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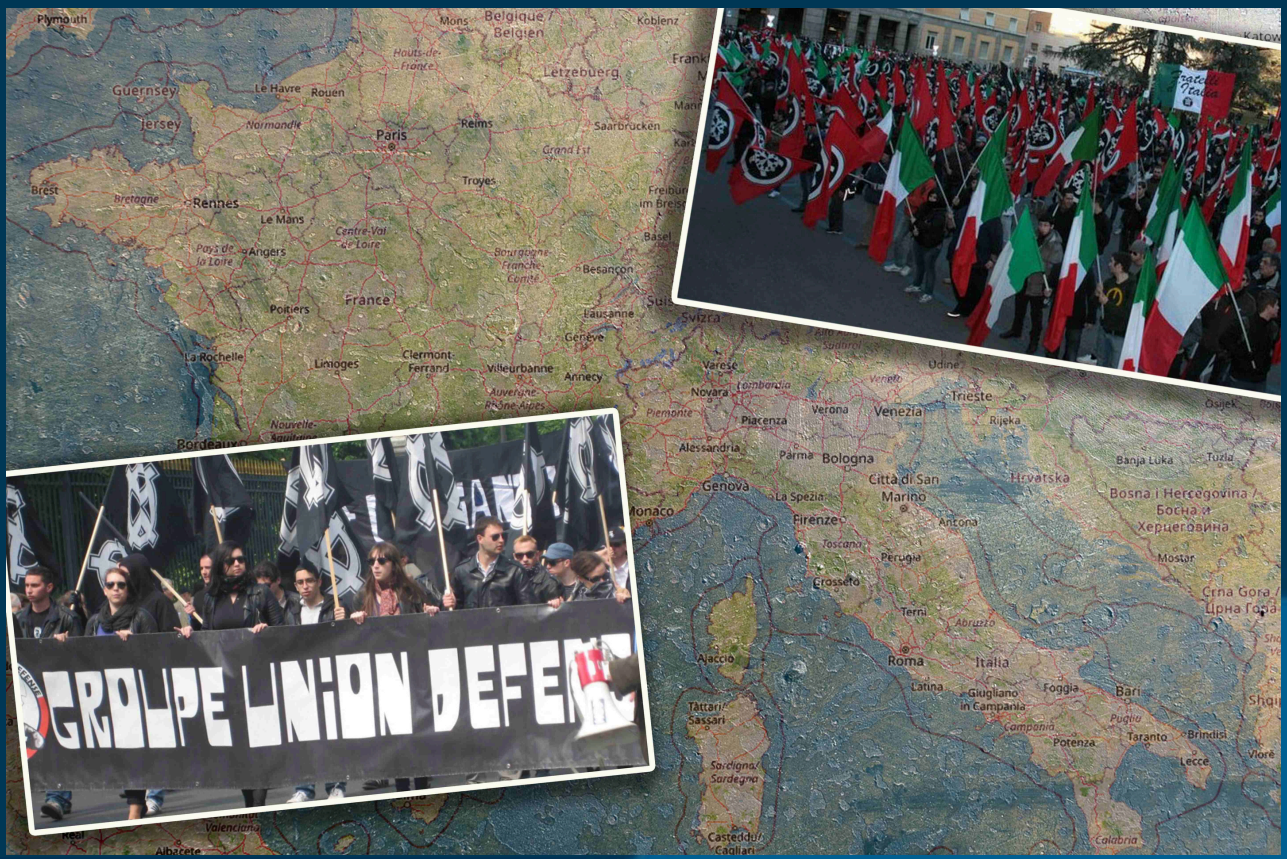
The French Groupe Union Défense and the Italian Far Right: Four Generations of Transalpine Cooperation



Périne Schir

IERES Occasional Papers, no. 24, May 2024
"Transnational History of the Far Right" Series

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Part I

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TransHistFarRight

Transnational History of the Far Right

A Collective Research Project led by Marlene Laruelle

At a time when global political dynamics seem to be moving in favor of illiberal regimes around the world, this research project seeks to fill in some of the blank pages in the contemporary history of the far right, with a particular focus on the transnational dimensions of far-right movements in the broader Europe/Eurasia region.

www.historyofthefarright.org/

Lyon Populaire cofounder Eliot Bertin and Gabriele Adinolfi on September 17, 2023[1]

In the last six months, Gabriele Adinolfi—a leading Italian far-right terrorist who was sought by the police for the better part of the 1980s and 1990s for his links to the Bologna massacre—journeyed across the Alps to meet four times with obscure and isolated far-right French groupuscules, including the Cercle François Duprat, Alérion, and Des Tours et des Lys.

This series of seemingly unremarkable events is, in truth, of the utmost importance to anyone with a memory of the tortuous 50+ year evolution of one of France's most violent far-right groups and its unbroken links with the Italian neo-fascist movement. Indeed, what seem like isolated groups are in reality the latest evolutionary phase of the Groupe Union Défense (GUD), a far-right student union founded in 1968 whose leadership has undergone a series of torch passes between four successive

[1] Lyon Populaire (@lyonpopulaire), Instagram post, September 17, 2023, https://www.instagram.com/p/CxTJbJkofEG/?img_index=3

generations : created as a satellite organization of Ordre Nouveau in 1968, its second generation collaborated closely with the youth group of the Front National in the 1990s, while its third generation created the umbrella organization Bastion Social in 2017. Today, Lyon Populaire, Alérion, Des Tours et des Lys and countless other local groupuscules make up its fourth generation, marked by a strategy of decentralization making it harder to monitor by the police.

The GUD plays a key role in the French far right. As a student organization, it has served as and continues to serve as an entry point for thousands of young people into far-right political socialization. However, it also serves as a shadow cabinet for the more respectable Rassemblement National (RN), with which the GUD maintains deep financial and organizational ties.

Beyond the national sphere, the GUD has a long history of transnational cooperation, particularly with the Italian far right, from the MSI to CasaPound. A key actor in this transalpine relation is Gabriele Adinolfi, who has been the contact person for three of the four GUD generations; as such, he offered them access to his network, including CasaPound, which he helped found, and FdI. This intergenerational cooperation with the European far right also extends to the Ukrainian National Corps—formed by veterans of the neo-Nazi Azov Batallion—and the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn in Greece.

Officially, the GUD is a student organization whose activities are said to be centered around the organization of in-house training courses, marches, and leaflet distribution. [2][3][4] However, the group's truly dangerous nature comes to light when, upon closer inspection, one realizes that the training it offers is actually combat training organized by a former MMA champion trained by the neo-Nazis in the Ukrainian National Corps, that the events and marches they organize are tributes to former Nazi collaborators, and that the distributed leaflets urge the expulsion of "leftist vermin" from universities "by all means."

To better understand the origins of the GUD as well as its links to both the historical and contemporary far right, the remainder of this paper is divided into three parts:

Part 1 delves into the context of the creation of the GUD, tracing the development of the French far right from the post-war Pétainist and pro-French Algeria organization Jeune Nation in the 1950s to the formation of Occident in the 1960s, which itself gave rise to two separate strands of the French far right: the electoral front represented by the Front National on one side and the first generation of GUD on the other, both of which featured strong ties with the Italian far-right Movimento Sociale Italiano (MSI).

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[2] In December 2019, Marc de Cacqueray de Valménier took part in a kickboxing championship in Ukraine. During the trip, he met members of the Ukrainian far right, including Olena Semenyaka, international secretary of the National Corps. De Cacqueray also attended training camps run by the Azov regiment. Sebastien Bourdon, "At Ukraine's Asgardsrei, a French Connection," *Bellingcat*, May 1, 2020, https://www.bellingcat.com/news/2020/05/01/at-ukraines-asgardsrei-a-french-connection/.

[3] Thierry Vincent, "Des Nervis d'Extrême-Droite, dont le Chef Présumé du GUD, Arrêtés à Paris," *Blast*, February 12, 2024, https://www.blast-info.fr/articles/2024/des-nervis-dextreme-droite-dont-le-chef-presume-du-gud-arretes-a-paris-X5DA3IUiRKWQJUWkrjqUwg.

[4] Maxime Macé and Pierre Plottu, "A Paris, le Retour du GUD Électrise l'Extrême Droite Violente," *Libération*, December 14, 2022, https://www.liberation.fr/politique/a-paris-le-retour-du-gud-electrise-lextreme-droite-violente-20221214_4CLEXOSW6VGPXBHL4IXFSUX4EM/?redirected=1.

Part 2 turns to the second generation of GUD leaders in the 1990s, especially Frédéric Chatillon, and focuses on their financial and structural ties with Marine Le Pen's FN as well as the organization's close relationship with Italian CasaPound founder Gabriele Adinolfi.

Part 3 explores the third generation of the GUD in the 2010s, its transformation into the umbrella organization Bastion Social, and later its 180-degree strategic turn toward the new local, decentralized, and ephemeral form adopted by the GUD's fourth generation, both of which have maintained strong collaboration with Gabriele Adinolfi.

The GUD before the GUD (1950-67)

A distant predecessor of the GUD is the Parti Franciste. A mere copy of the pre-war Italian fasces the party became an ultra-collaborationist movement under the German occupation. Pierre Sidos joined the youth movement of the Parti Franciste in 1943, and this early involvement in the collaborationist milieu later brought him to trial in January 1946. Alongside him in the box of the accused was his father, Francois Sidos, who was deputy inspector general to Joseph Darnand, leader and organizer of the Milice—an organization created in 1943 to fight against the Resistance in cooperation with the Gestapo. Pierre Sidos' brother, Jacques, was also prosecuted for having been appointed in August 1944 as chief inspector of the intelligence service responsible for detecting resistance groups in the Macquis. Pierre Sidos, aged 17, was held responsible only for his membership in the Franciste movement and sentenced to five years in prison. His brother was sentenced to ten years of forced labor, while his father was sentenced to death.[5]

Pierre was transferred to the Struth of concentration camp, which had been transformed into a temporary detention center for collaborators. He spent just under two years there in a camp characterized by a "family atmosphere in which Marechal Petain was revered as an icon." His time in prison only served to reinforce his convictions. In fact, it was while in prison that he had the idea of creating Jeune Nation, the ideology of which was very much inspired by Mussolini's fascist doctrine. Inspired also by esotericism, he chose the Celtic cross as the group's emblem, which would later be used by Occident, Ordre Nouveau, and the GUD.[6] Pierre Sidos was released early in August 1948 and resumed contact with his brothers. For months, the Sidos clan prospected ex-collaborationist members and established contacts that could enable them to obtain funding. The Sidos brothers formally launched Jeune Nation[7] in March 1950.[8] The group consisted of former Pétainists, including Jean-Louis Tixier-Vignancour, former MP and deputy secretary general for information under the Vichy regime, and Jean Malardier, former member Waffen-SS Charlemagne division.

Pierre Sidos would instill in the group an ideological pivot from collaborationism to opposition to decolonization. It was particularly opposed to the independence of Algeria, dreading the complete disintegration of the French colonial empire following the loss of Indochina in 1954. Most of Jeune Nation's members were also volunteers in the Algerian war, fighting on the French side against the

[5] Frederic Charpier, *Génération Occident* (Paris: Seuil, 2005), 18–19.
[6] Ibid., 23–24.
[7] Jean-Paul Gautier, "De Jeune Nation à L'Œuvre Française: Pierre Sidos, le Führer au Petit Pied," *Contretemps*, June 20, 2023, https://www.contretemps.eu/jeune-nation-oeuvre-francaise-sidos-extreme-droite-fascisme/.
[8] Op. cit. *Génération Occident*, 25–28.

FLN.[9] This was notably the case for Dominique Venner, officer in the 4th Bataillon de Chasseurs à Pied during the Algerian War from 1954 to 1956. Following his time in the war, he joined Jeune Nation and almost immediately became a member of the leadership before simultaneously joining the Organisation Armée Secrete (OAS). By joining Jeune Nation, Venner worked alongside future members of the OAS, including Jean-Jacques Susini and Robert Martel of the Union Nord-Africaine, predecessor of the OAS.

In 1958, Jeune Nation was shut down by the government. While it was briefly replaced by the Parti Nationaliste—to which Pierre Lagaillarde belonged—that too was shuttered by the government in 1959. In 1960, Lagaillarde and Jeune Nation member Robert Martel participated in the "semaine des barricades" in Algiers, which led to the deaths of 20 people and 150 being injured. On January 24, 1960, an arrest warrant was published against Sidos, Venner, and Malardier. All three subsequently went underground and, on April 12, 1960, founded the Fédération des Étudiants Nationalistes—officially a student organization presenting itself as an alternative to the anti-colonialist positions of the UNEF but in actuality a facade for the fight to maintain French Algeria. In November 1960, the "Barricades Trial" took place, after which Parti Franciste member Lagaillarde fled to Madrid and co-founded (with Susini of Jeune Nation) the OAS, the umbrella organization uniting those fighting for French Algeria.

Dominique Venner was arrested for his participation in the OAS in April 1961.[10] While in prison for this offense, he wrote the infamous "Pour une Critique Positive" booklet, in which he explained his plan to renounce active politics in favor of a long-term plan of the "noyautage des institutions." This was the initial conceptualization of the notion of "metapolitics," which would later give rise to an entire transnational movement: the Nouvelle Droite.[11] It was within the FEN that Venner recruited his protégé and most loyal lieutenant, Alain De Benoist, who participated alongside him in the foundation of Europe-Action following his release from prison in 1963 and later in the founding of GRECE (1968), the epicenter of the Nouvelle Droite. After the 2013 suicide of Venner, De Benoist and Jean Yves Le Gallou continued his legacy by forming the Institut Illiade, the primary representative of the Nouvelle Droite in France today.

Pierre Sidos, refusing to give up active politics and violent activism, broke with Venner and participated in the creation of Occident in 1964. Given that the signing of the Evian Agreements in 1962 put a definitive end to the fight for French Algeria, Occident wished to pivot ideologically toward anti-communism in the historical context of the Cold War. However, this pivot pushed them toward a pro-US stance, of which Sidos did not approve.[12] As a result, Sidos left Occident in December 1965 and later helped found Oeuvre Francaise in 1968.[13]

Following the departure of Sidos, Occident appointed a new central secretariat in 1966, which included Alain Robert.[14] Robert led Occident into the anti-leftist fight, after which Occident became

[9] Ibid., 31–32.
[10] Ibid., 57–59.
[11] Ibid., 44.
[12] Ibid., 106–107.
[13] Ibid., 160.
[14] Nicolas Lebourg, "Violence Militante Juvénile d'Extrême Droite: Le Cas du Groupe Union Défense (GUD)," in *Radicalités Identitaires*, ed. Manuel Boucher (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2020), 219–42.

synonymous with "violent brawls with iron bars and pickaxes" and regularly causing serious injuries on university campuses. This wave of overt violence prompted the Minister of the Interior to dissolve Occident in November 1968.[15] Contradictorily, it was precisely this unbridled capacity for violence that the French government sought when it recruited former members of Occident into the Service d'Action Civique (SAC), a taskforce originally created by De Gaulle's government in 1960 to counter OAS and later used to fight the leftist uprising of May 1968.[16] This development led to a "schizophrenic" split among former Occident members, orphaned by the dissolution of their formal structure, between those who refused to join SAC, not wishing to compromise with institutional politics, and those who viewed SAC as an opportunity to penetrate the political elite.

The GUD, Ordre Nouveau, and the MSI (1968–79)

This split gave rise to two separate strands of the French far right: on one side, the Groupe Union Défense (GUD) led by Alain Robert, a student union created in 1968 to carry on the legacy of its violent predecessors; on the other side, an electoral front, to which the current Rassemblement National is the successor.[17] This electoral front was dubbed Ordre Nouveau (ON), whose name called to mind the Nazi doctrine of the *Neuordnung*, meaning the planned reorganization of the continent along ethnic lines. It was formed a year after the formation of the GUD, in 1969, by former Occident members Jean-Francois Galvaire and Francois Duprat with the help of GUD President Alain Robert.

Alain Robert acted as a link between the two groups, first as president of the GUD in 1968–69 and then as a member of ON's management team. This liaison role enabled him to accentuate the complementary dynamic between the two groups. The stated goal of ON was to form the backbone of a future political party aimed at bringing together the fringes closest to the far right on the political spectrum and to play the democratic game by taking part in elections.[18] ON thus positioned itself on the far right but needed to distance itself from neo-fascism and violent efforts to fit in with the standard décor of institutional politics. Everything that had been abandoned—at least on the surface—by ON would then constitute the GUD's core: inspiration from interwar fascist movements, the Roman salute (practiced internally), and SS insignia or maxims engraved on truncheons. From its inception, the GUD has played and continues to play the role of a satellite organization, serving as a recruitment center and outlet for overly radical activists who can't identify with institutionalized groups like ON or, later, the FN/RN.

From the outset, Ordre Nouveau has maintained close links with the Italian far-right—and, in particular, with the Movimento Sociale Italiano (MSI). In November 1969, just a few days before the creation of ON, the MSI organized a congress in Rome for far-right militants from all over Europe. The French delegation was led by ON co-founder Jean-François Galvaire. The entrance of the foreign delegations was greeted by thunderous applause and the sound of the OAS anthem.[19] During his speech, Jean-François Galvaire evoked Colonel Jean-Marie Bastien-Thiry, "martyr of the OAS and of imperial Europe," testifying to the permanence of this mobilizing myth of the OAS both for groups

[15] Op. cit. *Génération Occident*, 166.
[16] Ibid., 162.
[17] Nicolas Lebourg, Jonathan Preda, and Joseph Beauregard, *Aux Racines du FN. L'Histoire du Mouvement Ordre Nouveau* (Paris: Éditions Jean-Jaurès, 2014), 17–21.
[18] Op. cit. "Violence Militante Juvénile d'Extrême Droite," 219–242.
[19] Pauline Picco, *Liaisons Dangereuses* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2016), 216, https://doi.org/10.4000/books.pur.46731.

inherited from the FEN, such as ON and the GUD, and for the Italian far right.[20] Following this congress, bilateral relations were established between the French members of Ordre Nouveau and the Italian members of the MSI, and the latter provided the former with substantial material aid throughout its lifetime.

Following Galvaire's resignation from ON leadership in 1970, Alain Robert and François Duprat took over his liaison role. Duprat was received in Rome by MSI General Secretary Almirante in September 1971. Robert was invited to take part in the national seminar of the Fronte della Gioventù (FDG)—the MSI youth group led by Gianfranco Fini, future President of Alleanza Nazionale, the predecessor of Fratelli d'Italia—in September 1972.[21] At the same time, Robert set up the Front de la Jeunesse (1972–81), modeled on the Italian FDG, whose aim was to bring together young people from the GUD and the Front National. Robert was personally received by Almirante, testifying to his interest in the political experience of the French far right structured around Ordre Nouveau and the GUD.

In 1972, Alain Robert and Francois Duprat drew up a plan for a political "front" to unite the fragmented far right and present candidates at the next legislative elections in March 1973. The presidency of the political party, termed the Front National (FN), was offered to Jean-Marie Le Pen after having been refused by Dominique Venner and Jean Jacques Susini, and Alain Robert took on the role of general secretary.[22] Despite very low scores in the long-awaited legislative elections (1.32% nationally), Le Pen came out on top: his name and that of the Front National totally eclipsed Ordre Nouveau, and it became clear that Le Pen had used ON as a stepping stone to his own political career. In April 1973, ON withdrew from the FN, and Robert relinquished his position in the party.[23] Two months later, in June 1973, ON was dissolved, and the majority of its members joined the FN. GUD members followed their first president, Robert, into the Parti des Forces Nouvelles, formed a year later in 1974.[24] Robert remained in contact with Almirante even after his resignation from ON in 1973 and the transfer of the GUD to the Parti des Forces Nouvelles— a group of anti-Jean-Marie Le Pen dissidents who had split from the FN.[25] Material and organizational support from the MSI continued even after the dissolution of ON in 1973, and it found a new recipient in Jean-Marie Le Pen's Front National with a symbolically powerful gift: the flame—the emblem of the Italian party—adopted by the FN.

Adinolfi in France (1980–2000)

After a short period of abeyance, the GUD helped found Troisième Voie (TV) in 1985, a reformation of Jean-Gilles Malliarakis' Mouvement Nationaliste Révolutionnaire (MNR). This name choice stemmed from the many contacts that Jean-Gilles Malliarakis and the MNR had developed over the years with Italian national-revolutionaries, including the main leaders of the Terza Posizione organization. The central figure in this Italian network, which has lasted from the 1990s to the present day, is Gabriele Adinolfi.

A member of the MSI since the age of 14, Adinolfi helped found in 1976 the fascist student organization Lotta Studentesca—which, in 1978, changed its name to Terza Posizione—alongside

[20] Ibid., p. 218.
[21] Ibid., p. 237.
[22] Ibid., 232–233.
[23] Ibid., 233–234.
[24] Op. cit. *Génération Occident*, 302.
[25] Alexandre Dézé, "Essai d'Iconographie Politique Comparée: La Propagande par l'Affiche de l'Extrême Droite Française et Italienne (1970–1995)," DEA diss., (IEP, 1996), 82.

Roberto Fiore, the current leader of Forza Nuova. In 1980, when an arrest warrant was issued against Adinolfi for the terrorist attack by the "Nuclei Armati Rivoluzionari" on the central station of Bologna, which killed 85 people, he fled to France. During these two decades on the run in France, he forged links with two independent French far-right networks.

He first linked with the Nouvelle Droite, especially its founder, the aforementioned Dominique Venner, who had been a member of Jeune Nation in the 1950s and a co-founder of FEN in 1960. In the 1980s, Venner reigned supreme over the Nouvelle Droite network, of which GRECE was the epicenter. Since 1973, Venner's entourage has met annually for the GRECE summer university at the Domus Europa.[26] Adinolfi attended for three years straight from 1998 to 2000. Following the expiration of his arrest warrant and his return to Italy in 2000, he returned to the summer university every year from 2000 to 2006, now accompanied by a dozen far-right Italian colleagues, including Gianluca Iannone. According to his autobiography, it was "from this nucleus that CasaPound was born a few years later [in 2003]." This closeness between the Nouvelle Droite and CasaPound persists unto today, as demonstrated by the formation of the Iliade Institute, in which many CasaPound executives—including Iannone—have been involved from the outset.

The Nouvelle Droite, CasaPound, and Fratelli d'Italia Today

While CasaPound was closer to Salvini's Lega in the past, today, CasaPound actively collaborates with Meloni's Fratelli d'Italia.[27][28] Most significantly, FdI co-founder Ignazio La Russa was a willing participant in CasaPound events until 2019 and continued to speak out in 2020 against the closure of CasaPound's premises.[29] In addition, CasaPound has created two ad hoc structures to interact with FdI elected officials. First, Firenze Identitaria in Florence works closely with Cassaggi, itself a spin-off of Gioventù Nazionale,[30] and organizes meetings with local FdI representatives, including Alessandro Draghi, the FdI Regional Councillor for Florence.[31] Second, Volonta Romana in Rome organizes joint meetings and events with local FdI representatives, including Gianluca Caramanna, FdI Member of Parliament, and Stefano Tozzi, President of Rome City Council and an FdI member.

The Nouvelle Droite, through its close relationship with Adinolfi and CasaPound, now also benefits from direct contact with FdI, especially through its collaboration with Passaggio Al Bosco, a publishing house that translates books published by the Iliade Institute into Italian. Passaggio is the publishing house of the aforementioned Casaggi, created in 2005 by the youth arm of Alleanza Nazionale, the forerunner of FdI, and now managed by Gioventù Nazionale, the youth arm of FdI.

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[26] Gabriele Adinolfi, *Années de Plomb et Semelles de Vent* (Synthèse Editions, 2014), 87–90.
[27] "La Russa Omaggia i Fascisti di CasaPound: 'Bisogna Unire il Fronte Sovranista,'" *Globalist*, September 7, 2019, https://www.globalist.it/news/2019/09/07/la-russa-omaggia-i-fascisti-di-casapound-bisogna-unire-il-fronte-sovranista/.
[28] Cristina Gauri, "'Accanimento Contro CasaPound e Silenzio su Occupazioni di Sinistra.' Anche La Russa contro la Raggi, Il Primato Nazionale," *Il Primato Nazionale*, June 4, 2020, https://www.ilprimatonazionale.it/politica/accanimento-contro-casapound-e-silenzio-su-occupazioni-di-sinistra-anche-la-russa-contro-la-raggi-158852/.
[29] Sara Lucaroni, "Un Laboratorio Sell'estrema Sestra a Firenze," *Patria Independente*, July 5, 2023, https://www.patriaindipendente.it/servizi/un-laboratorio-estrema-destra-a-firenze/.
[30] I Naufraghi di CasaPound e il Porto Sicuro di Fratelli d'Italia, *Rivoluzione Anarchica*, April 24, 2021, https://www.patriaindipendente.it/persone-e-luoghi/inchieste/i-naufraghi-di-casapound-e-il-porto-sicuro-di-fratelli-ditalia/.
[31] Valerio Renzi, "CasaPound si Camuffa da Volontà Romana per Saltare sul Carro di Fratelli d'Italia alle Elezioni," *Fanpage*, November 26, 2020, https://www.fanpage.it/roma/casapound-si-camuffa-da-volonta-romana-per-saltare-sul-carro-di-fratelli-ditalia-alle-elezioni/.

Passaggio al Bosco also publishes *Polaris - La Rivista*, the magazine of the Centro Studi Polaris, Adinolfi's think tank that he revived in January 2022.

Adinolfi's two decades on the run in France were also characterized by close collaboration with one of the most famous leaders of the GUD's second generation: Frederic Chatillon.[32] In his autobiography, Adinolfi states that he collaborated with the GUD in 1989–95, when Chatillon was GUD leader (1991–95).[33] Adinolfi also describes Chatillon and his right-hand man Axel Loustau as "loyal comrades."

Under Chatillon's aegis, the second-generation GUD moved closer to the FN. From 1993 onward—with Chatillon at the helm (1991–95)—the GUD took part in various actions with the FN's youth arm, the FNJ (Front National Jeunesse). A symbiotic relationship developed between the FNJ and the GUD, with political actions endorsed by the former and violent acts conducted by the latter.[34]

Chatillon's personal life predisposed him to his proximity to the FN. First, Chatillon himself was a childhood friend of Marine Le Pen, having attended alongside her Assas University in Paris, which represented the GUD epicenter. Second, Chatillon's first wife, Marie d'Herbais de Thun, was also a childhood friend of Marine Le Pen, and her grandfather, Marcel Chéreil de la Rivière, was a longtime friend of FN founder Jean-Marie Le Pen. These connections also branch out to the Nouvelle Droite network through Chatillon's current partner, Sighild Blanc, whose grandfather, Robert Blanc, was a member of the Waffen-SS, and whose aunt, Anne-Laure Blanc, was a member of GRECE and Europe-Jeunesse (a Nouvelle Droite-affiliated neopagan scouting movement) and is currently married to Institut Illiade co-founder Jean-Yves Le Gallou.

Chatillon's "GUD connection" and links to Adinolfi's Italy-based CasaPound

This closeness between Chatillon's GUD and the FN also took the form of numerous business links, dubbed the "GUD connexion" by the French media.

After leaving GUD leadership in 1995, Chatillon founded Riwal, a political communications company.[35] The firm has a checkered history featuring shady business dealings with Syrian dictators Hafez and Bashar al-Assad. However, Riwal is best known for its work on behalf of Marine Le Pen and the Front National. The company has regularly provided support for the party's campaigns, including through the printing of campaign kits and the production of various other materials. By the 2012 presidential election, Riwal was essentially the leading force behind Marine Le Pen's campaign. However, in 2014, the relationship between Riwal and the FN came under intense scrutiny from the French justice system, which accused the company of misusing corporate assets and misappropriating funds.[36]

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[32] Gabriele Adinolfi, *Nos Belles Années de Plomb*, (Dualpha Editions, 2023), 175.
[33] Op. cit. *Années de Plomb et Semelles de Vent*, 111.
[34] Op. cit. "Violence Militante Juvénile d'Extrême Droite," 219–242.
[35] Laure Siegel, "Frédéric Chatillon, l'Imprimeur Radical du Front National," *Les Inrockuptibles*, April 25, 2012, https://www.lesinrocks.com/actu/frederic-chatillon-limprimeur-radical-du-front-national-19951-25-04-2012/.
[36] In 2019, Chatillon was convicted of fraud for a scheme in 2012 on behalf of Le Pen's microparty *Jeanne*. He was sentenced to 30 months in prison and given a €250,000 fine. However, these penalties were later suspended upon appeal. Samuel Laurent, "Le FN et plusieurs de ses cadres condamnés à une amende pour «

Following the trial, conviction, and dissolution of Riwal, Chatillon relocated to Italy in October 2014 and quickly began to expand his business ventures in Italy, relying most notably on CasaPound's networks. Here, there is clear evidence of a two-way exchange between Chatillon and Adinolfi: When Adinolfi fled Italy in the 1980s after being accused of involvement in the Bologna station bombing, he found refuge in France and collaborated with the GUD; when Chatillon had to make the reverse journey in 2014, fleeing France after the campaign kit affair,[37] he became close with Adinolfi's entourage at CasaPound.

Chatillon's multiple business ventures soon joined CasaPound's vast entrepreneurial network. He formed companies in the fields of communications (Riwal Italia and Squadra Digitale, both domiciled at the address of the historic headquarters of the MSI, which houses Fratelli d'Italia, the part of Georgia Meloni), finance (the Edda Group), and gastronomy (most notably the Carré Français gourmet food chain).

To understand the true extent of the permeation between Chatillon's networks and the Italian far right, one must consider the relationship at both the interpersonal and professional levels. One good example of the entanglement between these informal and formal levels can be found in Le Carré Français, a restaurant established in Rome in 2015 by Chatillon and fellow former GUD member Jildaz Mahé O'Chinal.[38] Indeed, the restaurant was set up in the same year as Carré Monti, created *by* and *for* CasaPound members. Interpersonal and business relationships link the two restaurants: Carré Monti markets some Carré Français products, and Chatillon's daughter Kerridwen works at Carré Français during the day only to hang out at Carré Monti afterhours. Furthermore, Chatillon himself has developed a close personal relationship with CasaPound, frequenting the Cutty Sark bar and Osteria Angelino restaurant in Rome, both of which were founded by CasaPound President Gianluca Iannone. Chatillon has also been spotted several times at CasaPound social events and public demonstrations.

Bastion Social: The CasaPound look-alike (2017–19)

Following a period of dormancy (2000–2010) during which the GUD members re-organized in the RED (Rassemblement des Étudiants de Droite) (2004–2006), the GUD was reformed in Lyon in 2010 by Edouard Klein. In 2012, the presidency was passed on to Logan Djian—a man nicknamed the "Duce" with the SS Charlemagne division crest tattooed on his arm. GUD leadership was transferred from Klein to Djian after the latter violently assaulted the former.

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recel d'abus de biens sociaux »," *Le Monde* June 17, 2020, https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2020/06/17/le-fn-et-plusieurs-de-ses-cadres-condamnes-a-une-amende-pour-recel-d-abus-de-biens-sociaux_6043131_3224.html; Maxime Vaudano, Jérémie Baruch, Vincent Nouvet, and Pierre Januel, "La « GUD connexion » toujours présente dans les coulisses de la campagne de Marine Le Pen," *Le Monde,* January 28, 2022, https://www.lemonde.fr/les-decodeurs/article/2022/01/28/la-gud-connexion-toujours-presente-dans-les-coulisses-de-la-campagne-de-marine-le-pen_6111320_4355770.html.

[37] Simon Piel and Anne Michel, "'Panama papers': Comment des Proches de Marine Le Pen ont Sorti de l'Argent de France," *Le Monde*, April 4, 2016, https://www.lemonde.fr/panama-papers/article/2016/04/05/panama-papers-comment-des-proches-de-marine-le-pen-ont-exfiltre-de-l-argent-de-france_4895769_4890278.html.

[38] Carré Monti was created by CasaPound's lawyer, Domenico Di Tullio, and Chiara Del Fiacco, a partner of Sébastien Manificat and the "international relations manager" for CasaPound.

Djian has close links with the previous generation of GUD leaders, especially with Chatillon's right-hand man Axel Loustau. Indeed, following his violent attack on Klein, Djian was charged with aggravated violence and later released on bail. The bail in question—25,000 euros—was allegedly paid via companies owned by Axel Loustau. The two men were already close at the time of the arrest, as Djian was a former employee of Vendôme, Axel Loustau's security company.

After being released by the courts, Djian and his new number two, Steven Bissuel, tried to emulate Chatillon's network of businesses, again with the support of CasaPound. They notably opened a clothing boutique in Lyon called "Made in England" along with a clothing brand dubbed "London Spirit." Founded in 2016, the boutique notably sells Pivert clothing, a brand owned by the aforementioned CasaPound member Francesco Polacchi.[39][40] The same year, and down the same street in Lyon, Logan Djian opened "Point d'Encrage," a tattoo parlor that employed Daniele Castellani, who had been a CasaPound candidate in Rome's municipal elections in 2013 and 2016.
Notably, these business connections have been supplemented by institutional links. In November 2016, Djian invited Sebastien Manificat of CasaPound to attend a conference that he organized—"Réveil des Nations"—to bring together members of several European far-right groups.[41] Djian was meant to see Manificat again the following year at the First Paneuropa Conference in Kyiv in April 2017, hosted by the Ukrainian National Corps. [42]At the time, however, he was wanted by the police for another episode of aggravated violence and was unable to travel. Feeling the vice of the police search tightening, Djian delegated the movement's leadership to his number two, Steven Bissuel.

It was Bissuel, on behalf of GUD, who attended the First Paneuropa Conference in Kyiv in April 2017. There, he met with the GUD's CasaPound interlocutor, Sebastien Manificat. In May 2017, just one month after the Ukrainian conference, Bissuel announced the creation of a new umbrella organization for the GUD: Bastion Social. Djian was finally found by the police and entered prison a few months later in December 2017; henceforth, Bastion Social (BS) took over for the GUD.

The founding act of BS took place in May 2017 during the occupation of a derelict building in Lyon.[43] This illegal occupation was framed as a "solidarity requisition" aimed at housing the homeless, but not just any homeless—only "Europeans of French language and culture," meaning those without an immigrant background. The action was therefore a copy and paste of the founding act of CasaPound, which entailed the brief occupation of a building in Rome in 2003 for similar immigrant-excluding purposes. The experiment lasted just three weeks before the building was cleared by police, but BS then spread out, forming several decentralized chapters.

Bastion Social leader Steven Bissuel immediately built bridges with CasaPound. He attended CasaPound events on behalf of the GUD, including the CasaPound national celebration in September

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[39] "Pivert, la Marque Fasciste de CasaPound pour Pigeons Nationalistes," *La Horde*, December 15, 2017, https://lahorde.info/pivert-la-marque-fasciste-de-casapound-pour-pigeons-nationalistes.
[40] Marine Turchi and Matthieu Suc, "'Bastion Social': Les Secrets du Nouveau GUD," *Mediapart*, June 5, 2018, https://www.mediapart.fr/journal/france/050618/bastion-social-les-secrets-du-nouveau-gud?onglet=full.
[41] Daniel Dova, "Le Jour où Extrême Droite et Néonazis Européens se Sont Réunis à Nanterre," *Nouvel Obs*, November 21, 2016, https://www.nouvelobs.com/rue89/rue89-politique/20141213.RUE7016/le-jour-ou-extreme-droite-et-neonazis-europeens-se-sont-reunis-a-nanterre.html.
[42] Antoine Sillières, "Logan Djian, Patron du Gud Fiché S et Voisin de Collomb," *Lyon Capitale*, February 4, 2018, https://www.lyoncapitale.fr/politique/logan-djian-patron-du-gud-fiche-s-et-voisin-de-collomb.
[43] "'Bastion Social': Stratégie et Limites d'un Nouveau Mouvement de l'Ultra-Droite," *France Culture*, April 10, 2018, https://www.radiofrance.fr/franceculture/podcasts/choix-de-la-redaction/bastion-social-strategie-et-limites-d-un-nouveau-mouvement-de-l-ultra-droite-2479150.

2017.[44] He also maintained privileged links with CasaPound co-founder and main ideologue, Gabriele Adinolfi, who was invited several times in 2018 to lecture on BS premises. During its brief two-year existence, Bastion Social maintained such strong symbolic and interpersonal links with CasaPound that the creation of BS, which took place just after Bissuel's meeting with the CasaPound ambassador, may have been facilitated by financial and organizational support from CasaPound, a development clearly rooted in the model of material support provided to Ordre Nouveau by the MSI in the 1970s.

The creation of Bastion Social enabled the unification of several branches of the French far right, as the BS includes members of various other groups, including Génération Identitaires and Action Française. The creation of a formal structure like the GUD also came with the advantage of creating a legal separation between the violent actions of the GUD and the "community service" approach of Bastion Social. Despite this technical separation, the violent actions of BS members soon caught up with them. Indeed, the dissolution of BS by government decree was announced in February 2019 following the revelation of information from the French Renseignements Généraux that BS, in collaboration with another Parisian group close to the GUD (the Zouaves), incited the formation of an armed group in the context of the "Gilets Jaunes" social movement.[45]

From Unification to Decentralization: The GUD Today

Despite an effective dissolution in April 2019, Bastion Social was already in the process of reconstituting itself a few months later. This rebirth entailed the creation of a galaxy of small, decentralized structures. This strategy was announced semi-publicly—at a colloquium organized by far-right Synthèse Nationale on October 12, 2019—by Tristan Rochelle (also known as Tristan Conchon), former leader of the Lyon chapter of Bastion Social. Rochelle explained this choice to proceed through a "*multitude of local micro-structures*" to "*break with the classic pattern of a highly hierarchical, nationwide movement*" in order to dilute responsibility and complicate the task of monitoring by authorities.

The GUD torch has now been taken up by a multitude of local groups, all with ephemeral lives that revolve mainly around a semi-formal existence on social media. Their administrators are careful not to claim any formal affiliation, but a multitude of clues nonetheless point to a resurgence of the Bastion Social. Most significantly, the geographic distribution of these new structures reflects Bastion Social's historical presence across the French provinces. What's more, these decentralized groupuscules are headed by former Bastion Social regional leaders, most notably Bastion Social founder Steven Bissuel, who helped create Lyon Populaire. Lastly, there is a clear filiation in the history of these groupuscules' social media accounts: They are often the former accounts of Bastion Social's local chapters which have simply been renamed.

Similar ties of friendship are also displayed with Alvarium, a far-right group in Angers led by Jean-Eudes Gannat, son of a former cabinet director of Jean-Marie Le Pen. Alvarium was very close to Bastion Social, with whom it co-signed a call to take part in the C9M (Comité du 9 Mai) demonstration, the annual gathering of the French neo-fascist movement. When Alvarium was dissolved in November 2021, its members formed "RED-Angers," the name of which served as a reference to the aforementioned RED of the 2000s used by the GUD during its period of dormancy. All of these elements point in the direction of a filiation between these groupuscules and the dissolved Bastion Social (and, hence, with the GUD).

[44] Op. cit. "'Bastion social': Les Secrets du Nouveau GUD."
[45] Pierre Plottu, "Le Mouvement Néofasciste Bastion Social Renaît de ses Cendres," *Slate*, October 29, 2019, https://www.slate.fr/story/183429/bastion-social-gud-extreme-droite-radicale-ultradroite.

The GUD retained this decentralized structure until November 2022, when, at the initiative of Marc de Cacqueray de Valmenier (MCV), the "GUD" label was reactivated as part of the creation of a group referred to as GUD-Paris on social media.[46] The mobilization of this acronym by a fourth generation indicates that MCV had the authorization of—and therefore a certain proximity—to previous generations.

Indeed, MCV's lieutenant is Gabriel Loustau, son of Axel Loustau, Chatillon's right-hand man from the GUD's second generation. MCV's own family background predisposed him to far-right activism, as his parents are both close to Action Française, France's oldest far-right organization, of which Marc was a member before joining the GUD. Additionally, his uncle, Régis de Cacqueray de Valmenier, was a representative of the Brotherhood of St. Pius X in France and a chaplain for the Catholic far-right group Civitas. Finally, a distant relative, Louis de Cacqueray de Valmenier, was a Rassemblement National candidate in municipal elections and a member of Academia Christiana, a Catholic far-right training school.

By reactivating the GUD alongside Gabriel Loustau, MCV placed this fourth generation—comprising a galaxy of decentralized groupuscules on which GUD-Paris was superimposed without a vertical hierarchical structure—in the line of filiation stretching from the 1960s to the present day. One of the hallmarks of this affiliation is the omnipresent reference among these groupuscules to François Duprat, who was a member of all of the groups that preceded the GUD—Jeune Nation, FEN, and Occident—as well as a founding member and main ideologue of the Front National and a mentor of Jean-Marie Le Pen. A case in point here is the "Cercle François Duprat," a think tank formed in 2021 by Eliot Bertin, a former executive member of Bastion Social, and attached to the aforementioned GUD groupuscule Lyon Populaire. The stated aim of this think tank is to produce theory booklets for its members and to organize conferences, such as the one held on September 17, 2023[47] with Gabriele Adinolfi.

This invitation of Adinolfi—who was the Italian godfather of the previous generation of Bastion Social and who helped Chatillon establish his web of businesses in collaboration with the CasaPound networks—is by no means insignificant. In fact, it's yet another mark of filiation between the different generations of the GUD, each actively keeping these transalpine connections alive to benefit the next. Indeed, in just six months, Adinolfi met with the GUD groupuscules four (documented) times. In addition to the aforementioned meeting with Cercle François Duprat in September 2023, Adinolfi was invited twice by Thionville's Alérion group on December 10, 2023[48] and February 10, 2024.[49] At the latter meeting, Adinolfi debated with Robert Steuckers, a former member of GRECE in the 1970s and 1980s who was also close to Alexander Dugin and the Belgian far-right parties New Belgian Front and Vlaams Blok. The most recent meeting between Adinolfi and the GUD groupuscules took place on April 4, 2024 and was hosted by Des Tours et des Lys.[50]

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[46] Chloé Juhel, "Jordan Bardella et le Retour du GUD," *Le Courrier de l'Atlas*, November 8, 2022, https://www.lecourrierdelatlas.com/jordan-bardella-et-le-retour-du-gud/.
[47] Lyon Populaire (@lyonpopulaire), Instagram post, September 17, 2023, https://www.instagram.com/p/CxTJbJkofEG/?img_index=3.
[48] Alérion (@alerion_thionville), Instagram post, December 19, 2022, https://www.instagram.com/p/CmWeDxkqsJc/.
[49] Alérion (@alerion_thionville), Instagram post, February 6, 2024, https://www.instagram.com/p/C3AUMSUMuym/.
[50] Des Tours et des Lys (@destoursetdeslys), Instagram post, April 5, 2024, https://www.instagram.com/p/C5X4W8ftm3K/.

Conclusion

This overview of the GUD's lifespan exemplifies the adaptability of far-right groups to their environment as well as the difficulty that they pose for political authorities. As Gérald Darmanin continues his all-out crackdown on violent groups—21 groups have been disbanded as of 2020 sincehe was appointed Minister of the Interior—we must understand how the GUD has managed to slip through the cracks for so long as well as the real, physical threat that it poses to those who would stand in its way.

My hypothesis is that the GUD's ability to persist for such a long period of historyis linked to the fact that its leaders use the GUD name as a brand, enabling them to benefit from the support of previous generations and their international connections. In doing so, the group profits from continuous strategic and material support from the Italian far right.