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The extreme right party family

Studies of political parties have been based on a multiplicity of both scholarly and political theories, and have focused on a variety of internal and external aspects. As is common within the scientific community, complaints have been voiced about the lack of knowledge in particular areas of the field, such as party (as) organisations (Mair 1994), party ideology (Von Beyme 1985), and minor or small parties (Fischer 1980; Müller-Rommel 1991). However, even though a lot of work certainly remains to be done, political parties do constitute one of the most studied fields in political science in general, and comparative politics in particular (Katz and Mair 1992; Janda 1993).

Studies of political parties focus primarily either on the whole group of political parties or on different subgroups within the larger group. The former studies are aimed at determining what characteristics all political parties have in common. They mainly focus on constructing a (general) theory and definition of political parties. Even though many theories have been developed during the past decades, 'there has been no dominant theoretical perspective in the study of political parties' (Crotty 1991: 145). This also holds true for the second group, which deals with defining the political party. There is a wide variety of definitions, based on an almost as wide variety of criteria, but none can claim general acceptance in the field. However, a consensus can be found in the fact that the political party is to be defined primarily on the basis of its function(s). It is also on this basis that the political party will be defined in this study, namely as *any political group identified by an official label that places candidates for public office through elections* (see also Sartori 1976: 63). Although such definitions have sometimes been criticised for being (too) narrow (see Janda 1993), and although this criticism might be valid in certain cases, a 'minimal definition' serves the purposes of this study, i.e. identifying the object.

The concept of the party family

In addition to the group of scholars that study characteristics that are part of all political parties, a large(r) group centres on the distinction of different subgroups within the larger group. This is generally done by constructing typologies or classifications of political parties. The construction of classifications forces researchers to structure their knowledge and information of the subject at hand, which again helps them to gain a greater understanding and control of that subject (Lazarsfeld and Barton 1951). What variable is chosen as the theoretical basis of the classification, or combination of variables in the case of a typology, depends on the interest and research question of the author (e.g. Mair 1990).

One of the most popular classifications is that of the so-called party family, in which political parties are grouped across countries predominantly on the basis of their ideology. Although this idea has been elaborated at the theoretical level only relatively recently, it has been part implicitly of several of the older studies in the field, going back to the classical studies of Michels (1911/78), Duverger (1951:64) and Lipset and Rokkan (1967). The idea of the party family is not one of the most rigorously tested classifications in political science, however; and, for the most part, it has its vagueness and 'common sense' to thank for its wide usage. However, the distinction of political parties on the basis of ideology has both theoretical and practical merits (see Mair and Mudde 1998).

One of the most authorative sources on party families is Von Beyme's *Politische Parteien in Westeuropa* (1984; English translation in 1985). In this book he constructs several typologies, based on different criteria, of which the most important criterion is to be found at the ideological level: that of the *familles spirituelles*. It is these ideological 'families' that are compared on the basis of the other criteria. Although his main typology is based on ideology, Von Beyme writes that he has constructed the different types on the basis of Rokkan's famous historical–sociological study of the four critical lines of cleavages (Von Beyme 1985: 23). Where Rokkan distinguishes ten 'ideological groups' on the basis of four major conflicts (cleavages) in Western Europe (Rokkan 1970), Von Beyme specifies only nine 'spiritual families': (i) liberal and radical parties; (ii) conservative parties; (iii) socialist and social democratic parties; (iv) christian democratic parties; (v) communist parties; (vi) agrarian parties; (vii) regional and ethnic parties; (viii) right-wing extremist parties; and (ix) the ecology movement.

The classification of individual parties into these nine party families is done on the basis of two 'ideological' criteria: the *name* of the party, and, when this is not (or no longer) satisfactory, the *voters'* perception of party programmes and ideological position (Von Beyme 1985: 3; my italics).[1]

[1] Seiler (1980, 1985) has constructed a typology of *familles partisanes*, which is based even more closely on Rokkan's four cleavages model. He comes, however, to a far greater number

Although party ideology is said to be the most important criterion for classification, it is used only in an indirect way, i.e. through the eyes of the party itself (party name) or of the voters. Thus it is not the researcher who assesses the ideology of the different parties. This is also true for the assessment of the content of the party ideologies, as the attention in the book is predominately directed at the ideology of the different *familles spirituelles*, not at that of the different member parties. Moreover, whether the ideology of a certain party family is identical to that of all its member parties, or whether the individual parties are classified correctly on the basis of (one of) these indirect criteria, is not discussed by the author. His main interest is clearly in the party family as a whole, especially its development, rather than in the individual members that constitute the family.

More recently, Gallagher *et al.* have listed three criteria on the basis of which different party families in Western Europe can be distinguished: (i) 'genetic' origin, (ii) transnational federations and (iii) policies (1995: 181). With a shared genetic origin the authors mean that parties mobilised either in similar historical circumstances or with the intention of representing similar interests. As examples of these families they name socialist (or social-democratic) and agrarian parties. This criterion seems most strongly influenced by Rokkan's cleavage approach.

For the classification of political parties in general and the group of parties that is the concern of this study – (alleged) extreme right parties of the 1980s – in particular, the 'genetic' criterion is of limited use. Although these parties by definition mobilised in similar historical circumstances, Western Europe of the 1980s, they are not the only (group of) parties of this historical period; the green parties, for instance, also mobilised during this period. Nor does the criterion of (the intention of) representing similar interests apply to this specific group. It has been argued that Lipset's thesis of middle-class extremism, originally developed for the pre-war *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* (German National Socialist Workers Party, NSDAP), is also valid for the post-war extreme right parties (Lipset 1960; Kühnl *et al.* 1969). However, this thesis has come under increasing attack in the last decades (Childers 1983; Falter 1991) and electoral studies have shown that the electorates of modern extreme right parties of the second (Herz 1975; Husbands 1981) and third 'wave' of post-war right-wing extremism are too diverse to speak of middle-class extremism (Betz 1994; Kitschelt 1995).

of families than both Von Beyme and Rokkan. The individual parties are classified on the basis of (1) the historical function performed by the party at its creation; (2a) the sociological structure of the party's electorate, membership and inner group; and (2b) the linkage structure between the party and a given network of pressure groups, movements and associations (Seiler 1985: 81). Many of his *familles partisanes* clearly coincide with the party families generally classified on the basis of ideology, which also seems to be the major criterion for the 'linkage structure' in the third criterion.

The second criterion Gallagher *et al.* mention is based on pragmatic rather than theoretical considerations, i.e. the cross-national linkages that parties have developed among themselves. These linkages are chosen by the parties themselves, and are generally based on (the assumption of) a shared ideology. The most important examples of official organisations of parties from different countries are (i) the party groups in the European Parliament (EP) and (ii) the transnational party federations. Both are primarily organised on the basis of (the assumption of) shared ideological principles (Pridham and Pridham 1979a, 1979b; Bardi 1994).

From the very beginning of the establishment of some form of EP, various groupings of parties have been in place. In the first period only three party groups were represented in the then Common Assembly of the European Coal and Steel Community: the socialists, the christian democrats and the liberals. Since the 1980s, there seems to be a trend towards a closer cooperation between national parties within the existing party groups, on the one hand, and towards competition between these groups instead of between the various national parties, on the other hand. In addition to the three original groups the green parties also form a relatively well organised party group in the EP. Looser coalitions are formed by various regionalist parties in the Rainbow Coalition and during the years 1984–9 and 1989–94 by extreme right parties. This notwithstanding, not all political parties represented in the EP are members of a party group (or 'official' party family) and not every party family is represented as a party group in (every term of) the EP. Moreover, not all political parties that can be described as 'relevant' in the Sartorian sense (Sartori 1976) at the national level are represented at the European level.

Except for the party groups in the EP there are a number of transnational party federations that reach beyond the geographical boundaries of the European Union (EU). In his handbook on political parties of the world Day notes a 'growing inclination of political parties throughout the world to construct or join international organisations of like-minded formations' (Day 1988: ix). Some examples of world-wide federations are the Socialist International (primarily socialist and social-democratic parties), the Socialist Fourth International (Trotskyist parties), and the Liberal International. Even though most of these transnational federations are older than the party groups in the EP, the latter seem to be of bigger importance in the possible foundation of transnational, most likely Euro-, parties (Bardi 1994). However, it will still be a long time before transnational parties will become as relevant as national parties.

Though the criterion of transnational federations has the obvious advantage of being based on clear and open relations between parties, it has severe shortcomings when applied to classifying small parties in general and to the group of extreme right parties of the 1980s in particular. Although there exist several cross-national linkages between parties within the latter group,

most of these are neither official nor at the party level. Various linkages are *ad hoc* or only at the individual level. And, although there have been extreme right party groups in the EP, they have always involved only a few of the parties generally considered extreme right (as most of them never made it into the EP). On top of this, the party groups differed considerably in member parties and were highlighted by disputes both within and between the various parties (e.g. Osterhoff 1997; Veen 1997; Fennema and Pollmann 1998). The particular situation of a 'contaminated' family name, finally, makes the more successful parties often cautious to use it, and they often even distance themselves from 'family members' abroad (Pfahl-Traughber 1994).

This leaves us with the third criterion, i.e. policies, or to be more precise 'the extent to which the policies pursued by one party in a country are similar to those pursued by another party in another country' (Gallagher *et al.* 1995: 181). The authors warn that this criterion has the disadvantage that it naively assumes that the same policy means the same thing in different countries. Seiler even went so far as to state that the use of the criterion of 'policies really implemented by political parties' in cross-national research would in practice lead to a typology of countries rather than of parties (1985: 81). The question is how to solve this problem of cross-national comparability. While authors like Seiler have decided to ignore the criterion, Gallagher *et al.* state that 'to ignore professed policies altogether when looking for similarities between parties would clearly be to stick our heads in the sand' (1995: 181).

The problem of cross-national comparability can be circumvented by focusing on the ideology of the parties. Ideologies function as the normative bases of the pursued policies of political parties and have the advantage of being more generally formulated than the more nationally centred policies that are pursued (Christian and Campbell 1974; Sainsbury 1980). Even though the aspect of ideology has been ignored somewhat within the study of party politics, most scholars in the field do accept the importance of it (LaPalombara and Weiner 1966; Janda 1993). This is especially the case in comparative studies, as '[i]deology and program are … a convenient vehicle for bringing some kind of intellectual order out of what would otherwise be the chaos of competing political groups' (Alexander 1973: xix).

The study of extreme right parties

The rise of right-wing extremist parties comes in waves, as authors have observed for several West European countries (see Knütter 1991; Zimmermann and Saalfeld 1993; Buijs and Van Donselaar 1994). According to some authors these waves are similar in all or at least most of the countries (e.g. Von Beyme 1988; Stouthuysen 1993; Epstein 1996), whereas others believe that they are for the largest part country specific (e.g. Veen 1997). Buijs and Van Donselaar argue that what seems to be a European development might

be no more than a 'temporary and accidental coming together of the national development of a number of countries' (1994: 30). As they state, however, at the moment there is insufficient empirical evidence to support this, in their own words, relativising view (though see Husbands 1996).

Not only do extreme right parties rise in waves, but so do the studies on the subject, with a slight delay. This conjunctural development of scholarly studies on right-wing extremism has been written on and warned against (e.g. Backes 1990a). The recent 'high' in literature on extreme right parties is in line with this development. As extreme right parties either win or maintain their position in the various West European party systems, the number of writings on the phenomenon is exploding. Most of the literature is of a primarily descriptive nature, portraying (the history of) either one extreme right party or extreme right parties in one country. Only fairly recently have some truly comparative studies been undertaken in the field of party ideology (Gardberg 1993; Mudde 1995) and on explanations of the current electoral success of extreme right parties (Betz 1994; Kitschelt 1995).

The study of the third wave, 1980–2000

The 'third wave' of post-war right-wing extremism (Von Beyme 1988) is without a doubt the most successful period in both the electoral and ideological sense for such parties in almost every West European country (see Suleiman 1995; Taggart 1995). Even though they are still regarded as pariahs in most countries, some extreme right parties have established themselves, at the least, as politically important pariahs, as, for instance, the French *Front National* (National Front, FN) and the Belgian *Vlaams Blok* (Flemish Block, VB). In Italy the *Alleanza Nazionale* (National Alliance, AN) was the first West European extreme right party of the post-war period to make it into government. The extreme right has become a relevant factor in West European politics both within the party system and outside of it (as, for example, the extreme right linked violence in Germany, Austria and elsewhere).

The importance of extreme right parties is also visible in the field of research. Not only has the number of studies on the subject exploded, but also the number of scholars active in the field and the theoretical approaches applied to the field has expanded enormously (see Mudde 1996). Probably the most important development since the early 1980s has been the influx of scholars that originally worked outside the field of right-wing extremism (and historical fascism). This has, on the one hand, brought valuable insights from the study of, for instance, political parties in general and left-libertarian parties in particular (see, most notably, Betz 1994; Kitschelt 1995). On the other hand, it has incorporated the study of extreme right parties into the wider study of political parties, thereby providing useful insights for, among others, the study of small and new parties (e.g. Ignazi 1996). How-

ever, these developments have not only made the field broader in volume, but also the number of debates have increased. In comparison to the situation some ten years ago, we now know far more about extreme right parties, yet seem to agree on far less. In particular, there is increasing disagreement on which parties might be properly regarded as extreme right.

Which parties?

> Though formal definitions or derivations based on the history of ideas largely failed to provide a convincing concept for 'right-wing extremism', research work on political parties of the right has not had serious problems in selecting appropriate cases. (Von Beyme 1988: 3)

Von Beyme's observation is valid for most party families: we seem to know *who* they are even though we do not exactly know *what* they are. However, there are some special circumstances for this particular family that make the implications of the remark more serious. First, various other parties have (part) of the family name in their own party name, a feature which is especially obvious in the case of some left-wing families (notably communist and green). This is not true for the right-wing extremist parties, however, which not only reject the term extremist, some even object to the term right-wing (Verbeeck 1994), as is evident, for example, in the case of the two Dutch *Centre*parties. Second, most other party families have some sort of transnational federation in which the various national parties cooperate, whereas this is missing for the extreme right parties.

The 'appropriate cases' that are selected without serious problems by the various researchers involved in the field are listed in appendix A. The political parties listed are those generally considered 'extreme right', which contested national elections at least once in the 1980–95 period. Clearly, not every West European country is mentioned as there is no extreme right party in, for example, Iceland and Ireland that meets the election requirement. Nor is every party mentioned studied with equal care and attention. Parties like the FN and the German *Die Republikaner* (The Republicans, REP) belong to the better-known and studied political parties in Western Europe, while parties such as the Dutch *Centrumpartij'86* (Centre Party'86, CP'86) and the Swiss *Schweizer Demokraten* (Swiss Democrats) are virtually unknown beyond (and even within) their own national boundaries.

The fact that German extreme right parties (not only the REP) are studied so intensively shows that electoral significance is not the only or even main reason for scholarly attention. Even though they have had some electoral success at the *Land* (state) level and once at the European level, the German parties are of mediocre size at the national level in comparison to many of their European counterparts. Still, the REP has been studied by both German and non-German scholars more than, for instance, the almost equally successful Dutch *Centrumdemocraten* (Centre Democrats, CD). The

prime reason for this is, of course, the legacy of the past. On top of that and also because of this legacy there are more scholars from Germany working in the field of right-wing extremism than from other countries (Roberts 1994).

A practical reason for the difference in scholarly attention is language. As Müller-Rommel has noted this is a restraining factor in the study of all small parties, especially when primary sources are involved:

> Studying small parties obviously encounters some unique problems especially when it comes to gathering information for a cross-national analysis. In most cases there are clearly language problems. Although it is relatively easy to collect information on party programmes, manifestos and party statutes, it is notably more difficult to read these brochures since (in most cases) they have not been translated into English or another international language. (1991: 2)

Language is the main reason why the scholarly (English-language) community can get more information on, for instance, the British extreme right parties, the *National Front* (NF) and the *British National Party* (BNP), whose electoral relevance is particularly small, than on a party like the Belgian VB, one of the more successful yet still relatively little-known extreme right parties. It might also be one of the main reasons why the 'doyen' of right-wing extremism, the Italian MSI, has been largely ignored by the international scholarly community. However, language does not explain everything, since the MSI has only recently been discovered as a scientific topic by the Italians themselves (Ignazi 1989, 1994c; Ferraresi 1996). Moreover, the relatively new regional leagues have been the subject of intensive study both from Italian and non-Italian scholars, making them the subject of more (inter)national scholarly attention than the almost five times older and still more successful MSI (now AN).

There are also some parties whose extreme right status is disputed by some of the (leading) scholars in the field. One of these borderline cases is the *Lega Nord* (Northern League, LN) and its main predecessor the *Lega Lombarda* (Lombard League, LL), which some authors define as part of the regionalist or sub-nationalist rather than the extreme right party family (see Ignazi 1992; Gallagher *et al.* 1995). This may, except for the obvious regionalist platform and support, be partly the result of the fact that the LL itself chose to be part of the regionalist Rainbow Coalition in the European Parliament in 1989 instead of joining the Technical Fraction of the Euroright; in 1994 the LN joined the Euroliberals.

A party whose ideological status has been the subject of scientific, public and political debate, is the German *Die Republikaner*. Whereas most scholars have defined the party as extreme right there are some who have rejected this labelling. They argue that the REP is fundamentally different from the traditional German extreme right parties (such as the NPD), among other reasons because the REP originated as a splinter from a democratic party

(see chapter 2) (Backes 1990b; Veen *et al.* 1993). These scholars have long been 'supported' by the German state, which in its influential *Verfassungsschutzbericht* did not list the REP among the extreme right groups. However, in December 1992 the German state changed its view and the REP is from that time officially labelled extreme right. Even though this decision has been criticised from both inside and outside the REP as being primarily politically and electorally motivated (Jaschke 1994; More 1994), it has certainly weakened the argument advanced by the 'dissidents'; most have since changed to the new state terminology.

The Austrian *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs* (Austrian Freedom Party, FPÖ) did not originate from a purely right-wing extremist environment either. The party was founded in 1955/6 as the successor of the *Verband der Unabhängigen* (Alliance of Independents), a coming together of *Deutschnationalen* (German-nationalists), liberals and former and new Nazis (Neugebauer 1981). After a clearly nationalist beginning the FPÖ developed into a (national-)liberal party, thereby losing some right-wing extremists in the 1966 split *Nationaldemokratische Partei* (National Democratic Party, NDP), until it was eventually accepted as coalition partner of the *Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs* (Austrian Social Democratic Party) in 1983. However, with the 1986 take-over by Jörg Haider as *Bundesparteiobmann* (national party chairman), a young and energetic populist who had made his political career in the right-wing extremist Carinthian branch of the party, more and more authors came to define the FPÖ as right-wing extremist. This interpretation has been strengthened by the increasing grip of Haider (and his clique) over the party, by the split of prominent liberal party members in the Spring of 1993 in the *Liberales Forum* (Liberal Forum), and by the 'expulsion' of the party from the Liberal International later that year.[2] However, there are still various authors who dispute the right-wing extremist character of the party as a whole (Merkl 1993) or consider it (still) as part of the liberal party family (Gallagher *et al.* 1995).

Finally, the Scandinavian Progress Parties, the Danish *Fremskridtspartiet* (FPD) and the Norwegian *Fremskrittspartiet* (FPN), which are seen by some as the first of the most recent (third) wave of right-wing extremism (Ignazi 1992; Betz 1994; Svåsand 1998) whereas others consider them to be the last of the (second) wave of more Poujadist-like parties (Von Beyme 1988; Stouthuysen 1993). The main question here is certainly not whether the parties are right-wing but whether they are extremist. Various authors see them as either classical right-wing libertarian parties, admittedly primarily 'anti' but certainly not extremist or as part of the secular conservative party family (Gooskens 1994; Gallagher *et al.* 1995).

[2] The FPÖ was not formally expelled by the Liberal International, as the party anticipating expulsion, made its own withdrawal (Pfahl-Traughber 1994).

What right-wing extremism?

The question of which parties are excluded from the extreme right party family is closely related to the question of what one means by the term extreme right. Almost every scholar in the field points to the lack of a generally accepted definition. Even though the term right-wing extremism itself is accepted by a majority of the scholars, there is no consensus on the exact definition of the term. A variety of authors have defined it in a variety of ways. This has been partly caused by the fact that the term is not only used for scientific purposes but also for political purposes (Knütter 1991; Kowalsky and Schroeder 1994). Several authors define right-wing extremism as a sort of anti-thesis against their own beliefs and/or as (closely) linked to their 'democratic' political opponent.[3]

Notwithstanding these political disputes, there is a rather broad consensus in the field that the term right-wing extremism describes primarily an ideology in one form or another (Herz 1975; Mudde 1995).[4] What this ideology holds, again, is a matter of extensive scholarly debate. Some scholars define right-wing extremism on the basis of only one single feature. Hartmann *et al.*, for example, use right-wing extremism as a collective term for all 'progress-hostile forces' (1985: 9). There are some major objections to this restricted though at the same time broad usage. The most important objections are, first, that the term right-wing extremism describes something already described by another and more suitable term (like progress hostility), and, second, that it portrays extreme right parties falsely as (primarily) single-issue movements, thereby obscuring other (sometimes more) important features of their ideologies (see Mitra 1988; Mudde 1999).

Most of the authors involved define right-wing extremism as a political ideology that is constituted of a combination of several different features (see Mudde 1995). The number of features mentioned in the various definitions varies from one or two to more than ten. Examples of short definitions are from Macridis, who defines right-wing extremism as an 'ideology [that] revolves around the same old staples: racism, xenophobia, and nationalism' (1989: 231), and Backes and Jesse, who define it as 'a collective term for anti-democratic dispositions and attempts, that are traditionally positioned at the extreme "right" of the left-right spectre' (1993: 474).

Some definitions are the size of shopping lists, containing eight to ten different features. A good example is the definition of Falter and Schumann,

[3] This can also be seen in the fact that many definitions mention mainly negatively formulated features. Moreover, several scholars demonstrate their rejection of the phenomenon by declaring right-wing extremism to be an anti- or non-ideology (see Verbeeck 1994; Fennema 1996).

[4] Some authors add another dimension to the definition, as, for instance, the use of violence (Von Beyme 1988; Benz 1989), and/or a particular party strategy (De Schampheleire 1991; Jäger 1991).

who list no less than ten features as the core (!) of right-extremist thinking: 'extreme nationalism, ethnocentrism, anti-communism, anti-parliamentarianism, anti-pluralism, militarism, law-and-order thinking, a demand for a strong political leader and/or executive, anti-Americanism and cultural pessimism' (1988: 101).

In twenty-six definitions of right-wing extremism that can be derived from the literature no less than fifty-eight different features are mentioned at least once. Only five features are mentioned, in one form or another, by at least half of the authors: nationalism, racism, xenophobia, anti-democracy and the strong state (Mudde 1995: 206). As is clear from the large number of features mentioned in the different definitions, the questions of, how many features together constitute right-wing extremism and what are the minimal combination of features that define right-wing extremism, need some clarification.

Only a few authors explicitly state how many features constitute right-wing extremism. Commonsense would lead us to expect that the more features are mentioned in the definition, the less likely the statement is that all features have to be present. However, there are authors who list a large number of features and still require all features to be present. Pennings and Brants, for example, speak of a 'minimum repertoire' of six features (1985: 44). Even more extreme is the extensive list of Falter and Schumann, mentioned above, who require all ten features to form the core of right extremist thinking.

These authors are an exception, however, not only in their excessive demands, but also in the explicitness of these demands. Most authors either fail to mention or mention only vaguely what combination of features are necessary to constitute right-wing extremism. This notwithstanding, three different approaches can be distinguished: the quantitative, the qualitative, and the mixed approach (Mudde 1995: 218–19). In the first approach all features are considered equally important and only one criterion is used: the number of features. In the second approach one (or more) feature is 'more equal' than others: this is, for instance, the case in the extremism-theoretical tradition, in which at least anti-democracy must be part of the combination to speak of extremism (see Backes 1989; Backes and Jesse 1993). The third approach combines these two approaches: for example, the requirement of at least two features of which one has to be an 'exclusionist' feature, such as xenophobia, and one a 'hierarchic' feature, such as authoritarianism (see Meijerink *et al.* 1998).

Beyond right-wing extremism?

Even though right-wing extremism is the most commonly used term for the parties under study here (Ueltzhöffer 1991), alternatives are being used. On the one hand, terms that were used to describe right-wing extremist parties of the first and second wave are still used today. Generally speaking, the

terms neo-Nazism and to a lesser extent neo-fascism are now used exclusively for parties and groups that explicitly state a desire to restore the Third Reich (in the case of neo-fascism the Italian Social Republic) or quote historical National Socialism (fascism) as their ideological influence. Examples of neo-Nazi parties in the 1980s are rare, most notably the sectarian German *Freiheitliche Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* (German Free Workers Party), though there exists a wide variety of neo-Nazi groupings in Western Europe. The best (and only) example of a neo-fascist party is the Italian MSI, which until its transformation into the AN officially defined itself as a fascist party. Nevertheless, (neo-) Marxist authors in particular keep using the terms, either with or without the prefix 'neo', considering the parties of the 1980s as no more than recent examples of the 1930s phenomenon. Working within the Marxist theory of fascism, most of these authors try to 'prove' the historical continuity and cooperation of the traditional and extreme right (see Schulz 1990; Gossweiler 1995).[5]

Another term that occasionally surfaces in the literature is right-wing radicalism or *Rechtsradikalismus*. This predecessor of the term right-wing extremism is most often used interchangeably with it (e.g. Oswalt 1991; Weinberg 1993), but there are two traditions in which it is used in a different manner. In the German tradition the terms radicalism and extremism are used to describe a certain view *vis-à-vis* democracy, both containing a left-wing and right-wing variant. This tradition is strongly based on the official definition of the German state, which explicitly defines the 'fundamental principles of the free democratic order' and, since 1973, the distinction between radicalism and extremism:

> The term 'radicalism' resp. 'radical' has consequently undergone a change of meaning. What we characterise as 'extremist' today, used to be characterised as 'radical'. Nowadays, attempts that are characterised as 'radical' are those aimed at one-sided solutions that go 'down to the root' of certain problems, without (yet) aiming at the full or partial elimination of the free democratic order. (Frisch 1990: 8–9)

Simply stated, the difference between radicalism and extremism is that the former is *verfassungswidrig* (opposed to the constitution), whereas the latter is *verfassungsfeindlich* (hostile towards the constitution). This difference is of the utmost practical importance for the political parties involved, as extremist parties are extensively watched by the (federal and state) *Verfassungsschutz* and can even be banned, whereas radical parties are free from this control.

In the American tradition the term radical right is still commonly used, yet has a broader and even somewhat different meaning than in the European

[5] There are also a few scholars working outside the Marxist tradition who use the term 'fascism' in a generic sense, that is, for all periods – see, for instance, Griffin (1995) and Eatwell (1995).

literature. Authors working within the American tradition use the term 'radical right'

> to denote a wide variety of groups and small political parties that rekindled a special American tradition of right-wing radicalism. This old school of nativism, populism, and hostility to central government was said to have developed into the post-World War II combination of ultranationalism and anti-communism, Christian fundamentalism, militaristic orientation, and anti-alien sentiment. (Sprinzak 1991: 10)

Recently a wide variety of new terms, mainly variants on the term populism, have made their way into the field: right-wing populism, radical right-wing populism, national populism, new populism, neo-populism, etc. The terms not only differ in name but also in their relationship towards the term right-wing extremism. What most definitions have in common, though, is that it is claimed that populism is primarily used to describe a specific political form or style instead of a specific ideology or to distinguish modern from traditional parties of the extreme right. In most cases the difference between political style and ideological feature is not really clear, as authors relate the political style at least indirectly to a specific view of the people. This problem with defining the term populism is not typical for the field of right-wing extremism. Populism has always been a widely applied term in the political and scholarly debate (Canovan 1981; Ionescu and Gellner 1969).

Generally, two different uses of the term populism in relationship to the term extremism can be distinguished. In the first, authors clearly distinguish between the two, where the former is used primarily to describe the more moderate parties of the extreme right (Backes 1991; Betz 1994). In the second, the term populism is used exclusively to describe a certain political style used by right-wing extremist parties (Pfahl-Traughber 1994). All in all, most definitions of (whatever) populism do not differ that much in content from the definitions of right-wing extremism. They are usually more focused on political style and less on anti-democratic features. On top of that, the term populism is often used by authors who stress the newness of the (success of the) parties in question (Taggart 1995).

When the whole range of different terms and definitions used in the field is surveyed, there are striking similarities, with the various terms often being used synonymously and without any clear intention. Only a few authors, most notably those working within the extremist-theoretical tradition, clearly distinguish between the various terms. In addition, every term suffers from excessive variations in definitions and applications. All in all, the differences in definitions vary as much between terms as within terms, though they all point to some sort of ideology that is constituted from several different features. These features again refer back to the ideological features of historical fascism and National Socialism (cf. Scheuch and Klingemann 1976). Hence, the ultimate choice of what term is used is often primarily

determined by the theoretical school the author adheres to (see Mudde 1996).

Subgroups within the extreme right party family

Recently, there has been an increasing number of studies in which various subgroups within the broader extreme right party family have been distinguished on the basis of party ideology. These studies sometimes implicitly acknowledge the similarity of all parties with regard to some features of right-wing extremism, but point to differences between them with respect to other features or with respect to the intensity or importance of the feature(s) for the party ideology.

One of the early classifications is constructed by the German Stöss, who distinguishes four different types of right-wing extremism in Germany on the basis of the party's stand on the German question (1988: 36; also 1991: 26–8). Only two of the four groups have any real significance: the 'Old Nationalism' or the 'Old Right-Wing' and the 'New Nationalism' or the 'New Right-Wing'. The main difference between the two has to do with their ideological basis, whether it is 'Old', i.e. based on the ideas of the *Deutschnationalen* and the Nazis, or 'New', i.e. seeking modern paths adapted to changing national and international (post-war) conditions. The former are further characterised by 'a leaning towards statist and militarist thinking and a foreign policy preference for pro-Western or European-neutralist approaches', as well as a fierce anti-communism (Stöss 1988: 37). The parties of the New Nationalism want to find a 'new political credo' and look for a so-called 'third way'; a concept that has always remained rather vague and is mostly used to indicate an economic system different from both capitalism and communism and a foreign policy of a neutral Europe free of both the East and West, i.e. of the United States.

There are some problems with Stöss' distinction. First, it is developed for the German context, which is a rather specific one. Even if the concept of 'Old Nationalism' is extended to extreme right thinking of the inter-war period in general, the possibility of applying the classification outside of Germany (and possibly Austria) remains difficult. Second, the classification has limited value when applied strictly to political parties with some electoral relevance. Indeed, according to Stöss only two parties fall within the 'New' category, both of which never made it into the federal or even a state parliament.

These problems are for a large part overcome by the fairly similar classification of the Italian Ignazi, who distinguishes 'old' and 'new' extreme right parties. The whole family of extreme right parties is classified according to three ideological[6] criteria (1992: 7): (1) placement at the far right of the

[6] Ignazi himself speaks of three 'distinct' criteria and claims that his definition is, in contrast to others listed in his work, not solely based on 'party's ideology and/or issues' (1994b: 5). This

national political spectrum (spatial criterion); (2) fascist features in the party ideology (historic-ideological criterion); and (3) negative attitude toward the political system (attitudinal-systemic criterion). The new extreme right parties are selected on the basis of the first and third criterion, and are essentially right-wing anti-system parties. The old extreme right parties combine all three criteria. As prototypes of the new extreme right parties, Ignazi lists, among others, the CD, FN, REP and VB. The prototype of the old extreme right parties is the Italian MSI, which is according to Ignazi the inspiration for all extreme right-wing parties up until the 1970s. Other old extreme right parties are the BNP, CP'86, *Deutsche Volksunion-Liste D* (German People's Union-List D, DVU), and NPD (Ignazi 1992).

In his more recent work Ignazi has renamed the 'old' into 'traditional', and the 'new' into 'post-industrial' extreme right parties (1994a, 1994b). Even though the basis for classification remains the same, there are some changes in the actual classification of the individual parties. Former borderline cases such as the FPD, FPN and FPÖ are now included in the group of post-industrial extreme right parties. The VB is 'for certain aspects' included in the traditional group, but also in the post-industrial group, albeit with a question mark (1994a: 243–5; also 1994b). However, this problem of classification should by no means be limited to the case of the VB, as it can be argued for all parties involved. The problem stems from the vagueness of the historic-ideological criterion, which Ignazi summarises as: 'references to myths, symbols, slogans of the interwar fascist experience, often veiled as nostalgia, or in terms of a more explicit reference to at least part of the ideological corpus of fascism' (1992: 10). As he lists a rather broad and varied 'fascist corpus' including features like 'limitations on personal and collective freedoms' and 'acceptance of hierarchical criteria for social organisation' (1992: 10), not many of the new or post-industrial extreme right parties will escape this criterion when applied rigorously. Nevertheless, Ignazi has taken the distinction between 'new' and 'old' extreme right parties a step further by making it less German (thereby making it a bit too much Italian with its focus on Italian fascism and the MSI) and making it applicable to a wider range of (electorally relevant) political parties.

An alternative classification is constructed by Betz, who distinguishes two 'faces of radical right-wing populism': 'neo-liberal' or 'libertarian' populism, on the one hand, and 'authoritarian' or 'national' populism, on the other (1993: 680; 1994: 108). The main difference between these two 'ideal types' is defined in relative terms: 'What ultimately determines whether a party should be characterised as a neo-liberal populist party or a national

is primarily the result of the fact that Ignazi seems to have opted for a more restrictive use of ideology, requiring it to be 'structured and coherent' (1994b: 8), whereas I define ideology in a more inclusive way (see below).

populist party is the relative weight it attributes to the respective elements in its program' (Betz 1994: 108).[7] The distinction is far from static as parties can develop and have developed from one type into the other, partly as a result of the changing social base of their electorate. However, Betz notes that since the late 1980s there have been clear signs of an increasing importance of national-populist elements in the programmes of all the parties. The one exception to this development is the LN.

Betz' classification has both theoretical and empirical relevance but struggles with the problem of determining the relative weight of the two elements. How do you weigh the neo-liberal substance of a programme? Even though the author claims to provide 'a comprehensive analysis of the basic elements of the radical right-wing populist program and the shifts in emphasis of its two main components' (1994: 109), the actual analysis he provides is a rather general account on the basis of some election programmes and pamphlets of the various parties. While this might suffice to note 'a' shift in emphasis, it is hardly a solid basis for a meaningful classification.

Putting the extreme right party family to the test

As can be seen from this short overview, different scholars group different parties together and do this under different labels. In addition, even scholars that use the same term often mean different things. Some consensus can nevertheless be uncovered. First, the term extreme right (or right-wing extremist) is still broadly accepted as the most satisfying collective noun. Second, this term is generally used to describe an ideology containing a combination of several distinct features. Third, despite several borderline cases there is a large number of political parties whose extreme right status is not debated. On the basis of this consensus, we can construct the following propositions:

1 The extreme right party family consists of a distinct group of parties that share a common ideological core.
2 This common ideological core includes (at least) that combination of features generally defined as right-wing extremist.
3 Within the broader extreme right party family at least two subgroups can be distinguished on the basis of ideological extremity.

The term proposition is used as none of these points has ever been empirically validated. Moreover, as far as there has been empirical research into a common ideological core of alleged extreme right parties, the results have rejected rather than supported the propositions. In an earlier study I have

[7] Betz explicitly mentions the following parties as representatives of neoliberal populism: *Autopartei* (Car Party), FPD, FPN, FPÖ, LN and *Ny Demokrati* (New Democracy, ND); and of national populism: FN, REP and VB.

tested the (first two) propositions on a small number of parties (Mudde 1995). After defining right-wing extremism as a combination of five distinct features (i.e. nationalism, racism, xenophobia, anti-democracy, and the strong state), the literature of three parties was analysed on the basis of the presence of these features. Only three features were found in all three cases and could thus be said to constitute the ideological core of the(se) extreme right parties. So, though an ideological core was found (prop. 1), it did not include all the features generally described as constituting right-wing extremism (prop. 2). As all three parties – CP'86, NDP and NPD – belong to the 'old' subgroup (see Ignazi 1992), it could be expected that the more 'moderate' extreme right parties, which are also electorally more relevant, will hold even fewer features (generally described as constituting right-wing extremism).

In her parallel comparative study Gardberg focused on four 'new' extreme right parties: the FN, REP, VB and ND. The goal of her study was to find the most appropriate label for their ideologies, using a list of six different labels or categories: neo-fascism, extreme right, nationalism, xenophobia or racism, neo-conservative and neo-liberal ideas, and populism or protest (1993: 8–9). On the basis of an analysis of (some) party programmes and interviews she concludes that 'it is indeed difficult to agree on a common label or category for them' (1993: 121). As far as there is an appropriate label for all four parties, it is the label 'new right'. However, this label has the disadvantage of being rather vague, i.e. meaning a combination of neo-liberal and neo-conservative ideas, and is applicable to a far broader range of parties, such as those normally labelled 'conservative' (1993: 122).

These two studies show that although there exists a rather broad consensus on the existence of a distinct extreme right party family that entails (at least two) different subgroups, this consensus is no more than a proposition at this time. The few empirical studies provide only (moderate) support for the first proposition: that these parties share an ideological core. However, that this core is indeed right-wing extremist, as the second proposition holds, remains doubtful. Finally, the third proposition, asserting the existence of subgroups, has as yet not been tested at all. This study therefore intends not only to test all three propositions, but also to do this on the basis of a broader selection of cases and material than was employed in either of the two earlier studies. Indeed, both studies suffer from limitations, most notably in the particular group of parties selected (Mudde 1995) and the limited number of party documents studied (Gardberg 1993).

For the purposes of this analysis the following parties were selected according to both intrinsic and practical criteria: *Die Republikaner* and the *Deutsche Volksunion* in Germany, the *Vlaams Blok* in Belgium, and the *Centrumdemocraten* and the *Centrumpartij'86* in the Netherlands. The principal intrinsic criteria were that (i) the party has to have contested at least one parliamentary election; (ii) it has to be reputed generally as extreme right in

the scholarly literature; (iii) it has to be part of the 'third wave' of right-wing extremism, i.e. have been politically active since the 1980s. In addition, the selected parties must differ in ideological extremity to study the third proposition. Ideologically, the CP'86 and the DVU are classified as part of the (more) 'radical' subgroup of the old/traditional extreme right parties, whereas the CD and the REP are classified as part of the (more) 'moderate' subgroup of the new/post-industrial extreme right parties, with the VB being partly in both groups though mainly in the first (Ignazi 1992, 1994b). The parties also differ in terms of electoral success. The VB belongs to the electorally successful extreme right parties in Western Europe (in 1994), gaining around 12 per cent of the Flemish votes;[8] the rest are not successful, gaining under 5 per cent on average in national elections. The CD and the REP are more successful (or better: less unsuccessful) with around 2.5 per cent compared to the under 1 percent parties CP'86 and DVU. The most important practical criteria of the study were (accessibility of) language and the availability of party literature. Having selected the parties to be studied, we now have to determine how we can best study party ideology.

Studying party ideology

Although party ideology is normally given a chapter or paragraph in studies on political parties, there are only a few studies that adopt an 'ideological approach', i.e. in which 'the substance and prevalence of a party's ideology are of primary interest to the investigator' (Lawson 1976: 15). The number is even less in the case of comparative studies.[9] Especially in studies of party families the ideologies of the individual parties have been of secondary interest. Often it seems to be assumed that (all and only) the member parties share the family ideology as the core of their respective ideologies. The few comparative studies that have adopted the ideological approach compare either one party through time (Sainsbury 1980; Dittrich *et al.* 1986) or a number of parties from the same country (Hoogerwerf 1971; Borg 1966; see also most of the contributions in Budge *et al.* 1987) or like-minded parties in different countries (Gardberg 1993; Mudde 1995).

[8] Some authors list the score that the VB gets at the federal level (i.e. in the whole of Belgium, which was 6.6 per cent in 1991, see Betz 1994; Kitschelt 1995). However, as is the case for all Flemish parties, the VB contests elections only in the Flemish part of Belgium, and in the area of Brussels, and the federal score thus provides a distorted picture of the party's real strength.

[9] Janda, on the other hand, speaks of 'the outpouring of empirical research on comparative party ideologies' (1993: 169). This difference of opinion is for the largest part due to the fact that he also includes studies on party's positions on issues (even when these 'do not fit common ideological concepts'), i.e. studies that work with a single left–right dimension. Most of these studies are not only very limited in scope, as they primarily or exclusively focus on the socio-economic views of parties, but their interest in party ideology is also often only secondary.

This lack of comparative research into the ideologies of political parties can possibly be explained by the fact that during the so-called 'Golden Age of comparative politics' (Dalton 1991), i.e. the late 1950s and early 1960s, the importance of ideology in party politics was severely challenged by the 'end-of-ideology' thesis. This held that the major political parties in the West had converged so much ideologically that politics had become more a matter of administration (see in Bell 1960; also Lipset 1960). Not surprisingly, the few studies of that period that adopted the ideological approach were aimed at testing this thesis empirically. Hoogerwerf (1971), for instance, demonstrated on the basis of a both synchronic and diachronic comparative analysis of the 1948 and 1963 election programmes of the four major Dutch parties that a larger correspondence in socio-economic policies had come into being. The ideological differences that existed in 1948 were altered into differences in strategy and means in 1963. Thomas came to similar findings in a comparison of the major parties of six countries, which led him to the conclusion that without an ideological revival West European parties 'could be headed toward the kind of partisan consensus which now characterises American politics' (1980: 364). This revival seemed very unlikely to him, as the major parties had too much to loose and new parties had never proved to be very successful over time. Even though the end-of-ideology thesis was disputed both on empirical and theoretical grounds (see LaPalombara 1966; Seliger 1976), and seemed to have disappeared in the 1970s, it regained its influence within the political science community in the late 1980s.

Defining party ideology

Ideology has been defined in numerous ways, and often the definitions are based on some normative idea. Seliger, for example, distinguishes two uses of the term ideology: restrictive and inclusive (1976: 14). In the restrictive use the term is confined to belief systems of the extreme left and right in the post-war Western world. Seliger argues against this use, describing it as a manifestation of political conviction and 'a concomitant of the latest theory, that of the end of ideology, whose major proponents did not disguise that what they claimed to be ending was that which they wished to be ending' (1976: 26). In accordance with Seliger I reject the restrictive use, as it limits not only our view of the phenomenon at hand, but also its usage in comparative research; what is extremist and ideological in one context can be moderate and non-ideological in another.

In this study the term ideology is used in an inclusive way, i.e. as 'a body of normative or normative-related ideas about the nature of man and society as well as the organisation and purposes of society' (Sainsbury 1980: 8). It thus includes both ideas on how society or man *ought to be* and ideas on how they *are*. Following this definition, party ideology is defined as *a party's body of normative(-related) ideas about the nature of man and society as well as the organisation and purposes of society*. Once the different ideas (or fea-

tures) of the ideology are conceptualised properly, i.e. in a manner 'sufficiently abstract to travel across national boundaries' (Rose 1991: 447), the criterion of ideology should lead to no distinctive problems in cross-national comparative research.

Which sources of party ideology?

Most studies on party ideology use election programmes as data for analyses. Programmes have the advantage that they are, in general, officially endorsed by the members of the party and, consequently, can be 'considered to represent and express the policy collectively adopted by the party' (Borg 1966: 97; also Anckar and Ramstedt-Silén 1981). Nevertheless, some authors take the view that election programmes are not satisfactory, because out of tactical considerations they do not show the true face of the parties. Election programmes of political parties are aimed at, among other things, the attraction of voters and the enhancement of the profile of the party. They thus have a predominantly external orientation (Flohr 1968; Raschke 1970), and in the case of extreme right parties it has often been argued that there exists a radical 'back-stage' behind this (relative) moderate 'front-stage' (Van Donselaar 1991: 16; also Fleck and Müller 1998).[10] However, extreme right parties do not have the exclusive rights to a discrepancy between views expressed in the official election programmes and those proclaimed elsewhere or supported 'truly'.[11] Flechtheim, among many others (e.g. Sainsbury 1980; Dierickx 1996), has argued that this is customary with all political parties:

> The programmes alone will hardly fully open the true nature of the party – for that purpose political programmes are as a rule too much of an ideological covering. With those parties that are explicit ideological creations … at least much of what could be compromising will be left unsaid. (1974: 179)

One of the more popular methods to determine the 'real' ideology of (extreme right) parties has therefore been to focus attention on the 'political origins' of the party leaders and officials instead of on the party programmes (see Müller 1989; Van Donselaar 1991). There are several problems with this approach. First, the political origin of the individuals can only be interpreted when the ideology of the original party can be established. And then,

[10] Eatwell makes a similar distinction between the '*esoteric* and *exoteric* appeal. The former refers to the ideological nature of discussion among converts, or in closed circles. The latter refers more to what it is considered wise to say in public' (1992: 174).

[11] An explanation for the particular focus on extreme right parties in this regard can be found in the fact that most authors define the extreme right as 'the other' of which they are no part and are often also openly hostile toward. As Naess perceptively states: 'An important ingredient in descriptions of outgroups is the hypothesis that the outgroup says one thing, but means another' (1980: 136).

of course, the original question returns: how is this to be done? Second, which leaders and officials are representative of the (whole) party? In the case of the REP, for example, there are (and were) leaders that have been members of 'openly' extreme right parties like the NPD, and maybe even of neo-Nazi groups, but there are (were) also leaders who have never been part of these groups – several have even been (sometimes prominent) members of democratic parties. Which official counts more and on what grounds?

The problem of representativeness is also at the root of two other alternative methods, interviewing leading party members and using 'observers'. How do we know if the opinion of the interviewee(s) is representative of the (majority) view of the party (Dierickx 1996)? The volatility of the leadership of many extreme (right) parties makes this a particularly pressing problem. This can be seen in the study of Gardberg (1993), for example, who interviewed five of the six members of the REP fraction in the EP. Unfortunately, all five members had left the REP either already at the time of the interview or slightly afterwards, and the only remaining representative and then party leader, Franz Schönhuber, had objected to an interview. Gardberg was thus stuck with the views of REP dissidents, not REP leaders. The second approach, using 'observers' (see Janda 1980), cannot be evaluated on its scientific merits as it is not made clear who these observers in question are, nor what they observe and how they observe this.

To overcome the danger of being stuck with only the front stage of the extreme right parties, I have chosen to analyse not only primarily externally oriented party literature, but also party material whose primary orientation is internal: party papers. It seems plausible that this literature will hide 'the true nature of the party' to a far lesser extent than externally directed literature since it is aimed at a different group of recipients, i.e. the party members (the internal arena), as against the whole electorate (the external arena; cf. Sjöblom 1968). A second advantage of party papers is that they are the official organ aimed at the members on behalf of the party leadership, and although they are not officially endorsed by the members it can be assumed that they are officially endorsed by the collective party leadership. These two sources together (party programmes and party papers) should provide us with a fairly broad and detailed insight into the 'institutionalised party ideology' (Sainsbury 1980: 17; also Holzer 1981).

This selection, though broader than most studies on party ideology, still contains restrictions. The fact that only the *manifest* party ideology is studied means that the 'latent party ideology', appearing in unofficial documents (e.g. pamphlets of party dissidents or of individual party members), is left outside of the analysis (Helenius 1969; Sainsbury 1980). Moreover, the fact that only documents from the *national* party are studied means that material, whether official or unofficial, from regional or local party branches is left aside. Finally, the focus throughout rests on what the party says (party literature) and not on what the party does (party policy). However, since most

right-wing extremist parties in Western Europe, and all parties selected for this analysis, are seen and treated as pariah parties and kept out of power at all governmental levels, the distinction between what they say and what they do is largely academic.

What method of analysis?

Studies that deal either primarily or secondarily with party ideology generally adopt a qualitative approach to textual analysis; the selected material is 'read carefully' and the most important ideological features, according to the researcher, are presented (often with illustratory quotations). Although this type of textual analysis is still by far the most popular and has proven its value (especially in explorative studies), it has been criticised for being 'subjective, idiosyncratic, and overinterpretive' (Livingstone 1989: 188). According to some critics genuine textual analysis or content analysis is quantitative by nature and uses computerised methods to come to 'exact' and 'scientific' results. As Gerring has noted for the mostly quantitative studies of party ideology in America: 'the focus is usually on the *general function* of ideology … rather than on the *specific content* and history of the ideologies in question' (1998: 288, my italics). This is also the case for the ECPR-organised manifesto project, which dominates the comparative study of party ideology in Europe (see Budge *et al.* 1987; Klingemann *et al.* 1994). However, because of both its method and sources, the manifesto project data are better used to analyse policies of parties and party families than their ideologies (e.g. Budge and Keman 1990; Laver and Schofield 1990).

Moreover, differences between qualitative and quantitative analysis in general are not as big as is often claimed (Coffey and Atkinson 1996) and this is also true for the particular case of textual analysis (Thomas 1994). The choice between the two approaches is not a matter of principle, but a difference in attention and emphasis.

> Three major differences in qualitative and quantitative emphasis deserve attention: (1) the distinction between explanation and understanding as the purpose of inquiry; (2) the distinction between a personal and impersonal role for the researcher, and (3) a distinction between knowledge discovered and knowledge constructed. (Stake 1995: 37)

As this study is explorative, aimed at understanding rather than explanation, and at discovering rather than constructing, a qualitative approach is clearly more suitable. Moreover, given the complex nature of (party) ideology, classification or coding is vital. Though a human coder introduces an element of subjectivity, this should not be seen as 'a failing needing to be eliminated but as an essential element of understanding' (Stake 1995: 45; also Gerring 1998: 297–8). Moreover, the choice between a machine (computer) and a human coder (researcher) is often in essence a choice between reliability and validity (also Kepplinger 1989; Livingstone 1989). Whereas computerised

methods are superior in regard to reliability, both in terms of completed measurement and future replaceability (Thomas 1994), they are bound to the categories chosen on forehand and cannot interpret the context of these categories, and therefore may be inferior in regard to validity. Also, compared to the human coder the machine is far less flexible and less able to learn during the process. As Coffey and Atkinson write:

> codes are organising principles that are not set in stone. They are our own creations, in that we identify and select them ourselves. They are tools to think with. They can be expanded, changed, or scrapped altogether as our ideas develop through repeated interactions with the data. Starting to create categories is a way of beginning to read and think about the data in a systematic and organised way. (1996: 32)

On the basis of these arguments I have chosen a form of qualitative textual analysis that is partly structured by a preliminary list of possibly relevant ideological features and themes. This list has been constructed on the basis of a variety of sources: (1) ideological features mentioned in the literature on right-wing extremism (Mudde 1995); (2) themes used in other content analyses that were expected to be relevant (Borg 1966; Budge *et al.* 1987); and (3) an initial study of (a sample of) party programmes of the parties in question (see appendix B). On the basis of this list the *content* of the ideological features of the different parties will be captured.

The *importance* of the various features within the party ideology as a whole, however, will be determined by the use of the *causal chain approach*. This approach is aimed at discovering the hierarchy of the various features that are found to be part of the ideology. This is done by following the direction of the argumentation and assessing what is the prime argument, what is the secondary argument, etc. (see also Naess 1980). This can best be explained by a short (self-invented) story:

> Crime is sweeping our cities! Even within the police force there is nostalgia for the time that policemen and bankrobbers were on a first name base and arrests could still be made without the use of weapons. But these days are long gone, as the criminals of today are violent sociopaths. This is especially true for the immigrant youth, by far the majority of the hardened criminals. They have monopolised the drugs market and made the white criminal an exception in our own prisons. We should, however, not only blame these criminal black youngsters, as they are also victims. They have been torn away from their own culture and, under strong pressure from left-wing welfare people and politicians, forced to integrate. As we all know, this is impossible and the loss of identity and a consequent life of crime were the logical conclusions. Even though these black hoodlums should be punished severely, after having been sent back to their own countries, the problem can't be solved by this end alone. Not unless we punish the traitors in power and return to a pure Dutch society, will we have our peace and safety back on the streets again.

This story initially seems to deal with the problem of rising crime, based on the feature of law and order. However, it is not crime itself that is the main problem, but a specific sort of crime; crime committed by black youngsters. Moreover, it is not even their criminality, but the root of it, the fact that (young) immigrants are 'torn away from their own culture', that is the prime concern of the story. This is a typical example of ethnopluralist reasoning, which lies behind the law-and-order theme (and behind the xenophobic and anti-elite views). It is this sort of analysis that is developed by the causal chain approach.

Outline of the book

The book is composed in the following manner: the five parties are ordered by country and each of the three countries is addressed in a different section. Each section begins with a short introduction of the history of post-war right-wing extremism in the country up until the founding of the parties under study. Except for the Flemish part, which entails only one party, each part contains two chapters. Each chapter describes the history, literature and ideology of a single party in different sections.

The section on the ideology is subdivided into themes and ideological features. Some features are discussed for all parties, as they constitute main features of right-wing extremism (e.g. nationalism, exclusionism, the strong state). Other features and themes are mentioned in the case of some parties, depending on their salience in the party literature. Though the subdivisions might at times appear artificial or overlapping, they serve first and foremost to structure the presentation of the analysis of the ideology. The conclusions will provide for a concise and integrated description of the whole party ideology. The book concludes with a chapter in which the literature and ideology of the different parties are compared and the question of the validity of the propositions is addressed.