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The ICCT Press was established in 2021. Other books by ICCT Press include:

Mehra, Tanya, Thomas Renard and Merlina Herbach, ed(s). *Female Jihadis Facing Justice: Comparing Approaches in Europe*. The Hague: ICCT Press 2024.

Schmid, Alex (ed.) *Handbook of Terrorism Prevention and Preparedness*, The Hague: ICCT, 2021.

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France: Interference Based on Resistance to the System

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Schematically speaking, the French far-right can be divided into four main clusters. But before developing them, it should be remembered that such a division is necessarily excessively schematic. Some activist circles have drawn up maps¹ that better illustrate its diversity. It is also important to mention the schools of thought which, under an often pseudo-intellectual veneer of bookshops and magazines, provide a link between conservative circles and violent militants.²

Our first two clusters are naturally the two political parties that represent what we refer to as the far-right, our two others are more nebulous movements. The National Rally (RN), following a rebranding operation from the National Front, is the political party traditionally embodying the far-right. Long marginalised and excluded from any coalition with other political parties (a process known as ‘barrage’) made a win for the RN in the second round of three presidential elections (2002, 2015, 2022) impossible. However, the RN has been notably mainstreamed since 2022 and has managed to secure a significant number of minority seats in parliament. Its aim, since this electoral success, has been to normalise and pursue a policy of “de-diabolisation”, abandoning its calls for withdrawal from the euro or the EU and sanctioning the most blatant racist expressions among its activists. The RN does, however, continue to maintain links with groups, or former members, that are keen on violence, in particular the Groupe Union Défense (GUD).³⁴

The second party, Reconquête (literally “Reconquest”, based on the premise that the country is being invaded and that control has to be regained), which emerged ahead of the 2022 elections around populist polemicist Eric Zemmour, remains

more controversial than the RN, aiming much more to provoke rather than to mainstream. Its competitive relationship with the RN is linked to its origins: it emerged by poaching leaders and seeking to capture voters. Reconquête assumes a representation of the world based on a migratory invasion that would endanger France and its identity, leading to xenophobic, racist, and Islamophobic narratives, as well as adherence to the theory of the Great Replacement.⁵ It is close to militant groups such as Génération identitaire (which was one of its founders).⁶ Reconquête is tantamount to a form of French-style Trumpism, both in terms of its massive recourse to influence operations on social media,⁷ and the ease it shows in dealing with the facts, purveying a form of post-truth.

On the French political spectrum, these two parties are the closest to the Kremlin's positions.⁸ In 2014, the RN benefitted from two loans from a Russian bank for a total of six million euros, which led to an even more visible alignment with Moscow's positions (already very compatible)⁹: anti-globalism, anti-liberalism, anti-LGBTQ+, anti-immigration, and perceived resistance to a threatening Muslim world. This ideological proximity concerns not only issues relating to Russia,¹⁰ but international relations as a whole.¹¹ The RN at the time (and those who left to found Reconquête) were the most virulent in defending and rehabilitating Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria and denying his crimes. RN member of parliament Thierry Mariani was one of Moscow's most active advocates in France, founding an association, Dialogue franco-russe, which is a front for Russian intelligence¹² to exert influence, and organising numerous trips to Damascus. Russian support for the RN crossed the boundaries of legality during the 2017 presidential election: the Macron Leaks, an audacious hack and leaks operation carried out with malware developed by Russian military intelligence (GRU)¹³ and amplified by the US alt-right through highly visible X (formerly Twitter) accounts and more discreet Telegram channels,¹⁴ aimed to prevent the election of Emmanuel Macron while he was engaged in an electoral standoff against Marine Le Pen.¹⁵ Notwithstanding RN's actions, it is Zemmour's civilisational representation of the world which makes him ideologically the closest to the "conservative revolution"¹⁶ ideas promoted by the Kremlin. The Russian ambassador to France indicated in 2015 to the author, when Zemmour was just a columnist not yet involved in politics, that he considered him to be the best analyst of French political life and an asset to work with.¹⁷

Researcher Adrien Nonjon recalls¹⁸ the reasons for the far right's fascination with Vladimir Putin: virile, conservative, a defender of traditional values, particularly

in the area of morality. Where France is portrayed as in decline, Putin offers the response of a man who is said to have turned his country around when it was plunging into chaos and restored its place in the international arena. Finally, he presents an alternative to the way the Western world is organised, offering a sovereigntist alternative to a situation that would otherwise place France in a position of vassalage to the US.

A third cluster is made up of a nebula of non-legalistic local action groups advocating violent action. These groups constitute what the security services call the ultra-right to differentiate them from the “official” radical right, which respects the law and participates in elections. The main difference is also the call for violence, although in practice, the line between a “legalistic far-right” and a “violent ultra-right” is not so watertight. Many of the militants involved in violent ultra-right actions are or have been members of far-right political parties. This ultra-right is fragmented but largely made up of neo-Nazi groups, some of them popular and close to skinheads, others elitist and royalist.¹⁹

Recently, their mode of networking has been both global, through internet channels (notably Telegram), and local, around places such as bars, combat sports clubs, soccer fans’ clubs, or bookshops.²⁰ The tactic has been to set up branches down to medium-sized, provincial towns, supposedly to defend local cultural identity against the immigrants, leftists, or homosexuals who purportedly threaten it. They post photos and videos on their Telegram accounts in which they perform shows of force, organising fights and raids against their targets. The flagship Telegram channel of the neo-Nazi hooligan movement, Ouest Casual, has played a major role in recent times, becoming a flagship of the radical-right internet apparatus. It also communicates in English and interacts with the international neo-Nazi scene, which is relatively new, given that the French far-right is traditionally French-speaking and Franco-centric. These groups are occasionally the subject of legal proceedings. Some have been the subject of administrative disbandment, which has had little effect since they quickly reformed under a different name, suffering only somewhat from these types of sanctions.²¹

This ultra-right-wing ecosystem has been profoundly disrupted by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.²² Many activists deplore this “civil war between whites, which distracts from the real fight, that against the migratory invasion”.²³ But while the vast majority appreciate Putin’s ideology, some of the neo-Nazi movements have come out clearly in favour of Ukraine, but a Ukraine embodied by a fantasised Azov Battalion. These individuals are not directly controlled by

Moscow but while joining highly controversial Ukrainian units they inadvertently, and in a minor sense, validate the Russian narrative on the need for “denazification” of Ukraine.²⁴

The fourth cluster in our description of the French far-right extremism is a new movement that is being described by the intelligence services as “conspiracists” (sometimes also nicknamed “ultra-jaunes”, or ultra-yellows, to refer to radicalised Yellow Vests).²⁵ In fact, it began to be observed during the Yellow Vests protest movement in 2018, a populist movement that was initially not very politicised but gradually became radicalised and was absorbed by the far-right. This protest movement took the form of roundabout occupations on the outskirts of towns, large-scale and violent demonstrations every Saturday in Paris, and publications (texts, but above all videos) by influencers on social networks. Most of these influencers were unknown or little known before the crisis. It is interesting to note that they were highly valued and amplified by the Kremlin’s media,²⁶ but also by Alexandr Dugin who gave them vocal support on his Facebook page.²⁷ They are still part of a powerful narrative today used by pro-Kremlin media in France.²⁸

Among the figures who have lent strong support to the Yellow Vests are André Ryssen, a *Unité Radicale* activist,²⁹ or Jacques Sapir, known on social media under his *Russeurope* alias, and an outspoken advocate of the Kremlin.³⁰ Several Yellow Vests have been convicted of calling for violence or forcible overthrow of institutions.³¹ After the end of this social crisis, leaders of this movement again became very active during the pandemic, adopting COVID-19-sceptic or anti-vax stances before taking up the Kremlin’s narratives³² during the full scale Russian aggression of Ukraine.³³ Many of these players can count on a parallel media ecosystem, calling itself *reinformation media*.³⁴ These media, present exclusively on the internet (websites, web-hosted TV channels, Telegram channels), have shown large areas of overlap with the Kremlin media.³⁵ The subjects covered, and the people invited to talk about them were largely the same. This very marginal ecosystem partly intersects with traditional media (*Valeurs actuelles*, *CNews*, *Sud Radio*, or newcomers like *Omerta*), sharing common guest speakers and narratives.³⁶ They were also very present on the Russian state media (*RT France*, *Sputnik in French*) until their ban by the EU in 2022.

Regardless of the aforementioned clusters, this chapter will study two cases that illustrate the Russian influence and penetration of the French far-right. First is the case of Joël Sambuis, a pioneer of far-right online activism in France, who has

been based in Russia since 1998, and secondly is Rémy Daillet, a leader of the *complosphere* (online ecosystem for spreading conspiracy theories)³⁷ who illustrates that even if this radical ecosystem is not directly activated by Russia, it is manipulated and amplified in the hope of provoking violent action in France. Our two main characters began their careers in right-wing or radical-right political parties, before drifting away from any institutionalised organisation, advocating violent action while establishing themselves as leaders of their own movements. The first one is directly linked to Russia, as it is based there and promotes the country and its political system. The second is a radical right-wing figure who curates audiences activated and agitated by the Kremlin media.

Case Study 1: Joël Sambuis, a Predecessor of Online Hate

Joël Sambuis was born in 1959 near Grenoble, in the foothills of the Alps. Before becoming involved in extremism, he was first active in two traditional right-wing movements, the Inter-University Union (UNI)³⁸ and the Rally for the Republic (RPR).³⁹ He soon found himself in trouble with the law. In 1986, he received his first prison sentence for charges of participation in a paramilitary group and possession of weapons.⁴⁰ Then he began running credit card scams. In 1995, he was sentenced to four years imprisonment for charges of a new scam but was released in 1997 and married a Russian citizen in October of the same year. In 1998, he moved to Russia under a forged Russian passport. In 2001 he was sentenced to five years' imprisonment in France, which he never served.

His first signs of online activity date back to the closing years of the last century, around the time of his departure to Moscow. At the time, the web was still a largely undeveloped and deregulated territory, with several pioneers exploring the limits of freedom of expression. Under a pseudonym on the Usenet forum, a general discussion platform divided into chatrooms, he particularly frequented the newsgroup fr.soc.politique. In January 2000, he created the *cameleon.org* site, which promoted total freedom of expression and provided anonymisation solutions.⁴¹

In January 2001, Sambuis created a website *SOS Racailles* – a name that resonates with another name of one of the main anti-racist NGOs, *SOS Racisme*, and the word *racaille*, which is racist slang for scum. The head of *SOS Racaille* hides behind the pseudonym “Nick Samere”.⁴² Joël Sambuis has never admitted to being behind *Liberty web's* French-language sites but the site's development

uses the same non-public programme as the commercial site Sambuis openly ran with his wife (moskokiosk.com).⁴³ SOS Racaille regularly praised Putin's Russia ("the only country today that dares to fight the Islamist threat"), operated around a core of five main contributors, all identified by investigations done by activists known as V8.⁴⁴ V8 identified Sambuis: the host of SOS Racaille, usually very careful to conceal any clues to his identity, mistakenly posted a message revealing his email.⁴⁵ This address, along with many other clues, enabled them to trace Sambuis's identity.

Liberty web's chatrooms had self-proclaimed armed branches, the *Comités canal résistance* (CCR), which mainly called for violence, promising "armed actions in housing estates" and "targeted eliminations".⁴⁶ It also claimed to have damaged mosques (including at least one arson attack) as well as the premises of anti-racist organisations, and committed at least one physical attack, on the parish priest of Saint-Denis cathedral, calling him a "collaborator of the migratory invasion".⁴⁷ Led by a mysterious Colonel X (yet another Sambuis alias), the CCR appeared in August 2001 via a press release on SOS Racailles.⁴⁸ One of their main targets was president Jacques Chirac, referred to by the racist term Ben Shirak, supposedly to demonstrate his complicity with immigration.⁴⁹

On 14 July 2002, a 25-year-old neo-Nazi militant, Maxime Brunerie, inspired by this call to violence, decided to attempt to assassinate Jacques Chirac as he reviewed the troops on the Champs-Élysées for Bastille Day.⁵⁰ He fired one shot, which missed, then turned the gun on himself, but did not have time to fire again. He was subdued by passersby and police. Even though the psychological disorders are confirmed (the perpetrator seems to have been unsettled by a breakup with his partner), premeditation of the act and its ideological roots were established. Maxime Brunerie had been active in neo-Nazi groups since he was a teenager, had posted a message on a Combat 18 forum inviting people to watch what he was going to do on television, and emptied his bank account in the days before. He was sentenced to ten years in prison.⁵¹

Investigators, unaccustomed at the time to looking for evidence online, established a connection with the sites run by Joël Sambuis and obtained his arrest by the Russian police in July 2003. Sambuis was remanded in custody pending trial in Russia, where he was accused of having entered with a false passport in 1998. It was agreed that France would then obtain his extradition to serve his five-year prison sentence for bank fraud before a possible trial for his involvement in the attempted murder of Jacques Chirac.⁵²

Shortly after his imprisonment, Sambuis applied to Russia for political asylum, claiming to be the object of “political persecution” in France and preferring “to die in Russia than to return to France”.⁵³ To everyone’s surprise, Sambuis was released in January 2004, a decision that mortified the French investigators.⁵⁴ Thirteen years later, journalist David Doucet tracked down the retired police officer who had led the investigation. Doucet’s book reveals the connection between Sambuis and the failed attempt on Chirac’s life:

The investigations we carried out within the anti-terrorist section revealed links, exchanges, between Brunerie and Sambuis. In these messages, we learn that it was Sambuis who launched the idea of carrying out an attack on the 14th of July, and Maxime Brunerie told him he was going to take action.⁵⁵

SOS Racailles disappeared in March 2003 but promised to reorganise.⁵⁶ In fact, under his various aliases, Sambuis continued to make death threats against Chirac. A message posted by user JackyNice who signed his call CCR on Liberty Web's fr.soc.politique forum, targeted the president, calling for “a VERY hard hit on Ben Shirak and a dozen other targets selling France to the Muslims”.⁵⁷ At the same time, a joint investigation by V8 and the anti-racist association Movement Against Racism and for Friendship between Peoples (MRAP) profiled a number of CCR members: one of them had been involved in the bombing of a mosque in Romans-sur-Isère in 1982.⁵⁸ However, the case against Sambuis in the Chirac affair was dismissed in 2009. The Russians’ lack of cooperation ruined the investigation.

There is virtually no trace of Sambuis’s activity between his last provocations in 2003 and the summer of 2015. All he did was post, under the pseudonym SOS R, on the blog euro-reconquista.com. In 2015, Sambuis decided to come back to the web. He first created a website named Eurocalifat, seeking to weaponise jihadist attacks,⁵⁹ but above all the migration crisis. “The Muslim invasion of Europe began a few weeks ago”, wrote the administrator to justify the site. The site was overflowing with uninhibited, xenophobic, and Islamophobic hate content, providing anonymisation advice, pleading for urgent action in the face of an imminent ethno-religious civil war.⁶⁰ The site was shut down in 2017 following a court ruling, something rare to happen in France. Sambuis replaced EuroCaliphathat with reseaulibre.org, which was itself quickly replaced with another site in 2018 to thwart an investigation by the online media outlet Mediapart. Sambuis took over one of his former aliases and opened leonfrance.net (which is

no longer updated but still online). “You’ve understood that no election can change anything, so much so that the country is in the hands of a mafia sold out to the invaders? Are you preparing for a merciless confrontation in your villages and towns to liberate our country? You are Léon!”⁶¹ displayed a welcome message on this new site.⁶² In May 2016, he opened rusreinfo.ru, which amplified the content of his other sites.⁶³

This cascade of sites is contradictory: it seems to want to blur the traces and ensure an online presence even if a site is targeted by an investigation – but at the same time, these sites do not hide their affiliation, reference each other, use the same terms, and focus on the same targets. Similarly, their administrator, Joël Sambuis, remains clearly identifiable despite the forest of pseudonyms he hides behind.⁶⁴

A study of the narratives propagated by these sites shows a predominance of disinformation, sometimes crudely forged, with a focus on Kremlin priorities: demonstration of the moral decadence of the West, the need for a multipolar world in the face of American hegemony, division, and demoralisation of Western public opinion, in particular by showing the corruption and duplicity of their elites. For example, rusreinfo claimed, a few days after the 13 November attacks, that Fabius had admitted to delivering assault rifles to the Islamic State (ISIS).⁶⁵ Just as Russian propaganda puppets in Africa claim that the French are complicit with jihadist groups in the Sahel, claiming that the West was supporting and arming ISIS was one of Russia’s main narratives to pretend that they were the ones actually fighting terrorism in Syria, while their main aim was to support Bashar. In November 2016, Sambuis revived one of his old techniques and attacked two right-wing politicians, including a presidential candidate, with Arabic sobriquets: François Fillon became Farid Fillon and Alain Juppé Ali Juppé, using the same process as his call for Chirac’s murder.⁶⁶ In March 2017, he again attacked Fillon by fabricating the news of his wife’s suicide.⁶⁷ In early 2018, Paris regional council member Pierre Serne was targeted by a violent harassment campaign after he took part in an LGBTQ+ rights march in Moscow.⁶⁸ In July 2018, he disseminated the Kalergi Plan conspiracy theory for the destruction of Europe.⁶⁹ This far-right, anti-Semitic theory, disseminated in France by Alain Soral, among others, supports the idea of a great replacement of Europe’s indigenous populations, made possible by the construction of Europe and benefiting Jewish supremacy – echoing the anti-EU, anti-Semitic clichés of Russian propaganda. The Yellow Vests provide an opportunity for further

misinformation: in January 2019, he forged and circulated a false memo signed by the then–Minister of the Interior, Christophe Castaner, claiming that the government would seek to seize the weapons of the people, suggesting that it was fearful of being overthrown.⁷⁰

In April 2019, he took up Russian Elena Chudinova’s theory on the Islamisation of Europe:

By 2048, Islam has taken the reins of power in most of the countries of the European Union, renamed the Euro-Islamic Bloc or Euroislam. At first, a large Albania, reunited with Kosovo, and re-Islamized and armed with petrodollars, seized what was left of Serbia. (...) In this nightmarish Europe, only two countries retained their independence: Greece, at the price of paying a heavy annual tribute, and Poland, the last Catholic country in Europe, which had the wisdom to ally itself with Russia and leave the European Union while [there] was still time. Russia stands as the last representative of the free world.⁷¹

These fantasies were tantamount to conspiracy theories, suggesting, for example, that the fire at Notre Dame was provoked by president Macron so that he could build a minaret in place of the spire. Via his various sites, he propagated alternative, conspiratorial, and pro-HCQ discourses during the pandemic.⁷²

In October 2022, a retired man imbued with racist ideology, 84-year-old Claude Sinké, attempted to set fire to the Bayonne mosque after shooting and hitting two worshippers who were trying to flee. The investigation revealed the role played by the nebula of Islamophobic sites, including those of the Sambuis galaxy, in activating this act, convincing him that the use of violence against Muslims was an urgent necessity.⁷³ Currently, Sambuis is mainly present via a nebula of French-language hate sites, hosted under his tvs24.ru domain. These include a mirror of the Riposte laïque site, as well as the sites of several contributors. Among the most visible contributors to these sites is Boris Karpov who also has a Telegram channel with over 18,000 subscribers and echoes Kremlin narratives. Behind this alias is no real person to be found – it could even be another account by Sambuis. In January 2023, for example, Karpov called for the derailment of trains carrying weapons to Ukraine. “Derailing a train isn’t very difficult, a few judiciously placed concrete blocks do the job perfectly.” “There are lots of other possible actions to help us without leaving France, and I invite those who really want to (with ACTS, not phrases!) to contact me by Telegram @B*****

(residents in France only, if and only if you're ready to make a concrete engagement)".⁷⁴

Case Study 2: An “Ultra-Yellow” turned Violent

The second case study is that of Rémy Daillet-Wiedemann. He is a living example of an ideological ecosystem dubbed the *complosphere* by the security services, which grew in influence during the Yellow Vests crisis and particularly proliferated during the pandemic.⁷⁵ Members of this far-right ecosystem draw heavily on the propaganda of the Kremlin media which has amplified their outreach considerably—and make no secret of their admiration for Vladimir Putin. However, it would be an exaggeration to consider them mere Russian assets. Their fascination with the fantasy of a child-kidnapping deep state also affiliates them closely with the QAnon movement.⁷⁶

Born in 1969, Daillet’s political involvement began in 1991 when, at the height of the Yugoslav war, he and his brother enlisted in the Croatian National Guard which at the time attracted a number of French nationalist activists.⁷⁷ Then, he briefly became a local executive in his father’s centre-right Democratic Movement (MoDem) party but was expelled after a stormy meeting during which he secretly recorded the discussions. Next, Daillet concentrated his activities on the internet, offering training courses for parents wishing to unschool their children. A father of seven himself, he became involved with the School Withdrawal Days JRE movement, and with his partner authored a guide entitled *I school at home* (2012) which advocates homeschooling children.⁷⁸ According to his site, “school is a dangerous place: pedos [*sic*], harassers, delinquents, drug dealers, labs and government are the big vectors of malaise, suicide, murder and common crime”.⁷⁹ Some of these sites adopt the codes of personal development or promise entrepreneurial recipes for making a fortune. He promotes his coaching activities on his Telegram channel *La Nouvelle France*, which was filled with praises of him, posted by fake admirers. Settled on a Malaysian island since 2015, he sold advice on how to make a fortune expatriating. He found himself hosting sites and pages on social media devoted to his favourite topics: opposition to vaccination, 5G, chemtrails, or Renaud Camus’ racist theory of the Great Replacement. He endorsed QAnon’s theses on the corruption of American politicians, compromised in an international paedophile conspiracy. He also

supported Holocaust denier and Nazi activist Vincent Reynouard and posted revisionist texts on Facebook under the pseudonym Thibault Lacroisade.⁸⁰

Starting in October 2020, Rémy Daillet called for a coup d'état in several videos viewed hundreds of thousands of times on YouTube.

I'm going to overthrow the government of the Republic which has totally sold out to the powers of money [...] I am the one who will abolish the current regime and replace it with a new one [...] It's us, Mr. Macron, who are going to oust you. You have betrayed France.⁸¹

Following these videos in late 2020, a 39-year-old man rammed a gendarmerie station with his car in Dax (Landes). He had told the investigators who had arrested him that he was in contact with Daillet, and that he wanted to launch a coup d'état.⁸² The perpetrator, diagnosed as bipolar, was given an eighteen-month suspended prison sentence. On his website, Daillet explicitly recruited militants to join his coup project. Each person can choose a role according to his or her skills or tastes: "liaison officer" or "handling explosives and dangerous devices".⁸³

Jeannot, Pitchoune, le Corbeau, Bruno, Bouga – these are the pseudonyms, which may sound farcical but were apparently not perceived as such by those who adopted them, of the people Daillet recruited online, convincing them that COVID-19 is a scam designed to establish a health dictatorship by Emmanuel Macron who collaborates with obscure hidden forces. More or less discreetly, they all joined the so-called "resistance", acquiring false vaccination certificates and exchanging information with their guru as they waited to take action. In April 2021, Rémy Daillet triggered his followers into action. He conceived and remotely ordered the abduction by several men of an eight-year-old girl, Mia Montemaggi, who was staying with her grandmother in the Vosges. The operation aimed to return the child to her mother, a fan of conspiracy theories and radicalised during the Yellow Vests movement, who had lost custody and was no longer allowed to see her unsupervised. After a five-day search that focused media attention, the little girl was found in a squat in Switzerland.⁸⁴

In May 2021, Daillet and his wife were arrested by Malaysian police and extradited to France in June, along with all of their three children. He took advantage of the media exposure of his first court appearance to announce his candidacy for the presidential election, to be held the following year. In the end, the proceedings initiated by the local court were taken over by the anti-terrorist

prosecutor's office since the investigating magistrates considered that the child abductions were an integral part of the plan of violent action aimed at overthrowing the state.⁸⁵ The investigation showed that the plan to kidnap Mia had been conceived by the plotters under the code name of Operation Lima and its ultimate objective was to topple the governmental institutions. Daillet's plan for the young Mia, the abducted eight-year-old, was to take her to the only place where he and his accomplices believed she would be safe: Russia.⁸⁶

The coup d'état project was called Opération Azur and was conceived in Daillet's self-imposed exile in Malaysia while France was locked down⁸⁷. Daillet used his websites and Telegram channel to recruit a more or less serious network. The organisation involved cells in different regions with *captains* and was divided into two branches: one civilian and one military, with actual weapons preparations and a recruitment plan. This second branch was led by two soldiers from the French army. In Daillet's phantasmagorical plans, one group of demonstrators was to engage the security forces without attacking them so that the latter would be overwhelmed. Another group would have used incendiary projectiles, while another would have gone "into contact and shoved [blackboulers] the adversary" explained the conspiracist himself. The attackers were equipped with explosives and riot shields. Once the Élysée was in Daillet's hands, he imagined giving a long speech. Meanwhile, his militants would have taken control of a radio or TV station to broadcast their propaganda over and over again, for at least three or four hours, according to the press account of his hearings.⁸⁸ While in pre-trial detention in October 2021, Daillet was implicated in another case by the General Directorate for Internal Security (DGSI, the French domestic intelligence agency)⁸⁹: a planned attack by the neo-Nazi group Honour and Nation founded in late 2019 by Sébastien Dudognon, a former leader of the National Youth Front (FNJ, the RN's youth movement). Phone taps as part of this investigation revealed discussions about *Jewish France*, compared to an "octopus to be eliminated". The most advanced scouting operations concerned Masonic temples, which the militants wanted to blow up. An initial wave of arrests within this group led to the identification of several people who regularly exchanged views with Daillet.⁹⁰

In March 2022, Sylvain Baron, one of the Yellow Vests' conspiracy figures, was indicted along with other Daillet associates on charges of conspiring against governmental institutions.⁹¹ Barron has long adopted positions in favor of Putin's Russia, whom he begs to come to the aid of French "resistance fighters".⁹² In May 2023, Rémy Daillet was finally released from prison.⁹³ The Paris-examining

magistrate's court had authorised his release under house arrest and electronic surveillance.

Admittedly, Rémy Daillet only had a virtual relationship with Vladimir Putin's Russia. There is no indication that he has been activated by Russian agents. On the other hand, he is part of a conspiracy fringe, which flourished during the Yellow Vests⁹⁴ and then the pandemic⁹⁵ which has been agitated and promoted incessantly through various Kremlin channels and flourished further after the invasion of Ukraine.⁹⁶ Putin has probably never heard of Daillet, but that has not stopped the latter from using the former in his recruitment for a planned coup d'état: to motivate his subscribers on his social media, Daillet claimed to be in contact with the Russian president (and also with Trump) as these would have lent their support in the event of an insurrection against the French government and institutions.⁹⁷ In this case, Russian influence, however evanescent, has mainly been an amplification, notably through the Kremlin media RT and Sputnik.⁹⁸ These media have brought together anti-system movements that were initially quite heterogeneous, even if most of them had an affinity for the far right. They have structured them and done their utmost to make their message both more audible and more normalised. To a lesser extent, Russia provided these groups with technical resources, particularly electronic ones. The lax regulation of a platform like the Russian VK has been a godsend, making it a rallying place for these militants.

Threat Analysis

The two case studies show actions taking place mainly online, with calls for violence leading to concrete acts, even if the kinetic impact of these movements remains far below the ambitions of their initiators. At the very least, Russian interference seems to have consisted of facilitation and the provision of resources. Moscow seems to have taken pleasure in inspiring and encouraging the development of far-right movements in France with varying degrees of ideological conviction: from the most doctrinaire far-right, seeking to develop a constructed ideological corpus, to the most nebulous, ideologically opportunistic, amalgamating anti-system frustrated people wishing to turn the tables. Whatever the case, the risk of violence is real, and the limited results so far seem to be the result of the mediocrity of the players involved.

The question remains whether Moscow instigates or accompanies these calls for violence. In other words, are individuals seeking violence looking to Russian propaganda for an ideological framework and justification to carry it out, or is Moscow activating individuals through hate speech, driving them to violence? Both phenomena are probably at work simultaneously. While the two case-study characters discussed above undoubtedly adhered to Russian positions on their own initiative, and declared their allegiance, in the case of Sambuis, Moscow provided him with asylum and means, while in the case of Daillet, Kremlin propaganda helped radicalise an audience that enabled him to find followers.

Counter-measures

The example of Joël Sambuis and his network of sites demonstrates the limits of counter-measures when the perpetrator is located in a country that is not cooperative in judicial matters, such as Russia, which seems, at the very least, to tolerate these activities from its soil. Moreover, this case shows the limits of justice when internet traces are blurred. Cascading pseudonyms do not fool many people, but they go some way towards maintaining a plausible deniability that favours closing the case in the absence of absolutely irrefutable evidence. The impact of these sites is mixed: on the one hand, the low visibility of these sites must be emphasised as they remain confidential and are rarely shared, as shown by the CrowdTangle tool.⁹⁹ These sites have also been flagged up by disinformation watchdogs such as FirstDraft¹⁰⁰ and Les Décodeurs du Monde factcheckers for their propagation of false news. However, within a certain radical sphere, these sites undoubtedly help to create a reality and incite people to take violent action. Furthermore, these marginal discourses are slowly infusing into more mainstream media, helping to popularise a kind of casual hate speech.

A major vulnerability is media regulation which is no longer as much a matter for the national level as for the European Commission. This raises legitimate fears since a liberal democracy rests fundamentally on pluralism and freedom of expression. However, the RT and Sputnik experiences have shown how malicious actors succeed in weaponising liberal legislation for their own benefit. Right from the beginning of the Yellow Vests crisis, one of the main narratives promoted on RT France was the delegitimisation of liberal democracy.¹⁰¹ Since their Europe-wide ban following the invasion of Ukraine, the Kremlin's media have deployed strategies enabling them to circumvent these sanctions, including the creation of

false-hat media, such as the Omerta web TV¹⁰² and an eponymous printed magazine,¹⁰³ without any particular reaction from the authorities. In addition, there have been ethical flaws on the part of traditional media: the BFM-TV news channel found it appropriate to conduct a complacent interview with Daillet in Malaysia before his arrest without taking into account the dangerousness and infectiousness of his words.¹⁰⁴

Recommendations

In France, counter-terrorism and counter-interference are entrusted to the same players: the domestic intelligence chain, headed by the DGSI. However, within this chain, hybridisations could be useful. France has not seen any major right-wing extremist attacks, although it has been hit particularly hard by jihadist-inspired terrorism. Counter-terrorism resources have risen sharply (the total cost of counter-terrorism operations following the 2015 attacks reached nine billion euros in 2019, according to a report by the Cour des Comptes,¹⁰⁵ while intelligence services have seen their budget envelope continue to grow)¹⁰⁶ but still need to be redeployed to cover the whole spectrum of threats even if awareness of the problem is growing, as shown by DGSI Nicolas Lerner's media interviews, in which he reminds that, while the risk of jihadist attack remains the main threat, the trivialisation of the use of violence by the "ultra-right" presents a significant risk of terrorist violence "in Western democracies, and in France in particular". In particular, he considers that the French radical right has been radicalised by the jihadist attacks that France has seen, but also cites "the influence of radical ideologies" from the US (but does not mention Russia).¹⁰⁷

The system for preventing radicalisation is more precarious, as shown by the drift of the SG-CIPDR (the state body responsible for designing and implementing, among other things, policies to prevent extremism), illustrated by the Marianne Fund¹⁰⁸ (a generous subsidy allocated in a light-hearted way, assigning the largest amounts to incompetent, biased, and even hateful actors). It is urgent to broaden this approach to take account of changes in the threat. The prevention of radicalisation would benefit from taking better account of foreign interference: for example, debates on the Muslim Brotherhood are polluted by caricatured language from the Middle East. In addition, these case studies show a certain success in recruiting the violent extreme right among members of the forces of law and order or the military. Dedicated prevention is urgently needed.¹⁰⁹

Last but not least, the actors identified are able to take crude advantage of their use of pseudonyms and their extraterritoriality (it was not for sedition or terrorism that Daillet was arrested by the Malaysian police but for a residence offence). It is probably unrealistic to expect the Russian police to cooperate in the current circumstances while the Russo-Ukrainian war continues. However, opportunities to neutralise the actors judicially have undoubtedly been overlooked in the past. Every possible window of opportunity must be seized to activate international judicial cooperation. The case of Boris le Lay, perhaps the most convicted neo-Nazi militant in France, who escapes punishment thanks to his exile in Japan, even though his address is known,¹¹⁰ is a grim reminder of France's inability or unwillingness to prosecute such offenders.

¹ La Horde. “Schéma de l’extrême droite (maj 12.2022) – La Horde.” [Diagram of the far right], 22 January 2023. <https://lahorde.samizdat.net/Schema-de-l-extreme-droite-maj-12-2022>.

² These schools can be found in two major networks: Alain de Benoist’s Nouvelle droite (New Right) and the Mouvement Nationaliste Révolutionnaire (MNR). One of their aims is to build bridges between traditional right-wing movements and more radical ones. What these “schools” have in common is their ideological alignment with the Kremlin. Alexandr Dugin, the main ideologist of the Russian New Right, has been a source of inspiration for its French counterparts. The French Nouvelle Droite expresses itself mainly in the magazines *Éléments* (of which a Russian edition, *Elementi*, appeared for a while), *Krisis* or *La Nouvelle revue Histoire*, and can be found in places such as the Institut Illiade (which took a rather pro-Ukrainian stance after the invasion, provoking tensions), or around people like Guillaume Faye. Little-known figures played an essential role, such as MNR’s Christian Bouchet’s *Ars Magna* publishing house, which translated Dugin into French. Bouchet had been in contact with the Russian far right since the fall of the Wall. Blending traditional far-right references with elitist, counter-revolutionary esotericism (he has visited Kashmir, where he claims Christ died), he is notably the editor of the “Geopolitics” pages of the magazine *Réfléchir et agir* (Think and Act).

³ Guillou Clément. “Rassemblement National: Jordan Bardella Peu Pressé de Rompre Avec Les Anciens Du GUD.” [Rassemblement National: Jordan Bardella in little hurry to break with GUD former members], 15 May 2023.

https://www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2023/05/15/assemblement-national-jordan-bardella-peu-presse-de-rompre-avec-les-anciens-du-gud_6173493_823448.html.

⁴ Baruch Jérémie and Guillou, Clément. “La GUD Connection. [The GUD Connection], 7 July 2023. https://www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2023/07/07/en-2022-le-rn-a-verse-au-moins-deux-millions-d-euros-aux-entreprises-de-la-gud-connection_6180978_823448.html.

⁵ Trippenbach Ivanne. “La théorie complotiste du « grand remplacement » chemine avec Eric Zemmour.” [The conspiracy theory of the "Great Replacement" goes hand in hand with Eric Zemmour] *LeMonde.fr*, 4 November 2021.

https://www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2021/11/03/la-theorie-complotiste-du-grand-remplacement-chemine-avec-eric-zemmour_6100783_823448.html.

⁶ Romano Camille. “Présidentielle: de Génération Identitaire à Reconquête, qui est Damien Rieu, la nouvelle recrue d’Eric Zemmour?” [Presidential election: from Génération Identitaire to Reconquête, who is Damien Rieu, Eric Zemmour's new recruit?], *lejdd.fr*, 5 September 2023. <https://www.lejdd.fr/Politique/presidentielle-de-generation-identitaire-a-reconquete-qui-est-damien-rieu-la-nouvelle-recrue-deric-zemmour-4089264>.

⁷ Carpentier Arthur, Marceau Bretonnier, Adrien Sahli, Elisa Bellanger, and Emile Costard. “Comment des militants d’Eric Zemmour gonflent artificiellement la présence de leur candidat sur Twitter” [How Eric Zemmour activists artificially boost their candidate's Twitter profile How Eric Zemmour activists artificially boost their candidate's Twitter profile], 2022. https://www.lemonde.fr/election-presidentielle-2022/video/2022/02/02/comment-des-militants-d-eric-zemmour-gonflent-artificiellement-la-presence-du-candidat-sur-twitter_6112033_6059010.html.

⁸ Vaissié Cécile. *Les Réseaux Du Kremlin En France [Kremlin Networks In France]*, Les Petits matins, 2016.

⁹ Laske Karl, Marine Turchi, and Madeleine Leroyer. “Le financier de la campagne 2017 de Marine Le Pen est lié aux autorités russes.” [The funder of Marine Le Pen's 2017 campaign is linked to Russian authorities], *Mediapart*, 20 April 2022.

<https://www.mediapart.fr/journal/international/200422/le-financier-de-la-campagne-2017-de-marine-le-pen-est-lie-aux-autorites-russes?userid=151e5eb4-8e78-42b0-ae44-aa1e39197b74>.

¹⁰ Stéphane François. “L’extrême-droite française contemporaine et le monde: une vision ‘alternative’ des relations internationales” [The contemporary French far right and the world: an ‘alternative’ vision of international relations], *Revue Interrogations*, 2015.

<https://www.revue-interrogations.org/L-extreme-droite-francaise>.

¹¹ Schmitt Olivier. *Pourquoi Poutine Est Notre Allié? Anatomie d’une Passion Française*, [Why Putin Is Our Ally: Anatomy of a French Passion], *Hikari*, 2017.

¹² According to a French intelligence assessment note, calling it “vérolé par le SVR”, “infected by the SVR”, disclosed in Hénin, Nicolas. 2016. *La France Russe: Enquête Sur Les Réseaux Poutine*.

¹³ “Les Preuves de l’ingérence Russe Dans La Campagne de Macron En 2017.” [Evidence Of Russian Interference In Macron's 2017 Campaign], *LeMonde*, 6 December 2019.

https://www.lemonde.fr/pixels/article/2019/12/06/macronleaks-des-hackeurs-d-etat-russes-ont-bien-voie-la-campagne-presidentielle-de-2017_6021987_4408996.html.

¹⁴ Scott Mark. “US Far-Right Activists Promote Hacking Attack Against Macron.”, *New Work Times*, 6 May 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/06/world/europe/emmanuel-macron-hack-french-election-marine-le-pen.html>.

¹⁵ Some 20,000 emails from Emmanuel Macron's campaign team were hacked by an actor using a malware developed by the GRU. They were then disseminated, mixed with a few forged or falsified emails, on a 4chan forum, with a major amplification effort provided by US alt-right influencers, starting with Jack Posobiec, and Kremlin media. The timing of the leak – two days before a presidential run-off election pitting Emmanuel Macron against Marine Le Pen, when a period of silence had begun that prevented the candidates from speaking publicly, and even the media from covering the election – was particularly sensitive. In the end, it was an attempt (ultimately unsuccessful) to upset the election in favour of Marine Le Pen. Read Jeangène-Vilmer, Jean-Baptiste. 2021. “The “#Macron Leaks” Operation: A Post-Mortem.” *Atlantic Council*, August. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/report/the-macron-leaks-operation-a-post-mortem/>.

¹⁶ Eric Zemmour positions himself by proposing a “civilizational counter-culture”, analysts explain. Magal, Marylou. 2022. “Une rentrée sous le signe de la civilisation pour Éric Zemmour.” [Éric Zemmour "back to school day" with a civilized outlook], *Le Figaro*, 11 September 2022, <https://www.lefigaro.fr/politique/une-rentree-sous-le-signe-de-la-civilisation-pour-eric-zemmour-20220911>.

¹⁷ Hénin Nicolas. *La France Russe: Enquête Sur Les Réseaux Poutine*. [Russian France: Investigating Putin's Networks] Fayard, 2016.

¹⁸ Interview with the author, June 2023.

¹⁹ *Libération* newspaper publishes an updated map of radical right-wing groups in France, with their ideology and local presence: https://www.liberation.fr/politique/carte-interactive-des-groupuscules-dextreme-droite-ils-sont-vraiment-partout-20231003_5HWZLQE2IBAJBLZZSEW5NRYZTY/?redirected=1.

²⁰ François, Stéphane. *Géopolitique Des Extrêmes Droites: Logiques Identitaires et Monde Multipolaire* [Geopolitics of the Extreme Right: Identity Logics and a Multipolar World], 2022.

²¹ Plottu Pierre and Macé Maxime. “Dissous il y a huit mois, Génération identitaire est de retour à bas bruit.” [Disbanded eight months ago, Génération identitaire makes a low-key comeback], *Libération*, 20 October 2021. <https://www.liberation.fr/politique/dissous-il-y-a->

huit-mois-generation-identitaire-est-de-retour-a-bas-bruit-20211020_XO3OEYPR5RAZHBR5XVXRRR4XXQ.

²² According to the author's monitoring of the ecosystem on Telegram.

²³ As worded by researcher Adrien Nonjon, interview with the author, June 2023.

²⁴ Geoffroy Romain. "Qui sont les soldats du régiment Azov, accusés d'être les « néonazis » de l'armée ukrainienne?" [Who are the soldiers of the Azov regiment, accused of being the "neo-Nazi" of the Ukrainian army?], *Le Monde*, 24 March 2022. https://www.lemonde.fr/les-decodeurs/article/2022/03/23/qui-sont-les-soldats-du-regiment-azov-accuses-d-etre-les-neonazis-de-l-armee-ukrainienne_6118771_4355770.html.

²⁵ Mahfud Y., and Adam-Troian J. "Macron demission!": Loss of significance generates violent extremism for the Yellow Vests through feelings of anomia. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 24(1), 108–124, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430219880954>.

²⁶ Colin Gérard, Guilhem Marotte, and Loqman Salamatian. "RT, Sputnik et Le Mouvement Des Gilets Jaunes: Cartographie Des Communautés Politiques Sur Twitter." [RT, Sputnik and Le Mouvement Des Gilets Jaunes: Mapping Political Communities on Twitter], *L'Espace Politique*, no. 40, October 2020. <https://doi.org/10.4000/espacepolitique.8092>.

²⁷ Mandraud Isabelle. "Les « gilets jaunes » vus de Moscou: une « révolution de couleur » fomentée par les Etats-Unis." [The "yellow vests" as seen from Moscow: a "color revolution" fomented by the United States], *Le Monde*, 3 December 2018. https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2018/12/03/les-gilets-jaunes-vus-de-moscou-une-revolution-de-couleur-fomentee-par-les-etats-unis_5392159_3210.html.

²⁸ The magazine Omerta, founded and staffed by former journalists of RT France after the station was banned, dedicated the cover story of its third issue (Oct. 2023) to their legacy. See https://twitter.com/Omerta_officiel/status/1713547076498264348.

²⁹ Unité radicale was a revolutionary nationalist political organisation created in June 1998 by the alliance of the Groupe union défense (GUD), Jeune Résistance and the Union des cercles de résistance, which had been joined by dissident executives and leaders of the Œuvre française, such as Thierry Maillard, and the Parti nationaliste français et européen (PNFE), criticising the inaction, folklorism, and backwardness of their former organisations. See LEBOURG Nicolas, « L'hydre de l'ultradroite » [The hydra of the ultraright], *Sciences Humaines*, 2019/6 (N° 315), p. 25–25. DOI: 10.3917/sh.315.0025. URL: <https://www.cairn.info/magazine-sciences-humaines-2019-6-page-25.htm>.

³⁰ Jacques Sapir, "Economiste, spécialiste de la #Russie et des questions monétaires #Euro", November 2012, <https://twitter.com/russeurope>.

³¹ *Le Parisien*. "L'ancien Gilet jaune Christophe Chalençon visé par une enquête après avoir menacé de mort Jacques Attali." [Former Gilet jaune Christophe Chalençon under investigation after making death threats against Jacques Attali], *leparisien.fr*, 5 July 2022. <https://www.leparisien.fr/faits-divers/lancien-gilet-jaune-christophe-chalencon-vise-par-une-enquete-apres-avoir-menace-de-mort-jacques-attali-05-07-2022-4W42JLOSHVHLBDNS63NI4DBN24.php>.

³² Plottu Pierre, and Maxime Macé. "Comment les antivax sont devenus les meilleurs relais de la propagande russe." [How antivax became the best relay for Russian propaganda], *Libération*, 24 March 2022. https://www.liberation.fr/politique/comment-les-antivax-sont-devenus-les-meilleurs-relais-de-la-propagande-russe-20220324_5CBSAUUXIJGR3DPE2Y5W5TEE64/.

³³ Anizon, Emmanuelle. "Ils disaient: « On nous ment sur le Covid ». Désormais, ils disent: « On nous ment sur l'Ukraine »." [They used to say: "We're being lied to about Covid". Now they say: "We're being lied to about Ukraine".], *L'Obs*, 16 March 2022.

<https://www.nouvelobs.com/societe/20220316.OBS55731/ils-disaient-on-nous-ment-sur-le-covid-desormais-ils-disent-on-nous-ment-sur-l-ukraine.html>.

³⁴ Stephan, Gaël. “Réinformation.” *La Revue Européenne Des Médias Et Du Numérique*, October 2023. <https://la-rem.eu/2023/10/reinformation/>.

³⁵ Brunet Margot, and Jean-Loup Adenor. “Après le Covid, les réseaux de “réinformation” antivax s'emparent de la guerre en Ukraine.” [After Covid, antivax “reinformation” networks take over the war in Ukraine], *Mariannet*, 10 March 2022.

<https://www.marianne.net/societe/apres-le-covid-les-reseaux-de-reinformation-antivax-s'emparent-de-la-guerre-en-ukraine>.

³⁶ There are few resources available that publish the audiences of radical right “alternative news” sites. Since the closure of Amazon's dedicated tool, researchers have had little choice but to use Similarweb and CrowdTangle. An infographic produced by ConspiracyWatch in May 2021 on “France's 10 most visited conspiracy sites” is available at <https://www.conspiracywatch.info/complosphere-quels-sont-les-10-sites-les-plus-visites.html>. All the sites listed can be politically classified as “far-right”. With two exceptions, their overall audience remains below one million page views per month. Websites mentioned as case studies in this research reach much lower levels.

³⁷ Fondation Descartes. “Complosphère, l'esprit conspirationniste à l'ère des réseaux.” [Complosphere, the conspiracy mindset in the age of networks], *Fondation Descartes*, July 2020. <https://www.fondationdescartes.org/2020/06/complosphere-lesprit-conspirationniste-a-leres-des-reseaux/>.

³⁸ The Union nationale inter-universitaire (UNI) is a French university organisation founded in 1969. Initially close to the moderate right, it became radicalised in the 1980s. In 2022, UNI national delegate Jacques Smith claimed that “the vast majority” of the union’s members also belong to Génération Z, the youth organisation of the radical-right Reconquête party. Read Trippenbach, Ivonne. “Avis de tempête à Reconquête,” *LeMonde*, 16 July 2022. https://www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2022/07/16/avis-de-tempete-a-reconquete-le-parti-d-eric-zemmour_6134991_823448.html.

³⁹ Rassemblement pour la République (RPR) was France's large mainstream right-wing political party between 1976 and 2002. It claims to be part of the legacy of General de Gaulle and was renamed Union pour un mouvement populaire (UMP).

⁴⁰ Manach Jean-Marc. “transfert.net./ Sos-Racaille : Sambuis, le cerveau présumé, sera d'abord jugé en Russie” [Sos-Racaille: Sambuis, the alleged mastermind, will first be tried in Russia], 2003. <https://transfert.net/Sos-Racaille-Sambuis-le-cerveau>.

⁴¹ Albertini Dominique, and David Doucet. *La Fachosphere: Comment l'extrême Droite Remporte La Bataille d'Internet* [The Fachosphere: How the Far Right Wins the Internet Battle], Flammarion, 2016.

⁴² Nick Samere is slang for motherf*cker. Manach, Jean-Marc. “transfert.net./ Pas de pitié pour la haine en ligne!” [No mercy for online hate!], 2003. <https://transfert.net/Pas-de-pitie-pour-la-haine-en>.

⁴³ Manach Jean-Marc. “transfert.net./ Sos-Racaille: Sambuis, le cerveau présumé, sera d'abord jugé en Russie”, 2003. <https://transfert.net/Sos-Racaille-Sambuis-le-cerveau>.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ternisien Xavier. “La victoire d'une poignée de cyberjusticiers contre des sites racistes.” [The victory of a bunch of cyber vigilantes against racist sites], *LeMond*, 29 September 2003. https://www.lemonde.fr/archives/article/2003/09/29/la-victoire-d-une-poignee-de-cyberjusticiers-contre-des-sites-racistes_335846_1819218.html.

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- ⁴⁶ Launet Edouard. “Traquer les caméléons du Net.” [Tracking the Net's chameleons], *Libération*, 29 October 2003. https://www.liberation.fr/grand-angle/2003/10/29/traquer-les-cameleons-du-net_449830/?redirected=1.
- ⁴⁷ Ternisien Xavier “Un groupe d’extrême droite veut s’en prendre aux « intérêts musulmans de France ».” [A far-right group wants to attack "Muslim interests in France"], *Le Monde*, 1 February 2003. https://www.lemonde.fr/archives/article/2003/02/01/un-groupe-d-extreme-droite-veut-s-en-prendre-aux-interets-musulmans-de-france_4269600_1819218.html.
- ⁴⁸ SOS-racaille, “Communiqué des CCR”, 2001, <https://web.archive.org/web/20011212084809/http://sos-racaille.org/ccr1.html>.
- ⁴⁹ Laurent Yann. “Le webmaster d’un site néonazi, SOS-Racaille, a été interpellé par les polices française et russe.” [The webmaster of a neo-Nazi website, SOS-Racaille, has been arrested by French and Russian police], *Le Monde*, 8 August 2003. https://www.lemonde.fr/archives/article/2003/08/08/le-webmaster-d-un-site-neonazi-sos-racaille-a-ete-interpelle-par-les-polices-francaise-et-russe_330062_1819218.html.
- ⁵⁰ Tourancheau Patricia. “Un tireur isolé vise Chirac sur les Champs-Élysées.” [Sniper targets Chirac on Champs-Élysées], *Libération*, 14 July 2002. https://www.liberation.fr/evenement/2002/07/15/un-tireur-isole-vise-chirac-sur-les-champs-elysees_410183/.
- ⁵¹ L’Obs. “Brunerie condamné à 10 ans de prison.” [Brunerie sentenced to 10 years in prison], *L’Obs*, 10 December 2004. <https://www.nouvelobs.com/societe/20041210.OBS3390/brunerie-condamne-a-10-ans-de-prison.html>.
- ⁵² Manach Jean-Marc. “transfert.net./ Sos-Racaille: Sambuis, le cerveau présumé, sera d’abord jugé en Russie” [Sambuis, the alleged mastermind, will first be tried in Russia], 2003. [https://transfert.net/Sos-Racaille-Sambuis-le-cerveau; Gateway To Russia. “French Fraudster Suspected of Ties with Extremists Detained in Moscow”, 2003. \[https://web.archive.org/web/20030817112749/https://www.gateway2russia.com/st/art_110121.php\]\(https://web.archive.org/web/20030817112749/https://www.gateway2russia.com/st/art_110121.php\).](https://transfert.net/Sos-Racaille-Sambuis-le-cerveau; Gateway To Russia. “French Fraudster Suspected of Ties with Extremists Detained in Moscow”, 2003. https://web.archive.org/web/20030817112749/https://www.gateway2russia.com/st/art_110121.php)
- ⁵³ Nougayrède Natalie. “Joël Sambuis, le Français qui demande l’asile politique à la Russie.” [Joël Sambuis, the Frenchman seeking political asylum in Russia], *Le Monde*, 29 September 2003. https://www.lemonde.fr/archives/article/2003/09/29/joel-sambuis-le-francais-qui-demande-l-asile-politique-a-la-russie_335847_1819218.html.
- ⁵⁴ Smolar, Piotr and Subtil Marie-Pierre. “Confusion après la libération du ‘cerveau’ du site SOS-Racaille incarcéré à Moscou.” [Confusion following the release of the 'mastermind' of the SOS-Racaille website imprisoned in Moscow], *Le Monde*, 30 January 2004. https://www.lemonde.fr/archives/article/2004/01/30/confusion-apres-la-liberation-du-cerveau-du-site-sos-racaille-incarcere-a-moscou_351093_1819218.html.
- ⁵⁵ D. Albertini and Doucet (2016).
- ⁵⁶ Manach Jean-Marc. “transfert.net./ Pour les anciens de Sos-Racaille, la lutte continue” [For the former members of Sos-Racaille, the fight goes on], 2003. <https://transfert.net/Pour-les-anciens-de-Sos-Racaille>.
- ⁵⁷ Message archived and in possession of the author.
- ⁵⁸ Manach Jean-Marc. “Les Comités Canal Résistance ou l’art de la provocation” [The Comités Canal Résistance or the art of provocation], 2003. <https://transfert.net/Les-Comites-Canal-Resistance-ou-l>.
- ⁵⁹ Lebourg Nicolas. “Le Terrorisme islamiste entraîne-t-il une droitisation politique?” [Does Islamist Terrorism lead to political rightism?], *Les Temps Présents*, 15 August 2016.

<https://tempspresents.com/2016/08/15/terrorisme-droitisation-france/>.

⁶⁰ Suc Matthieu and Marine Turchi. “Révélations sur des «patriotes» qui projetaient des attentats islamophobes.” [Revelations about "patriots" who planned Islamophobic attacks], *Mediapart*, 20 May 2021.

<https://www.mediapart.fr/journal/france/010419/revelations-sur-des-patriotes-qui-projetaient-des-attentats-islamophobes>.

⁶¹ Léon is a pun on the word chameleon, to suggest that the author is elusive, ubiquitous, and can hide anywhere. The injunction “You are Léon” is an invitation to join this clandestinity by hiding like a chameleon. The term contains another pun with the word *camé*, French slang for junkie, but it’s unlikely that Sambuis meant to suggest a “junkie Léon”.

⁶² “Léon, c’est vous, c’est moi, c’est nous!” [Léon, c’est vous, c’est moi, c’est nous!"] Léon France. <https://leonfrance.net/leon-cest-vous-cest-moi-cest-nous/>.

https://web.archive.org/web/20240000000000*/https://leonfrance.net/leon-cest-vous-cest-moi-cest-nous/

⁶³ Personal OSINT research by the author.

⁶⁴ Albertini Dominique and David Doucet. *La Fachosphère: Comment l’extrême Droite Remporte La Bataille d’Internet* [The Fachosphere: How the Far Right Wins the Internet Battle], 2016; Suc Matthieu and Marine Turchi. “Révélations sur des «patriotes» qui projetaient des attentats islamophobes.” [Revelations about "patriots" who planned Islamophobic attacks], *Mediapart*, 20 May 2021.

<https://www.mediapart.fr/journal/france/010419/revelations-sur-des-patriotes-qui-projetaient-des-attentats-islamophobes>.

⁶⁵ Rusreinfo, “La France a livré des fusils d’assaut à l’Etat Islamique”, 16 November 2015, <https://rusreinfo.ru/fr/2015/11/la-france-a-livre-des-fusils-dassaut-a-letat-islamique/>.

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