

PETRA VEJVODOVÁ

Transnational Forms of Contemporary **Neo-Nazi** Activity in Europe from the Perspective of Czech **Neo-Nazis**



International Institute of Political Science
of Masaryk University



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AN	Autonomous Nationalists
BHDB	Blood and Honour Division Bohemia
BHS	Bohemia Hammerskins
CR	Czech Republic
CTK	Czech News Agency
DS	Delnicka Strana (Workers' Party)
KES	Kontinent Europa Stiftung
LGBT	gay-lesbian-bisexual-transsexual
MVCR	Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic
NO	National Resistance
NPD	National-Democratic Party of Germany
NS	National Socialism, National-Socialistic
NSDAP	National Socialist German Workers' Party
NSDAP-AO	National Socialist German Workers' Party – Foreign Unit
NS-LEV 21	National Socialists – LEV 21
NW	Nationaler Widerstand (National Resistance)
UN	United Nations
PEA	Protest Event Analysis
P.O.W.	Prisoner of War
RAHOWA	Racial Holy War
SOLID	Solidarité Identités
SS	Schutzstaffel
SxE	Straight Edge
USA	United States of America
WSA	Widerstand Street Art
ZOG	Zionist Occupation Government

1. INTRODUCTION

On the most general level, it is evident that transnational activities and structures play a decisive role in our current globalized world. Accordingly, research focused on the transnational level has gained importance in the fields of political science and sociology. The past two decades of social science research have seen a number of publications written in the area. They include Čísař 2004; Kolářová 2009; Della Porta, Tarrow 2005; Imig, Tarrow 1999, 2001; Snow, Benford 1999; Tarrow 1998; and Tarrow 2005. It is noteworthy that each of these researchers has chosen to examine transnationalism in the context of social movements.

The primary motivation for entering into transnational relationships is often cited as an effort to reinforce ideological collaboration at the same as international support is obtained and an international impact is achieved. But to utilize transnational ties, a so-called “structure of political opportunities” must exist. The structure of political opportunities was introduced by Tarrow to answer the question of why social movements are mobilized and organized at particular moments in time. He maintains that the political opportunity structure is a key factor in political actions. If a political opportunity structure opens, mobilisation occurs and social movements may thus obtain access to the political system. The system must formally allow this entry – i.e., the system must be set up in such a way that it allows the movement to take part in political life without breaking the law. Another factor relates to whether the system is capable of regulating the behaviour of social movements once they have entered the political arena. The original focus of this concept was on political opportunities at the nation-state level, since at this level the identification of particular institutions concerned with entry of a movement is simple and the concept may be used to track how individual institutions regulate behaviour. Only later did the concept begin to be used at the transnational level as well. According to Tarrow, the greatest problem lay in the transnational operationalisation of political opportunities when state-like structure and authority are missing (Čísař 2004: 42). This problem was solved by identifying internationalism as an opportunity structure. Internation-

alism was defined as a channel for raising requirements based upon three mutually interconnected trends:

- 1) increased horizontal relationships between countries, governmental officials and nongovernmental actors;
- 2) increased vertical relationships between the subnational, national and international levels;
- 3) the reinforcement of formal and informal structures which encourage transnational activism and motivate the origin of non-governmental, state and international actors (Tarrow 2005: 8).

Political opportunities are therefore understood to be stable but not necessarily permanent or formal dimensions of the political environment which motivate the occurrence of events by inclining actors to expect success or failure, and thereby encourage or dissuade them from taking action (Vejvodová 2012).

Current research into transnationalism as a phenomenon is focused on new social movements articulating human rights interests, LGBT issues and ecological concerns. Research into the anti-globalization movement, especially (radical) left-wing entities, is strongly represented. A number of research projects also focus on transnationalization in the context of migration. Little attention, however, is paid to transnationalization and transnational activity within the context of the extreme right. In most cases, transnational activity and the use of internationalisation are touched on only in supplementary subchapters of texts treating individual extreme right-wing entities, normally in the form of descriptions of individual national entities' chief foreign partners. Such descriptions simply list the actions conducted by the entity abroad or with foreign participation and only round out the entity's characteristics. Several papers place a partial focus on the analysis of common elements of extreme-right political party ideology (Osterhoff 1997; Schellenberg 2009). A somewhat more analytical look at international collaboration between extreme right political parties is offered by Mudde (2007), Schiedler (2011) and Vejvodová (2012). In the specific case of neo-Nazism, the focus of this publication, its existence within a transnationalization context is explored by only a few papers. These include Simi and Futrell (2010), who analyse the American White Power movement with a focus on the virtual space of white racists in the first section of their paper.

Thomas Grumke (2009, 2012) looks into the ideological base of neo-Nazi internationalisation and Jean Yves Camus (2012), a French political scientist, provides an overview of international neo-Nazi organizations throughout the course of history. Hübner (2008) presents an overview of both European political parties and factions in the European Parliament and several current international projects on the extreme right-wing, thereby also touching upon the topic of neo-Nazism. The latest research into neo-Nazism within the context of social movements and transnationalization includes the paper “Trans-National Cooperation between Right-Wing Extremists in East-Central Europe” by Miroslav Mareš (2012), which analyzes international collaboration between extreme right-wing entities situated geographically in Central and Eastern Europe (the issue of neo-Nazism is, once again, covered only partially) and “The Transnational Dimension in Current Czech Neo-Nazism” (Mareš, Vejvodová 2011). “Mobilizing on the Extreme Right: Germany, Italy, and the United States” (Caijani, della Porta, Wagemann 2012) focuses on the extreme right-wing from the standpoint of social movements and thus addresses the gap in research on the extreme right. This publication also provides only partial coverage of the neo-Nazi movement, considering it only one element in the broader extreme right-wing. The authors employ some key concepts and methods from social movement studies and focus on discourse analysis in addition to exploring the scope of activity and organizational structure of the entities involved. The most recent contributions to research on neo-Nazism in a transnationalization context include a paper by Fabian Virchow (2013) entitled “Creating a European (neo-Nazi) Movement by Joint Political Action?”, which targets transnationalization in the context of joint international actions and how these actions (specifically, gatherings in Wunsiedel, Salem and Budapest) have contributed to the rise of the European neo-Nazi movement.

The goal of this publication is to examine extremism and radicalism, and in so doing to demonstrate that analytically-based research may be conducted in this area. Using the methods of social movement studies, it is shown that extremism may be approached more ambitiously than has so far been done using simple descriptions often based on randomly obtained information and data. These methods sidestep the criticism that a number of results in extremism research are based

simply upon randomly gathered information, that such research is not subject to verification and that research on extremism has been inadequately informed by methodology. Research quality obviously falls prey to a like critique. This fact poses a challenge to researchers to test methods from other social-science subdisciplines in this area.

Caiani, della Porta and Wagemann say that, although research into the extreme right-wing has shown a growth trend, it is only rarely explored as a social movement and a number of existing methods have been underutilized, something which is unacceptable. Meantime it is clear that transnationalization is a process that indeed involves the extreme right-wing and the National-Socialist (neo-Nazi) subgroups that are part of it.

In contemporary Europe, political forces at least partially based upon the heritage of the totalitarian Nazi regimes of the 20th century remain in place and also have a base to some extent in the Czech Republic (CR). In general, the goal of neo-Nazis is to establish a National-Socialist regime in several or even all European countries, or constitutional bodies which would not respect current borders. To attain this, neo-Nazis from various countries collaborate. Although the collaboration has undergone dynamic development in many respects and a tradition of sorts has been established, various limitations and obstacles have arisen. It's clear that a large number of neo-Nazi organisations and activities in the CR have included at least some cross-border elements. From its very inception, the Czech National-Socialist scene (NS scene) has been impacted strongly by events abroad.

In the 1990s there were several noteworthy attempts to involve Czech neo-Nazism in international structures, among them the founding of the Czech division of the Hammerskins, the Bohemia Hammerskins, a subsidiary of the international Hammerskins Nation, and the establishment of Blood and Honour Division Bohemia, a subsidiary of the international Blood and Honour network. This was probably the most significant effort to direct Czech neo-Nazis towards the international movement and unify its members within the country. They primarily organized concerts with an international presence and published zines and ideological materials. In the late 1990s, however, these efforts were subject to repression by security forces.

Currently, the transnational ties of neo-Nazis are apparent in the adoption of strategies such as "leaderless resistance" and in the spread

of concepts, terminology and designations. So-called autonomous nationalism has become a popular and rapidly disseminating concept.

On the international level, neo-Nazis also enter into ad-hoc bonds purpose-driven for a particular opportunity resulting from individual contacts. Significant international collaboration is also apparent via demonstrations, commemorative events and concerts. The most frequently visited events typically include:

- The Day of Honour, Budapest, February – commemorating soldiers killed in WWII
- Dresden in February – commemorating the bombing of the city by the Allies at the end of WWII
- A music festival in Budapest organized by the Hungarian Blood and Honour
- The “Festival of Nations” – a music-political festival organized by the German Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands (NPD) in September
- The “Veneto Summer Fest” organized by the Veneto Fronte Skinheads, an Italian organization, in July

It is therefore clear that there is justification within social science research for an examination of the neo-Nazi movement in the transnational context. In this publication, transnationalization will be understood to mean interaction between national and foreign actors as they engage in protest, put forward demands and communicate their mission/message. Thus, a network of crossborder actors with common objectives of both an international and a national character comes into being. The fact that the actors involved in this network are interconnected on more than just an infrequent basis is important to the definition. They share an outlook on the world and are interconnected either informally or via organisational ties. Their common interest is visible in both word and action. Transnationalism also means the dissemination and sharing of ideology, individual ideological elements and behaviour patterns (Tarrow 1998: 184; Virchow 2013: 197).

This publication explores present transnational forms of contemporary European neo-Nazism using the Czech neo-Nazi movement as an example. It uses Czech neo-Nazis to analyse the manner in which transnational (European) neo-Nazism is currently being formed. The definition indicated above serves as the basis for the areas of focus:

a common worldview and actions testifying to that, as well as objectives and concepts current in the European neo-Nazi movement and reflected in the Czech neo-Nazi environment. Transnationalization is followed comprehensively on three levels: 1. the ideological level, 2. the conceptual level (bridging ideology and specific activities), 3. the practical level (specific events in public space).

The text is structured as follows: Chapter 2 clarifies the theoretical-methodological basis of work in transnationalization theory and, primarily, in the theory of transnationalization processes as defined by Sidney Tarrow in his research into social movements. These processes are used to analyse the transnationalization activities of Czech neo-Nazis. In addition, collective event frames are defined along with an event repertoire for use as tools in obtaining the data needed for analysis of the transnationalization of Czech neo-Nazis at the ideological and practical levels.

Chapter 4 is devoted to concepts and terminology. It forms the starting point for defining the subjects of the analysis in the Czech Republic. It explains “National Socialism” as the key term employed here and a Czech form of national socialism which is very often mistaken for the former, causing confusion. Chapter 5 uses the basis laid in prior chapters to detail the methodology which underpins this text.

Chapter 6 describes the framing of the European neo-Nazi movement, i.e., the ideology of neo-Nazism which defines a common worldview and thus gives lower-level units (such as national movements) the opportunity to draw on its ideological definitions to become part of a greater whole, potentially leading to transnationalization. An important element treated in this section is the common identity of European neo-Nazis as a basic prerequisite for sharing ideas and objectives on an international basis. The chapter presents the theoretical basis and prerequisites for the transnationalization of European neo-Nazis.

The following chapter, Chapter 7, discusses specific concepts such as the second level of transnationalization of European neo-Nazis. It captures contemporary transnational concepts and expressions of European neo-Nazism which have also been reflected in check neo-Nazism and details the sense in which this has happened.

Chapter 8 focuses on the analysis of transnational activity by Czech neo-Nazis. The definition of European neo-Nazi ideology serves as a basis for analyzing Czech neo-Nazi ideology as formulated by the neo-

Nazis themselves in their website discourse. This section thus explores the extent to which the ideological output the Czech neo-Nazis accords with the European framing of neo-Nazism. Where do the points of contact lie which support the transnationalization of Czech neo-Nazis and does one encounter any sort of definition of identity? An analysis of specific actions/protest events follows, focusing on the transnationalization of Czech neo-Nazism at a practical level – not only in terms of words but action, as well. Actually equates to physical contact with European neo-Nazis, not simply virtual contacts. This portion of the text reveals with whom Czech neo-Nazis actually meet, what comes up at their meetings (i.e., topics supporting transnationalization), who their messages and demands are addressed to and what the characteristics of such events are in terms of size, etc. The event analysis reveals the actual form of activity of Czech neo-Nazis during the process of being transnationalized.

Having determined this information, we can now return to define transnationalization and discuss how the Czech neo-Nazi movement is framed thematically within the context of European neo-Nazism, what specific events look like as regards transnationalization efforts, which concepts are present in European space and what response they engender in the Czech environment, as well as which transnational processes Czech neo-Nazism is characterized by.