

The Rise of Neo-Fascism in Today's World: A Qualitative Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the recent noticeable rise in neo-fascist ideologies and its underlying appeal when considering the youth and young adults. Additionally, this paper investigates the underlying psychological tactics and modern-day issues when it comes to the strategies implemented by various neo-fascists to increase the membership numbers of their fringe-extremist groups.

Keywords: *Neo-fascism, Fascism, Social Issues*

A recent trend in today's globalist society would be the unprecedented rise in political parties (and other organizations) which adhere to various extreme ultra-nationalist ideologies. Additionally, one should note the recent mainstream acceptance of such groups. Despite most of these groups coming from drastically different nations and cultures, all of them could be observed to be slight variations of the same extremist philosophy, namely a modern evolution of fascism (referred to as neo-fascism).

Contradictory to popular belief, neo-fascism is not an exclusively white-supremacist belief system, rather it is commonly followed by many extremist elements present in various nationalist ideologies across the globe. A good example of said ideology being followed by an historic non-white regime would be The Japanese Imperial Empire from the World War II era. In other words, modern elements of neo-fascism could be considered as an extremist interpretation of populism.

Common Traits of Neo-Fascist Organizations

Neo-fascism could be defined as a post-World War II ideology that usually consists elements of traditional fascist states such as the Third Reich and Mussolini's Italy. This umbrella ideology usually includes ultranationalism, racial supremacy, populism, authoritarianism, nativism, xenophobia, and anti-immigration sentiment as well as opposition to liberal democracy, parliamentarianism, liberalism, Marxism, communism, and socialism.

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Despite the varied backgrounds of these neo-fascist organizations ranging from white nationalists to fundamentalist Islamic extremists, most of these modern interpretations (if not all of them) adhere to the following principles:

- A belief of a mythic past and perceived flaws prevalent in modern day societies and the existing world order.
- The blatant demonization of other groups and their ideas.
- A lack of individuality and the implementation of herd mentality.
- An observed lack of democratic leadership and liberal ideals.
- It should be noted that most of these neo-fascist target young adults and teenagers.

Additionally, these neo-fascist groups tend to implement the belief that their group is a close-knit figurative family and an instrumental part of a bigger cause, it should be noted that this strategy has had a subconscious psychological effect when it comes to extreme control and unwavering loyalty. This strategy has also been utilized in the third point mentioned above, like many cults these neo-fascist groups distribute the belief that the needs and wants of the group is more important than any basic individual needs or rights.

Analysis

A major catalyst for the rise of neo-fascism could be a combination of immigration (an attribute of globalization) and rising unemployment numbers among the youth. This has resulted in a rise in protectionist sentiments and an observed rise in xenophobic tendencies, leading to a desire to return to a romanticised pre-globalist past. It should be noted that the world has been the most prosperous and safest now, in the era of globalization, when compared to any other time in history. This has recently been observed in traditional immigrant-friendly regions such as western Europe and North America.

Another factor contributing to the rise of such extremist ideals would be the recent development of technological advances, especially in the field of internet-based communications. Like modern era cult leader, several prominent neo-fascist leaders utilize the internet to influence and recruit a considerable percentage of their younger members. It should be noted that many teenagers and young adults tend to exhibit insecure tendencies that border cynicism with them personally feeling alienated from most of mainstream society, making their personalities quite easy to mould and manipulate, making them ideal targets for neo-fascist groups. These fringe organizations make it a priority to utilize manipulative tactics such as validating the skewed worldviews of potential recruits and making said recruits feel important and special. This systematic methodology utilized by neo-fascist groups have also been observed in various infamous terrorist organizations (most of which arguably fit into the classification of neo-fascist groups).

Alongside their generally violent anti-social activities, many of the neo-fascist organizations tend to have strong long-term political ambitions, usually mobilizing their young supporters to prop their political leaders into elected office, from which they could make their fringe ideals more mainstream and simultaneously demonizing those who oppose their extremist views. A good example of such a group with a political wing would be Golden Dawn, an ultra-nationalist Greek political party accused of adhering to neo-fascism.

Case study

The Popular Association – Golden Dawn (or commonly referred to as Golden Dawn) is a Hellenic ultra-nationalist political party. This political organization has often been labelled a

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neo-fascist group (contrary to their objections) and have been known to utilize symbols and icons which resemble historic Nazi iconography. It should be noted that this Golden Dawn has publicly identified as nationalist and anti-immigrant, additionally, members have expressed their admiration for several autocratic Greek dictators and infamous Nazi figures, trying to spin a “romantic” fictional past for such insidious characters. It should also be noted that this political party maintains an active youth wing and a newspaper (often accused of being a propaganda distribution mechanism). Additionally, this political group has spent considerable resources in specifically targeting urban Athenian youth via their youth wing and a magazine targeting younger readers (something that has been quite successful in recruiting younger members).

The earliest elements of what is now known as Golden Dawn was started by Nikolaos Michaloliakos (who later served as the party leader), an ultranationalist right-wing Greek politician in 1980. After officially being founded in 1985, Golden Dawn first received significant attention in 1991, and in 1993 registered as a political party. They gained considerable support (for an alleged neo-fascist group) around 2010 following the fallout, which was created by the 2008 economic crisis, with reasonable representation in both the European Parliament (the governing body of the European Union) and the Hellenic Parliament as they voiced support of extreme populist rhetoric which included a Greek-first foreign policy, a strong anti-immigration belief based on race and religion, and an extremist anti-Turkish stance (aligning with the extreme elements of Greco-Christian supremacy). This has resulted them in becoming a vocal component of the Greek opposition and the anti-EU (and anti-globalist) Greek political bloc till 2019. Their political performance is as listed in both Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1: performance of Golden Dawn in the Hellenic Parliament elections

Hellenic Parliament				
Election	Votes	Percentage of Votes (%)	Seats Won	Status
1996	4,537	0.1	0/300	No Seats
2009	19,636	0.3	0/300	No Seats
May 2012	440,966	7.0	21/300	Opposition
June 2012	426,025	6.9	18/300	Opposition
January 2015	388,387	6.3	17/300	Opposition
September 2015	379,581	7.0	18/300	Opposition
2019	165,709	2.9	0/300	No Seats

Table 2: performance of Golden Dawn in the European Parliament elections

European Parliament			
Election	Votes	Percentage of Votes (%)	Seats Won
1994	7,242	0.1	0/25
2009	23,566	0.5	0/22
2014	536,913	9.4	3/21
2019	275,821	4.9	2/21

It should be noted that Golden Dawn had lost a considerable chunk of its populist support by 2019 since several prominent members of its leadership including Nikolaos Michaloliakos had been convicted of leading and directing a criminal organization which had allegedly been involved in human trafficking. However, this does not indicate the diminishment of

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neo-fascist ideologies in Greek politics, rather it has resulted in a void which might be filled by another neo-fascist political party (or a "reformed" version of Golden Dawn) in the foreseeable future.

CONCLUSION

Based on the current youth culture and political climate, it's not a surprise that neo-fascist ideologies are becoming popular among the younger members of most communities. Additionally, it can be concluded based on their historic performance that several of these neo-fascist organizations with political aspirations are and will continue to be quite successful among disillusioned youth.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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