and European elections. The most interesting manifestation of the Portuguese extreme right during this period was the journal, *Futuro Presente*, and its struggles on the cultural front. The team that worked on the journal came from the university national-revolutionary scene of the Sixties and Seventies, and attempted to breathe new life into extreme-right political thinking by introducing the analyses of the French, British, and American “New Right” to Portugal. However, the project, which displayed a bizarre enthusiasm for Alain de Benoist, Margaret Thatcher, and Ronald Reagan, did not have a significant impact, even within its own sphere of reference. Some of the journal's writers or editors, such as Jaime Nogueira Pinto and Nuno Rogeiro, attained key positions as political columnists and analysts, but did not give tangible expression in these roles to the cultural hegemony they aimed to promote by launching the *Futuro Presente*. The publication still exists today, but has no real impact as an instrument of renewal for the Portuguese radical right.

The Eighties also witnessed a significant generational and cultural rift in the Portuguese extreme right. After a long incubation period in the Nineties, radical activists were eager to try to gain a foothold in the political arena and take advantage of the winds of populism, identity politics, and protest that were beginning to sweep across Europe in the new millennium.

2. A new identity for the Portuguese extreme right

The profound changes that affected the Portuguese extreme right in the last two decades of the twentieth century arose out of new geopolitical and socio-economic scenarios emerging in democratic Portugal after the transition period had drawn to a close.

From the geopolitical perspective, the imperial myth that played a pivotal part in the collective imaginary of Lusitanian radical nationalism rapidly crumbled when decolonization was completed in the mid-Seventies. As a result, many leaders who had been radicalized during the years of colonial wars in defence of the empire stepped back, no longer playing an active role in politics, while activists who were politicized after the transition abandoned the myth of a multiracial, pluricontinental Portuguese empire.

On the economic front, Portugal's accession to the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1986 meant diminished national sovereignty, subjection to EEC policies in strategic realms such as agriculture and fisheries, and growing dependence on subsidies from Brussels. These developments led the Portuguese extreme right to adopt a pronounced anti-Europe stance, picking up on a strand that had always been present in the political culture of imperialist nationalism.

In societal terms, the increase in immigration from the mid-1980s on, primarily from former African colonies towards the metropolitan areas of Lisbon and Porto, transformed Portugal from a country of emigrants into a country shaped by immigration. This demographic shift stirred up xenophobic sentiments that were already latent in Portuguese society, particularly among the enormous community of *retornados* from Portuguese-speaking Africa. The increasingly pronounced multiracial and multicultural mix in the suburbs of these large metropolises had an especially marked impact on young people. An increasing number of them joined small ultra-nationalist groups, which in 1980s Portugal were characterized by political subcultures imported primarily from the Anglo-Saxon world, such as the skinheads and the white supremacist movement.

All of these factors contributed to the emergence of a new kind of extreme-right activist, lacking an organizational and training substratum handed down by previous generations and far removed from Salazarist nostalgia and traditional Portuguese nationalism's "Lusotropicalist" discourse (according to which Portuguese colonialism was more benign than that of other countries). The new right-wing extremism was characterized instead by pronounced ethno-nationalism and an emphasis on defending the racial and cultural homogeneity of European Portugal, in the broader context of the white community scattered across five continents. Between 1985 and 1991, the Movimento de Acção Nacional (National Action Movement, or MAN) was the breeding ground for this identity. The movement attracted press attention due to various episodes of violence, including the murder of an extreme-left leader (which was attributed to the skinhead contingent), together with the ensuing anti-constitutionality trial based on legislation addressing fascist organizations. MAN was little more than a tiny ultra-nationalist group, of scant relevance in terms of its membership numbers. However, the actions it undertook, as well as the galaxy of mini-groups that appeared when it broke up in the early 1990s, made it the training ground for a new radical political elite, which was eager to take up the challenge of founding a party to give voice to Portugal's extreme right as the 20th century drew to a close.

3. The "new" Portuguese extreme right: the *Partido Nacional Renovador*

The first steps in this new phase for the Portuguese extreme right were taken in the second half of the 1990s, when some elements from the new radical generation converged with the old Salazarist generation, grouped around the ephemeral acronym, AN (standing for *Aliança Nacional*, or *National Alliance*). The AN episode is also symptomatic of the organizational weakness of the Portuguese extreme right: its supporters never managed to register the party with the Constitutional Court, as they had trouble in drumming up the requisite 7,500 signatures. This legal

obstacle was not overcome until 1999, when the AN project was abandoned and its supporters infiltrated a party that was already registered with the Constitutional Court but no longer actually active: the *Partido Renovador Democrático* (*Democratic Renewal Party*, or PRD). In 2000, the PRD was re-established by radicals, who changed its name to *Partido Nacional Renovador* (*National Renewal Party*, or PNR) and adopted a logo more in keeping with their ideas: a flame.

The first years of the PNR's existence reawakened disputes between the old and new generations of radical activists, with the latter keen to assume direct control of the party and to align it with the most successful expressions of right-wing extremism in Europe. In 2002, forces pushing for renewal gained the upper hand, with, first, Paulo Rodrigues (2002–2005) and subsequently José Pinto Coelho (since 2005), who had started his career among the nationalist activists of the Seventies and Eighties, replacing António da Cruz Rodrigues, the leader of the Salazarist traditionalist Catholic camp, at the head of the party.

The new leadership immediately began work on rejuvenating the image of Portuguese nationalism, shifting it closer to the political discourse of European populism. Although it did formally accept democratic rules, this was a radical anti-system discourse, which placed anti-immigrant and anti-Islamic issues on the political agenda. In practical terms, the new leadership set its sights on winning a seat in parliament in the 2009 legislative elections as the icing on the cake of the party's renewal, coupled with increasing numbers of party activists and a stronger presence for the PNR across the country. They dramatically failed to achieve this goal, partly because the PNR's image became increasingly tarnished. From 2007 on, a number of the leading figures in the party were entangled in court proceedings related to the criminal activities of the Portuguese skinhead movement, which at the time was an active component of the party and, under the leadership of Mario Machado, was affiliated with the prominent neo-Nazi group, the International Hammerskin Nation.

Despite this process of renewal, the party still remained within the orbit of what political scientists categorize as the "old" extreme right. The PNR did not feel that it could identify with the values of the Carnation Revolution and the democratic regime established in its wake in 1974. Although the party abandoned the nostalgic and revanchist attitudes characteristic of old-style Salazarism, it continued to celebrate Salazar as the greatest 20th-century Portuguese statesman and to trumpet the authoritarian regime's contribution to defending national interests and traditional values.

In this context, a series of interviews with PNR cadres on the margins of the 2010 National Congress revealed that all party members were either fairly dissatisfied or completely dissatisfied with the way Portuguese democracy functioned. They saw it as a partitocratic regime, controlled, as ever, by the same political elite. Nationalist activists were equally distrustful of all the country's major institutions: the parliament, the government, the upper echelons of the state, and all the parliamentary parties, from the right (CDS-PP) to the extreme left (Bloco de Esquerda, or Left Bloc, BE), not to mention the media. The PNR anti-system stance is also apparent in its rejection of the right/left dichotomy and in its self-proclaimed nationalist identity, outside the framework of partitocratic polemics. The sole institution that party members regarded at all favorably was the Catholic Church, which they saw as the final bulwark in the struggle to defend traditional values.

In terms of political strategy, the focus in the first few years of Pinto Coelho's party presidency was on gaining publicity, with provocative actions tailor-made to attract the attention of the national media. This also helped to compensate for the scant charisma of the party's leader: Unlike other extreme-right groupings across Europe, the PNR did not derive any added value from promoting its policies through its leader's personal magnetism.

Initially, campaigns to boost the party's media visibility did enjoy some success, offering the spectacle of marches and demonstrations that were

rather unusual in the context of the Portuguese political agenda: against Turkish membership in the EU; against adoptions by homosexual couples, viewed by the PNR as unnatural and consequently undeserving of the rights accruing to civil unions; against the decriminalization of abortion, with the PNR participating regularly in actions organized by the pro-life movement rooted in the Catholic Church; against increasing levels of immigration from Brazil; and against the lack of security experienced by the large Portuguese-speaking community in post-apartheid South Africa. The most successful events were linked to anti-immigration issues, which played a vital role in political discourse during the first few years of Pinto Coelho's presidency. In particular, the PNR attracted national media attention with a demonstration it organized in 2005, along with two xenophobic billboard campaigns in central Lisbon in 2007 and 2008. In the first case, picking up on an episode of petty crime along the coast outside Lisbon that had been sensationalized by media outlets, the PNR managed to mobilize several hundred people to demonstrate against immigration and multiculturalism. It was the largest extreme-right demonstration – with the most effective display of public relations – since tensions had been at their height during the transition to democracy. Nevertheless, it was only a qualified success, facilitated by societal alarm stirred up by the media, and indeed a comparable demonstration organized in 2010 after a similar incident saw negligible turnout.

In the second case, the party bought advertising space along major thoroughfares in the Portuguese capital, plastering it with xenophobic posters. The first poster campaign encouraged immigrants to go back to their countries of origin, while the second presented the Swiss SVP's polemical manifesto, depicting white sheep chasing black sheep out of the country. These two campaigns provoked different reactions from Portuguese journalists. In the case of the SVP-inspired manifesto, removal of the posters by order of the city council of Lisbon led some renowned columnists to voice concerns, emphasizing that freedom of expression must be safeguarded for all legally-recognized political forces, a reaction that led to a more positive image for the PNR. The other campaign, calling

for voluntary repatriation of immigrants, became the butt of a satirical attack by a famous Portuguese comedy group, which placed a virtually identical, sarcastic billboard conveying exactly the opposite message next to the original: this stunt had the effect of distracting public attention and poking fun at the extreme right's message. Together, the two episodes demonstrate how institutional repression of the extreme right's legal political activities offered the PNR an opportunity to present itself as a victim and achieve a certain degree of solidarity, whereas the caricature mocking some of its attitudes left the party stymied, making it the object of public derision.

Anti-immigration billboard displayed by PNR



The PNR anti-immigration billboard displayed in downtown Lisbon's Praça Marques de Pombal in 2007 and the ironic billboard from the comedy group "Gatos Fedorentos."

Generally speaking, the campaigns the PNR organized to focus media attention on immigration during the first few years of Pinto Coelho's presidency definitely did raise national awareness of the party, yet they did not significantly increase its membership or its local support base. Since the start of the recent economic crisis and the concomitant interventions of the "troika" (the IMF, the European Central Bank, and the

European Commission) in Portuguese affairs from 2011 on, the party has slightly altered its political strategy, adopting a much less acerbic and provocative tone, and focusing (in particular) on the April 25th bankruptcy caused by the political class and (more generally) on the dangers of globalization. However, not even these issues, which are much more in tune with certain populist protest sentiments in Portugal and much less vulnerable to damaging accusations of racism, seem to have created a significant advantage for the party, which the general public continues to view as a politically unattractive, extremist force.

4. The PNR's political platform

4.1 Immigration

The PNR developed its ethno-nationalist discourse, which has been a hallmark of the Portuguese extreme right since the 1980s, to the full during José Pinto Coelho's presidency. The party adopts the classic posture of the European extreme right, viewing immigration as an invasion that poses a threat to national identity, security, employment, and trade. The PNR thus opposed the Socialist government's 2006 reform of legislation on nationality, which reinforced the principle of *ius soli* above that of *ius sanguinis*. The PNR's stance was diametrically opposed to that, calling for scrapping the Schengen Treaty, zero immigration, abolishing the family reunification mechanism, increasing public investment in the police, and lowering the age limit for criminal responsibility from 16 to 14 years. Further PNR demands included introduction of the principle of reversing migration flows (immediate expulsion of illegal immigrants convicted of crimes, and repatriation of economic immigrants unable to support themselves), a moratorium on benefits paid to impoverished immigrants, and withdrawal of funding from associations offering assistance to immigrants.

Parallel to measures to combat immigration, the PNR advocates the principle of national preference. Giving priority to the "native" population

and defending their rights is seen by the party as all the more urgent because the phenomenon of migration is causing demographic shifts that are likely to distort Portugal's ethno-cultural character.

Seeking to avoid accusations of racism and xenophobia, the PNR deploys populist discourse, claiming that anti-immigration campaigns simply represent the will of the people. Ordinary citizens, in this view, reject the provisions imposed by technocrats in Brussels, who are guilty of having exposed EU member states to this invasion of foreigners. At the same time, the party, like many of its counterparts across Europe, stresses that it is not opposed to immigrants as individual human beings, but is rather against immigration as such. It regards immigration as a phenomenon triggered by global capitalism that has brought in its wake higher crime rates, particularly among young second- and third-generation immigrants.

4.2 Europe and the European Union

The European Union is another key topic on the PNR's political agenda. In the two electoral campaigns in which PNR candidates stood for elections to the European Parliament (2005 and 2009), the party presented its case to voters by proclaiming that the European Union has a destructive impact on Portugal, both nationally and internationally. Ever since the early years of the transition to democracy, the Portuguese extreme right, which is traditionally Euro-skeptical, has pointed the finger of blame in the national arena at the governing parties (PS, PSD, and CDS) which have shaped all of Portugal's pro-Europe policies, culminating in the country's accession to the EU in 1986. According to the extreme right, this accession forced Portugal into dependency on handouts from Brussels, foisted Community directives upon the country that dismantled key domestic economic sectors (agriculture, fishing, maritime trade), and caused devastation on the environmental front with pointless, Pharaonic infrastructure programs and construction booms. The gravest consequences of EU membership – the increase in corruption and clientelism in managing Community funds and the loss of Portuguese purchasing power when the Euro was introduced – were further exacerbated in 2011,

with *de facto* suspension of national sovereignty in compliance with the dictates of the European Commission and the European Central Bank in their capacity as members of the troika.

The Portuguese extreme right also tapped into populist accusations that the people's wishes were being ignored when it came to European integration: In the three fundamental stages of this process (accession to the EEC in 1986, to Economic and Monetary Union in 1998 and to the Lisbon Treaty in 2007), the government in power always avoided a popular referendum. This strategy was tantamount to that pursued by other European partners, who organized outright reruns of national referendums that produced anti-Europe outcomes, thus providing further confirmation of the European Union's structural democratic deficit.

On the institutional front, the Portuguese extreme right rejected the federalist blueprint for Europe, for reasons that were as much cultural as they were geopolitical. Culturally this rejection stemmed first and foremost from the party's nationalism, which viewed the homeland as being of paramount importance, incompatible with any type of supranational power. Geopolitically, the rejection was rooted in their conviction that European integration is the first step toward establishing a "world government" that ignores national specificities. For the extreme right, the alternative to European integration is full national sovereignty flanked by multilateral agreements with other European states, particularly in the economic sphere, in order to boost the "Old Continent's" competitiveness on global markets.

Analyses from the Portuguese extreme right always distinguish between two concepts: the European Union and Europe. The latter is viewed as Portugal's natural frame of reference in the light of its historical and cultural baggage, particularly given the country's roots in the Catholic West. Conversely, the EU is seen as a mere technocratic superstructure in thrall to neo-liberal globalization. Now that it has shaken off any hint of the Euro-African fascination typical of old-school Lusitanian nationalism, this attachment to a clearly defined, exclusive European identity offers Portugal's extreme right the scope to incorporate into its program some

of the anti-Islamic issues central to similar groupings across Europe. In particular, the PNR considers opposition to Turkey's accession to the EU as a chapter in the struggle against the anti-European policy pursued by the United States, seen in the PNR's eyes as seeking to create dangerous Muslim enclaves on the Old Continent, as it did previously in recognizing Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo. Unlike other parties of the new extreme right in Europe, the PNR adopts an openly anti-American stance, lambasting Europe's "subjection" to the USA, condemning above all the deployment of European forces in the imperialist wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The extreme right therefore calls for Portugal to leave NATO and regain full military sovereignty.

Despite its pronounced isolationist tone, the PNR recognizes that immediately abandoning membership in international bodies is unrealistic, and would be detrimental to Portugal. In electoral campaigns it therefore prefers to talk about a phased, negotiated exit. In the meantime, it calls for a change of course in EU policies to remedy the unfair competition that Portuguese workers face due to the free circulation of labor, seeking also to allocate more resources to "native" families by transferring resources out of programs to assist immigrants in Portugal. Likewise, it demands measures to counteract the falling birth rate and the aging of the "native" European population. To achieve these goals, the PNR always has been involved in cooperation at the European level with other nationalist parties, both those that hold parliamentary seats and those that do not. In 2009 it joined the *Alliance of European National Movements* (AENM) as a founding member.

4.3 Reform of the state

While the PNR takes a clear stance and proposes drastic measures on immigration, abortion, homosexuality, and Europe, the picture is rather different when we consider its views on reform of the Portuguese state. This has been the central issue in political debate in Portugal ever since the start of the financial crisis, particularly under the tutelage of the IMF-ECB-European Commission troika.

If we consider the clarity – or lack thereof – in the reform policies proposed in Portuguese extreme-right discourse, a pronounced dichotomy between the *pars destruens* and the *pars constituens* becomes apparent.

The *pars destruens* of the PNR draws on all the slogans of anti-system and protest populism: the corruption of the parties in power and economic lobbies, which makes a judicial intervention based on the Italian “Mani pulite” (“Clean Hands”) model urgently necessary; the political patronage system and the extravagant squandering of public monies by local administrations, which are also controlled by parties from the governing coalition; and the politicization of judges, which deprives the people of an equitable, well-functioning judicial system. During electoral campaigns the PNR adopts a more hardline anti-elitist tone, attacking rival parties across the political spectrum, and in particular targeting the moderate-right Portuguese party, CDS-PP, accusing it of propping up the alternating PS and PSD governments that have held power for nearly forty years. By taking this position the PNR seeks to establish its credentials as an anti-system party, to attract non-voters, and above all to head off tactical voting, which has always resulted in considerable support for the moderate right-wing party from voters who might otherwise be tempted to support more radical proposals, particularly on topics such as immigration, security and Europe. On the other hand, the CDS-PP, seeking to retain and attract voters, adopts a more radical line on these very issues during electoral campaigns or when in opposition.

Conversely, the *pars constituens* is not so clear or forceful, putting forward a hybrid line that combines statist and liberalizing elements. The PNR frequently criticizes the current Portuguese state, painting it as a totalitarian Leviathan that demands ever more resources from citizens while offering fewer and fewer services. The PNR calls for modernization of the state by reductions in public debt, yet without dismantling the welfare state, seeking to achieve this through radical cuts in the numbers of public officials, but without raising the pensionable age for civil servants. When it comes to the private sector, the party advocates reducing fiscal pressure, establishing a more equitable distribution of wealth, and fostering small traditional businesses, which it claims are being hammered by ex-

cessive taxation. It rejects full liberalization of markets, as well as measures to make labor-markets more flexible and thus more precarious. It also calls for state price regulation of basic commodities, yet is opposed to drastic interventionist measures, such as nationalization of the banking sector. The party generally favors public-private partnerships to boost the national economy, even while it has consistently opposed the former Socialist government’s plans for major public works projects (high-speed trains, new airports and motorways), viewing such schemes as wasteful, beneficial only to private interests and to the parties within the system. More recently, the PNR attacked the current center-right government’s privatization program and its decision to open up the Portuguese economic system to foreign capital, with massive influxes of capital from China, Brazil and Angola.

These protectionist elements are counterbalanced by the party’s acceptance of the idea of private sector investment in the welfare state, for example in pension funds, the healthcare system, and education. For the PNR, the state, which is obliged to provide such services, must concentrate on making the system sustainable rather than on ensuring that it remains entirely in the public sector. In particular, the extreme right proposes public-private partnerships in health and education through a voucher system. The idea here is that individuals and families could use vouchers in private-sector establishments, thus amortizing the costs and avoiding the shortcomings of the public sector. In the realm of education, the proposed family voucher is linked to the extreme right’s struggle to ensure freedom of choice for families about the education of their offspring. The PNR believes that the state should merely provide a minimum school curriculum, common to all Portuguese students, leaving it up to families to determine the details of the course of study. Freedom of choice for families would apply above all for sensitive issues such as sexual education, which the PNR thinks should be optional rather than mandatory in public schools. The PNR’s positive opinion of private schools, particularly Catholic ones, stems from their conviction that the public education system in democratic Portugal is the arena in which the left currently wins young hearts and minds through propaganda and indoctrination.

When addressing the issue of the welfare state's sustainability, the PNR generally prefers to focus on demographics and the problem of aging, with calls for more state support for Portuguese families and cuts in aid to immigrants. They reject the idea, favored by the governing coalition and the extreme left, that immigration could provide a means of funding the welfare system. In this case too, the state interventionism that the PNR advocates is to some extent at odds with the party's call for greater oversight on social welfare payments by tax authorities, coupled with cuts in benefits and in the minimum guaranteed income program, which the extreme right believes often turns recipients into "social parasites".

5. The PNR's electoral performance

In terms of electoral performance the results chalked up by the PNR in the first decade of its existence demonstrate how marginal the extreme right is on the Portuguese political scene. In its debut in the 2002 legislative elections, the PNR won an insignificant 0.09 %, equivalent to 4,712 votes. In the next legislative elections in 2005, the party doubled its share of the vote to 9,347 (0.16 %). There was a further slight increase in the 2009 legislative elections, up to 11,628 votes (0.20 %), and this trend continued in 2011, when the PNR received 17,548 votes (the equivalent of 0.31 %).

In the 2004 European parliamentary elections, the PNR received 8,405 votes (0.25 %), with a slight increase in 2009: 13,214 votes (0.37 %). At the local level, there was no change in the percentage of the electorate voting for the PNR in administrative elections, which did not even open up any significant scope for the party to establish a broader presence across Portugal.

Although the PNR has almost doubled its share of the vote during the last three elections, its marginal position becomes apparent if the absolute values for this electoral performance are compared either with those of the moderate right during the same period or with those of the extreme right from the late Seventies to the Eighties. In the former case, the PNR

obtained almost 18,000 votes in 2011, contrasting with support for the CDS-PP, now part of the governing coalition, which increased from 400,000 votes (7 %) to 600,000 votes (11 %) between 2005 and 2011. In the latter case, the *Partido da Democracia Cristã* (PDC) maintained an average of around 40,000 votes in the six legislative elections in which it stood between 1976 and 1987. In other words, the best result the PNR has achieved so far (17,548 votes) is still lower than the PDC's poorest performance (in 1976, with 29,874 votes received) and is equivalent to roughly just a third of the PDC's best showing in 1979 (in 1979, with 72,514 votes received). This comparison is significant when appraising the evolution of the challenge posed by the extreme right for Portuguese democracy since its establishment.

The PNR continues to put a positive spin on its performance, depicting it as a slow but inexorable march towards attaining the longed-for parliamentary representation. Over the last few years the party has therefore concentrated on consolidating its public image and in extending its reach across more of the country, aiming to capture the protest vote, which is reflected in increasingly low electoral turnout (41 % of eligible voters abstained in the last legislative elections, held in 2011). Over the last few months the party has developed a "national opposition" discourse, which now views globalization as the arch-enemy, personified in Portugal by the international troika (IMF-ECB-European Commission) together with its national "agents"; namely, all parties across the parliamentary spectrum.

6. Conclusions

The academic literature on the extreme right in contemporary Europe classifies Portugal among the countries where this phenomenon is fairly weak or indeed non-existent. This is often explained as the result of the country's experience of right-wing authoritarianism in the recent past – as is also the case for other countries in southern Europe (such as Greece and Spain) – which is held to inoculate Portugal against the re-emergence of a significant extremist presence. This analysis, which identifies a mar-

ginalized extreme right still linked to an authoritarian political culture, is in essence confirmed by the PNR's political experience, despite the renewal of the party since 2005 and its ethno-nationalist break with the myth of European-African Portugal.

The campaigns for national and European parliamentary elections in which the party has fielded candidates over the last seven years reveal how the PNR has attempted to break out of this marginalized position by incorporating topics and strategies typical of parties from the new extreme right across Europe. This involves adopting populist language steeped in notions of identity politics and protest; an anti-elitist stance, calling for direct democracy; a certain degree of economic liberalism in defending national capital from global high finance; condemnation of patricocracy; national chauvinism vis-à-vis the welfare state; anti-Europeanism; and anti-Islamism. However, the PNR has not managed to personalize its politics. The Portuguese extreme right lacks a charismatic leader of the type that has facilitated the rise of populist groups elsewhere in Europe. Initial attempts to make José Pinto Coelho the official face of the party have largely failed to impress the mass media and public opinion, and have not even worked with the various small groups that make up the Portuguese extreme right. Rather than rallying behind Coelho as a charismatic leader, these groups have taken advantage of his weakness, using it to provide a justification for the radical right's continuing fragmentation, which is caused more by personal differences than ideological, programmatic, or strategic ones. The most recent example is the rift within the PNR that gave birth to the short-lived Movimento de Oposição Nacional (National Opposition Movement/MON) in June, 2010.

In contrast to other populist groups that emerged as protest parties and developed into identity parties (e.g., anti-Islamism and anti-immigration), the origins of the PNR lie in the xenophobia that has informed radical Portuguese activism over the last twenty-five years. For much of that time, its political manifesto revolved around the ethno-nationalist struggle. It is only in the last two years that the party has changed its own political discourse, partly in response to its dismal electoral fortunes, and

has focused to a greater extent on the serious economic crisis that afflicts the country, accompanied by the discrediting of the political class, increasing levels of social conflict, and pronounced constraints on national sovereignty due to the troika's interventions. Although this is a potentially opportune moment for anti-system parties, the impact of the growing swell of public discontent in Portugal has not extended beyond public demonstrations. Despite the scale of these protests, they have not yet produced new anti-system parties, nor led to a significant increase in support for traditional opposition parties, specifically the Bloco de Esquerda and the *Partido Comunista Português*. It is therefore unsurprising that the extreme right has not seen even the slightest increase in membership figures to date. Furthermore, over the last two years the extreme right has been particularly sluggish about mobilizing support. The demonstrations traditionally organized on June 10 and December 1, marking historic, official anniversaries that play a key part in Portuguese national identity, attracted just a few dozen people. Even the extreme-right bloc organized at the large anti-government demonstrations in 2012 garnered scant support.

What explanations can be given for the weakness of the extreme right in Portugal? Why is the PNR likely to remain marginalized and in limbo for the foreseeable future, despite the existence of a growing pool of politically disenfranchised citizens who potentially might be swayed by populist rhetoric? The reasons for this failure lie both within and outside the PNR. The most significant internal factor for the extreme right's limited success in Portugal is undoubtedly a crisis of leadership, with current leaders unable to rally the radical fringe around a common political project, to provide a clear structure for the party across the entire country, or even to make local cadres more professional, something that is indispensable if a party hopes to attain a modicum of local electoral success. On the contrary, the most visible PNR leaders behave like amateur volunteers, paying little attention to the developing strategies designed to improve communication with the public and make a mark in elections. The PNR is hardly represented at all at the grassroots level, although closer contacts here between the party and the citizenry, coupled with efforts to highlight

problems reflecting key PNR issues (such as security and immigration), might allow for a certain degree of success in administrative elections. That, in turn, could serve as a point of departure for institutional involvement, while also enabling party cadres to become more professional. As the PNR is not really represented across the length and breadth of the country, the electorate continues to view the party through the filter of the mass media, which depict it as an extremist group nostalgic for the former authoritarian regime and close to the headline-generating lunatic fringe.

In addition, one should note that, from an organizational point of view, the existence of a single extreme-right party rather than the multitude of radical groups active in the initial years of the democratic regime does not mean that there is greater cohesion at the nationalist end of the political spectrum; on the contrary it is indicative of the way in which the far right has atrophied, losing both members and intellectual capacity. This impoverishment in regard to human resources has been simultaneously the cause and effect of both falling voter and activist numbers and diminishing potential for dialogue and debate with the moderate right. During the transitional years, the radical right did tap into this potential, albeit with scant results, but the PNR, in contrast, has never sought to develop such contacts.

While the key internal determining factors in the immobility of the Portuguese extreme right are its uncharismatic, unprofessional leadership, its failure to establish a solid alliance of radical forces, and its limited grassroots presence, the most significant external factor is the competition it faces from the moderate right. The CDS-PP manages to modulate its own political discourse by picking up on sensitive topics addressed by the extreme right and thus averts a hemorrhage of its most radical voters (although existing studies do not offer a clear indication of precisely how large this more extreme fringe might be). Against that backdrop, the PNR's political program is not well designed to compete with that of the CDS-PP. On so-called "values" issues (such as patriotism, drugs, abortion, homosexuality, and the defense of the nuclear family), the PNR takes the

same positions advocated much more effectively by its more moderate competitor. When it comes to Europe, the CDS-PP has managed to shed the anti-Europeanism of the 90s, which did not sit well with the generally pro-European mood among the Portuguese public at large. It has adopted a more realistic stance of defending national interests within the European institutional framework, a more attractive proposition for conservative voters than the isolationism advocated by the extreme right. On immigration, the CDS-PP has managed to formulate a legalistic political discourse entirely devoid of racist overtones and more in tune with the general mood in Portugal. There are certainly pockets of latent xenophobia in Portugal, but it has proved difficult for parties to tap into them simply by adopting an ethnocentric tone. In addition, that kind of language has little impact outside the two metropolitan centers of Lisbon and Porto, where the number and impact of immigrants is not as great as it is in these urban areas.

Even anti-liberal topics, which constitute the major distinction between the PNR's program and that of the CDS-PP, do not serve as a significant magnet for anti-system voters. That is largely because these topics are monopolized by two parties from the radical leftist, anti-globalization camp, the PCP and BE. Both parties hold seats in parliament and are rooted in social movements that make them much more substantial and visible than the PNR. In that sense, the PNR's anti-globalization line, in contrast to those of the PCP and BE, does not have the slightest influence on the mood of anti-liberal protest that is increasingly prevalent within Portuguese public opinion.

Regardless of what happens to populism as a political phenomenon in Portugal, the current extreme right, in the form of the PNR and like-minded smaller groups, is highly unlikely to enjoy significant electoral success in the future. An increase in its membership numbers or activities is equally improbable. Sidelined as it is by other conservative forces, the extreme right's influence on the course of contemporary Portuguese politics is likely to remain marginal.

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