

THE POPULIST RADICAL RIGHT

A reader

Edited by Cas Mudde



“Cas Mudde offers an expert guidance to the current debates about the populist radical right. With its clear framework and comprehensive selection of key readings this book is essential reading for students and those new to the field.”

Tjitske Akkerman, University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands

“Cas Mudde has assembled the most important work on the populist radical right. Research that has collectively defined the research agenda. The manner in which Mudde presents them encapsulates not only the essential work that has already been done, but (perhaps most critically) it sets the stage for future research.”

Andrej Zaslove, Radboud University, the Netherlands

The Populist Radical Right

The populist radical right is one of the most studied political phenomena in the social sciences, counting hundreds of books and thousands of articles. This is the first reader to bring together the most seminal articles and book chapters on the contemporary populist radical right in western democracies. It has a broad regional and topical focus and includes work that has made an original theoretical contribution to the field, which makes it less time-specific. The reader is organized in six thematic sections:

- (1) ideology and issues;
- (2) parties, organizations, and subcultures;
- (3) leaders, members, and voters;
- (4) causes;
- (5) consequences; and
- (6) responses.

Each section features a short introduction by the editor, which introduces and ties together the selected pieces and provides discussion questions and suggestions for further readings. The reader is ended with a conclusion in which the editor reflects on the future of the populist radical right in light of (more) recent political developments – most notably the Greek economic crisis and the refugee crisis – and suggest avenues for future research.

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A reader

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First published 2017
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Names: Mudde, Cas, editor.

Title: The populist radical right : a reader / edited by Cas Mudde.

Description: Abingdon, Oxon ; New York, NY : Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an Informa Business, [2017] | Series: Routledge studies in extremism and democracy

Identifiers: LCCN 2016020508 | ISBN 9781138673861 (hardback) | ISBN 9781138673878 (pbk.) | ISBN 9781315514574 (e-book)

Subjects: LCSH: Right-wing extremists—Europe. | Conservatism—Europe. | Populism—Europe. | Political parties—Europe. | Europe—Politics and government—1989—

Classification: LCC HN380.Z9 R3575 2017 | DDC 320.5094—dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2016020508>

ISBN: 978-1-138-67386-1 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-138-67387-8 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-1-315-51457-4 (ebk)

Typeset in Baskerville MT

by RefineCatch Limited, Bungay, Suffolk

For all students of the populist radical right, past, present, and future.

We are like dwarfs sitting on the shoulders of giants. We see more, and things that are more distant, than they did, not because our sight is superior or because we are taller than they, but because they raise us up, and by their great stature add to ours.

—John of Salisbury (1159)

Contents

[Cover](#)

[Title](#)

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[Dedication](#)

[Contents](#)

[Preface](#)

[Acknowledgements](#)

[Introduction to the populist radical right](#)

[CAS MUDDE](#)

[PART I Ideology and issues](#)

[1 Interregnum or endgame? The radical right in the ‘post-fascist’ era](#)

[ROGER GRIFFIN](#)

[2 Party ideology](#)

[ELISABETH CARTER](#)

[3 Against the current—stemming the tide: the nostalgic ideology of the contemporary radical populist right](#)

[HANS-GEORG BETZ AND CAROL JOHNSON](#)

[4 A new winning formula? The programmatic appeal of the radical right](#)

[SARAH L. DE LANGE](#)

[5 The European extreme-right and Islam: new directions?](#)

[JOSÉ PEDRO ZÚQUETE](#)

[6 European integration and the radical right: three patterns of opposition](#)

[SOFIA VASILOPOULOU](#)

[PART II Parties, organizations and subcultures](#)

[7 Right-wing extremism in post-war Europe](#)

[KLAUS VON BEYME](#)

8 New populist parties in Western Europe

PAUL TAGGART

9 Modern European democracy and its enemies: the threat of the extreme right

AMI PEDAHZUR AND LEONARD WEINBERG

10 Racist extremism in Central and Eastern Europe

CAS MUDDE

11 Conservative and right-wing movements

KATHLEEN M. BLEE AND KIMBERLY A. CREASAP

PART III Leaders, members and voters

12 The rebirth of right-wing charisma? The cases of Jean-Marie Le Pen and Vladimir Zhirinovsky

ROGER EATWELL

13 Extreme right activists: recruitment and experiences

BERT KLANDERMANS

14 Becoming a racist: women in contemporary Ku Klux Klan and neo-Nazi groups

KATHLEEN M. BLEE

15 Electoral sociology – who votes for the Extreme Right and why – and when?

KAI ARZHEIMER

16 The radical right gender gap

TERRI E. GIVENS

PART IV Causes

17 The silent counter-revolution: hypotheses on the emergence of extreme right-wing parties in Europe

PIERO IGNACI

18 The new politics of resentment: radical right-wing populist parties in Western Europe

HANS-GEORG BETZ

19 The contemporary radical right: an interpretative and explanatory framework

HERBERT KITSCHELT (IN COLLABORATION WITH A.J. MCGANN)

20 The radical right in postsocialist Central and Eastern Europe: comparative observations and interpretations

MICHAEL MINKENBERG

21 Ten theories of the extreme right

ROGER EATWELL

22 The populist radical right: a pathological normalcy

CAS MUDDE

PART V Consequences

23 The radical right in public office: agenda-setting and policy effects

MICHAEL MINKENBERG

24 The extreme-right and immigration policy-making: measuring direct and indirect effects

MARTIN A. SCHAIN

25 Contagious parties: anti-immigration parties and their impact on other parties' immigration stances in contemporary Western Europe

JOOST VAN SPANJE

26 Comparing radical right parties in government: immigration and integration policies in nine countries (1996–2010)

TJITSKE AKKERMAN

27 Populism and liberal democracy: populists in government in Austria, Italy, Poland and Switzerland

DANIELE ALBERTAZZI AND SEAN MUELLER

28 The 2012 Stein Rokkan Lecture: Three decades of populist radical right parties in Western Europe: so what?

CAS MUDDE

PART VI Responses

29 Patterns of response to the extreme right in Western Europe

JAAP VAN DONSELAAR

30 Between adaptation, differentiation and distinction: extreme right-wing parties within democratic political systems

ALEXANDRE DÉZÉ

31 Reacting to the radical right: lessons from Germany and Austria

DAVID ART

32 New alliances: why mainstream parties govern with radical right-wing populist parties

SARAH L. DE LANGE

[Conclusion: studying populist radical right parties *and* politics in the twenty-first century](#)

[CAS MUDDE](#)

[Index](#)

Preface

The idea for a reader on the populist radical right came to me first more than fifteen years ago. I had been working on the topic since the early 1990s and had noticed the sharp increase in scholarship. Whereas much of the studies on the populist radical right had been descriptive and in German when I started in the late 1980s, a body of more analytical and comparative work had developed in English created by and catering to an ever-growing community of scholars and students. And while readers on related topics were quite common, most notably on fascism, there was no equivalent on the populist radical right. Fifteen years later the situation has not changed much. There are even more courses on and scholars of the populist radical right, and much more scholarship, but still no reader.

This reader aims to provide the perfect introduction into the main scholarly debates on populist radical right parties in Europe and beyond. It is first and foremost catering to scholars teaching courses on the contemporary populist radical right – which are taught at universities across Europe and North America, from Bath in the United Kingdom to Ottawa in Canada and from Boston in the United States to Mainz in Germany. In addition, it is meant as a fundamental resource for the hundreds of graduate students and scholars working on populist radical right topics across the world. Finally, the reader hopes to offer an essential introduction to the topic for the many practitioners that have a professional interest in the populist radical right, from activists in anti-racist organizations like Hope not Hate in the United Kingdom to analysts in intelligence agencies like the Federal Bureau for the Protection of the Constitution (BVS) in Germany.

The process of making this reader went through several iterations in which feedback from no less than fourteen reviewers was received and integrated as well as possible. While some reviewers suggested diametrically opposed changes – from more historical fascism to no historical cases whatsoever – the collective feedback has significantly improved the selection of articles as well as the overall reader. I would like to express my sincere thanks to all fourteen reviewers. I also want to thank all the authors who have granted permission to have their seminal works included in this reader. Finally, I want to thank all my friends at Routledge, including the editors of the Routledge Studies in Extremism and Democracy, Roger Eatwell and Matthew Goodwin, editor extraordinaire Craig Fowlie, and senior editorial assistant of Politics & International Relations Emma Chappell.

Making this reader was a great opportunity for me to re-establish contacts with old colleagues, re-read the classics, and re-think my own influences. I can still remember the excitement when, as an undergraduate, I came across the first special issue on the ‘extreme right’ in *West European Politics* in 1988 and reading Klaus von Beyme’s foundational introductory article. Equally influential was Piero Ignazi’s seminal article in the *European Journal of Political Research* special issue of 1992, which came out just a few months before I started my PhD. Finally, the defining books by Hans-Georg Betz (1994) and Herbert Kitschelt (1995) proved to me, and the initially skeptical discipline, that the populist radical right could, and should, be studied within mainstream social science. I thank all these great scholars for their inspiration and hope they will continue to inspire many others.

Athens, March 2016

Acknowledgements

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Griffin, Roger “Interregnum or Endgame? The Radical Right in the ‘Post-Fascist’ Era,” *Journal of Political Ideologies* 5(2): 163–178. Copyright © 2000 Taylor & Francis Ltd (www.tandfonline.com). Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

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De Lange, Sarah L. “A New Winning Formula? The Programmatic Appeal of the Radical Right,” *Party Politics* 13(4): 411–435. Copyright © 2007 Sage Publications Ltd. Reproduced by permission of SAGE Publications Ltd., London, Los Angeles, New Delhi, Singapore and Washington DC.

Zúquete, José Pedro “The European Extreme-Right and Islam: New Directions?” *Journal of Political Ideologies* 13(3): 321–344. Copyright © 2008 Taylor & Francis Ltd (www.tandfonline.com). Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

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Blee, Kathleen M. and Kimberly A. Creasap “Conservative and Right-Wing Movements,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 36: 269–286. © 2010 by Annual Reviews, <http://www.annualreviews.org>. Reproduced with permission of Annual Review of Sociology, Volume 36.

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Arzheimer, Kai “Electoral Sociology – Who Votes for the Extreme Right and Why – and

When?" in Uwe Backes and Patrick Moreau (eds.), *The Extreme Right in Europe: Currents Trends and Perspectives*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 35–50. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

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Eatwell, Roger "Ten Theories of the Extreme Right," in Peter H. Merkl and Leonard Weinberg (eds.), *Right-Wing Extremism in the Twenty-First Century*. London: Frank Cass, 47–73. Copyright © 2003 Taylor and Francis Ltd. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

Mudde, Cas "The Populist Radical Right: A Pathological Normalcy," *West European Politics* 33(6): 1167–1186. Copyright © 2010 Taylor & Francis Ltd (www.tandfonline.com). Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

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Van Spanje, Joost “Contagious Parties: Anti-Immigration Parties and Their Impact on Other Parties’ Immigration Stances in Contemporary Western Europe,” *Party Politics* 16(5): 563–586. Copyright © 2010 Sage Publications Ltd. Reproduced by permission of SAGE Publications Ltd., London, Los Angeles, New Delhi, Singapore and Washington DC.

Akkerman, Tjitske “Comparing Radical Right Parties in Government: Immigration and Integration Policies in Nine Countries (1996–2010),” *West European Politics* 35(3): 511–529. Copyright © 2012 Taylor & Francis Ltd (www.tandfonline.com). Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

Albertazzi, Daniele and Sean Mueller “Populism and Liberal Democracy: Populists in Government in Austria, Italy, Poland and Switzerland,” *Government and Opposition* 48(3): 343–371. Copyright © 2013 Government and Opposition Ltd. Reproduced with permission of the publisher (Cambridge University Press).

Mudde, Cas “The 2012 Stein Rokkan Lecture: Three Decades of Populist Radical Right Parties in Western Europe: So What?” *European Journal of Political Research* 52(1): 1–19. Copyright © 2013 John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Reproduced with permission of Blackwell Publishing Limited.

Van Donselaar, Jaap “Patterns of Response to the Extreme Right in Western Europe,” in Peter H. Merkl and Leonard Weinberg (eds.), *Right-Wing Extremism in the Twenty-First Century*. London: Frank Cass, 272–292. Copyright © 2003 Taylor & Francis Ltd. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

Dézé, Alexandre “Between Adaptation, Differentiation and Distinction: Extreme Right-Wing Parties Within Democratic Political Systems,” in Roger Eatwell and Cas Mudde (eds.), *Western Democracies and the New Extreme Right Challenge*. London: Routledge, 19–40. Copyright © 2003 Taylor & Francis Ltd. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

Art, David “Reacting to the Radical Right: Lessons from Germany and Austria,” *Party Politics*

13(3): 331–349. Copyright © 2007 Sage Publications Ltd. Reproduced by permission of SAGE Publications Ltd., London, Los Angeles, New Delhi, Singapore and Washington DC.

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Introduction to the populist radical right

Cas Mudde

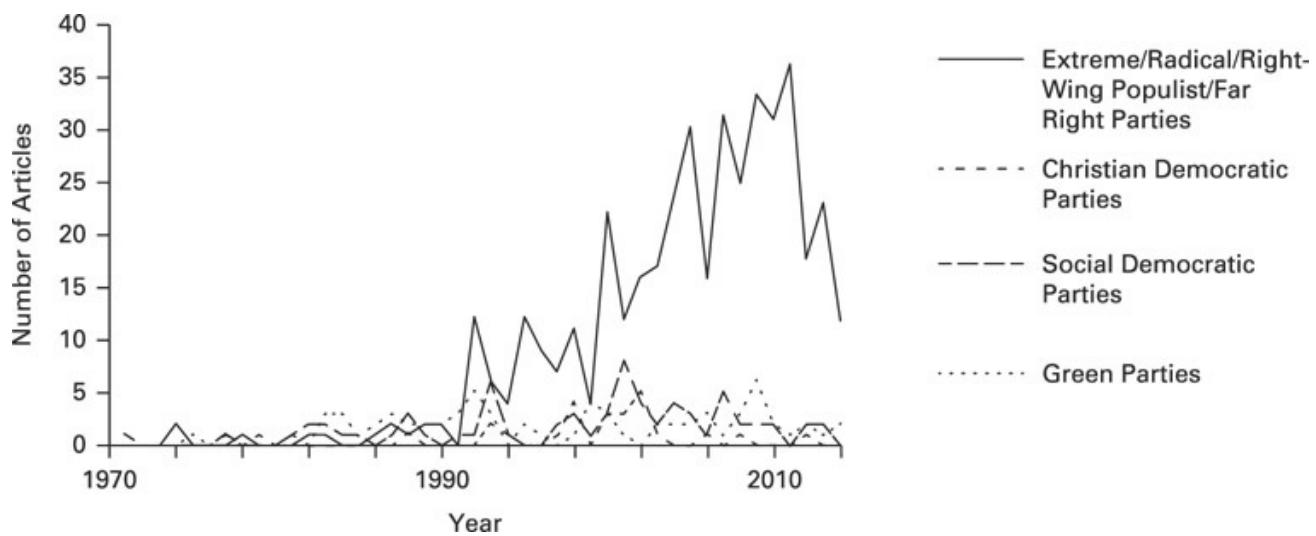
The populist radical right is one of the most studied political phenomena of the postwar western world. Hundreds of scholarly articles and books have been devoted to it, most notably to contemporary populist radical right parties in (Western) Europe. These works are trying to meet the ‘insatiable demand’ (Bale 2012) for information on the contemporary populist radical right. And this demand is not limited to the scholarly community; rarely a day goes by without at least one media outlet reporting on the populist radical right. The Great Recession has raised the public and scholarly demand even further, given that received wisdom holds that economic crises lead to the rise of the populist radical right (see Mudde 2016).

While there are many readers on the historical far right, i.e. fascism and National Socialism (e.g. Gregor 2000; Griffin 1998, 1995), no academic reader exists on the contemporary populist radical right. Most collective research is published in edited volumes, which have at least three weaknesses: (1) they often present single-country chapters, which date rapidly because of the volatile nature of most populist radical right parties; (2) they have a limited focus in terms of topics and regions; and (3) they tend to be light on theoretical insights, which normally are only covered in the introductory or concluding chapter. This reader aims to bring together classic articles on the contemporary populist radical right party family. It has a broad regional and topical focus and includes mostly work that has made an original theoretical contribution to the field, which makes it less time-specific.

The main aim of this introduction is threefold: (1) to provide a short overview of the academic study of populist radical right parties in the postwar era; (2) to outline the conceptual framework that I have been using in most of my more recent work – but which is not followed by the vast majority of authors included in this reader; and (3) to present an up-to-date history of the contemporary populist radical right in Europe, with a particular focus on the twenty-first century. Obviously, my own work has been strongly influenced by the writings included in this reader and will reflect many of their key insights. In particular, I am a product of the second wave of scholarship (see below), standing on the shoulders of giants like Hans-Georg Betz, Roger Eatwell, Piero Ignazi, and Herbert Kitschelt, whose seminal texts are included in this volume.

The study of the populist radical right

Populist radical right parties are the most studied party family in political science. Hardly a month goes by without a new article or book on a populist radical right party or the populist radical right party family. No less than ten articles were published (primarily) on the populist radical right in the first two months of 2016 alone! In the same period, no articles were published on the three major party families of European politics – the Christian democrats, social democrats, and liberals – while two articles were published on ‘radical left’ parties, a party family that was recently brought back from the dead by the Coalition of the Radical Left (Syriza) in Greece and We Can (Podemos) in Spain.



[Figure 1](#) Articles on four party families over time.

This disproportionate focus is nothing new. Ever since the rise of populist radical right parties started in the mid-1980s, the party family has inspired an ever-growing coterie industry of scholars that tries to satisfy the never-ending desire for information that exists among various publics. One of the consequences of this ballooning of scholarship is that, at least since the early 1990s, there have been more academic studies of populist radical right parties than of all other party families *combined* (see [Figure 1](#)). In fact, in certain years (e.g. 2010) there were almost *seven times* as many articles on populist radical right parties than on all other party families together.

While the increase in studies of populist radical right parties reflects, at least to some extent, the rise in the electoral success of the party family, the emphasis remains highly disproportional. Even in the early twenty-first century the populist radical right is at best the fourth-largest party family in Europe, in terms of electoral support – behind the three party families mentioned before – and possibly only the fifth-most relevant in terms of political relevance, given that the Greens still have more coalition potential in most (West) European

countries (e.g. Müller-Rommel & Poguntke 2002; Rihoux & Rüdig 2006).

But the study of the populist radical right does not only stand out in terms of its disproportionate volume. What is unique is that virtually all of its scholars are more or less open opponents of the parties they study – in fact, I know of no openly sympathetic scholar of the populist radical right. While (younger) scholars are increasingly hiding behind alleged positivist neutrality, particularly within quantitative studies, even they mostly set up the populist radical right as a problem for, if not an open threat to, the liberal democratic system. This is in sharp contrast to studies of other party families, which have all been dominated by open supporters of the party families they studied – in fact, many of the scholars were active participants within the parties/party families they studied.

Three waves of scholarship

Just as Klaus von Beyme (1988) famously distinguished between three chronologically and ideologically different waves of right-wing extremism in postwar Europe, we can differentiate between three academically distinct waves of scholarship of populist radical right parties since 1945. The three waves do not just follow each other chronologically, but also reflect different types of scholarship in terms of the questions they ask and terms they use. Obviously, the distinction is imprecise and functions mostly as a heuristic tool to structure the voluminous scholarship. None of the three waves is homogenous and heated debates about definitions and interpretations have always dominated the field.

The first wave lasted roughly from 1945 till 1980, was mostly historical and descriptive, and focused primarily on the historical continuity between the pre-war and post-war periods. The majority of the (few) scholars were historians, experts on historical fascism, who studied the postwar populist radical right under the headings of ‘extreme right’ and ‘neo-fascism.’ The bulk of this, still rather limited, scholarship was published in other languages than English, most notably German and French. Among the few English language studies was Kurt P. Tauber’s seminal, two-volume *Beyond Eagle and Swastika: German Nationalism since 1945* (1967), which discussed roughly twenty years of postwar German extreme right politics in no less than 1600 pages! Only a few studies described the ‘re-emergence of fascism’ across Europe, and even beyond, including countries like Argentina and South Africa (Eisenberg 1967; del Boca & Giovana 1969).

The second wave of scholarship lasted roughly from 1980 to 2000, although it only really took off with the start of the third wave of the ‘extreme right’ in Europe in the mid-1980s. This wave saw an infusion of social science literature, in particular various forms of modernization theory (e.g. Betz 1994; Kitschelt 1995), and was, directly or indirectly,

influenced by American studies of the ‘radical right’ of the previous decades (e.g. Bell 1964; Lipset & Raab 1970). In line with the influential ‘normal pathology’ thesis (Scheuch & Klingemann 1967), scholars tried to understand why ‘radical right’ parties could be successful in modern western democracies. Focusing on a small subset of parties in Western Europe – the usual suspects like the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ), the French National Front (FN), and the German Republicans (REP) – scholars almost exclusively studied the demand-side of populist radical right politics, treating the populist radical right party as the dependent variable.

The third wave of scholarship took off at the turn of the century, as scholars started to focus more on the supply-side of populist radical right politics, including the parties themselves (e.g. Art 2011). Scholars no longer only tried to explain their electoral successes (and, to a much lesser extent, failures), but started to investigate their effects as well (e.g. Williams 2006). Consequently, the populist radical right party was now studied as both a dependent and an independent variable. The field also became part of mainstream social science, and particularly political science, which led to further integration of mainstream theories and methods into the study of the populist radical right. Under a broad plethora of terms, though mostly including some combination of ‘right’ and ‘populism,’ scholarship of populist radical right parties now trumped that of all other party families together. It also influenced scholarship on related phenomena, from ‘niche’ parties (e.g. Adams et al. 2006; Meguid 2010) to the ‘radical left’ (e.g. March 2011; March & Mudde 2005).

A conceptual framework

Although I have so far mainly spoken about the ‘populist radical right,’ the topic of this reader is termed ‘extreme right,’ ‘radical right,’ or ‘right-wing populist’ in most academic and media accounts. This terminological quagmire is in part a consequence of the fact that, unlike other party families (such as Greens and socialists), populist radical right parties do not self-identify as populist or even (radical) right. Many reject the left–right distinction as obsolete, arguing that they are instead ‘neither left, nor right.’ While there are widely different definitions out there, most authors define the essence of what I call the ‘populist radical right’ in very similar ways.

The populist radical right shares a core ideology that combines (at least) three features: nativism, authoritarianism, and populism (Mudde 2007). Individual actors might have additional core ideological features, such as anti-Semitism or welfare chauvinism, but *all* members of the populist radical right (party) family share at least these three features. Obviously, different groups express their ideology differently, defining their ‘own people’ in various ways and targeting different ‘enemies’ on the basis of a broad variety of motivations

and prejudices (ibid.: [Chapter 3](#)). But all populist radical right actors share at least these three features as (part of) their ideological core.

Nativism entails a combination of nationalism and xenophobia. It is an ideology that holds that states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group ('the nation') and that non-native (or 'alien') elements, whether persons or ideas, are fundamentally threatening to the homogeneous nation-state. Nativism is directed at enemies both within and outside and has a long history throughout the western world – dating back at least to the Native America Party, better known as American Party or Know Nothing movement, in the United States in the mid-nineteenth century (e.g. Bennett 1990; Higham 1983).

In Europe the nativism of the populist radical right has mainly targeted 'immigrants' (including guest workers and refugees) in the West and 'indigenous minorities' (e.g. Hungarians or Roma) in the East. The basis of the nativist distinction can be multifold – including ethnic, racial, and religious prejudices, which are often combined in one form or another. For example, Islamophobia, the prime nativist sentiment of the contemporary populist radical right, combines ethnic, religious, and sometimes even racial stereotypes. At the same time, populist radical right parties will use both socio-economic and socio-cultural motivations to 'justify' their nativism.

Authoritarianism refers to the belief in a strictly ordered society, in which infringements of authority are to be punished severely. It is an ideological feature shared by most right-wing ideologies (e.g. conservatism) as well as by many religions (e.g. Roman Catholicism and Orthodox Christianity). In terms of concrete policies authoritarianism translates into strict law and order policies, with call for more police with greater competencies as well as less political involvement in the judiciary. It also means that social problems like drugs and prostitution are, first and foremost, seen as security issues and not, for example, health or economic issues. Hence, authoritarians call for higher sentences and fewer rights for criminals, but also for more discipline in families and schools.

The final feature of the ideological trilogy is populism, which is defined in many different, and often highly problematic, ways. It is here defined as an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' and 'the corrupt elite,' and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people (Mudde 2004: 543). Populist radical right politicians claim to be the *vox populi* (voice of the people), accusing established parties and politicians of being a 'political class' that feigns opposition to distract the people from the fact that they are essentially all the same and working together. The FN expresses this latter sentiment by referring to the two major parties in France, the Union for a Popular Movement (UMP) and Socialist Party (PS), as 'UMPS.'

The three different ideological features are often interconnected in the propaganda of the parties. All populist radical right parties devote disproportionate attention to crimes by 'aliens,'

be it Roma in the East or immigrants in the West. The Dutch Party for Freedom (PVV) even campaigned with a slogan linking nativism and authoritarianism directly: ‘more safety, less immigration.’ Similarly, populism and nativism are often connected, as mainstream political parties are accused of ignoring ‘immigrant crime’ and suppressing any critique with ‘political correctness’ as well as of favoring ‘immigrants’ at the expense of the native people. This does not mean that populism and nativism are identical, as some scholars seem to believe. Whereas the nativist distinction is between (good) ‘natives’ and (evil) ‘aliens,’ the populist division between the (good) ‘people’ and the (evil) ‘elite’ is *within* the native group!

Importantly, it is the combination of *all* three features that makes an ideology (and party) populist radical right. Unlike the extreme right of the 1930s, the populist radical right is democratic, in that it accepts popular sovereignty and majority rule. It also tends to accept the rules of parliamentary democracy; in most cases it prefers a stronger executive and a few parties even support a toothless legislature. Tensions exist between the populist radical right and liberal democracy, in particular arising from the constitutional protection of minorities (ethnic, political, religious). The populist radical right is in essence monist, seeing the people as ethnically and morally homogeneous, and considering pluralism as undermining the (homogeneous) ‘will of the people’ and protecting ‘special interests’ (i.e. minority rights).

Finally, the populist radical right is not ‘right’ in the classic socio-economic understanding of the state versus the market. In theory, economics is at best a secondary issue for the populist radical right. In practice, most populist radical right parties support a hybrid socio-economic agenda, which combines calls for fewer rules and lower taxes with economic nationalism and welfare chauvinism, i.e. protection of the national economy and support for welfare provisions for ‘natives’ (only). It is, however, ‘right’ in its acceptance of inequality, as a ‘natural’ phenomenon, which should not be ‘legislated away’ by the state (Bobbio 1996).

The populist radical right today

In contemporary Europe the populist radical right mobilizes primarily in the form of political parties, which contest elections to gain seats in parliament and influence, either directly or indirectly, government policies. Street politics is traditionally more associated with the extreme right, notably neo-Nazi and other far right (skinhead) groups, but this has started to change in recent years. In fact, the refugee crisis has seen an upsurge in both extreme right and radical right street politics.

Given that no party self-defines as populist radical right, classification is up to scholars, and they tend to disagree almost as much as they agree. While there are many parties that virtually all scholars agree upon, at least in recent years, debate exists on many others. These

debates are mainly related to the different definitions used, but are also the result of a continuing lack of detailed academic studies of several key parties in, mostly smaller, European countries. In fact, systematic analyses of the ideology of populist radical right parties, and political parties more generally, remain remarkably rare in political science.

It would lead too far to discuss all categorizations in detail here (see Mudde 2007: 32ff.). The most important parties that are excluded from this analysis, but that some other authors include, are List Dedecker in Belgium, Progress Party (FPd) in Denmark, Finns Party (PS) in Finland, Alternative for Germany (AfD) and German National Democratic Party (NPD) in Germany, Golden Dawn (XA) and Independent Greeks (ANEL) in Greece, Fidesz-Hungarian Civic Alliance (Fidesz) in Hungary, Forza Italia (FI) and National Alliance (AN) in Italy, National Alliance (NA) in Latvia, List Pim Fortuyn (LPF) in the Netherlands, Progress Party (FrP) in Norway, Law and Justice (PiS) in Poland, New Democracy (ND) in Sweden, Nationalist Action Party (MHP) in Turkey, and United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) in the United Kingdom. All these parties share some but not all of the three core features that define the populist radical right party family.

In most cases the debate is over the question of whether nativism (most often anti-immigrant sentiments) is ideological or opportunistic, i.e. used only strategically in election campaigns. I exclude the following parties because nativism is not a *core* feature of their party ideology: AfD, AN, ANEL, FI, Fidesz, FP, FrP, LPF, NA, ND, PiS, PS, and UKIP. NA and PS are rather more problematic cases, however, as both parties have strong institutionalized radical right factions within their party and parliamentary factions, but their leadership, program, and government policies are not radical right. UKIP seems increasingly pushed into a radical right direction, and might move there after the Brexit referendum, which has significantly reduced the saliency of its main issue, i.e. exit from the EU. The AfD, on the other hand, moved to the populist radical right in 2015, when the more radical Frauke Petry succeeded the more conservative Eurosceptic Bernd Lucke as party leader.¹

A new phenomenon is the electoral relevance of more or less openly extreme right parties. Concretely, both NPD and XA are excluded because they are extreme right parties, even if at least the NPD tries to hide this in its official party materials. Similarly, the People's Party Our Slovakia (L'SNS), which won seats in the 2016 national elections in Slovakia, is excluded on the basis of its extreme right character. The British National Party (BNP) and Movement for a Better Hungary (Jobbik) are not excluded, however, even though they are borderline cases, i.e. mostly populist radical right ‘front-stage’ but with features of a extreme right ‘back-stage’.² For example, racism and historical revisionism are prevalent within the BNP, which has recently imploded, while anti-Semitism and historical revisionism are endemic within Jobbik, which is also closely linked to a (non-armed) paramilitary unit, the now banned Hungarian Guard.

[Table 1](#) lists the electoral results of the most important populist radical right parties in

Europe. I have included only the main party in each country, focusing on national elections in the past twenty-five years and the two most recent European elections. It is important to note that, while the twenty-first century has seen the highest results for populist radical right parties in the postwar era, large parts of Europe remain immune to them. Consequently, [Table 1](#) includes only fifteen countries, less than half of all European democracies. In the other countries either no populist radical right party contests national elections (e.g. Iceland and Ireland) or no party comes close to representation in the national or European parliament (e.g. Portugal and Spain). It is particularly striking that most of the largest and most powerful European countries do not have a strong populist radical right party: Germany, Spain, Poland, and the United Kingdom.

Even among the countries with more or less successful populist radical right parties the diversity is remarkable. The highest results in national elections range from 5.6 to 29.4 percent of the vote, while the most recent results vary between 1.0 and 29.4 percent. The *average* high result of these successful parties is 15.0 percent, while their average in most recent elections is 10.8 percent. Only six of the fifteen parties gained their highest result in the most recent election, which warns against seeing the development of populist radical right success as one continuous upward trend. In fact, the peaks of some parties were almost two decades ago and while some have since recovered (e.g. FN and FPÖ), others have not (e.g. PRM).

Populist radical right parties perform, on average, not very differently in European elections (Minkenberg & Perrineau 2007), where the average of the fourteen most successful parties was 9.9 percent in 2014 – the average of all populist radical right parties was just under 7 percent (see Mudde 2016). Again, the diversity is striking, with results ranging from 2.7 to 26.6 percent and changes between the 2009 and 2014 elections between -9.0 and +18.7 percent. The massive gap in gains and losses again emphasizes the different trajectories of populist radical right parties in Europe. While the overall trend is up, particularly on average, there are several parties that are well beyond their peak.

[Table 1](#) Electoral results of main populist radical right parties in Europe in national elections (1980–2015) and European elections (2009 and 2014)

Country	Party	National elections		European elections	
		Highest result	Last result	2014 result	Change 2009
Austria	Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ)	26.9	20.5	19.7	+7.0
Belgium	Flemish Interest (VB)	12.0	3.7	4.1	-5.8
Bulgaria	National Union Attack (Attack)	9.4	4.5	3.0	-9.0
Czech Republic	Dawn – National Coalition (Dawn)	6.9	6.9	3.1	+3.1
Denmark	Danish People's Party (DF)	21.1	21.1	26.6	+11.8
Estonia	Conservative People's Party of Estonia (EKRE)	8.1	8.1	4.0	+4.0
France	National Front (FN)	15.3	13.6	25.0	+18.7
Greece	Popular Orthodox Rally (LAOS)	5.6	1.0	2.7	-4.5
Hungary	Movement for a Better Hungary (Jobbik)	20.5	20.5	14.7	-0.1
Italy	Northern League (LN)	10.1	4.1	6.2	-4.0
Netherlands	Party for Freedom (PVV)	15.5	10.1	13.2	-3.8
Romania	Greater Romania Party (PRM)	19.5	1.5	2.7	-6.0
Slovakia	Slovak National Party (SNS)	11.6	4.6	3.6	-2.0
Sweden	Sweden Democrats (SD)	12.9	12.9	9.7	+6.4
Switzerland*	Swiss People's Party (SVP)	29.4	29.4	—	—
<i>Average of 15**</i>		<i>15.0</i>	<i>10.8</i>	<i>9.9</i>	<i>+1.1</i>

* Switzerland is not a member of the European Union and the SVP does therefore not contest the European elections.

** In the case of the European Elections it is the average of 14, as Switzerland is not an EU member state.

A similar story can be told about government participation. The first populist radical right party to enter a (coalition) government in Western Europe was the LN in Italy in 1994. The phenomenon was more common in Eastern Europe in the 1990s, largely a symptom of the still fragile and volatile party politics of the transition period. In the first decade of the twenty-first century several parties entered coalitions in the West, while they became less common in the East. Although the trend remains up, there are currently only three governments with populist radical right participation – the four-party coalition government in Slovakia, in which a significantly moderated SNS is a junior partner; the liberal minority government in Denmark, which depends on the support of the DF (and other right-wing parties); and the uniquely constructed Swiss government, which includes the SVP, even though that party also functions as the main opposition party in Switzerland.³

Until 2015 the populist radical right was almost exclusively a party phenomenon with street politics the domain of small, sometimes violent, extreme right groups. While extreme right activists and groups remain primarily involved in street politics, they are no longer alone. In recent years various radical right non-party organizations have emerged that are exclusively focused on extra-parliamentary politics. The best-known groups are the English Defence League (EDL) and Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the West (PEGIDA), which both have inspired similar groups across Europe and even beyond (e.g. Busher 2016; Vorländer

et al. 2016). While these groups have been able to mobilize several thousand people at some times, their significance is strongly exaggerated by the media. Most EDL and PEGIDA demonstrations have been complete failures with small groups of activists being protected from the much larger numbers of anti-racist demonstrators by a mass police force.

Table 2 Participation in government by populist radical right parties, 1980–2014

<i>Country</i>	<i>Party</i>	<i>Period(s)</i>	<i>Coalition partner(s)</i>
Austria	Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ)	2000–2002	ÖVP
		2002–2005	ÖVP
	Alliance for the Future of Austria (BZÖ)	2005–2006	ÖVP
Bulgaria ¹	National Union Attack (Attack)	2013–2014	BSP & DPS
Croatia	Croatia Democratic Union (HDZ)	1990–2000	
Denmark ¹	Danish People's Party (DF)	2001–2005	V & KF
		2005–2007	V & KF
		2007–2011	V & KF
Estonia	Estonian National Independence Party (ERSP)	1992–1995	Isamaa
Greece	Popular Orthodox Rally (LAOS)	2011–2012	ND & PASOK
Italy	Northern League (LN)	1994	AN & FI
		2001–2006	AN & FI & MDC
		2008–2011	PdL & MpA
Netherlands ¹	Party for Freedom (PVV)	2010–2012	CDA & VVD
Poland	League of Polish Families (LPR)	2005–2006	PiS & Samoorona
Romania		1994–	PDSR & PSM

	Romanian National Unity Party (PUNR)	1996	
	Greater Romania Party (PRM)	1995	PDSR & PSM
Slovakia	Slovak National Party (SNS)	1994–1998	HZDS & ZRS
		2006–2010	HZDS & Smer
		2016–	Smer & Most-Híd & Siet'
Switzerland ²	Swiss People's Party (SVP)	2000–	SPS & FDP & CVP

¹ Minority governments in which the populist radical right party functions as the official support party.

² Swiss governments are longstanding, voluntary governments based on a ‘magic formula’ rather than the outcome of the parliamentary elections.

The refugee crisis has changed populist radical right street politics in both qualitative and quantitative terms. First of all, there are more anti-immigration demonstrations, which attract more people in more countries. Second, the type of groups and people involved in these demonstrations is much more diverse, ranging from members of mainstream parties to activists from neo-Nazi groups. Most striking is the rise of anti-immigration demonstrations in East Central Europe, a region that had been confronted with little mass immigration or mass protest before. While much anti-immigration politics has so far remained either loosely organized or organized by existing far right groups, some new populist radical right groups have emerged, such as the Bloc Against Islam in the Czech Republic. I will discuss the possible ramifications of these ongoing developments in more detail in the concluding chapter.

Outline of the book

This introductory chapter has aimed to provide a short background to the populist radical right in Europe and to its academic study. It has mainly presented my own approach, and definition, which is similar, but certainly not identical, to most of the authors included in this volume. Almost every author uses a somewhat different term, definition, and classification, which sometimes has consequences for the assessment of causes and consequences. Hence, it is important to compare not just the insights of different authors, but also the terms and classifications that they employ. For example, it is possible that two authors come to very different conclusions on the electoral success or political impact of the populist radical right, because one uses a very broad definition, which includes many governing parties, and the

other a very narrow one, which excludes most of them.

The reader includes thirty-two previously published articles and book chapters organized in six thematic sections: (1) ideology and issues; (2) parties, organizations, and subcultures; (3) leaders, members, and voters; (4) causes; (5) consequences; and (6) responses. Each section features a short introduction by the editor, which introduces and ties together the selected pieces and provides discussion questions and suggestions for further readings. The reader is ended with a conclusion in which I will reflect on the future of the populist radical right in light of (more) recent political developments – most notably the Greek economic crisis and the refugee crisis – and suggest avenues for future research.

Notes

¹ As the AfD contested both the 2013 German and 2014 European elections as a non-populist radical right party, i.e. before the split, it is excluded from Table 1.

² The distinction between ‘front-stage’ and ‘back-stage’ was initially developed by the American sociologist Erving Goffman and applied to far right parties by the Dutch anthropologist Jaap van Donselaar (1991).

³ Obviously, the count is quite different if a broader interpretation of the ‘radical right’ is used. Several colleagues would, for example, also include the current governments in Finland (PS), Latvia (NA), and Norway (FrP). And, in light of the refugee crisis (see conclusion), many journalists have started to count Hungary (Fidesz) and Poland (PiS) as well.

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Part I

Ideology and issues

All scholars define the populist radical right as essentially an ideology and link it to specific political issues. There is significant debate about what exactly defines the core features of (what I call) the populist radical right ideology, and what the best term to denote it is. However, whether explicitly or implicitly, virtually everyone makes a connection to historical fascism of the early twentieth century (in its German or Italian form). **Roger Griffin** discusses the similarities and differences between historical fascism and the contemporary populist radical right, arguing that the latter is, in part, a consequence (and proof) of the post-fascist era.

Elisabeth Carter identifies the core features of (what she calls) ‘right-wing extremism’ and outlines the dividing lines between the ‘extreme right’ and the ‘mainstream right.’ In line with many other authors (see several chapters in [Part IV](#)), she argues that there are different types of ‘right-wing extremism’ and that there is a relationship between the type of ideology and electoral success. **Hans-Georg Betz and Carol Johnson** focus on the essence of the contemporary populist radical right ideology, and its complex relationship to liberal democracy, while **Sarah L. De Lange** questions the so-called ‘new winning formula’ (of Herbert Kitschelt and Anthony McGann, see [Part IV](#)), which has informed much research into the radical right, particularly among US(-trained) scholars.

Populist radical right politics is related to a specific set of issues, which have remained relatively stable. Immigration has always been at the core of the populist radical right program, but the type of immigrant has changed in time. At least since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 Muslims have become the prime target of radical right parties. **José Zúquete** looks into the phenomenon of ‘Islamophobia’ and how the new focus on Islam and Muslims has changed the populist radical right and its relationship with the political mainstream.

Finally, **Sofia Vasilopoulou** discusses another core issue of populist radical right politics: European integration. She shows that, as the European Union (EU) has changed, the position of the populist radical right parties has changed. Today, different populist radical right parties hold different positions on European integration in general and the EU in particular.

Revision questions

Griffin

- What are the key differences between historical fascism and the contemporary populist radical right?
- What does Griffin mean with the term ‘ethnocratic liberalism’?
- What are the two main strategies to keep fascism alive in the post-fascist era? Where do these two strategies come together?
- What ideological purpose does Revisionism, and in particular Holocaust Denial, serve for fascists in the post-fascist era?

Carter

- What are the two anti-constitutional and anti-democratic elements that define right-wing extremism?
- What are the two features that constitute the dividing line between the extreme right and the mainstream right?
- What are the three bases of division for Carter’s typology of right-wing extremism? Which five types does she distinguish?
- What is the relationship between party ideology and electoral success?

Betz and Johnson

- What did Jean-Marie Le Pen mean when he said that he wants to ‘return the word to the people’ who live under ‘a totalitarian yoke with a democratic mask’?
- What does the populist radical right mean with ‘true’ or ‘real’ democracy? What is the essence of this form of democracy?
- What is ‘the ethnocratic alternative’?

De Lange

- What are the two main dimensions of West European party politics?
- What is ‘the new winning formula’ according to Kitschelt and McGann? What is De Lange’s main critique of that formula?

Zúquete

- What are the key consequences of the populist radical right's new focus on Islam and Muslims?
- What do the terms 'Eurabia' and 'Dhimmitude' mean?
- How has the issue of Islam led to the mainstreaming of the populist radical right in Europe?

Vasilopoulou

- Why do populist radical right parties have 'increased incentives' to oppose the European Union?
- What are the four aspects of European integration?
- What are the populist radical right's three 'patterns of opposition' to European integration? Why do different parties have different patterns of opposition?

Discussion points

1. Are we today in an 'interregnum' or an 'endgame,' according to Griffin? Do you agree with his position?
2. Is Carter's (full) typology of 'right-wing extremism' still relevant today? Does her established relationship between party ideology and electoral success still hold true in the twenty-first century?
3. What constitutes a bigger threat to contemporary liberal democracy, the 'post-fascist' New Right or the 'ethnocratic' radical right?
4. Does the European populist radical right have a distinct economic program?
5. Zúquete argues that Islamophobia is 'indistinctive' and 'moralistic' and should therefore not be used in academic debates. Do you agree?
6. Has there been a shift in the populist radical right's opposition to European integration during the Great Recession?
7. Are populist radical right parties 'anti-European'?

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Interregnum or endgame?

The radical right in the ‘post-fascist’ era

Roger Griffin

A charred corpse lying unrecognizable in an underground bunker in Berlin, a body hanging all too recognizably upside down from the gantry of a petrol station in Milan: if single images can be worth pages of historical analysis then the fates of Hitler and Mussolini in April 1945 certainly point to a dramatic watershed in the history of the radical right. The *Duce’s* prophecies that his regime inaugurated a ‘century of the Right, a Fascist century’, and the *Führer’s* claims to have founded a thousand-year Reich had proved catastrophic misreadings of unfolding political realities. The increasingly geriatric personal dictatorships of Franco and Salazar soon seemed grotesque anachronisms. In 1994 the oldest and most successful neo-fascist movement, the Movimento Sociale Italiano, became a ‘right-wing party’, declaring at its first congress held in Fiuggi that the collapse of actually existing socialism five years earlier had meant the end of an era characterized by the struggle between anti-fascism and fascism, and that parliamentary democracy now remained ‘the only solution without negative side effects to the problem of competition between political forces for the conquest of consensus’.¹ In the run up to the congress in December 1993 the MSI’s leader, Gianfranco Fini, had asserted that ‘Fascism was now irreversibly consigned to history and its judgement. . . . Like all Italians we are not neo-Fascists, but post-Fascists’.² Symbolically at least, Fiuggi was the Bad Godesberg of the European radical right. Liberal democracy had triumphed.

With its Faustian urge to probe beneath the surface of human phenomena to find ‘what holds together the world at its inmost level’³ political science clearly cannot be content with such punchy story-lines and cinematographic *dénouements*. However, once it is asked to recount how things ‘actually have been’ for the radical right since 1945 a number of factors come into play which make it hazardous to offer any sort of script at all, even if only in the form of a rough treatment. For one thing, even if the scope of the question is restricted to Europe, the failure of the radical right to achieve hegemony has a different story in every country.⁴ Moreover, the conceptual problems involved compound those raised by the sheer

quantity of empirical material. Apart from the increasingly contested nature of the fundamental term ‘the right’,⁵ the concept ‘radical right’ can be defined and delimitated in several conflicting ways,⁶ and in each case subsumes a number of distinct forms of organization and ideological rationale. Moreover, the specific connotations of the term in different languages (when it is possible to translate it literally) and its significance, both historical and contemporary, vary significantly from country to country and from one part of the world to another (e.g., in German ‘radical right’ is regarded as still within the bounds of legitimate political debate, while ‘extreme right’ is not). In some Anglo-Saxon usages it embraces thousands of individual groups, movements, and parties the world over, ranging from the vast and well-established to the ephemeral and minute.⁷ In addition, the subliminal political values, not to mention the historical assumptions and shadowy teleological imaginings, of the social scientist who attempts to sketch the ‘big picture’ cannot fail to influence the way it is composed, which empirical features are highlighted, and what inferences for the future are drawn from it.

Fortunately, three factors operate to bring the remit of this article just within the bounds of the manageable. First, it is written as one of a series of articles primarily concerned with general patterns of development discernible over the twentieth century within some of the major modern political ideologies, rather than with specific political formations and the events they helped shape. Secondly, the right–left dichotomy is a product of the French Revolution, and the term ‘radical right’ acquires its most precise connotations in the context of ideologically elaborated rejections of parliamentary liberalism of the type which first arose in late nineteenth-century Europe. Considerations of traditionalist forces operating outside Europeanized societies in a non-parliamentary context, such as Islamic fundamentalism, or of ideologically vacuous dictatorships, whether military or personal, thus need not detain us. Thirdly, one of the most significant events in the recent history of the radical right arguably concerns not the object of research but the lens through which it is seen. After several decades in which even the most rudimentary agreement over the definition of fascism was lacking, a significant pocket of consensus has emerged about its basic definitional contours. This conjuncture of factors enables an area of empirical data which poses irreducible definitional and taxonomic problems to be cut down to size, at least for heuristic purposes, by considering within a relatively uncontentious conceptual framework those aspects of the post-war radical right which can be seen as outlets or conduits for the same ideological energies which fed interwar fascism. Having cleared some of the terrain it will then be possible to suggest in a more speculative spirit that the most significant development that has taken place since the war in the radical right has occurred outside the parameters of fascism: the spread of ‘ethnocratic liberalism’. The anti-liberal currents of ideology it feeds may prove even more insidious than modernized forms of the interwar fascist right in their liberticide effects because they are so easily absorbed into the bloodstream of liberalism itself.

There is now a growing consensus that fascism is best seen as a revolutionary form of populist nationalism which emerged in the interwar period at a time when a systemic crisis seemed to many within the Europeanized world to be affecting not only national life, but civilization as a whole.⁸ A necessary precondition for the rise of fascism was a cultural climate saturated with apocalyptic forebodings and hopes for imminent or eventual renewal captured in such works as Spengler's *Decline of the West* and H.G. Wells's *The Shape of Things to Come*. It articulated, fomented, and channelled inchoate but extraordinarily widespread longings for a new type of political system, a new élite, a new type of human being, a new relationship between the individual and society, for a more planned economy, for a revolutionary change in the values of modern life, for a new experience of time itself.⁹ The mobilizing myth which can be treated ideal-typically as the definitional core of fascism (the 'fascist minimum') is that through the intervention of a heroic élite the whole national community is capable of resurrecting itself Phoenix-like from the ashes of the decadent old order ('palingenetic ultra-nationalism'). It is this myth which informs the obsessive preoccupation with national/ethnic decadence and regeneration in a post-liberal new order which is now widely acknowledged to be the hallmark of all fascism.¹⁰

After 1945 not only was ultra-nationalism widely identified with war, destruction, genocide, and calculated inhumanity on a horrendous scale, but liberal democracy underwent no serious systemic crises, and was if anything strengthened and legitimated for the bulk of its citizens (in the myth of the 'Free World') by the emergence of the Soviet Empire, which also had the effect of comprehensively denying political space to liberal and right-wing agitation on its own territory. Within a few years of the Axis defeat it had become clear to all of fascism's more astute activists that the age of mass armed parties led by charismatic leaders was dead, and that in order to survive at all as an ideology in the absence of a pervasive palingenetic climate it had to be extensively overhauled. The basic problem was to adapt a revolutionary form of populist nationalism posited on the imminent collapse of Western liberalism and the palpable risk of a Communist takeover, to a Western world now divided between a dynamically expanding capitalist and an apparently impregnable Communist state system, neither of whose populations were susceptible to mass mobilization by the rhetoric of extreme nationalism, racism, and war.

It would be misleading to suggest that all fascists recognized the extent to which their vision had been discredited by events, and have accepted the need for drastic change in their ideology and tactics in the light of the new international situation. The psychotropic power of palingenetic myth to transform despair into hope encouraged many who had believed in a fascist cause at the height of the war to enter a sustained state of denial. For decades pockets of purely nostalgic and mimetic fascism could be found in Europe, like muddy puddles in the bed of a dried-up lake. But the dramatic loss of the historical climate which produced fascism forced its more flexible activists, decimated by events and acutely marginalized within their

political cultures,¹¹ to develop two basic strategies for keeping the dream of national rebirth alive, even if in a state of hibernation, in the bleak winter of liberal and (until 1989) communist hegemony in Europe. They can be summarized ideal-typically as ‘internationalization’ and ‘metapoliticization’.

The internationalization of fascism

Even before the end of the Second World War some Nazis were making plans for the core values of the Third Reich to be perpetuated after its increasingly inexorable defeat. One of the more bizarre schemes may well have involved the setting up of a secret international order through the agency of the Sicherheitsdienst des Reichsführers-SS.¹² Though this particular project came to naught, it was an early symptom of the Europeanization of fascism which has become such a striking feature of the post-1945 fascist radical right. There had been several fascist schemes for a federal Europe before the war,¹³ especially emanating from Italy,¹⁴ and the realities of a Nazi conquest made the ‘New European Order’ a subject of considerable speculation and forward planning in some ministries of the Third Reich when victory seemed a foregone conclusion¹⁵—one Nazi initiative, Young Europe, was revived after the war as Jeune Europe. Nazi fellow travellers, such as Drieu la Rochelle in France and Szálasi, leader of the Hungarian Arrow Cross, also promoted visions of a Nazi dominated pan-fascist Europe. Once Germany had lost the war, a tempting explanation for the defeat without abandoning fascist principles was to accuse Mussolini and Hitler of being too narrowly nationalistic to realize the true historical purpose of fascism, namely to save European civilization as a whole from destruction at the hands of Bolshevism and Americanization.

Symptoms of the Euro-fascism which emerged in the aftermath of 1945 were the launching of periodicals dedicated to the cause such as *The European*, *Europa Nazione*, and *Nation Europa*, the publication of major texts by Oswald Mosley,¹⁶ Julius Evola,¹⁷ Maurice Bardèche,¹⁸ and Francis Yockey¹⁹ calling for a European Federation or Empire of fascist nations, and the creation of pan-European fascist organizations such as The Nouvel Ordre Européen, The European Social Movement, and Faisceaux Nationaux et Européens.²⁰ However, any notion that the radical right had found in Eurofascism an effective strategy for a coordinated assault on the citadels of power is instantly dispelled when it is realized how many incompatible schemes emerged from it: pagan and Catholic, Nietzschean and occultist, pro-Nazi (and anti-Semitic), pro-Fascist, pro-British, pro-French, and pro-Hungarian. Some saw the new Europe as equally threatened by Russia and America, and hence saw Africa as a colonial hinterland supplying an autarkic Europe with raw materials (the idea of ‘Eurafrica’ was first formulated in the Salò Republic in the last years of the war). Others linked its destiny

with the USA as part of an anti-communist alliance, or with Russia to form a continental bloc against decadent materialism and individualism ('national bolshevism').

The acute taxonomic difficulties posed by the post-war fascist radical right are brought out clearly when we consider that the Nazi variant of Eurofascism is simultaneously an example of another form that its internationalization has taken. Once stripped of its specifically German connotations of a 'Third Reich', Nazism became the ideology of the white supremacist struggle to save civilization from its alleged enemies (Jews, communists, the racially inferior, liberals, etc.), whether on a strictly European (Nouvel Ordre Européen, Circulo Español de Amigos de Europe) or a planetary (World Union of National Socialists, League for Pan-Nordic Friendship) scale.²¹ In both cases, as with Eurofascism in general, the national or ethnic dimension of the struggle for regeneration was not abandoned, but subsumed within a wider context, so that Swedish or American Nazis can feel that the struggle for the rebirth of their nation or homeland is but one theatre in an international race war. By the 1970s a new generation of Universal Nazis was thinking globally and acting locally, made up principally of marginalized 'working class' white racists targeted through propaganda directed at the educationally challenged, a racist variety of heavy metal 'punk' rock and ballads, and, in Europe at least, through networks of organized football hooliganism with a racist agenda. Extensive international links exist between them, not only in the form of ritual 'congresses' (e.g., the annual jamboree in the Belgian town of Dijksmuide, the Hitler or Hess birthday celebrations), but especially at the level of the distribution of propaganda, literature, and merchandizing. The White Noise CD business is a multinational industry in itself whose profits are channelled into financing political activities.²²

Universal Nazism has retained the original's fanatical belief in the genius of Adolf Hitler and in the innate right of Aryan peoples to take any measures necessary to protect and strengthen the national community, which in practice means fighting the threat posed by Jews, Communists, Blacks, and other alleged enemies of racial health, but the showdown between cultural health and degeneracy generated new variants of Nazism as it adapts to its new habitat. Thus US Nazis present the federal state as ZOG (Zionist Occupation Government), and the United Nations as an agency of enforced racial mixing in a culturally homogenized, genocidal New World Order. Specific groups blend in elements taken from the Ku Klux Klan, evangelist Christianity,²³ or Nordic mythology²⁴ in a spirit reminiscent of the 'German Faith Movement' which appeared under Hitler, though the fusion of the political with 'new religions' has its roots deep in the charter myths which inform the national identity of traditionally minded white Americans.

An even more original form of international fascism ideologically is Third Positionism, which, influenced by some currents of Italian neo-fascism, seeks a third way between capitalism and communism, and associates itself with Third World struggles against the global market and a USA-Israel dominated 'international community' (notably Gaddafi's Libya, the

PLO, and Hussein's Iraq), 'Zionist' capitalism, and the cultural hegemony of the USA. The English Third Positionist group the National Revolutionary Faction, for example, promotes its own alternative economics ('distributionism'), and calls for the component parts of Britain (including Cornwall and the Isle of Man) to achieve semi-autonomy within a united (but decidedly not in the EU sense of united) Europe. This combination of regionalist separatism (ethno-pluralism) with supranational federalism reflects a marked tendency in some areas of the modern European radical right to abandon the nation-state as the basic unit of homogeneous cultural energy and promote the idea of discrete ethnic groups or *ethnies* (a principle already familiar from the Nazi equation of nation with *Volk*). This produces the concept of the 'Europe of a hundred flags' to which the NRF subscribes.

Though it presents itself as a vanguard movement of 'political soldiers', the NRF is typical of Third Positionism for the considerable energy it expends on refining its ideological alternative to classic fascism and encouraging a healthy diet of reading among its followers. The books on sale via its magazine *The English Alternative* (formerly *The Crusader*) range in subject matter from Nazism, especially its anti-Semitism and racial politics, the Iron Guard and the Falange, to ecology and the ideas of English visionaries such as Hilaire Belloc and William Morris. Especially significant is its promotion of the socialistic, pro-Russian, and Europeanist brand of fascism evolved by Otto Strasser and (in attenuated form) by his brother Gregor before he became a Nazi leader. Indeed, Third Positionism is sometimes called Strasserism to distinguish it from neo-Nazism, which it rejects as excessively compromised by capitalism, demagogic, and narrow chauvinism. The ENM is informally linked to Third Positionist groups all over the world, all with their own unique syntheses of ideas.²⁵

The metapoliticization of fascism

An even more important ideological development within the fascist radical right than its rejection of the nation as the sole or principal focus for revolutionary energies also results from the defeat of the Axis powers in 1945. An outstanding feature of Fascism and Nazism which fascist organizers elsewhere attempted to emulate was that they were able to take over the state as a new type of force in modern politics which combined four components: an electoral party, a paramilitary army, a mass social movement, and an effervescent ideological discourse. The ideological discourse, which under the two regimes became the orthodoxy and hence the basis for the social re-engineering of values and behaviour, was provided by a profusion of texts by intellectuals, artists, and articulate activists (notably the leaders themselves) who felt an elective affinity with a movement which promised to put an end to the decadence in national life and inaugurate a process of renewal. Far from being fully

cohesive bodies of doctrine, the ideologies of both movements were alliances (in the Fascist case a very loose one) of heterogeneous political, intellectual and cultural currents and ideas which converged on the image of the reborn nation.

A post-war political climate inclement towards all ‘extremisms’ precluded fascism from attracting anywhere in the world a mass following of sufficient size, momentum, and gravitational pull to bind these four components together under a charismatic leader in a way which had been only possible in the exceptional circumstances of the 1920s and 1930s. As a result overtly anti-systemic cadre movements of revolutionary paramilitaries and radical ideologues split off from ostensibly democratic political parties pursuing a fascist agenda, and it became possible for the ideological production of fascist discourse to operate relatively autonomously without any formal links with organized politics. The situation which emerged was reminiscent of the French or German radical right in the pre-1914 period where party politics, popular passions, extra-parliamentary activism, and ideological agitation were still not coordinated into cohesive unified populist movements. As a result of the fragmentation a panorama of the modern fascist right in Europe presents a spectacle of a small number of political parties with fascist associations existing alongside a much larger number of organizations made up of militant activists dedicated solely to ideas, some of them with minute memberships (the ‘groupuscular right’).²⁶ The radical right planets of Europe’s interwar political system have broken up into countless asteroids.

The combination of this situation with the universalization of Nazism is that a whole new sector of international cultural production has grown up since the war dedicated to keeping alive Nazism as an ideology, either through books glorifying the Nazi period (memoirs, biographies), or, more subtly, through academic journals, monographs, conference papers, and ‘scientific’ reports which are ‘revisionist’ in that they offer historical accounts of Nazism denying, relativizing or minimizing the atrocities and human catastrophes which directly resulted from its attempt to create a racial empire in the heart of Europe. The most notorious product of Revisionism is Holocaust Denial, which exists in various degrees of pornographic crudity and specious sophistication in its manipulation of historical realities.²⁷ Its success in re-editing history and making the facts about the Nazis’ racial state at least contestable in the minds of post-war generations is crucial to a long-term strategy of elements within the international radical right for normalizing and rehabilitating Nazism to a point where its ideas no longer create repulsion among the general public, and where some anti-Nazi energy is actually deflected towards Jews themselves (who are accused by some ‘vulgar’ revisionists of ‘inventing’ the ‘lie’ of the Holocaust in order to be given a homeland at the expense of the Palestinians).

Some of the more sophisticated examples of revisionism²⁸ provide fascinating and disturbing case studies in the persuasive psychological power which form can exercise over content. By deliberately emulating a discourse and format of academic production

(conferences and public lectures, journal articles and books incorporating footnotes, a strictly analytical linguistic register, the appeal to documentary evidence, the invocation of academic qualifications, etc.) which originally evolved as part of a liberal humanistic quest for truth, revisionists set out simultaneously to pervert the historical record and overcome psychological barriers which any humanist should have towards fascism. Revisionist and Holocaust denial literature is demonstrably part of the staple diet of ‘Nazi-oid’ fascists the world over and its most prolific producers nearly always have links to known Nazi activists. However, much of its insidious power derives from the fact that it exists as a free-floating discourse in its own right, and is not part of the ideological stance of any particular movement, party, or ‘school’ of fascism. In this sense revisionism is ‘metapolitical’.

The pro-Nazi subtext of revisionism is at least apparent. By far the most sophisticated disguise assumed by the fascist radical right since the war is the (European) New Right. First elaborated as a response to calls for a more ‘modern’ fascist discourse which became increasingly frequent within the French radical right in the 1960s,²⁹ the Nouvelle Droite has been responsible for an extraordinary output of high quality ideological material associated with the ‘think-tank’ GRECE and the periodicals *Nouvelle École* and *Éléments*, most of which only the trained eye (peering through the lens of the ‘new consensus’) can detect as bearing the traces of a fascist legacy. The New Right’s ‘metapolitical’ critique of liberal democracy has been taken up in several other countries, notably Italy (where it has been fused with a fascination with fantasy literature, especially Tolkien, and with esoteric elements derived from the total alternative ‘Traditionalist’ philosophy of history bequeathed by Julius Evola), Germany (where the influence of the Conservative Revolution is particularly strong), and Russia (where it has given rise to a new version of Eurasianism). There is even an English branch of the New Right which adds some Celtic and Anglo-Saxon perspectives to a view of the modern world as indebted to Evola as it is to GRECE.³⁰ The European New Right embraces a large number of academics and freelance autodidacts, journalists, writers, and intellectuals, some of whom are associated with particular magazines, study groups, or parties, while others are essentially loners. Some are overtly fascist, as when one of their number calls for a regenerating explosion of mythic energy of the sort precipitated by Hitler,³¹ while others have evolved in such idiosyncratic directions away from any discernible revolutionary position that their fascist expectations of rebirth seem to have melted into a diffuse cultural pessimism about the present world order.³²

While it is impossible to generalize about its ideological contents, the recurrent features of New Right thought are: a ‘right-wing Gramscianism’ which recognizes that cultural hegemony must precede political hegemony; the extensive use of intellectuals associated with the ‘Conservative Revolution’, notably Nietzsche, Ernst Jünger, Martin Heidegger, and Carl Schmitt, as articulators of principles central to non-Nazi variants of German fascism which emerged under Weimar; the idea of Europe as a unique cultural homeland which can still be

revitalized by renewing contact with its pre-Christian mythic roots; an extreme eclecticism stemming from the belief that the dichotomy of left and right can be transcended in a new alliance of intellectual energies opposed to the dominant system of liberal egalitarianism, capitalist materialism, and American consumerist individualism (summed up in the concept of a creeping ‘McDonaldization’ of the world, which also links in with an idiosyncratic concern with ecology); and the celebration of ethnic diversity and difference (‘differentialism’) to be defended against cultural imperialism and ‘totalitarian’ one-worldism (‘mondialisme’), mass migration, and the liberal endorsement of a multi-racial society (presented as ‘genocidal’).

The hallmark of the New Right is its belief that the present world system is not only decadent, but that it will eventually give way to a new type of civilization based on healthy mythic forces (though the new millennium nowadays often seems indefinitely postponed). Contemporary history is thus an ‘interregnum’ for the spiritually awakened (a concept derived from the Conservative Revolution). New Rightists of an Evolian bent use the alternative image of the ‘Kali Yuga’ or Black Age which in the Hindu cyclic philosophy of history precedes the opening of a new golden age. Since the Axis powers did not take advantage of the unique opportunity offered by the interwar crisis to install a European empire based on Traditional values, those with an intuitive sense for these values have no option but to withdraw into ‘apoliteia’ (which does not preclude political activism and even terrorism) until the modern world finally collapses.

It is in the copious publications of Europe’s metapolitical New Right that the remarkable vitality and originality of the contemporary fascist radical right as an ideological phenomenon is to be found, as well as the most sophisticated expression of its Europeanization.³³ Perhaps the ultimate form taken by fascism’s metapoliticization, however, is the extensive use it is now making of the Web. Thanks to the Internet, schemes for the salvation of nations, ethnic groups, Europe, the West, or the White race from their present decadence cease to be located in a movement, party, ideologue, or visionary leader, or even in a particular country or ethnic community: the secular Jeremiads and Evangelia are everywhere and nowhere simultaneously in a suprahistorical electronic reality which has the most tenuous link with the material world. In ‘cyberfascism’, the zenith of metapoliticization coincides with the ultimate degree of internationalization. To follow up the links to kindred organizations provided on each radical right web-page will take the avid researcher on a virtual journey through literally thousands of sites located throughout the Europeanized world, all presenting different permutations of palingenetic ultra-nationalism. What results is the paradox that as fascism diversifies into an ever greater plethora of factions and sects, it is simultaneously undergoing an ever more intense process of ecumenalization.³⁴

Democratic fascism, ethnocratic liberalism, and the prospects of the radical right

The sheer quantity of *groupuscules*, organizations, and publications which point to the tenacity of fascism in its various modulations might lead the unwary to assume that fascism is growing in strength and still poses a challenge to democracy. Fortunately in the present case, where variants of major ideologies are concerned there is often weakness in sheer numbers, since they point to an absent centre, the lack of dynamic movement which would turn them into mutually intelligible dialects of the same *lingua franca*. Fascist ecumenicalism does not run deep, and papers over radical differences in ideology which would nip in the bud any sort of fascist international (as they did when attempts to ‘universalize’ fascism formally were made in the much more propitious 1930s). Similarly, its metapolitics mask the fundamental impotence of visions which survive solely because their essential utopianism is never exposed by the acid test of attempted implementation. Creating a European Empire on differentialist lines, for example—leaving aside the preposterously surreal conditions required before such a fantasy could be enacted—would involve a process of enforced resettlement and ethnic cleansing which would soon leave the ‘hundred flags’ of the new Europe drenched in blood.

The most telling indicator of the structural impotence of the revolutionary radical right today is perhaps the emergence of electoral parties, which, despite euphemizing their fascist agenda for public consumption, have remained firmly marginalized everywhere in the world since 1945. The NSDAP or the PNF used paramilitary force to back up electoral campaigns and negotiations with the state, and made no secret of their contempt for liberalism. The modern parliamentary fascist party (e.g., the British National Party, the Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands) is more like a toothless, emaciated, old nag than a powerful Trojan horse capable of carrying revolutionaries into the citadel of power. The extent to which ‘real fascism’ is a dead letter is exemplified by the consequence of Fini’s decision to move the MSI towards the centre from the right to take advantage of the Italian state crisis of the early 1990s. The price for becoming a legitimate player in the political game was to renounce the official commitment to a post-liberal new order, which meant taking Genesis out of the Bible just as much as it did for the hard left when Clause 4 was removed from the Labour Party Constitution. In both cases a small rump of intransigents were left (Scargill’s Real Labour Party and Rauti’s MSI Fiamma Tricolore) to keep the flame of ideological purity burning as a practically invisible point of light in the political spectrum. Despite occasional bouts of media panic about the possibility of massive swings to the right triggered by neo-Nazi violence against asylum seekers or the BNP’s winning of a seat in a local election, the structural conditions are simply lacking for any fascist party to ‘take off’ as a mass force in national politics anywhere in the world as long as the globalization of capitalism continues apace.

Fascists cannot afford to concede this without ceasing to be fascists. Just as communists when confronted by the appearance of fascism in the 1920s had to classify it as another counter-revolutionary form of capitalism in order to ‘save’ their teleology, so fascists have to believe they are living on the threshold of a new age or in a protracted interregnum (or the ‘Kali Yuga’), in order to retain their commitment to the cause intact. They are temperamentally incapable of coming to terms with one of the most psychologically disturbing cosmological implications of liberal modernity: the idea of history as an intrinsically meaningless, neutral medium in which—at least as long as our species survives—an infinite chain of events will continually unfold generated by the largely random interaction of the lives of billions of human beings, events which disclose patterns and trends but no intrinsic purpose or continuous story. In that sense the withering away of fascism in the West marks the victory, not of the ‘Open’ over the ‘Closed Society’, but of open-ended, amorphous, plotless time over aesthetic shapes and mythic dramas projected onto events as a palliative to the ‘Terror of History’—a term coined by Mircea Eliade, who before becoming a world expert on palingenetic cosmologies, himself succumbed to the need to believe in the myth of politico-cultural rebirth from decadence.³⁵

It would be academically irresponsible, however, to give this brief account what is, in a liberal perspective, a happy ending. As many reading this will have been already waiting impatiently for me to point out, another type of radical right has crept up on European society, one which is potentially of considerable virulence, not in its ability to destroy liberalism from without, but to contaminate it from within. Sometimes called ‘radical right populism’, or simply ‘the radical right’,³⁶ its paradoxical qualities perhaps emerge more clearly in the term ‘ethnocratic liberalism’.³⁷ It is a type of party politics which is not technically a form of fascism, even a disguised form of it, for it lacks the core palingenetic vision of a ‘new order’ totally replacing the liberal system. Rather it enthusiastically embraces the liberal system, but considers only one ethnic group full members of civil society. As the case of apartheid South Africa illustrates only too clearly, a state based on ethnocratic liberalism is forced by its own logic to create institutions, including a terror apparatus, to impose a deeply illiberal regime on all those who do not qualify on racial grounds for being treated as human beings. This contaminated, restrictive form of liberalism poses considerable taxonomic problems because, while it aims to retain liberal institutions and procedures and remain economically and diplomatically part of the international liberal democratic community, its axiomatic denial of the universality of human rights predisposes it to behave against ethnic outgroups as violently as a fascist regime.

The fact that ethnocratic liberalism is a hybrid of ideological extremism and democratic constitutionalism, of radical right and centre (making the term ‘radical right populism’ misleading), and is a paradox rather than an oxymoron, also makes it more dangerous. It is perfectly attuned to a post-war world hostile to unadulterated fascism, one where the clerks³⁸

now enthusiastically help ‘man’ the ideological Maginot Line which has been constructed to stop an openly revolutionary brand of illiberalism ever again achieving credibility. It speaks a language of ‘rights’—rights of ethnic peoples, rights to a culture—which addresses deep-seated and understandable fears about the erosion of identity and tradition by the globalizing (but only partially homogenizing) forces of high modernity. It is a discourse which has grown in sophistication thanks to the theorists of communitarianism,³⁹ ethnopluralism, and differentialism, and in legitimacy in the context of justified concerns over cultural globalization. The ground for its widespread acceptance as a familiar and genuine (if unwelcome) member of the liberal ideological family rather than the offspring of a highly fecund anti-liberal cuckoo, has been well prepared by liberalism’s long history of contamination by prejudices which have denied entire groups access to the rights it upholds as ‘sacred’: women, the poor, children, the handicapped, the nomad, the allophone, the aboriginal, the ‘primitive’. If the battle cry of liberalism in theory is Rousseau’s ‘All [human beings] are born equal and everywhere they live in chains’ then its slogan in practice has been Orwell’s ‘All men are equal but some are more equal than others’ (a phrase which is often conveniently identified with the authoritarian ‘other’ rather than ‘our’ own brand of totalitarianism).

The Front National, the FPÖ, the Lega Nord, the Vlaamsblok, the Republikaner, the Centrumpartei, the Scandinavian Progress parties, and scores of openly xenophobic parties which have emerged in the countries of the former Soviet Empire⁴⁰ vary considerably in their programmes and aspirations, and most can sincerely claim to have nothing to do with historic fascism in the conventional sense of the word. Yet in a world inoculated against openly revolutionary varieties of palingenetic ultranationalism, their axiomatic rejection of multiculturalism, their longing for ‘purity’, their nostalgia for a mythical world of racial homogeneity and clearly demarcated boundaries of cultural differentiation, their celebration of the ties of blood and history over reason and a common humanity, their rejection of *ius soli* for *ius sanguinis*, their solvent-like abuse of history represent a reformist version of the same basic myth. It is one which poses a more serious threat to liberal democracy than fascism because it is able to disguise itself, rather like a stick insect posing as a twig to catch its prey. It was arguably because Zhirinovsky’s Liberal Democratic Party blended with ethnocratic liberalism that he made such an impact on Russian politics in 1993, even if events since have shown that it is the militarist/imperialist perversion of liberalism familiar from nineteenth-century Europe which still retains hegemony. It was his exploitation of ethnocratic liberalism, not fascism, which enabled Milošović to carry out ethnic cleansing for years under the gaze of an international community mesmerized by the (procedurally speaking) democratic consensus on which he based his actions. The total number of victims of the calculated atrocities against non-Serbs which resulted far outweighs that of all the outrages committed by post-war fascists put together, suggesting that ethnocratic liberalism has replaced fascism as the form of radical right best adapted to the realities of the modern world.

The Third Reich's citizenship laws distinguished between Germans and non-Germans, but at least the Nazis had never made a secret of their contempt for what one of their number dismissed in 1925 as 'the Jewish-liberal-democratic-Marxist-humanitarian mentality'. He went on: 'as long as there is even a single minute tendril which connects our programme with this root then it is doomed to be poisoned and hence to wither away to a miserable death'.⁴¹ Ethnocratic liberals have genetically modified the radical right so that it thrives in the very soil which once would have been poisonous to it. What are their long term prospects for success, in the face of the 'ecological' purists within liberalism constantly seeking to cleanse it of toxic additives? As I write, Tudjman's ethnocratic liberal party has recently been ousted by centre-left forces in Croatia.⁴² Fukuyamians might read this as a sign that history is still on course for achieving the undisputed hegemony of liberal capitalism which will give birth to the bottomless *ennui* of the 'last man'. A host of less sanguine social scientists such as Anthony Giddens and Zygmunt Bauman would suggest instead a Manichean view which sees contemporary history as a permanent battle ground between forces tending to realize liberalism's project of a global humanity and those seeking to thwart and corrupt it. We will continue to live in interesting times.

I must side with the Manicheans. The modern world is not an interregnum, but it is an endgame, one being continually played out, like the eternal recurrence of world snooker competitions and European cup football on British TV, superimposing a cyclic pattern on rectilinear history. 'It is only our concept of time which causes us to use the phrase The Last Judgment: actually it is a court in permanent session'.⁴³ Now that millennium hysteria has died down, it might become easier to see that the last act being constantly performed in our age has nothing to do with a particular date or a technological glitch, or even a final reckoning between liberalism and the conveniently alien ideological 'other' provided by fascism, communism, or fundamentalism. Instead it is between genuinely liberal versions of democracy open to global humanitarian and ecological perspectives on the one hand, and radical right versions on the other which exploit the profound ambiguity of the concept 'demos'. Nor is it necessary for openly radical right political formations such as the Front National or the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia to triumph for liberalism to be corroded by the ethnocentrism which they represent. Given the evidence of contemporary Europe's continuing implication in forces which, according to some reliable humanitarian monitoring agencies, are generating mounting structural poverty and ecological depredation in the 'South', it is possible to see 'actually existing' liberal Europe not just as a socio-economic fortress, but as an ethno-cultural one as well, protected by ramparts being continually reinforced. It is a concentration of ethnocentric power which, though liberal in its domestic politics, continues to operate prevalently as a radical right wing force in terms of its total impact on the global community.

The effect of propaganda put out by ethnocratic ideologues and parties can only reinforce this tendency, no matter how marginalized they are from actual government, making it even

more impossible for politicians to present populations with policies which would involve a substantial transfer of wealth and resources (back) from the North to the South or address the structural reasons for mounting immigratory pressures, for fear of the mass dissent it would arouse. The next few decades should decide whether a healthy liberalism can prevail or whether, in the midst of a deteriorating environment and escalating demographic explosion which the new millennium inherits from the old, its contamination takes a permanent hold. Meanwhile, one of the messages transmitted by the protesters against the WTO in Seattle in the autumn of 1999 for those who habitually treat the radical right as ‘out there’ is that it might also be already in our midst. If the radical right is based on a malfunction of human empathy, on an affective aridity, then it might be legitimate to appropriate lines written in a very different context by T. S. Eliot, someone who managed to make the transition from fellow traveller of radical right cosmologies to a pundit of ‘high’ liberal humanist culture:

The desert is not remote in southern tropics,
The desert is not only round the corner.
The desert is squeezed into the tube-train next to you,
The desert is in the heart of your brother.⁴⁴

Notes and references

¹ *Pensiamo l'Italia: il domani c'è già. Valori, idee e progetti per l'Alleanza Nazionale. Tesi Politiche approvate dal congresso di Fiuggi* (Rome: On Line System, 1995), p. 11. For more on the AN's ambiguous embrace of democracy, see R. Griffin, ‘The post-fascism of the Alleanza Nazionale: a case-study in ideological morphology’, *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 1/2 (1996), pp. 107–146

² Quoted in C. De Cesare, *Il Fascista del Duemila* (Milan: Kaos Edizioni, 1995), p. 106. For a more sceptical view of the sincerity of the MSI conversion to democracy, see Piero Ignazi, *Postfascisti?* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1994).

³ A phrase from Faust’s monologue in the first scene of Goethe’s *Urfaust*.

⁴ See especially the impressive country-by-country survey in S. U. Larsen and B. Hagtvet (Eds.), *Modern Europe after Fascism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

⁵ One of the best surveys of the conceptual complexities posed by the term ‘right’ is still R. Eatwell (Ed.), *The Nature of the Right* (London: Pinter, 1989).

⁶ See, for example, the debate over the comparative value of the terms ‘fascism’ and ‘radical right’, in D. Prowe, “Classic” fascism and the new radical right in Western Europe: comparisons and contrasts’, *Contemporary European History*, 3/3 (November 1994), pp. 289–313. For another perspective on the word-field associated with the radical right, see Herbert Kitschelt. *The Radical Right in Western Europe: A Comparative Analysis* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1995), Chapter 1.

- 7 C. O'Maoláin, *The Radical Right: A World Directory* (London: Longman, 1987).
- 8 For a fuller account, see the 'General introduction' to R. Griffin, *International Fascism: Theories, Causes and the New Consensus* (London: Arnold, 1998). The latest (unwitting) convert to the consensus is A. J. Gregor, as shown in his latest book on generic fascism, *Phoenix* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1999), in which he refers to it as a 'tortured, enraged, and passionate demand for national renewal' (p. 162). For independent corroboration of the existence of this necessarily partial and contested consensus, see Stanley Payne's review article, 'Historical fascism and the radical right', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 35/1 (2000), pp. 109–111.
- 9 See R. Griffin, 'Party time: Nazism as a temporal revolution', *History Today*, 49/4 (April 1999).
- 10 See particularly R. Griffin, *Fascism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).
- 11 The only real exception to this generalization is the explosion of radical right groups both extra-systemic (some fascist) and others ostensibly democratic (ethnocratic), which took place in Russia in the 1990s. Though safely marginalized by the system, the sheer variety of them and the dramatic, though predictably short-lived, rise to international prominence of Zhirinovsky's Liberal Democratic Party underline the dependency on conditions of acute systemic crisis for radically palingenetic and ethnocratic forms of the right to achieve a popular resonance. Even in post-unification Germany and pre-democracy South Africa the radical right, though violent, remained safely marginalized, because in both cases populist palingenetic hopes for the rebirth of the country were projected onto liberal democracy/capitalism and channelled within the parliamentary system.
- 12 Kevin Coogan, *Dreamer of the Day* (New York: Autonomedia, York, 1999), pp. 317–324.
- 13 'Europe for the Europeans: the fascist vision of the new Europe', Humanities Research Centre Occasional Paper, No. 1 (Oxford Brookes University, Oxford OX3 0BP), 1994, available at <<http://www.brookes.ac.uk/schools/humanities/staff/europ.txt>>.
- 14 M. A. Ledeen, *Universal Fascism* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1972).
- 15 R. E. Herzstein, *When Nazi Dreams Come True* (London: Abacus, 1982).
- 16 Oswald Mosley, *The Alternative* (Wiltshire: Mosley Publications, 1947).
- 17 E.g., 'Sui presupposti spirituali e strutturali dell'unità europea', in *Europa Nazione*, 1/1 (January 1951). For a collection of Evola's highly influential essays on the European empire, see Part One of J. Evola, *Saggi di Dottrina Politica* (Genoa: Dioscuri, 1989).
- 18 Maurice Bardèche, *Qu'est-ce que le fascisme?* (Paris: Les Sept Couleurs, 1961).
- 19 Francis Yockey, *Imperium* (n.p.: Truth Seeker Press, 1962). See Coogan, *op. cit.*, Ref. 12, which locates the book in its context of the fascist international and projects for a new Europe.
- 20 See Coogan, *ibid.*, Chapters 30–36.
- 21 See Coogan, *ibid.*, Chapters 45–48. A highly influential expression of the ideology of Universal Nazism is *The Turner Diaries*, written (under a pseudonym) by William Pierce, leader of the neo-Nazi National Alliance; for a sample, see

Griffin, *Fascism, op. cit.*, Ref. 10, pp. 372–374.

22 See N. Lowles and Steve Silver (Eds.), *White Noise* (London: Searchlight, 1998).

23 The most famous example is the ‘Christian Identity’ movement, which makes extensive use of the Internet. The characteristic blend of Christianity with a Universal Nazi ethos can also be sampled at the website of ‘Kingdom Identity Ministries’ at <<http://www.kingidentity.com>>.

24 See Jeffrey Kaplan. *Radical Religion in America* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1997).

25 For a flavour of Third Positionist ideology and its sophisticated use of the Internet see the NRF’s website at <www.nationalbolshevik.com/nrf/nrfindex.html>. Another Third Positionist *groupuscule* is Groupe Union Défense, whose ideology is discussed in R. Griffin, ‘GUD reactions: the patterns of prejudice of a neo-fascist *groupuscule*’, *Patterns of Prejudice*, 33/2 (April 1999). The tendency to extreme eclecticism so typical of fascist ideology is explored in R. Eatwell, ‘Towards a new model of generic fascism’, *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 4/2 (1992).

26 See Griffin, ‘GUD reactions’, *op. cit.*, Ref. 25.

27 See Deborah Lipstadt, *Denying the Holocaust* (New York: Free Press, 1993).

28 E.g., Ernst Nolte, *Der europäische Bürgerkrieg* (Berlin: Proylæn Verlag, 1987); David Irving, *Hitler’s War* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1977), the text at the centre of the libel case which Irving brought against Professor Lipstadt and lost so ignominiously in April 2000.

29 See Pierre-André Taguieff, *Sur la Nouvelle Droite*, (Paris: Descartes & Cie, 1994); R Griffin, ‘Between metapolitics and *apoliteia*: the New Right’s strategy for conserving the fascist vision in the “interregnum”’, *Modern and Contemporary France* 8/1 (February 2000), R. Griffin, ‘Plus ça change! The fascist pedigree of the Nouvelle Droite’, in Edward Arnold (Ed.), *The Development of the Radical Right in France, 1890–1995* (London: Routledge, 2000).

30 See the website of *The Scorpion* at <<http://www.stormloader.com/thescorpion>>.

31 Horacio Cagni, ‘Assenza di Dio e vitalismo tragico nel fascismo’, *Trasgressioni*, 20 (January–August 1995).

32 This would appear to be true of two intellectuals who in the past have worked tirelessly to establish the New Right as the major current of radical right thought in their respective countries, Alain de Benoist (France) and Marco Tarchi (Italy), even if they are still associated with publications which betray the persistence of a belief in the ‘interregnum’ and its eventual dissolution in a new age.

33 An outstanding example of the richness and diversity of New Right cultural production was provided by Italy in the 1970s and 1980s: see especially M. Revelli, ‘La nuova destra’, in F. Ferraresi (Ed.), *La destra radicale* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1984); and P. Bologna and E. Mana (Eds.), *Nuova destra e cultura reazionaria negli anni ottanta* (Notiziario dell’Istituto storico della Resistenza in Cuneo, no. 23, 1983).

34 See Coogan, *op. cit.*, Ref. 12, for an impressively researched exploration of just one ‘story’ in the internationalization of post-war fascism, its extraordinary ideological diversity and earnestness, and the bizarre fantasy world which some fascists still inhabit while they wait for the ‘interregnum’ to close.

[35](#) On Eliade's time as an ideologue of the Iron Guard, see Coogan, *ibid.*, pp. 318–326.

[36](#) E.g., Hans-Georg Betz, *Radical Right-Wing Populism in Western Europe* (London: Macmillan, 1994); Herbert Kitschelt, *The Radical Right in Western Europe* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1995).

[37](#) For more on this concept, see R. Griffin, 'Last rights?', in S. Ramet (Ed.), *The Radical Right in Central and Eastern Europe* (Pennsylvania, PA: Penn State Press, 1999).

[38](#) An allusion to Julien Benda's classic study of the European intelligentsia's betrayal of the humanist tradition in the interwar period, *La Trahison des Clercs*, published in 1927.

[39](#) For an excellent essay which underlines the anti-liberal thrust of communitarian notions of culture, see Z. Bauman's introduction to the reprint of his *Culture as Practice* (London: Sage, 1999), pp. xxxiii–xlvi.

[40](#) See Ramet, *op. cit.*, Ref. 37.

[41](#) See Griffin, *Fascism, op. cit.*, Ref. 10, pp. 118–119.

[42](#) Since writing, an impressive wave of international and national protest was unleashed by Jörg Haider's success in manoeuvring the (ethnocratic but not fascist) Austrian Freedom Party into power as part of a coalition government in February 2000.

[43](#) Franz Kafka, 'Betrachtungen über sünde, leid, hoffnung und den wahren weg' (no. 40), in *Hochzeitsvor bereitungen auf dem Lande und andere Prosa aus dem Nachlass Betrachtungen* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Verlag, 1980), p. 33.

[44](#) T. S. Eliot, *Choruses from 'The Rock'*, *Selected Poems* (London: Faber and Faber, 1961), p. 109.

Party ideology

Elisabeth Carter

Parties of the extreme right are to some extent ‘masters of their own success’. That is, regardless of the political environment in which they operate and regardless of the institutional contexts within which they find themselves, their electoral success will depend, in part, on the ideology they espouse and the policies they put forward, and on the way in which they are organized and led. This chapter focuses on the first of these party-centric factors, and examines the extent to which the ideologies of the extreme right parties influence their fortunes at the polls. Rather than there being a uniform right-wing extremist ideology, the ideas and policies of the different parties vary quite considerably, with some of these being more popular with the electorate than others. Consequently, it is quite possible that the variation in the electoral success of the parties of the extreme right across Western Europe may be partly explained by the presence of different ideologies, with the more successful right-wing extremist parties embracing one type of ideology and the less successful ones adopting another.

The chapter begins by discussing the much-debated concept of right-wing extremism and by examining the different terminology used to describe the parties. Then it considers the existing studies of right-wing extremist party ideology, and investigates the ways in which these works have sought to illustrate the diversity that exists among the West European parties of the extreme right. As will become clear from this discussion, these existing studies suffer from a number of limitations and, in the light of this, the chapter puts forward an alternative typology of right-wing extremist parties. Five different types of right-wing extremist party are identified. On the one hand, this typology allows for the full diversity that exists within the right-wing extremist party family to be illustrated. On the other, it means that the link between the parties’ ideology and their electoral scores can be investigated. In this way it becomes possible to ascertain whether right-wing extremist party success is linked to a specific type of ideology, or whether, conversely, the nature of a party’s ideology matters little to its electoral success. The chapter concludes with some thoughts on the importance of party ideology in an overall explanation of the disparity in the electoral fortunes of the West European parties of the extreme right.

The concept of right-wing extremism

In spite of the fact that right-wing extremism has been extensively analyzed by academics, journalists and other observers alike, it remains the case that an unequivocal definition of this concept is still lacking. Indeed, almost every scholar of right-wing extremism has pointed to the difficulties associated with defining the concept: Billig refers to the term ‘extreme right’ as ‘a particularly troubling one’ (1989: 146); Roberts speaks of the lack of ‘satisfactory operational indicators of extremism’ (1994: 466); and von Beyme argues that ‘formal definitions or derivations based on the history of ideas [have] largely failed to provide a convincing concept for “right-wing extremism”’, while other frequently used criteria for labelling these parties have also been problematic (1988: 1–3).

The absence of an agreed-upon definition of right-wing extremism means that scholars continue to disagree over which attributes a party should possess if it is to be considered as being of the extreme right. As Hainsworth argues, ‘essentialist categorizations of the extreme right [are] fraught with problems’ and it is thus ‘not easy to provide neat, self-contained and irrefutable models of extreme rightism which might successfully accommodate or disqualify each concrete example or candidate deemed to belong to this party family’ (2000a: 4).

Surveying the different definitions of right-wing extremism that can be found in the academic literature, a consensus does nonetheless emerge that right-wing extremism refers to a particular form of *ideology* (Mudde, 1995a: 203–5). A few scholars have also pointed to a certain type of political style, behaviour, strategy or organization, or a certain electoral base as constituting facets of right-wing extremism (e.g. Herz, 1975: 30–1; Betz, 1994, 1998a; Taggart, 1995). These must be considered additional or secondary dimensions of the concept rather than defining features, however, since they are all informed first and foremost by the parties’ ideology. As Backes notes,

there are no organizational or strategic traits that would take into account the multiplicity of the phenomena that we generally call ‘right-wing extremism’, and that would act as a common denominator ... The organizational structures of the parties of the extreme right are important for an exact description of this phenomenon, but they are totally inappropriate in reaching a definition of this concept.

(2001: 24, 29, this author’s translation)

A few authors have argued that right-wing extremism may be defined by reference to one single ideological feature. Husbands (1981), for example, points to ‘racial exclusionism’ as constituting the common ideological core of the West European extreme right, while more recently, Eatwell cites nationalism (in various forms) as being *the* defining feature of the parties of the extreme right in Western Europe (2000a: 412). The majority of scholars define right-wing extremism with reference to more than one ideological feature, however, although they fail to agree on which features these are. Indeed, following an extensive review of the

literature, Mudde found no fewer than 58 different features were mentioned in the existing definitions of right-wing extremism. That said, he also found that certain features appeared more frequently than others in the existing definitions, and that five features were cited in over half the definitions. These are nationalism, xenophobia, racism, anti-democratic sentiment and a call for a strong state (1995a: 206–7).

Just because these five features appear more frequently than others in the existing definitions of the concept of right-wing extremism does not mean that they can be considered as constituting the foundations of a generally accepted definition, however. It would, in fact, be misleading to consider them as such, because these five features do not all occupy the same place on the conceptual ladder of abstraction. More specifically, four of the five features – nationalism, xenophobia, racism and a call for a strong state – are all further down the ladder of abstraction than the fifth concept – anti-democratic sentiment. Put differently, nationalism, xenophobia, racism and a call for a strong state are all manifestations of the higher concept of anti-democratic sentiment.

The disparity in the level of abstraction of these five features is problematic because it means that possible (or even sufficient) features of right-wing extremism are mixed with its necessary features. Nationalism, xenophobia, racism and a call for a strong state are all possible (and sometimes even sufficient) features of right-wing extremism, but they are not necessary ones. Anti-democratic sentiment, by contrast, is a necessary (though not a sufficient) feature of right-wing extremism. Cumbersome though it may be, this distinction between necessary and possible features of right-wing extremism is important because it underlines the fact that while a racist party, for example, is indeed a right-wing extremist party, not all right-wing extremist parties are racist. Thus, to argue that nationalism, xenophobia, racism or a call for a strong state are defining features of right-wing extremism is misleading. To maintain that anti-democratic sentiment is a defining feature of right-wing extremism is not problematic, however, because all right-wing extremist parties do indeed embrace anti-democratic sentiment, though it is important to note that not all parties that embrace anti-democratic sentiment are right-wing extremist.

To get closer to identifying the defining features of right-wing extremism – that is, features that are common to *all* right-wing extremist parties – and to make out which parties belong to an extreme right party family, it is therefore important to focus on necessary features of right-wing extremism rather than on possible ones. Possible features only become important later on, when the extreme right party family is subdivided in some way or another. To begin identifying the necessary features of right-wing extremism it is useful to go back to the concept of extremism, *tout court*, and for the most part, it is scholars from (or linked with) the German tradition who have engaged in such a task, not least because of the consequences a German party must face if it is deemed to be extremist (see below).

As Backes explains, the concept of extremism originates from an Aristotelian tradition, in

which the just moral and politico-institutional sphere is set against the excessive exercise of power (2001: 21). It is thus concerned with negative constitutional notions and with the domination of one group over another, and hence involves both anti-constitutional and anti-democratic elements. In the more modern era, and since the advent of the totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century in particular, extremism is most often conceptualized as the antithesis of liberal democracy. This means that on the one hand, it is characterized by its rejection of the ‘fundamental values (human rights), procedures and institutions (free, equal, direct and secret elections; party competition; pluralism; parliamentarism; a state based on the rule of law; separation of powers) of the democratic constitutional state’ (Backes and Moreau, cited in Roberts, 1994: 463), while on the other, it is distinguishable by what it embraces: absolutism and dogmatism (Backes, 2001: 22).

A definition of extremism as an ideology that incorporates anti-constitutional and anti-democratic features has also been adopted by the German Federal Constitutional Court in its interpretation of the Basic Law. As Saalfeld observes,

in addition to the principles of political pluralism, the Court has emphasised the rule of law, respect for human rights and civil liberties, free and universal democratic elections, a limitation of government powers through a system of checks and balances, the accountability of government, and independence of the judiciary as fundamental elements of liberal democracy. Furthermore, it has pointed out that liberal democracy is incompatible with the violent or arbitrary exercise of power. Parties whose principles violate one or more of these fundamental characteristics are considered extremist and can be banned by the Federal Constitutional Court.

(1993: 180–1)

Since anti-constitutional and anti-democratic elements can be part of a left-wing ideology just as they can be part of a right-wing ideology, political extremism can be of the left or of the right. Right-wing extremism is therefore a particular type of political extremism, and is distinguishable from left-wing extremism. The distinction between the two types of extremism can be made by reference to attitudes towards the principle of fundamental human equality, a principle that lies at the very core of liberal democracy. Whereas left-wing extremism accepts and supports this principle even though it interprets it ‘with consequences that mean the principle of total equality destroys the freedoms guaranteed by the rules and institutions of the state of law’ (Backes, 2001: 24, this author’s translation), right-wing extremism strongly rejects it. Instead, right-wing extremism emphasizes the notion of inequality of individuals, and ‘extreme right-wing models of political and social order are rooted in a belief in the necessity of *institutionalised* social *and* political inequality’ (Saalfeld, 1993: 181 *italics in original*).

Such institutionalized social and political inequality may be based on a number of different criteria, but those overwhelmingly favoured by parties and movements of the extreme right have been nationality, race, ethnic group and/or religious denomination. This, to a great extent, helps explain why nationalism, xenophobia, racism and ethnocentrism appear in so

many of the existing definitions of right-wing extremism. It remains the case, however, that although these features may help characterize and describe the extreme right, they do not help define it. They are mere manifestations of the principle of fundamental human inequality, which lies at the heart of right-wing extremism.

In the same way as it is misleading to consider nationalism, xenophobia, racism and a call for the strong state as defining features of right-wing extremism, so too is it inaccurate to view an adherence to the legacy of fascism as a defining feature of right-wing extremism. This is because the characteristics of fascism or neo-fascism (to use a term frequently assigned to the post-war extreme right, which drew on the legacy of historical fascism) are also merely manifestations of the higher concept of rightwing extremism.¹ These characteristics (over which there is significant debate but which include extreme nationalism, anti-parliamentarism, anti-pluralism, and the subordination of the individual to the will of the nation or state, to name but a few) are thus only possible features of right-wing extremism rather than necessary ones. While fascist or neo-fascist movements or parties should indeed be considered right-wing extremist, not all right-wing extremist movements or parties may be considered facist or neo-fascist.

This point is accepted by the vast majority of scholars studying the contemporary extreme right. Billig is explicit on this matter, and argues that ‘fascist regimes can be seen as the paradigmatic instances of extreme right-wing politics, but this should not be taken as implying that all extreme right-wing movements are necessarily fascist’ (1989: 146). Similarly, Hainsworth maintains that although ‘the label “neo-fascism” may be appropriate in some extreme right cases ... it would be erroneous and reductionist to stereotype the post-war extreme right as parodies of earlier fascist movements’ (1992a: 5). Thus, just as racist parties should be seen as a particular type of right-wing extremist party, as was argued above, so too should fascist or neo-fascist parties.

To be absolutely clear, therefore, right-wing extremism is defined by two anti-constitutional and anti-democratic elements:

1. a rejection of the fundamental values, procedures and institutions of the democratic constitutional state (a feature that makes right-wing extremism extremist);
2. a rejection of the principle of fundamental human equality (a feature that makes right-wing extremism right wing).

Of the numerous features that appear in the existing definitions of right-wing extremism, most are mere manifestations of one or other of these two elements. Anti-partyism, anti-pluralism, anti-parliamentarism, a call for a strong state, a demand for a strong leader, an emphasis on law and order, and a call for militarism are all manifestations of the rejection of the fundamental values, procedures and institutions of the democratic constitutional state (i.e.

they are all manifestations of extremism), while nationalism, xenophobia, racism, ethnocentrism and exclusionism are all manifestations of the principle of fundamental human inequality (i.e. they are all manifestations of right-wing extremism). These elements are possible features of right-wing extremism rather than necessary ones, and while they help describe and sub-categorize the extreme right, they do not define it.

The assertion that right-wing extremism may be defined by (1) a rejection of the fundamental values, procedures and institutions of the democratic constitutional state and (2) a rejection of the principle of fundamental human equality does not mean that the concept is free from definitional problems, however. On the contrary, the concept remains a difficult one because, as Roberts explains, ‘satisfactory operational indicators of extremism are [still] lacking’ (1994: 466). The reason for this is that the concept of extremism refers, in the first instance, to what Roberts calls ‘structural elements’, rather than to the programme or policies of movements or parties. Indeed, he observes that ‘the stipulative definition of “extremism” applying to groups opposed to the values, procedures, and institutions of the democratic constitutional state says nothing, in itself, about the programme and policies of organisations or movements that qualify as “extremist”’ (1994: 465).

Yet, to operationalize the concept of extremism, scholars have turned to the policies and programmes of the movements and parties, and have made the assumption that ‘the content of policy statements of such extremist groups *in themselves* necessitate breaches of the democratic constitutional order’ (Roberts, 1994: 465, italics in original). This assumption is, in some instances, not overly problematic. Policy statements that call for the expulsion of all non-whites, such as those put forward by the British NF in the early 1980s, for example, clearly result in a violation of the democratic constitutional order because they give rise to the breaching of the fundamental values of that order, including the principle of fundamental human equality. However, the presumption is more difficult with regard to many other policy statements, as it is less evident whether a violation of the democratic constitutional order will inevitably occur.

This is particularly the case in the contemporary period as most movements and parties described as extremist by academics and other observers regularly underline their commitment to the existing democratic constitutional order and to its values. As Betz notes, ‘if not out of conviction then out of expediency, they have tended to abandon much ideological baggage that might sound too extremist [as] parties that have transgressed the boundaries of the permissible and acceptable political discourse soon found themselves penalized in public opinion, at the polls, or in parliament’ (1998a: 3).

Though well aware of the problem this presents to the operationalization of right-wing extremism, many scholars argue that the parties’ expressions of commitment to the democratic constitutional order should not be taken at face value, however. As Hainsworth puts it, ‘nominal commitment to democracy and constitutionalism should not simply be taken

as evidence of its actual realization' (2000a: 8). Instead, scholars believe that beneath the homage to the rules of the game lie a discourse and a political culture that clearly undermine the legitimacy of the democratic system. In other words, scholars consider these parties examples of what Sartori (1976) terms 'anti-system' parties or what Kirchheimer refers to as parties that display an 'opposition of principle' (1966: 237).

Gardberg sums up the political culture of the extreme right as one that can be interpreted as a 'subversive stream that is anti-egalitarian and anti-pluralist and that opposes the principle of democratic constitutional states' (1993: 32). Similarly, Voerman and Lucardie argue that 'even if extremists accept the formal constitution, they reject the dominant political culture and party system'. These authors go on to say that, in the case of many modern right-wing extremist parties, they 'seem to accept parliamentary democracy, but reject the prevailing "cosmopolitan" and liberal political culture' (1992: 35–6).

The lack of operational indicators of extremism means that it is very difficult to establish a dividing line between the extreme right and the mainstream right. In fact, Roberts argues that since 'there is an analytic continuity linking democratic parties and organisations to those classified as extremist . . . it is impossible to draw a firm boundary line and say that on one side of the line everything is democratic, on the other everything is "extreme"' (1994: 480). Von Beyme is not quite so categorical but nonetheless maintains that, as right-wing extremist parties have evolved and as more and more parties reject any adherence to the legacy of fascism, 'the dividing line between conservatives and right-wing extremists has become even more blurred' (1988: 2).

Two points can nevertheless be made about this dividing line. First, as the above discussion has shown, the dividing line should be conceived in terms of a party's acceptance or rejection of the fundamental values, procedures and institutions of the democratic order rather than in terms of its spatial location. In other words, a party does not qualify as being of the extreme right just because it is the party furthest to the right in its party system. Instead, it qualifies as being of the extreme right because it rejects or undermines the democratic constitutional order in which it operates. The examples of Iceland or Ireland illustrate this point: although one party in each party system is further to the right than all others, no party in either party system may be considered right-wing extremist because no right-wing party in either party system undermines or rejects the respective democratic constitutional order.

The second point to make about this dividing line is that it is country specific, since the values, procedures and institutions that make-up the democratic constitutional order of each country are specific to that country. Indeed, Roberts questions the universal validity of the concept of right-wing extremism and suggests instead that the concept has a "relative" quality'. He argues that

since the basic rights and pattern of democratic institutions and procedures vary not insignificantly from democratic constitution to democratic constitution . . . surely a group which might be extremist in one country might not be so

described in another. [Thus] for all the claims to be dealing with a concept of universal validity, ‘extremism’ is primarily a concept defined in relation to the particular version of the democratic constitutional order.

(1994: 467)

The relative nature of the concept is well illustrated if the Scandinavian parties of the extreme right – the Danish FRPd, Norwegian FRPn and Danish DF – are compared to their counterparts elsewhere in Western Europe. The ideology of these parties is somewhat less extreme than that of other right-wing extremist parties. As Ignazi observes, they have ‘never made a frontal attack on democracy involving authoritarian solutions’ in the way that other extreme right parties have (2003: 148). However, this does not mean that they are not extreme within their own party systems and political culture. Rather, as Ignazi goes on to argue, ‘they certainly undermined the system’s legitimacy, not just by displaying contempt towards the parties and the politicians, but also by considering the parties as useless, backward, and even harmful’ (2003: 148). Thus, ‘although their anti-system profile is quite limited compared to that of their other European counterparts’, they nonetheless ‘qualify for inclusion in [the extreme right] political family’ (Ignazi, 2003: 140).

The difficulty – if not impossibility – in establishing where the dividing line between the extreme right and the moderate right lies does not mean that parties of the extreme right cannot be identified and analysed. To be sure, borderline cases exist and scholars continue to disagree over whether these should be considered part of the extreme right party family or not. Yet ‘there is a large number of political parties whose extreme right status is not debated’ (Mudde, 2000: 16), and an extreme right party family, distinct from the mainstream right, is indeed discernible (Hainsworth, 2000a: 6; Mudde, 2000: 16–17).

Terminology

Before embarking on a detailed examination of the different ideologies of the parties of the extreme right, a few words must be said about terminology. As the above discussion has shown, the term ‘extreme right’ is clearly favoured in this book, but a number of other authors have preferred to assign other terminological labels to the parties in question. Indeed, a plethora of terms has been used in conjunction with these parties. As well as being termed extreme right, these parties have been labelled fascist, neo-fascist, Nazi, neo-Nazi, totalitarian, fundamentalist, radical right, new radical right, populist right, neo-populist right, new populist, far right and even simply rightist. And long though it is, this list is probably not exhaustive.

There is a growing consensus in the more recent literature that a number of these terms can be misleading and unhelpful. Perhaps the most unhelpful are ‘totalitarian’ and ‘fundamentalist’. Von Beyme notes the unsuitability of applying the first to the modern parties

of the extreme right when he observes ‘it is difficult to argue that totalitarianism is possible without the access to power in a given society’ (1988: 2). As for the term ‘fundamentalist’, it has been linked above all to religious movements, and has the unity of the state and the religious order as a central element. Therefore, as Backes explains, it is inappropriate to apply this term to non-religious movements such as the contemporary parties of the extreme right. The term is further unsuitable because it does not denote movements or parties that are specifically of the right (Backes, 2001: 18).

The terms ‘fascist’, ‘neo-fascist’, ‘Nazi’ and ‘neo-Nazi’ are not without their problems either. To return to a point made earlier, many authors agree that ‘fascist’ or ‘neo-fascist’ are no longer accurate labels for the contemporary parties of the extreme right, since many of these have abandoned all references to the legacy of fascism. Most authors instead argue that fascism or neo-fascism is a sub-phenomenon of the extreme right and that fascist or neo-fascist parties are therefore only a particular type of extreme right party (see Billig, 1989; Hainsworth, 1992a; Fennema, 1997; and Backes, 2001, among others). The same is even more true for Nazi or neo-Nazi parties: not only can these parties be considered a sub-type of the extreme right, but they have also been judged to be a sub-type of fascist parties (Billig, 1989).

More common in the recent literature is the use of the terms ‘radical right’ or ‘new radical right’. Indeed, Herbert Kitschelt’s influential analysis (1995) is entitled *The Radical Right in Western Europe*, while Hans-Georg Betz famously coined the term ‘radical right-wing populist parties’, though in more recent work he appears to have dropped the label ‘populist’ and refers to the parties simply as ‘radical right-wing’ (e.g. Betz, 2003). Peter Merkl (1997, 2003) has also used the term ‘radical right’, though he does seem to use it interchangeably with the term ‘extreme right’.

A number of other authors take issue with the term ‘radical’ being used to refer to the contemporary parties of the extreme right, however. The main objection they have is that the term has been used to refer to a wide variety of movements, most of which have been quite distinct from the modern parties of the extreme right. As Backes explains, the term originated in eighteenth-century England but was soon used on the other side of the Atlantic to refer to advocates of Utilitarianism. It was then swiftly adopted by left-liberal and republican parties in France and Italy (2001: 17). In the twentieth century, however, the term was applied to rather different movements. In the United States it was used in the immediate post-World War II period to refer to extreme conservative movements that were ‘characterized by strict moral traditionalism and an obsessive anticommunism’ (Ignazi, 2003: 28). As Ignazi notes, therefore, its varied usage means that the term ‘radical’ has taken on ‘ambiguous connotations’. Furthermore, the fact that it has been applied to movements that did not display anti-system tendencies means that it is ‘too loose [to] be fruitfully applied to the analysis of extreme right parties’ (2003: 28).

This last point finds resonance in the German usage of the term. Since 1974, the Federal

Office for the Protection of the Constitution has labelled ‘radical’ those groups or parties that display a critique of the constitutional order without any anti-democratic behaviour or intention. By contrast, those that exhibit anti-democratic, anti-constitutional or anti-liberal values or intent are labelled ‘extremist’ and, as was noted above, such parties can be banned by the Federal Constitutional Court. As Roberts (1994) has argued, and as was discussed above, the lack of satisfactory operational indicators of extremism means that, in practice, making the distinction between radicalism and extremism is very difficult, and it remains the case that the contemporary German parties of the extreme right have not (yet) been officially defined as extremist, and have thus not (yet) been banned. However, if ‘anti-system’ is taken to mean behaviour or values that undermine the legitimacy of the democratic system, the parties in question are clearly parties that display anti-system tendencies, and as such they should not be labelled ‘radical’, as this term does not capture their anti-systemness. As Westle and Niedermayer note, this explains why, despite the fact that these parties have not been officially defined as extremist by the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution, ‘in the scientific literature [they] are predominantly judged as being clearly on the extreme right’ (1992: 87).

The preference for the term ‘extreme right’ over ‘radical right’ that is apparent in the German or German-based literature has been mirrored elsewhere. As a result of the different connotations of the term ‘radical’ and the fact that it does not denote movements or parties that display an anti-systemness, it has been increasingly replaced in the literature by the term ‘extreme right’.

Another term increasingly used in recent years to refer to the contemporary parties of the extreme right is ‘populist’, or its derivative ‘neo-populist’. As was just observed, Hans-Georg Betz (1993a, 1993b, 1994) has shown a preference for this term over the label ‘extreme right’ and has referred to the modern parties as radical right-wing populist parties. French authors have also favoured this term, and have tended to refer to the contemporary parties as national-populist parties (see Taguieff, 1984, 1986, 1995; Winock, 1993; Perrineau, 1997, among others). Other authors have used the term ‘populist’ to refer to a specific type of right-wing extremist party. Taggart, for example, identifies as ‘New Populist’ those extreme right parties that fuse ‘the anti-politics stance of the New Politics with the broad-based protest of the populist right’ (1995: 35). Similarly, Kitschelt (1995) uses the term ‘populist’ to describe certain parties of the extreme right, notably the Austrian FPÖ and the Italian LN.

The term ‘populism’ is not unproblematic, however, especially when it is applied to the contemporary parties of the extreme right. While the term may be used meaningfully to describe or characterize certain parties of the extreme right, it is of little use to denote or identify a separate party family. This is because populism refers to a particular political style or form rather than to a specific political ideology (Taguieff, 1995; Mudde, 1996a: 231; Backes, 2001: 20). It therefore brings together parties that are ideologically quite distinct from each

other, and within the populist group many parties that are not of the extreme right (and that do not espouse anti-democratic sentiments) sit alongside ones that are. The usefulness of the term is further limited when it is applied to the parties of the extreme right because, just as not all populist parties are of the extreme right (or even of the right), not all parties of the extreme right have adopted a political style that may be described as populist.

The term ‘far right’ is also problematic, even though it is used quite widely in both the academic literature and the media. Its limitation lies in the fact that it suggests that cases are selected according to their relative spatial location. However, as was discussed above, a party should be considered for inclusion in the extreme right party family according to its acceptance or rejection of the fundamental values, procedures and institutions of the democratic constitutional order, and according to its acceptance or rejection of the principle of fundamental human equality, rather than in terms of its spatial location. A party does not qualify as being of the extreme right just because it is the party furthest to the right in its party system. As for the term ‘rightist’, which is used frequently in the study by Kitschelt, for example, it is simply too imprecise to be used to describe the parties of the extreme right, as it fails to distinguish them from their mainstream counterparts.

In the light of these discussions, the term ‘extreme right’ is clearly favoured in this book. Not only does it overcome the problems associated with the alternative terms, but it also has the advantage of being squarely concerned with party ideology and of evoking notions of anti-democracy and anti-systemness, which lie at the very heart of the concept of right-wing extremism. Some of the other terms discussed above are used within the book, but they are not employed interchangeably with the term ‘extreme right’ as they have been in some of the other studies of right-wing extremism. Instead, they are used, where appropriate, to describe sub-groups of the wider extreme right party family only.

The study of right-wing extremist party ideology: existing typologies and their limitations

In view of the continuing debates over what constitutes right-wing extremism and over what terminology should be used to describe the parties, more and more studies have sought to turn attention away from conceptual definitions and instead have endeavoured to examine the actual object in question – that is, they have focused on the nature of the right-wing extremist parties themselves. The single-party case study is the most common approach to this kind of research, but in addition to such works, a handful of comparative analyses of the ideologies of the parties of the extreme right exists.

The main impetus behind most of these comparative studies of right-wing extremist

ideology is the desire to illustrate the diversity that exists among these parties. In particular, the parties that have emerged and prospered during the ‘third wave’ of post-war right-wing extremist activity are, for the most part, distinct from those older parties that embrace some form of historical legacy, be it of a fascist or some other kind. The French FN and the Austrian FPÖ, for instance, are markedly different in nature from the British NF or the Italian MSI. Therefore, through their examination of the ideology of the parties, the existing comparative studies have shown that the combination of the rise of newer parties and the continued survival of older parties has rendered the extreme right party family increasingly diverse in composition.

In addition to illustrating the variety that exists within the extreme right party family – something that is clearly of interest and importance in itself – these comparative studies also shed some light on which type or types of right-wing extremist ideology are most commonly associated with electoral success. Whereas the connection between ideology and electoral success is only implicit in some of these studies, in others it is wholly explicit. For example, Richard Stöss’s analysis of West German right-wing extremism (1988), Christopher Husbands’s overview of the extreme right in Western Europe at the beginning of the 1990s (1992a), and Hans-Georg Betz’s broader study of West European radical right-wing populism (1993b, 1994) all stop short of offering a discussion of which type of party is the most successful in electoral terms. In contrast, in his influential article on the emergence of right-wing extremist parties, Piero Ignazi (1992) discusses which of his two types of party (‘old’ and ‘new’) is electorally most successful. In a similar fashion, Paul Taggart (1995) observes that the right-wing extremist parties that he terms ‘New Populist’ are those that have experienced the greatest success at the polls. The link between ideology and electoral success is even more explicit in Herbert Kitschelt’s analysis (1995), as a core objective of this study is precisely to explain why right-wing extremist parties have performed well at the polls in some countries but not in others. Ideology is therefore examined as one of the factors that might account for the uneven electoral success of these parties.

Although these existing comparative studies provide valuable insights into the diversity that exists within the extreme right party family, and although some of these works also point to which types of right-wing extremist parties are more successful at the polls, these existing typologies nonetheless suffer from a number of shortcomings, which limit the extent to which they can be used as a basis from which to examine the link between the parties’ ideology and their electoral success in close detail. In the light of this, a new, alternative typology of right-wing extremist parties will be constructed in this chapter, with which it will be possible to investigate fully the influence of ideology on the parties’ electoral success. In the first instance, however, it is useful to examine the limitations of the existing typologies in some depth and to draw lessons from these so that the typology put forward later in the chapter may avoid some of the pitfalls most commonly associated with this type of study.

A first limitation of the existing typologies is that the majority of them do not examine all of the parties of the extreme right that are of concern to this book. With the notable exceptions of Ignazi's and Taggart's studies, the existing analyses include only certain members of the extreme right party family. Stöss's categorization remains limited to the West German extreme right; the study by Betz fails to include older parties such as the Italian MSI, the German Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands (NPD) and the British NF; and the works by Husbands and Kitschelt omit some of the smaller and less successful West European right-wing extremist parties such as the Belgian Front National/Front voor de Natie (FN(b)) or the Spanish Falangistas.

A second reason for not wishing to use the existing categorizations as a basis from which to examine the influence of ideology on the electoral scores of the parties of the extreme right is that they are now all to varying degrees out of date. With the exception of Stöss's study, which has a historical focus and concentrates on the West German extreme right of the 1950s and 1960s, all of the typologies referred to above examine the extreme right in Western Europe in the 1980s and in the first few years of the 1990s. Therefore, because they were compiled when they were, they do not take into account more recent developments in the West European extreme right, such as the split in the Danish FRPd in 1995 and the establishment of the rival DF, the transformation of the Italian MSI into the AN in the same year and the subsequent breakaway of Pino Rauti's Movimento Sociale-Fiamma Tricolore (Ms-Ft), or the formation of the Front Nouveau de Belgique (FNB) as a result of Marguerite Bastien's defection from the Belgian FN(b) in 1997. Making use of these studies to examine the link between ideology and extreme right-wing party success would therefore result in the investigation being out of date.

A further, more fundamental reason for deciding not to use the studies mentioned above to examine the influence of ideology on the parties' electoral success is that some of these analyses display methodological and theoretical shortcomings. More specifically, a number of the existing typologies fail to satisfy the conditions of exhaustiveness and mutual exclusiveness around which typologies should be built (Sartori, 1984; Marradi, 1990). In Betz's study, for example, the fact that two parties are not assigned to either of the two types suggests that a third type of party is possible, and that the typology is therefore not exhaustive in nature. As the typology stands, the Austrian FPÖ and the Swiss Autopartei der Schweiz (APS) are not included in either the 'neo-liberal populist' or the 'national populist' type because they 'place equal emphasis on both a neo-liberal and an anti-immigrant program' (1993b: 684). While this may indeed be the case, in order for the typology to be exhaustive, a third category would have to be created to accommodate such parties. The inclusion of this third category would mean that every possible state of the property that is being used as a basis of division (in this case the emphasis placed on the neo-liberal elements of the programme as compared to that placed on the anti-immigration elements) is allocated to one

of the typology's categories.

In some of the other studies, the condition of mutual exclusiveness is not met. In Taggart's categorization, for instance, the German Republikaner, the French FN and the Flemish VB may, arguably, be accommodated in either one of the two categories of parties. Indeed, Taggart himself argues that these three competitors are 'examples of parties that blur the distinction' between 'neo-fascist' and 'New Populist' parties (1995: 40). In contrast to Betz's analysis, this problem with Taggart's study would not be solved even if a third category were constructed. Instead, the difficulty lies with the basis of division used. The features Taggart highlights as important in distinguishing between 'neo-fascist' and 'New Populist' parties do not reflect a particular property of the parties that may be categorized into all its various states. As such, these features are not sufficiently stringent to allocate parties to one type and one type only and, as a result, the two categories in the typology are not mutually exclusive. Taggart is clearly aware of this since he argues that 'New Populism and neo-fascism are not *necessarily* contradictory' (1995: 40, italics in original). This does not stop the principle of mutual exclusiveness from being violated, however.

The distinction between the categories in Kitschelt's typology is also somewhat unclear. The Italian MSI and the German NPD are described as 'likely to express shades of fascist thinking that range from a workerist (and now welfare chauvinist) "social fascism" ... to a "corporatist capitalism"' (1995: 64). The apparent uncertainty over whether to locate these two parties in the 'welfare chauvinist' or in the 'fascist' category of parties suggests that, here too, the bases of division used to subdivide the extreme right party family are not stringent enough to ensure that all of the categories in this study are mutually exclusive.

Of all the existing typologies, Ignazi's arguably displays the most theoretical and methodological rigour. The bases of division that are used are such that the different categories are mutually exclusive and the typology is also exhaustive in nature. In addition, it is one of the most comprehensive of the existing comparative studies, since it includes the great majority of West European right-wing extremist parties. In spite of these attributes, however, in terms of providing a base from which this chapter may investigate the link between the parties' ideology and their electoral success, Ignazi's typology remains far from ideal.

The main reason for this is that Ignazi is primarily interested in examining the different parties of the extreme right from a democracy/anti-democracy perspective. In other words, he is concerned above all with whether the parties accept or reject the existing democratic consensus, something that leads him to consider both the parties' ideological legacy and their attitudes towards the system. This is in no way a criticism of the typology – on the contrary, as has been observed already, the study is extremely sound and, for that reason, has become very influential – but it does mean that the different parties within each of Ignazi's two groups ('old' and 'new') continue to exhibit significant variation when features other than their

attitudes towards democracy are taken into account. For instance, even though their views on democracy are relatively similar, the British NF and the Spanish Frente Nacional, two of the parties located within Ignazi's 'old' extreme right category, differ markedly in their attitude towards foreigners and people of other ethnicities. Whereas racism and xenophobia lie at the heart of the NF's ideology, these features do not play a part in the belief structure of the Frente Nacional.

The fact that significant differences continue to exist between parties of the same group implies that, in Ignazi's typology, the diversity present within the extreme right party family is not illustrated as fully as it could have been had more bases of division been employed. This, in turn, suggests that, if such a model were to be used to examine the link between the parties' ideology and their electoral success, the extent to which ideology might be able to explain the disparity in the electoral fortunes of the parties would possibly be limited. In other words, with a model such as this, the explanatory power of ideology in an overall account of the disparity in the electoral fortunes of the parties of the extreme right could potentially be curtailed. This is because it may well be the case that some parties have been more electorally successful than others due to characteristics not mentioned in Ignazi's typology. For example, it is quite possible that the most successful right-wing extremist parties are those that have an ideology in which xenophobia (a feature not included in Ignazi's typology) is central. Therefore, in spite of its strengths, Ignazi's typology will not be used as a model on which to base an examination of the link between the ideology of the parties of the extreme right and their electoral success. In addition to his model being rather dated by now, it does not contain sufficient bases of division with which to fully illustrate the diversity that exists within the right-wing extremist party family.

From this examination of the limitations of the existing typologies, it has become clear that if the relationship between the ideology of the parties of the extreme right and their levels of electoral success is to be properly investigated a new typology is necessary. This typology, however, must be sure to draw on the lessons learned from the existing studies. Namely, it must:

- include all right-wing extremist parties in Western Europe;
- be as up to date as possible;
- be constructed so that its types are jointly exhaustive;
- be constructed so that its types are mutually exclusive;
- attempt to reflect the full diversity of the extreme right party family.

In addition, and in contrast to some of the existing studies, the logic behind the construction of the typology will be fully explained. It will be apparent what bases of division are being employed, and why. It should therefore also be clear why certain parties are grouped together,

while others are not.

An alternative typology of right-wing extremist parties

To fully illustrate the diversity present within the right-wing extremist party family, three bases of division have been chosen with which to construct this typology. These are:

1. the importance attached by the parties to the issue of immigration;
2. the nature of the parties' racist attitudes;
3. the parties' attitudes towards democracy, parliamentarism and pluralism.

These criteria have been selected because they relate to elements of right-wing extremist ideology most frequently mentioned in the existing literature. Indeed, in his review of the existing definitions of right-wing extremism, which was referred to above, Mudde found that at least half the studies he examined pointed to xenophobia, racism, anti-democracy and the strong state (1995a: 206) as being key features of right-wing extremism.² While the above discussion of the concept of right-wing extremism argued that these elements are only possible features rather than necessary ones, and emphasized that they are therefore not appropriate for defining right-wing extremism, it nonetheless suggested that these features are useful for describing and sub-categorizing the extreme right party family.

Clearly, the first basis of division proposed for this typology relates to xenophobia, and the second to racism. The third encompasses both the parties' attitudes towards democracy and their views on the state. These two final features are merged into one basis of division because the views right-wing extremist parties have on democracy and on how society should be organized are closely related to their position on the role of the state.

These three bases of division also allow the typology to distance itself from examining the impact that the legacy of fascism (or any other historical ideology) has had on the different parties of the extreme right. This is an advantage because evaluating the importance of fascism in the ideologies of right-wing extremist parties is fraught with difficulties. In some instances, parties have referred to past legacies even though these have not formed a central part of their ideologies. This was the case, for example, when Jörg Haider, the leader of the Austrian FPÖ, commented on the Third Reich's 'competent employment policies' (Knight, 1992: 285). In contrast, parties that do draw on such historical traditions in their ideologies have, as Ignazi observes, frequently toned down symbolic references to fascism so as to avoid stigmatization (1992: 10). Given this behaviour, it is extremely difficult to assess the extent to which the ideologies of the parties are actually informed by such legacies.

Each basis of division will now be considered in turn. The ideologies of the right-wing

extremist parties will be explored in detail and, in the first instance, the parties will be categorized along each basis of division separately. Then the three bases of division will be combined to produce the final typology. Once the separate types of right-wing extremist party are identified, the electoral success of the parties of each type will be examined so that it will become possible to ascertain whether the electoral performance of the different parties is in any way linked to their ideology.

Importance attached to the issue of immigration

Attitudes towards the issue of immigration reflect the importance of xenophobia in the ideologies of the different right-wing extremist parties. Moreover, a party's xenophobia – its fear, hatred of and hostility towards foreigners – reveals its concern for 'internal homogenization', which Koch (1991) argues is one of the two forms of the nationalist political programme.³ As [Table 2.1](#) illustrates, right-wing extremist parties can be divided into two groups according to the importance they attach to the issue of immigration. For some parties this issue is a priority, and they can thus be described as radically xenophobic. In contrast, xenophobia does not feature in the ideology of other right-wing extremist parties.

[Table 2.1](#) Importance attached to immigration in the ideologies of the different right-wing extremist parties of Western Europe

<i>Central to party's ideology</i>	<i>Not central to party's ideology</i>
Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPÖ) Austria Vlaams Blok (VB) Belgium (Flanders) Front National (FN(b)) Belgium (Wallonia) Front Nouveau de Belgique (FNB) Belgium (Wallonia) British National Party (BNP) Britain National Front (NF) Britain Dansk Folkeparti (DF) Denmark Fremskridtspartiet (FRPd) since mid-1980s, Denmark Front National (FN) France	Fremskridtspartiet (FRPd) before mid-1980s, Denmark

Mouvement National Républicain (MNR) France	Ethniki Komma (EK) Greece
Deutsche Volksunion (DVU) Germany	Alleanza Nazionale (AN) Italy
Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands (NPD) Germany	Lega Nord (LN) before mid-1990s, Italy
Republikaner Germany	Movimento Sociale–Fiamma Tricolore (Ms-Ft) Italy
Lega Nord (LN) since mid-1990s, Italy	Fremskrittspartiet (FRPn) before mid-1980s, Norway
Fedrelandspartiet (FLP) Norway	Falange Española Auténtica (FEA) Spain
Fremskrittspartiet (FRPn) since mid-1980s, Norway	Falange Española de las Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional-Sindicalista (FE de las JONS) Spain
Ny Demokrati (ND) Sweden	Falange Española de las Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional-Sindicalista – sector Diego Marquez (FE de las JONS sector DM) Spain
Sverigedemokraterna (SDk) Sweden	Falange Española Independiente (FEI) Spain
Freiheitspartei der Schweiz (FPS) Switzerland	Lega dei Ticinesi (LdT) Switzerland
Schweizer Demokraten (SD) Switzerland	[Ethniki Politiki Enosis (EPEN) Greece]
[Agir Belgium (Wallonia)]	[Komma Proodeftikon (KP) Greece]
[Parti des Forces Nouvelles (PFNb) Belgium (Wallonia)]	[Movimento Sociale Italiano (MSI) Italy]
[Centrumdemocraten (CD) Netherlands]	[Partido da Democracia Cristã (PDC) Portugal]
[Centrumpartij (CP) Netherlands]	[Frente Nacional Spain]
[Centrumpartij'86 (CP'86) Netherlands]	[Fuerza Nueva Spain]
[Nederlandse Volksunie (NVU) Netherlands]	
[Det Nya Partiet (DNP) Sweden]	

Note: Parties in square brackets no longer exist.

Parties of the first group view combating immigration as their overriding concern. The French FN, for example, has demanded the immediate expulsion of all illegal immigrants and the strict control of political refugees ever since the late 1970s when Jean-Pierre Stirbois (who later became the FN's secretary general) famously called on immigrants from beyond the Mediterranean to 'go back to your huts' (Hainsworth, 2000b: 24). The issue has remained

central in more recent years too. In both the 1993 and 1997 party programmes, immigration was addressed in the very first chapter (Marcus, 1995: 100; Front National, 1997a). The FN seeks to reduce the length of employment contracts for non-Europeans, rejects the automatic acquisition of French citizenship by children born in France to foreign parents, and calls for an end to dual citizenship (Marcus, 1995: 107). Furthermore, the majority of the FN's other policies – be they on the family, health, housing or law and order – all revolve around this political issue, with the notion of national and European preference lying at the heart of the party's programme (Hainsworth, 1992b: 49; Mayer, 1998: 16). As Marcus argues, immigration has thus become the FN's 'ideological aspic' (1995: 101).

The French Mouvement National Républicain (MNR), which split from the FN in 1998–99, has an attitude towards immigration that is very similar to that of the FN. In fact, the entire political programme of the MNR closely mirrors that of the pre-split FN, since Mégret, who now heads the MNR, drafted the majority of FN manifestos (Bastow, 2000).

With the election of Franz Schönhuber to the position of party chairman in 1985, and with the fall of the Berlin Wall, immigration also became the overriding concern for the German Republikaner. In its 1990 programme, the party called for the repatriation of the 4.5 million immigrants living in Germany and, like its French counterparts, it recommended that employment contracts for foreigners should not be granted indefinitely (Childs, 1995: 300). In addition, the party opposes the right of immigrants to permanent residence in Germany and objects to foreigners bringing their dependent families into the country (Backes, 1990: 10). It also recommends that the naturalization laws should be tightened and that dual nationality should be banned (Saalfeld, 1993: 191; Veen *et al.*, 1993: 16). Thus the issue of immigration informs the majority of the Republikaner's other policies, very much as it does the FN's (Backer, 2000: 100).

Immigration also occupies a central place in the ideologies of the German Deutsche Volksunion (DVU) and NPD (Mudde, 1995a: 213). Both parties demand a significant reduction in the number of immigrants and asylum-seekers, and favour measures such as repatriation schemes in order to 'solve' the immigration problem (Saalfeld, 1993: 183).

The attitude of the Austrian FPÖ towards immigration is similar to that of both the French and the German right-wing extremist parties. Jörg Haider and his party did not hesitate to exploit the sentiments of anxiety felt within Austria after the arrival of many foreigners from the former Communist countries of Eastern Europe in 1989 and 1990 (Morrow, 2000: 51). The FPÖ argued that this surge in immigration was leading to higher levels of unemployment, and demanded an immediate stop to foreigners entering the country. In addition, the party called for the repatriation of all foreigners already in residence in Austria. Although the tightening of immigration and asylum legislation by the socialist interior minister in the early 1990s deprived the FPÖ of some of its ammunition (Knight, 1992: 296–7), the party continues to place the issue of immigration very high on its agenda. This was evident in the 1997 party

programme, which ‘clearly stated the central role of national identity and the necessity to defend it from foreign invasion’ (Ignazi, 2003: 119).

Immigration has also become the most important policy area for the Danish and Norwegian right-wing extremist parties in more recent years. The issue was of little concern until the mid-1980s, but following an increase in the number of foreigners entering both countries, the two Progress Parties (the FRPd and the FRPn) began to address the question of immigration more and more (Andersen and Bjørklund, 2000: 205). They began to demand that the number of immigrants should be sharply reduced, that integration into society should be strongly encouraged, and that immigrants should be sent home if they committed serious crimes or if conditions in their home countries improved sufficiently (Svåsand, 1998: 84). The parties’ continued emphasis on these policies has been such that today xenophobia and immigration are key elements for both Progress Parties (Widfeldt, 2000: 491). The issue is also central to the ideology of the Danish DF, which was formed in 1995 when the FRPd split. It is key in the ideology of the Norwegian Fedrelandspartiet (FLP) too.

Like its Danish and Norwegian counterparts, the Swedish Ny Demokrati (ND) has been greatly concerned with the issue of immigration. During the 1991 election campaign, the party stood on a platform that included measures to repatriate immigrants (Arter, 1992: 357). It was also very critical of the government’s policies towards immigration and asylum-seekers, linking immigration to crime, and describing refugees as welfare scroungers (Widfeldt, 2000: 496). Sweden’s Sverigedemokraterna (SDk) and Ian Wachtmeister’s Det Nya Partiet (DNP), which he formed in 1998 after he left Ny Demokrati but which has since been dissolved, are two other parties with views on the issue of non-European immigration that are similar to those of the ND (AXT, 2001: 8–10; Widfeldt, 2000: 496).

As the Scandinavian Progress Parties began to concern themselves more and more with the issue of immigration from the mid-1980s onwards, so likewise immigration has become central in the ideology of the Italian LN since the mid-1990s. Ignazi argues that by 1996 the LN had become the ‘only Italian party openly to address a xenophobic discourse’ and that ‘the opposition to multiculturalism and the practice of making foreigners the scapegoats are constant themes of party propaganda’ (2003: 59).

The issue of immigration also features centrally in the ideology of the Belgian right-wing extremist parties. The VB perceives the ‘massive’ presence of foreigners as ‘the most important cause of moral decay’ and claims that immigration is ‘destroying Flemish culture’ (Swyngedouw, 1998: 65–6). Accordingly, since the mid-1980s, the anti-immigrant issue has become the central plank of the party’s electoral platform, overshadowing even the nationalist issue (Swyngedouw, 1998: 67; Mudde, 1995b: 11). The party calls for a ‘watertight’ end to immigration and demands the immediate expulsion of all immigrants who are found to have no papers, who have committed criminal offences, or who have been unemployed for more than three months (Hossay, 1996: 343). Although their ideologies are significantly less well-

developed than that of the VB, the Belgian FN(b) and its off-shoot, the FNB, have similarly virulent views on migrants and subscribe to many of the same policies as the VB, including the repatriation of immigrants (Fitzmaurice, 1992: 307; Swyngedouw, 1998: 59). The same is also true of the Parti des Forces Nouvelles (PFNb), and of Agir, two very small Wallonian parties that had ceased to contest elections by the 1990s.

Immigration was also a key element in the ideologies of the now defunct Dutch Nederlandse Volksunie (NVU), Centrumpartij (CP), Centrumpartij'86 (CP'86) and CD. The CP saw immigration from countries with a non-European culture as the root of a whole host of social problems, from environmental concerns to unemployment. In response, the party called for the immediate cessation of immigration, and for the expulsion of illegal immigrants (Voerman and Lucardie, 1992: 40). The CP'86 also demanded the repatriation of all foreigners, starting with those not legally entitled to be in the Netherlands and those with criminal records (Mudde, 2000: 151). As for the CD, its obsession with the dangers of multiculturalism was such that, as Mudde and Van Holsteyn argue, 'the ideology of the CD is almost exclusively focused on the immigration issue' (2000: 150). Like those of the French FN and the German Republikaner, all the CD's other policies were informed by the party's attitude towards immigration (Lucardie, 1998: 118).

The Swiss Schweizer Demokraten (SD) are also preoccupied by the immigration issue. As Gentile and Kriesi observe, even though the party has changed its name twice since it was first founded,⁴ its programme has remained fundamentally the same and continues to emphasize anti-immigrant concerns (1998: 126). More specifically, 'since the early 1970s, the Swiss Democrats have sought to reduce or at least restrict the number of foreign residents in Switzerland [and] have also been involved in the movement to limit the right of foreigners to be recognized as refugees, especially for non-European nationals' (1998: 131). Anti-foreigner sentiment is similarly central in the ideology of the Swiss Freiheitspartei der Schweiz (FPS) (Husbands, 1992a: 281).

The British right-wing extremist parties are one last set of parties for which the fight against immigration is a priority. The NF's vehement xenophobia and anti-immigrant sentiment were illustrated in the party's most notorious policy – the compulsory repatriation of New Commonwealth immigrants (Thurlow, 1998: 262–3). The BNP's policies are similar, even though Nick Griffin, who assumed the party leadership in 1999, seems more guarded about the issue of forced repatriation (Eatwell, 2000b: 189).

All the parties just discussed are grouped together in [Table 2.1](#). Since immigration is central to the ideologies of all these parties, and since they all perceive the fight against immigration to be a priority, all can be considered radically xenophobic.

In contrast to parties of the first group, the fight against immigration does not preoccupy the Italian MSI/AN and Movimento Sociale–Fiamma Tricolore (Ms–Ft), the Spanish Falangistas⁵ and Fuerza Nueva/Frente Nacional, or the Portuguese Partido da Democracia

Cristã (PDC). These parties therefore form part of a separate, second group. Commenting on the ideology of the Italian MSI, Griffin observes that ‘in marked contrast to [the British NF and the German Republikaner] and to … Le Pen’s Front National, the MSI had in the late 1980s deliberately veered away from an overtly racist “anti-immigration” platform’ (1996: 132). Furthermore, xenophobia remains insignificant in the ideology of the AN, the successor party to the MSI. As Ignazi notes, at the Fiuggi party congress of 1995, Fini, the party leader, ‘clearly abandoned any tough standing regarding immigration’ (1996a: 707).⁶

The lack of emphasis placed on the issue of immigration by the Spanish Falangistas and Fuerza Nueva/Frente Nacional can be explained, in part, by the fact that there was an absence of anti-immigrant rhetoric in the Franco era.⁷ Furthermore, ‘the anti-Muslim sentiment that pervades the European neo-populist movement may be difficult to mobilize in a country that was once part of the Islamic empire’ (Davis, 1998: 161). With non-nationals accounting for less than 2 percent of the Spanish population, it is also very difficult for the parties to blame these individuals for the high level of unemployment (Ellwood, 1995: 103; Casals, 2001: 330). As for Portugal, even though there are significantly more black or mixed-race people here than in Spain, ‘the anti-immigrant hysteria which has revived the far Right in France, Austria and elsewhere, has passed Portugal by’ (Gallagher, 1992: 244).

The fight against immigration is also not central in the ideology of the Swiss Lega dei Ticinesi (LdT), nor was it in that of the Italian LN until the mid-1990s. Although the LdT has campaigned for the defence of the cultural autonomy of the Ticino region and has criticized other cultures in the process, and although its attitude towards refugees is not very favourable (Mazzoleni, 1999: 80–1), the party has never developed an ideology in which the fight against immigration is central and in which all other themes revolve around this issue. Similarly, until the mid-1990s the LN used the issue of immigration in order to attract votes. However, Bossi’s xenophobic slurs in this period must be viewed as provocative arguments only, designed to shock and earn him public attention, rather than as expressions of the party’s true beliefs (Kitschelt, 1995: 162, 175; Gallagher, 1993: 620).

The ideology of the Greek parties of the extreme right is not centred on the issue of immigration either. The Ethniko Komma (EK), like its predecessors the Ethniki Politiki Enosis (EPEN) and the Komma Proodeftikon (KP), is concerned above all with ‘restoring Greece’s national strength’ and promoting a return to ‘Hellenization’ in public life rather than fighting immigration (Dimitras, 1992: 265). As in Spain, the lack of emphasis on the issue of immigration by the Greek parties of the extreme right may, in part, be explained by the high ethnic homogeneity of the Greek population.

As was mentioned earlier, the issue of immigration hardly featured in the ideologies of the Scandinavian Progress Parties until the mid-1980s. Indeed, in the 1973 FRPn and FRPd pamphlets the issue was not even referred to (Andersen and Bjørklund, 2000: 204). Therefore the Progress Parties of the 1970s and early 1980s are categorized in the second group of parties

in [Table 2.1](#) rather than the first.

Racist attitudes

Racism, which may be defined as the belief that natural and hereditary differences exist between groups of people, is another frequently mentioned characteristic of right-wing extremism (Miles and Phizacklea, 1979). That said, it is not a defining element of right-wing extremism, and the contemporary parties of the extreme right exhibit different types of racist attitudes. The views of the parties on race can therefore be used as a second basis of division in the present typology. More specifically, right-wing extremist parties can be divided into three categories according to their attitudes on race. Parties of a first group embrace classical racism; those of a second group espouse new racism or culturism; and parties of a third group adhere to ideologies in which racism plays no part. These three categories are illustrated in [Table 2.2](#).

The first group consists of parties that distinguish groups solely on the grounds of race (rather than culture) and that embrace overtly anti-Semitic beliefs. These parties, which stress the inequalities of races, can be described as adhering to classical racism (Barker, 1981). The British NF and BNP espouse classically racist beliefs. John Tyndall and Martin Webster, who assumed control of the NF in its heyday in the 1970s, both had their roots in the tradition of British neo-Nazism that originated in the pre-war Imperial Fascist League. They were concerned above all with the racial purity of Britain and warned against the degeneration of the British race brought about by ethnic cross-breeding (Thurlow, 1998: 265–6). They were also distinctively anti-Semitic. Despite some change in direction when Nick Griffin and Joe Pierce took control of the NF in 1983, this type of racism still characterizes the party's inner core, although publicly the repatriation of blacks on the grounds of non-assimilation is emphasized (Husbands, 1988a: 71–2). The BNP also adheres to classical racism. This similarity is partly explained by the fact that it was Tyndall who set up the BNP, two years after he resigned from the NF in 1980 (Eatwell, 1992: 178).

The German NPD has also traditionally adhered to notions of classical racism. Admittedly, the importance the party attaches to the white race has been toned down in recent years, with echoes of biological racism being eliminated from its public programme in favour of greater emphasis on the importance of the German *Volk* (Backes, 1990: 15). This moderation stems mainly from the party's fears of being outlawed by the Federal Constitutional Court for exhibiting anti-democratic behaviour. An examination of the NPD's internal literature shows clear continuities with the prewar German extreme right tradition that fed into National Socialism, and that undeniably included vehement white supremacism and aggressive anti-Semitism. The racist sentiments of the DVU are similar to, if not more extreme than, those of the NPD. The DVU also embraces strong nationalism and patriotism. In addition, it overtly

glorifies the National Socialist past and challenges the responsibility of the Nazis as regards the Holocaust. Its anti-Semitism is particularly fervent (Roberts, 1994: 335; Backes and Mudde, 2000: 462).

The former Dutch NVU was another right-wing extremist party that embraced classical racism. As Voerman and Lucardie observe, ‘Glimmerveen [the party leader] and his comrades could be considered racists in the narrow, classical sense. They believed in the superiority of the white race in general and the Germanic and Northwest European race in particular’ (1992: 38–9).

Table 2.2 Racist attitudes of the different right-wing extremist parties of Western Europe

<i>Adhere to classical racism</i>	<i>Adhere to culturism</i>	<i>Not racist</i>
British National Party (BNP) Britain National Front (NF) Britain Deutsche Volksunion (DVU) Germany Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands (NPD) Germany [Parti des Forces Nouvelles (PFNb) Belgium (Wallonia)]	Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPÖ) Austria Vlaams Blok (VB) Belgium (Flanders) Front National (FN(b)) Belgium (Wallonia) Front Nouveau de Belgique (FNB) Belgium (Wallonia) Dansk Folkeparti (DF) Denmark Fremskridtspartiet (FRPd) since mid-1980s, Denmark Front National (FN) France Mouvement National Républicain (MNR) France Republikaner Germany Lega Nord (LN) since mid-1990s, Italy Fedrelandspartiet (FLP) Norway	Fremskridtspartiet (FRPd) before mid-1980s, Denmark Ethniko Komma (EK) Greece Alleanza Nazionale (AN) Italy Lega Nord (LN) before mid-1990s, Italy Movimento Sociale-Fiamma Tricolore (Ms-Ft) Italy Fremskrittspartiet (FRPn) before mid-1980s, Norway Falange Española Auténtica (FEA) Spain Falange Española de las Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional-Sindicalista (FE de las JONS) Spain Falange Española de las Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional-Sindicalista – sector Diego Marquez (FE de las JONS sector DM) Spain

[Centrumpartij'86 (CP'86) Netherlands] [Nederlandse Volksunie (NVU) Netherlands]	Fremskrittspartiet (FRPn) since mid- 1980s, Norway	Falange Española Independiente (FEI) Spain Lega dei Ticinesi (LdT) Switzerland [Ethniki Politiki Enosis (EPEN) Greece] [Komma Proodeftikon (KP) Greece] [Movimento Sociale Italiano (MSI) Italy]
Sverigedemokraterna (SDk) Sweden	Ny Demokrati (ND) Sweden	[Partido da Democracia Cristã (PDC) Portugal] [Frente Nacional Spain] [Fuerza Nueva Spain]
Freiheitspartei der Schweiz (FPS) Switzerland	Schweizer Demokraten (SD) Switzerland	
[Agir Belgium (Wallonia)]		
[Centrumdemocraten (CD) Netherlands]		
[Centrumpartij (CP) Netherlands]		
[Det Nya Partiet (DNP) Sweden]		

Note: Parties in square brackets no longer exist.

The Dutch CP'86, which was outlawed in 1998, also adhered to classical racism. Although the party's manifestos and programmes contained few references to the superiority of the white race, as Mudde notes, 'closer reading shows that one race is "more equal" than others. The superiority of the white race is implicated in [a number of party] slogans' and the inferiority of other races was implicitly referred to in the party paper, which spoke of "'jungle-people, "non-European underdeveloped nations" and [talked of] "degeneration" as a result of the mixing of races' (1995a: 211–12). In addition, the CP'86 displayed anti-Semitic tendencies (Voerman and Lucardie, 1992: 43).

The Belgian PFNb, which was dissolved in 1991, also embraced classical racism. In particular, the party engaged in fervent anti-Semitism and developed a revisionist ideology, the central tenet of which was the denial of the Holocaust (Husbands, 1992b: 133; Deslore, 1995: 253).

The parties that adhere to classical racism are grouped together in [Table 2.2](#). As the table illustrates, however, contemporary right-wing extremist parties that embrace such attitudes are in the minority. Much more common are parties that may be termed culturist, or which espouse a 'new' racism. These parties believe that differences exist between groups of people but, in contrast to their counterparts who advocate classical racism, they argue that it is culture

rather than race that marks these differences. Thus, they maintain that the indigenous people and the Western civilization are superior because of their culture rather than because they are part of the white race. They also stress that certain groups are incompatible because of differences in their culture rather than differences in race. Hence, culturist or new racist parties reject multiculturalism on the grounds that the mixing of cultures endangers the separate identity of each of the different groups (Barker, 1981: 23; Mudde, 1995a: 211). This contrasts with parties that adhere to classical racism, which view multiculturalism as leading to the ‘degeneration’ or ‘pollution’ of the white race.

The French FN is located within this second category of parties. Its leader, Jean-Marie Le Pen, is obsessed with the French nation’s survival and with its identity, which, he argues, is threatened by increasing cosmopolitanism. He ‘insists that a plurality of cultures and peoples must be preserved, but clearly not in France [and] he rejects the “Anglo-Saxon” and American models of integration – “multiculturalism” and the politics of the “melting-pot” – … as unrealistic and dangerous options’ (Marcus, 1995: 106). These attitudes are reflected in the policies of the party. As Swyngedouw and Ivaldi contend, ‘the key argument of the FN is that the culture and religion of the immigrants coming from North Africa or black African countries is irreconcilable with the European culture of which the French nation is part. There can only be adversarial coexistence between the two’ (2001: 14). The party thus avoids ‘blatantly racist formulations, stressing cultural differences between groups instead of their supposed inferiority’ (Mayer, 1998: 17).

The MNR is similarly preoccupied with the preservation of France’s identity, which it considers particularly threatened by Islam (Bastow, 2000: 7–9). The parallels with the FN’s beliefs on multiculturalism and globalization are unsurprising, given that Mégret, the MNR’s leader, was responsible for drafting many of the FN’s policies before he left the FN to form the MNR. Indeed, he declared that the MNR had not abandoned ‘one iota of the programme of the Front national’ (Bastow, 2000: 7).

The German Republikaner display similar beliefs. As Backes makes clear, the party distances itself from the tradition of National Socialism and ‘does not shroud its xenophobia in a biologically-based theory of race’ (1990: 14). Instead, it rejects multiculturalism and argues that cultural diversity poses a threat to the national identity. Saalfeld explains that, for the Republikaner, ‘foreigners and non-Germans are not officially classified as inferior, [but] they are seen as a threat to the cultural and ethnic identity of Germany’ (1993: 191). Thus, like the FN, the Republikaner can be categorized as being culturist, rather than adhering to the tradition of classical racism.

The racism of the Belgian VB is also of the culturist variety. Although the party ‘essentially maintains that peoples are not the same or equal …, the VB rarely allows itself to support a distinction on a purely biological (racial) basis’ (Swyngedouw, 2000: 136). The party ‘insists that it never speaks in terms of races and that, in its opinion, the Flemings are no better than

other people' (Mudde, 1995b: 19). However, it does emphasize that different cultures are incompatible, and talks of non-Europeans as being 'incapable of assimilating into the Flemish community' (Mudde, 2000: 99). Furthermore, the party's paper 'is not completely free from claiming the inferiority of other cultures' (Mudde, 2000: 100).

The racism of the now-defunct Wallonian party Agir, which was formed in 1989 after a split in the PFNb, was similar. The founders of the party (Freson, Steuckers and Destordeur) made a point of distancing themselves from other extreme right groups by emphasizing a culturist belief structure rather than one based on biological racism (Ignazi, 2003: 128). In the same vein, the Wallonian FN(b) and FNB (the latter created after a split in the FN(b) in 1995) avoid any reference to biological racism, and instead emphasize their concern with the preservation of the nation's identity, which they believe is being particularly undermined by the presence of foreigners.

The Austrian FPÖ may also be regarded as culturist. Morrow notes that the party makes 'no explicit mention of traditional phrases such as *Volksgemeinschaft* ("the community of the *volk*", a core component of Nazi racial ideology). Instead, [it] substituted a determination to protect more pastoral and domestic notions like *Heimat* (hearth and home)' (2000: 54). The current party programme continues to reflect this preoccupation with *Heimat*, and as well as emphasizing Austria's right to a cultural identity, the programme also rejects 'multi-cultural experiments that bear social conflicts with them' (FPÖ, 2002a).

The racism of the contemporary Scandinavian right-wing extremist parties is also of the culturist kind. Writing about the Danish DF and the Norwegian FRPn, Widfeldt explains that both parties may be classified as new racist because of their clear opposition to multiculturalism. The Danish party 'objects to Denmark developing into a multi-ethnic society', while its Norwegian counterpart argues that the 'continued immigration of asylum-seekers ... will lead to serious conflicts between ethnic groups in Norway' (2000: 491). The same is true of the other, smaller Scandinavian right-wing extremist parties – the present-day Danish FRPd, the Swedish ND, DNP and SDk, and the Norwegian FLP. This latter party, for example, calls for an end to multiculturalism on the grounds that the mixing of peoples of different cultures leads to murder, rape and the establishment of gangs (AXT, 2000: 8).

In the same way the Swiss FPS and SD distance themselves from any reference to biological racism but do, however, embrace a culturism which is underpinned by an aversion to multiculturalism. The two parties' involvement in initiatives against the antiracist law (which was finally passed in 1994) and in other similar public actions reflect their beliefs that the mixing of different cultures can only be detrimental to the preservation of the Swiss identity and culture.

The Dutch CP and CD – now both defunct – were similarly preoccupied with the threat posed by multiculturalism. In its internal papers the CD argued that 'the inclusion of people of a different culture ... causes substantial problems, for both the Dutch culture and the people

from the other cultures' (*CD-Actueel*, March 1990, quoted in Mudde, 2000: 134). One way in which the CD proposed to help 'combat' multiculturalism was by discouraging mixed marriages, and by making it easier for Dutch people married to foreigners to file for divorce (Mudde, 2000: 133).

The parties just discussed are grouped together in [Table 2.2](#). All of these right-wing extremist parties can be described as culturist or new racist, as they all emphasize cultural rather than racial differences between groups. They also point to the incompatibility of these groups and, if they stress the superiority of one group over another, this is done on the grounds of culture rather than race.

As was the case with their attitude towards the issue of immigration, the Spanish, the Portuguese and the Greek right-wing extremist parties differ from their north European counterparts in that they do not adhere to any form of racist beliefs. They espouse neither racial supremacism nor any form of culturism. As Ellwood explains, there is no tradition of racism on the extreme right in Spain and none of the parties are white supremacist (1995: 103).⁸ Racism has never been a feature of the Portuguese extreme right either (Davis, 1998: 161).

Racism is also absent from the ideology of the Italian AN, just as it was from that of its predecessor, the MSI. At the 1995 party congress, the party leader, Gianfranco Fini, unequivocally condemned any form of racism and anti-Semitism (Ignazi, 1996a: 707). This stance was reflected in the 'Fiuggi Theses', which were published shortly after the conference and in which the party declared its 'explicit, definitive and absolute condemnation of any form of anti-Semitism and anti-Hebrewism' (Griffin, 1996: 140).

Similarly, racism is absent from the ideology of the Ms-Ft, a party created in 1995 as a result of a split in the AN. Indeed, Pino Rauti, the leader of the Ms-Ft, was known for having emphasized a rejection of all forms of xenophobic and racist attitudes in his days as secretary of the MSI in the early 1990s, and had led a faction within the MSI that distanced itself from any type of racial discrimination (Ignazi, 2003: 42). When he left the AN and set up the Ms-Ft, Rauti's views on race remained fundamentally unchanged.

The Swiss LdT does not espouse racist views either. While it is intent on defending the regional interests of the Ticino region, and on safeguarding its cultural identity and autonomy, it does not do this by arguing that other cultures are inferior or that the mixing to different cultures is a threat to the region. Instead, the LdT believes that the interests of the Ticino region are being undermined by the federal political establishment, which pursues economic policies that discriminate against Ticino in favour of the richer Swiss-German regions (Mazzoleni, 1999: 80).

Given the absence of racism in their ideologies, the Spanish Falangistas, Fuerza Nueva and Frente Nacional, the Portuguese PDC, the Greek KP, EPEN and EK, the Italian AN (and its predecessor the MSI) and Ms-Ft, and the Swiss LdT are therefore all grouped together into a

third category in [Table 2.2](#), distinct from the previous two.

Until the mid-1990s the Italian LN did not hold racist beliefs either. Talking about the party in the early 1990s Kitschelt observed, ‘Bossi’s ethno-regional and xenophobic anti-immigration slurs . . . are not expressions of a biological or cultural racism as much as new efforts to attack the establishment’ (1995: 175). More recently, however, opposition to multiculturalism has become a constant theme in the party’s programmes and statements (Ignazi, 2003: 59). The LN is thus categorized in [Table 2.2](#) as not racist in the period until the mid-1990s, and as culturist after that date.

Similarly, although the Scandinavian Progress Parties (FRPn and FRPd) of the contemporary period display a culturist form of racism as was just discussed, in the period up until the mid-1980s these parties did not hold any form of racist beliefs. They are therefore categorized as not racist in the period until the mid-1980s, but are placed in the culturist category of [Table 2.2](#) thereafter.

Attitudes towards democracy, parliamentarism and pluralism

The contemporary right-wing extremist parties of Western Europe can also be categorized into three groups according to the kind of attitudes they have towards democracy, parliamentarism and pluralism. One group is made up of parties that reject outright the fundamental values, procedures and institutions of the democratic constitutional state and wish to see the existing democratic order replaced altogether. A second group comprises parties that also display an anti-systemness but that, rather than calling for a whole-sale replacement of the existing democratic constitutional state and its values, procedures and institutions, demand significant reform that would strengthen the executive and would curtail the rights and freedoms of organized interests and of individuals. In other words, parties of this second group undermine the legitimacy of the existing constitutional state by calling for less democracy, weaker powers for parliament and less pluralism. Finally, a third group of parties also favour a reform of the existing democratic institutions and procedures but, unlike the parties of the second group, demand less state intervention rather than more, and call for more to be done to promote and safeguard the rights and freedoms of individuals. As will be discussed, the attitudes of these parties as regards democracy, parliamentarism and pluralism call into question their inclusion in the wider extreme right party family. [Table 2.3](#) illustrates which right-wing extremist parties belong to which of the three groups.

The Italian MSI is part of the first group of parties. In the early 1980s it proposed the adoption of an entirely new constitution, which would establish a ‘corporativist political system, based on compulsory trade unions, with a strong centralised state. [The party] also proposed the direct election of the head of state, with a seven-year term and strong executive

powers, and a limited role for political parties' (Furlong, 1992: 349).

Table 2.3 Attitudes of the different right-wing extremist parties of Western Europe towards democracy, parliamentarism and pluralism

<i>Outright rejection of existing system</i>	<i>Reform of existing system: less democracy, more state</i>	<i>Reform of existing system: more democracy, less state</i>
British National Party (BNP) Britain	Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPÖ) Austria	Dansk Folkeparti (DF) Denmark
National Front (NF) Britain	Vlaams Blok (VB) Belgium (Flanders)	Fremskridtspartiet (FRPd) Denmark
Deutsche Volksunion (DVU) Germany	Front National (FN(b)) Belgium (Wallonia)	Ethnico Komma (EK) Greece
Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands (NPD) Germany	Front Nouveau de Belgique (FNB) Belgium (Wallonia)	Lega Nord (LN) Italy
Alleanza Nazionale (AN) Italy	Front National (FN) France	Fedrelandspartiet (FLP) Norway
Movimento Sociale-Fiamma Tricolore (Ms-Ft) Italy	Mouvement National Républicain (MNR) France	Fremskrittspartiet (FRPn) Norway
Falange Española Auténtica (FEA) Spain	Republikaner Germany	Ny Demokrati (ND) Sweden
Falange Española de las Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional-Sindicalista (FE de las JONS) Spain	Schweizer Demokraten (SD) Switzerland	Sverigedemokraterna (SDk) Sweden
Falange Española de las Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional-Sindicalista – sector Diego Marquez (FE de las JONS sector DM) Spain	[Agir Belgium (Wallonia)]	Freiheitspartei der Schweiz (FPS) Switzerland
Falange Española Independiente (FEI) Spain	[Centrumdemocraten (CD) Netherlands]	Lega dei Ticinesi (LdT) Switzerland
[Parti des Forces Nouvelles (PFNb) Belgium (Wallonia)]	[Centrumdemocraten (CD) Netherlands]	[Ethniki Politiki Enosis (EPEN) Greece]
[Movimento Sociale Italiano (MSI) Italy]	[Centrumdemocraten (CD) Netherlands]	[Komma Proodeftikon (KP) Greece]
[Centrumpartij'86 (CP'86) Netherlands]	[Centrumdemocraten (CD) Netherlands]	[Det Nya Partiet (DNP) Sweden]
[Nederlandse Volksunie (NVU) Netherlands]		
[Partido da Democracia Cristã (PDC) Portugal]		
[Frente Nacional Spain]		
[Fuerza Nueva Spain]		

Note: Parties in square brackets no longer exist.

The MSI's successor party, the AN, is arguably still deeply embedded in the fascist tradition.

Despite some modernization, it espouses deep-seated anti-democratic sentiments (Ignazi, 1996a: 706). Although the AN publicly maintains that it is the partocracy that it is against, rather than the democratic system itself, as Griffin observes, ‘at a subtextual level self-evident to any fascist, the party-ocracy was a code-name for liberal democracy *per se*’ (1996: 134). Similarly, even though the AN’s 1995 programme talks of moves towards direct democracy and of ‘new forms of participation through organisms linking to civil society and institutions’, Griffin argues that ‘[h]istorically speaking, this scheme is nothing less than a “modernized” and muted form of the Fascist regime’s leftist corporativism’ (1996: 135). Such a system would leave little or no room for autonomous political parties and interest groups or even for parliament, which Fini would like to see ‘demoted in importance’ (Gallagher, 2000: 79). The Ms-Ft is even more hard-line, and even more loyal to the fascist legacy than the AN (Gallagher, 2000: 78). It strongly rejects the existing democratic order and expresses contempt for pluralism. It can therefore also be considered as belonging to this first group of parties.

The Spanish Falangistas have also shown themselves unwilling to support the principles of parliamentary democracy. Similarly, Piñar’s Fuerza Nueva opposed democratic reform, and ‘overtly manifested its affective, ideological, and political ties with Franco’s regime’ (Ignazi, 2003: 188). It also disapproved of ‘most social liberalization laws including those dealing with abortion, divorce, and the freedom of religion and press’ (Davis, 1998: 159). As Ellwood explains, the Spanish right-wing extremist parties ‘drew their inspiration from the past and, as in the past, considered anathema precisely those things on which post-Francoist Spaniards pinned their hopes, such as the devolution of power to regional governments, class-based trades unions, a market-based economy, integration into the EC, and, above all, freedom of choice and expression in every sphere of life’ (1992: 381). Even the more modern Frente Nacional ‘lapsed back into its obsession with “Spain’s problems”, identifying these as disorder and lack of effective government; … liberalism; political parties, elections and democracy in general’ (Ellwood, 1992: 383–4). A similar attitude towards democracy and parliamentarism, and a similar nostalgia for the past, characterized the now-defunct Portuguese PDC.

The British right-wing extremist parties also belong to this first group as they too reject the existing democratic institutions, procedures and values. Although the NF maintained that it never totally rejected democracy, as Eatwell explains, the party’s democratic credentials were hardly sound, as ‘most of its leaders felt that “democracy” was perfectly consistent with a one-party state that would reforge the holistic nation and overcome the threat from international capital’ (i.e. Jewish interests) (1998a: 146–7). The legacy of Strasserism, which drew on the ideas and beliefs of the German inter-war fascists Otto and Gregor Strasser, and which advocated the replacement of parliamentary democracy by a corporate system and the rejection of capitalism, was still strong within the NF for much of the 1980s and early 1990s (Thurlow, 1998: 267).

As with other areas of policy, the BNP’s views on democracy have been very similar to

those of the NF, particularly in the 1980s and early 1990s. Tyndall, who led the party until 1999, was ‘suspicious of the masses, seeing them as putty to be manipulated by the strong leader – whose task it is to set out a grand vision’ (Eatwell, 1998a: 147).

Three other parties that rejected the established democratic order and that were suspicious of pluralism were the Dutch NVU and CP’86, and the Wallonian PFNb. The NVU favoured reinforcing the executive and weakening the legislature. It proposed that the prime minister should be appointed by the queen and should be able to veto any legislation passed by a parliament that would be partly elected and partly appointed. The party also suggested the creation of a corporatist socio-economic council (which would serve as a senate) and envisaged the end of all class conflict as a result of cooperation between workers and employers (Voerman and Lucardie, 1992: 38). All these proposals were very much in line with traditional fascist thought. For its part, the CP’86 also viewed pluralism and individual rights with suspicion, maintaining that ‘there will be no place for the “personal and group egoism [that] have led to an excessive deterioration of responsible thinking and acting”’ (1989 party programme, *Nationaaldemocratische gedachten voor een menswaardige toekomst*, quoted in Mudde, 2000: 163). The Wallonian PFNb embraced similar views, expressing contempt for parliamentary parties and favouring the introduction of a new corporatist order (Ignazi, 2003: 128).

Assessing the German right-wing extremist parties’ true beliefs about democracy is a somewhat difficult task, since, as Winkler and Schumann explain, a ‘party’s goals cannot necessarily be deduced from its official platform [because] for strategic reasons [parties] do not openly proclaim their ideas, in order to avoid being considered hostile to the constitution’ (1998: 102). That said, it is quite evident from internal documents and from the party press that the NPD opposes the contemporary democratic system, its institutions and its values, even though the party often attempts to guard its true attitudes. Indeed, the very fact that it is currently under observation by the Office for the Protection of the Constitution bears witness to its anti-democratic character (Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, 1999). In its 1987 and 1992 manifestos, the NPD displayed ‘a tight monistic vision of the state, in which there [was] neither place for “group-egoism” nor for the “Volk-hostile class-struggle”’. The party also argued that in order ‘to uphold true democratic principles, individual and sectional interests should always be appointed and subordinated to the whole’ (Mudde, 1995a: 215). In its 1987 programme, the NPD committed ‘itself to the establishment of an ethnically defined “national community” based on corporatism and directed by a strong and non-partisan executive’ (Saalfeld, 1993: 183). As far as the institutions of democracy are concerned, ‘the line taken by the NPD party press is that the party still serves a public fundamentally opposed to the parliamentary system which it often subjects to vicious attacks’ (Backes, 1990: 15).

The DVU’s attitudes towards the democratic system and towards individual rights and freedoms are similar to those of the NPD, although the DVU’s party programmes tend to be

much less detailed than those of the NPD (Mudde, 2000: 78). Like the NPD, the DVU calls for a strong, authoritarian state, whose interests should come first, before those of the individual citizen (Winkler and Schumann, 1998: 102). Given their attitudes on democracy, parliamentarism and pluralism, it is appropriate to locate the NPD and the DVU in the first group of parties (see [Table 2.3](#)), even though they may at times temper their anti-democratic remarks so as to avoid prosecution by the Office for the Protection of the Constitution.

Not all contemporary right-wing extremist parties reject outright the existing democratic order, its values, procedures and institutions, however. In contrast to the parties just discussed, some parties of the extreme right tolerate the established liberal democratic system, but at the same time they call for significant reform that would strengthen the executive, weaken the power of parliament and organized interests, and curtail the rights and freedoms of individuals. These parties can be grouped together in a second category.

One such party is the French FN. Jean-Marie Le Pen and the FN have not only accepted the electoral path to power, but also claim to have consented to the parliamentary method of achieving this. Nevertheless, while the party takes care not to question the legitimacy of the constitution and the established institutions, it is far from enamoured of the current state of French democracy (Marcus, 1995: 114; Swyngedouw and Ivaldi, 2001: 12–13). Indeed, Le Pen ‘describes himself as a Churchillian democrat, i.e. not a great supporter of democracy, although knowing no better system’ (Hainsworth, 1992b: 48). The FN’s main argument is that the political system is in need of comprehensive reform. In particular, the party calls for the introduction of proportional representation for all legislative elections as a priority. In addition, it favours a significant extension of the use of direct democracy, including the increased use of referendums and the introduction of a system of popular initiatives through which a sufficient number of signatures could force a referendum. The party’s programme suggests that immigration is an appropriate theme for the extension of referendums and insists that the introduction of popular initiatives would enable French people to voice their opinions openly on this subject (Hainsworth, 1992b: 49; Front National, 1997a; Mayer, 1998: 16).

While such recommendations may give the impression that the FN is above all concerned with individual rights and liberties, the party’s attitude towards interest group activity suggests otherwise. In its programme, the FN condemns the strength of political lobbies and unions and accuses them of entering into a cosy relationship with the mainstream political parties for their mutual benefit (Front National, 1997a). Le Pen maintains that the rights of the individual should be subordinated to the ‘sacred rights of the collective’, which, in his worldview, refers to nothing less than the nation of France as a whole (Marcus, 1995: 103–4; Swyngedouw and Ivaldi, 2001: 16–18). Bearing these attitudes in mind, the FN’s call for the extension of direct democracy therefore becomes more a vehicle for suppressing the organization of interests than a means of promoting a more participatory political system. Furthermore, far from giving power back to the people, the FN favours a strengthening of the

presidency (Hainsworth, 1992b: 50).

Despite its criticisms of the established system, the FN does not aspire to change the political regime altogether (Minkenberg, 1997: 77). Instead, it presents proposals for reform that would strengthen the executive and weaken organized interests and that would curtail individual rights and freedoms. It therefore differs significantly from the parties of the first group that advocate a complete replacement of parliamentary democracy.

As is the case in all policy areas, the MNR's views on democracy, parliamentarism and pluralism are extremely similar to those of the FN. While the MNR supports the 'institutional principles of the Republic', it nonetheless calls for some significant reform of the system (Bastow, 2000: 11). The party also emphasizes 'the general interest over that of the particular' (Bastow, 2000: 14).

As has been the case in other areas of policy, the Republikaner's attitudes towards the existing democratic order are very similar to those of the FN. Like the FN, the Republikaner demand that referendums be used widely, especially in situations where there are proposed amendments to the German Basic Law. This request is particularly significant in view of the fact that plebiscitary forms of decision-making and referendums are outlawed under the Basic Law. Furthermore, the party recommends that the present system should be altered so that the presidency gains full political powers, and it suggests that the incumbent should be elected directly by the people (Minkenberg, 1997: 82; Die Republikaner, 1998).

The Republikaner, just like the FN, also call for a stronger state, the restriction of the power of trade unions and other interest groups, and the subordination of individual and group interests to the common, national interest. In addition, the party demands that the mass media be subject to greater control (Westle and Niedermayer, 1992: 90–1; Saalfeld, 1993: 185). In short, therefore, the Republikaner do not wholeheartedly accept the existing political system, and, like their French counterpart, they demand considerable reform in many areas. However, unlike parties of the first group discussed earlier, the Republikaner do not reject democracy outright. On the contrary, the party makes sure it continually emphasizes its loyalty to the constitution and its commitment to the existing democratic arrangements.

The Belgian VB has similar views on democracy and on individual rights. The party does 'not outwardly reject the multi-party system, free expression, or parliamentary democracy' (Swyngedouw, 1998: 65), but at the same time, it calls for 'effective measures which bring about an upgrading of political life and parliamentary activities, [and argues that] politics must be withdrawn from the atmosphere of small-mindedness, cliques, and calculation in which it has currently been marooned by democracy and the malady of parliamentarism' (*Principles of the VB*, quoted in Swyngedouw, 1998: 65). As for the rights of individuals, the VB maintains that 'the ethnic community takes absolute precedence over the individual [and that] individuals have no separate existence from which they could draw universal rights' (Swyngedouw and Ivaldi, 2001: 16).

The Belgian FN(b) and FNB embrace similar beliefs to those of the parties just discussed. This likeness is unsurprising in view of the fact that the FN(b) has tried to model itself on the French FN (Deslore, 1995: 253). It too calls for a stronger state and a stricter policy on law and order, and it also criticizes the immobilism of the traditional democratic parties and emphasizes the need for stronger leadership. Agir, which merged with the FN(b) in 1997, held similar attitudes too. It distanced itself from elements that called for a wholesale replacement of the existing democratic system, such as those inside the PFNb (Ignazi, 2003: 128), yet was critical of the established parties and favoured significant institutional reform.

The Dutch CD and CP also advocated democracy, yet they criticized the existing system and argued that it was in need of reform. As Voerman and Lucardie explain, the leaders of the CP and the CD seemed ‘to accept the institutions of liberal democracy but [rejected] the dominant liberal values with respect to ethnic minorities and cultural pluralism’ (1992: 52). The CD called for a stronger state, more police and stricter sentencing (Voerman and Lucardie, 1992: 45). At the same time, however, just like the French FN and the German Republikaner, the party maintained that it wanted to give more power to the people by introducing referendums (Lucardie, 1998: 117–18).

The Austrian FPÖ is another party that belongs to this second group, as its attitudes towards democracy and the existing institutions and norms are similar to those of the French FN, the German Republikaner, the Belgian VB and the Dutch CD and CP. More specifically, the FPÖ has called for a stronger executive, suggesting that the position of chancellor should be abolished and that, in its place, a powerful presidency should be created. The party has also proposed that the cabinet should be reduced in size (Morrow, 2000: 54). In addition, the FPÖ has shown itself in favour of an increased use of plebiscites, and has voiced its objection to the power that political parties have in the Austrian system (FPÖ, 2002b).

The Swiss SD is one final party that belongs to this second group. It too calls for a strong state, whose role is perceived as guaranteeing ‘the well-being of the Swiss collectivity and not of the business community’. The party maintains that to do this ‘the state has to be strong and ready to intervene in the social and economic spheres’ (Gentile and Kriesi, 1998: 131). The party also demands that the Swiss system of direct democracy be protected, and in line with this it opposes Swiss membership of the EU, UN and IMF (Gentile and Kriesi, 1998: 131).

All the parties just discussed are grouped together in [Table 2.3](#). All tolerate the established democratic order, but they nonetheless recommend significant levels of reform that would strengthen the executive and weaken the rights and freedoms of organized interests and individuals. They thus call for less democracy, less pluralism and a stronger state, and in doing so, they undermine the legitimacy of the procedures, institutions and values upon which the existing constitutional state is built.

A third group of contemporary West European right-wing extremist parties also calls for significant reform of the existing democratic order, but unlike the second group of parties just

discussed, parties in this third group believe that existing democratic institutions and procedures make for too little democracy rather than too much. In particular, parties of this third group are critical of the established parliamentary system and of the existing parties for not representing citizens adequately, and they call for substantial reforms to address these issues. Parties in this third group also favour a reduction (rather than a strengthening) of the role and reach of the state. They also differ from the first two groups of parties in that they do not maintain that individual rights and freedoms should be subordinated to the greater national interest.

The Danish and Norwegian Progress Parties (FRPd and FRPn) and the Danish DF emphasize their commitment to safeguarding the personal freedom of the indigenous population, which they believe is currently undermined by the size and reach of the state apparatus (Fremskridtspartiet, 1998). Both Progress Parties call for a reduction in the size of the public sector and argue that ‘politically, the state or other public authorities should have less opportunity to regulate the activities of citizens, and economically, the public sector should be scaled down [and] should retreat from many of its regulating activities’ (Svåsand, 1998: 83). According to both Progress Parties, such measures will ‘increase the freedom of the individual in society’ (Svåsand, 1998: 83).

The Danish and Norwegian right-wing extremist parties also have a preference for more direct democracy, including increasing the use of referendums (Andersen and Bjørklund, 2000: 202). The FRPd also favours a reduction in the size of the Danish parliament (Svåsand, 1998: 83). In contrast to the parties of the second group, the demands of the Danish and Norwegian parties for more direct democracy and for reform of the parliamentary system must be viewed as efforts to increase the freedom of the individual rather than as methods by which to subordinate the rights of the individual in the greater interests of the collective.

The Swedish right-wing extremist party ND shares many of the views of the Progress Parties and of the Danish DF as regards democracy, parliamentarism and pluralism. It too calls for more referendums and fewer parliamentarians and it also favours the direct election of the prime minister (Svåsand, 1998: 84). It also demands a reduction in the size of the public sector and less state intervention (Svåsand, 1998: 84; Widfeldt, 2000: 495). The DNP, a short-lived party created as a result of a split in the ND in 1994 and led by a Ian Wachtmeister, one of the founders of the ND, embraced similar policies (Widfeldt, 2000: 496).

The Swedish SDk and the Norwegian FLP have little to say on the subject of democracy and pluralism, as their respective programmes are concerned, above all, with immigration and multiculturalism. That said, when they do touch upon issues that relate to the existing democratic system, the established parties or the rights of individuals, by and large these two parties seem to share the outlook of the other Scandinavian parties of the extreme right. The SDk, for example, has been keen to portray itself as a ‘leftist’ or ‘progressive’ party rather than a ‘nationalist’ one (Anti-Semitism Worldwide, 2000/1), thereby suggesting that it attaches

some importance to the safeguarding of individual rights and freedoms.

The Swiss FPS (known as the APS until the party changed its name in 1992) has views on democracy that are similar to those of the Scandinavian right-wing extremist parties. The party fights all intervention by the state that restricts personal freedoms and that impinges on the workings of the free market. It argues that the state should exert no control over society and that, instead, the state's role should be kept to guaranteeing internal and external security and public order only (Gentile and Kriesi, 1998: 131–2).

The LdT is similarly critical of the existing democratic system. Although it sees some role for the state in the economy (in particular in providing social benefits such as pensions), it favours the reduction of taxes and administrative red tape so as to attract more businesses to the Ticino region. More importantly, however, it is extremely critical of the Swiss party system and of the established parties. It regards the party system as a 'power bloc' working against the interests of the people, and sees the mainstream parties as agents of clientalism (Mazzoleni, 1999: 80–6).

In its quest for a complete reorganization of the Italian political and economic system, the LN likewise calls for less state intervention. The party proposes the creation of a federal republic, a development that would entail radical devolution of power away from Rome (Betz, 1998b: 48).

Similarly, the Greek parties of the extreme right have called for less state intervention in people's daily lives. While the KP was particularly vocal about what it saw as excessive intervention by the state in economic affairs, its successor, EPEN, demanded, among other things, the 'restoration and cleansing of parliamentarism' as well as a return to the 'liberalized economy' (Dimitras, 1992: 265). Similarly, the EK, founded in 1989 after EPEN was disbanded, called 'for the abolition of income taxes, a significant scaling back of the state's role in economic affairs, and the adoption of a simple system of proportional representation benefiting smaller parties' (Davis, 1998: 167).

The parties that belong to this third group are listed in [Table 2.3](#). They differ from the two other groups of right-wing extremist parties discussed above in that they believe the existing democratic order does too little rather than too much to promote and safeguard the rights and freedoms of individuals. To address these issues they call for less state intervention and a reform of the parliamentary system and of the established parties.

As was mentioned above, the attitudes of the parties in this third group towards democracy and towards the rights and freedoms of individual citizens raise doubts over their inclusion in the wider right-wing extremist party family. Indeed, it is debatable whether the reforms that these parties call for undermine the legitimacy of the democratic constitutional state and the fundamental values, procedures and institutions on which it is built. After all, these parties are asking for more democracy rather than less. That said, before any judgements are made on whether these parties do or do not belong to the right-wing extremist party family, it should

be remembered that, as the earlier discussion of the concept of right-wing extremism made clear, a party's attitude towards the principle of fundamental human equality is also crucial in determining whether it should be considered right-wing extremist. Thus, if the parties in this third group embrace xenophobic and/or racist attitudes, and thereby display a rejection of the principle of fundamental human rights, they qualify for inclusion in the extreme right party family regardless of their rather liberal views on democracy and on the rights and freedoms of individuals. This point will be returned to below.

Having discussed the attitudes of the different West European right-wing extremist parties towards immigration, towards race, and towards democracy, parliamentarism and pluralism, it is now possible to consider these three bases of division simultaneously rather than one by one. In other words, the alternative typology can now be constructed.

Five types of right-wing extremist party

The three bases of division examined above are sufficiently stringent to allow for the types in this new, alternative typology to be jointly exhaustive and mutually exclusive. In addition to satisfying these key theoretical and methodological conditions, the present typology also has the advantages of including all West European parties of the extreme right and of being as up-to-date as possible. In this way it reflects the full diversity of the extreme right party family in Western Europe.

Given the three bases of division just examined and given the number of classes within each of these (2, 3 and 3 respectively), 18 different types of right-wing extremist parties are theoretically possible ($2 \times 3 \times 3$). In practice, however, far fewer types exist. In fact, as [Table 2.4](#) illustrates, only five types of right-wing extremist party are found in Western Europe in the contemporary period.

A first type of party is characterized by radically xenophobic attitudes, classical racism, and an outright rejection of democracy, parliamentarism and pluralism. The one feature that sets parties of this type apart from other right-wing extremist competitors is the nature of their racist attitudes: they adhere to classical racism. Since their racist attitudes are reminiscent of and highly influenced by that of the National Socialist German Workers' Party (Nazi Party), and because they renounce the established political and economic order, these parties can be referred to as 'neo-Nazi' parties.

A second type of right-wing extremist party also rejects democracy, parliamentarism and pluralism outright but, unlike the first type, this type of party is neither concerned with immigration nor racist. The parties of this type have tended to remain faithful to many of the legacies of Mussolini's Italy and Franco's Spain. Accordingly, they are labelled 'neo-fascist'

parties.

Parties of a third type differ from the previous two in their attitudes towards democracy, parliamentarism and pluralism. Unlike the neo-Nazi and neo-fascist parties, parties of this third type do not reject the existing democratic order completely. Yet neither do they accept it. Instead, they are critical of many of the existing institutions and are also suspicious of interest group activity and of the promotion of individual rights and freedoms. These parties call for significant reforms that would strengthen the executive and would weaken the rights and freedoms of organized interests and individuals, and which, together, can be seen to undermine the legitimacy of the existing democratic order. Like members of the first group, parties of this third group are radically xenophobic, as the fight against immigration is central to their ideology. However, they do not embrace classical racism. Their racism is of a culturist kind. In the light of the emphasis these parties place on the issue of immigration, and in view of their attitudes towards democracy, pluralism and individual rights, these parties are termed ‘authoritarian xenophobic’ parties.

Parties of the fourth type share some of the characteristics of the authoritarian xenophobic parties: they are radically xenophobic and their racism is of a culturist variety. However, in contrast to authoritarian xenophobic parties, parties of this fourth type favour a reform of the existing democratic order that would make for more democracy rather than less. These parties call for less state intervention, for the reform of the existing parliamentary and party system to represent citizens better, and for a promotion of the rights and freedoms of individuals. Given these somewhat liberal attitudes towards democracy, parliamentarism and pluralism, and yet taking into account their strong emphasis on the fight against immigration, parties in this fourth group are referred to as ‘neo-liberal xenophobic’ parties.

A final type of right-wing extremist party is characterized by the absence of xenophobic and racist attitudes, and by the same liberal attitudes towards democracy and individual rights that the neo-liberal xenophobic parties embrace. Like the neo-liberal xenophobic parties, parties of this fifth group call for a reform of the parliamentary and party system and favour a substantial reduction in the size and reach of the state, all in the name of promoting individual rights and freedoms. In the light of their views on democracy and individual

Table 2.4 Five types of right-wing extremist parties in Western Europe

1 Neo-Nazi parties (<i>radically xenophobic; adhere to classical racism; reject outright existing democratic system</i>)

British National Party (BNP) Britain

National Front (NF) Britain

Deutsche Volksunion (DVU) Germany

Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands (NPD) Germany

[Parti des Forces Nouvelles (PFNb) Belgium (Wallonia)]

[Centrumpartij'86 (CP'86) Netherlands]

[Nederlandse Volksunie (NVU) Netherlands]

2 Neo-fascist parties (*not xenophobic; not racist; reject outright existing democratic system*)

Alleanza Nazionale (AN) Italy

Movimento Sociale–Fiamma Tricolore (Ms-Ft) Italy

Falange Española Auténtica (FEA) Spain

Falange Española de las Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional-Sindicalista (FE de las JONS) Spain

Falange Española de las Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional-Sindicalista – sector Diego Marquez (FE de las JONS sector DM) Spain

Falange Española Independiente (FEI) Spain

[Movimento Sociale Italiano (MSI) Italy]

[Partido da Democracia Cristã (PDC) Portugal]

[Frente Nacional Spain]

[Fuerza Nueva Spain]

3 Authoritarian xenophobic parties (*radically xenophobic; culturist; demand reform of existing system: less democracy, less pluralism, more state*)

Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPÖ) Austria

Vlaams Blok (VB) Belgium (Flanders)

Front National (FN(b)) Belgium (Wallonia)

Front Nouveau de Belgique (FNB) Belgium (Wallonia)

Front National (FN) France

Mouvement National Républicain (MNR) France

Republikaner Germany

Schweizer Demokraten (SD) Switzerland

[Agir Belgium (Wallonia)]

[Centrumdemocraten (CD) Netherlands]

[Centrumpartij (CP) Netherlands]

4 Neo-liberal xenophobic parties (*radically xenophobic; culturist; demand reform of existing system: more democracy, less state*)

Dansk Folkeparti (DF) Denmark

Fremskridtspartiet (FRPd) since mid-1980s, Denmark

Lega Nord (LN) since mid-1990s, Italy

Fedrelandspartiet (FLP) Norway

Fremskrittspartiet (FRPn) since mid-1980s, Norway

Ny Demokrati (ND) Sweden

Sverigedemokraterna (SDk) Sweden

Freiheitspartei der Schweiz (FPS) Switzerland

[Det Nya Partiet (DNP) Sweden]

5 Neo-liberal populist parties (*not xenophobic; not racist; demand reform of existing system: more democracy, less state*)

Fremskridtspartiet (FRPd) before mid-1980s, Denmark

Ethniki Komma (EK) Greece

Lega Nord (LN) before mid-1990s, Italy

Fremskrittspartiet (FRPn) before mid-1980s, Norway

Lega dei Ticinesi (LdT) Switzerland

[Ethniki Politiki Enosis (EPEN) Greece]

[Komma Proodeftikon (KP) Greece]

Note: Parties in square brackets no longer exist.

rights, but given that these parties have drawn on a whole range of issues for electoral profit – including immigration, even though xenophobia is not central to their ideology – parties in this fifth group are labelled ‘neo-liberal populist’ parties. The five types of parties and their constituent members are illustrated in [Table 2.4](#).

The fact that neo-liberal populist parties embrace neither xenophobic nor racist attitudes, and the fact that they have rather liberal views on democracy and individual rights, clearly raise questions over whether these parties should be considered part of the wider extreme right party family. The absence of xenophobia or racism in their ideologies implies that these parties do not reject the principle of fundamental human equality, which, as the earlier discussion of the concept of right-wing extremism suggested, is one of the two anti-constitutional and anti-democratic elements of right-wing extremism. These parties’ inclusion in the right-wing extremist party family therefore rests on the second element of right-wing extremism, namely the rejection or the undermining of the fundamental values, procedures and institutions of the democratic constitutional state.

At first sight, it appears somewhat debatable that the neo-liberal populist parties’ calls for the extension of participatory democracy, and for the promotion of the rights and freedoms of the individual, can be seen as undermining the legitimacy of the democratic constitutional state and the fundamental values, procedures and institutions upon which it is built. After all, these demands suggest that these parties favour more democracy, rather than less, and more democracy can hardly be perceived as threatening the legitimacy of the existing democratic order.

On closer inspection, however, the ways in which the neo-liberal populist parties propose to

carry out these reforms, and the attitudes these parties have towards the existing parliamentary and party system, indicate that, behind the calls for greater democracy and participation, lie a discourse and a political culture that do indeed undermine the legitimacy of the democratic system, and the legitimacy of its institutions and procedures in particular. The calls of the Scandinavian and the Greek right-wing extremist parties for the substantial reform of the existing parliamentary system (including a significant reduction in the size of parliament) demonstrate an opposition to the existing democratic institutions and the procedures by which citizens are represented, and the strong anti-partyism that all these parties exhibit points to a further rejection of the procedures and institutions of the existing constitutional democratic state (Gentile and Kriesi, 1998: 126; Ignazi, 2003: 55, 60–1).

Thus, although their anti-systemness is less strong than that of some of the other right-wing extremist parties, neo-liberal populist parties nonetheless display contempt for the institutions and procedures of the existing democratic system that results in it being undermined. Ignazi sums this up well when, speaking about the Danish FRPd, he argues:

While Glistrup and the more moderate leadership never made a frontal attack on democracy by invoking authoritarian solutions, they certainly undermined the system's legitimacy, not just by displaying contempt towards the parties and the politicians, but also by considering the parties as useless, backward and even harmful. There is a substantial anti-partism [*sic*] circulating in the veins of the FRPd, clearly indicated by its irritation with parliamentary procedures.

(2003: 148)

The fact that the neo-liberal populist parties exhibit a weaker anti-systemness than some of the other West European right-wing extremist parties is reflected in the debates in the literature. Indeed, a number of existing studies do not consider some of the neo-liberal populist parties to belong to the wider extreme right party family, precisely because they do not deem the anti-systemness of these parties to be sufficient to warrant their inclusion in this party family. Andersen and Bjørklund (2000), for example, have reservations over whether the Scandinavian parties (especially in their early years) should be considered full members of the extreme right party family. Other scholars, by contrast, believe that the anti-systemness of the neo-liberal populist parties is pronounced enough to justify their inclusion in the wider extreme right party family (e.g. Mazzoleni, 1999; Golder, 2003a; Ignazi, 2003). This present study concurs with this latter view, and believes that the contempt that the neo-liberal parties display towards the existing institutions and procedures of the democratic constitutional state constitutes an anti-systemness that is sufficient to undermine the legitimacy of that state. Thus, although they may be perceived as being on its fringes, the neo-liberal populist parties should nonetheless be considered as belonging to the wider extreme right party family.

Right-wing extremist party ideology and electoral success

Having identified the different types of right-wing extremist parties present in Western Europe, it is now possible to investigate whether electoral success is linked to a particular type of extreme right ideology, or whether, conversely, the type of ideology a party embraces is unrelated to its success at the polls.

[Figure 2.1](#) illustrates the average electoral scores of the different right-wing extremist parties under observation, with the parties arranged according to their type of ideology. A number of patterns are immediately discernible from the bar chart. Particularly striking is the lack of success of the neo-Nazi parties. While parties of the other four types have experienced electoral success, none of the neo-Nazi ones has. In fact, they have all been extremely unsuccessful at the polls, never securing more than an average of 0.6 percent of the vote – this being the average score of the German DVU.

There has been more variation in the electoral success of the other four types of party. While some parties of each type have experienced success at the polls, others have not. For example, the Italian LN averaged 5.9 percent of the vote in the period in which it was a neo-liberal populist party. Similarly, as neo-liberal populist parties in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Danish and Norwegian Progress Parties (FRPd and FRPn) also performed relatively well, averaging 7.8 percent and 4.1 percent of the vote respectively. However, the Greek right-wing extremist parties (KP/EPEN/EK), also of the neo-liberal populist type, have been much less successful at the polls. They have recorded an average of only 0.5 percent of the vote. The Swiss LdT, for its part, has been more successful than the Greek parties, but less successful than the LN and the Scandinavian neo-liberal populist parties, recording an average of 1.3 percent of the vote.

The same variation is apparent within the neo-liberal xenophobic category of parties. The Norwegian and Danish Progress Parties (FRPn and FRPd) have secured averages of 12.3 and 4.9 percent of the vote respectively in the period since the mid-1980s when they became neo-liberal xenophobic parties, and the Danish DF has also enjoyed electoral success, polling an average of 9.7 percent of the ballots. Similarly, in the period since the mid-1990s when it became a neo-liberal xenophobic party, the LN has won an average of 7.0 percent of the vote. By contrast, however, the Swedish SDk and DNP and the Norwegian FLP have recorded low electoral scores, polling averages of 0.5, 0.5 and 0.3 percent respectively. The Swedish ND and the Swiss FPS fall between these two sets of parties in terms of

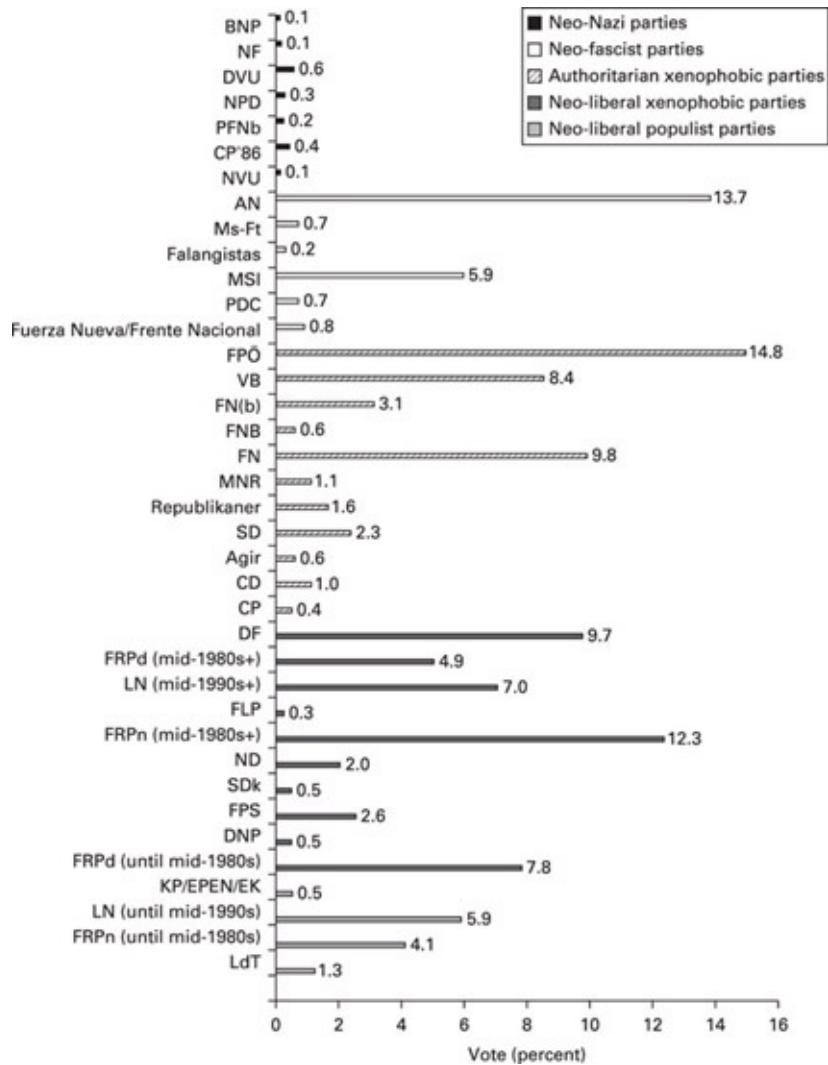


Figure 2.1 Electoral success of the West European parties of the extreme right, 1979–2003: by ideological type.

Notes: For full right-wing extremist party names, see Abbreviations (pp. xiii–xiv). The figure illustrates the mean electoral scores of each party in the period 1979–2003. The mean score is calculated by summing the electoral scores of each party at all elections in which it competed and then dividing this total by the number of elections the party contested.

Sources: Mackie and Rose (1991, 1997); Cheles *et al.* (1995); Betz and Immerfall (1998); Hainsworth (2000a); Elections around the World; Parties and Elections in Europe.

electoral success. The ND averaged 2.0 percent of the vote, while the FPS recorded an average of 2.6 percent of the ballots.

The other two types of party – the authoritarian xenophobic parties and the neo-fascist parties – have also experienced both success and failure in elections. Within the first group, for example, the FPÖ has performed extremely well, polling an average of 14.8 percent over the period under observation. The French FN and the Belgium VB have also recorded high average scores – 9.8 and 8.4 percent respectively. However, within this group of parties the Dutch right-wing extremist parties have not performed well. The CP won an average of only 0.4 percent of the vote, and the CD polled an average of only 1.0 percent. The Wallonian

parties of the extreme right have not been successful either. While the Belgian FN(b) recorded an average of 3.1 percent, the FNB and Agir secured averages of only 0.6 percent of the ballots. The German Republikaner and the Swiss SD fared poorly too. The two parties secured 1.6 and 2.3 percent of the vote respectively.

Of the neo-fascist parties, the Italian MSI/AN has enjoyed electoral success, polling an average of 5.9 percent of the vote as the MSI, and recording 13.7 percent as the AN. No other parties of this type have experienced such success. The Ms-Ft secured an average of only 0.7 percent of the vote; the Spanish Fuerza Nueva and Frente Nacional won an average of 0.8 percent of the vote; the Falangistas recorded an average of only 0.2 percent of the ballots; and the Portuguese PDC averaged a mere 0.7 percent.

The electoral success of the neo-fascist group of parties must be viewed with caution, however, as there is significant debate in the literature on right-wing extremism about the nature of the AN's ideology. Indeed, Newell talks of the AN 'standing at the crossroads', having not completely rejected its founding ideology but yet no longer talking of 'alternatives to the system' (2000: 483–4). Similarly, Griffin sees the AN as posing a 'taxonomic dilemma' to those who wish to compare it to other right-wing extremist parties. He too maintains that the AN falls between two distinguishable categories, and that it is 'a genuine hybrid' that embraces 'a reformist or democratic fascism' (1996: 142). Ignazi also describes the AN as moving away from neo-fascism, though at the same time he argues that the 'AN's governing and appeasing role still clashes with the lack of profound internal revision which leaves space for nostalgia. While the national leadership (with few exceptions) rapidly pursues the path away from neo-fascism, the middle-level elite and local militants remain imbued of [sic] the traditional MSI political culture' (2003: 223).

Within this present typology the AN has been included in the neo-fascist category of parties on the basis of its past behaviour and ideology rather than on forecasts of its future direction. However, if the party were to embrace the democratic system fully, and to disassociate itself finally from its original ideology, its inclusion in the neo-fascist category would clearly no longer be accurate. Following such a move, the party would need to be accommodated in a sixth category, the characteristics of which would be a rejection of xenophobia and racism and a full acceptance of the existing political and economic system. This move would further throw into question the inclusion of this party in the right-wing extremist party family and would suggest that it might instead have become a constituent of the mainstream right – a transition that Fini himself announced as having begun at the Verona party conference in March 1998 (Gallagher, 2000: 82–3).

The transformation of the AN into a conservative party would also mean that the neo-fascist category of parties would become markedly less successful. The MSI, which averaged 5.9 percent of the vote over the period under observation, would become the category's most successful party if the AN were no longer included, and the neo-fascist category of parties

would be second only to the neo-Nazi parties in terms of its lack of success.

Overall, the patterns illustrated by [Figure 2.1](#) suggest that successful right-wing extremist parties have tended to embrace an authoritarian xenophobic, a neo-liberal xenophobic or a neo-liberal populist ideology rather than a neo-Nazi or a neo-fascist one. These trends are further confirmed by a regression analysis. Taking the neo-Nazi parties as a reference group, the OLS (ordinary least squares) regression model reported in [Table 2.5](#) estimates the right-wing extremist party vote as a function of ideology, represented by the five types of ideology described above.⁹ The value of the constant in this regression, .233, reports the expected vote share for neo-Nazi parties (the reference group). The other regression coefficients estimate the effect of being in a particular category of ideology as compared with the reference group. On average, therefore, neo-fascist parties are expected to win 3.075 percent more of the vote than neo-Nazi parties; authoritarian xenophobic parties are expected to record 5.489 percent more of the vote than neo-Nazi parties; neo-liberal xenophobic parties are expected to secure 4.172 percent more of the vote than neo-Nazi parties; and neo-liberal populist parties are expected to poll 2.953 percent more of the vote than neo-Nazi parties. All these coefficients are statistically significant at the 0.1 level or better.

These broad patterns are further confirmed in [Table 2.6](#), which displays the mean electoral scores for each type of right-wing extremist party. The table shows that when each party at each election is taken as the unit of analysis, the mean electoral score of the neo-Nazi parties is a mere 0.23 percent of the vote (i.e. the constant in [Table 2.5](#)). The neo-fascist parties average a score of 3.31 percent if the AN is included, but record a mean of only 1.66 percent if this party is excluded. The authoritarian xenophobic parties poll an average of 5.72 percent of the vote; the neo-liberal xenophobic parties register a mean of 4.40 percent of the vote; and the neo-liberal populist parties average 3.19 percent of the ballots.¹⁰

In addition to reporting the mean electoral scores of the different types of parties, [Table 2.6](#) also illustrates how often the different types of parties have competed in elections. The neo-liberal populist parties (of which there are 7) have contested in the fewest elections – 18. By contrast, the 11 authoritarian xenophobic parties have contested 50 elections. The 7 neo-Nazi parties have taken part in 25 electoral contests, the 6 neo-fascist parties (taking the Falangistas as one single party) have contested in 22, and the 9 neo-liberal xenophobic parties have contested 31 elections. The authoritarian xenophobic parties are therefore not only the most successful type of party in terms of their mean electoral score, but also the most common type of party and the most active type of party, as they have contested in the most elections.

[Table 2.5](#) Effect of ideology on the right-wing extremist party vote (OLS dummy regression)

Type of party	Unstandardized coefficients
---------------	-----------------------------

	B	Std error
Constant	0.233	1.005
Neo-fascist parties	3.075 ^{**}	1.469
Authoritarian xenophobic parties	5.489 ^{***}	1.231
Neo-liberal xenophobic parties	4.172 ^{***}	1.351
Neo-liberal populist parties	2.953 [*]	1.554
Adjusted R ²	0.104	
n = 146		

Notes: Dependent variable: right-wing extremist party vote (in percent). Reference group: neo-Nazi parties.

^{**} coefficient significant at 0.01 level.

^{**} coefficient significant at 0.05 level.

^{*} coefficient significant at 0.1 level.

Table 2.6 Mean electoral scores of the different types of right-wing extremist parties in Western Europe, 1979–2003

Type of party	Number of cases (number of times parties of this type have competed in elections)	Mean electoral score (percent)
Neo-Nazi (7)	25	0.23
Neo-fascist (6)	22	3.31
[Neo-fascist excluding AN] (5)	19	1.66
Authoritarian xenophobic (11)	50	5.72
Neo-liberal xenophobic (9)	31	4.40
Neo-liberal populist (7)	18	3.19

Notes: Numbers in parentheses refer to the number of individual parties of each type. (The Italian Movimento Sociale and Alleanza Nazionale are counted as one party within the neo-fascist group; the Spanish Falangistas are counted as one party.)

As well as examining the mean electoral scores of the different types of right-wing extremist parties and the frequency with which they have contested elections, it is also useful to consider which parties have ceased to exist. A glance back at *Table 2.4* shows that it is the

neo-Nazi and the neo-fascist types of party that have seen the most casualties. Of the seven neo-Nazi parties featured in this study, three no longer exist – the CP'86, the NVU and the PFNb. Moreover, of those that continue to exist the NF currently faces disintegration (see [Chapter 3](#)). As for the neo-fascist parties, four of the six (counting the Falangistas as one party) no longer exist. The Spanish Fuerza Nueva and Frente Nacional, the Portuguese PDC and the Italian MSI have all been dissolved – although this last party was superseded by the AN, so did not disappear in quite the same way as the other parties. In the authoritarian xenophobic group, three of the eleven parties – the Dutch CP and CD and the Wallonian party Agir – no longer exist, while in the neo-liberal populist group of parties, two parties – the Greek KP and EPEN – have been dissolved. Only one of the neo-liberal xenophobic parties – the Swedish DNP – has ceased to exist.

These patterns are not surprising – they simply confirm that persistent electoral failure has led to a number of neo-Nazi and neo-fascist parties deciding (or being forced) to cease contesting elections. In many cases these parties have chosen to disband altogether. In contrast, the authoritarian xenophobic, the neo-liberal xenophobic and the neo-liberal populist parties have not fallen victim to such pressures to the same extent. They have seen fewer casualties: with the exception of three authoritarian xenophobic parties (the Dutch CP and CD and the Wallonian party Agir), two neo-liberal populist parties (the Greek KP and EPEN) and one neo-liberal xenophobic party (the Swedish DNP), they all continue to compete in the electoral arena.

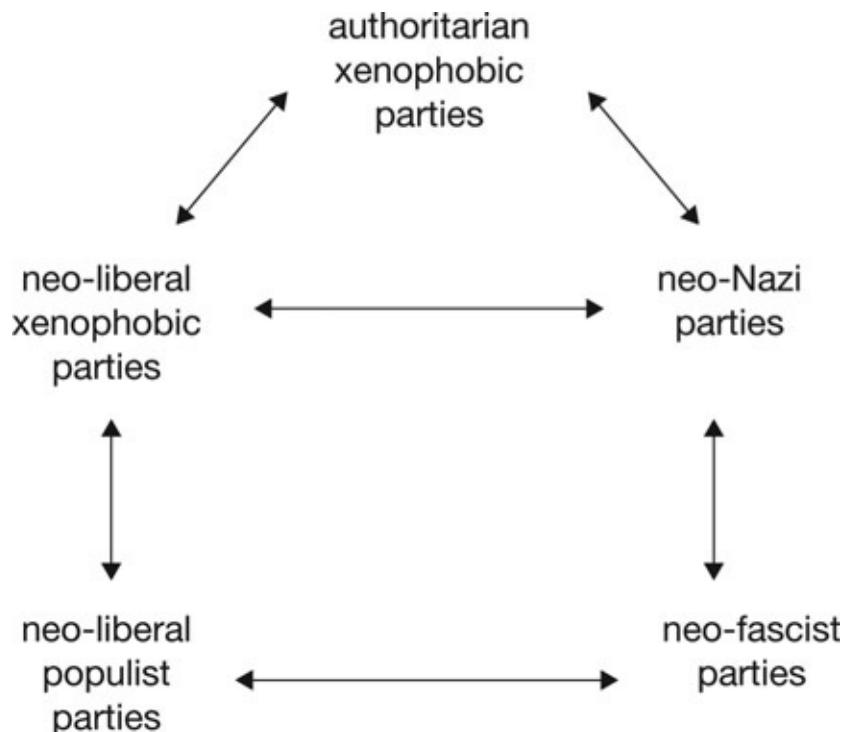
Concluding remarks

At the outset, this chapter suggested that ideology might potentially be important in helping to explain why some right-wing extremist parties in Western Europe have performed better in elections than others. To test this proposition a new typology of right-wing extremist parties was constructed, as it was argued that the existing studies were not adequate for the task at hand. More specifically, an overview of the existing typologies showed that these were out of date, were not comprehensive, and suffered from important methodological and theoretical limitations. The new typology, constructed using three bases of division, has identified five different types of right-wing extremist parties: (1) neo-Nazi parties, (2) neo-fascist parties, (3) authoritarian xenophobic parties, (4) neo-liberal xenophobic parties, and (5) neo-liberal populist parties.

In the first instance, by its in-depth examination of the ideologies of the different parties, the typology has illustrated the full diversity that exists within the West European extreme right party family. As well as highlighting this diversity, the typology also allows for some

observations to be made as to the composition of this party family. It has demonstrated that the various types of right-wing extremist parties are related to each other in different ways. While some types of party are directly related to each other, others are not. For example, the neo-Nazi parties, the authoritarian xenophobic parties and the neo-liberal xenophobic parties all resemble each other in that they are all radically xenophobic. Similarly, the neo-Nazi parties and the neo-fascist parties share a number of characteristics as both types of party reject democracy, parliamentarism and pluralism outright. However, in contrast, neo-Nazi parties share no features with neo-populist parties. Likewise, neo-fascist parties share no characteristics with authoritarian xenophobic parties. Therefore, to pursue the analogy of the party family, the conclusion can be reached that while some right-wing extremist parties are directly related to each other rather like brothers and sisters, others are only cousins (see [Figure 2.2](#), which illustrates the ways in which the different types of parties are related to each other). All these parties nonetheless belong to the same, wider party family.

In addition to shedding light on the composition of the extreme right party family, the typology has allowed for the link between right-wing extremist ideology and electoral success to be examined. The analysis undertaken in this chapter has shown that certain types of ideology are indeed linked with greater electoral success than other types of ideology. Specifically, the neo-Nazi and the neo-fascist type of right-wing extremist parties have tended to record low electoral scores, whereas the authoritarian xenophobic, the neo-liberal xenophobic and the neo-liberal populist types of parties have tended to experience greater levels of electoral success.



[Figure 2.2](#) Extreme right party family.

This said, having an authoritarian xenophobic, a neo-liberal xenophobic or a neo-liberal populist type of ideology is in no way a guarantee of electoral success. As well as performing well at the polls, these three types of parties have, on occasions, also recorded low electoral scores. By contrast, however, neo-Nazi and neo-fascist parties (with the notable exception of the MSI/AN) have nearly always experienced failure at the polls. In fact, all the neo-Nazi parties in the countries under observation in this study have experienced electoral failure. Neo-Nazi and neo-fascist parties have also had a tendency to disband – precisely because of their lack of electoral success.

Overall, therefore, this chapter has suggested that the type of ideology to which the different parties of the extreme right adhere is quite likely to help account for their levels of electoral success. The disparity in the electoral fortunes of the parties of the extreme right across Western Europe may thus be explained, at least in part, by the fact that the parties embrace different types of ideologies, some of which are more successful than others. More specifically, [Table 2.5](#) suggested that, when no other factors are taken into consideration, approximately 10 percent of the variance in the right-wing extremist party vote could be explained by the presence of different types of right-wing extremist party ideology ($R^2 = .104$).

This said, however, ideology is clearly only one factor of many that may help explain why the parties of the extreme right have experienced uneven success at the polls. When other factors are taken into consideration, the influence of ideology on the electoral scores of the right-wing extremist parties may well change. Therefore, while the conclusions reached in this chapter are important in and of themselves, the precise influence of ideology on the right-wing extremist party vote will only be ascertained when other explanatory factors are also taken into consideration. One such set of factors refers to the parties' organization and leadership, and it is to these that the book now turns.

Notes

¹ It is worth noting that Eatwell (1995) identifies a left-wing type of fascism as well as a right-wing type.

² In addition, over half the authors mentioned nationalism. However, in this present typology nationalism has not been chosen as a basis of division because, since the great majority of right-wing extremist parties display this characteristic, it does not assist in sub-categorizing the extreme right party family.

³ Internal homogenization is achieved when only people belonging to a certain nation live within the borders of that state. For this to occur, all foreigners must leave that state. This helps ensure that the congruence of the nation and the state is attained – the traditional definition of the nationalist political doctrine (Gellner, 1983; Hobsbawm, 1990). Although this form of nationalism entails xenophobia, xenophobia and nationalism remain different concepts. This is because, in

addition to internal homogenization, the congruence of the nation and the state may be reached through external exclusiveness, that is, the need to have all people belonging to a nation living within the borders of that state. Therefore, a political party can adhere to a nationalist ideology without necessarily espousing a xenophobic attitude if it pursues external exclusiveness only and remains unconcerned with internal homogenization.

⁴ The party (founded in 1961) was first called Nationale Aktion gegen die Überfremdung von Volk und Heimat (National Action against Excessive Foreign Influence on People and Homeland). Then in 1977 it changed its name to Nationale Aktion für Volk und Heimat (National Action for People and Homeland). It then changed its name again in the summer of 1990 to Schweizer Demokraten.

⁵ See below and note 7.

⁶ However, the ideology of the MSI and the AN clashes somewhat with the attitudes of a significant number of middle-level elites. On the basis of the results of a survey he carried out himself, Ignazi argues that many party cadres express concerns over the loss of national identity brought about by the presence of immigrants and favour the expulsion of illegal immigrants (Ignazi, 1996a: 707). Nonetheless, the party leadership continues to condemn such sentiments and insists that xenophobia has no place within the party's ideology.

⁷ After Franco's death a number of different groups all laid claim to the original title of the dictator's movement, Falange Española de las Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional-Sindicalista (FE de las JONS). These were the Frente Nacional Español, the Falange Española Auténtica, the Junta Coordinadora Nacional Sindicalista (which was made up of two groups: the Falange Española Independiente and the Círculos Doctrinales José Antonio), and a group without a name. The matter was resolved in October 1976 when the title of FE de las JONS was assigned to the Frente Nacional Español (Ellwood, 1995: 92–3). Today, the parties with any visibility are the FE de las JONS, the Falange Española Independiente (FEI), the Falange Española Auténtica (FEA) and the Falange Española de las Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional-Sindicalista – sector Diego Marquez (FE de las JONS sector DM), which was founded in 1995 as a split from the FE de las JONS (Ellwood, 1995). As pointed out in the notes to Table 1.1, all these groups have extremely similar ideologies, and together they can be referred to as the Spanish Falangistas.

⁸ This is not to say that there is no racism at all in Spain. On the contrary, an organization that adhered to classical racism – the Círculo Español de Amigos de Europa (CEDADE) – did exist until 1994. It espoused both anti-Semitic and white supremacist beliefs. However, CEDADE never contested any elections. Instead, it remained confined to the extra-parliamentary arena. For details of CEDADE see Rodríguez (1995).

⁹ No hard and fast rules exist as to which category of a variable should be chosen as a reference group. The choice, on statistical grounds, is arbitrary, and no choice can be 'wrong'. Some researchers prefer to choose a reference group at the upper or lower boundary, whereas others prefer to select a category that is roughly mid-range. Whichever approach is chosen, however, the reference group should be well defined and should contain a sufficient number of cases to allow for a reasonably precise estimate of the sub-group mean. For further details on regression analysis with dummy variables, see Hardy (1993).

¹⁰ Taking the electoral result of each party at each election as a unit of analysis means that it is possible to control for the number of times each particular party has stood for election. In this way, a party that has only competed in elections

once or twice but that has recorded high electoral scores (like the AN, for example, which competed in only three elections in the observed period but which recorded high scores) has less of a distorting effect on the mean electoral score of that type of party than if the number of elections were not controlled for.

Against the current—stemming the tide

The nostalgic ideology of the contemporary radical populist right

Hans-Georg Betz and Carol Johnson

Introduction

There are few major developments in the domestic politics of liberal capitalist democracies that have provoked as much alarm and concern in recent years as the electoral gains of right-wing parties and movements. Initially dismissed as a flash in the pan, which would die down as quickly as it had emerged, the radical right has arguably become the most formidable new political challenge to liberal democracy in Western Europe and elsewhere, and this for good reasons: as Roger Griffin has recently pointed out, unlike the ‘old’ radical right in the nineteenth and twentieth century, the contemporary radical right ‘enthusiastically embraces the liberal system’ while, at the same time, ‘making a conscious effort to abide by the democratic rules of the game and respect the rights of others to hold conflicting opinions and live out contrasting value systems’.¹ Under the circumstances, traditional approaches to deal with the radical right—such as proscription, marginalisation and shunning (as was tried, most famously, in the case of the FPÖ by the EU)—no longer seem to work. To the contrary: radical right-wing parties and movements have been increasingly successful in marketing themselves as champions of ‘true’ democracy and defenders of the values and interests of ordinary people, too often ignored if not dismissed by the political establishment. In the process, the radical right has defined the public debate on a number of important issues, ranging from immigration and citizenship to questions of security and law and order, while forcing a—not always completely—reluctant establishment to accord these issues high priority on the political agenda.

Griffin’s characterisation of the contemporary radical right, echoed by a growing number of specialists on the subject, has not gone unchallenged.² The most significant attempt to defend

the notion of right-wing extremism as a useful analytical tool for the analysis of contemporary right-wing parties is advanced by Piero Ignazi in his most recent book, *Extreme Right Parties in Western Europe*.³ In order to make his case, Ignazi starts out with an extensive discussion of the meaning and definition of right and left as well as extremism. He concludes that for a party to be counted among the extreme right it must either refer to ‘one of the established right-extremist traditions of thought’ (e.g. fascism, nazism, *nouvelle droite*) or present ‘an anti-system discourse’ (where the system is generally defined as the institutions and values of liberal democracy).⁴ Parties that disavow the former but promote the latter belong to what he refers to as the new postindustrial extreme right.

Unfortunately Ignazi, like most others who argue along the same line, fails to offer the detailed comparative analysis of radical right-wing discourse that would have been necessary to substantiate his provocative claim.⁵ This does not mean, however, that his point is without merit. To be sure, the political project promoted and defended by the contemporary radical right is a far cry from the program advanced by the fascists and the traditional extreme right, which explicitly aimed at overturning the democratic order and replacing it with an authoritarian system. While contemporary radical right-wing parties generally have no problem with democracy *per se*, they undoubtedly represent a major challenge to liberal democracy and its proponents. Even if the contemporary radical right has been able to ‘mobilize on political discontent without being stigmatized as anti-democrats’, it still promotes an aggressive discourse that directly aims at weakening and undermining the values and institutional arrangements and procedures central to liberal democracy and replacing them with a fundamentally different system. Radical right-wing parties are thus radical both with respect to the language they employ in confronting their political opponents and the political project they promote and defend. What makes it so difficult to get a firm grip on the nature of the contemporary radical right is that it is both democratic and extreme. One of the contemporary radical right’s most important innovations has been its ability to reconcile formal support for democracy as the best system for the articulation and representation of interests with a political doctrine that is profoundly anti-liberal and, in this sense, can be qualified as extremist.

In the remainder of this article we will explore the main features of the contemporary radical right’s political project through an extensive analysis of its political strategy and ideological discourse. The main argument underlying this analysis is that the contemporary radical right represents a radical type of right-wing populism, whose proponents seek to transform liberal democracy into an ethnocratic regime, which gives supremacy to the interests of ‘the people’, defined in terms of a narrow conception of citizenship. Radical right-wing populism, while adopting some of the social and economic concerns of the traditional left, accords priority to ‘new politics’ issues, such as questions of identity and recognition.⁶ For this reason, radical right-wing populist discourse represents a comprehensive ideology that

seeks to span—and transcend—the modern/postmodern cleavage.

Radical right-wing populism

Populism ‘has been defined as a “style of political rhetoric” that seeks to mobilize ordinary people against both the established structure of power and the dominant ideas and values of the society’.⁷ One of the main features of this rhetoric is the appeal to resentment, which, as Robert C. Solomon has argued, is an emotion ‘that is distinguished, first of all, by its concern and involvement with power “reflecting” a kind of blame and personal outrage, an outward projection, an overwhelming sense of injustice’.⁸ At the same time, resentment is more than an expression of impotence, it also invokes a desire for radical change: ‘the world could and should be other than it is, with those at the top no longer on top, and those on the bottom no longer at the bottom’.⁹ Populism thus lends itself ideally to a political strategy that aims at bringing about a radical transformation of the *status quo*. The mobilizing appeal of contemporary radical right-wing populism lies in the fact that it plays on both aspects. On the one hand it appeals to sentiments of unfairness and injustice, on the other hand it promises recourse and remedy.

Central to the contemporary radical populist right’s politics of resentment is the charge that in liberal capitalist democracies power has been usurped by a self-serving political and cultural elite that pursues its own narrow agenda without concern for the legitimate concerns and interests of ordinary citizens. The result is a degeneration of representative democracy, which has ceased to function properly. Pauline Hanson was one of the first prominent radical right-wing populist leaders to characterise politicians, intellectuals and academics as a ‘new class’ who promoted ‘political correctness’ while controlling ‘various taxpayer “industries” that flourish in our society servicing Aboriginals, multiculturalists and a host of other minority groups’ at the expense of ordinary Australians.¹⁰ From the choice of examples it is quite clear that when the radical populist right refers to the ‘new class elite’, it means above all what a leading New Zealand First politician has called the ‘spa bath, Chardonnay sipping, social [i.e. left-wing] elitists who have more interest in the fine arts than they do in working class Kiwis’.¹¹ In fact, in many instances, one of the main motivations behind radical right-wing populist mobilisation has been the desire to break the ‘cultural hegemony’ allegedly exercised by the ‘68 generation’ that, as Haider and Gollnisch have put it, not only managed to gain intellectual predominance but successfully ‘lodged itself’ in the political system in order to pursue their subversive goals: the destruction of the nation and the family and of ‘all moral norms on which our civilization is founded’.¹² The result was the creation of a system that increasingly infringed on the right of ordinary people to speak their mind and express

themselves freely without being ‘called names, intended to make [them] look backward, intolerant, or extremist’.¹³ Le Pen has gone even further, charging that in contemporary France ‘we live under a totalitarian yoke with a democratic mask’.¹⁴

A brief passage from an article by the late Pim Fortuyn (with the telling title, ‘Extreem links’) provides an illustration of the profound resentment harboured by the radical populist right against the left-wing elite.

The extreme left—the Greens and the PvdA [Social Democrats] plus their henchmen in the civil service and the media—have tried to suppress, via the subsidized thought police and the increased number of anti-racist committees, all critique of the blessings of multicultural society. And woe to those critics who failed to express themselves in a legally careful fashion; they were quickly brought to court by the public prosecutor. Ever heard of a Moroccan or Iranian brought to trial for blatant anti-semitic remarks, or of a Muslim who calls our women whores and us, Christian dogs?¹⁵

Similar vitriolic charges have been advanced by a number of other leading figures on the radical populist right, accusing their opponents and detractors of picking on ordinary people with ‘hypocritical self-righteousness’ while ignoring the real problems.¹⁶ As Christoph Blocher put it in a speech (in which he sought to defend Switzerland’s behaviour during the Second World War against critics urging the Swiss to confront their country’s shortcomings in dealing with Nazi Germany): ‘In bigoted, loud-mouthed, hypocritical manifestos, these people extol their own highly sensitive sense of humanity, their flawless character, their deep concern, and they quickly point a finger at the guilt-laden decision makers. “We are the good guys, we are disassociating ourselves from the bad guys, and we are proclaiming it in full-page advertisements”’.¹⁷ As Blocher made clear, the question of the past was hardly the only case where the ‘moralists’ and ‘*Gutmenschen*’ (good guys) tried to impose their view of the world and their standards of political correctness on a reticent, but powerless majority. The same was true for questions regarding European integration, the abuse of the right to asylum, and particularly integration and multiculturalism.

Given these charges, it is hardly surprising that the radical populist right has generally promoted itself as the only relevant political force that dares to make a stand against, challenge and resist the prevailing ideas by saying uncomfortable truths.¹⁸ The radical populist right not only claims for itself to say out loud what the majority of the population secretly thinks (one of the main Vlaams Blok slogans has been ‘*zeggen wat u denkt*’ [say what you think]), but, as Jean-Marie Le Pen has famously put it, also ‘to return the word to the people’ (*render la parole au peuple*). Characteristically, radical right-wing populist leaders have generally been rather careful in cultivating an image of the outsider and political maverick, who consciously ignores and flouts conventions.¹⁹ One of the best examples of this strategy was Pauline Hanson’s emphasis on the fact that she was not a ‘polished politician’ but an ordinary woman whose view on issues was ‘based on common sense and my experience as a mother of four children, a sole parent and a businesswoman running a fish and chip shop’.

Similarly, Pia Kjærsgaard has insisted that she could not care less ‘what the political establishment says and thinks. What is important to me is that the local storekeeper agrees.’²⁰ Finally, Winston Peters has gone on record stating that he and his party trusted the ‘commonsense of ordinary people’ far more than the ‘cultural commissars and ethnic engineers’ in the governing Labour Party, who sought ‘to transform New Zealand into a politically correct, gender bent, lawless, Third World republic’.²¹

The appeal to ‘the common sense of the ordinary people’ as a basis of legitimisation for political claims and demands is a crucial element in contemporary radical right-wing rhetoric and central to its fundamental critique of representative democracy.²² The core contention behind this critique is that in modern liberal democracies, representative democracy has become little more than a farce, a simulacrum carefully cultivated by the elite to delude ordinary voters into believing that their vote counts for something. In reality, as Winston Peters put it in a recent speech,

Our form of democratic process really only consists of placing ticks in boxes every three years. We have the right of free speech but we know, sadly, that most of the time no one is listening. The politicians peddle their own agenda, or that of their bureaucrats, and most people are left muttering to themselves or complaining to talkback radio. You see the democratic process that we take part in actually leads to a tyranny and we believe this is happening in New Zealand.
[...]

The perversion of the democratic process has been perpetuated by the media, which has never learned to accept that New Zealanders voted out the old two party system. The media are obsessed with creating coalitions among political parties and find it hard to accept that democracy should be more than setting up cliques of political power. [...] As a result, politicians do as they wish. Instead of placing the interests of the people first, they put their parties first or pander to some self interest group in return for prejudice, cash or votes or all three. Is it any wonder that ordinary New Zealanders feel powerless because they have no say in deciding the momentous issues facing their society?²³

At the same time, the appeal to the common sense of ordinary people holds a prominent place in radical right-wing populist ideology. On the one hand it allows the radical populist right to counter charges of racism and right-wing extremism. As the program of the Vlaams Blok has put it: ‘Our party program and our position on foreigners have nothing to do with extremism or racism, but everything with healthy common sense (*gewoon gezond verstand*).’²⁴ On the other hand, it lends legitimacy to, and garners support for, the radical right’s call for far-reaching political change designed to give voice to ordinary citizens excluded from the political process by the machinations of the established political parties and the dominant elite.²⁵ It is therefore not surprising that radical right-wing political parties have generally made the promotion of direct democracy one of their main political priorities. Demands include, among other things, the call for the introduction of binding initiatives and referenda, the reduction in the size of parliament and the cabinet, and the direct election of executive positions. This, as Winston Peters has put it in classic populist style, would give ordinary people the opportunity to ‘create a democracy that is of the people and for the people’. In fact, in a situation where ‘ordinary New Zealanders feel powerless’ because politicians, instead ‘of

placing the interests of the people first, they put their parties first or pander to some self interest group’, the people had a ‘moral duty to rise up and restore democracy themselves’.²⁶ With this line of argument, the radical populist right not only promotes itself as the advocate of the rights and interests of ordinary citizens, but as the defender of ‘true’ and ‘genuine’ democracy while at the same time justifying a political project that has as its goal a far-reaching transformation of the prevailing system.²⁷

Identitarian politics

In his book, *Baas in eigen land*, Filip Dewinter advances the provocative thesis that with the end of the cold war the old left-right conflict has become largely obsolete, to be replaced by a new social and political cleavage (*breuklijn*) that pits identity against multiculturalism.²⁸ Dewinter’s thesis reflects one of the most important developments in the evolution of radical right-wing populist ideology—a growing emphasis on questions of culture, values and identity and, with it, the recourse to claims of recognition. In recent years, the radical populist right has aggressively promoted itself as the defender of diversity and particularity against those promoting universalism and ‘deracination’. Strategically, appeals to the ‘right’ to identity and respect for ‘difference’ and cultural distinctiveness have served as one more device to meet the charge of racism and extremism. As Filip Dewinter has succinctly put it, ‘racism means a belief that on the basis of racial features a group of people is superior or inferior to another. This isn’t what we believe; everyone is equal but not all the same.’²⁹

One of the central features of contemporary radical right-populist discourse is its attempt to delineate who ‘the people’ are and who does and should not legitimately be part of the people—for example, groups representing racial and ethnic minorities who will not ‘assimilate’ into the desired culture. This involves both an argument that the elites and political leadership have not been listening to the (legitimate) ‘people’ and an attempt to ensure that they stop listening to groups and organisations that in the radical populist right’s view are not legitimate. In short, the apparent arguments for ‘genuine’ democracy are actually arguments for excluding some groups from democratic representation. At the same time, they are ideological arguments for influencing whose identity should be politically recognised and whose should not.

The ideological justification for exclusion in the name of the preservation of identity advanced by radical right-wing populists derives its logic from what Pierre-André Taguieff has provocatively characterised as ‘differentialist racism’. Unlike traditional forms of racism, differentialist racism ‘is communitarian and turns the difference or identity of a group into an absolute. Here it is less a question of inequality than of the inability to communicate, of being incommensurable or incompatible.’ Differentialist racism is ‘imbued with the categorical

imperative of preserving the identity of the group, whose very “purity” makes it sacred—the identity of heredities and heritages’. As a result, ‘exclusion is given a place of honor in the general demand of the right to difference’.³⁰

As Taguieff notes, the identitarian positions defended by the contemporary radical populist right are largely founded on this ideology. The strongest support for this claim comes, surprisingly enough, from the Lega Nord, which scholars have more often than not been rather reluctant to include it among radical right-wing populist parties. However, it has been the Lega Nord, which has made most explicit reference to concepts and figures of speech directly derived from the differentialist discourse.³¹ Thus in a document from late 2002, designed to explain the party’s reasons for insisting on a new immigration law, the Lega Nord affirmed, among other things, its ‘differentialist vision of the world’, and it continued: ‘Those who fight for the survival of their nations represent the camp of the diversity of cultures, true tolerance, and freedom whereas the America-like multiculturalism (*multiculturalismo americanomorfo*) represents the camp of uniformity, deracination, and enslavement’.³² Umberto Bossi had set the tone for the party’s campaign for the defence of ‘Padanian’ identity as early as 2000 when, during his speech at the Lega Nord’s traditional meeting in Pontida, he maintained:

We who fight for the diversity of the peoples (*popoli*), starting from our own peoples, and their right to freedom, we fight against this new project: the absolutism of racism, which today is based, I repeat, not on direct violence, but on the indirect violence of the negation of any difference.³³

The appeal to the defence of diversity and difference, however, not only serves to reverse charges of racism; it also serves to justify—in the name of what Bruno Gollnisch has called ‘the desire of the nations to preserve their identity’—concrete policies of exclusion.³⁴ Thus in a recent speech Marine Le Pen, accusing her party’s detractors of ‘intellectual terrorism’ for using the ‘myth of exclusion’ as a justification to promote minorities while equating exclusion with discrimination and ultimately racism, defiantly maintained:

Yet every social life is founded on affiliations that legitimately determine inclusion and, on the contrary, exclusion. Religion, nation, family, enterprise, association: they all represent communities of members, which legitimately exclude those who are not members, without causing them injustice or violence. It is therefore undisputable that France has the duty to control who enters and to regulate the inflows according to her possibilities and capacity to receive them.³⁵

Winston Peters has argued along similar lines when he compared his party’s position on immigration with the Great Wall of China, which, after all, ‘was built to keep people out’. Immigration policy should be designed in a similar fashion, ‘for inclusion as well as exclusion’. He and his party were ‘committed to both in order to successfully manage our borders and protect the nation’s interest’.³⁶

This suggests that radical right-wing populist identity politics serves primarily as an ideological justification for selective exclusion. The main argument behind this is that certain

groups cannot be integrated into society and therefore represent a fundamental threat to the values, way of life and cultural integrity of the ‘indigenous’ people (where ‘indigenous’ people are invariably defined as those people who share the dominant, i.e. ‘Western’ and largely European values and culture). Unchecked immigration must inevitably provoke what Winston Peters and other radical right-wing populists have called a ‘collision of cultures’ and ultimately lead to the transformation of the developed world into ‘third world’ countries.³⁷ It would, however be quite misleading to characterise radical right-wing populist parties as ‘anti-immigrant’ or ‘anti-immigration parties’ *tout court*. To be sure, in recent years, one of the most distinct features of radical right-wing populist parties has been their pronounced opposition to immigration. However, the radical populist right’s position on the ‘foreigner question’ has been far more complex and ambiguous than most analysts have been prepared to concede.

In Australia and New Zealand, for example, the radical populist right’s campaign against immigration has targeted above all migrants from Asia. Thus Pauline Hanson argued against increasing levels of Asian immigration, claiming that Australia risked having an Asian-dominated population. She claimed that the problem with Asians was precisely that they did not assimilate unlike previous migrant groups (whose ‘whiteness’ was implicit). Overall, Hanson argued against multiculturalism, claiming that Australia, rather than promoting multicultural ‘separatism’, should return to its old policies of assimilationism into core values. It was wrong that migrants were keeping their old countries’ values rather than becoming ‘Australian’. Indeed, the idea behind One Nation was precisely the argument that Australia should have one set of (traditional Anglo) core values to which all Australians should adhere. In the process, Hanson, like Dewinter and other leading radical right-wing populists, repeatedly denied being racist, implying that racism involved a conception that people were biologically inferior whereas she did not mind which race people were as long as they assimilated into mainstream Australian values (which many Asians would not do).³⁸ In a similar way, Winston Peters, who is of both Maori and Scots descent, has argued that unchecked immigration, particularly from Asia, was causing a divided, fragmented society and a decline in common values. The emphasis should be on integration and assimilation rather than the ‘politically correct’ concept of diversity since ‘this fetish with diversity is destroying our national identity’ and ultimately leads to the ‘Balkanisation of our country’. While expressing his commitment to the idea that ‘all New Zealanders are equal’, Peters also maintained that ‘New Zealand’s identity, culture and traditions are of value and we say it is reasonable to expect those who settle here to accept them. [...] If you don’t like the way we are you are welcome to enjoy another one of our great freedoms—the freedom to go back home.’³⁹

Ironically enough, by aggressively standing up for Western culture and values, the radical populist right has managed to promote itself as uncompromising defenders of the liberal heritage. This has been particularly pronounced with respect to Islam, which in recent years

has come to occupy a prominent place in the radical populist right's identitarian discourse. The late Pim Fortuyn was hardly the first to warn of the 'Islamization of our culture' as the most serious threat to the survival of Western open societies. Jörg Haider and Umberto Bossi had maintained as much already in the early 1990s when they charged Islam with being fundamentally incompatible with the core values defended by Western societies, such as democracy and human rights, individualism and religious freedom, and particularly women's rights.⁴⁰ Even before 11 September 2001, the radical populists increasingly adopted this line of argument to support and legitimise their politics of exclusion. The Danish People's Party, for example, made the fight against what it characterised as the subversion of Danish society by militant Muslims the central theme for its election campaign in 2001. Charging that Islam was not a religion but a 'political program' that promoted 'medieval practices', the party charged that the 'Muslim way of life' was fundamentally incompatible with liberal democracy.⁴¹ In Belgium Filip Dewinter went even further, characterising Islam as a 'totalitarian ideology' that while despising and denigrating 'our norms, values and way of life' was intent on 'colonizing Europe' and subjugating it to its will.⁴² Referring to Samuel P. Huntington, Dewinter and others on the radical populist right argued that faced with a major 'clash of civilizations' Western societies would only survive if they united to defend their distinctiveness and identity.⁴³ Confronted with a rapidly growing immigrant community from Muslim countries that aggressively challenged the customs, practices and way of life of their host societies (by, for example, campaigning for the removal of crucifixes from schools and other public spaces) intended, as the Lega Nord put it, to bring about 'the definitive annulment of an identity', Western societies had no other choice than to stand up and fight for their survival.⁴⁴ For what is at stake is nothing less than the 'foundations of our western civilization'.⁴⁵

The radical populist right's position on Islam provides a striking illustration of the logic behind its politics of exclusion. With a growing number of these parties seeking to gain legitimacy by moderating their rhetoric and their demands, the radical populist right no longer calls for the complete reversal of all aspects of immigration policy. The new position is one that gives immigrants a choice—assimilation or return.⁴⁶ From the radical populist right's point of view, assimilation is more than integration. It means 'complete absorption' in a process, which Rogers Brubaker has characterised as 'organic assimilation'.⁴⁷ This presupposes not only a willingness on the part of immigrants to adopt the host society's norms, culture and way of life, but also a predisposition on their part that allows them to do that, thus cultural commensurability. In the case of Muslims, the radical populist right denies that this commensurability exists. A programmatic article, published in the Lega Nord daily newspaper, *La Padania*, makes that clear when it refers to the Islam's irreducible 'incompatibility with regard to European culture' and 'western values', which makes Islam fundamentally impervious to integration.⁴⁸ Islam, as the Vlaams Blok has blatantly stated, is 'fundamentally

un-European', intrinsically intolerant of, and hostile to, the core values that constitute the heritage of Western civilisation, and, in the final analysis, a deadly threat to its survival.⁴⁹ In the eyes of the radical populist right, the exclusion of Western Europe's growing Muslim minority together with measures designed to prevent further inflow of migrants from Muslim countries thus represents an act of self-defence rather than an act of discrimination. As Filip Dewinter once put it, 'in this country, those who appeal to Islam have in fact already signed their return ticket to their country of origin'.⁵⁰

From this perspective, the radical populist right's hostility toward multiculturalism makes perfect sense. As a prominent SVP politician has put it, multiculturalism is nothing more than a 'resigned reaction' to the fact that the vast majority of recent immigrants are unwilling to assimilate and 'instead insist that their national and cultural identity be respected'. Given the incommensurability of cultures like Islam with Western values, the 'multicultural experiment' not only endangers 'fundamental western values', but threatens to destroy the local culture.⁵¹ Faced with this danger, the radical populist right sees and promotes itself as the only relevant force intent on and capable of defending 'the sacrosanct right of our people to maintain and defend their own ethno-cultural and religious identity and not to get reduced to the status of a residual minority in their own country'.⁵² Again, from the radical populist right's point of view, this line of argument should not be construed as an expression of ethnocentrism or even worse, racism, but as a logical consequence of the right to cultural recognition, which should be conferred equally to all cultures. This, however, is a fundamentally anti-liberal position. For, as Kevin McDonough has pointed out, a 'liberal society dedicated to the value of equal respect must also recognize the multiplicity of cultural sub-groups that constitute it'.⁵³ This is a proposition the radical populist right rejects as a matter of principle, arguing that the call for the recognition of cultural diversity is nothing more than an ideological construct promoted by the 'multicultural industry' designed to legitimise extending unjustified privileges to minorities at the expense of everybody else.

The ethnocratic alternative

The radical populist right's political project aims at putting an end to multicultural experiments and at re-establishing the principles of ethnocratic rights.⁵⁴ Ethnocracy represents a system, which, on the basis of 'qualified rights to citizenship, and with ethnic affiliation (defined in terms of race, descent, religion, or language) as the distinguishing principle' seeks, via the mobilisation of 'historical claims and cultural symbols steeped in mythology over distant and not so-distant past' to 'secure that most important instruments of state power are controlled by a specific ethnic collectivity'.⁵⁵ As Andreas Wimmer has shown, ethnocratic

principles have been a constitutive element in the formation of the modern nation state; ‘political closure along national lines’ the ‘price’ to be paid for the creation of modern communities guaranteeing solidarity, justice and democracy. In the process, access ‘to state power and unlimited access to services of the new bureaucracy were restricted to those who could show themselves to be part of the national community, because the only legitimate form of government had become the rule of like over like’.⁵⁶

In the radical populist right’s view, recent socioeconomic and sociocultural developments associated particularly with internationalisation and globalisation fundamentally challenge and threaten to undermine the principles and institutional arrangements that have guaranteed what Wimmer calls ‘ethno-national dominance’. This, however, is only part of the problem. More important, from the radical populist right’s perspective, is the fact that the elite has largely adopted a ‘mondialist’ worldview that aggressively promotes, as Umberto Bossi has put it, ‘the negation of any kind of difference’.⁵⁷ For Jean-Marie Le Pen, this new mondialist ideology (*mondialisme*) aims at nothing less than the establishment of a ‘new global order’ based on the right to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries and, with it, the establishment of ‘a totalitarian democracy’ on the ‘ruins’ of the nations and their ‘liberties, traditions, and particularisms’.⁵⁸ In the Lega Nord’s view, *mondialismo* is based on a utopian—and fundamentally racist—ideology that sees humanity inevitably destined for the ‘mixing of cultures’ along the lines of the American model of the melting pot. At the same time, it is based on the notion that society is nothing more than an assemblage of ‘residents who at a certain point of time live in a certain space and whose only real social ties consist of those that the various occupants of this territory happen to establish among each other’. *Mondialismo* thus not only fundamentally negates the importance of culture and heritage, but also the notion that society’s wealth is largely the result of the hard ‘work and the struggles’ of earlier generations, which, in turn gives certain privileged rights to their descendants.⁵⁹ In the Lega Nord’s view, this mondialist ideology was a new racism, aimed at the complete eradication of diversity, identity, and cultural idiosyncrasy as a first step toward the construction of a totalitarian, monocultural global village.⁶⁰

From the perspective of the radical populist right, the promotion of pluralistic models of society and what Andreas Wimmer has referred to as a ‘deterritorialised, transnational regime of citizenship rights’⁶¹ by supra-national institutions and non-governmental organisations in Europe and elsewhere represents nothing less than a ‘plot (*complot*) intent on destroying the nations and the frame of the natural order’ and with it, any sense of belongingness and identity.⁶² This is one of the reasons why in Western Europe, the radical populist right has generally been hostile to the institutionalised process of European integration in the form of the EU. The FPÖ, for example, argued in 1994, Austrian membership in the EU would lead to a ‘far-reaching loss of [Austria’s] national sovereignty’. An inevitable transfer of a great deal of

decision-making power from the national and provincial parliaments to the European Commission would severely restrict popular sovereignty and undermine direct democracy.⁶³ In Switzerland, the SVP went even further, characterising the proponents of EU membership as unpatriotic and ‘tired of the fatherland’ and intent on selling out Switzerland’s neutrality, independence and popular rights.⁶⁴ Christoph Blocher, in a programmatic speech from 2001, characterised the EU as an ‘undemocratic big power’, which used threats and blackmail to impose its will on small countries like Switzerland.⁶⁵ Despite this reality, the majority of Switzerland’s political elite continued to pursue EU membership and thus to surrender more and more of the country’s freedom, sovereignty and democratic self-determination, particularly with respect to the protection of her borders and ‘the independent regulation of immigration and naturalization’.⁶⁶

The main political goal of radical right-wing populist politics is to bring about a reversal of these trends via a political project that accords absolute priority to the interests and concerns of the popular sovereign. The aim of what Jean-Marie Le Pen has called the ‘national alternative’ is the re-establishment of the supremacy of national law over supranational laws, treaties and directives. In its most radical form, it aims at the re-establishment of a strict policy of ‘national preference’ with respect to citizenship, social rights and access to work according to the principle, ‘the own people first’, which in one form or another has been adopted by virtually all radical right-wing populist parties as their trademark. For the right populist right, the establishment of a policy of national preference represents a crucial step towards once again becoming ‘boss in the own country’ (according to a well-known Vlaams Blok slogan).⁶⁷ Ideologically, the call for national preference derives its logic and justification above all from arguments that blame current problems of the welfare state directly on immigration and thus appeal both to the ‘common sense’ of ordinary people and their *ressentiments* toward newcomers. A typical example of this strategy is a passage from a speech by a leading member of New Zealand First, which castigates the current Labour government’s ‘open door’ approach to immigration as a policy,

Where refugees and asylum seekers and suspected terrorists who have lied and deceived their way into our country on false documents and concocted stories, enjoy hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars of legal assistance, housing and care whilst thousands of New Zealanders can’t get a state home and thousands more are being cut from the waiting lists not with a scalpel, but with a pen. Tens of thousands of supposed business category immigrants arrive here to make our lives so much better only to end up on the social welfare pig’s back, because they had hoodwinked a naive Immigration Minister who truly believes that no prospective immigrant would ever lie to an immigration official.⁶⁸

From the radical populist right’s point of view, in a situation, where ‘honest and hardworking’ ordinary people are increasingly ‘becoming the idiots of the nation’, national preference is an attempt to safeguard the social gains of the past, in other words, a legitimate defence of the welfare of the ‘own people’.⁶⁹ This, Jean-Marie Le Pen claims, has nothing to do with racism. On the contrary, to speak of national preference ‘means to show solidarity with the national

community. It is legitimate to protect one's community before looking after the condition of other communities, even if one has to remain attentive to the plight of the others.⁷⁰

Conclusion

Contemporary radical right-wing populist parties have often been described as opportunistic political agents, whose political programs reflect little more than the latest trends in public opinion. In this article we have tried to argue that this is only half of the picture. Much of the rant of prominent radical right-wing populist leaders is inspired by a distinct ideology, which has shaped and formed its political project. Like all ideologies, radical right-wing populist ideology proposes an analysis designed to respond to a number of essential political questions: what went wrong; who is to blame; and what is to be done to reverse the situation. As we have seen, radical right-wing populist discourse provides an answer to each of these questions. Reduced to its core, radical right-wing populist ideology is a response to the erosion of the system of 'ethno-national dominance', which characterised much of the history of modern nation states.

As Andreas Wimmer and others have argued, exclusion and 'national preference' have hardly been alien to liberal Western democracies. In fact, particularly with the emergence of the welfare state, they became central to the maintenance of social consensus. It is thus hardly surprising that even those favouring ethnocultural diversity and policies promoting multiculturalism have warned of the potentially negative consequences of these developments for the welfare state.⁷¹ Radical right-wing populist ideology emphatically maintains that this has already happened, blaming the political and cultural elite for undermining and destroying the established system of privilege and exclusion, based on closely circumscribed citizen rights. The strategic goal is to reverse this development and reinstall ethno-national dominance. Like the French *nouvelle droite*, the contemporary radical populist right sees political struggle primarily in terms of a 'metapolitical' contestation of the power to define concepts and shape discourse. From this perspective, radical right-wing populist ideology can be characterised as a postmodern ideology, largely inspired by the notion that in modern, media-saturated societies textual representations represent a, if not the, major site of struggle.

Unlike fascist and right-wing extremist parties and movements of the past, the contemporary radical populist right hardly seeks to bring about a revolutionary transformation of the existing democratic regime and the creation of a 'new man'. On the contrary, a central element of radical right-wing populist parties' political strategy has been to point out the gaps and contradictions between the abstract principles and claims informing representative democracy and their application in the real world. As Bruno Villalba has

recently argued with regard to the French case, those studying the radical populist right have not always sufficiently appreciated this ‘underground work’ of radical right-wing populist ideology, which goes beyond a radical critique of ‘those aspects of the representative principle, which are most contentious (such as the practices associated with the functioning of parties: financing, clientilism, etc.)’, sowing doubts and suspicions with respect to the whole representative system as a first step towards replacing it with a system responsive to the popular desire for genuine political involvement and participation.⁷²

Despite its revolutionary pretensions (one of Umberto Bossi’s books had the provocative title, *La rivoluzione*) and postmodern aspirations, radical right-wing populist ideology is a backward-looking reactionary ideology, reflecting a deep sense of nostalgia for the good old days. Although fundamentally anti-liberal in its rejection of the possibility of universal rights and the negation of the possibility of ethnically diverse communities living peacefully side by side in the same society, radical right-wing populist ideology is only borderline extremist (at least with regard to the way extremism has been defined in the academic literature). One of the most curious aspects of the ideology is its ability to combine seemingly contradictory notions into a new ideological amalgam, the most striking example being the appeal to the defence of Western liberal values to bolster the call for exclusion based on essentialist claims (e.g. Islam is by nature anti-Western). Roger Griffin has tried to capture this tension by suggesting the characterisation of the core of radical right-wing populist ideology in terms of ‘ethnocratic liberalism’.⁷³ In fact, it might even be characterised as a radicalised version of what, after all, have been mainstream concerns and practices (and thus might perhaps be characterised as a genuine radicalisation of the centre) for most of the twentieth century,⁷⁴ extremist only by virtue of the strident and shrill tone of radical right-wing populist discourse and its uncompromising position. From this perspective, it seems hardly surprising that centre-right parties have had relatively few problems in entering in coalitions with radical right-wing populist parties or raising similar issues in somewhat more subtle forms.⁷⁵

From this perspective, radical right-wing populist ideology represents above all one position in a larger, current ‘political struggle about who deserves to be cared for by state and society: a fight for the collective goods of the state’.⁷⁶ This might at least in part explain why in recent years, a number of radical right-wing populist parties (most prominently the Front national, the FPÖ and the Scandinavian radical populist right) have been increasingly successful in appealing to those social groups that have felt most threatened both by the loss of their relatively privileged social position (e.g. skilled unionised blue-collar workers from the dominant ethnic group) and by the neglect of those political parties that once defended their interests and espoused their cause.⁷⁷

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- [10](#) P. Hanson, ‘Australia, wake up!’, Pauline Hanson’s maiden speech, 10 September 1996 at <http://nsw.onenation.net.au/policy/misc/phmaiden.htm>.
- [11](#) R. Mark, speech to the New Zealand First 2003 Convention, 11 November 2003, Christchurch at http://www.nzfirst.org.nz/content/display_item.php?t=1&i=1195.
- [12](#) J. Haider, *Die Freiheit, die ich meine* (Frankfurt: Ullstein, 1993), p. 74; B. Gollnisch, ‘Mai 68: revolution ratée?’ *Le Figaro*, 25 May 1998.
- [13](#) P. Hanson, ‘Party launch speech’, 11 April 1997 at <http://www.onenation.net.au/archives/partylaunch.php>.
- [14](#) J.-M. Le Pen, ‘Libérons la France!’ Introduction to: *Programme du Front national* at <http://www.frontnational.com/pdf/programme.pdf>.
- [15](#) P. Fortuyn, ‘Extreem links’, 26 March 2002 at <http://www.pim-fortuyn.nl/columns/column.asp?ID=83>.

[16](#) See, for example, M. Hastings, ‘Front national: des mots pour faire mal’, *Le Monde*, 25 November 1996.

[17](#) C. Blocher, ‘Switzerland and the Second World War: a clarification’, Zurich-Oerlikon, 1 March 1997, p. 10 at <http://www.blocher.ch/en/artikel/970301worldwar2.pdf>.

[18](#) In fact, in a recent speech, Filip Dewinter characterised ‘resistance’ against, among other things, political correctness, immigration and the permissive society as the essence of the Vlaams Blok’s political *raison d’être*. See. F. Dewinter, speech delivered at the Third National Convention, Ghent, 26 October 2002 at http://www.vlaamsblok.be/activiteiten_manifestaties_conventie_toespraak_fdw.shtml.

[19](#) See, for example, M. Tarchi, *L’Italia populista* (Bologna: Il Mulino), 2003, pp. 135–136.

[20](#) Hanson, *op. cit.*, Ref. 10; Pia Kjærsgaard made the statement to *Berlingske Tidende*, 4 October 1997, quoted in P. Hervik, ‘Limits of tolerance and limited tolerance: how tolerant are the Danes?’, Copenhagen, The Board for Ethnic Equality, December 9, 2001 at www.evensfoundation.be/Commonlang/Hervik%20.pdf.

[21](#) W. Peters, ‘Labour fears direct democracy’, New Zealand First press release, 13 November 2003 at <http://www.scoop.co.nz/mason/stories/PA0311/S00293.htm>.

[22](#) The appeal to the common sense of the common people was a cornerstone of Preston Manning’s Reform Party of Canada in the early 1990s. See S. Patten, ‘Preston Manning’s populism: constructing the common sense of the common people’, *Studies in Political Economy*, 50 (Summer 1996), pp. 95–132.

[23](#) W. Peters, ‘Replacing political tyranny with direct democracy’, Wellington, 12 November 2003 at http://www.nzfirst.org.nz/content/display_item.php?t=1&i=1245.

[24](#) Vlaams Blok, *Een toekomst voor Vlaanderen—Programma en standpunten van het Vlaams Blok* (Brussels: Vlaams Blok, 2002), p. 19.

[25](#) See, for example, M. Goot and I. Watson, ‘One nation’s electoral support: where does it come from, what makes it different and how does it fit?’, *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 47, 2 (2001), pp. 159–191. They argue that support for One Nation in the late 1990s was driven primarily by opposition to elite values, particularly around questions of race.

[26](#) Peters, *op. cit.*, Ref. 23.

[27](#) Thus the FPÖ quite explicitly characterised itself in the early 1990s as the only force that ‘pursues a strategy of system change’. FPÖ, ‘Freiheitliche Thesen zur politischen Erneuerung Österreichs’, Vienna: Freiheitliches Bildungswerk, 1994, p. 4.

[28](#) F. Dewinter, *Baas in eigen land* (Brussels: Uitgeverij Egmont, 2000), p. 14.

[29](#) Dewinter in an interview for a BBC 2 program entitled ‘Our nationality’, 13 May 2001.

[30](#) P.-A. Taguieff, ‘From race to culture: the new right’s view of European identity’, *Telos*, 98–99 (1993–1994), pp. 122, 124.

[31](#) For a first attempt to come to grips with this issue see A. Spektorowski, ‘Ethnoregionalism: the intellectual new right and the Lega Nord’, *The Global Review of Ethnopolitics*, 2, 3 (2003), pp. 55–70.

[32](#) Lega Nord, ‘Ragionare sull immigrazione: la nuova legge Bossi’, Lega Nord, Secretaria Politica Federale, Milan, September 2002, p. 21.

[33](#) Intervento del Secretario Federale, On. Umberto Bossi, Pontida, 4 June 2000.

[34](#) B. Gollnisch, ‘Droits de l’homme, racisme, xénophobie et antisémitisme’, March 15, 2000 at http://www.gollnisch.com/discours_detail.php?id_inter=72.

[35](#) M. Le Pen, ‘Discours prononcé lors de l’université d’été du FN à Annecy’, 29 August 2002 at <http://www.generationslepen.com/discoursannecy.html>.

[36](#) W. Peters, ‘One country, one nation, one people’, address to Chinese Communities and Associations, Auckland, 14 July 2002 at http://www.nzfirst.org.nz/content/display_item.php?t=1&i=45.

[37](#) Winston Peters in an address to a Southern African Business breakfast meeting, at <http://www.sanztrust.org.nz/winston.html>.

[38](#) P. Hanson, *The Truth* (Ipswich: One Nation, 1997), pp. 3, 7, 13, 15, 16, 25.

[39](#) W. Peters, ‘New Zealand’s identity crisis—colony or nation’, 23 May 2003 at http://www.nzfirst.org.nz/content/display_item.php?t=1&I=1018; W. Peters, ‘*Sowing the Seeds of Sectarianism*’, 10 November 2002 at http://www.nzfirst.org.nz/content/display_item.php?t=1&i=787.

[40](#) Haider, *op. cit.*, Ref. 12, p. 93; U. Bossi and D. Vimercati, *La rivoluzione* (Milan: Kupfer & Sperling, 1993), pp. 205–206.

[41](#) *Danmarks fremtid—dit land, dit valg ...* (Copenhagen: Dansk Folkeparti, 2001), pp. 28, 190–191.

[42](#) F. Dewinter, ‘Het groene totalitarisme: de kolonisatie van Europa!’, 20 November 2002, Antwerp at http://www.vlaamsblokantwerpen.org/toespraken_21.shtml.

[43](#) Dewinter, *op. cit.*, Ref. 28, pp. 15–23.

[44](#) Lega Nord, ‘Mozione crocifissi’, 2003 at <http://www.leganord.org/pdf/mozioni/mozcrocifissi.pdf>.

[45](#) M. Le Pen, October 2003 at <http://www.marine2004.com/comptrenduusa.html>.

[46](#) Vlaams Blok, *Aanpassen of terugkeren. Het vreemdelingenstandpunt van het Vlaams Blok* (Brussels: Vlaams Blok, 2003).

[47](#) R. Brubaker, ‘The return of assimilation? Changing perspectives on immigration and its sequels in France, Germany, and the United States’, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 24, 4 (2001), p. 534.

[48](#) D. Gianetti, ‘Islam: regia occulta dietro l’invasione’, *La Padania*, 14 February 2001.

[49](#) Blok, *op. cit.*, Ref. 46, p. 9.

[50](#) Dewinter cited in R. v. d. Brink, *L'internationale de la haine* (Brussels: Luc Pire, 1996), p. 120.

[51](#) T. Meier, ‘Irrweg “multikulturelle Gesellschaft”, *Schweizerzeit*, 3 March 2000 at http://www.thomas-meier.ch/artikel_sz.03.03.00.htm.

[52](#) Enti Locali Padani Federali, *Padania, identità e società multirazziali*, December 1998, p. 4.

[53](#) K. McDonough, 'Cultural recognition, cosmopolitanism and multicultural education', *Philosophy of Education Society Yearbook 1997* at http://www.ed.uiuc.edu/EPS/PES-yearbook/97_docs/mc-donough.html.

[54](#) The heuristic value of the ethnocratic concept was pointed out by Griffin (1999), *op. cit.*, Ref. 1, pp. 308–315.

[55](#) N. A. Butenschøn, 'Politics of ethnocracy: strategies and dilemmas of ethnic domination', Department of Political Science, University of Oslo, 1993 at <http://www.statsvitenskap.uio.no/ansatte/serie/notat/fulltekst/0193/index.html>; J. Mostov, 'La fonction de l'ethnocratie', *Transeuropeennes*, 8 (1996), p. 36, cited in I. Ivekovic, 'The Israeli ethnocracy and the Bantustanization of Palestine', *Revista de ciencias sociales*, 4 (2002), p. 123.

[56](#) A. Wimmer, 'Dominant ethnicity and dominant nationhood', in E. Kaufman (Ed.), *Majority Groups and Dominant Minorities: Conceptualizing Dominant Ethnicity* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 2004); A. Wimmer, *Nationalist Exclusion and Ethnic Conflicts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), ch. 7.

[57](#) U. Bossi, 'Intervento del secretario federale, On. Umberto Bossi', 4 June 2000, Pontida at http://www.leganord.org/a_2_discorsi_pontida_4_06_2000.htm.

[58](#) J.-M. Le Pen, speech at the Université d'été du Front national, Orange, 1999 at http://www.frontnational.com/lesdiscours.php?id_inter=8.

[59](#) Enti Locali Padani Federali, *op. cit.*, Ref. 52, p. 15.

[60](#) Lega Nord, *op. cit.*, Ref. 32, p. 21.

[61](#) SVP, *Wahlplattform 2003 bis 2007* (Bern: Schweizerische Volkspartei, 2003), p. 22.

[62](#) See J.-M. Le Pen, 'Discours de Jean-Marie Le Pen', 1 May 1997 at <http://www.front-nat.fr/jeanne.html>; 'Discourse de Jean-Marie Le Pen lors du dernier Congrès du Front National, le 30 avril 2000' at http://www.frontnational.com/lesdiscours.php?id_inter=12.

[63](#) FPÖ, 'NEIN—heißt JA zu Neuverhandlungen', flyer, 1994.

[64](#) SVP poster reproduced in J. Steinberg, *Why Switzerland?*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 111.

[65](#) C. Blocher, 'Suchst Du den Krieg, dann kommt er zu Dir!', *Albisgüetli-Rede 2001*, Zurich, 2001, pp. 12–13.

[66](#) SVP, *op. cit.*, Ref. 61, p. 22.

[67](#) See the chapter entitled 'Werk en sociale voorzieningen voor eigen volk eerst' ('Jobs and social benefits for the own people first'), in Blok, *op. cit.*, Ref. 46, pp. 21–25.

[68](#) Mark, *op. cit.*, Ref. 11.

[69](#) The quote is from an article by the general secretary of the SVP, Gregor A Rutz, 'Le PS, le PRD et le PDC détruisent notre pays!' at http://www.svp.ch/index.html?page_id=548&1=3. For the centrality of 'welfare chauvinism' in radical right-wing populist ideology see, for example, Mudde, *op. cit.*, Ref. 5, pp. 174–175; J. G. Andersen, 'Denmark: the Progress Party –populist neo-liberalism and welfare state chauvinism', in Paul Hainsworth (Ed.), *The Extreme Right in Europe and in the USA* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), pp. 198–199; T. Bjørklund and J. Saglie, 'The Norwegian Progress Party: building bridges across old cleavages', paper presented at the 12th Nasjonal fagkonferanse i statsvitenskap, Tromsø, 7–9

January 2004, p. 18 at <http://uit.no/getfile.php?PageId=1410&FileId=171>.

[70](#) J.-M. Le Pen, ‘Immigration et soveraineté’, 27 January 2003, Paris at http://www.frontnational.com/lesdis-cours.php?id_inter=34.

[71](#) Herbert Kitschelt, for example, raises the question of whether ‘the multiculturalization of still by and large homogeneous or ethnically stable Western Europe [will] lead to a decline of the welfare state’. H. Kitschelt, *The Radical Right in Western Europe* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1995), pp. 258–259. For an extensive discussion of the question see K. Banting and W. Kymlicka, ‘Do multiculturalism policies erode the welfare state?’, School of Policy Studies, Working Paper 33, Queen’s University, Kingston, Ontario, August 2003 at http://www.queensu.ca/sps/WorkingPapers/files/sps_wp_33.pdf.

[72](#) B. Villalba, ‘Jean-Marie Le Pen et l’usage politique de la quête des signatures’, in A. Gattolin and F. Miquet-Marty (Eds), *La France blessée* (Paris: Denoël, 2003), pp. 79–80.

[73](#) Roger Griffin, ‘<http://www.brookes.ac.uk/schools/humanities/Roger/2457/POSTWAR.htm> Interregnum or Endgame?’

[74](#) As Andreas Wimmer has pointedly put it: ‘The discrimination against aliens is so deeply inscribed in the institutional structures of modern states and their legal machinery that it is not perceived as running against basic principles of political modernity—rather, it is taken for granted as the way “things have always been”’. A. Wimmer (2002), *op. cit.*, Ref. 56, p. 222.

[75](#) See T. Bale, ‘Cinderella and her ugly sisters: the mainstream and extreme right in Europe’s bipolarising party systems’, *West European Politics*, 26, 3 (2003), pp. 67–90; C. Johnson, ‘The dilemmas of ethnic privilege: a comparison of constructions of “British”, “English” and “Anglo-celtic” identity in contemporary British and Australian political discourse’, *Ethnicities*, 2, 2 (2002), pp. 163–188.

[76](#) A. Wimmer, ‘Explaining xenophobia and racism: a critical review of current research’, *Racial and Ethnic Studies*, 20, 1 (1997), p. 32.

[77](#) As Ron Mark has put it referring to the Labour administration in New Zealand: ‘Already today, [it] is seen as more arrogant, more aloof, more elitist, more out of touch with working class New Zealanders than any party in the history of our nation’. Mark, *op. cit.*, Ref. 11.

A new winning formula?

The programmatic appeal of the radical right

Sarah L. de Lange

Introduction

The third wave of radical right parties that emerged in Western Europe during the 1980s and 1990s has generated renewed scholarly attention for the study of this party family.¹ In comparative designs and case studies political scientists have attempted to explain why this type of party has been relatively successful. Much attention has been given to the electoral appeal of the radical right, that is, to the composition of its electorate and the particular appeal of its message to this group of voters (e.g. Betz, 1994; Perrineau, 2001). Recently, studies have also focused on the structural factors that have enabled the breakthrough of the radical right (e.g. Ignazi, 2003; Jackman and Volpert, 1996; Jungerstam-Mulders, 2003).

One of the most comprehensive studies so far is Herbert Kitschelt's *The Radical Right in Western Europe: a Comparative Analysis* (1995), written in collaboration with Anthony J. McGann. This book has been widely recognized as an important contribution to the literature on the radical right; thus, Cas Mudde (1999: 188) suggests that it offers 'the most elaborate theory' of the rise of radical right parties. At the same time, it has provoked critical reactions. Several authors have refuted some of the main ideas presented by Kitschelt, like that of his winning formula (a combination of neoliberal and authoritarian appeals) that is said to make the radical right so successful (Eatwell, 2003; Mudde, 1999).

In a recent study written for the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Kitschelt (2004) responds to his critics and asserts that although the applicability of his theoretical framework is not confined to a specific time period, his analysis of the electoral success of the radical right is. The radical right made use of its winning formula in the 1980s, because it was only effective given the configuration of parties in West European party systems in this period. Since the 1990s new political developments have altered the configuration of West European party systems and therefore also the appeal of radical right parties, who now campaign on a more centrist

economic programme, still combined with authoritarianism.

Although Kitschelt's initial analysis has received considerable attention, and has been tested empirically (Abedi, 2002; Ivarsflaten, 2005; Veugelers, 2001), his follow-up study has been ignored so far. My article sets out to address this by testing whether the radical right does indeed have a new economic appeal. In three West European countries (France, Belgium and The Netherlands), the political programme of the radical right is analysed and compared with that of the other parties in the party system. On the basis of this comparative analysis, the validity of Kitschelt's new predictions concerning the radical right is determined.

Success of the radical right in Western Europe

In a number of books and articles, Kitschelt studies West European party systems with 'analytical schemes' that share a theoretical core (2004: 1). These schemes consist of an assessment of two elements: the demand for and the supply by political parties. Kitschelt therefore attempts to make a double analysis of the success of various party families in Western Europe. On the basis of the changes that have occurred in the West European electorates (the demand side) and party systems (the supply side), he constructs a theory that can account for the rise of left-libertarian parties (1988), the changes in the social-democratic party family (1994) and the rise of the radical right (1995) during the 1970s and 1980s. The sociological changes that have taken place in Western Europe are linked to the structural changes that have transformed the West European party systems. Thus, Kitschelt uncovers the political opportunity structures that have been (un)favourable to the various party families.

The value of Kitschelt's theory, the core of which is identical in all the studies mentioned above, lies in his belief that parties are more than mere reflections of mass-level sentiments. The fortunes and behaviour of a political party are dependent not only on the presence or absence of an electorate close to its party position, but also on the strategic interactions of political parties in the competitive system (Kitschelt, 1995: 14). The focus of my article is on this second element, more specifically on the strategic interaction of existing parties with radical right parties among West European party systems. I analyse the programmatic appeal of radical right parties, how this appeal is related to that of other parties in the party system, and whether this appeal matches Kitschelt's (2004) analysis.

Kitschelt's theoretical core

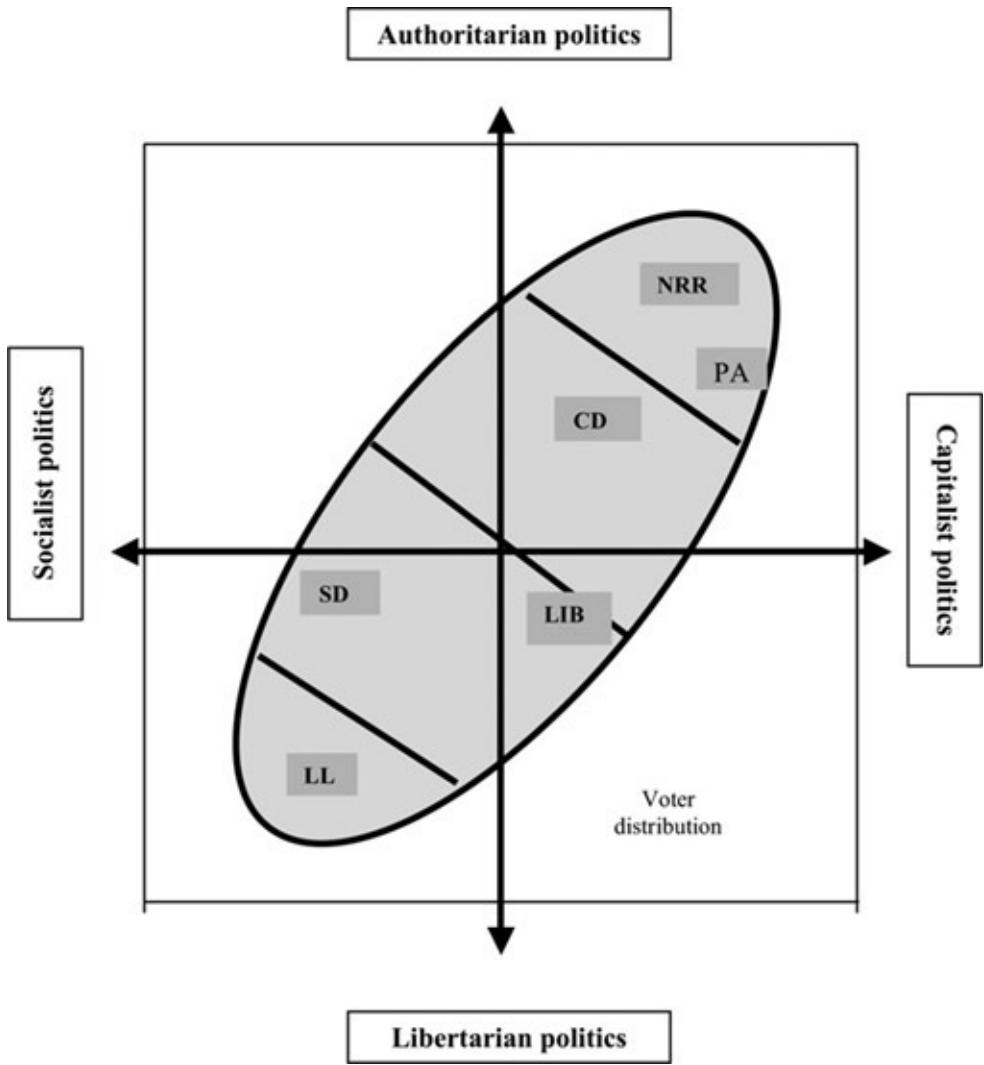
The point of departure for Kitschelt's theory is the two-dimensionality of the competitive space in post-industrial West European societies. The axes of this two-dimensional space are

formed by the socialist–capitalist dimension and the libertarian–authoritarian dimension (see Figures 1 and 2). The opposition between socialist and capitalist politics reflects questions that are concerned with the allocation of resources ('the nature of the outcomes'), whereas the opposition between libertarian and authoritarian politics reflects questions that are related to the process that brings about collective outcomes – 'the quality of the process' (Kitschelt, 1994: 10).

Kitschelt locates both voters and political parties within this two-dimensional competitive space. The distribution of the electorate within the space is dependent upon the attitudes of the voters. According to Kitschelt, these attitudes are strongly related to voters' 'market situation', that is, to their 'skills and capabilities, their social ties, and their location in a particular economic sector' (1995: 5). The overall distribution of voters in the competitive space is therefore largely dependent on the occupational structure of a country.² Since the occupational structures of West European countries have been ever-changing in recent decades, attitudinal distributions in the competitive space have been dynamic rather than static.

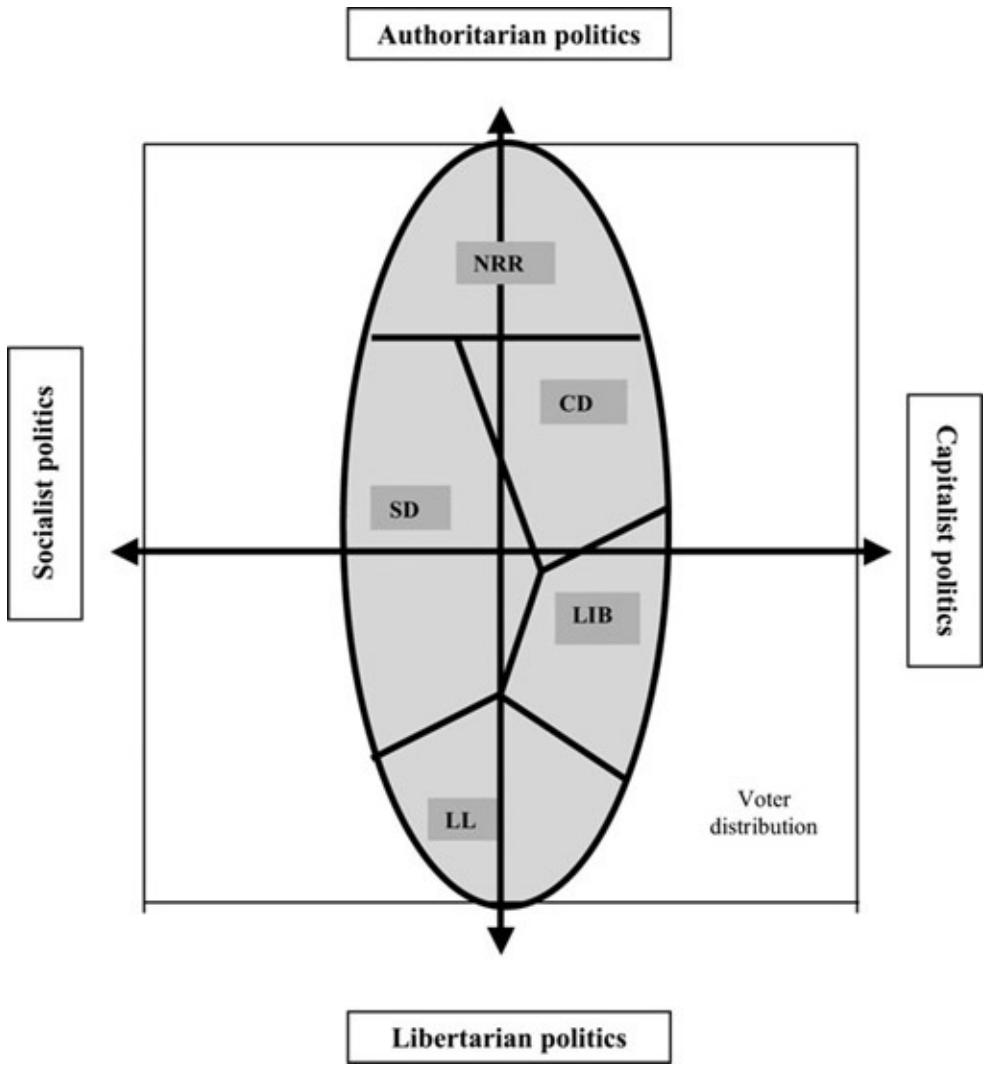
Kitschelt assumes that political parties follow a vote-maximizing logic, i.e. they position themselves in a distinct part of the competitive space (at least in multiparty systems). When the voter distribution in the competitive space changes, parties reposition to maintain their vote-share. However, they have to make trade-offs and decide which constituencies they want to please most. This can lead to voids in the competitive space, areas in which there are a considerable number of voters, but no existing parties to meet their political preferences. This creates a political opportunity for new political parties that may enter the competitive space to serve these neglected constituencies and hence become electorally successful.

Old and new predictions



[Figure 1](#) Party positions in competitive space in the 1970s and 1980s (CD: Christian-Democratic Party. LIB: Liberal Party. LL: Left-Libertarian Party. PA: Populist Anti-Statist Party. NRR: New Radical Right Party. SD: Social-Democratic Party).

On the basis of this theoretical framework, Kitschelt assessed the configuration of parties in West European party systems. During the 1980s, the competitive space was essentially one-dimensional, he argued. Although voters and parties took positions on both the socialist–capitalist and libertarian–authoritarian dimensions, their distribution was largely confined to the socialist–libertarian and capitalist–authoritarian quadrants (see [Figure 1](#)). According to Kitschelt, the period 1980–90 was characterized by strong centripetal tendencies. Both social-democratic and Christian-democratic parties moved to the centre of the competitive space to preserve their electoral strongholds and to enhance their chances of getting into government. This opened up competitive space for new political parties at the extremes. In the socialist–libertarian quadrant, left-libertarian (most notably green parties) appealed to dissatisfied social-democratic voters. The New Radical Right (NRR) did the same to former Christian-democratic voters in the capitalist–authoritarian quadrant (Kitschelt, 1995).



[Figure 2](#) Party positions in competitive space in the 1990s and the new millennium (CD: Christian-Democratic Party. LIB: Liberal Party. LL: Left-Libertarian Party. NRR: New Radical Right Party. SD: Social-Democratic Party).

In the 1990s, we see a rotation of the voter distribution in reaction to which the political parties adjusted their policy positions. They now spread over all four quadrants of the political space, making the political competition truly two-dimensional (see [Figure 2](#)) (Kitschelt, 2004). This does not mean that the parties became evenly distributed over the two dimensions. Rotation of the voter distribution led all parties to converge around the centre of the socialist–capitalist dimension, whereas the parties remained spread out over the full length of the libertarian–authoritarian dimension. The most drastic changes in party positions were those of left-libertarian and NRR parties. Both moved to the centre of the socialist–capitalist dimension, the first from an outspoken socialist position and the second from an outspoken neo-liberal position. Their respective positions on the libertarian–authoritarian dimension have not been influenced by the rotation of the voter distribution. The positions of social-democratic, Christian-democratic or conservative and liberal parties have remained more or less the same, notwithstanding changes in the composition of their electorates.

The radical right

Kitschelt defines the NRR on the basis of two features, its constituency and its ideological appeal (McGann and Kitschelt, 2005: 149). In the 1980s, the ideological appeal of the NRR consisted of a winning formula that combined a pro-market position on the socialist–capitalist dimension and an authoritarian position on the libertarian–authoritarian dimension. This combination was not unique, but the position of the NRR was more neoliberal and more authoritarian than that of established right-wing parties that had moved to the centre of the competitive space under the influence of centripetal tendencies (Kitschelt, 1995: 19–21). The winning formula of the NRR attracted a broad constituency of small-business owners, routine white-collar workers, blue-collar workers and inactives (McGann and Kitschelt, 2005: 149).

In the course of the 1990s, established NRR parties modified their ideological appeal and moved to a more centrist (albeit still right-wing) economic position. This change was inspired by the simultaneous decline in voters with capitalist–authoritarian preferences and increase in working-class voters with socialist–authoritarian attitudes. To expand its vote-share, the NRR had to meet the preferences of the latter group without neglecting those of the first group. Hence, it gradually moved to a more centrist position on the socialist–capitalist dimension, while maintaining its fierce authoritarianism. From there it would be able to appeal to those who had previously voted for the Social Democrats, but were in search of a more authoritarian party. However, the new position of the NRR does make it hard to satisfy its two constituencies, i.e. the socialist-authoritarians and the capitalist-authoritarians (Kitschelt, 2004: 10).

The fact that NRR parties that emerged during the 1980s evolved ideologically during the 1990s does not mean that the original kind of NRR has disappeared off the political scene. According to Kitschelt, there are countries where the NRR has emerged only recently and has done so in its original form (e.g. Switzerland) (McGann and Kitschelt, 2005). It remains unclear in Kitschelt’s work whether this is a result and/or a symptom of a structure of party competition that has not yet been reshaped and whether the NRR always has to emerge in its original form before it can evolve ideologically (of course, the two questions are closely related).

In his initial study of the radical right, Kitschelt stated that under special conditions a variant of the NRR, the Populist Anti-statist party, can emerge in West European party systems. The position of the Populist Anti-statist party in the competitive space is more flexible than that of the NRR. It can range from a neoliberal and authoritarian to a ‘more neutral, if not slightly libertarian, appeal’ (Kitschelt, 1995: 21). However, the position of the Populist Anti-statist party remains more radical than that of the established right in order to take advantage of the centripetal forces in the party system (Kitschelt, 1995: 15). Moreover, the Populist Anti-statist party would only be successful in countries where the established parties converged to the

centre *and* where the political economy is based on a strong clientelist/paternalist relationship between the political elite and the electorate (Kitschelt, 1995: 21–2). It is in opposition to the latter aspect that the Populist Anti-statist party defines itself primarily. Subsequently, this type of party focuses on its opposition to the other parties rather than on its own programmatic position.

Kitschelt's description of the programme (or absence of a programme) of the Populist Anti-statist party has some unintended repercussions for the location of this party in the competitive space. Since the space depicts party positions on only two dimensions, namely socialist–capitalist and libertarian–authoritarian, it is impossible to incorporate pro- or anti-establishment politics in the model. The Populist Anti-statist party therefore can only be positioned on issues that are secondary to the party. A second problem arising from Kitschelt's description of the Populist Anti-statist party concerns the distinction between that party and the NRR. Kitschelt's description of the Populist Anti-statist party implies that the NRR is neither populist nor anti-establishment, because these characteristics can be found exclusively in the programme and rhetoric of the Populist Anti-statist party. However, the parties that Kitschelt considers as representatives of the NRR also have populist elements in their programmes and employ a fierce anti-establishment rhetoric. Put more strongly, populism is one of the defining characteristics of the radical right (e.g. Betz, 2004; Taggart, 1995).

Methodology, operationalization and case selection

In order to test whether the radical right has taken a new, more economically centrist, position in West European party systems in the new millennium, one needs to measure the ideological positions of actual parties, radical right and other, in Kitschelt's two-dimensional competitive space. Two important decisions need to be made if such a space is to be constructed. First, one needs to choose a method that allows the measurement of party positions in this competitive space and, second, one needs to select the cases that can be used to construct one or more competitive spaces.

Methodology

To measure party positions, two groups of techniques are available. On the one hand, there are techniques by which the perception of voters (by means of a mass survey or of experts) is used to determine party positions. On the other hand, there are techniques by which party positions are measured directly through the use of sources that reflect party positions, such as manifestos (Mair, 2001). Since Kitschelt states that parties are more than simple reflections of

mass-level sentiments, it seems apt to pursue the second strategy.³

The most widely used technique for measuring party positions on the basis of manifestos is that of the Manifesto Research Group (MRG). However, the MRG technique is not the most appropriate for testing Kitschelt's model. To code manifestos, the MRG has chosen a saliency (or valence) approach, assuming that 'parties argue with each other by emphasizing different policy priorities rather than by directly confronting each other on the same issues' (Budge and Bara, 2001: 6–7). In other words, the MRG believes that issues are salient in nature, i.e. parties pay attention to some issues and neglect others, regardless of their positions on these issues. Thus, the MRG measures how often parties mention certain issues in their manifestos rather than the positions they take on these issues.

Kitschelt does not use a saliency approach, but a confrontational approach. The theoretical assumption of a confrontational approach is that 'issues are generally confrontational and not valence in nature, i.e. parties take up a range of explicit positions on each issue, ranging from fully pro to fully con, without inherent constraints' (Budge, 2001: 86). Kitschelt believes that parties take opposing positions on a range of questions: for example, libertarians favour an inclusive and universalistic conception of citizenship, whereas authoritarians support an exclusive and particularistic conception of citizenship.

In an attempt to avoid the problem of using a saliency approach to test a confrontational model, a new confrontational technique for analysing party manifestos is used to test Kitschelt's model. This innovative method, developed by Huib Pellikaan (e.g. Pellikaan et al., 2003), aims to measure party positions on dimensions consisting of issues that are conflictual in nature, i.e. questions on which parties are expected to take pro and contra positions.

To measure party positions with this confrontational approach, a three-step procedure must be followed. First, the researcher has to specify the number and the content of the dimensions on which s/he would like to position the parties. Dimensions can be relevant on a number of grounds. In this article, the dimensions that make up the spatial model are determined by Kitschelt's theory. They are the socialist–capitalist dimension and the libertarian–authoritarian dimension.

Second, issues have to be selected that are representative of these dimensions. The number of issues used to operationalize each dimension is not fixed. The researcher can select as many issues as deemed necessary, the only requirement being that the selection has to be large enough to allow differentiation between the parties in a party system. For example, when five issues are selected for operationalizing a dimension, an 11-point scale is created which can easily fit the parties of a multiparty system. The more issues that are selected, the better one can differentiate between parties that are ideologically close to each other. It is possible to select an unequal number of issues on the different dimensions. The scores on the dimensions can then still be compared, if necessary after standardization.

Third, on the basis of the statements in its manifesto, a party is assigned a score on all

selected issues. The party receives a positive score (+), a neutral score (0) or a negative score (-) depending on the position it takes on an issue in relation to the dimension it pertains to. The scores of all issues pertaining to a given dimension are then aggregated to establish the party's position on that dimension. High inter-coder reliability can be achieved through the use of multiple readers to score the manifestos.

There are various ways of processing the data obtained with this technique into a visual representation of the political space. Here, the space is constructed by placing the x-axis (the socialist–capitalist dimension) and the y-axis (the libertarian–authoritarian dimension) orthogonally, as in Kitschelt's model. The scores of all parties on the two axes can then be plotted on the graph, thus visualizing the party positions in Kitschelt's competitive space.⁴

An important advantage of this specific technique is that it is general enough to allow for comparative research and at the same time sensitive enough to take the specific political context in a country into account. It can measure local space by the selection of new issues for every election in every country, but the scores on these issues can still be aggregated and compared to scores of parties in other countries or in different elections, because they are representative of a more general dimension. However, the technique can also be used with identical issues across countries or across time, as will be demonstrated.

Operationalization

To replicate Kitschelt's model, a number of issues have to be selected that are indicative of the socialist–capitalist and libertarian–authoritarian dimensions. The opposition on the former dimension is between statements favouring the 'political redistribution of economic resources', on the one hand, and statements favouring the 'market allocation' of resources, on the other (Kitschelt, 1995: 1). Seven issues were selected that are central to this opposition in all West European countries: 'privatization' (X1), 'the public sector' (X2), 'the welfare and social security system' (X3), 'the labour market' (X4), 'taxation' (X5), 'the budget and financial deficit' (X6) and 'trade and enterprise policies' (X7). In previous research, similar issues have been shown to form a robust scale for economic policy preferences (e.g. Pellikaan et al., 2003). When statements in a manifesto predominantly indicate that a party is in favour of state intervention on one of these issues, this party receives a score of -1 on that specific issue. When statements in a manifesto predominantly indicate that a party is in favour of more market influence on one of the selected issues, this party receives a score of +1. When the overall statement is unclear or ambiguous, that party receives a score of 0. Parties that do not express any policy preferences also receive a score of 0 on that specific issue.⁵ The scores of each party on the seven selected issues are aggregated to determine the party positions on the socialist–capitalist dimension.

Operationalization of the libertarian–authoritarian dimension is more complex, as the dimension encompasses several political questions. From Kitschelt’s description of this dimension we retain three constituent elements: (1) citizenship and ethnocultural relations, (2) individual freedom and (3) collective decision modes.⁶ In order to capture the complete essence of the libertarian–authoritarian dimension, all three elements have to be represented by the selected issues. It is also important for all elements to have the same weight in the composition of the libertarian–authoritarian dimension. This can be achieved by selecting an equal number of issues for every question that is part of this dimension. In this study, every question is represented by two issues.

Citizenship and ethnocultural relations are measured by the issues ‘immigration’ (Y1) and ‘integration of cultural minorities’ (Y2). These issues reflect whether a party has an inclusive or exclusive view of society. Statements indicating support for an inclusive and universalistic society received a score of -1, whereas statements indicating support for an exclusive and particularistic society received a score of +1. To measure individual freedom, the issues ‘diversity of lifestyles’ (Y3) and ‘ethical legislation’ (Y4) are selected. These issues represent the extent to which parties want the government to interfere in the private domain. Statements indicating support for individual freedom received a score of -1, whereas statements indicating support for a moral government received a score of +1. Collective decision-making procedures are measured by the issues ‘direct representation’ (Y5) and ‘participation in the decision-making process’ (Y6). Statements in support of more direct representation and more participation in the decision-making process received a score of -1. Statements indicating support for appointed representation and hierarchical decision-making procedures received a score of +1. All statements on issues of the libertarian–authoritarian dimension that were unclear or ambiguous received a score of 0. Parties that refrained from expressing any policy preferences on a certain issue also received a score of 0 on that specific issue.

Case selection

I have selected three cases to test Kitschelt’s model: the French Front National (FN), the Flemish Vlaams Blok⁷ and the Dutch Lijst Pim Fortuyn (LPF).⁸ In this selection, we follow Kitschelt’s broad interpretation of the radical right party family. In his own research, Kitschelt includes parties as diverse as the French FN, the Scandinavian Progress parties, the Austrian Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPÖ), the Italian Movimento Sociale Italiano (MSI), the German Republikaner (Kitschelt, 1995) and the Swiss Schweizerische Volkspartei (SVP) (McGann and Kitschelt, 2005). I have chosen the FN, Vlaams Blok and LPF from the radical right party family partly for pragmatic reasons, most importantly the availability of party programmes in languages with which I am familiar. Moreover, the three countries in which

these radical right parties are situated have had parliamentary elections (France in 2002, Belgium in 2003 and The Netherlands in 2002 and 2003)⁹ that were separated by only a few months. All three elections were dominated by similar issues, and this facilitates comparison of the three competitive spaces constructed to test Kitschelt's predictions.

The radical right in France, Belgium and The Netherlands

In 2002–2003 the national elections held in France, Belgium and The Netherlands shared an important feature: in all three elections the radical right parties under investigation here played important roles. In France, all eyes were on the FN, because its leader Jean-Marie le Pen surprisingly made it to the second round of the presidential elections held in May 2002. In Belgium, the established parties feared the eleventh consecutive 'black Sunday', i.e. the eleventh election in which the Vlaams Blok would increase its vote-share. In The Netherlands, the rise of Pim Fortuyn and his assassination not only dominated the 2002 election, his party, the LPF, also left a mark on the provisional election in 2003. The campaigns preceding the elections revolved around similar issues. In France, questions regarding security/law and order were predominant in the election campaign. However, immigration and integration were also important, though framed as part of the security debate (Cole, 2002). Security and immigration (especially the question of voting rights for immigrants) also featured as important themes in the Flemish campaign. Moreover, during the campaign the Flemish mainstream parties focused heavily on the appropriateness and efficiency of the *cordon sanitaire* around the Vlaams Blok (Fitzmaurice, 2004). In The Netherlands, the campaign revolved around immigration and integration, and more specifically around the place of Islam in Western societies (Van Praag, 2003). Essentially, the campaigns in France, Flanders and The Netherlands were dominated by issues 'owned' by the radical right.

In the following sections I analyse and compare the positions of the French, Flemish and Dutch radical right with those of Kitschelt's NRR (both old and new) and the Populist Anti-statist party. For a proper analysis we need to put the positions of the radical right parties into context and therefore also determine the positions of the other parties in the party system. The parties whose manifestos were analysed and the party families they belong to are presented in [Table 1](#). The scores of the parties on all issues are given in [Appendix A](#).

Before commencing the analysis, expectations about the positioning and categorization of the radical right parties need to be stated clearly. Owing to the varying conditions under which Kitschelt's ideal-types are likely to occur, I am obliged to formulate more than one expectation for each radical right party. Both the FN and the Vlaams Blok are radical right parties of the original group, i.e. they had their first successes in the course of the 1980s. I

would thus expect them to have evolved into the weaker version of the NRR by now, assuming that the structure of competition in the French and Flemish party systems has changed as well. If this assumption does not (yet) hold, however, I would expect the FN and Vlaams Blok to maintain the original winning formula of neoliberalism and authoritarianism. In the Flemish case, there is also a third possibility. Vlaams Blok could opt to be a Populist Anti-statist party, given that Belgium is one of the three West European countries with a particularly high level of clientelism (Veugelers, 2001). LPF is a radical right party that emerged only recently. Following Kitschelt, I believe that it is therefore most likely to make use of the original winning formula and be of the early NRR type.

Table 1 Political parties and party families in France, Flanders and The Netherlands

France		Flanders		The Netherlands	
Front National (FN) ¹	Radical right	Anders Gaan Leven (Agalev)	Green	Christen Democratisch Appèl (CDA)	Christian-democratic
Parti Communiste Français (PCF)	Communist	Christen Democratisch en Vlaams (CD&V)	Christian-democratic	ChristenUnie (CU)	Orthodox-Christian
Parti Socialiste (PS)	Socialist	Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie (N-VA)	Other	Democraten66 (D66)	Liberal
Union pour la Démocratie Française (UDF)	Liberal	Sociaal Progressief alternatief (SP.a)	Social-democratic	GroenLinks (GL)	Green
Union pour un Mouvement Populaire (UMP)	Conservative (Gaullist)	Spirit	Other	Leefbaar Nederland (LN)	Other
Les Verts (Greens)	Green	Vlaams Blok	Radical right	Lijst Pim Fortuyn (LPF)	Radical right
		Vlaams Liberalen en Democraten (VLD)	Liberal	Partij van de Arbeid (PvdA)	Social-democratic
				Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij (SGP)	Orthodox-Christian
				Socialistische Partij (SP)	Socialist
	§			Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie (VVD)	Liberal

¹ Party name and party acronym. In the text, the most commonly known of the two is used.

France

The position of the FN roughly resembles that of the ‘new’ NRR (see [Figure 3](#)). The FN combines a centrist economic position with an (moderate) authoritarian position (position

coordinates [1,3]). The centrist economic position is in accordance with Kitschelt's (2004) model, but the authoritarian position is too moderate to match Kitschelt's predictions for a NRR party accurately.

The latter position is the result of the FN's populist stance on the questions of collective decision modes. The party is in favour of a more participatory democracy, but this position is not based on a libertarian heritage. Rather, it is a programmatic consequence of the populism that is one of the cornerstones of the FN ideology. In other words, the FN's stance on the issue 'participation in the decision-making process' is mistakenly interpreted in Kitschelt's model as libertarian, and therefore incorrectly moderates the FN's overall authoritarian position – the party takes authoritarian stances on the issues of 'immigration', 'integration of cultural minorities', 'diversity of lifestyles' and 'ethical legislation'.

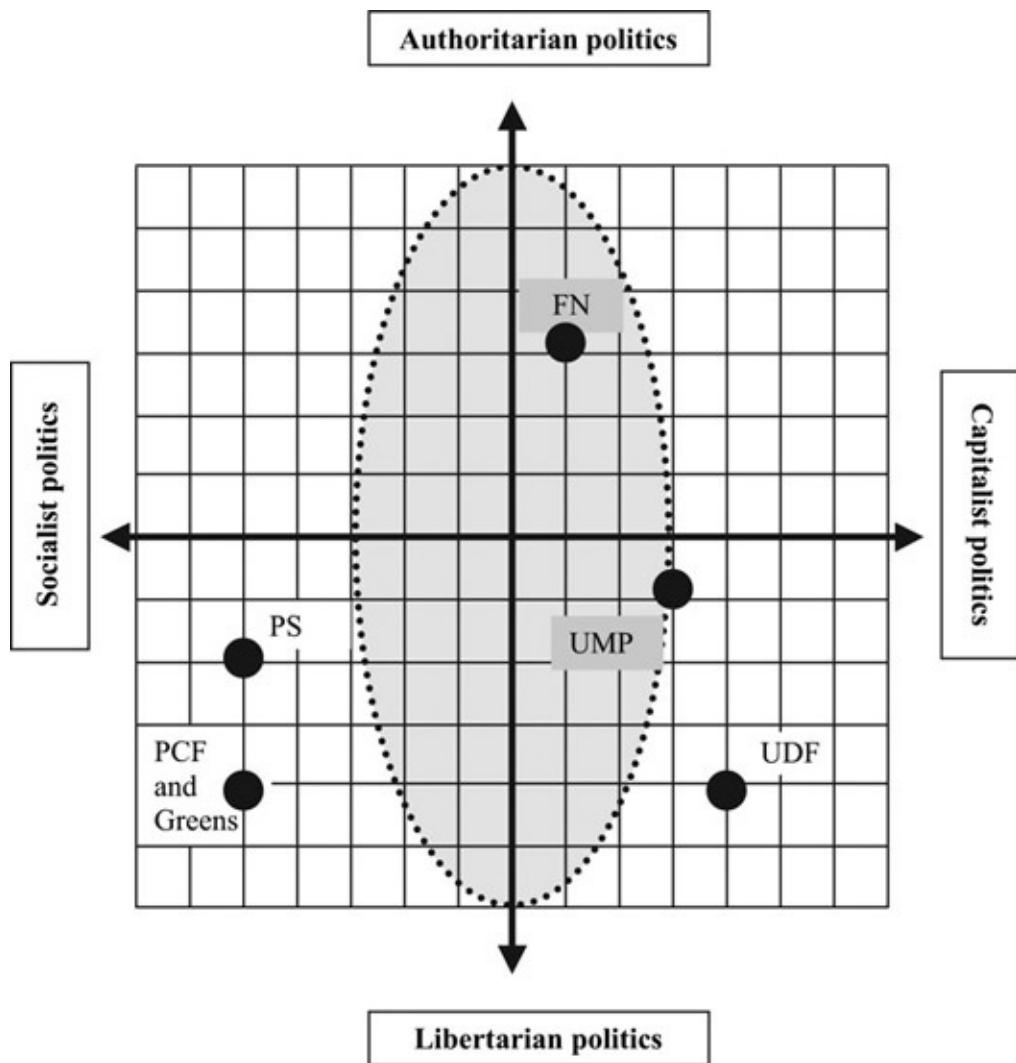


Figure 3 Political space in France, 2002 (Reliability scores – socialist–capitalist dimension: $\alpha = 0.88$; libertarian–authoritarian dimension: $\alpha = 0.86$).

The position of Vlaams Blok is similar to that of the FN ([Figure 4](#)); hence, Vlaams Blok can also be characterized as an evolved NRR party. The party combines a centrist economic position with a moderate authoritarian position (1,2). As in the case of the FN, however, the authoritarianism of Vlaams Blok is toned down by its populist stance on issues of collective decision modes. This also explains why Vlaams Blok is located so close to the Christian Democrats (CD&V [0,2]) and the New Flemish Alliance (N-VA [1,1]). These parties appear to share almost the same overall ideological position as Vlaams Blok, but they take a libertarian stance on the issue of ‘integration of cultural minorities’ and an authoritarian stance on the issues of ‘direct representation’ and ‘participation in the decision-making process’, whereas Vlaams Blok has the inverse profile, i.e. an authoritarian stance on ‘immigration’ and ‘integration of cultural minorities’ (as well as on ‘diversity of lifestyles’ and ‘ethical legislation’), and a position that is (apparently) libertarian on ‘direct representation’ and ‘participation in the decision-making process’. In fact, as in the case of the FN, Vlaams Blok’s ‘libertarian’ position on these questions is more appropriately characterized as populist, and therefore tends to ‘disguise’ the party’s authoritarianism. If we were to take the issues of collective decision modes out of the analysis, Vlaams Blok would receive a score of +4 on the libertarian–authoritarian dimension, whereas CD&V and N-VA would fall back to scores of 0 and -1 (all on a scale of -4 to +4). This reveals a clear difference between Vlaams Blok and the mainstream right.

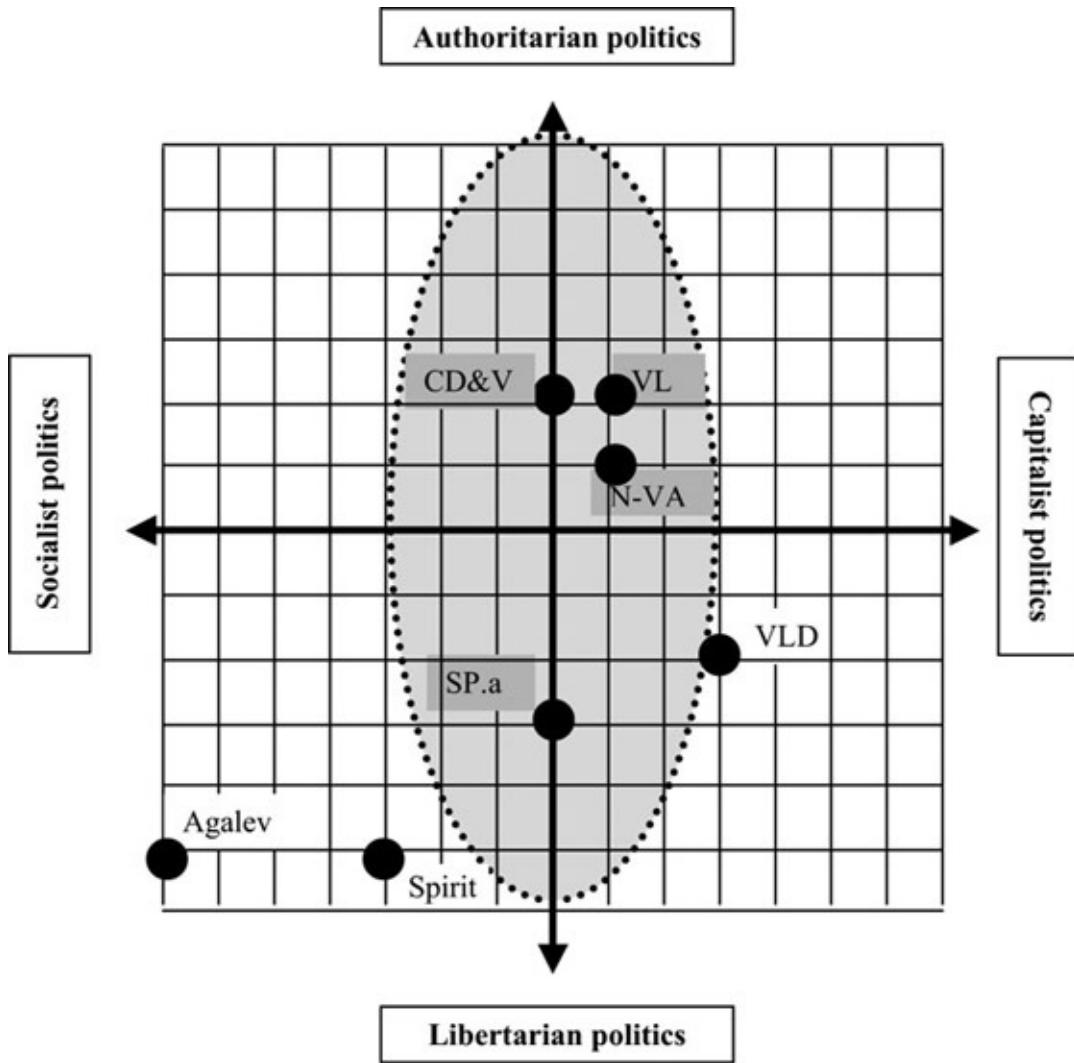
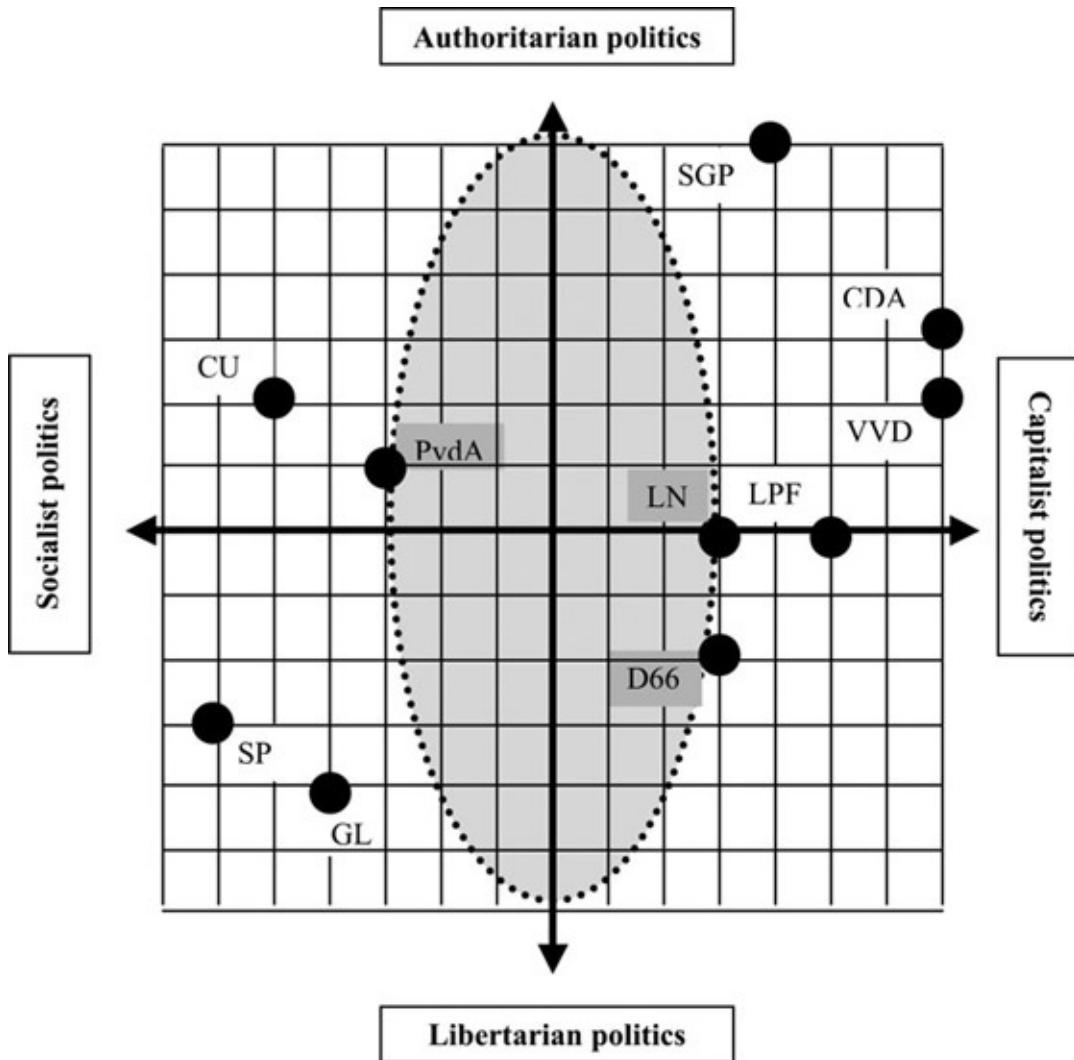


Figure 4 Political space in Flanders, 2003 (Reliability scores – socialist–capitalist dimension: $\alpha = 0.73$; libertarian–authoritarian dimension: $\alpha = 0.70$).

Although the FN and Vlaams Blok are both representative of the new version of NRR parties, it is interesting to note that the party systems in which they are situated have not (yet) completed the transition to a two-dimensional structure of competition. It seems that these radical right parties have moved to the centre of the socialist–capitalist dimension, changing the structure of competition in the upper half of the competitive space (i.e. the competition between the NRR and the moderate right). However, the same cannot be said of left-libertarian parties that maintain their original place in the socialist–libertarian quadrant of the political space. Thus, if the structure of competition in West European party systems has indeed changed, this seems more to be a consequence of the changing position of the radical right than anything else.

The Netherlands

The LPF is located at the border of the capitalist–authoritarian and capitalist–libertarian quadrant (5,0) (see [Figure 5](#)). Clearly, the position of the LPF does not match Kitschelt’s predicted position for a party of the NRR type. It is not the most extreme position in the capitalist–authoritarian quadrant; worse still, it is not even unambiguously capitalist–authoritarian in orientation. The position of the LPF is difficult to interpret in the light of Kitschelt’s theory, especially because the configuration of the Dutch party system resembles neither Kitschelt’s original model for the 1980s nor his new model for the 1990s or the new millennium. Polarization in the Dutch party system was extremely high by 2002/2003, which made the position of the LPF seem relatively moderate.



[Figure 5](#) Political space in The Netherlands, 2002/03 (Reliability scores – socialist–capitalist dimension: $\alpha = 0.88$; libertarian–authoritarian dimension: $\alpha = 0.75$).

However, if we ignore the overall configuration of Dutch parties and focus solely on the position of the LPF, it becomes clear that this party has almost all the features of a Populist Anti-statist party. The position of the LPF is neoliberal, a primary feature of the Populist Anti-statist party, though it may be a little less outspoken than Kitschelt assumed. The LPF has a

position on the libertarian–authoritarian dimension that is not unambiguously authoritarian or libertarian, which fits Kitschelt’s claim that the Populist Anti-statist party can have ‘a more neutral, if not slightly libertarian, appeal’ (1995: 21). The programme and rhetoric of the LPF are also fiercely anti-establishment (Jones, 2002; Lucardie and Voerman, 2002). Kitschelt claimed that this was a crucial element of the Populist Anti-statist party, even though his two-dimensional competitive space does not take account of this. If the LPF is a Populist Anti-statist party, however, this would contradict Kitschelt’s prediction that this type of party only emerges in political systems characterized by strong clientelistic relationships between the political elite and the electorate. To discuss this matter in more depth, I make a general assessment of the programmatic appeal of the NRR and the Populist Anti-statist party in the next section.

Assessing the programmatic appeal of the radical right in West European party systems

The party positions of the French FN and the Flemish Vlaams Blok correspond closely with that of Kitschelt’s new NRR, but only when the question of collective decision modes is taken out of the analysis. The position of the LPF seems to have more in common with that of the Populist Anti-statist party, which according to Kitschelt is a subtype of the NRR. These findings allow us to make some observations with regard to Kitschelt’s analysis of the radical right in the new millennium, the distinction between the NRR and the Populist Anti-statist party, and some of the premises of the theory.

Kitschelt predicted that in the new millennium the radical right would abandon its neoliberal appeal for a more centrist economic position. Our findings are largely consistent with this claim. The FN and Vlaams Blok have indeed taken a position in the competitive space that is economically centrist in orientation. However, the original position of these parties cannot be identified and therefore I cannot directly corroborate Kitschelt’s claim that the programmatic appeal of NRR parties has changed from neoliberalism to economic centrism. Bastow (1998) argues that this is indeed the case for the FN. However, the literature on Vlaams Blok suggests that the party started out with a programme in which ‘solidarism’ was the key word (Spruyt, 1995). References to this have been reduced over time and the party now relies on an economic programme of welfare chauvinism and protectionism. Some authors have claimed that this blend has long been vital to the ideology of the radical right (Eatwell, 2000; Mudde, 2000). In any case, it is surely true that welfare chauvinism and protectionism form a qualitatively different appeal from neoliberalism, with its emphasis on free markets and *laissez-faire*.

Concerning the distinction that Kitschelt makes between the NRR and the Populist Anti-

statist party, I can be brief. Although the analytical distinction is useful, the conditions that Kitschelt specified under which the NRR would be of the Populist Anti-statist subtype (a centripetal tendency in the party system and a political system characterized by strong client–patron relations) are not confirmed. In Belgium, a country that fulfils the conditions for the emergence of a Populist Anti-statist party, the radical right is of the NRR type and not of the Populist Anti-statist subtype. By contrast, in The Netherlands, a country that does not fulfil the conditions for the emergence of a Populist Anti-statist party, the radical right shares a number of characteristics with this type of party. This shows that the presence of strong client–patron relations in a country is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for the emergence of a Populist Anti-statist party (although it may be that they can help a Populist Anti-statist party on its road to electoral success).

An important point should be made in regard to the premises of Kitschelt's theory on the radical right. In the empirical account given above, we have seen that measurement of authoritarianism can be distorted if Kitschelt's guidelines are followed. The problem arises from the inclusion of collective decision modes in the content of this dimension. Kitschelt theorized that this question would distinguish between libertarians who favoured more participatory democracy and authoritarians who favoured hierarchical decision-making. However, the FN, Vlaams Blok and the LPF are all in favour of more participatory collective decision-making procedures, and thus seem to have a libertarian orientation towards this question if we stick to Kitschelt's model. This is an inaccurate interpretation of the facts. The NRR and Populist Anti-statist parties alike have adopted demands for more participatory democracy as a tool against the political elite, whom they accuse of having lost contact with popular opinion and of lacking popular legitimacy. Radical right parties present forms of participatory democracy, such as the referendum and popular initiative, as a solution to the unresponsiveness of the current political system (e.g. Betz, 2004; Bowler et al., 2003).

Essentially, Kitschelt's libertarian–authoritarian dimension cannot capture the difference between these populist calls for more participatory democracy and a genuinely libertarian programme that supports direct democracy from a perspective of equality and liberty in which personal autonomy and voluntary and equal participation are key values (Kitschelt, 1994: 9–12).¹⁰ It is evident that the question of collective decision-making procedures does not enable us to differentiate between libertarian and authoritarian parties, and should therefore be dropped in favour of social-cultural questions of immigration, integration, morality and law and order.

Conclusion

The rise of radical right parties in Western Europe has been an important political phenomenon since the 1980s. Although established parties have progressively adopted tougher stances on questions of immigration and integration, radical right parties remain present in the West European party systems. In countries such as Austria and Italy the radical right is no longer an outsider and has become part of the political establishment.

A first step in understanding the radical right as a political phenomenon is to explain its emergence. A second step is to document and explain its persistence. In an update of his earlier work, Herbert Kitschelt does just that. He analyses the changing programmatic appeal of the radical right and puts this into perspective by linking it to broader changes in West European party systems. According to Kitschelt, the radical right has adopted a more centrist stance on economic questions in reaction to the changing political preferences of voters in post-industrial societies. This article set out to investigate whether the radical right has indeed changed its position.

On the basis of three cases, the French FN, the Flemish Vlaams Blok and the Dutch LPF, it is clear that established radical right parties take a fairly centrist position on economic questions in the new millennium. The authoritarianism that characterized the radical right in the 1980s and 1990s remains present. I found that only the LPF disconfirmed this pattern, but this party is relatively new and functions in a different competitive setting from the other two radical right parties. I am inclined to conclude that the LPF resembles the Populist Anti-statist party more than the NRR.

However, Kitschelt's theory is not flawless. The distinction he makes between the NRR and Populist Anti-statist parties needs serious revision. Main problems concern the definition and position of the Populist Anti-statist party, the conditions for its emergence and its relation to the party system in general, and the radical right in particular. I agree with Kitschelt that, within the context of his model, a Populist Anti-statist type of party can occur that, like the radical right, is located in the capitalist-authoritarian quadrant. However, his definition requires amendment on one point. Populist Anti-statist parties are not necessarily more radical than mainstream right-wing parties on all issues and dimensions. A Populist Anti-statist party could very well oppose mainstream right-wing parties on only one or two political issues (e.g. immigration) and have a moderate profile on other political issues. As far as the conditions for the emergence of Populist Anti-statist parties are concerned, clientelism is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for their emergence.

In regard to the distinction between Populist Anti-statist parties and the NRR, I would argue that the differences between the two are more substantial than Kitschelt's model indicates. For example, nationalism is dominant in the programmes of NRR parties, yet absent in that of Populist Anti-statist parties. An important similarity between Populist Anti-statist and NRR parties lies in their populism, in this study exemplified by the positive stance that radical right parties take on questions of collective decision modes. However, in Kitschelt's theory this

populism could easily be mistaken for libertarianism, implying the need for revision of the theory. The question of collective decision modes in the libertarian-authoritarian dimension obscures the true authoritarianism of radical right parties and should therefore be excluded from consideration.

Appendix A Party scores

	<i>Libertarian–authoritarian dimension</i>						
	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total
FRANCE							
FN	+	+	+	+	0	–	+3
PCF	0	–	–	0	–	–	-4
PS	0	0	0	0	–	–	-2
UDF	0	–	–	0	–	–	-4
UMP	0	0	0	0	0	–	-1
Verts	–	0	–	0	–	–	-4
FLANDERS							
AGALEV	–	–	–	0	–	–	-5
CD&V	0	–	0	+	+	+	+2
N-VA	0	–	0	0	+	+	+1
SP.a	0	–	–	0	0	–	-3
SPirit	–	–	–	0	–	–	-5
VLAAMS BLOK	+	+	+	+	–	–	+2
VLD	+	0	–	0	–	–	-2
THE NETHERLANDS							
CDA	+	+	0	0	+	0	+3
CU	–	+	+	+	+	–	+2
D66	0	+	–	0	–	–	-2
GL	–	–	0	0	–	–	-4
LN	+	+	0	0	–	–	0
LPF	+	+	0	0	–	–	0
PvdA	+	+	0	0	–	0	+1
SGP	+	+	+	+	+	+	+6
SP	0	–	0	0	–	–	-3
VVD	+	+	0	0	0	0	+2

Notes

The author would like to thank Peter Mair, Cas Mudde, Huib Pellikaan, Wouter van der Brug and Joop van Holsteyn, as well as the anonymous referees of *Party Politics* for their constructive criticisms on earlier drafts of this article.

¹ The debate on the appropriate terminology for describing this party family is still ongoing. The label used here – radical right – has been chosen because it is all-inclusive. It encompasses all parties that are treated in this article, i.e. parties that are more radical than the established right.

² Other factors that influence the distribution of voters over the competitive space are the sociological profile (age, education and gender) and the type of welfare regime of a country (Kitschelt, 2004).

³ Kitschelt himself seems to violate this claim, because he assesses the empirical validity of his original and updated theory solely on the basis of survey data (i.e. ideological dispositions of radical right electorates) (Kitschelt, 1995; McGann and Kitschelt, 2005).

- [4](#) Various statistical techniques are available that allow for a more complex analysis of scores on multiple dimensions. However, these techniques have serious drawbacks when positioning a small number of parties on a small number of issues. The main problem is that they artificially place parties to create a spatial representation with only two or three dimensions (an optimal solution). Thus, the ideological distances between parties are sometimes exaggerated, or on the contrary reduced, by the statistical programme to make all parties fit in its optimal solution. This can lead to inaccurate observations and analyses of party positions (see Elkink and De Lange, 2002).
- [5](#) For example, in the programme of the VVD (Dutch liberal party) the following statement regarding privatization can be found: ‘The contracting out and hiving off of public tasks and services that can be carried out more effectively by the private sector must be taken up when possible and desirable. Research into the possibilities in, for example, health care, education, agriculture, network sectors, research infrastructure, elements of the prison system, etc. should be accelerated’ (VVD, 2003: 740). On the basis of this statement, the VVD receives a score of +1 on the issue ‘privatization’. In the programme of the PCF (French communist party), the statement regarding privatization reads: ‘To resist the liberal assault, we have to guarantee and conquer new public services, modern and effective, of which the control should be democratized, and oriented exclusively to the satisfaction of its users. Only public services can warrant the equality of access and the same quality of services for all. [...] And first, stop all privatizations, like that of the EDF or the SNCF’ (PCF, 2002: 2). On the basis of this statement, the PCF receives a score of -1 on the issue ‘privatization’.
- [6](#) Kitschelt gives the following description of the opposition between libertarian and authoritarian: ‘The former emphasizes the individual autonomy of citizens to govern their life styles, the tolerance and respect for socio-cultural difference, be they related to gender or cultural beliefs and practices, and on the right of autonomous individuals to participate in all collectively binding political decisions. The authoritarian counterview envisions the conduct of social life as governed by compliance with collectively shared, uniform norms and regulatory principles of ‘decency’ that endorses cultural homogeneity, a particular form of family organization and its corresponding sexual code, justified by a dominant religious belief system and enforced by a higher social, moral and political authority to which individuals are expected to show deference’ (Kitschelt, 2004: 2).
- [7](#) The Belgian political system consists of separate areas of competition for Flemish, Walloon and Brussels parties. This study focuses exclusively on the Flemish Vlaams Blok and the Flemish party system.
- [8](#) Although the LPF is sometimes labelled a flash party, we object to the use of this label, because the LPF still commanded a considerable number of seats in the Dutch parliament after the 2003 elections, particularly given the fragmentation of the Dutch party system.
- [9](#) The Dutch parliamentary elections took place in May 2002 and then again in January 2003, after the fall of the first Balkenende government. All national parties competed in both elections with the same manifestos, some supplemented by an epilogue, and the party positions of 2002 and 2003 can therefore be seen as one (as far as the competitive space is concerned).
- [10](#) More generally, scholars have found it difficult to interpret issues of participatory democracy in the light of existing theoretical frameworks. For example, Lijphart struggled to situate the referendum in his theory of majoritarian and consensus democracies (1984).

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The European extreme-right and Islam

New directions?

José Pedro Zúquete

Introduction

Islamophobia is a word that is practically ubiquitous in today's discourse on Islam. The situation of Muslim minorities in the West is frequently framed both by academics and by pundits in terms of the 'need' to combat the 'evils' of Islamophobia. The United Nations has organized seminars on 'Confronting Islamophobia: Education for Tolerance and Understanding'¹ and such websites as *Islamophobia Watch* were created to denounce 'opinion columns and news items that we believe advocate Islamophobia and those writers and organizations taking a stand against Islamophobia'.² The Vienna-based European Union agency European Monitoring Center on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC—since March 2007 it became the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights—FRA), with a specific focus on Europe, released a much-publicized, cross-national report on 'discrimination and manifestations of Islamophobia' since 2001.³

Yet the widespread mention of Islamophobia is a recent development. The 1997 document that officially established the EUMC includes no reference to Islamophobia, but rather specifies the 'phenomena of racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism'.⁴ Literature on the European extreme right has mirrored the increasing ubiquity of the term Islamophobia in the public sphere. Though there is an ongoing debate on the definition of 'extreme right' and its shortcomings,⁵ the consensus has been to ascribe the label to highly nationalist, anti-system, and exclusionary (often racist) parties. In this light, Jean-Yves Camus, for example, has pointed out the emergence in the extreme right imagination of Islam as the 'new enemy',⁶ and has noted that 'racist rhetoric today [has] an undeniable Islamophobic dimension'.⁷ In academia, however, Islamophobia was not until recently seen as a *basic* feature of the extreme right's ideological and value system. The term itself was absent in early literature. It is true that Islam has been a target of some extreme-right parties for a considerable time. For

instance, *Identité*, a *Front National* (National Front) magazine, dedicated a 1990 issue to the ‘awakening’ of Islam, and stressed both its ‘incompatibility’ with European culture and that it constituted once again in history ‘a danger for Europe’.⁸ The scholarly tendency, however, has been to consider ‘Islamophobia’ as primarily a dimension of xenophobia,⁹ and ‘anti-Muslim’ narratives as part of a broader anti-immigration outlook of extreme-right parties,¹⁰ or as a consequence of aggressive foreign policy visions in post-communist Russia.¹¹

However, in the early 21st century, and particularly in the aftermath of September 11, 2001, the threat that the Crescent will rise over the continent and the spectre of a Muslim Europe have become *basic* ideological features and themes of the European extreme right. Thus, the concept of ‘Islam’ galvanizes group action: as the group rallies a ‘defence’ against Islamization, new issues emerge, existent issues heighten or decline in prominence, party objectives become reconsidered, and new alliances form against the ‘threat’ of this ‘common enemy’.

I thus accept the premise that extreme right ideology is not static but, within some limits, evolves and is shaped by the surrounding environment.¹² This study focuses on a variety of parties across Europe, from Austria, Belgium, Britain, Denmark, France, and Italy. The reason behind the choice of parties with different electoral fortunes and each emerging from diverse national traditions is to show how, despite their differences, they display commonalities in their approach to Islam. Because this paper’s goal is to capture the overall narrative towards Islam, a primary focus on the parties’ literature (such as manifestos, press releases, official party publications, speeches) as well as interviews of leaders and members both to the media and to the author, seems appropriate. Additionally, secondary sources (from mainstream newspapers, websites and outside groups) that yield insight into the parties’ worldview are also incorporated.

In the pages that follow, and in the light of the increased weight that the issue of Islam has gained, I will pose a number of key questions, seek to analyze ideological developments of the extreme right, and probe into the challenges that these potential shifts and re-alignments offer to the literature on the subject. Bearing in mind that each development by itself could form the basis for a new article and invite further scrutiny, this paper aims to provide an overview of trends that, in my view, open new avenues of research into the ideology of the extreme-right party family.

Islamophobia or anti-Islamic?

As a preliminary note, it is necessary to point out not only that the term ‘Islamophobia’ is present both in and outside academia, as I mentioned in the introduction, but also that there is a growing alarmism regarding the issue. This perception of imminent danger is epitomized by

the following words of the vice president of the American Humanist Association: ‘It’s like the beginning of a thunderstorm; you can sense the electricity in the air. Islamophobia is raising its ugly head in the United States as in Europe . . . We are teetering on the brink of a kind of mass hysteria—Islamophobia—that can set us back a generation or more in our quest for a world at peace’.¹³ Yet this perceived ‘hysteria’ seems to be over a term about which there is a lack of agreement regarding its meaning or to what exactly it refers. The last European Union report on ‘Discrimination and Islamophobia’ specifically states that the definition, application, and use of the term ‘remains a contested issue’.¹⁴ The introduction to a cross-national report on ‘Secularization and Religious Divides in Europe’ notes that ‘we therefore intend to use the term “Islamophobia” as a starting point’ of analysis, but ‘will not take the term for granted’.¹⁵ Regardless of these caveats, the fact of the matter is that the term shows staying power and has increasingly become the norm in the discussion of the situation of Muslims in Europe. Thus, Islamophobia designates the stigmatization of all Muslims, and is defined as a widespread mindset and fear-laden discourse in which people make blanket judgments of Islam as the enemy, as the ‘other’, as a dangerous and unchanged, monolithic bloc that is the natural subject of well-deserved hostility from Westerners.¹⁶

Owing to a ‘failure’ in explaining what Islamophobia is, there have been calls for a new definition of Islamophobia, either broader or more constrained than the current one.¹⁷ There are, however, important reasons to rethink such widespread use of the term. Several criticisms have been levelled against it, some more compelling than others. For instance, Césari has mentioned the fact that ‘the term can be misleading’ because it may subsume other forms of discrimination (such as racial or class) under religious discrimination.¹⁸ In my view there are two compelling reasons that the employment by social scientists of the term ‘Islamophobia’ should be restrained. The first stems from the term’s *indistinctiveness*: It places under the broad umbrella of ‘fear or hatred of Islam’, discourses and criticisms that have different sources, motivations, and goals. Vincent Geisser, for example, accuses pundits and social scientists who criticize Islam in the name of liberal values, of being driven essentially by a ‘fear’ that manifests in symptoms of a somewhat undefined ‘latent islamophobia’.¹⁹ Against this ‘catch-all’ dynamic, I adopt an approach similar to that of Marcel Maussen, who calls for an urgent need to distinguish between ‘academic discussions on the relations between Islam and modernity, public discussions on whether Islam recognizes the principle of separation of church and state, public outcries about Islam as a “backward religion” or as a “violent religion”, and hate speech.²⁰ Certainly a sizeable number of those who pose questions regarding Islam are not necessarily motivated by an illogical attitude, biased mindset, pure fear, or blind hate.

This aspect is linked with a second point of concern regarding the prevalent mention of ‘Islamophobia’. John Bowen argues that the term is more polemical than it is analytical: It is

'far from neutral'.²¹ In this recognition, parallels can be established with the widespread use of the label 'xenophobia' that has long been attached to those who questioned the impact of immigration or the problems arising from specific models of integration (or lack thereof) of immigrants. This issue is connected with what Chantal Mouffe has described as one of the greatest flaws of contemporary European democracies: the imposition of a 'moral framework' on a number of issues, legitimating the reign of *good*, 'acceptable discourse' (and sometimes *cordon sanitaires*) over discourse deemed *evil* and out-of-bounds. There is, of course, no denial of the existence of 'extreme' positions or xenophobic attitudes, for example. Yet, in the wake of fairly recent developments in Europe, one is hard-pressed not to support her denunciation of 'the danger of using this category [extreme-right] to demonize all the parties who defend positions that are seen as a challenge to the well-meaning establishment'.²² The indiscriminate use of such labels as 'Islamophobia', that have an unmistakably *moralistic* dimension, has the potential to stigmatize *generally* and relegate to the 'Islamophobic' periphery of public debate, those who criticize or even attempt to understand, in a non-monolithic fashion, some aspects of Islam. The conflation (sometimes open, often implicit) of legitimate criticism or valid points of view with demonization, has the consequence of ending any sort of truly democratic and open debate on any sort of issue, silencing voices afraid of stigmatization, and in practice facilitating the emergence and actions of those who indeed demonize. This rings especially true in the light of increasing recognition, in academia for example, that there has been in recent decades a lack of public debate and interaction between those who govern and the governed, about crucial issues (like immigration), which has in turn increased the appeal of those parties that profess to represent the people and call for 'true' democracies.²³ In this light, 'anti-Islamic' seems a more suitable analytical category to apply to some discourses on Islam, particularly those coming from the extreme-right, because it at least starts a necessary (and long overdue) process of *distinguishing* between discourses about Islam: those who show irrational fears and treat Islam as a monolithic bloc from those who may be critical of some aspects yet are not *ipso facto* 'anti' Islam because of their criticism.²⁴

A greater focus on Christianity?

The authors of a 1998 research paper to the European Commission argued that it was no longer possible to discuss political futures 'without also discussing questions of meaning, spirituality, and cultural identity'.²⁵ A decade later these words ring truer than ever, particularly in regard to the European 'political future'. One of the developments of notice in the last years has been the growing relevance of Christian motifs and themes in the narratives set forth by a substantial number of European extreme-right parties.²⁶ The increased

perception of Muslims, and Islam in general, as an ominous threat to the native communities is in no small part responsible for this evolution. In a few cases, such as that of the National Front, the attention paid to Christianity is an intensified *continuation* of a previous ideological stance. Thus, when Le Pen defends outlawing large mosques on the grounds that they constitute ‘buildings of political-religious conquest’ and ‘threaten the Christian identity of our country’, he is by and large reiterating a familiar theme.²⁷

In some cases this ‘turn to Christianity’ has been novel and dramatic, and has implied a rejection of previous positions. This has been the case, for instance, with the Northern League. During an initial phase—which lasted until the late 1990s—the Catholic Church was defined as a natural enemy of the freedom of the North, because of the Church’s ‘collusion’ with the oppressive centralist forces since the unification of the Italian state. The Vatican, and its ecclesiastical hierarchy in particular, were denounced as a reactionary force and enemy of Northern liberation. The outbreak of the Kosovo war (which the party saw as part of an American-led project to ‘Islamicize’ Europe), coupled with an increasing emphasis by the party on ‘traditional’ values and principles (as a response to the disruptive forces of liberalization and globalization), triggered a shift in its discourse toward a pro-Christian, pro-Vatican direction. Pope John Paul II went from being a ‘Polish enemy’ of the besieged community to, in the words of Umberto Bossi, ‘a great [man] … the first [pope] for one hundred years who does not retreat in front of the Masonic and anti-Christian doctrines … the Church is starting to wake up’.²⁸ Thus, the League led the opposition against the construction of Islamic places of worship,²⁹ and increasingly stressed the ‘millenarian struggle’ between Christianity and Islam.

This anti-Islamic reorientation of the party received a major boost after the terrorist attacks of September 11. If the anti-Islamic focus had previously been fixed on the consequences for the indigenous community identity of Muslim settlement in Italy, ‘Islam’ soon became in the narrative of the party the synonym for terrorism, violence, and death. The party increased its activism on the ground against policies and practices that seemed to facilitate what the party called the ‘Islamization’ of the country.³⁰ A European MP for the Northern League declared at a street protest against the *burqa* that ‘Islam is a dangerous virus, and we must stop it from spreading, because Padania must remain Christian’.³¹ Historical battles are reinterpreted in the light of the steady influx of Muslim immigration to Europe. When the Italian parliament decided to remove a painting of the 1571 naval battle of Lepanto (in which the Ottoman fleet was defeated by Christian forces) from parliament Mario Borghezio, a top Northern League official, reacted angrily, saying that the decision ‘was an attack against the Christian identity of the country [because Lepanto] signalled the victory of a Christian Europe against Muslim invasion’.³² In this new context it came as no surprise that the party daily was one of the strongest supporters of Pope Benedict XVI when he made comments about the constitutive

role of violence in Islam that triggered worldwide Muslim protests.³³ Northern League officials also praise Benedict for his focus on the need to ‘re-Christianize’ Europe. ‘We need to thank Ratzinger’, declared one League member. ‘Because of him the Church has remembered its origins [and] what the deep meaning of belonging to a Christian community is’.³⁴

A similar emphasis on ‘Christian roots’ has become a feature of the discourse of the British National Party (BNP), particularly since 2001 and in reaction to the Islam-as-a-threat framing of the debate. Nick Griffin, leader of the BNP, has proclaimed the party to be the ‘vanguard of the resistance to Islamification’, which he deems to be ‘the most pressing problem of the first half of our young century’.³⁵ As in the case of the Italian Northern League, the BNP has actively opposed the construction of mosques, each of which it describes as a step toward the ‘Islamic colonization’ of the country (as, for example, the large mosque planned for the 2012 London Olympics).³⁶ Even a symbol of traditional English nationalism such as Saint George has been described as a ‘fiery and powerful symbol of opposition to Islam’.³⁷ Further the BNP has defended Pope Benedict XVI, and praised his ‘courage to speak against the perils of Islam’³⁸ while heavily criticizing the Anglican Church of England for lacking the resolve to address ‘the very real threat of Britain becoming an Islamic state in the next few decades’.³⁹ In this context, in which the Church of England is accused of having resigned itself to irrelevance and extinction, with ‘hand wringing ministers kneel[ing] before the advancing waves carrying aloft the mighty sword of Islam’,⁴⁰ it is no wonder that the party has been linked to the creation of a new Christian organization, the Christian Council, whose mission statement reads: ‘At this time of moral crisis and faced with the very real prospect of the spiritual void being filled with dangerous creeds and cults, now more than ever, is a strong voice needed to reconnect the church with the lost congregations’.⁴¹ When the head of the Church of England noted that the incorporation of some aspects of Sharia law into the British legal system was ‘unavoidable’, the BNP reacted by stating that these declarations were part of a larger disposition of the Establishment toward ‘betraying Britain’s Christian heritage in order to appease Islam’.⁴² In the party’s magazine *Identity*, a writer suggested that the BNP should commit itself to the defence of ‘civilisational Christianity’, because ‘the alternative to a Christian Britain is chaos’ and could lead *inter alia* to ‘the surrender to the aggressiveness of a certain foreigner religion’.⁴³

This renewed emphasis on the ‘Christian identity’ of the ‘original communities’, who are now endangered by the advance of Islam in Europe, can be seen across the spectrum of parties on the extreme right. The short-lived political group of the European Parliament, ‘Identity, Tradition and Sovereignty’ (ITS), a coalition of extreme right parties from six member states that lasted from January to November 2007, had as a founding principle the ‘commitment to Christian values, heritage, culture’. Chairman Bruno Gollnisch stated that one of the goals of the group was to go beyond a narrow euroscepticism (limited to attacking a European

superstate) that does not ‘properly defend Christian values’.⁴⁴ During the Austrian parliamentary elections of October 2006, the Freedom Party campaigned with a specifically anti-Islamic platform and released a political advertisement in which the cross atop Stephen’s Cathedral in Vienna, the oldest church in the country, was replaced with an Islamic crescent. The caption read: ‘This is the true hidden desire of Muslims’.⁴⁵ Amidst warnings against the impending ‘Islamization’ of the country, the Flemish party Vlaams Belang proclaims to be the real guardian of Christianity. As stated by Filip Dewinter, ‘In political disputes about abortion, euthanasia, same-sex-marriage, adoption for homosexual couples, family values, subsidies for Christian or Jewish schools, we have always defended the Christian viewpoint. On those topics, we were better Christians than the so-called Christian-Democrats’. He added, ‘Many of us are not “believers” in the religious meaning of the word, but we share the moral values of Christianity. They are the foundation of European civilization’.⁴⁶

This idea of an embattled ‘Christian Europe’ weakened by secularism and threatened with disappearance under the continuous migratory flow and settlement of Muslim populations, has found support in the warnings of Pope Benedict XVI against the spiritual void into which Europe fell due to the triumph of a Godless rationality that denies its peoples the role of faith and spiritual guidance.⁴⁷ As the Pope declared in an address regarding the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, Europe has ‘an identity comprised of a set of universal values that Christianity helped forge, thus giving Christianity not only a historical but [also] a foundational role *vis-à-vis* Europe. These values, which make up the soul of the Continent, must remain in the Europe of the third millennium as a “ferment” of civilization’. If Europe stays the course of radical secularism, in a context of the steady decline of birth rates, it is ‘following a path that could lead to its departure from history’.⁴⁸ This theme of an impending collapse of a Christian Europe is not exclusive to the Catholic hierarchy but also comes from Protestant environs. Although some of these voices specifically denounce the ongoing ‘Islamization of Europe’,⁴⁹ the emerging consensus seems to focus on the need for a more assertive and aggressive defence of ‘Christian’ values that would bring about the ‘re-Christianization’ of Europe. In this scenario it is not surprising that many nationalist parties find in the appeals of the Church, notably the Vatican, a confirmation of their *own* message and an ally in the need for urgent action against the decadence and the collapse of a Christian Europe that looms on the horizon. Eric Kaufmann has written that the growth of a European Islam may lead to an indigenous nationalist response (in the form of stronger nationalist parties) or ‘may lead to a renewed emphasis on Christian identity’.⁵⁰ Those variables, however, are not necessarily opposed and need not to exclude each other. The latest developments in European nationalist groups indicate that, particularly in opposition to visions of a Muslim takeover, a more Christian direction within these parties is already under way.

Toward philo-Semitism?

While anti-Semitism has been absent from the narrative of some parties (the Northern League, for example), distrust of Jews—perceived as alien, rootless, and engaged in international conspiracies against the unity of the nation—has long been a trait of European extreme-right parties (for instance, the National Front in France). In more recent times, however, there has been a discursive shift in many of these parties to a decidedly pro-Jewish direction. This trend has been uneven, and some parties, like Germany's National Democratic Party (NPD), remain decidedly loyal to their anti-Semitic origins.⁵¹ A case in point is the Flemish Vlaams Belang that went from hardly taking any notice of Jews⁵² to—in an increasingly anti-Islamic context—the staunch support of Judaism and Zionism.⁵³ Filip Dewinter has often professed his support of and admiration for Jews, both in Jewish and in mainstream media. He repeatedly mentions the ‘Judeo-Christian’⁵⁴ foundations of Europe and the West. ‘Jewish values are European values’, he stated in an interview, ‘and Jewish civilization is one of the roots of Western civilization’.⁵⁵ The party has vowed to defend the Jewish communities against attacks from Muslims, which Dewinter described as ‘the first pogroms in Belgium since World War II’.⁵⁶ Israel is also praised as a ‘natural ally’ of Europe because it is ‘the only nation with freedom of speech, freedom of religion, rule of law [in the Middle East]. It’s a paradox, but even the Arabs in Israel have more political rights and more freedom than their brothers in the Arab countries. Israel struggles for survival and security in a region that’s ruled by bloody dictators’.⁵⁷ An interesting case is the British National Party that has recently been trying to distance itself from anti-Semitism, one of the driving forces of the party since its origins. The party leader has criticized the rabid ‘blame-the-Jew’ mentality,⁵⁸ and stated that for the BNP the idea ‘that “the Jew is the enemy” is simply over for us now’ because the party wants to ‘get on with the real struggles’.⁵⁹ The party has given space to voices that openly profess admiration for Israel. A BNP member announced that the party ‘has moved on in recent years, casting off the leg-irons of conspiracy theories and the thinly veiled anti-Semitism which has held this party back for two decades’. Instead the party identified as ‘the real enemies of the British people’ two groups: ‘home grown Anglo-Saxon Celtic liberal leftists’ and ‘the Crescent Horde, the endless wave of Islamists who are flocking to our shores to bring our island nations into the embrace of their barbaric desert religion’. Thus, the anti-Semitic ‘lunatic fringe of the Nationalist movement’ should be rejected and Israel’s ‘nationalist’ stance praised. After all, ‘the 21st century is the Islamic century. Unless we start to resist the threat of Islamic extremism then within 100 years the West will have become Eurabia’.⁶⁰ In France Marine Le Pen, who vowed to ‘de-demonize’ the image of the party, has made overtures to the French Jewish community and, as a member of the European parliament, has registered with the Delegation for Relations with Israel. She was behind the

decision to send National Front members to a demonstration in memory of a French Jew killed in a hate-crime, and told the media that she wanted to put an end to a ‘number of misunderstandings’ between the party and the Jewish community who, Marine Le Pen said, ‘have nothing to fear from the National Front’.⁶¹ ‘The French community, who are increasingly victims of attacks by Islamic radicals’, she said on one occasion, ‘should be able to turn to us for support’.⁶² For this show of solidarity with Jews, more traditional voices close to the party have accused her of trying to create, together with the Flemish Vlaams Belang, an ‘axis’ of rapprochement with the Jewish community in order to confront Muslims.⁶³ Guillaume Faye, one of France’s New Right main theorists, advocates that those who defend European identity should get rid of an obsessive and ‘chronic anti-Judaism’ because the real danger is colonization from ‘the third world and Islam’.⁶⁴

Recently a few voices in academia have argued that ‘Muslims’ have replaced ‘Jews’ as the new transnational Other in exclusionary discourses in the European Union. ‘Welcome to the new Europe, in which the Jews are no longer persecuted but revered as cosmopolitan ancestors’, observed Dominic Boyer.⁶⁵ For Matti Bunzl, the modern form of anti-Semitism has run its historical course and ‘there simply is no debate on the legitimacy of the Jewish presence in Europe’. Whereas anti-Semitism is a thing of the past, ‘designed to protect the purity of the ethnic nation-state, Islamophobia is marshalled to safeguard the future of European civilization’.⁶⁶ To other scholars anti-Semitism provides an accurate model regarding how Muslims are increasingly perceived as perpetual aliens to the indigenous culture.⁶⁷ Some remarkable differences between the treatment and status of Jews in the past and the situation of Muslims in today’s Europe should not be underestimated, however, and the fact remains that traditional anti-Semitism can resurge in other forms—in a ferocious form of anti-Zionism, for example—and can even manifest itself in anti-Jewish violence perpetrated by Muslim youths (visible during the second Palestinian Intifada 2000–2006).⁶⁸ Yet, an increasing number of acknowledgments by some extreme-right parties of the Jewish contribution to European culture, and support of Israel, *may* serve as evidence that the traditional demonization of Jews is taking a backseat to a new, fierce stigmatization of Muslims in narratives of belonging and exclusion in Europe.

Beyond nationalism?

Nationalism has long been identified as a core, and perhaps as *the* most-important, feature of extreme right-wing parties.⁶⁹ Further, these parties proudly declare themselves to be the only ‘authentic’ national forces of the country, and a majority of them feature variations of ‘nation’ in their own names. It has been observed that in some intellectual circles, such as those around

the European New Right, nationalism was running out of fashion, replaced by an allegiance to a wider source of cultural identity, such as Europe. I believe that this development is not restricted to these rather small circles. I argue here that although conceding that nationalism may have more than one centre of control,⁷⁰ the height to which the notions of ‘Europe’ and ‘West’ have reached in the narratives of the European extreme-right warrants a closer look at the hypothesis that the ‘defence’ of the original communities by these groups has been increasingly extended to a European level and does not limit itself to the borders or territories of the country. This trajectory can be seen across the spectrum of extreme-right parties and has become more intense in recent years. In some respect this post-national discourse, the greater focus on European and Western borders and traditions, complements the nationalist stance, but has also the potential to compete with it. The emphasis on a broader entity—Europe or the West—emanates both from the need collectively to defend indigenous Europeans from the ‘New World Order’ and its globalist ethos (which erases traditions and roots),⁷¹ and from fears of, and struggle against, Islamization.

A recurring theme of transformation of Europe into a new geo-political entity dominated by Muslims called *Eurabia* emerges in many of the discourses. The work of Jewish historian Bat Ye’or,⁷² is becoming a reference, and such concepts as *Eurabia* and *Dhimmitude* (referring to the subjected status of Christians and Jews under Islamic governance) have entered the vocabulary of the extreme-right (and, one might add, some sectors of the mainstream right as well). Asked to define his party, Flemish Party leader Filip Dewinter replied, ‘We are the defenders of Western civilization, with its two pillars: Judeo-Christianity and the heritage of the ancient Greece’. Bat Ye’or is hailed as someone who was able both to unveil the ‘shameful political shift’ that led European elites and Arab leaders to concoct together the formation of Eurabia, and to point out ‘how European politicians are kowtowing to Islam’. Bat Ye’or sheds light on dynamics that were previously in the dark. Dewinter explains it thus: ‘I never understood how European politicians could be so short sighted. It seems so absurd. Again, Bat Ye’or explains how this fits into a larger pattern of creating a new political entity called Eurabia. It’s not just weakness or ill judgement. It’s part of a plan’. Dewinter adds, ‘These Eurabian-minded politicians think they can consolidate their political power by making an alliance with the Muslim world. By selling out Europe to its worst enemies. They hope a strong Eurabia will be able to counterbalance the power of the United States’. This Eurabia path is thus leading Europe to a catastrophe: ‘It puts at stake the physical survival of our European nations. We could go down the road of Lebanon’.⁷³ The focus here is on the survival of Europe, and potentially the entire West, with the threat to the Flemish community as *part* of a broader Europe-wide struggle. The Eurabian narrative is also gaining strength in the discourse of the British National Party. When Italian journalist and polemicist Oriana Fallaci passed away, the party praised her as someone who ‘defied the civilizational transformation of Europe into Eurabia’.⁷⁴ According to Nick Griffin, the BNP leader, ‘We are deeply concerned

about the mainly—though not exclusively—French elite project to morph the EU, Turkey and the Mahgreb into “Eurabia”. Bat Ye’or is 100% right about this.⁷⁵ In an article about the November 2005 riots in France Griffin described his party as ‘the vanguard’ in the ‘struggle between the West and Islam’, for if the party fails in its mission, ‘Europe will be no more, and our grandchildren will curse us in their *dhimmi* status as they pay endless tribute and suffer ceaseless oppression, injustice, humiliation and rape in the lands that once belonged to their free forebears’.⁷⁶ As written by a BNP columnist, ‘This is in fact the start of World War 4, with its roots in the victory of Charles Martel over Islam in the Battle of Tours in 732 AD. Islam is once again awakening, and the West must awaken as well’.⁷⁷

The Northern League in Italy shares an analogous view regarding the need to defend Europe and the West in the face of the ‘imperialist’ designs of Islam. Northern League senior member Roberto Calderoli, decrying the West’s abjuration of ‘our Christian roots, identity and culture’, argued in the party’s newspaper for the launch of ‘crusades of Western peoples, who still remember the battle of Lepanto’, against Islam.⁷⁸ When the Islamic threat—both in terms of ‘colonization’ and terrorism—is discussed in the party literature, it is typically framed as a danger not merely to the community but to the peoples of Europe and the West. The party claims to itself the role of supreme protector of the West against Islam; after all, ‘We were the first to ring the alarm about the danger that Islam represents, about their inherent hostility toward the West’.⁷⁹ ‘As preached by Oriana Fallaci’, commented a party official, ‘we need to show the pride of being Westerners, Christians and Padani’.⁸⁰ Mogens Camre, member of the European Parliament with the Danish People’s Party, also mentions the need to combat the ‘real danger of an Islamization of Europe’ as a top priority of its party. He explicitly frames the discourse in terms of a collective European identity, saying, ‘We think the Muslim countries belong in the Middle Ages and we will not see our democratic countries being destroyed by people who think they should rule the world according to a book written in the Middle East in the 7th and 8th centuries’.⁸¹ Regarding the threat of ‘Islamization’, an Austrian Freedom Party official observes that there is a real ‘threat regarding the cultural integrity of the European nations and peoples with its cultures and traditions . . . when Islamization threatens our laws, rules, habits and traditions it needs to be rolled back’. He added, ‘Islamic countries must grant equal rights to Christians in their countries as Europe grants to Muslims who integrate into our society’.⁸² At the same time the new ‘pan-European party’ envisioned by four right-wing nationalist leaders (from Austria, France, Belgium, and Bulgaria) aims at rescuing Europe from the twin evils of ‘globalization and Islamization’. ‘Patriots of all the countries of Europe, unite!’ exhorted the leader of Austria’s Freedom Party at the conference where such plans were announced.⁸³ At the heart of political parties commonly described as ‘extreme-right’, nationalism is still the dominant force. Yet it is difficult to deny the emergence—and the examples presented here reinforce this perception—of a growing turn toward post-nationalist

dynamics and arguments in the discourse of many of such parties. It is as if there is a direct relationship between their concerns *vis-à-vis* an Islamic community or *umma* united by faith and mores, *and* the need of these parties to present themselves as representatives and first line of defence of a wider European (and Western) transnational community *also* bound by a common (Christian) faith and values. This dynamic emerges clearly in the way, for example, that a potential (and increasingly unlikely) EU membership of Turkey is depicted by the European extreme-right. Many anti-Turkey membership propaganda materials, from a different number of parties, portray a threatening Crescent over the map of Europe with the headline, ‘Turkey No!’ One of the ways that, in the last general elections, the Austrian Freedom Party promoted its anti-system image was to state repeatedly that, unlike mainstream parties, it rejected Turkey’s membership in the EU.⁸⁴ The alternative ‘European project’ promoted by leader of the French National Front Jean-Marie Le Pen, is based on a ‘coherent group of peoples belonging to a Christian civilization [and] sharing a common culture’,⁸⁵ which effectively excludes any Muslim countries (like Turkey). Raising the spectre of a ‘true Islamic invasion of Europe’ in the eventuality of Turkey’s membership in the European Union, the Northern League has been continually campaigning for a popular referendum that ‘will allow all citizens to have their say on a historical issue that will seal the destiny of our peoples’.⁸⁶ It has been argued that the debate on Turkish membership transformed Turkey into the ““other” for self-definition of what it was to be defined as a European’.⁸⁷ More to the point, Casanova wrote that after 30 years of immigration from territories outside of Europe, the Turkish question is part of a broader issue in which ‘Islam’ is identified as the ‘utterly other’. Yet, the rejection of Islam by European extreme-right parties is dismissed by the same author as merely ‘nativist’ and ‘nationalist’.⁸⁸ As I have attempted to show in this section, a third ‘Europeanist’ dimension could be added, regardless of how different this ‘Europe’ is from the one currently promoted by Brussels. An increased ‘European identity’—going beyond a mere attachment to the original homelands—in these parties is certainly associated with the prominent role that Islam plays as the ‘other’ in contemporary discourses about ‘what it means’ to be an European in the 21st century.⁸⁹

From the periphery to the centre?

The question of the adoption by the mainstream right of themes and issues previously ‘owned’ by extreme-right parties (such as those dealing with law and order or immigration, for instance) has been addressed with some regularity by the literature on the extreme right.⁹⁰ Hainsworth has edited a volume on these parties, containing the telling subtitle ‘From the Margins to the Mainstream’, in which he concludes by stating that ‘in a variety of situations,

they have influenced the agendas, policies and discourses of major political parties and governments'.⁹¹ In this section I will address the ways in which the increasing importance of the issue of 'Islam' has led to a *de facto* mainstreaming of opinions and policies previously deemed too 'extreme' and relegated to the periphery of the political spectrum by centrist parties.

But before illustrating and discussing this point, I will focus on another crucial consequence that this emphasis on Islam has had for the extreme right. In fact, recent years have witnessed a growing assimilation by these parties of a number of issues that are 'respectable', that are morally compelling for a substantial majority of public opinion and rooted in relatively consensual attitudes and inclinations. In short, the extreme right has co-opted issues that a large number of mainstream politicians, both on the mainstream Right and Left, find hard to disagree with, if not fully support. This development has rendered the distinction between what is 'mainstream' and what should be categorized as 'extreme' difficult and, at times, hopelessly muddied. For example, the situation of women in Muslim communities—and the issue of women's rights in general—illustrate this point well. When the situation of women in Islam is discussed, the European extreme right puts forward arguments that, in a not-so-distant past, were considered to be positions exclusive to progressive and feminist groups in the West. The extreme right has been visibly active in its rejection of several cultural practices associated with Islam—ranging from the use of the headscarf and forced marriages, to honour-killings and female genital mutilation—by using arguments similar to those employed by mainstream groups that denounce inequalities and discrimination against women. This development can be seen across the continent. Danish People's Party MEP Mogens Camre stated that 'headscarves and burkhas are a discrimination of women. The real effect is to keep women apart from society and prevent them from obtaining freedom and equality. No society can develop without equality and freedom for women'.⁹² One of the most popular books in Denmark, *Islamists and Naivists*, was co-written by two figures of the country's political mainstream (both Social Democrats, one a feminist) and denounces the 'totalitarian' impulses of Islam and its claim to control every single aspect of the lives of its adherents, and especially of women. As one of the writers observed, 'If a woman doesn't wear a headscarf, the Islamists will exert maximum pressure and use the threat of violence to make sure that she does. It is that zealous attempt to apply Islamist principles that is as authoritarian as Nazism or communism'.⁹³

In recent years the theme of 'oppression of women' under Islam has become a major theme of the literature of the Italian Northern League. According to League writers, the condition of Muslim women is a tell-tale sign of Islam's 'backwardness', and is incompatible with the mores of a superior Western civilization that strives for gender equality. A party MP commented that the Western way of life 'is based on civilized [notions of] democracy and respect for others ... rooted in the DNA of each citizen', while Islam's way of life 'is based on

uncivilized traditions such as *sharia*, the death penalty, *lex talionis* . . . infibulation, polygamy, the idea that inside families men are superior to women. These are all uncivilized traditions'.⁹⁴ When the Italian parliament refused to decide on a motion submitted by the Northern League coalition regarding 'violations against women's freedom in the name of religion', a party MP showed her outrage by declaring that 'in order to not offend Islamic susceptibilities', the parliament decided to ignore the fact that 'that in our country there are women and girls who are "slaves" or subjected to personal restrictions or forced [to accept] polygamy in the name of a religious faith that does not recognize the principle of equality between men and women'.⁹⁵ The British National Party has also intervened in favour of women's rights, specifically in the context of media reports about the establishment of Sharia courts and a two-tier legal system in Britain.⁹⁶ The BNP accused the media, and particularly the BBC, of ignorance about 'the abuse women and minorities suffer under Sharia laws the world over'. It continued: 'Women are beaten, raped, murdered, mutilated and oppressed by Muslim "culture" and English law should never turn its back on these vulnerable members of their society'. Like the Northern League, the BNP stresses gender equality in their denunciations of Islam. The party warns that the government's failure to stop Islamic law from taking hold, 'would be a travesty and a direct refutation of western morals that posit that all people are created equal and stand the same in the eyes of the law'.⁹⁷

The debate about the use of the headscarf in French public schools provides an example of an issue that conflates the questions of separation of Church and State and of gender equality, and has mobilized on the same front different forces of the political spectrum from the extreme right to feminists and progressives. For example, one of the strongest supporters of banning the *hijab* was a prominent feminist, Elisabeth Badinter, who denounced the scarf as the 'oppression of a sex' and at odds with the Western tradition of women's emancipation.⁹⁸ A Socialist and former president of SOS Racisme defended a left-wing policy of immigration quotas, and of setting as a precondition for potential immigrants the respect for both '*laïcité* [secularism] and gender equality'.⁹⁹ One should not be surprised, then, that Le Pen repeatedly raised in his speeches the need to enforce the principle of separation of Church and State while decrying the measures taken by the French government,¹⁰⁰ to 'institutionalize' Islam in the country. These efforts, Le Pen said, marked the end of the principle of *laïcité* and the first stage of the official financing of Islam in France under the pressure of its burgeoning 'migrant and demographic force'.¹⁰¹ The necessity of maintaining religious and cultural neutrality in public schools has also been invoked by the Freedom Party in Austria as a reason to ban the use of the headscarves by both teachers and students.¹⁰² Denmark's People's Party was behind a proposal to ban 'culturally specific' headgear, except for those cultural manifestations that reflected a Christian-Jewish background.¹⁰³ On this issue the Italian Northern League leads the fight against any attempt to remove Christian symbols from schools, and has even argued that

in order to prevent a Muslim ‘takeover’ of public institutions, the Italian Constitution should explicitly strengthen the ‘Christian identity’ of the country.¹⁰⁴

The increased political focus on Islam has also made a fierce opposition to the ritual slaughter of animals—particularly the production of *halal* meat, the only one permissible according to Sharia law—a major theme of extreme-right narratives. In this opposition these movements have often joined animal rights groups in protesting against halal food on the basis that it promotes an inhumane and barbaric method of slaughter. The British National Party has been active on this front, and even broke the news story that halal meat was served in many schools across the country because of an increasing number of Muslim students. The party quoted from a report by an animal rights group arguing that the practice caused considerable animal suffering. A BNP official added that ‘we really don’t like the way these animals are killed’.¹⁰⁵ The party affirmed not only that ‘this is an issue of animal welfare’, but that ‘parents have a right to know if their sons and daughters are unknowingly being fed on ritually slaughtered meat’.¹⁰⁶ The Danish People’s Party has launched a campaign to ban *halal* slaughter because ‘consideration of religious minorities should not be prioritized over consideration of animals’.¹⁰⁷ Similar accusations of cruelty to animals and calls by both the extreme right and animal welfare organizations to ban ritual slaughter have been reported in Austria,¹⁰⁸ France,¹⁰⁹ and Italy.¹¹⁰

At the same time, in no small part because of the pressure the ‘Islamic question’ places on contemporary European societies, ‘governing parties’ and politicians have shifted public policies and discourses toward positions that previous observers in academia have dismissed as extreme and exclusionary. A case in point is the growing relevance that cultural norms and values play in discussions of immigration, national identities, and national belongings across Europe. For the last 20 years, scholars have argued that contemporary extreme-right parties no longer held ‘classic’ racist positions in their discriminatory and exclusionist positions *vis-à-vis* other individuals and communities. Pierre-André Taguieff describes this transformation from ‘biological racism’ (based on inequality and hierarchy of races) to a new, ‘differentialist’ form of racism in which exclusion was based on cultural differences. This new cultural racism advocates the ‘right to difference’ in which different cultures, viewed as incommensurable ‘totalities’, needed to be preserved and separated in order not to corrupt the ‘authenticity’ and ‘integrity’ of each culture. Such a perspective views culturally distinct groups as aliens whose absorption into the prevalent culture provides mainstream society with a fruitless and potentially disastrous task.¹¹¹ This distinction introduced by Taguieff, since its first formulation, has been widely used in the study of the extreme right in Europe and beyond Europe.¹¹² Stolcke, in a similar manner, added the notion of ‘cultural fundamentalism’ to the debate over anti-immigrant and racist groups. This form of exclusion was thus based on the assumption that cultures are incommensurable, with the caveat that, contrasting with racist theories,

cultural fundamentalism ‘has a certain openness which leaves room for requiring immigrants, if they wish to live in our midst, to assimilate culturally’.¹¹³

Yet, as we progress toward the end of the first decade of the new century, even a detached observer cannot fail to notice that a great cultural revival has been taking hold of mainstream European politics. Though an emphasis on cultural aspects has of course existed before (see for example Germany’s long-term reluctance to give citizenship to *gastarbeiter*, many of whom are Muslim Turks), particularly since the late nineties, the emphasis on culture in regard to immigration, both in mainstream discourse and policies, has become conspicuous. In a 1997 article, political scientist Giovanni Sartori warned about the challenges posed to pluralistic European communities by massive immigration, particularly that from Islamic countries. Referring to the danger that ‘cultural strangers’ represented, Sartori wrote that ‘strangers who are unwilling to give in exchange for what they get, who wish to remain “alien” to the point of challenging the very laws of the land that hosts them, are bound to elicit fear, rejection, and hostility’.¹¹⁴ These arguments have been reinforced after the terrorist attacks of Muslim extremists both in America and Europe. Models of immigrant integration—from the multicultural (as in Britain or the Netherlands) to those focused on assimilation (as with the case of France)—have been questioned and revamped due to the unavoidable reality of the increased growth of separated communities that do not engage with and many times refuse, if not downright hostile to, the norms and values of the broader society. The growing awareness of the danger that Islamic extremism represents for Europe’s civil societies created a political need for intervention, for the sake of national security. Thus, underlying this cultural revival are not only worries about Europe’s cultural demise but, importantly, an urgent need to address the real issue of radical Islamist activity on European soil. This is the starting point from which a wave of new policies toward immigrants and newcomers have sprung to life across Europe, and not only has urged the need for but has often imposed *as a condition for entering or remaining within the country* ‘integration’ and acceptance of ‘indigenous’ norms and values. These policies are intimately linked with a more pronounced emphasis on ‘national’ identity and values to which immigrants must demonstrate allegiance. This urged reassertion of national identity and liberal values not only emerges from conservatives,¹¹⁵ but cuts across the ideological spectrum. David Goodhart, a progressive, argues that the left must discard ‘the fallacy that nationalism and national feeling is only and necessarily a belligerent and xenophobic force’.¹¹⁶

In this sense, it is true that civic integration policies have acquired an obligatory (and coercive) character.¹¹⁷ The Netherlands set the pace in revising an existent integration law and warning newcomers to ‘be aware of Dutch values and keep the country’s norms’. Immigrants are now required to pass an immigration test that includes a DVD showing gay and topless women.¹¹⁸ Such citizenship tests, for a long time unknown in Europe, are becoming the norm. In Denmark, the ministry of integration website instructs potential citizens ‘to work, pay tax,

don't hit your children, and show respect for equal rights between sexes'.¹¹⁹ Britain introduced an American-style citizenship ceremony, and has launched citizenship tests. These measures were preceded by a vigorous debate in which mainstream politicians, both from the left and the right, argued for a more active assertion of 'core' national values. Former Home Secretary David Blunkett vowed to 'protect the rights and duties of all citizens and confront practices and beliefs that hold them back, particularly women. The left has to be consistent about defending core values, rather than retreating into moral relativism when its commitments are tested'.¹²⁰ In an op-ed piece David Davis, the shadow home secretary (from 2003 to June 2008), asked, 'Are we going to find the compromises to preserve the freedoms, the tolerance, the give-and-take, that characterize the most open, vital and creative society in history? Or are we going to allow the splintering of loyalties, the division of communities, that will corrode the foundations of that society?'¹²¹ There has been a growing public discussion about practices that are not part of British culture, for example forced marriages (particularly Muslim first-cousin marriages), and a cabinet minister warned about the 'genetic' dangers associated with inbreeding.¹²²

France, under the initiative of then Interior minister Nicolas Sarkozy, adopted an obligatory 'social integration contract' (targeted at combating ethnic endogamy) for all new entrants. Further, before applying for permanent residence, immigrants to France must prove that they are 'well-integrated' into French society, meaning, among other things, that the applicant complies with the principles of the French Republic.¹²³ As a sign that the times—and the boundaries of what is acceptable to propose—have indeed changed regarding integration policies for immigrants in Europe, Sarkozy vowed during the presidential campaign to create a Ministry for Immigration and National Identity, which led Jean-Marie Le Pen to accuse him of 'soliciting' in the National Front's territory.¹²⁴ The first bill presented by the new Ministry targeted foreigners who wanted to join their families, and introduced tests to ascertain would-be immigrants' knowledge of French language, history, and 'Republican values'.¹²⁵

Taken as a whole these examples, which are far from exhaustive, illustrate how in recent years there has been a clear shift in the discourse and policies regarding immigration. This shift has been driven by the relevance that the frame Islam-as-a-threat-to-European-security-and-values has gained in public opinion. Further, the discussion and the launch of new models of integration of immigrants has been linked with cultural narratives (a fact that is not often acknowledged and is sometimes denied by public officials), and the need for communities with cultural practices at odds with the indigenous majority to adjust and conform. There is an underlying cultural justification running through the new citizenship reforms and 'integration contracts' imposed on newcomers. In truth, the emphasis is on 'integration', and these new official measures reveal *per se* the belief in the possibility of integration of immigrants from different cultures, as with the case of Muslims. This optimism is close to non-existent in

extreme-right narratives that promote instead the impossibility of such integration and the need for separation. Nevertheless, the trend toward cultural justifications in order to decide or determine a sense of belonging to the community—long considered a feature of the extreme-right—seems clear. This realization arguably raises the question of whether the concept ‘extreme’ is indeed malleable, varying according to circumstances and the politicians behind the discourses and-or policies. It depends on the messenger, not the message.¹²⁶ With respect to this a note of caution is necessary. While mainstream discourse on Muslim immigration tends to be nuanced both in terms of the diagnosis and proposed solutions, the extreme-right view is framed both on an either-or scenario (assimilation or expulsion) and in an apocalyptic tone (the coming of Eurabia, the extinction of European peoples, etc.). Also, it could be argued that in championing Western and democratic values as a way of countering Islam, the extreme right is essentially striving for legitimacy by inoculating itself from accusations of racism and xenophobia, while pursuing in its ultimate quest for ethnic homogeneity.¹²⁷ In any case, the extent or degree to which, particularly after September 11, 2001, the extreme right has influenced the establishment (mainstreaming of its positions) and/or was influenced by a favourable anti-Muslim environment (co-option of issues) certainly deserves further qualitative and quantitative investigation.

The ‘spirit of decadence’ goes mainstream?

Another point, however, merits reflection. Scholars, or even non-specialists, who have followed the extreme-right are aware that one of the driving forces of its ideology is the idea of *decline*, either of the nation or, increasingly, of Europe.¹²⁸ In a context in which signs of irreversible ‘decadence’ are perceived to be everywhere, extreme-right leaders portray their groups as the ‘last defenders’ of their beleaguered communities, whose cultural identity, authenticity, and independence are threatened by national and global forces. The ‘disappearance’ or ‘death’ of the community is, in these narratives, a real possibility looming on the near horizon. The patriarch of the European extreme-right, Jean-Marie Le Pen, has repeatedly warned that France and Europe, due to massive immigration and demographic decline, were living on borrowed time. His daughter (and in line to become his successor at the head of the party) Marine Le Pen argues that ‘if we go on like this, Europe will no longer be Europe, [but] will turn into an Islamic Republic’. Thus, she says, ‘We are at a turning point, and if we don’t protect our civilization it will disappear’.¹²⁹ For the British National Party’s leader, what is at stake is Europe’s survival because of ‘continued mass immigration and the high Muslim birthrate, coupled with our own suicidally low one’.¹³⁰

Yet, in this regard, particularly since the last decade, the idea of an encroaching decadence,

once viewed as fringe and ‘marginal’ has moved to the centre and is increasingly being adopted by conservative mainstream voices. Established scholars and many commentators, on both sides of the Atlantic, have in recent years written the script for the last days of Europe in which because of a demographic collapse, self-defeating multicultural policies and unfettered immigration, mostly from Muslim countries, Europe will undergo drastic changes that will transform it forever. Historian Bernard Lewis argued that because of Europe’s unwillingness to battle for cultural and religious control, the only question remaining regarding its future would be, ‘Will it be an Islamized Europe or Europeanized Islam?’¹³¹ Walter Laqueur delivered the ‘epitaph for an old continent’: Because of uncontrolled immigration, misguided multicultural policies that created parallel societies, aggravated by self-imposed ghettoization of Muslim immigrants and a severe demographic problem, Europe has reached the ‘belated realization that the continent faced enormous problems with which it had not yet come to terms: that the issue at stake was not its emergence as the leading superpower but survival’.¹³² This theme of European decadence is also present in the work of Niall Ferguson who argues that due to demographic reasons Islam has a long-term advantage *vis-à-vis* Europe (and the West), ‘a youthful society to the south and east of the Mediterranean is quietly colonizing, in the original sense of the word, a senescent and secularized continent to the north and west of it’.¹³³ Significantly, the work of Edward Gibbon on *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776) is often cited as an ominous warning to the ongoing ‘decline and fall’ of Europe and the West.¹³⁴

Other conservative voices that are part of the public debate are more dramatic and envision a future of warfare for Europe, with widespread violence triggered by an ‘indigenous backlash’ against Muslims. ‘It is difficult to imagine any other future scenario for Western Europe than its becoming Islamicized or having a civil war’, wrote a commentator.¹³⁵ Steyn thinks likely in Europe’s future a scenario of ‘War—the decline into bloody civil unrest that these economic and demographic factors will bring; and Conquest—the recolonization of Europe by Islam’.¹³⁶ Ralph Peters has warned that ‘far from enjoying the prospect of taking over Europe by having babies, Europe’s Muslims are living on borrowed time . . . I have no difficulty imagining a scenario in which U.S. navy ships are at anchor and U.S. marines have gone ashore at Brest, Bremerhaven or Bari to guarantee the safe evacuation of Europe’s Muslims’.¹³⁷ This grim scenario for Muslims in Europe is shared by voices on the left, such as the *New Statesman*, which had a cover story on ‘The Next Holocaust’ (of Europe’s Muslims), with the rhetorical question, ‘Do new pogroms beckon?’¹³⁸ In all fairness, these prophecies of doom are also countered in the public sphere by those who see the new Europe as more of a paradise than an inferno.¹³⁹

The noteworthy adoption by the extreme right of issues that have a relatively large consensus in the West (women’s emancipation, for example), and the cultural shift of

mainstream policies toward immigrants and newcomers lend tentative support to the hypothesis that the boundaries between extreme and reasonable or sound discourse have become increasingly indistinct. Matters are further complicated both because the extreme right uses Christianity as a sort of ideological shield, and mainstream conservative voices are also disseminating the catastrophic theme of ‘decline and fall’ of European nations under dual immigrant and demographic pressures.

Conclusion

In an attempt to anticipate what the future holds, Peter Jay and Michael Stewart wrote in 1987 of a post-millennium scenario in which the cross-national *Europe First Movement*, longing for a inward-looking Europe free of ‘alien influences and undesirable immigrants’, and proposing European-wide solutions, *inter alia*, to the erosion of European civilization and values, was able to supersede parochial nationalist parties and, in a period of economic breakdown, get hold by democratic means of the European Parliament and change in a isolationist, repressive, and exclusionist direction the European destiny.¹⁴⁰ In this ‘forecast’ the issue of Islam was absent but, nevertheless, there are ongoing and systemic trends on the European ground that, if they do not confirm the ‘apocalypse’ pictured by the authors, give a fair amount of credibility to scenarios in which extremist European-wide groups claiming to be the last hope of a doomed culture and declining civilization could emerge and become a significant force. Across Europe, though recognizing the unevenness of the process, we are witnessing in different movements on the extreme-right the increase in post-national dynamics, the beckoning of an assertive Christian identity, the shedding of anti-Semitic origins, and the growing respectability of some of its positions in the public debate about the role of Islam in Europe. The aim of this article, obviously, is not to make sweeping claims but rather to reflect on the changes (and their significance) that have been occurring in the worldview of the extreme right, emanating in large part from the omnipresence of the theme of Islam, that point to new directions and, at the same time, pose new challenges to established consensus, both in academia and society in general.

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[63](#) Le Pen, *op. cit.*, Ref. 61.

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[71](#) There are some voices that advocate a rapprochement between nationalism and Islamism, precisely because both nationalists and Islamists share the same enemy in ‘soulless’ and ‘disruptive’ globalism. According to one such proponent, ‘Both groups stand in antithesis to the globalist, in their insistence that man is *homo sapiens*, not *homo economicus*, and therefore materialism is not and ought not to be at the center of life’. In A. Fear, ‘Anti-globalist Mussulmen’, *Right NOW!*, No. 26 (January–March 2000), p. 6.

[72](#) Bat Ye’Or, *Eurabia: The Euro-Arab Axis* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2005).

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[77](#) Barnes, *op. cit.*, Ref. 60.

[78](#) *La Padania*, July 8, 2005.

[79](#) *La Padania*, *op. cit.*, Ref. 33.

[80](#) *Ibid.* Oriana Fallaci is a major reference for the Northern League. For example, in a Northern town governed by a party member, a building used by Muslims for prayer has been razed to make way for Public Square 'Oriana Fallaci'. See *La Repubblica*, May 18, 2008.

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[86](#) *La Padania*, March 1, 2005.

[87](#) N. Göle, 'Europe's Encounter with Islam: What Future?' *Constellations*, 13(2) (2006), p. 255. Some observers argue that the future of Turkey is in the European Union regardless of current hostility by Europeans to the idea. Robert Kaplan, for example, asked in an article, 'Does Europe want that many Muslims within its community? The answer should be that Europe has no choice. It is becoming Muslim anyway, in a demographic equivalent of the Islamic conquest of the early Middle Ages, when the Ottoman Empire reached the gates of Vienna. More to the point, Turkey is not only contiguous to Europe but also is already economically intertwined with it'. In R. Kaplan, 'At the Gates of Brussels', *The Atlantic*, 294(5), (December 2004), p. 48.

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European integration and the radical right

Three patterns of opposition

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Political developments in Europe during the past twenty years have led to an increased academic interest in radical right parties as well as the study of Euroscepticism. However, studies bridging the two have not yet been systematic. This is partly because radical right parties have been viewed as strong advocates of negative positions on European integration. Indeed, Hainsworth argues that these parties ‘are well placed to act as the voice of popular opposition and protest against developments declared to be anti-national’.¹ Radical right parties either because of their extremist ideology² or because of their marginal position in their domestic party system³ have increased incentives to oppose Europe.

It is only very recently that scholars have identified that behind this seemingly uniform stance lies a vast array of party responses to Europe that have also varied over time.⁴ This can also be verified by the latest 2006 Chapel Hill expert survey on party positions,⁵ where radical right parties exhibit varying scores on the question of their overall European Union (EU) position ranging from a strongly opposing 1 for the French Front National to a comparatively favourable approach of the Latvian For Fatherland and Freedom, which scores 4.75.⁶ Although this indicates strongly that parties belonging to the radical right party family display dissimilar positions on European integration, the issue of radical right EU attitudes remains under-researched in terms of content as well as underlying argumentation. Seeking to build on the above-mentioned literature and to contribute towards an improved understanding of the radical right stance to European integration, this research is informed by two interrelated questions. First, how can we conceptualize the nature of radical right positions on the EU? Second, how do radical right parties respond to the issue of European integration?

This article argues that radical right parties may be categorized into three patterns of opposition towards European integration: the rejecting, conditional and compromising patterns of Euroscepticism. These are identified through the careful examination of party attitudes on four different aspects related to European integration and the EU. These are: a

common cultural definition of Europe, the principle of cooperation at a European multilateral level, the EU policy practice and the desire to build a future European polity. In order to address these two research questions and to present the argument, this article is divided into three sections. It first discusses the prominent works in the literature on Euroscepticism, assessing the extent to which they apply to the European positions of radical right parties. Second, it proposes the conceptualization of radical right attitudes to European integration in terms of three patterns of opposition. Third, it conducts a qualitative analysis of party literature of 12 radical right parties from 10 European countries, adding empirical substance to the theoretical reasoning of the article.

Defining negative attitudes towards European integration

Euroscepticism is a widely accepted term that describes negative attitudes towards European integration. Conceptualizing and defining Euroscepticism has presented researchers with various problems. It is an elusive term that has emerged from journalistic discourse and has assumed different meanings over time and according to region. Its early uses can be understood as being ‘embedded within the specific British political and historical context’.⁷ Indeed, the term has been first traced in journalistic articles written for the British press during the mid-1980s, when there was a tendency to use the term ‘Eurosceptic’ interchangeably with that of ‘anti-marketeer’.⁸ The Thatcherite discourse at this period of great tension between the British government and the European Commission gave the term a connotation of extremism. However, the term Euroscepticism ‘assumes a meaning which must be understood relative to the different national political traditions and experiences of European integration which frame those debates’.⁹ Although the term has its historical roots in the United Kingdom, it has progressively become established elsewhere, especially since the process of the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty. Mudde also identifies 1992 as the ‘turning point’ for radical right parties in terms of both their position on European integration and the salience of the issue in their agenda.¹⁰

Taggart, being the first scholar to define Euroscepticism, suggested that it is ‘the idea of contingent or qualified opposition, as well as incorporating outright and unqualified opposition to the process of European integration’¹¹ and argued that Eurosceptic parties are more likely to stand outside the status quo. Over the years, Taggart and Szczerbiak have further developed this definition by suggesting the distinction between hard (principled) and soft (contingent) Euroscepticism. On the one hand, hard Euroscepticism indicates a party’s ‘outright rejection of the entire project of European political and economic integration and opposition to their country joining or remaining members of the EU’.¹² Thus, hard Eurosceptics advocate

withdrawal of their country from the EU as a result of their being at variance with the current conception of the project. This objection ‘comes from the belief that the EU is counter to deeply held values or, more likely, is the embodiment of negative values’.¹³ On the other hand, soft Euroscepticism is ‘NOT a principled objection to European integration or EU membership but where concerns on one (or a number) of policy areas leads to the expression of qualified opposition to the EU’.¹⁴

Szczerbiak and Taggart’s definition of Euroscepticism is the most widely accepted in the literature for a number of reasons, not least because it successfully identifies Eurosceptic trends and tendencies in countries and party systems. If we apply this typology to radical right parties, however, we are presented with a less clear picture of their attitudes and underlying argumentation. As far as the first type is concerned, Taggart and Szczerbiak argue that parties may adopt a hard Eurosceptic position as the EU epitomizes negative values. This assertion holds true in the case of radical right parties. Due to the nationalistic elements of their ideology, these parties consider supra-nationalism as an enemy of the nation-state. This, however, presents a conceptual problem as not all radical right parties are hard Eurosceptics. Whereas some seek their country’s EU withdrawal and reject European integration ‘on principle’, others are content to criticize the system from within. Thus, this distinction between hard and soft becomes less sensitive to the fact that some radical right parties may not oppose their country’s EU membership but may rather disagree with the way in which the EU project is run. What is more, the authors rightly argue that soft Eurosceptic parties present concerns over a number of policy areas. Radical right parties, however, are not concerned solely about EU policies but also about the type of EU decision-making and may present conditions under which they would support cooperation at a higher level. The definition of soft Euroscepticism does not capture the further distinction made between opposition to the polity and policy aspects of European integration.¹⁵ This distinction is particularly prominent in radical right discourse and will be explained below.

Kopecky and Mudde have suggested an alternative categorization of party-based Euroscepticism, differentiating between diffuse and specific support for European integration. Drawing from Easton’s¹⁶ seminal work on political regimes, they define diffuse as ‘support for the general ideas of European integration’, while specific is defined as ‘support for the general practice of European integration’.¹⁷ This framework leads to a two-by-two matrix of possible party positions structured along the Europhobe/Europhile and EU-optimist/EU-pessimist axes. These include first, the Euro-enthusiasts, who support both the ideas of European integration and the general practice of integration. Second are the Euro-rejects, who do not accept either. Next, the Eurosceptics, who support the idea of a united Europe but disagree with the general practice of integration. Fourth are the Euro-pragmatists, who are against the idea of the EU but support the practice of European integration.¹⁸ These categories being ideal types, they

argue, makes them serviceable for the qualitative analysis of party positions.

Mudde has used this typology to discuss the European attitudes of populist radical right parties in Europe currently as well as historically.¹⁹ This typology is successful at describing radical right positions on European integration to the extent that it has somewhat (albeit indirectly) incorporated the policy and polity aspect of the EU in the dimensions of diffuse and specific support. However, the four types that are distinguished on the basis of these two dimensions are not entirely relevant to the party family under investigation. The Euro-reject category can be both theoretically and empirically applicable to this party family. The Eurosceptic category is also highly relevant as it is empirically possible for radical right parties to support the idea of cooperation at EU level but not in the shape of the EU. However, the Euro-enthusiast category is not empirically observable, especially after the process of ratification of the Maastricht Treaty during the early 1990s. Simply put, there are no radical right parties that enthusiastically support the process of European integration. The ‘Europragmatist’ type is also problematic in this regard as principled opposition to the idea of European integration is highly unlikely to lead to favourable positions on the project of the current EU. Mudde himself accepts this, arguing that ‘very few European political parties fall into this category’.²⁰

Sørensen has defined the nature of public Euroscepticism, identifying four broad ideal types: the economic, sovereignty, democracy and social types.²¹ Although the aim of her research has been to discuss public EU attitudes, the sovereignty type can be instructive in discussing radical right positions on European integration. Radical right ideology is rooted in the defence of national interests and identity, drawing mostly on the nationalist political doctrine ‘that strives for the congruence of the cultural and the political unit, i.e. the nation and the state’.²² As such, the issue of sovereignty is particularly salient in radical right discourse and differentiates the attitudes of these parties from those of other party families. We can thus group radical right attitudes as mostly belonging to the ‘sovereignty type’. However, Sørensen’s work does not help us to analyse different European positions of the radical right party family that fall within the sovereignty type to which the article turns.²³

Conceptualizing radical right attitudes on European integration: three patterns of opposition

Aiming to improve the conceptualization of radical right attitudes towards the EU, this section proposes the categorization of their positions on European integration into the rejecting, conditional and compromising patterns. The three categories of radical right party attitudes advanced here are deduced from party positions on four aspects of European integration,

which derive from the current literature on Euroscepticism, Mair's distinction between the policy and polity aspect of the EU and an attentive reading of the Treaties Establishing the EU (TEU).²⁴ These include a cultural definition of Europe, the principle for cooperation at a European multilateral level, the current EU policy practice and the future of the EU polity. They represent four fundamental aspects of the debate on European integration and provide the indicators on the basis of which the three patterns of radical right Euroscepticism are identified.

Four aspects of European integration

The first aspect of European integration is a cultural 'definition' of Europe. The common identity of European peoples is defined as the feeling of cultural, religious and historical bonds among the European nation-states. Mudde identifies this definition of Europe based on the Christian, Hellenistic and Roman traditions as present in radical right party discourse. Europe is seen as a civilization 'shared by the various different and independent European nations'.²⁵ This definition does not imply that Europe is considered to be above the nation. Rather, Europe as a continent encapsulates the common elements that bind European peoples together and serves to distinguish 'us' from 'others'. This cultural definition of Europe is closely related to a spatial/border definition and becomes the prime justification for the exclusion of Turkey from Europe and, by extension, the EU. Since Christianity is one of the constitutive elements of Europe, its borders must stop at the Urals and the Mediterranean, excluding any non-Christian country to the east and south. If Europe accepted a religiously dissimilar country such as Turkey, then the European construction would lose one of its essential characteristics and would ultimately collapse.

The second aspect discussed here is the 'principle' of European integration. This is anchored in the preamble of the Treaty Establishing the European Union, which states that the member states are 'RESOLVED to mark a new stage in the process of European integration undertaken with the establishment of the European Communities'.²⁶ The principle of European integration indicates a party's wish and willingness for cooperation at a higher multilateral level. This type of cooperation refers only to cooperation within the EU framework, even if the structures of the latter are criticized and reform is actively pursued. It does not signify bilateral or trilateral cooperation between selected European states on particular ad hoc policies, including, for instance, some aspects of trade. In this respect, cooperation under the European Free Trade Area does not imply support of the principle of European integration. The latter is an agreement providing only for trade, requiring no political commitment and taking place outside the EU framework. On the contrary, the principle of European integration refers to a multifaceted multilateral agreement with a political character within the EU structures, even if

the reform of the latter is actively pursued. Thus, opposing the principle of European integration entails opposition against ‘not only the government and its policies but also the whole system of governance’.²⁷ The principle of integration also features in Szczerbiak and Taggart’s above-mentioned ‘hard/principled’ opposition to European integration as well as Kopecky and Mudde’s ‘Euro-reject’ category.

The third and fourth aspects of European integration derive from Mair’s discussion of political opposition in the EU context. They are deduced from the distinction between opposition to the policy and opposition to the polity aspects of the EU and are respectively labelled as the ‘practice’ and ‘future’ of European integration.²⁸ The practice indicator is also inferred from the TEU’s stipulation, according to which ‘The Union shall be served by a single institutional framework which shall ensure the consistency and the continuity of the activities carried out in order to attain its objectives while respecting and building upon the *acquis communautaire*’.²⁹ The practice of European integration comprises the overall body of EU law and institutional framework, which include the policies administered at the European level as well as the nature of decision-making. Opposition to the practice of European integration becomes opposition to the policy aspect of the EU.

The ‘future’ indicator of the EU refers to the member states’ strong desire to promote European cooperation within the EU political framework with the general aim of creating an ever-closer union. This aspect of integration features in the TEU, which specifies that ‘This Treaty marks a new stage in the process of creating an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe’.³⁰ According to the TEU, member states recall ‘the historic importance of the ending of the division of the European continent and the need to create firm bases for the construction of the future Europe’.³¹ Opposition to the future of European integration develops into opposition to the polity aspect of the EU. Note that this implies Euroscepticism because it is ‘at odds with what is the dominant mode of ongoing integration’.³² [Table 1](#) summarizes these four aspects.

[Table 1](#) Conceptualizing European integration

<i>The four aspects of European integration</i>	
Definition	The feeling of cultural, religious and historical bonds among the European peoples
Principle	The wish and willingness for cooperation at a European multilateral level
Practice	The EU institutional and policy status quo
Future	The making of a European polity

The three patterns of radical right opposition

In defining the EU in terms of the four fundamental features of the definition, principle, practice and future of integration, our understanding of the range of positions available for parties to adopt increases and the analysis becomes more specified. These four aspects of integration represent the principal point of reference of this article. They provide the researcher with the analytical toolkit integral to the process of identification of potential radical right EU positions. This section argues that radical right Euroscepticism can be categorized into the rejecting, conditional and compromising patterns.

‘Rejecting’ Euroscepticism is a position that implies acceptance of common cultural, historical and religious European characteristics. However, there is strong opposition to the remaining three aspects of European integration. This includes rejection of the principle of cooperation within the EU framework, disagreement with the European institutional and policy status quo and resistance to the future building of a European polity. Under this stance it is necessary to manage all policies solely at the national level and to withdraw from the EU at any cost. This position is generally associated with an ardent anti-supranationalism and national self-determination discourse. The general aim is to shift power back to the nation-state and to restore the sovereignty of the nation-state’s institutions, denying the legitimacy of the EU system of governance as a whole. This pattern largely overlaps with Szczerbiak and Taggart’s hard Euroscepticism as well as Kopecky and Mudde’s Euro-rejects.

‘Conditional’ Euroscepticism entails an acceptance of the common heritage of European peoples, approval of the principle of European cooperation but hostility to the current policy practice as well as the future building of a European polity. Although the importance of nation-state cooperation at a European level is acknowledged, the current institutional balance as well as the policy status quo are unacceptable because they compromise nation-state sovereignty. Consequently, closer unification of the European polity is not an appealing option. Conditional Eurosceptics accept by and large the system but have objections to the policies and institutions of EU governance. This pattern is usually connected with a conditional wish for European cooperation to the extent that supranational institutions do not compromise state sovereignty. A ‘conditional’ position on Europe implies the rejection of decisions taken by supranational institutions and the endorsement of reform so that nation-state interests are guaranteed. Cooperation has already gone too far, and opposition to an ever-closer union is strong. Whereas both the practice of integration and the institutional balance of powers are dismissed, intergovernmental cooperation within the EU structures and in policies deemed beneficial to the nation-state are largely supported. To be sure, there is a great variation of the policies that each conditional Eurosceptic wishes to be governed intergovernmentally. Conditional Eurosceptics tend to favour the creation of a Europe administered by an institutional framework resembling a confederation, namely intergovernmental cooperation without the presence or with limited power of supranational institutions. The legitimacy of the EU project is denied to the extent that a majority of decisions have been taken by

supranational institutions and not by the member states.

‘Compromising’ Euroscepticism comprises acceptance of a common European culture, support for the principle and the practice of integration but opposition to the future building of a European polity. Compromising Eurosceptics admit that European integration is not necessarily a good thing but that some of its aspects are beneficial to the state. Transferring decision-making powers to European institutions is particularly unattractive. However, a degree of integration is necessary for the general prosperity of the state, particularly in the economic domain. Taking part in the EU structures and institutions offers the possibility to (re)negotiate change and reform from within the EU institutional structures in order to promote one’s national interest. This implies a willingness to play by the rules of the game, aiming to reinforce the EU’s intergovernmental aspect as well as the member states’ decision-making power, typically – but not necessarily – to the detriment of supranational institutions. An ever-closer union is not acceptable, however, because that would entail reinforcing federalism. Although this pattern of opposition to the EU project has a negative character, it may not necessarily be considered to be Eurosceptic; Szczerbiak and Taggart prefer to use the term ‘Euro-criticism’ or ‘Euro-contestation’ when discussing similar types of attitude.³³

Table 2 Patterns of radical right opposition to European integration

<i>Aspects of European integration</i>				
<i>Patterns of opposition</i>	<i>Cultural definition</i>	<i>Principle of cooperation</i>	<i>Policy practice</i>	<i>Future EU polity</i>
Rejecting	In favour	Against	Against	Against
Conditional	In favour	In favour	Against	Against
Compromising	In favour	In favour	In favour	Against

As shown in *Table 2*, a cultural definition of Europe is a point of agreement among the three patterns of radical right Euroscepticism. Europe is seen as standing on a tripod composed of ancient Greek democracy, Roman legal tradition and Christianity.³⁴ These three necessary constituent elements provide the basis for a cultural as well as a spatial definition of Europe. They also generate the justification of the almost unanimous position of radical right parties against Turkish EU accession. Furthermore, opposing the future building of a European polity under the auspices of the EU represents the lowest common denominator of radical right negative attitudes on European integration.³⁵

Given that, as mentioned above, radical right attitudes on European integration are a case of ‘sovereignty-based’ Euroscepticism,³⁶ the issue of sovereignty in their discourse needs to be

addressed. The transfer of decision-making power to European institutions is prominent in all three types but is viewed in different manners. Both the rejecting and conditional patterns entail strong opposition to supranationalism and ceding one's sovereignty to the benefit of European institutions. Any type of transfer of sovereignty to European institutions on any type of issue is unacceptable. However, conditional Eurosceptics differ from rejecting Eurosceptics on three grounds. First, they recognize that particular issues cannot be resolved exclusively at the domestic level. Second, and as a result of the first, they are willing to accept that European countries must actively cooperate at a multilateral level. Third, they agree that cooperation can take place within the EU framework only if the latter is reformed. This entails taking power away from supranational institutions to the benefit of member states. This is sometimes articulated in a 'Europe of Nations' discourse or supporting the prospect of a European confederation.

Compromising Eurosceptics do not support the transfer of sovereignty either. Nevertheless, they accept – albeit with criticisms – the current structures of European integration. A degree of European integration is desirable because it brings important economic advantages and prosperity to the member states. The main difference between the conditional and the compromising patterns in terms of the issue of sovereignty lies in how the current EU framework is treated. Whereas the first push for intergovernmental cooperation in all policy spheres, advocating a framework without supranational institutions, the latter are willing to act within the existing EU structures; in other words to play by the rules.

Radical right attitudes on European integration: an empirical overview

This section, which is largely empirical, tests the validity and relevance of the above patterns through a qualitative analysis of party literature of 12 radical right parties from 10 European countries (see [Table 3](#)).³⁷ Radical right parties are defined here on the basis of Mudde's suggestion that their 'core ideology is a combination of nativism, authoritarianism, and populism'.³⁸ The parties included in this study feature in Mudde's appendix of populist radical right parties.³⁹ Party programmes have been selected as they are carefully crafted compromises representing the party as a whole and directed both externally at potential voters as well as internally at the party members.⁴⁰ A qualitative methodological approach is preferred because it can unfold the different arguments of the parties. This will enrich and add qualitative substance to expert surveys' numerical assessments.

The period under investigation is the latter part of the 2000s. This period has been chosen not only because of the article's contemporary focus but also because during these years there

was extensive discussion over the ratification of the European Constitution and the Lisbon Treaty, which have both aroused strong nationalist sentiments across Europe. The failed 2005 referenda in France and the Netherlands are especially seen as ‘epitomizing a growing mood of scepticism about Europe that could be sensed more or less throughout the enlarged Union’.⁴¹

Table 3 Radical right party positions on European integration

<i>Patterns of opposition to European integration</i>			
	<i>Rejecting</i>	<i>Conditional</i>	<i>Compromising</i>
Austria		Austrian Freedom Party	
Belgium		Flemish Interest	
Bulgaria		Attack	
Denmark		Danish People’s Party	
France	Front National		
Greece		Popular Orthodox Rally	
Italy	Tricolour Flame	Northern League	National Alliance
Latvia			For Fatherland and Freedom
Poland	League of Polish Families		
United Kingdom	British National Party		

The ‘rejecting’ pattern

The parties belonging to this pattern are the French Front National, the League of Polish Families, the British National Party and the Italian Tricolour Flame. These parties display similar positions on the issues of sovereignty transfer, European legislation, immigration, enlargement and foreign policy. Although they accept that European peoples share cultural, historical and religious characteristics, they are against the principle of ceding national sovereignty to non-national institutions and oppose any European legislation or treaty. They also blame the EU, suggesting that it has been one of the sources of their domestic

immigration and economic problems. These parties do not accept the principle that nations should cooperate at a higher European level. They advocate that policies must remain strictly national, and they wish for their country's withdrawal from the EU. They clearly reject the EU policy practice and the future building of an EU polity, openly questioning the latter's political legitimacy.

The Front National's stance on French withdrawal from the EU is slightly indirect but nevertheless existent. The party expresses its desire that the European treaties are overhauled. It suggests a tour of European capitals in order to renegotiate the treaties, and if the EU member states fail to reach an agreement, Front National advocates the organization of a popular referendum on the question: 'Should France regain its independence vis-à-vis the Europe of Brussels?'.⁴² This rhetoric indicates that the party advances French EU withdrawal, which the party believes should take place in a hassle-free manner, just like an amicable divorce. Indeed, the literature suggests that the party 'calls for a restoration of French sovereignty and independence and for the exit of France from the EU', quoting Le Pen as saying 'Let's liberate France'.⁴³ Most important, the party supports the restoration of the French currency as well as the re-establishment of French internal border controls. The League of Polish Families argues along similar lines in favour of Polish withdrawal. The 2008 manifesto maintains the party's opposition to Polish EU membership. In the case of a national referendum, the party would reject European integration.⁴⁴ In similar vein, the British National Party argues for 'leaving the European Union – the sine qua non', viewing the EU as an aspiring superstate that is contrary to British interests.⁴⁵ The Italian Tricolour Flame indirectly advocates withdrawal, arguing that Italy and the European states should restore political sovereignty and that the EU has been artificially created in Maastricht from the elites and without the will of the people.⁴⁶

The 'conditional' pattern

The radical right parties adopting a conditional Eurosceptic position strongly differentiate themselves from the rejecting pattern in that they do not maintain that their countries should exit the EU. These are the Austrian Freedom Party, the Belgian Flemish Interest, the Italian Northern League, the Danish People's Party, the Greek Popular Orthodox Rally and the Bulgarian Attack. For these parties, the EU framework as currently conceived is clearly not the right platform for European multilateral cooperation. In contrast to the previous category, they crucially accept the principle that European peoples need and should cooperate. They refrain from supporting the current policy and institutional practice as well as the future building of a European polity.

As far as the Austrian Freedom Party is concerned, we learn from the literature that it has

'used the campaign before the general elections to underline its scepticism regarding EU enlargement'.⁴⁷ The party has been sceptical with respect to the lifting of any kind of borders within the Union and has promoted a general rethinking of Austria's membership.⁴⁸ The party calls the European Constitution a 'madness'.⁴⁹ Andreas Mölzer, the party's only member of the European Parliament during the legislative period 2004–9, argues that 'Europe of the Brussels syndicate has nothing in common with the conception of a Europe of free and sovereign states'.⁵⁰ However, the party's official programme states that the future of Europe lies in the close cooperation of its peoples. It mentions that the EU is only one part of the European reality and should not develop into a European federal state but into a confederation of independent nation-states.⁵¹ The party puts forward an alternative framework for European cooperation, thus accepting the principle of integration. It nevertheless disagrees both with the EU policy practice and the building of a future European polity. Similarly, the Flemish Interest criticizes the EU for being bureaucratic and intruding in the sovereignty of the nation-state and its people. The party is critical towards the EU as it is currently conceived, arguing that the nation-state should take precedence. It does not, however, advocate withdrawal, but gives preference to intergovernmental cooperation within the framework of a European confederation.⁵²

Conti finds that the Northern League's position has changed from a supportive to a much more radical stance.⁵³ Quaglia also indicates this shift, arguing that it is consolidating its Euroscepticism.⁵⁴ Indeed the party criticizes the European institutions for not being close to European citizens and for failing to respect the traditions and cultures of European peoples. However, it argues that 'we must construct a Europe that is founded on the respect of national and territorial realities, giving the European Union only a limited degree of sovereignty, delimiting its competences and the fields of its intervention avoiding ambiguities'.⁵⁵ This demonstrates that whereas the Northern League accepts the principle of EU cooperation, it discards the current policy arrangements and rejects future EU cooperation.

While the Danish People's Party is against European unification and suggests that the EU must not gain power over the member states, it also maintains that particular policies may be dealt with at a European multilateral level. For instance, the party's official programme states that it opposes the development of a federal EU resembling the United States of Europe. Rather the party seeks a close and friendly European cooperation limited to particular areas of Danish interest, including trade and the environment as well as technical cooperation. Cooperation can occur within the EU framework only at the request of large majorities of member states.⁵⁶ Although the party supports cooperation in general, it opposes the introduction of a European political union and argues that Denmark should remain a sovereign state, especially as far as its borders are concerned.

Similarly, the Greek Popular Orthodox Rally argues that the future of Greece is linked to

the EU to a great extent. However, this can only occur in the context of a confederation whereby member states would recognize and protect their historical, cultural and ethnic roots as well as the ethnic characteristics of the European peoples.⁵⁷ Lastly, the Bulgarian Attack does not dedicate much space in its electoral programme to the EU, indicating the low importance of the issue in the party's agenda. The EU is briefly discussed in the foreign policy section, which argues that Bulgaria's foreign relations must be expanded to include not only the EU but also other states.⁵⁸ This indicates that although the party is a fervent supporter of the maintenance of national sovereignty, it accepts the existence of the EU as a foreign policy actor. While it seeks to reinforce foreign relations with other states, it does not find Bulgaria's withdrawal from the EU a desirable alternative.

The 'compromising' pattern

The parties belonging to this pattern agree with the principle for cooperation and the policy practice of European integration. They also acknowledge that their country's economic prosperity is largely a result of cooperation within the EU framework. These parties are the Italian National Alliance and the Latvian For Fatherland and Freedom. They suggest that the EU should be reformed within its existing structures and they refrain from proposing an alternative framework for cooperation, such as the confederation argued for by some of the parties belonging to the conditional pattern. Nevertheless, they are not active proponents of further integration, nor do they promote the uploading of further national policies to the European level.

In his analysis of party positions on integration in Italy, Conti argues that the Italian National Alliance attaches particular importance to the nation. It 'rejects the idea of a federal Europe and supports one of a looser union where the power of nation states are preserved and the outcomes of European integration are systematically checked'.⁵⁹ The National Alliance is in favour of a number of EU policies, including technology, energy and the Lisbon Agenda. It believes that Italy should not entrust itself to Europe but contribute to remaking Europe, taking into account the specifics of the Italian case.⁶⁰ The party views integration through a cost-benefit analysis approach and seeks to reinforce the Italian national interest through participating in the European institutions. This clearly indicates that the party has accepted that it should promote Italian interests within the existing EU structures. Likewise, the Latvian For Fatherland and Freedom argues that the EU must be strengthened only as an association of member states and that Latvian politicians should work hard to achieve advantageous conditions for their country in the EU.⁶¹ Both parties have accepted that they should promote and strengthen their country's position within the existing structures of the EU.

The above analysis has produced the categorization of four radical right parties in the

rejecting pattern, six parties in the conditional pattern and two in the compromising pattern. Since one of the aims of this article has been to provide qualitative support for quantitative assessments of party positions, it is worth comparing the results of this study to those of the latest 2006 Chapel Hill survey. As seen in [Table 4](#), they largely overlap. On the question of the ‘overall orientation of the party leadership towards European integration’, Front National and the League of Polish Families score respectively the lowest scores. The opposite is true for the National Alliance and For Fatherland and Freedom. Six parties rank somewhere in the middle. Note that the Chapel Hill survey has not measured the EU positions of the British National Party or the Italian Tricolour Flame.

[Table 4](#) 2006 Chapel Hill party scores on the question: ‘overall orientation of the party leadership towards European integration’ (1 = strongly opposed; 7 = strongly in favour)

<i>Pattern</i>	<i>Party name</i>	<i>Chapel Hill score</i>
Rejecting	British National Party	–
	League of Polish Families	1.38
	Front National	1
	Tricolour Flame	–
Conditional	Attack	2.46
	Austrian Freedom Party	1.75
	Danish People’s Party	2.33
	Flemish Interest	2.5
	Northern League	1.5
Compromising	Popular Orthodox Rally	2.38
	For Fatherland and Freedom	4.75
	National Alliance	4.75

Conclusion

In an attempt to provide a bridge between the literature on radical right parties and the study of Euroscepticism, this article has proposed that radical right opposition to European integration is categorized into the rejecting, conditional and compromising patterns. It has presented four facets of European integration: the definition of Europe, the principle, the policy practice and the future building of a European polity. It is on the basis of these four indicators that the three patterns have been identified. Finally, this article has provided a

qualitative analysis of party literature in an attempt to improve our understanding of the nuanced radical right anti-EU arguments. By building on our existing knowledge of these parties' EU positions from expert surveys, it has systematically mapped and analysed the nature of radical right Euroscepticism during the latter part of the 2000s.

The identification of four fundamental aspects of European integration may become helpful in providing a solution to the wider problem of measuring the dependent variable – different levels of Euroscepticism. They can add precision and clarity when assessing a party's position on Europe and may be used to identify similar patterns in different party families. This, however, has a caveat. The definition of Europe may need to be refined in order to apply the approach to other party families. The usefulness of this three-fold conceptualization of radical right Euroscepticism lies in identifying the nuances of the phenomenon in descriptive terms. The three categories have also an analytical purpose since different patterns of Euroscepticism may be associated with different party behaviour at the domestic level.

The qualitative analysis of party literature demonstrates that, although these parties belong to the same party family, they exhibit three utterly different patterns of opposition to European integration. This is a striking finding for a number of reasons. First, it provides evidence to support the idea that radical right parties not only differentiate themselves from other party families in that they adopt a 'sovereignty type' of Euroscepticism. They also seek to differentiate themselves from each other. Second, it demonstrates that radical right parties, although highly nationalistic in character, do not present themselves as being anti-European in the wider sense of the term. They willingly accept the common aspects shared by European peoples because those aspects serve to distinguish 'us' from the 'others'. Third, and perhaps contrary to common 'journalistic' wisdom: not all radical right parties oppose European integration to the extent of pushing for their country's withdrawal from the EU. Instead, some radical right parties are rather pragmatic in their approach to integration.

These findings have important implications in terms of possible explanations of party-based Euroscepticism. Arguably, the issue of European integration may be assimilated into pre-existing ideologies that reflect long-standing commitments on fundamental domestic issues. Traditional cleavage theory may account for the general party response to European integration.⁶² However, the findings of this article demonstrate that traditional cleavage theory is less able to explain the extent of opposition or to predict different types of argument within a given party family. Other predictors of party-based Euroscepticism, including the national context and party strategic objectives within the domestic party system, may also have explanatory power. This is especially true for radical right parties. Given that nationalism is core to these parties' ideology, their European position may be largely influenced by the national context. A comparison of radical right party policies and preferences across Europe 'can tell us a great deal about the boundedness of the various party families'.⁶³ It can offer great insights to how an issue may be emphasized in different political settings and provide

some hints regarding the association between the issue of Europe and the dynamics of party competition in EU member states.

Notes

[1](#) P. Hainsworth, *The Extreme Right in Western Europe*, New York, Routledge, 2008, p. 85.

[2](#) G. Marks and C. J. Wilson, ‘The Past in the Present: A Cleavage Theory of Party Response to European Integration’, *British Journal of Political Science*, 30: 2 (2000), pp. 433–59; L. Hooghe, G. Marks and C. J. Wilson, ‘Does Left/Right Structure Party Positions on European Integration?’, in G. Marks and M. Steenbergen (eds), *European Integration and Political Conflict*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004.

[3](#) P. Taggart, ‘A Touchstone of Dissent: Euroscepticism in Contemporary Western European Party Systems’, *European Journal of Political Research*, 33: 3 (1998), pp. 363–88.

[4](#) C. Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007; Hainsworth, *The Extreme Right*.

[5](#) L. Hooghe, R. Bakker, et al., ‘Reliability and Validity of Measuring Party Positions: The Chapel Hill Expert Surveys of 2002 and 2006’, *European Journal of Political Research*, 49: 5 (2010), pp. 689–703.

[6](#) The scale is structured from 1 to 7, where 1 indicates a strongly opposing position and 7 a strongly favourable position.

[7](#) R. Harmsen and M. Spiering, ‘Introduction: Euroscepticism and the Evolution of European Political Debate’, in R. Harmsen and M. Spiering (eds), *Euroscepticism: Party Politics, National Identity and European Integration*, Amsterdam, Rodopi, 2004, p. 16.

[8](#) M. Spiering, ‘British Euroscepticism’, in Harmsen and Spiering, *Euroscepticism*, p. 128.

[9](#) Harmsen and Spiering, ‘Introduction’, p. 17.

[10](#) Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties*, p. 159.

[11](#) Taggart, ‘A Touchstone of Dissent’, p. 366.

[12](#) P. Taggart and A. Szczerbiak, ‘Parties, Positions and Europe: Euroscepticism in the EU Candidate States of Central and Eastern Europe’, *Opposing Europe, Sussex European Institute Working Paper 46*, Brighton, 2001, p. 10.

[13](#) *Ibid.*

[14](#) A. Szczerbiak and P. Taggart, ‘Introduction: Researching Euroscepticism in European Party Systems: A Comparative and Theoretical Agenda’, in A. Szczerbiak and P. Taggart, *Opposing Europe? The Comparative Party Politics of Euroscepticism, Volume 2: Comparative and Theoretical Perspectives*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 2.

[15](#) This idea is largely based on P. Mair, ‘Political Opposition and the European Union’, *Government and Opposition*, 42: 1 (2007), pp. 1–17.

[16](#) D. Easton, *A Framework for Political Analysis*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Prentice Hall, 1965.

[17](#) P. Kopecky and C. Mudde, ‘The Two Sides of Euroscepticism: Party Positions on Euroscepticism in East Central Europe’, *European Union Politics*, 3: 3 (2002), pp. 300–1.

[18](#) Ibid.

[19](#) Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties*, pp. 161–5.

[20](#) Ibid., p. 162.

[21](#) C. Sørensen, ‘Love Me, Love Me Not: A Typology of Public Euroscepticism’, *Sussex European Institute Working Paper 101*, Brighton, 2008.

[22](#) Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties*, p. 16.

[23](#) For reasons of space, only the prominent typologies in the literature have been discussed. Others, by no means less important, include C. Flood, ‘Euroscepticism: A Problematic Concept’, paper presented at the UACES 32nd Annual Conference and 7th Research Conference, Queen’s University Belfast, 2002; and J. Ronvy, ‘Conceptualising Party-Based Euroscepticism: Magnitude and Motivations’, *Collegium*, 29 (2004), pp. 31–47. It is worth mentioning that the Eurosceptic patterns identified below may be seen as overlapping with Flood’s rejectionist, revisionist and minimalist categories. However, Flood’s categories are broad and, unlike the present article, they ‘are not intended to convey any suggestion of a specific content to the positions which they describe, beyond basic stances towards the EU’s development’, Flood, ‘Euroscepticism’, p. 5.

[24](#) Note that these three patterns build on the author’s previous work: S. Vasilopoulou, ‘Varieties of Euroscepticism: The Case of the European Extreme Right’, *Journal of Contemporary European Research*, 5: 1 (2009), pp. 3–23.

[25](#) Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties*, pp. 169–70.

[26](#) European Union, ‘Consolidated Version of the Treaty on European Union 1992’, *Official Journal of the European Communities* (2002), p. 9. Capitals in the original. The TEU has been selected as it is the major treaty establishing the European Union with which all member states are obliged to comply.

[27](#) Mair, ‘Political Opposition’, p. 5.

[28](#) Ibid.

[29](#) European Union, ‘Consolidated Version of the Treaty’, p. 11.

[30](#) Ibid., p. 10.

[31](#) Ibid., p. 9.

[32](#) Taggart and Szczerbiak, ‘Introduction’, p. 8.

[33](#) A. Szczerbiak and P. Taggart, ‘Theorizing Party-Based Euroscepticism: Problems of Definition, Measurement and Causality’, in Szczerbiak and Taggart, *Opposing Europe?*, p. 252.

[34](#) Note that this definition of European identity directly applies to the radical right’s world view and may not necessarily

be shared by other parties or the European public. For a detailed discussion of European identity from the citizens' perspective, see M. Bruter, *Citizens of Europe? The Emergence of a Mass European Identity*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

[35](#) To clarify, the patterns suggested here are devised in order to provide useful information regarding party discourse. They have indeed an ordinal character, namely ranging from more to less opposition against the EU. However, measuring the exact distance between them is outside the scope of this article.

[36](#) Sørensen, 'Love Me, Love Me Not'.

[37](#) This article does not consider the Greater Romanian Party because of the lack of linguistic skills on the part of the author.

[38](#) Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties*, p. 26.

[39](#) For the appendix see Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties*, pp. 305–8. This article also studies the Italian National Alliance. Recent academic discussions have pointed out the party's steady evolution towards a mainstream right-wing party under Gianfranco Fini's leadership. For example, see P. Ignazi, 'Legitimation and Evolution on the Italian Right Wing: Social and Ideological Repositioning of Alleanza Nazionale and the Lega Nord', *South European Society and Politics*, 10: 2 (2005), pp. 333–49. While I agree with the conclusions in the literature, it is indisputable that the party has its origins in right-wing radicalism, given that it is the offspring of the fascist Italian Social Movement, and as such it is included in the current study.

[40](#) I acknowledge that in order to assess party positions on European integration a greater diversity of documents would have to be analysed. However, due to limited space the analysis is based on party manifestos and some secondary sources on the parties. National election manifestos have been selected instead of European manifestos; this has been a deliberate choice as it is arguable that national manifestos represent the parties' world view as a whole. European manifestos are more likely to be manipulated by opportunistic party actors, who can criticize the EU more severely as they try to exploit the protest character of European elections.

[41](#) Mair, 'Political Opposition', p. 1.

[42](#) Front National, *Programme de Gouvernement de Jean-Marie Le Pen*, Front National, 2007.

[43](#) P. Hainsworth, C. O'Brien and Paul Mitchell, 'Defending the Nation: The Politics of Euroscepticism on the French Right', in Harmsen and Spiering, *Euroscepticism*, p. 47.

[44](#) League of Polish Families, *The LPR Program*, LPR, 2008.

[45](#) British National Party, *Rebuilding British Democracy: British National Party General Election Manifesto*, BNP, 2005, p. 5.

[46](#) Tricolour Flame, *Programma Politico*, Tricolour Flame, 2007, p. 2.

[47](#) A. Pelinka, 'Austrian Euroscepticism: The Shift from the Left to the Right', in Harmsen and Spiering, *Euroscepticism*, p. 216.

[48](#) Ibid., p. 222.

[49](#) Austrian Freedom Party, *Dafür stehen wir!*, Austrian Freedom Party, 2007.

[50](#) Original in English. A. Mölzer, ‘The FPO and Europe’, 2007, available at <http://www.andreas-moelzer.at/index.php?id=62>.

[51](#) Austrian Freedom Party. *Dafür stehen wir!*

[52](#) Flemish Interest, *The Manifesto of Vlaams Belang*, Flemish Interest, 2007.

[53](#) N. Conti, ‘Party Attitudes to European Integration: A Longitudinal Analysis of the Italian Case’, *European Parties Elections and Referendums Network Working Paper 13*, Brighton, 2003, p. 27.

[54](#) L. Quaglia, ‘Euroscepticism in Italy and Centre-Right and Right Wing Political Parties’, *Opposing Europe, Sussex European Institute Working Paper 60*, Brighton, 2003, p. 18.

[55](#) Northern League, *Errori ed orrori del programma Prodi e dell’Unione*, Northern League, 2006, p. 26. Original text in Italian.

[56](#) Danish People’s Party, *Den Europæiske Union*, Danish People’s Party, 2008.

[57](#) Popular Orthodox Rally, *Πλαίσιο Θέσεων*, Popular Orthodox Rally, 2007, p. 23.

[58](#) Attack, *Програмна схема*, Attack, 2009.

[59](#) Conti, ‘Party Attitudes to European Integration’, p. 26.

[60](#) National Alliance, *Ripensare il centrodestra nella prospettiva europea*, National Alliance, 2008, p. 13.

[61](#) For Fatherland and Freedom, *Tēvzemei un Brīvībai/LNNK programma*, LNNK, 2008.

[62](#) Marks and Wilson, ‘The Past in the Present’.

[63](#) A. Treschel and P. Mair, ‘When Parties (Also) Position Themselves: An Introduction to the EU Profiler’, *EUI Working Papers 65*, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, European Union Democracy Observatory, 2009, p. 2.

Part II

Parties, organizations and subcultures

This section includes articles and chapters that discuss populist radical right parties, organizations and subcultures in a general manner within a certain geographical region. To ensure that they are not dated upon or soon after publication, the selected contributions offer general observations that remain relevant for a longer time. What all have in common is that they highlight the ideological and organizational diversity of the broader populist radical right.

Klaus von Beyme wrote the introduction to the first special issue on the populist radical right of a mainstream, English language political science journal. Some years later **Paul Taggart** presented a first analytical description of ‘the new populism.’ Ironically, both wrote their seminal articles before ‘the third wave of right-wing extremism’ had really taken off. **Ami Pedahzur and Leonard Weinberg** look beyond populist radical right parties and focus on a more amorphous threat, what they call ‘uncivil society.’ **Cas Mudde** takes a broad overview of ‘racist extremism’ in the post-communist democracies of Central and Eastern Europe, focusing on both the organizational diversity and the state and civil responses to them. Finally, **Kathleen Blee and Kimberly Creasap** provide one of the few discussions of the diverse populist radical right scene in the United States that integrate a European perspective.

Revision questions

Von Beyme

- What are the main differences between conservatives and right-wing extremists?
- What are the three phases of development of right-wing extremist parties in post-war Western Europe? What are their main characteristics?
- What are the main causes of support for extreme right parties in each individual phase?
- What is the ‘status-inconsistency hypothesis’?

Taggart

- What are the three dimensions on which Taggart defines ‘new populist parties’?
- What defines the organizational model of ‘new populist parties’?
- What are the main differences between ‘neo-fascism’ and ‘new populism’?

Pedahzur and Weinberg

- What are the main differences between the ‘old enemies’ and the ‘new enemies’?
- What is ‘uncivil society’ and how does it relate to ‘civil society’?
- What is the ‘trade-off hypothesis’? What are its limitations?

Mudde

- What is a ‘subculture’? What are the main ‘racist extremist’ subcultures in Central and Eastern Europe?
- Why were post-communist states initially reluctant to introduce legal restrictions that would limit freedom of speech?
- How has the response of state institutions against political extremism changed in the past decades?
- Who are the main ‘outgroups’ in Central and Eastern Europe?

Blee and Creasap

- What are the main differences between ‘conservative’ and ‘right-wing’ movements?
- Which two ‘historic shifts’ were instrumental in the rapid rise of the ‘New Right’ in the United States?
- What are the main differences between ‘strategic violence’ and ‘performative violence’?
- What are the three foci in the new scholarship on right-wing mobilization?
- What are the ‘ethical dilemmas’ of scholars of the populist radical right?

Discussion points

1. Are we still in the third wave of ‘right-wing extremism’ today or has a fourth wave started? If so, when and what defines it?
2. Can the status-inconsistency hypothesis explain the success of populist radical right parties in the twenty-first century?
3. How relevant is the ‘trade-off hypothesis’ for the populist radical right today?
4. What are the main differences between Western Europe and Central and Eastern Europe in terms of strength of populist radical right political parties, social movements, and subcultures today?
5. Have the two regions become more similar in terms of state and civil responses to the populist radical right? If so, who copied whom?
6. What are the main differences and similarities between the European and the US radical right?
7. Is there a ‘New Christian Right’ in Europe? If so, is it part of the populist radical right?

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Right-wing extremism in post-war Europe

Klaus von Beyme

Controversies over concepts

Since the nineteenth century a host of party typologies have been developed. This kind of research included efforts to find four or five factors defining the difference between the moderate and the extreme right. In the nineteenth century extremists on the right of the political spectrum were frequently called 'reactionaries'. The concept of conservatism cannot easily be described by rationalistic definitions and refuses to pose as just another 'ism'. The Pope on his return to Rome in 1814 outlawed all street lighting because it was in his view a 'revolutionary innovation'.¹ In stating this opinion he gave a remarkable definition of what conservatism wants to avoid. Conservatism is, however, not necessarily opposed to change. Modern right-wing extremism, though frequently called 'reactionary', may have a quite progressive social programme. The Fascist regimes in Germany and Italy became the most violent rationalistic modernisers of their respective countries in spite of ideological commitments to an organic society.

Modern definitions of right-wing extremism are still based on the traditional criterion for differentiating between conservatives and reactionaries: conservatives try to maintain the status quo, right-wing extremists want to restore the status quo ante. A second criterion has been added, however: the envisaged restoration may, if necessary, be achieved by the use of force. This latter criterion may be better applied to fascism and neo-fascism than to traditionalist reactionary movements. The commitment of right-wing extremists to the status quo ante can, however, be called into question. In Weimar Germany the movement called 'conservative revolution' was the first right-wing political formation which did not simply want restoration. It was neither clerically-oriented nor very traditional in its social ideas, and certainly not interested in the restoration of the Hohenzollern monarchy.² The ideas of the 'conservative revolution' seem to have played a greater role in France than even certain French precursors of right-wing thought. Germany was a latecomer with regard to the production of this type of ideology. Among the revolutionary right in France a kind of

‘préfascisme’ had developed, based on attitudes which remained similar from Barrès to Maurras.³

Other frequently used criteria for labelling fascist and neo-fascist movements (ethnocentrism, anti-pluralism, anti-individualism, hyper-nationalism, missionary attitudes and so on) also cause problems, because a good many neo-conservative groups (at least outside America, where the ideology of the market society is stronger than in Europe) share these values. Since the concept of a free enterprise economy has been given a central place among the few constant elements of the conservative credo⁴, and since its high esteem has even been accepted by some right-wingers, the authoritarian elements of the right-wing credo have been smoothed over, and the dividing line between conservatives and right-wing extremists has become even more blurred.

Survey studies that allocate responses on a scaling system have always emphasised that the dividing line cannot be fixed. In their famous ‘Studies in Prejudice’ Adorno and others spoke of conservatives and pseudo-conservatives.⁵ Most of the statements used there were connected with the sphere of symbols and history. Tests concentrating only on right-wing belief systems with regard to the hard core of constitutional values and the rules of parliamentary democracy show that the real number of right-wingers was much smaller.⁶

The term right-wing extremism has certain virtues which make its use preferable to the competing concepts of *radicalism* – originally a left-wing notion with positive connotations – or *fascism* and *neo-fascism*. The term ‘radical right’ came into widespread use in America⁷ and was introduced into other languages through social psychology. The polemical German word *Radikalenerlass* was coined in this tradition. In 1974 the Reports of the Ministry of Internal Affairs on extremist activities in the Federal Republic began to speak of extremism instead of radicalism.⁸ But this new term did not change the German habit of looking for a strictly ‘symmetrical analysis’ of extremism which is alien to the approach of most other European countries. There is hardly any other country in which the Moscow-oriented Communist Party would be subsumed under ‘extremism’, as the DKP is in Germany. German authors who refuse to accept the symmetry of extremism are under constant attack.⁹ They are also blamed for not accepting the term ‘totalitarian’ as an adequate description of the character of extremist movements, although it is difficult to argue that totalitarianism is possible without access to power in a given society. Only a very conservative party theory, like that of Giovanni Sartori’s for Italy, shows signs of this obsession with symmetry which is typical for the German concept of ‘militant democracy’ (*wehrhafte Demokratie*). But from the outset Sartori did not have the *communis opinio doctorum* in Italy behind his attempt to construct his model of polarised pluralism on the basis of almost equal distances between the MSI and PCI respectively to the constitutional centre.¹⁰ In the Italian case a symmetrical explanation is not even justified in terms of the German concept of ‘militant democracy’. The

Italian communists have accepted the constitution and the political system it produces; the neo-fascists have not.

Even with regard to those right-wing movements which have been in power, the label totalitarian or authoritarian does not always mean very much. When Dante Germino tried to prove the totalitarian character of Italian fascism and classified the Franco regime as authoritarian, this was not to mean that there was less repression in Spain. On the contrary, because Franco came to power through civil war repression in Spain was initially worse than in Mussolini's Italy.¹¹ Those German authors who favour a symmetrical view of extremism no longer pretend to be able to discover strong similarities between right- and left-wingers. They prefer to measure the degree of disregard for the values of parliamentary government among these groups.¹²

On the one hand, conservatives have fought for a wide use of the concepts radicalism and totalitarianism; on the other they bitterly resented the leftist inclination to call every right-wing tendency fascist or neo-fascist, since they upheld Nolte's assumption that 'fascism' perished with its epoch in 1945.¹³ Radicalism as a term was rehabilitated in its original nineteenth-century meaning depicting a thoroughgoing liberal attitude.¹⁴ In spite of an old tradition of left-wing bourgeois radicalism in the *Risorgimento*, represented today by the PRI and the new radicals, the name *destra radicale* for the groups of the extraparliamentary right survived in Italy.¹⁵ In the Latin languages there is a tendency to use the term conservatives for the moderates within the political system and the term 'political right' for the more extremist groups. Especially in Spain there is a strong defence of conservatism against the stubbornness and traditionalism of the *derecha*.¹⁶ In his typology, Fraga and his *Alianza Popular* [AP] are perfectly correct when they seek to vindicate 'conservatism'.¹⁷ Extremism, as the most neutral of all concepts, was widely accepted as key word in this scientific debate, because behaviouralists undertaking research on extremist attitudes had little interest in quarrels over concepts.¹⁸

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.¹⁹ One open question remains, however, even for this approach, namely whether petty-bourgeois protest movements, which are clearly not fascist but certainly right-wing extremist, like Poujadism in France or the Scandinavian Glistrupism, did not exert much greater influence in their respective countries than openly neo-fascist groupings.²⁰

The ideological development of right-wing extremism in

Europe

According to Ernst Nolte, fascism perished with its epoch in 1945. This hypothesis seems to suggest that neo-fascism is no longer a real danger in Western Europe. But comparisons between the situation today and the development of the membership and the vote for fascist parties after the First World War should warn against underestimating the possible danger. The Italian Fascists gained only 0.5 per cent of the national vote in 1921 and had 320,000 members. As late as 1927 the party still had only a million members.²¹ In Germany the National Socialists started in May 1924 with 6.5 per cent of the vote. In 1930 their electoral support had gone up to 18.3 per cent. In 1930 the NSDAP had 300,000 members, even less than the bourgeois parties of the Weimar system. In Spain there was not even a fascist group of note in the second legislature of 1936. The potential fascist support was concealed in the Calvo Sotelo group (4.6 per cent) and the CEDA (24.4 per cent). The *Falange* had 35,630 members in 1936 and 240,000 in 1937. In France, the strongest fascist group, Doriot's *Parti Populaire Français* of 1936, never had more than 250,000 members.²² The longer fascist regimes had been defunct, the more clearly the question emerged whether diffuse nostalgia for this old fascism was the problem of the day, since the neo-fascists responded more or less clearly to new political problems. Only the MSI stressed its loyalty to its predecessor party in its latest period, whereas the NPD in Germany, if only because it was under constant threat of dissolution by the authorities, had to adapt to the existing political system and presented itself as a version of 'parliamentary fascism'.²³ Neo-fascism had not always openly emphasised the continuity of its programme with the politics of the old regime. Only the MSI leader Almirante made no reservations in hailing fascism as an important 'period of our history'. He regards fascism as the enduring strain of history whereas anti-fascism only seems to him to be a transitory phenomenon, a 'temporary and forced alliance of doctrines ... and traditions'.²⁴ The case of the MSI is unique also because of the fact that the party detects political continuity not with regard to the early more pluralistic and tentative periods of fascism, but in connection with the doctrinaire and radical '*Repubblica di Salò*' (see Caciagli's contribution to this volume).

Le Pen's movement is based on a considerable degree of continuity with Poujadism, the OAS and Vichy. He prefers, however, to give his movement the appearance of something completely new, calling it: 'droite populaire, sociale et nationale'. Although there are in Le Pen's programme parallels to the national and social programmatic elements so vital to the Italian *Repubblica di Salò*, Le Pen responded to charges calling him a fascist as 'intellectual terrorism'.²⁵ He even refused to accept the notion of extremism: 'Or notre philosophie, notre principe d'action et notre programme ne sont pas extrémistes et par conséquence nous occupons la place qui est libre'.²⁶ The *Alianza Popular* can hardly be called fascist. In contrast

to the groups of the extreme right, like *Fuerza Nueva*, *Falange Española* and the *Carlistas*, the AP did not refuse to support the new democratic constitution. The party was split over this issue, but its majority, led by Fraga Iribarne, urged the followers of the party to vote ‘yes’ in the referendum. Only right-wing groups headed by Federico Silva Munóz and Gonzalo Fernández de la Mora campaigned for a ‘no’-vote.

Right-wing extremism in its official version does not usually advocate a completely new political system. Le Pen only wants to modify the institutions of the Fifth Republic to create a fully presidential system.²⁷ The German NPD has similar programmatic tendencies towards establishing a populist, semi-presidential system without challenging the Basic Law. The MSI used to advocate a ‘corporatist system’. Now it calls for a constitutional reform to achieve this aim, plus a reform of the senate and the electoral law. Meanwhile other parties, like the PSI, have started to debate these last two issues, too, so that this kind of ‘revisionism’ is no longer considered as being completely unconstitutional (see Caciagli’s analysis).²⁸ Recent evaluations refuse to describe the German NPD as a neo-fascist party in contrast to the older moderate literature, because it has developed more and more bourgeois structures and ideas deeply rooted in the mainstream of conservative thought. The real danger with the NPD lies in its role as a scapegoat and trial balloon for the democratic deficits and non-democratic views that are present in the contemporary German political culture.²⁹

Whereas in former times the DC on the national – not the local – level, refused political support through MSI votes, as in 1960 in the case of Tambroni, it accepted MSI support in 1971 for Leone in the presidential election, and more recently, in 1984, representatives of centre parties, like Piccoli (DC), made the party more respectable when participating in an MSI-party convention.

Racism is today much more subtle than it used to be in the old fascist movements. Frequently it sounds like the theory behind apartheid in South Africa. The Latin countries never shared the militant anti-Semitism of the Nazis. Though there were some laws discriminating against Jews in Fascist Italy and in Vichy, there was also at the time criticism of Nazi racism. Spanish falangists sometimes took pride³⁰ in the fact that there was not a single anti-Semitic phrase in the complete works of Antonio Primo de Rivera.³¹ The more traditional fascists, like Franco’s brother-in-law Serrano Suñer, declared that racism is heresy for a good Catholic who knows that mankind is morally a unity.³² The new *Action Française* came out against the racism of the *Nouvelle Droite* and the *Front National*.³³ Even a declared neo-fascist like Maurice Bardèche, who used all the topoi of the ‘Auschwitz lie’ and minimised Hitler’s crimes, still stated that the systematic persecution of the Jews was Hitler’s greatest error, and it was ‘hors du contrat fasciste’.³⁴ The fact that anti-Semitism has no prominent place in right-wing extremist literature in Latin countries does not imply that there is no anti-Semitism in those countries. A report on a research committee of the European Parliament on anti-Semitic

incidents 1981–83 gives higher figures for France than for Germany (see [Table 1](#)).

Among the moderate right, even among German moderate right-wingers, a latent current of ‘philosemitism’ has developed as a result of the admiration for a small nation defending itself heroically in a hostile environment. There have also been arabophiles, especially in Italy and Spain – less so in France, because there right-wing extremism had been too closely linked to the movement *Algérie française*, and because the Arab problem in large French cities provides fertile ground for right-wing extremism. On the whole the Palestinian movement was, however, too inclined to sympathise with left-wing extremism still to be able to mobilise enthusiasm among right-wing extremists.³⁵

Increasingly new issues such as the question of foreign workers, have absorbed the potential of open xenophobia among all right-wing extremists. The Jewish question was reduced to a metaphor. If, as has been said, 20 per cent of German youth has open or latent anti-Semitic views, these views can hardly originate from empirical experience, because for young people there is only a minimal chance of meeting one of the 30,000 Jewish citizens still living in Germany. For some movements the question of foreign workers has attracted so much attention that the hypothesis of them being single-issue-movements was debated, for example in the case of Le Pen’s movement in France (see Mitra in this volume).

[Table 1](#) Anti-semitic incidents 1981–83

Countries	1981	1982	1983
Austria	28	32	23
Belgium	28	26	19
Denmark	2	11	9
Federal Republic of Germany	88	120	88
Finland	7	5	2
France	100	116	93
Great Britain	314	312	321
Ireland	–	1	1
Italy	70	95	28
Netherlands	8	52	20
Norway	1	7	7
Portugal	–	3	1
Sweden	11	8	7
Switzerland	6	22	7
Spain	16	10	10

Source: Complied by U. Backes, 'Rechtsextremismus in westlichen Demokratien', *Neue Politische Literatur*, Beiheft 4 (1987), p. 71.

A comparable development was important for British right-wing extremism, which in the old days had shared anti-Semitism with its German counterpart, and in the 1970s broadened its appeal by linking race and immigration to other political themes: 'Unemployment was explained as black workers taking British jobs: bad housing as blacks jumping the council house queue, clogged health and social services were the fault of diseased immigrants taking the place of deserving Britons . . .'.³⁶ Because the ideology of right-wing extremist groups has usually been irrational and diffuse, personal rivalries and factionalism have played a far greater role in these groups than in other parties.³⁷ This is one of the reasons why the 'scientification' of an ideology for right-wing extremist circles, as is true for the *Nouvelle Droite* in France and can be observed in the era of the ideological *Tendenzwende* in Germany, has for the first time since the Second World War transformed these ideas into a threat. Only a study of the various stages of development of the political right can lead to a more objective picture of the real dangers of right-wing extremism, which are difficult to discern by comparing statistics on votes. For an evaluation it is, however, not sufficient to exaggerate a possible danger by blurring the dividing line between conservatism and right-wing extremism without providing the empirical evidence which proves their interconnection.

Phases of the development of right-wing extremist parties

A first glance at the voting record of extremist parties in [Table 2](#) shows that this follows a pattern different from the voting record of other political movements. Other political

[Table 2](#) Percentage of votes for right-wing extremist parties

	Britain	France		Germany		Italy		Spain
		Cons.	Ext.			Mon.	MSI	
45		13.3	0.8					
46		12.8	0.3			2.8		
47								
48						2.8	2.0	
49				1.8				
1950								
51		14.0	2.0					
52								
53				1.1		6.8	5.8	
54								
55			Poujade					
56		14.4	13.3					
57				1.0				
58		22.9	3.0			2.2	4.8	
59								
1960								
61				0.8				
62		13.9	0.9					
63					1.7		5.1	
64								
65				2.0				
66								
67		3.7	0.8					
68		1.3	0.1			1.3	4.4	
69				4.3				
1970								
71					0.6			
72						8.7		
73		2.9						
74	0.3							
75	0.4							
76				0.3		6.1	AP	
77							8.4	
78		2.3						
79					5.3		6.5	2.1
1980				0.2				
81							25.8	
82								
83				0.2		6.8		
84								
85			Le Pen					
86			9.7					
87								

movements, such as the new leftist parties which originated from the world-wide student protest movement, Eurocommunism, or the ecological parties have developed at a comparable pace throughout European countries. Right-wing extremists, however, have had permanent representation only in the Italian Parliament. The growth-waves of right-wing movements have been restricted to individual countries. A striking example is France (1956, 1986). Not so much in quantitative as in qualitative terms, three waves of the development of right-wing extremism can nevertheless be detected.

1 Post-war neo-fascism

This was strongest in countries like Germany and Italy, where the violent end to fascism had condemned a number of the former followers of fascism to an underprivileged situation. The strength of this latent neo-fascist potential was, however, difficult to assess, because it was not able to grow at will. Only Italy soon acquired the status of a *Gastsieger* ('honorary victor'), so that the Allies ceased to interfere in its internal affairs. That is why already immediately after

the war Giannini's *Uomo Qualunque* was able to flourish. In Germany and Austria there were similar potentials, but they were under strict control of the Allied forces. In Spain, the long erosion of the Franco regime had reduced the potential of the extreme right to about 4 per cent of the electorate. But since Spain was the only West European country where the democratisation process succeeded in avoiding any rupture between the old and the new regimes (in order not to provoke the military), a large part of the population remained loyal to fascism, above all those who had benefited from Franco's regime. It was hardly by chance that in the 1979 elections the strongholds of the right-wing extremists of the *Unión Nacional* were situated around Madrid (Toledo 7.2 per cent, Guadalajara 6.5 per cent, Madrid 4.7 per cent). Apparently a proportion of former functionaries of the Franco regime expressed their views in this way.³⁸

In those fascist regimes which collapsed by force, the latent fascist potential had hardly any chance to reorient itself. In Italy *Uomo Qualunque* gained 5.3 per cent of the vote in 1946,³⁹ in Germany the fascist potential was not tested at that time. The Allies mistrusted the German people to the extent of even violating basic rules of popular sovereignty by not submitting the German constitution to the people, as had been done before in France and Italy. Public opinion polls which showed German unwillingness to reject Nazism completely, a large minority of about one quarter of the population who thought that one party was sufficient, and the degree of distrust in pluralism and federalism as traced by the OMGUS surveys – all this seemed to justify the Allies' attitude.⁴⁰

In all formerly fascist systems there was some right-wing extremist potential among those excluded from better jobs. France persecuted collaborators most brutally. It has been estimated that up to several hundred thousands were killed or prosecuted after the war. France tried to minimise the Vichy problem by dealing with it as a form of collaboration with the Nazis, denying that there was a latent civil war in the 1930s even in France, and that Vichy mobilised more support than was compatible with de Gaulle's idea of the 'resistant nation'. Italy knew much better that Italian fascism was not only a problem of collaboration. Even the Communists – who initially played a central role in the immediate sentencing of fascists and collaborators – pleaded for mitigation. Togliatti is supposed to have negotiated with the fascist underground in order to get its vote for the Republic in exchange for a broad amnesty.⁴¹ More reliable proof of the attitude of the PCI is its policy of attracting former 'small fascists'. This compliance, the limited results of '*defascistisation*', even more meagre than those in Germany, the relatively bloodless fascist record, the limited and haphazard, yet legally constrained persecution of fascism, and the persistence of a broad sphere of personal privacy all helped to prepare the ground for a relatively quick review of right-wing extremism in Italy.⁴²

In Germany, too, there seemed to be good conditions for a neo-fascist revival: There were about 10 million refugees, who had lost their property and who were more than twice as frequently among the unemployed than the old population of the Western zones, and 2 million

civil servants who had lost their jobs, among them quite a number who had benefited from the Nazi regime (cf. Stöss's study). But as in Italy, most of those who had worked under the Nazis got back into civil service jobs. The civil service had one of the best lobby organisations in a country without central government. The CDU modernised the old Nazi *Beamtengesetz* (civil servants law) of 1937 by substituting – as the SPD opposition in the first Bundestag correctly remarked – the term ‘democracy’ for ‘National Socialism’. Hans Globke, who – as later discovered – had provided the written commentary on the Nuremberg laws, was also in charge of recruiting civil servants for the federal government under Adenauer. From him, a harsh attitude towards fascism could not reasonably be expected.⁴³ Although this policy had some drawbacks, because it tainted the credibility of the new German administrative élite, it had also one advantage: it did not provide a recruiting-ground for a political counter-élite of right-wing extremist parties. On the whole, all European countries – even Spain as a latecomer, already highly penetrated by international capitalism in Franco’s time – participated in prosperity and reintegration. Labels like ‘defeated’ and ‘victors’ – unlike after the First World War – were of minor importance, so that in all countries neo-fascism stood less chance.

The former fascist countries have provided for regulations against the revival of right-wing extremism. Italy in Article XII of the ‘concluding regulations’ of the constitution stipulated that no fascist party can be reorganised. The *legge Scelba* of 1951 tried to put this provision into operation, but it has never been applied to the MSI, although the neo-fascist character of this party is less in doubt than is the case for all other European right-wing extremist parties. Italy is an ‘anti-fascist Republic’ – but not like the FRG – a ‘militant democracy’, as stipulated in Article 21/2 of the Basic Law which regulates the outlawing of parties, and which was applied against a right-wing extremist party in 1952 (*Sozialistische Reichspartei*).

Only Germany has burdened itself with a special problem by giving the civil service an exaggerated importance. Whereas in most Western democracies ‘loyalty to the constitution’ is a normal duty for a citizen, for civil servants in Germany a specified loyalty is required. Only Germany has systematically collected data on extremists. In the 1970s six times as many left-wing extremists as right-wing extremists were identified.⁴⁴ A comparison of West European regulations aiming to secure the political loyalty of civil servants shows that no other country has such rigid regulations as Germany. Most countries prefer a more indirect way of control, whereas Germany has even tried to regulate all the emergency cases.⁴⁵ The tiny proportion of 0.01 per cent right-wing extremists who have been found in the German civil service hardly justifies the enormous apparatus of control and with it the psychological consequences of intimidation and sham-loyalty in society which has repercussions even in opinion surveys. It is hardly an acceptable explanation to say that the low degree of self-placement on the extreme right among Germans compared with other European countries is exclusively due to a change in German political culture.

2 New waves of social deprivation

The later emergence of right-wing extremism seems to have been conditioned by new waves of social deprivation. The second phase of right-wing extremism was more of the Poujadist type. This movement was to some extent connected with the tradition of the Vichy regime, and Le Pen, today a prominent leader of right-wing extremism, gained his first political experiences in that movement. The Poujadists were the first party whose career demonstrated the latent danger originating from the right-wing potential. The party started as a pressure group and at the first election it contested (1956) it still took 12.3 per cent of the vote.⁴⁶ With Poujadism in France, the tax revolt and the anti-welfare state movement found an organisation before the welfare state had been fully developed.

In Scandinavia the corresponding development took the opposite course. The extremist movement in opposition to the alleged ‘totalitarianism’ of the welfare state had begun to produce according to petit-bourgeois status groups. In Denmark and Norway extremist movements used the rather misleading term ‘Progress Party’ as party label. Glistrup’s protest movement against an extensive tax burden won 15.9 per cent of the vote in 1973. This was the first example of a party whose success put into question the Rokkan hypothesis of ‘frozen party systems’. In Glistrup’s ideology a deeply felt antipathy against the welfare state was combined with a distrust of the political process and authoritarian attitudes and programmes.⁴⁷ But his ideology was not in every respect simply neo-fascist, or even extremist. Glistrup advocated independence for Greenland and demanded a drastic cut in the defence budget.⁴⁸

As a reaction against the endangered status of mostly petit-bourgeois groups, Poujadism was latent in many European countries. But it did not succeed everywhere in achieving an organisational breakthrough. In the Federal Republic, until 1982, those aiming to form a party of tax-rebels remained pawns to Strauss’s calculations on how to use a ‘fourth party’ as a vehicle for the Union parties to regain power. In the Netherlands, Koekoek’s Farmers’ Party came closest to French Poujadism. In its programme it opposed European integration and development aid.⁴⁹ But most of these movements remained so closely connected with the conservative mainstream that they could be absorbed easily by it. The Gaullists swallowed the Poujadists in 1958, and the CSU incorporated a number of right-wing groups which had been founded in southern Germany. One of the major ramparts against neo-fascism was probably the strong position of democratic parties on the right of the political spectrum, such as the Christian Democrats. The fact that the church, though late but unwaveringly, had accepted the idea of parliamentary democracy saved post-war Europe from the spectacle of the Vatican and the Christian national churches supporting right-wing extremism from Italy to Portugal, and from Austria to Germany.⁵⁰

Although the rise of the German NPD, which secured 4.6 per cent of the national vote in

1969, was frequently interpreted as a revival of fascism, in retrospect this extremist success can be categorised as a right-wing protest vote originating from a first disappointment with the results of the economic miracle.

3 Unemployment and xenophobia

A third phase of right-wing extremism was caused by unemployment and xenophobia at the end of a long prosperous period. The most striking example of this development has been France. The irresponsible manipulation of the electoral law by the new socialist government seems to have taken into account that it might strengthen Le Pen's *Front National*. More important than the election results were, however, changes in the intellectual and political climate in France. Two such changes were:

- the coming into prominence of militant-rightist intellectuals;
- the internationalisation of right-wing extremism and the revival of right-wing terrorism as an answer to, or under the pretext of, opposition to the growth of left-wing terrorism in many countries.

The first new development produced ambiguous results. On the one hand it strengthened right-wing parties by providing an intellectual philosophical background for their political orientation. The *Nouvelle Droite* in France – which avoids a practical involvement in the activities of Le Pen's movement – is important throughout Europe. Ideas stemming from the 'conservative revolution' of the late phase of the Weimar Republic have much more open and sophisticated advocates in France than in Germany. The idea of the necessity for an intellectual hegemony as a precondition for an access to power emigrated from political left to the political right. Both the *Nouvelle Droite* in France and its Italian equivalent the *Nuova Destra* sometimes call themselves '*gramscista di destra*'.⁵¹ It is still widely debated whether the new ideologues, who had before been engaged in right-wing activities, use the theoretical argument only as a camouflage, or whether the restriction of political involvement to intellectual debate is authentic. Alain de Benoist, for example, has so far avoided contact with active extremists. He criticises terrorists and claims to despise all right-wing political sects. On the *Front National* he remained silent; only Le Pen has criticised GRECE as 'sovietophile sub-Gaullism' and 'anti-Americanism'.⁵² Other right-wing activists, however, emphasised the common intellectual ground: 'We have the same working-ground. They explore the desirable, we work in the sphere of the possible'.⁵³ Although the *Nouvelle Droite* is not identical with the *droite musclée*, most scholars agree that it deserves the epithet of '*extrême droite*', and that a degree of division of labour among the groups is typical of the new trend.⁵⁴ The fact that a

book like Alain de Benoist's *Vu de droite* received literary prizes in France is probably more alarming than one or the other electoral success of the *Front National*.

In Germany and Italy there are also right-wing groups who call themselves 'metapolitical' and try to free right-wing extremism from its ghetto by making it more respectable among intellectuals. In Germany the preoccupation with ecology proved to be an excellent strategy for achieving this aim.⁵⁵ On the other hand, intellectually inspired extremism has apparently contributed to the fact that right-wing convictions and attitudes do not transform easily into electoral support. The more intellectually influenced tendencies of right-wing extremist movements carefully weigh up the electoral changes for the right-wing camp. Alain de Benoist has never shared the violent anti-Gaullism of the majority on the French extreme right. In Germany the co-operation of all groups on the extreme right was so difficult, because the NPD did not succeed in integrating the right-wing press, directed by Gerhard Frey, into the party. Frey has frequently opted in his newspapers to support the Christian Democrats in order not to 'waste' votes on the NPD.⁵⁶

Voting support for right-wing extremist parties are especially low both in Germany and in the United Kingdom. In Germany, political control and social undesirability may have created greater sensibility with regard to the danger from the extreme right. Strategic voting through the rational use of the complicated German electoral system with its possibility of a split-vote may be another reason for the lack of success of right-wing parties. Only Italy's voting behaviour follows the older pattern of a permanent and stable, socially homogeneous group supporting the neo-fascists.

The revival of right-wing terrorism and a degree of internationalisation of the terrorist scene is the second feature of the third phase of right-wing extremism in Europe. In the 1970s the major obstacle to any close co-operation between European right-wing extremist groups seemed to have been their personal jealousies and rivalries.⁵⁷ With the creation of closer intellectual networks and the co-ordination of their activities on the European level, the chances for right-wing internationalism have improved. Some news on the existence of a 'neo-fascist International' seem to exaggerate its influence, to judge from the German experience. German right-wing groups have always needed an international connection because the rigid state supervision of their activities forced them to print part of their material abroad, even in the USA.⁵⁸ Nevertheless there are certain tendencies leading to an internationalisation of right-wing ideology. The slogan of a 'multi-ethnic world' in confrontation with the superpowers is gaining ground. Whereas anti-Americanism is less developed in the belief system of the average supporter of right-wing extremist ideas (see Falter and Schumann), it has a strong position in the new ideologies behind right-wing groups. In Germany the NPD is more anti-American than some of the right-wing ideologues, like Gerhard Frey. In France the opposite seems to be the case. Le Pen is less anti-American than Benoist and the *Nouvelle Droite*.

In those countries where data have been collected, right-wing terrorism used to be weaker than left-wing terrorism. In Spain this is true even if one takes into account the indicator of ‘casualties’ in the analysis, even if this measure is extended to include those killed by the *Guardia Civil*.⁵⁹ The reports of the German *Verfassungsschutz* (office for protection of the constitution) have always tried to prove that the dangers from left-wing extremism are greater than from right-wing extremism, but they have also tended to use a wider definition for the universe of the political left than for the right. This impression was strengthened by the fact that with the RAF in the 1970s there was for some time a highly organised group of terrorists on the left, whereas right-wing terrorism in Germany seemed to be practised by individual lunatics or small, short-lived groups.⁶⁰ Even though for Germany empirical studies have not confirmed that right-wing potential is lower than for the left wing, it was held that, because of the total political climate ruling in the country, it is more difficult to organise right-wing extremism. If this was true in the 1970s, the climate has now changed. The leftist terrorist scene is today highly decentralised, too, and it is no longer dominated by the Baader-Meinhof Group. A proportion of right-wing extremists involved in criminal acts justify their actions by right-wing ideologies – above all so as to shock society, since it is only Nazi symbols that still have a provocative effect in a society that has become used to a wide range of provocation.⁶¹ Right-wing extremism among football fans, skinheads and rock groups is on the increase in many countries.

It is one of the political paradoxes that right-wing extremist parties have gained more respectability in some countries in a period when right-wing terrorism (except the special case of the French OAS movement) had just developed on a larger scale and when the hidden ties between parties and terrorism were not beyond doubt, as in the case of the MSI. The MSI–DN has always criticised the murderous attacks of the Piazza Fontana in Milan (1969), Piazza della Loggia in Brescia (1974) or on the railway station in Bologna (1980). But individuals in the *Umfeld* of the MSI have had proven connections to right-wing terrorist organisations.

There are sometimes rumours that the right-wing parties have also become more respectable recipients of donations from outside the party. Even the NPD has been suspected of spending more money in a recent *Land* election than all the other parties together.⁶² Only countries, like Germany and Italy, which have a system of public subsidies for parties, normally require them to report on party income. In Germany hardly any rich donors for the extremists could be located, and in Italy donations are the source of such a small proportion of the parties’ income (5 per cent compared with 90 per cent from state subsidies) that the importance of donations for right-wing parties is not at all clear. Experts in Italian party finance conclude that, in the last few years, donations from non-members to the MSI–DN have declined.⁶³

Explaining right-wing extremism

After the Second World War attempts were made to explain the rise of fascism and national socialism between the two wars and the incidence of contemporary extremism by using the same categories. This approach was frequently applied in the German literature which was oriented towards the dominant interpretation in the GDR. Soviet literature has up to now not begun to differentiate between old and new fascism.⁶⁴ The differences in the phenomenology of right-wing extremism during the three phases of its modern development have led to a pluralism of theoretical approaches. In the first phase of the development of right-wing extremism psychological explanations in the tradition of a neo-psychoanalytical approach using the ‘authoritarian character’ argument have competed with explanations based on a social structure approach. Psychological explanations were heavily criticised on methodological grounds. In particular, their inability to compare right-wing and left-wing extremism was regarded as a serious shortcoming, a view which has its origin in the nature of American society and its traditional liberal-conservative value spectrum.⁶⁵

More influential in political science theory was Lipset’s hypothesis of middle-class extremism. The finding that the less-educated lower middle classes are always in danger of being attracted towards right-wing extremist parties was upheld in many studies, but these social strata did not show the same voting behaviour every time. The NPD during the Grand Coalition attracted votes from retail traders and farmers, but other groups at the same income-level reacted differently.⁶⁶ In fact, the social structural approach has little predictive value. Why is it that those groups of society who voted for the NPD in the first German crisis 1966–69 did not behave in the same way in the second crisis after 1973?

In discussions on the second and third phase of the development of right-wing extremism, the inclination of scientists was to explain this phenomenon more weakly, in terms of national character analysis, and to consider it basically as a ‘German problem’, a heritage from the past. Comparative studies have shown that in Germany acceptance of democratic values has increased and that the remaining authoritarian attitudes are not much stronger than in America.⁶⁷ Germans could derive some comfort from having been declared ‘normal’, but they still remained the only ones to pay more attention to the problem of right-wing extremism in contrast to the superficial media attention right-wing extremism received from time to time in France or Italy. Italy has the strongest neo-fascist party, but this fact never got much attention from Italian or even those Anglo-Saxon scholars who have investigated every detail of German right-wing tendencies. Oddly enough, the Italians keep quoting the German book by Helga Rosenbaum as the major monograph on the MSI.⁶⁸ The theory of ‘status inconsistency’, also developed by Bendix and Lipset in the German context, proved to be even less convincing. The same kind of social stress produced too many different reactions in various

countries.⁶⁹ If we compare the three phases of the development of right-wing extremism the status-inconsistency hypothesis loses plausibility even if one only analyses individual countries. An international comparison shows that very different social groups have been tempted by right-wing extremism, from the lumpenproletariat and the lumpenbourgeoisie in Italy⁷⁰ to the urban working classes in special areas in Britain and the Netherlands.⁷¹ As a result, only typologies, but hardly a theory of right-wing extremism for all European countries, could be developed.

There is virtually no comparative literature on the topic. Only the Michigan-Cologne school developed an understanding for the fact that the potential for right-wing movements exists in all industrial societies, and that it has to be understood as a ‘normal pathological condition’.⁷² This approach has the virtue of no longer concentrating intensively on the electoral success of right-wing parties, but it tries to develop a more complex model for improving the prognostic value of theories of right-wing extremism. Right-wing political ideologies are central to the interest of the major part of the literature in the tradition of the Frankfurt school. These ideologies, and the cognitive rigidity⁷³ as traced by political psychology in America, are confronted with political facts which have largely been neglected by both the psychological and the political economy approach of neo-Marxism: severity of conflicts, political institutions, availability of rightist political parties, and alternative means of expressing rightist sentiments in private life. All these features have been extensively studied but rarely understood in American sociology. This approach is an important step forward towards gaining the insight that there are no neatly separated democratic and extremist personalities in the political arena. Attention has also been drawn to the processes by which groups of voters still holding many democratic views may be won over. No extremist party can be successful without an influence which extends beyond the core group of its sympathisers.

These conclusions have also been verified by research on party identification and self-identification of voters on a right-left scale. Most European citizens are still ready to locate themselves on a right-left scale. But there are considerable differences in their readiness to admit to having right-wing inclinations. The ideal-type of the distribution of attitudes in graphic representation either takes the form of a triangle located in the centre (FRG), or appears in the shape of a crown with various peaks not only in the centre, but also at the extremes (Italy). The right-wing extremes are most strongly accentuated in Ireland, Luxembourg and Belgium.⁷⁴ The strength of party identification among right-wing extremists is approximately the same as among left-wing extremists, and it is considerably higher than for the political centre. On the whole, party identification in the countries of the European Community is at the level of only 48 per cent. The other part of the electorate declares itself either as sympathisers, or as without party preference.⁷⁵

If authoritarian tendencies are only measured by testing the nostalgia for strong leadership

alarming figures can be cited for various countries: 6 per cent allegedly longed for a *Duce* in Italy, 13 per cent for a *Führer* in Germany, and 19 per cent for a *Caudillo* in Spain.⁷⁶ The SINUS-Study on Germany has correctly been criticised on methodological grounds. Reliable conclusions from survey data can only be drawn when the scales for measuring extremism are carefully constructed. Measurements have to use a large variety of criteria, such as nationalism, ethnocentrism, anti-Communism, anti-parliamentarianism, anti-pluralism, affinity to law and order, affinity towards national socialism, harsh punishment and militarism (see Falter and Schumann). Many older explanations of right-wing extremism have looked only at the ‘demand side’ of politics: authoritarian personalities or certain deprived social groups who longed for right-wing movements. If they existed, they were taken as proof for the reality of the importance of this demand structure. The other side of the coin was simply neglected: the ‘supply side’ of politics. Xenophobia does not push the rigid nationalist potential into extremist parties if Chirac, Thatcher or Kohl offer an outlet for these feelings as part of the programmes of their dominant, moderate conservative parties. ‘Factionalism’ within a dominant bourgeois party, as in the UCD, or a skilful division of labour between various branches of the same party, as in the CDU and the CSU, can also absorb a good deal of the rightist potential. It was scarcely by chance that after the decline of the UCD a more right-wing party was successful in Spain.⁷⁷ Future studies of right-wing extremism will have to pay more attention to the whole political context of this political movement instead of being preoccupied with traditional party and electoral studies.

Notes

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³ Z. Sternhell, *La droite révolutionnaire. Les origines françaises du fascisme, 1885–1914* (Paris: Seuil, 1978), pp. 401ff.

⁴ J. A. Laponce, *Left and Right. The Topography of Political Perceptions* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), p. 121.

⁵ Th. W. Adorno *et al.*, *Der autoritäre Charakter* (Amsterdam: De Munter, 1968), Vol. 1, p. 186.

⁶ H. D. Klingemann and F. U. Pappi, *Politischer Radikalismus* (Munich: Olzog, 1972).

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[13](#) K.D. Bracher, *Zeitgeschichtliche Kontroversen um Faschismus, Totalitarismus, Demokratie* (Munich: Piper, 1976), 2nd edition, p. 17.

[14](#) O.K. Flechtheim, 'Extremismus und Radikalismus', *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, B 6, (1976), pp. 22–30.

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[21](#) G. Schepis, *Le consultazioni popolari in Italia dal 1848 al 1957* (Empoli: Caparrini, 1958), p. 33. Germino, op. cit., p. 52.

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[26](#) Ibid., p. 176.

[27](#) A. Rollat, *Les hommes de l'extrême droite* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1985), p. 125.

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[34](#) Quoted in J. Algazy, *La tentation néofasciste en France 1944–1965* (Paris: Fayard, 1984), p. 217.

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New populist parties in Western Europe

Paul Taggart

The new populism

The 1980s and early 1990s have witnessed, not without some sense of alarm, a rising tide of right-wing extremism.¹ Attacks on immigrants and racist violence have occurred with an ugly regularity across Europe. Anti-immigrant sentiment on the streets has been matched by electoral success of prominent parties like the French National Front, the Italian National Alliance and the German Republicans. At the same time, many new parties have sprung up, some of which share an agenda with the racist right. Other new parties stressing radical regionalism, anti-political sentiments, or frustration with taxation policies more than immigration issues have added to the impression of a resurgence on the far right.

The Austrian Freedom Party has come up from near dissolution to gain 23 per cent of the vote – its best ever share of the national vote – in the 1994 election with a charismatic leader and an agenda focused against immigration. The rise of the Northern Leagues as a political force in Italy has been matched by the startling success of media magnate Silvio Berlusconi in forming a new party and gaining the largest share of the vote with Forza Italia in the 1994 elections. Switzerland has seen its own regional league in the Ticino League which has joined the Automobilist Party as two of the newest parties in the political system, both clearly on the right. In Scandinavia the long-established Danish and Norwegian Progress Parties that emerged as anti-taxation parties finally found a sibling in Sweden where New Democracy broke through in a seven-month period to gain election to the parliament in 1991. In Belgium, the radical nationalist Flemish Bloc achieved its best national electoral performance in the 1991 election. All these parties have combined elements of nationalism with neo-liberal economic policies, and have presented this package in a style that confronts political systems while, simultaneously, operating comfortably within the realm of parliamentary politics.

It has been tempting to see a monolithic tide of right-wing extremism sweeping across Western Europe, but a closer examination reveals two trends. Avowedly racist and neo-fascist movements have had limited success in their parliamentary aspirations. There have been

significant electoral gains on the far right but those parties that have been electorally successful have shared certain features with each other rather than with the ‘conventional’ extreme right. Employing a comparative perspective this article suggests that the recent trend towards protest parties of the right represents a ‘New Populism’. This New Populism fuses the anti-politics stance of the New Politics with the broad-based protest of the populist right. Issues such as race and immigration are, for such parties, touchstones of dissent. Along with issues of radical regionalism and opposition to taxation, the racist right’s agenda is employed as a means of mobilising a larger vein of discontent that has as its focus a dissatisfaction with the foundations that underlie the ‘postwar settlement’. The New Populism is therefore a telling indicator of important changes in West European politics.

Defining the new populism

Hans-Georg Betz has identified a wave of new parties on the far right and has termed them the ‘radical populist right’. Piero Ignazi has called them the ‘new right-wing’ parties.² Ignazi offers a categorisation of the far right based on three criteria. Stressing first the spatial dimension, he argues that this minimal criterion includes a diverse range of parties located on the extreme right end of the left-right continuum.³ In order to further differentiate, he offers an additional criterion, that of ideology, which allows him to separate those parties with a clear fascist legacy from those without.⁴ Finally, he stresses that the parties can then be differentiated on the basis of their support for or rejection of the political system.⁵ This provides us with a means of differentiating between ‘new’ and ‘old’ far right parties but it does involve a high degree of uncertainty with respect to many parties. This article is an attempt to build on the theoretical basis of Ignazi’s differentiation while offering an alternative set of criteria that allows us to differentiate between neo-fascist parties and New Populist parties.

The argument is that the ideological position of party is articulated not only through platforms, manifestos, speeches and policy positions, but also through party organisation and political style. In order to cut across the different dimensions of the New Populism we will address the beliefs of its elites, the organisation and strategy that those beliefs engender and the electoral bases to whom the party appeals.

The New Populist party is an ideal type of political party. Some parties conform closely to it. Other parties combine New Populism with neo-fascism and are consequently something of a hybrid. Despite this it is important to identify the New Populism because, even when it is in a hybrid form, it can represent the dominant strain. It is ascendant in the realm of party politics on the far right.⁶ Where neo-fascism focuses its energies on the streets and is

associated with the ideology of the ‘boot-boy’, the preferred arena for the New Populists is the parliamentary one, and here they are more likely to be wearing bespoke suits than military fatigues. In order to demonstrate the rise of the New Populism, it is necessary to identify the core elements of the New Populism and then it is possible to identify those parties that conform most closely to this ideal type and to compare their fortunes to those of the neo-fascist parties.

Ideology

The term ‘populism’ is a notoriously difficult term. Any term that encompasses radical agrarian movements in the United States, the nineteenth century intellectual movement of *narodничество* in Russia, Peronist dictatorship in Argentina via Swiss direct democracy, George Wallace and Polish Solidarity necessarily verges on being a conceptual tinderbox. Nonetheless there are some elements that run through many of the different uses of the term.⁷ Stripping populism of its contextual and social features, it is employed here (admittedly guardedly) to stress two elements that seem to run throughout the various meanings. These two elements are its negativity and its breadth. These factors place the New Populism on the right and ‘in the mainstream’. An anti-system element is drawn from the same sources from which have also sprung the New Politics.⁸

In ideological terms, the New Populism is *on the right, against the system, and yet defines itself as in the ‘mainstream’*. It is right-wing, anti-system and populist. It is of the people but not of the system. The growth of the New Populism is itself the repudiation of any idea that politics as usual is a politics that works. This anti-system orientation has had implications for how the party both organises and behaves. It enjoys ‘breaking the rules’ because they are the rules of a system it sees as defunct.

Hofstadter described American populism as nativistic and anti-Semitic.⁹ The idea of intolerance is often central to analyses of populism. There is, in populism then, a strong element of the negative. It is opposed to the system and to those that run the system. And it frequently invokes a notion of ‘the people’ that is characterised more by whom it excludes than by whom it includes. Central to this impetus is a politics of the ‘heartland’.¹⁰ Implicit and integral to populism is a vision of the heartland: a sense of what is ‘normal’ and, consequently, comfortable. The politics of the heartland is a vague notion, but a potent mobilising force. Unable to articulate those instincts fully, populism frequently resorts to attacking those that appear to be threatening to notions of the heartland. By challenging the legitimacy of others, populists are engaging in the politics of identity construction by default. They may not know who they are, but they know who they are not.

High on the list of the excluded for the New Populists are politicians, immigrants,

bureaucrats, intellectuals and welfare recipients. While the list varies slightly from country to country according to circumstances, the core logic of exclusion remains a constant. In his examination of the Kansas populists Walter Nugent terms this a ‘selective nativism’ and we see something of that in the New Populism with its emphasis upon the politics of race and immigration.¹¹ When the New Populists talk of the ‘ordinary man’ and his exclusion from contemporary politics it sometimes seems to be an evocation of the excluded rather than the included. The ‘ordinary man’ is the typical occupant of the heartland.

The ‘people’ have always been central to the rhetoric of populists. As Lawrence Goodwyn notes, it is this mass nature of populism that has been so vital to the accepted academic interpretations of populism.¹² The alleged breadth of New Populists’ constituency is the well-spring for the New Populists’ indignation at their exclusion from political life. While they may not be the elite (‘the political class’) they are, so the claim goes, the many (‘the mainstream’). Like Richard Nixon’s ‘silent majority’, it is the size of the support rather than its silence which is its salient feature.

The reason for describing the New Populism as ‘New’ is twofold. First, it is to stress that this is a historically-contingent manifestation of populism that, although bearing strong similarities to other populist movements, has some idiosyncratic features rendering it distinct. The New Populism is that populist instinct that is engendered by the collapse of the postwar settlement in Western Europe. In this sense it is indeed novel because it is contingent upon a particular historical and political context. It ties itself to the collapse of many of the prevailing ‘meta-narratives’: the ‘end’ of the Cold War, the ‘collapse’ of communism, the ‘crisis’ of welfarism and the ‘passing’ of fordism.

The second reason for the ‘New’ lies in the common basis that it shares with New Politics movements such as Green Parties and the new social movements.¹³ In many ways, the New Populism lies across the same fault lines which have given rise to the New Politics. It clearly faces a different direction but it shares the same anti-system orientation and is a consequence of the particular social, political, and economic changes that we may characterise as the ‘postwar settlement’. This settlement can be portrayed as the consensus that grew around ideas such as social democracy, the welfare state, corporatism and Keynesianism in most West European countries following the end of the Second World War. The New Populism has emerged as the postwar settlement has effectively broken up.¹⁴ The crises of the postwar settlement have served as the facilitators of the New Populism.

The reason many observers conflate the New Populism with neo-fascism is that they both lie somewhere on the right of the political spectrum. Although many New Populists seek to deny the efficacy of the left-right distinction, there is more tenacity in that distinction than they would like to see. The denial of being on the right may well be a rhetorical device that serves to avoid alienating those on the left who are attracted by parts of its ideology. There is a good strategic reason for the New Populists cultivating an electoral base that crosses from

the left to the right. In terms of activist beliefs and programme orientation, there can be little doubt that the New Populism lies on the right.

The New Populism is markedly neo-liberal in its economic orientation. The market is the legitimate and effective site for conflict resolution. The state is viewed as largely illegitimate, over-extended and ineffective. Liberty is, consequently, a key concept for the New Populism. This liberty is defined in negative and individual terms. For the New Populists, freedom consists largely of the absence of state restraints on individual action. The alleged over-extension of the state scope and scale as a consequence of the postwar settlement is the basis of much of the New Populist critique.¹⁵ It therefore makes sense that they should emphasise the importance of the individual as an ethical norm. They are unmistakably parties of the right in this sense.

The leader of the Lombard League, Umberto Bossi declared after their election success in 1992: ‘This was just the first blow against the system, the second will be decisive.’¹⁶ New Populism exists as a reaction to certain systemic and political factors that appear to be manifest as crises. It is therefore not surprising to find that a core belief is that the ‘system’ has failed. In identifying the ‘system’ with those who people it, the New Populists are betraying their populist roots. This anti-system attitude can manifest itself in an anti-party ideology. Such a position has important implications for the way they operate as parties. It also gives rise to the quintessential dilemma that they share with New Politics parties: how to be an effective party at the same time as being an ‘anti-party’.

It is the exclusionary element of the New Populism that justifies the description as populist. In rhetorical terms, this exclusion is usually expressed in terms of their representation of the ‘mainstream’. The New Populism is an appeal to majority politics: it argues that corporatism and the growing strength of interest groups have, in effect, excluded the middle ground and alienated the ‘ordinary’ voter. Of course, such an appeal makes some very contentious assumptions. It assumes that the multi-cultural vision of society is illegitimate and implies that the ordinary person is working in the private sector, white and most probably male. Although these assumptions are contentious, they are important factors in the construction of an electoral constituency.

The New Populist parties differ from neo-fascist parties in several ways. The most concrete difference is also very difficult to verify but is related to historical continuity: neo-fascist parties tend to have some direct link to the fascist parties of the previous era while New Populist parties appear to lack such a historical link. For example, the Italian Social Movement was formed in 1946 by Fascists set on maintaining the tenacity of their ideas in the face of the defeat of the regime.¹⁷ Other neo-fascist parties have been associated with a fascist tradition. Ignazi makes a similar point in his differentiation between old and new far right parties.¹⁸ He provides us with a list of those far right parties linked to fascism.¹⁹

Ignazi’s list includes the German People’s Party (DVU), and the National Democratic Party

(NPD) in Germany.²⁰ In Greece, Spain and Portugal he highlights the National Political Union (EPEN), the National Front and the Christian Democratic Party (PDC) respectively as having strong links with the former fascist regimes in these countries. Similarly the Italian fascists have clearly found a modern incarnation in the Italian Social Movement (MSI) now renamed National Alliance. In countries without such legacies, Ignazi links the British National Front and the British National Party to fascist roots, and he traces a similar genealogy for CP'86 in the Netherlands. Even at first glance the absence of major far right parties such as the French National Front, or the Republicans in Germany is notable.

The second difference is that, while New Populist parties often have an explicit or implicit anti-immigrant stance, this is rarely the sole source of their identity. The anti-immigrant stance is often conflated with other salient issues. For example, the Swiss Automobilists' Party was formed as a reaction to the demands of environmentalists. The Progress parties in Denmark and Norway and New Democracy in Sweden are most famously associated, sometimes primarily, with an anti-taxation agenda. The Italian Lombard League has, as its ideological centrepiece, a commitment to regional devolution and is often analysed primarily as a regional movement – albeit an exceptional one.²¹ In contrast, the neo-fascist parties, while they do develop other policy positions, are almost exclusively anti-immigrant parties.

New Populism, like neo-fascism, is an ideal type party. We should consider both as ideals towards which parties of the far right may gravitate. Some parties are more unequivocally New Populist than neo-fascist. A further complication is that New Populism and neo-fascism are not *necessarily* contradictory. A neo-fascist party may assume a New Populist orientation, or a New Populist party may move towards a neo-fascist agenda if it begins to stress the immigration issue to the effective exclusion of all others. However, in practice, parties do tend to be either neo-fascist or New Populist. The examples of parties that blur the distinction are the Republicans in Germany, the National Front in France and the Flemish Bloc in Belgium.

Ideologically, New Populist parties bear the imprint of their origins. The parties are on the defensive because of threats to a perceived heartland. Their ideology therefore defines itself in largely negative terms as who it is not and who are the ‘enemy’. The effect of that ideology is to draw on a certain social constituency. It also has profound implications for the way they institutionalise as parties.

Organisation

New Populist parties have two qualities that pertain to their organisation: they are very centralised and they set great store in the leadership which is both personalised and charismatic. These characteristics are not, in themselves, peculiar to New Populist parties, but they do point to a central feature of such parties: that they can reconcile anti-systemic

elements with organisational elements that ensure their institutional and electoral survival. They are also the organisational articulation of key elements of their ideology.

The element of charismatic leadership is essential to the nature of the New Populism. New Populism is an explicit attempt to offer models of party *qua* party that differ from prevailing models. It is because the prevailing party model is the ‘catch-all’ professional-bureaucratic party, that charismatic-based models are themselves a form of protest.²² The other alternative is the New Politics model of devolved, decentralised and depersonalised leadership. Both are challenges to the conventional ideas of parties as organisations.

A simple rule of thumb to decide whether to exclude a party from the list of New Populist parties is to see if there is a name of an individual leader that comes to mind with the name of the party. If there is no such association, then the party will probably not be a New Populist phenomenon. In identifying such parties across Western Europe it is easy to single out leaders whose names seem inextricable from the parties they lead (or led). In one case the name has been more than identified with the party: the Norwegian Progress Party was originally called the Anders Lange Party. In its latter incarnations it was revived under, and became identified with the leadership of Carl I. Hagen. Mogens Glistrup’s name goes with the Danish Progress Party, Veikko Venamo’s with the Finnish Rural Party, and Jean-Marie Le Pen’s with the French National Front. Some commentators have even talked of the phenomenon of ‘Lépénisme’ in the latter case.²³ With the Swedish example of New Democracy the party has become associated with an unusual but definitely personalised double-act of Ian Wachtmeister and Bert Karlsson.²⁴ Something similar has occurred with the leadership of the Ticino League in Switzerland where Giulano Bignasca and Flavio Maspoli have indelibly stamped their mark on their fledgling creation.²⁵ In the case of the Austrian Freedom Party it has been the leadership of Jörg Haider that has in fact transformed the party into being a New Populist party, and it is with his leadership that the party has come to be identified. In Germany, Franz Schönhuber’s role has been crucial to the development of the Republicans.

Clearly other non-New Populist parties are also identified with particular leaders so this is merely a minimal criteria for New Populist parties. For the New Populists, leadership is not merely an ingredient: it is the essence of both their message and their party. In New Populist parties, the charismatic basis of their leadership is an essential element because it represents a symbolic challenge to the prevailing models of party organisation. It serves the dual function of legitimating the parties’ claim to be essentially different from other parties and allows a degree of control over the party machinery by the leadership that is designed to maximise the impact of their relatively small electoral constituency.

It is partly a consequence of the centralised structure that New Populist parties employ charismatic leadership. In seeking to reject the traditional idea of a political party, the New Populists construct a party organisation that explicitly challenges the model of bureaucratic and hierarchical structure associated with mass parties. This means that they employ

centralised organisational patterns. Where the traditional parties are strictly hierarchical and pyramidal, New Populists aim to be selective and small in structure. An example of this would be Sweden's New Democracy which has striven to make its national party independent of the encumbrances of the local or county levels, with the justification that this allows a direct line of communication between the 'people' and the national elites.²⁶

The regional basis of some of the New Populist parties (e.g., the Italian Northern Leagues and the Swiss League of Ticino) can also be seen as an attempt to reject the basic rules of party organising that usually result in parties that are explicitly national in scope. It is an essential element of the Lombard League that it has advocated a radical form of federalism and of 'macroregions'.²⁷ It is a combination of unorthodoxy with centralisation and personalised leadership that leads Dwayne Woods to describe the Lombard League as 'a centralised political movement with decision-making concentrated in the hands of Bossi and national committee of his supporters'.²⁸ Such a description is typical of the organisational form favoured by the New Populists. These parties of 'ordinary people' seem to consistently depend upon the personal appeal of the most extraordinary of men to lead them.

Electoral base

The final element of New Populists that makes them distinct is their electoral profile. The contours of the New Populist base clearly overlap with the profile of the far right that has traditionally been drawn. Neo-fascist movements have traditionally been portrayed as having an inner city, working-class, protest constituency or as poor and under-educated and predominantly male.²⁹ In terms of some basic demographic characteristics we can summarise from the literature that neo-fascist parties draw from poor, under-educated, urban and male constituencies.³⁰ The New Populists are drawing from that constituency but the net is cast somewhat wider.

The reason for assuming that New Populists will draw from a wide range of electors than neo-fascists, is that New Populism is, at root, at least in the electorate, a protest phenomenon. If the parties are successful at portraying themselves as a different type of party, then they will be at relative liberty to attract voters from across the political spectrum because they have not defined themselves out of any particular ideological milieus. In a similar vein, they aim to mobilise the citizens who have previously expressed their dissatisfaction with the dominant parties by simply not voting. It is because their ideology contains the idea that they are a 'mainstream' phenomenon that they can, and do, attract voters from across a broad range. Within this swathe there is a clear propensity for some demographic groups to be attracted to the New Populists. This means that, at one and the same time, they can portray themselves as beyond the sullied constraints of normal class-centred electoral base-building, and yet count

on the support of a core group of voters – albeit a small group.

The New Populist constituency is predominantly male. On a wider note than neo-fascism, it is not necessarily poor or unemployed, but is employed in the private sector. It is not poorly educated but does draw from the middle to low educational strata. It also draws from a wide range of prior voting positions and may draw in those that previously did not take part in elections. It is also predominantly young with those who are voting for the first time having fewer ties to break with the established order. We may see examples of this in several parties.

Mitra's study of the French National Front demonstrates how there is an over-representation of the youngest cohort (18–24) in the party's electorate and also shows that the National Front's vote actually increases with higher levels of education.³¹ Nonna Mayer and Pascal Perrineau also demonstrate that Le Pen's voters 'cross the left-right divide more often than any other electorate'.³² Andersen demonstrates that the voters for both the Danish and Norwegian Progress parties are predominantly from the private sector.³³ This author has elsewhere shown that Sweden's New Democracy crosses from left to right, draws the previously apathetic and is predominantly male and private sector in its support.³⁴ Eva Kolinsky demonstrates that the German Republicans are disproportionately male, while Veen, Lepszy and Mnich concur with this conclusion and also point out that the voters are a 'disproportionately young "homeless" pool of voters'.³⁵ Knüsel and Hottinger describe the voters for the Ticino League as 'predominantly masculine, a little older and less educated than the average, living mostly in large towns, [and] Catholic but not necessarily church-going'.³⁶ There does appear to be some sort of a sociological profile that emerges when we compare New Populist voters.

Summarising we can say that New Populist parties are recognisable along three dimensions:

Ideologically the parties are on the right, anti-system in orientation, and claim to be speaking for the 'mainstream' of society.

Organisationaly the parties are characterised by strongly centralised structures with charismatic and personalised leadership as an integral component of their institutional development.

Electoralilly the parties are defined by a constituency that is disproportionately male, private sector, young and which draws from a wide range of political orientations.

Table 1 below provides us with a typology of New Populist and Neo-fascist parties in seventeen West European countries. The differentiation is based upon the above three criteria. It

Table 1 Electoral highlights of new populist and neo-fascist parties in Western Europe [\(1\)](#)

Country	New populist party	Best vote (year)	Neo-fascist parties	Best vote (year)
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Austria	Freedom Party (FPÖ)	23 (1994)	–	
Belgium	Flemish Bloc (VB)	7 (1991)	National Front (FNb)	1 (1991)
Denmark	Progress Party (FRP)	16 (1973)	–	
Finland	Rural Party	11 (1970)	–	
France ⁽²⁾	National Front (FN)	12 (1993)	–	
Germany	Republicans (REP)	2 (1990)	National Democratic Party (NPD)	4 (1969)
			German People's Union (DVU)	.6 (1987)
Greece	–		National Political Union (EPEN) ⁽³⁾	.6 (1985)
Ireland	–		–	
Italy	Northern Leagues ⁽⁴⁾	9 (1992)	Italian Social Movement (MSI) ⁽⁵⁾	14 (1994)
	Forza Italia	21 (1994)		
Luxembourg	–		–	
Netherlands	–		Centre Party (CP'86)	.8 (1982)
			Centre Democrats (CD)	2.5 (1994)
Norway	Progress Party (FRPn)	12 (1989)	–	
Portugal	–		Christian Democratic Party (PDC)	1 (1979)
Spain	–		National Front (FNs)	2 (1979)
Sweden	New Democracy	7 (1991)	–	
Switzerland	Automobilists Party	5 (1991)	National Action (NA) ⁽⁶⁾	4 (1983)
	Ticino League	1 (1991)		
United Kingdom	–		National Front	.6 (1979)
			British National Party (BNP)	.1 (1983)
Mean		7.4		2.2

Sources: Thomas Mackie and Richard Rose, *The International Almanac of Electoral History* (London: Macmillan, 1991); Paul Hainsworth (ed.), *The Extreme Right in Europe and the USA* (London: Pinter, 1992); Cheles, Ferguson and Michalina Vaughan

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Notes:

- [\(1\)](#) Best vote refers to the highest percentage of the national vote gained in national elections for lower house of legislature and therefore excludes both regional and European elections.
- [\(2\)](#) French figures are for vote in 1st ballot. FN received 6 per cent in 2nd ballot in 1993.
- [\(3\)](#) EPEN was dissolved in Sept. 1989.
- [\(4\)](#) Northern League incorporates the Lombard League, the Venetian League and the Autonomous Piedmont League.
- [\(5\)](#) Changed its name to National Alliance in the 1994 election.
- [\(6\)](#) The Swiss NA changed its name to Swiss Democrats (SDs) in 1990.

includes those parties on the far right that are still active or have been active in the past. The focus is primarily upon those parties that have taken part in elections. This is essential to all New Populist parties as they do not usually derive from a social movement basis but tend to be top-down creations that rely on elections as the currency of their existence as they are without the self-sustaining culture of the new social movements that underlies the New Politics parties, or the labour movement of social democratic parties. It excludes extra-parliamentary far right movements whose focus is racist violence. The table includes, with the names of the parties, their best electoral performances in national elections. The reason for this is that we are focusing on those parties that can truly be said to be national phenomena.

[Table 1](#) allows us to make some important observations. The table illustrates why the New Populism is such a pertinent topic at this time: the New Populist parties are clearly in the ascendancy. The best election results have been gained mostly since 1989. The two parties which seem to buck this trend by gaining their best result at an earlier time have both experienced revivals. The Danish Progress Party dropped to 4 per cent in the 1984 election but revived its support to 9 per cent in 1988. Similarly the Finnish Rural Party dropped to a low-point of 4 per cent of the vote in 1975 but pushed this back up to 10 per cent in 1983. There does seem to be a wave of New Populism sweeping across West Europe. While New Politics parties and the more established parties appear to be losing support, the New Populists, while clearly a small minority, are a rising force.

In contrast, the neo-fascist parties have not, on the whole, been as successful as the New Populist parties in the recent period with many of them gaining their best results in the period before the success of the New Populists. The other comparison allows us to conclude that the neo-fascist parties have never been as electorally competitive as the New Populists. Where most of the New Populists have garnered over 5 per cent of the vote at one time or another,

the neo-fascist parties have consistently failed to gain this level of support. By conflating these two tendencies commentators have confused what is, in reality, a very clear picture. New Populism is growing in electoral muscle and has been more popular than neo-fascism among voters. The new wave of activity on the far right is therefore not a continuation of the long-term trend of neo-fascism.

The second observation that may be made from [Table 1](#) is that the electoral strength of German neo-fascism and German New Populism has been unduly stressed, compared with other countries. It has to be acknowledged that the far right have done very well at gaining representation at the *Länder* level.³⁷ This has yet to be translated into a national shift. Clearly, with Germany's Nazi legacy, any rumblings of the far right are bound to incur more attention than they would in other countries. But the electoral performance at a national level does not yet merit such attention. Indeed the danger is that an over-emphasis on the German case has occluded those cases where the far right has assumed a more dangerous position. The emphasis on Germany's far right may well follow from the rise of extra-parliamentary violence against immigrants which may be at the highest level of any European country. But this does not amount to the same thing as a rise of the far right in electoral terms. It behoves us to be clear about which phenomenon we are addressing: racist violence or the electoral rise of the far right.³⁸

The third observation conclusion can be made that none of the three countries which have experienced transitions from authoritarian rule in the postwar period have given rise to significant New Populist movements and, perhaps even more surprising given the fascist past, none of the neo-fascist parties have gained more than a single percentage of the vote. Panayote Elias Dimitras concludes a study of the far right in Greece with the comment that 'most observers ... agree that in the near future, unless there are dramatic developments, no extreme right party will play a significant role on the Greek political scene.'³⁹ In the same volume, Tom Gallagher describes the marginalisation of the far right in Portugal resulting from Salazar's period of military dictatorship in which he suppressed any movement of the far right as he saw this as a threat: the result was that the contemporary far right has been denied a historical basis.⁴⁰ John Gilmour concludes his study of the Spanish far right with the observation that the far right 'wallowing in nostalgia and traditionalism, is now nothing more than a marginalised movement which appears to be set on a downward course into oblivion'.⁴¹

These three countries, due to their authoritarian periods, did not experience the consensus of the postwar settlement in the same way as the rest of Western Europe. There do seem to be common elements to the three countries' experiences such that some commentators argue for a 'Mediterranean model' of liberal democracy.⁴² The nature of their authoritarian regimes, and the transitions away from those regimes point up the difficulties of mobilising a viable alternative-right formation because, in the words of one commentator "Francoism without

“Franco”, “Spinolismo” in Portugal, or monarchical oligarchy without the colonels were simply not viable options.⁴³ We can perhaps speculate that in periods of consolidation of liberal democracy there is a tendency for the public to eschew extreme alternatives.⁴⁴ Another common feature was the discrediting of highly personalised fascist regimes. We can observe that an extreme form of both populism and fascism had been given a long period in command of a regime. The fact that these states experienced revolutions can be seen as a repudiation of the far right. As a result Spain, Portugal and Greece have seen the right forming broad-based alliances to gain wider support and to lose the taint of fascist legacies.

The application of two models of the far right to recent election results is a relatively simple exercise but it shows a strong trend and debunks over-simplified notions of a simple re-running of history through the re-emergence of fascism. This only applies to electoral mobilisation and should not be taken to imply that the rise of racist violence is not a very real and growing phenomenon. On the contrary, comparative examination shows that in legislatures across Western Europe new actors and new potential partners for the neo-fascists are appearing, but it is necessary to recognise the different character of the parliamentary arm of the extreme right.

Conclusion

By separating the New Populism from neo-fascism, it is clear that the growing strength of the far right at present largely derives from the growing strength of the former rather than the latter. The New Populism, as an ideal type, has a clear identity with ideological, organisational and electoral facets. The rise of the New Populism seems to be linked, like the New Politics, to some deep set changes in the nature of West European societies and polities. Its rise is therefore a commentary on the wider context of contemporary politics.

In conclusion three points need to stressed. The first point is that the changes on the far right cannot simply be ascribed to a singular rise in support for neo-fascism. Issues of race and immigration may well be functioning as catalysts for a deeper protest about the nature of postwar politics in general. The success of the sharp-suited far right is not unrelated to the growth of extremist violence of the boot boys, but we have a clearer picture if we separate the two phenomena. Defining New Populism is a start to such a process.

The second point is that the New Populists may well represent an emergent new party family. From a general overview of West European countries it is clear that in many cases there exist nascent party formations that apparently share important ideological, electoral and organisational characteristics. In this sense they represent the right-wing equivalent of the New Politics. Like Green parties, they have self-consciously constructed themselves in

opposition to the existing parties and the wider model of party politics that the dominant parties represent.

The final point is that, despite the impression easily garnered from studies of the wave of right wing extremism, the neo-fascist level of success at the ballot box has been somewhat limited. Those parties that are unequivocally racist or fascist have not benefited from a tidal wave of electoral support. Those parties that have tempered the agenda of race and immigration with other issues of protest pertinent to their populations have generally been more successful.

The New Populism is important because it sometimes explicitly shares, and sometimes hints at, the agenda of the extra-parliamentary far right. The muted radicalism of the New Populists has led to great success at entering parliaments and has the potential to transform party systems. As a nascent, but apparently effective force for change – perhaps radical change – the New Populism represents a formidable protest force. It both reflects changes in contemporary society and also is attempting to enact political change. In its potent cocktail of muted radicalism, anti-system attitudes and a right-wing populism, the New Populism is set to make its presence felt across Western Europe.

Notes

[1](#) With this tide of political activity has also come a wave of academic studies. Much of the academic coverage has been of an explicitly comparative nature. There have been a number of special issues of prominent journals devoted solely to this issue. In *West European Politics* 11/2 (April 1988) an issue was devoted to Right-Wing Extremism. More recently the *European Journal of Political Studies* 22/1 (July 1992) and *Parliamentary Affairs* 45/3 (Winter) 1992 have followed suit. For comparative books consult Peter H. Merkl and Leonard Weinberg (eds.), *Encounters with the Contemporary Radical Right* (Boulder: Westview, 1993), Paul Hainsworth (ed.), *The Extreme Right in Europe and the USA* (London: Pinter, 1992), Luciano Cheles, Ronnie Ferguson and Michalina Vaughan (eds.), *Neo-Fascism in Western Europe* (London: Longman, 1991), Geoffrey Harris, *The Dark Side of Europe*, 2nd ed, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1994) and Glyn Ford, *Fascist Europe* (London: Pluto, 1992).

[2](#) Hans-Georg Betz, ‘The New Politics of Resentment: Radical Right-Wing Populist Parties in Western Europe’, *Comparative Politics* 25/3 (1993), pp.413–27. Piero Ignazi, ‘The Silent Counter-Revolution: Hypotheses on the Emergence of Extreme Right-Wing Parties in Europe’, *European Journal of Political Research* 22/1 (July 1992) pp.3–34.

[3](#) Ignazi, ‘Silent Counter-Revolution’, pp.7–9.

[4](#) Ibid. pp.9–11.

[5](#) Ibid. pp.11–12.

[6](#) The term ‘far right’ is used here as an umbrella term to refer to those parties at the far end of the right side of the

political spectrum, and therefore includes both New Populist and neo-fascist parties.

[7](#) See the collection of articles in Ghita Ionescu and Ernest Gellner (eds.), *Populism: Its Meanings and National Characteristics* (London: Weidenfeld, 1969) and Margaret Canovan, *Populism* (London: Junction, 1981).

[8](#) For New Politics parties as anti-system forces see Ferdinand Müller-Rommel ‘New Political Movements and “New Politics” Parties in Western Europe’, pp.209–31 in Russell J. Dalton and Manfred Kuechler (eds.), *Challenging the Political Order*, (Oxford: OUP, 1990), Herbert Kitschelt, *The Logics of Party Formation*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1989) and Thomas Poguntke *Alternative Politics*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1993).

[9](#) Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform* (NY: Vintage, 1955), p.61.

[10](#) The author is grateful to B.D. Graham for this point.

[11](#) Walter T.K. Nugent, *The Tolerant Populists: Kansas, Populism and Nativism* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago, 1963), p.9.

[12](#) Lawrence Goodwyn, ‘Rethinking “Populism”: Paradoxes of Historiography and Democracy’, *Telos* 88 (Summer 1991), p.54.

[13](#) For overviews of New Politics parties see Ferdinand Müller-Rommel (ed.), *New Politics in Western Europe* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1989) and for the new social movements see Dalton and Kuechler *Challenging the Political Order* (note 8).

[14](#) For one description see Peter Gourevitch, *Politics in Hard Times* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1986), pp.29–31.

[15](#) There is a strong similarity with the critique of bureaucratisation and with the consequent emphasis on liberty that characterises the New Politics critique. See Herbert Kitschelt, ‘Left-Libertarian Parties: Explaining Innovation in Competitive Party Systems’, *World Politics* 40/2 (1988), pp.209–11 and Thomas Poguntke, ‘New Politics and Party Systems: The Emergence of a New Type of Party’, *West European Politics* 10/11 (Jan. 1987), p.78.

[16](#) Quoted in Carlo E. Ruzza and Oliver Schmidtke, ‘Roots of Success of the Lega Lombarda: Mobilization Dynamics and the Media’, *West European Politics* 16/2 (April 1993), p.1.

[17](#) Roberto Chiarini, ‘The ‘Movimento Sociale Italiano’: A Historical Profile’ in Cheles *et al.*, *Neo-Fascism in Europe*, (note 1), p.26. Also see Piero Ignazi ‘The Changing Profile of the Italian Social Movement’ in Merkl and Weinberg, *Encounters with the Contemporary Radical Right*, (note 1), pp.77–9.

[18](#) Ignazi, (note 2), pp.9–11.

[19](#) *Ibid.*, p.10.

[20](#) Also see Richard Stöss, ‘The Problem of Right-Wing Extremism in West Germany’, *West European Politics* 11/2 (April 1988), pp.41–4, Michael Minkenberg, ‘The New Right in Germany: The Transformation of Conservatism and the Extreme Right’, *European Journal of Political Research* 22/1 (July 1992), p.56 and Geoffrey K. Roberts, ‘Right-Wing Radicalism in the New Germany’, *Parliamentary Affairs* 45/3 No.3, (July 1992), pp.334–6.

[21](#) Ruzza and Schmidtke, ‘Roots of Success of the Lega Lombarda’ (note 16), pp.1–4.

[22](#) See Angelo Panebianco, *Political Parties* (Cambridge: CUP, 1988). Other commentators have recently described this party form as the ‘cartel party’. See Richard S. Katz and Peter Mair ‘Changing Models of Party Organisation: The Emergence of

the Cartel Party' paper presented at the ECPR Joint Sessions, Limerick, 1992.

[23](#) Michalina Vaughan, 'The Extreme Right in France: "Lépénisme" or the Politics of Fear' in Cheles *et al.*, (note 1), pp.221–5.

[24](#) There is strong evidence to suggest that the double act is in fact dominated by the leadership of Wachtmeister both in terms of the party itself and in terms of the electoral support for the leadership which places Karlsson as one of the most unpopular Swedish political figures. See Paul Taggart 'The New Populism and the New Politics' unpublished PhD diss., Univ. of Pittsburgh, 1993 and Mikael Gilljam and Sören Holmberg, *Väljarna Inför 90-Talet* (Stockholm: Norstedts, 1993).

[25](#) René Knüsel and Julian Thomas Hottinger, 'Regionalist Movements and Parties in Switzerland: A Case Study on the "Lega dei ticinesi"', paper presented at the European Consortium for Political Research, Joint Workshops, Madrid, 1994.

[26](#) Paul Taggart and Anders Widfeldt, '1990s Flash Party Organisation: The Case of *New Democracy* in Sweden', paper prepared for presentation at the Political Studies Assoc. of the UK Annual Conference, Univ. of Leicester, UK, 20–22 April 1993.

[27](#) Michéal Thompson, 'From Chanou to Bossi: The Roots of Northern Italian Regionalist Politics', *Italian Politics & Society* (Spring 1993), pp.8–16. Also see Gianfranco Miglio, 'Towards a Federal Italy', *Telos*, 90 (Winter 1990), pp.41–2.

[28](#) Dwayne Woods, 'The Crisis of the Italian Party State and the Rise of the Lombard League', *Telos*, 93 (Summer 1992), p.125.

[29](#) See, e.g., Paul Whitely, 'The National Front's Vote in the 1977 GLC Elections: An Aggregate Analysis', *British Journal of Political Science* 9/3, (1979), pp.370–81 and Christopher T. Husbands, 'The Netherlands: Irritants on the Body Politic', in Hainsworth, *Extreme Right in Europe and the USA* (note 1), p.120.

[30](#) Jürgen W. Falter and Siegfried Schumann, 'Affinity Towards Right-Wing Extremism in Western Europe', *West European Politics* 11/2 (April 1988), pp.96–110.

[31](#) Subrata Mitra, 'The National Front in France – A Single-Issue Movement?', *West European Politics*, 11/2 (April 1988), pp.54–6. Compare with William Safran, 'The National Front in France: From Lunatic Fringe to Limited Respectability' in Merkl and Weinberg (note 1), p.24.

[32](#) Nonna Mayer and Pascal Perrineau, 'Why Do They Vote for Le Pen?', *European Journal of Political Research* 22/1 (1992), pp.127–8.

[33](#) Jorgen Goul Andersen and Tor Bjorklund, 'Structural Changes and the New Cleavages: The Progress Parties in Denmark and Norway', *Acta Sociologica* 33/3 (1990), p.204.

[34](#) Paul Taggart, 'Green Parties and Populist Parties and the Establishment of New Politics in Sweden', paper presented at the annual meeting of the APSA, Palmer House Hilton, Chicago, 3–6 Sept. 1992.

[35](#) Eva Kolinsky, 'A Future for Right Extremism in Germany?' in Hainsworth (note 1), p.82. Hans-Joachim Veen, Norbert Lepszy and Peter Mnich, *The Republikaner in Germany: Right-Wing Menace or Protest Catchall?* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1993), p.31.

[36](#) Knüsel and Hottinger, 'Regionalist Movements and Parties in Switzerland' (note 25).

[37](#) Their greatest successes have so far been in Baden-Wurttemberg where the Republicans took 11 per cent of the vote and 15 seats and the DVU took 6 per cent of the vote and 5 seats in Schleswig-Holstein in 1992 (*Financial Times* 6 April 1992, p.1 and 7 April 1992, p.1). In a state election in Bremen the DVU gained 15 per cent of the vote and six seats in the parliament in 1991 (*Financial Times*, 1 Oct. 1991, p.22).

[38](#) For a recent overview, both theoretical and empirical, of racist violence in Europe see Tore Björge and Rob Witte, ‘Introduction’ in Tore Björge and Rob Witte (eds.), *Racist Violence in Europe* (NY: St. Martin’s Press, 1993), pp.1–16.

[39](#) Panayote Elias Dimitras, ‘Greece: The Virtual Absence of an Extreme Right’ in Hainsworth *Extreme Right in Europe and the USA* (note 1), p.267,

[40](#) Tom Gallagher, ‘Portugal: The Marginalization of the Extreme-Right’ in Hainsworth (note 1), p.243.

[41](#) John Gilmour, ‘The Extreme Right in Spain: Blas Piñar and the Spirit of the Nationalist Uprising’ in Hainsworth, (note 1), p.229.

[42](#) See, e.g., Geoffrey Pridham, ‘Comparative Perspective on the New Mediterranean Democracies: A Model of Regime Transition?’ in Geoffrey Pridham (ed.), *The New Mediterranean Democracies: Regime Transition in Spain, Greece and Portugal* (London: Frank Cass, 1984), pp.1–29. For a contrasting perspective see A. Lijphart, T.C. Bruneau, P.N. Diamandouros and R. Gunther, ‘A Mediterranean Model of Democracy? The Southern European Democracies in Comparative Perspective’, *West European Politics* 11/1 (Jan. 1988), pp.7–25.

[43](#) Philippe C. Schmitter, ‘An Introduction to Southern European Transitions’ in Guillermo O’Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter and Laurence Whitehead (eds.), *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Southern Europe* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins UP, 1986), p.7. Also see specific contributions on Spain, Greece and Portugal in this same volume for accounts of the effects of authoritarian rule on the subsequent electoral and ideological emergence of the right.

[44](#) Richard Gillespie, ‘The Consolidation of New Democracies’ in Derek W. Urwin and William E. Paterson (eds.), *Politics in Western Europe Today* (London: Longman, 1990), pp.238–43.

Modern European democracy and its enemies

The threat of the extreme right

Ami Pedahzur and Leonard Weinberg

Introduction

For many people, the last decade of the twentieth century will be remembered for its violent, ethnocentric, xenophobic and racist features. Most of the horrific mass killings and ethnic cleansings have taken place in Africa and the Balkans. Still Western Europe has not escaped bitter manifestations of political extremism, especially of a right-wing nature. Since the early 1980s, many Western European countries have experienced a steady increase in the power of extreme right-wing parties. Furthermore, a neo-Nazi subculture is thriving and violent attacks against refugees and immigrants have become commonplace.

Democracies, by their very nature, open their gates to debate, competitive political activity, and struggle over resources and power. Most citizens in western democracies see these freedoms as the moral basis for the legitimacy of the regime. Others citizens, fewer in number, exploit these same freedoms to challenge existing political arrangements and undermine liberty, equality and civil rights, sometimes seriously endangering them. For decades, the most prominent political actor posing these challenges was the radical political party.

From the late nineteenth century onward, and more prominently following World War II, democratic regimes adopted legal measures to exclude extreme right-wing parties from the political game. In this way liberal democracies acted to assure their own stability. Political dynamics in the last few decades have introduced a new threat to the stability of democracies. This threat, which we will refer to as the ‘uncivil society’, is far more fluid in nature and structure than the political party and thus presents an even greater challenge than subversive political parties to democratic regimes looking for measures to assure stability. We contend that, at the beginning of the new millennium, achieving stability by outlawing extreme political parties is no longer an effective strategy. Furthermore, contrary to the ‘party decline’ and ‘trade off’ theses, we argue that the ‘uncivil society’ and extreme right-wing parties

operate jointly to promote similar goals and thus present a double threat, one operating from within the parliaments and the other from the surrounding environment.

The first part of the article will explore the changing structure of the political process which has allowed the expansion of democracy's enemies. The second part will identify old and new enemies of democratic regimes; define their ideologies, boundaries and modus operandi; and evaluate the level of threat they now pose to Western European democracies. Finally, we will assess whether 'uncivil society' has replaced the subversive party as the principal mobilizer of extremism, or rather whether it co-operates with this same extremism.

The changing nature of the political process

In 1850 virtually no European country knew what a political party was, apart from small elite parties. The development of new types of political parties was closely linked to social and economic changes which promoted democratisation and valued the idea of popular representation. As a result of these processes European parliaments became open to a new type of party – the mass party, characterised by mass membership. The idea of representing the interests of the masses altered common perceptions of the role of political parties in society and the polity, and brought an end to the small elite parties of the nineteenth century. According to Lawson, the mass party became the primary link between society and the state.¹

But after World War II the role of the mass party itself declined. According to Katz and Mair, European political parties transformed themselves since 1945 into the 'catch all' model of party organisation; 25 years later they transformed themselves again into what we can call the 'cartel' model.² As they transformed their organisation, such parties moved away from the society and attached themselves to the state. Thus the political party as a primary link between the society and the state disappeared and a vacuum was created. This process was essentially complete by 1970.

The changing role of the political parties showed itself in various ways. According to Ignazi, volatility between parties 'progressively accelerated in the 1980s' and that volatility shows little sign of abating even now. Further 'decomposition of established party ties' has also accelerated. Decline in party membership and decrease in degree of partisan involvement all indicate that earlier enduring ties between the electorate and established parties are progressively fading away, allowing new parties and/or new agencies to emerge in their place.³

Given such major changes in political structure and affiliation, society and the state should theoretically have grown apart. But linkage between society and the state is essential for the continuous functioning of any regime, especially democracies. Since the early 1970s, in fact,

alternative forms of political participation emerged, apparently to fill the gap between society and the state and became relevant linkage agents as the linking capacity of the parties declined.⁴

Clearly the evolution of these new modes of political participation cannot be attributed solely to structural changes and disconnected from changes in values. Ronald Inglehart has provided perhaps the most prominent explanation for the emergence of alternative ‘new politics’ in the Western world: ‘The silent revolution’. ‘The silent revolution’ consists of a set of materialist/post materialist factors which, Inglehart claims, have shaped the attitudes of citizens in the West, especially Europe. A post materialist set of values, says Inglehart, emphasises freedom, participation and self-realisation. This value set has produced new political alignments and new political movements on the left of the political spectrum,⁵ namely the Green parties, as well as new social movements.

Scott Flanagan was the first to suggest that a change of values might produce not only libertarian manifestations, but authoritarian ones as well.⁶ Piero Ignazi develops this point in his ‘silent counter revolution’ thesis, which aims to explain the re-emergence of the extreme right-wing parties in the 1980s. Ignazi considered both the structural and value changes which jointly may explain the reappearance of parties on the far right. Parties of the far right have gained much scholarly attention; other types of political participation on the extreme right have received significantly less. This is puzzling, given the fact that the extreme right political scene is similar in many ways to the left libertarian end of the political spectrum, where both political parties and extra-parliamentary organisations operate simultaneously to promote post-materialistic agendas. Unlike other scholars who focus exclusively on political parties, we contend that extreme right-wing parties are not the only forces linking society and the state and thus are not the only challengers to democracy. In making this argument we acknowledge that political extremism is widespread, and may indeed be a ‘normal pathological’ condition of any industrial society.⁷ Political extremism has many faces: ultra-nationalism, intolerance (against women, immigrants, homosexuals), ethnocentrism, anti-democratic prejudice, and fundamental religious beliefs. Often such extremisms do not find their way from the social sphere into the political. Yet, some conditions (political, social, economic, and cultural)⁸ may be conducive to the political mobilisation of such extremist views. In order to complete the political mobilisation process a mechanism must be available and in place carry the load of extremism. This vehicle is the actual linking agent between society and the state.⁹ The last two decades of the twentieth century have produced new conditions which permit alliances between political parties and what we prefer to call the ‘uncivil society’.

Old enemies – political parties

The extreme political party became democracy's bitterest enemy at the beginning of the twentieth century. This development was linked to the appearance of the mass party and its smaller counterpart, the devotee party.¹⁰ The devotee party may be characterised as a highly cohesive organisation gathered around an extreme ideology. Its members were committed to their ideology, to party organisation and in many cases, to a charismatic leader. Two main ideologies characterised the devotee parties – communism and fascism. Besides mainstream political activities, devotee parties often developed paramilitary organisations in order to stage violent confrontations with their opponents.

During the 1920s and 1930s these anti-democratic parties operated in a convenient 'structure of political opportunity'. In social terms, during the aftermath of WWI and the subsequent economic depression, many European societies went through crises characterised by profound hostility toward existing regimes. Democracy, especially in Italy and Germany, did not constitute much of a barrier to these militant parties.¹¹ In sum, fascist parties were democracy's worst enemies. These parties mobilised popular animosity against democracy, shaped it as an electoral resource, and used it to undermine the European democracies.

After WWII, in most European countries extreme right-wing parties were banned and thus denied legitimacy as linking agents between society and the state. This exclusion responded to and resulted from atrocities committed during World War II and the bloody heritage left to Europe by Fascist dictatorships. According to Hans Georg Betz, Western Europe enjoyed economic growth, a major increase in living standards and the expansion of the welfare state during the decades following the war. Only in the 1980s, following serious political and economic changes, did extreme right-wing parties re-emerge.¹² These parties exhibited more moderate ideologies than their Fascist predecessors. Still they advocated nationalism, racism, xenophobia, and belief in the need for a strong state.¹³ According to Betz, the main goal of the parties was to exploit the fears and alienation felt by many Europeans.¹⁴

Eatwell mentions several different explanations for the re-emergence of extreme right-wing parties: 1) Changing class structure and consequently the tendency of voters to line up in terms of increasingly complex patterns of issue and value cleavages. Many voters are attracted to charismatic sources of authority, to individuals who seem to provide authoritative guidance to the dangerous future. 2) The emergence of a post-materialist agenda and its minimal appeal to working class voters. Given the fact that centre-left parties have often been influenced by post materialist agendas, a growing rift appears to be emerging within a major section of their classic support. 3) Globalisation, both in economic and cultural terms, and its effects in terms of unemployment and the loss of identity, produces support for extreme right-wing parties among working class and even middle class persons. 4) Loss of faith in old ideologies and disillusionment with politics and politicians.¹⁵

An initial look at the European parliamentary scene leaves the impression that Eatwell's argument regarding the re-emergence of extreme right-wing parties is only partially correct

(see [Table 1](#)). Diversity in the electoral achievements of extreme parties in different European countries reinforces Eatwell's assumption regarding the specific contexts under which parties operate. On the one hand, formerly marginal political parties can suddenly become prominent actors in the electoral scene. Examples are the Austrian Freedom Party, the Swiss People's Party or even the Norwegian Progress Party, which according to recent polls, is about to become the leading party in the next national elections. On the other hand, parties which were declared emerging threats of the far right in the 1980s, such as the German Republikaner, lost most of their power during the 1990s. We can claim that, as mainstream political parties lost voters' allegiance, extreme right-wing devotee parties gained.

[Table 1](#) Electoral results for extreme right-wing parties in general elections (in per cent)

	<i>LN</i> (Italy)	<i>FN</i> (France)	<i>REP</i> (Germany)	<i>FP</i> (Denmark)	<i>FP</i> (Norway)	<i>FPO</i> (Austria)	<i>VB</i> (Belgium)
1980							
1981				8.9	4.5		11.4
1982							
1983							
1984				3.6			
1985					3.7		1.4
1986						9.7	
1987				4.8			1.9
1988		9.7		9.0			
1989			7.1		13.0		
1990			2.1	6.4		16.6	
1991							6.6
1992	8.7						
1993		12.5			6.0		
1994	8.4		1.9	6.4		22.5	
1995						21.9	7.8
1996	10.1						
1997		14.9			15.3		
1998			1.8	2.4			
1999						26.9	9.9

Source: 1980–94, Betz 1994 (note 12); 1994–99 European Journal of Political Research, Political Data in 1994–99; Government and Opposition.

Though their organisation and structure is often similar in organisation and structure to 'cartel' parties, extreme right-wing political parties attempt to present themselves as alternatives to the established parties in which the public has lost faith.¹⁶ Such parties have often succeeded in mobilising the electorate. According to Eatwell many European countries, including those without powerful extreme right-wing parties, display a high potential for right-wing extremism. For example, a poll conducted in Germany in February 2000 indicated that around 30 per cent of the voters would seriously consider supporting a Haider-type

party.¹⁷ This finding was prefigured by a late 1997 Eurobarometer survey which measured the level of racism and xenophobia among European citizens. According to the 1997 survey, 81 per cent of Belgian citizens identified themselves as racists on a certain level. This was also true for 78 per cent of Finns and 75 per cent of the French. As for attitudes regarding immigration to European countries, 85 per cent of the German respondents argued that their country could absorb no more immigrants from certain ethnic groups, while 82 per cent of the Belgians felt the same.¹⁸

Where do such respondents go to when they do not find a compatible political party to support? As mentioned earlier, Piero Ignazi suggested the possible existence of alternate means for manifesting racist and xenophobic sentiments. Even though Ignazi's analysis was somewhat narrow, as he himself acknowledged, Ignazi saw that changes in party systems could encourage the potential for the emergence of new political parties. In making his argument Ignazi intentionally ignored the possibility of other effects, such as a further decline of parties and the emergence of alternative non-parliamentary organisations. Ten years later Ignazi's decision to omit such organisations from his analysis should be reconsidered.

From the late 1940s onward, and more prominently in the 1980s and 1990s, a new channel for the mobilisation of extremism appeared on the European scene, referred to by some as extreme right subculture,¹⁹ a subculture which resembles the American extra-parliamentary racist movements. This subculture, especially in Germany, emerged in fact as a result of the state's close supervision of extreme parties. Functioning as non-parliamentary, non-structured organisations allowed subcultures to enjoy freedoms they would not have known as political parties. Under their influence contemporary European extreme right-wing politics became far less structured and its boundaries less defined than those of Fascism in the 1930s and 1940s.

The emergence of an extra-parliamentary sub-culture, and especially the tendency of both academics and journalists to reduce its significance to acts of violence, originated what can be referred to as the 'trade off hypothesis'. According to this hypothesis, 'violence and parties are the two most important forms of extreme right mobilisation, and can be seen as strategic alternatives for activists and adherents'.²⁰

We believe that the term 'subculture' is not inclusive enough to describe the extreme right extra-parliamentary scene. Furthermore, emphasis solely on the violent aspects of extra-parliamentary political culture may cause a distraction from the real threat posed by the extreme right. Hence, we will use the term 'uncivil society' to describe European extreme right groups and their activities outside the realm of political parties. Moreover, we will attempt to prove that any use of the 'trade off hypothesis' should be very cautious. In fact, if we do not focus solely on violence, the extra parliamentary extreme right can be seen to coexist with right-wing political parties in European democracies, rather than replace them. Hence, not only is the danger from extreme parties not yet over, but such parties benefit from a sophisticated new ally which shares their ideologies and goals and which, unlike them,

enjoys much more freedom.

New enemies – uncivil society

Before discussing the concept of ‘New Enemies – Uncivil Society’ we need to define the boundaries of its alternative – ‘civil society’. ‘Civil society’ has been variously defined, and its definition continues to shift.²¹ Commonly ‘civil society’ is described as a sphere of social interaction distinct from the economy and the state. It is characterised by and composed of social, religious and political groups and organisations independent of the state and not under the state’s control.

In 1998 Yael Yishai moved this definition to an operational level and presented three clear components of ‘civil society’. First, interest groups can be counted as the most important component of a ‘civil society’. Interest groups have participated in various types of voluntary activities over the years. Second, social movements: citizens active in such movements (such as women, racial minorities or other discriminated-against groups),²² try to change their social status, call for change in oppressive laws,²³ or advocate the alteration of national and supranational priorities (e.g. environmental movements, whose activities cross national and continental boundaries). Third in Yishai’s analysis are grassroots movements of citizens in social frameworks that do not necessarily aim for lasting social change and do not rely on any concrete organisation for assistance.²⁴

The concept ‘civil society’ receives approbation in the writings of liberal scholars referred to by Berman as ‘neo-Tocquevilleans’.²⁵ ‘Civil society,’ especially following Robert Putnam’s seminal book *Making Democracy Work*, is perceived by liberal scholars as a crucial element in supporting the functioning and stability of democratic regimes. Putnam argues that horizontal voluntary associations, cutting through social cleavages and supported by large amounts of social capital (in terms of interpersonal trust), are highly likely to create norms of co-operation and reciprocity.²⁶ Jean Cohen agrees, arguing that a civic culture of ‘generalised trust’ and social solidarity, peopled by citizens willing and able to co-operate in joint ventures, is an important societal prerequisite of a vital democracy.²⁷

But other scholars have claimed and attempted to prove that ‘civil society’ may have another, destructive, side, especially in democracies. Eubank and Weinberg have shown that the Fascist movement in Italy emerged from a civil society.²⁸ Berman has claimed that German civil society helped to generate the fall of the Weimar Republic.²⁹ Kornhauser’s ‘Mass Society’ concept explains in part the emergence of threats in an otherwise ‘civil’ world. ‘Mass Politics’ occurs, according to Kornhauser, ‘when large numbers of people engage in political activity outside of the procedures and rules instituted by a society to govern political action.

Mass politics in democratic society therefore is anti-democratic, since it contravenes the constitutional order. The extreme case of mass politics is the totalitarian movement, notably Communism and Fascism'.³⁰

Further, Foley and Edwards,³¹ like Booth and Richard,³² have argued persuasively against Putnam's dismissal of the conflictive potential inherent in the 'civil society' concept. Foley and Edwards focus on the potential ability of civil society to energise resistance against tyrannical regimes;³³ Booth and Richard prefer to present another type of conflict potential, similar to the one presented by Eubank, Weinberg and Berman. Booth and Richard refer to 'uncivil society' as a violent and confrontational, but not necessarily antityrannical, form of associational activism.³⁴ This line of argument follows from Keane's strong linkage between the concepts 'uncivil society' and 'violence'.³⁵ According to Booth and Richard, examples of the 'uncivil society' include the Ku Klux Klan, some of the militias in the United States, and the numerous extremist groups, paramilitary organisations and death squads in Central America.

In sum, 'civil society' and 'uncivil society' cannot be separated.³⁶ Keane notes: 'those who work for a (more) civil society must recognise not only that violence is often the antithesis of civil society, but also that every known form of civil society tends to produce this same violent antithesis, thereby preventing it from becoming a haven of non-violent harmony'.³⁷ In other words, every 'civil society' is escorted by its 'uncivil' shadow. Support for this argument can be found in Ignazi's theory, according to which any shift towards more 'civil' values and new types of 'positive' political action produces an opposite reaction.³⁸ Hence, it may be assumed that the evolution of 'uncivil society' was an inevitable part of the evolution of 'civil society', its equal and opposite. Thus, while according to Putnam 'civil society', induced by high amounts of 'social capital', is supposed to help democracy work, 'uncivil society', characterised by either extremely low levels of 'social capital' or high social capital within sectarian communities, (yet very low with regard to society as a whole) should damage democracy.³⁹

Booth and Richard, like Keane, essentially reduce the term 'uncivil society' to its violent component. Their choice reflects a similar tendency evident during the 1960s and 1970s. In those years, according to Eatwell, 'advocacy of violence was the heart of most definitions of the extremist party family. This has now been dropped as a necessary requirement because there are no electorally-significant parties in Western Europe which openly support domestic political violence – although it could be argued that anti-immigrant politics encourages racial violence and harassment'.⁴⁰ The same applies in the non-parliamentary arena. Although, as mentioned earlier, extra-parliamentary organisations are freer to act in comparison with political parties, such organisations are not united under the flag of violence. Different types of organisations adopt different strategies to accord with their structures and aims. Hence, we can define right-wing 'uncivil society' almost as we define extreme right-wing parties – by

their ideological concerns – i.e. nationalism, racism, anti-democracy, xenophobia, and the belief in the need for a strong state.

When we move from ideology to modus operandi, however, ‘uncivil society’ is far harder to define than ‘civil society’, since ‘uncivil society’ includes groups of varied organisational structures. We must therefore locate and define ‘uncivil society’ operationally on a continuum of action which begins with legal strategies such as lobbying, and ends in horrific features of political violence and terrorism.

It is time now to move to the difficult task of defining the boundaries of the concept ‘uncivil society’. To do so it will be helpful to use Yishai’s distinction between the three configurations of civil society – interest groups, social movements and grassroots participation of citizens – as well as Cohen’s approach to the components of civil society.

Highly institutionalised organisations

Interest groups are the most structured feature of ‘civil society’. Such groups are mostly organised according to financial, occupational and/or professional concerns, or according to valuable social purposes such as aiding the deaf or the blind. The aims of well-established organisations under ‘uncivil society’ depart from the aims of interest groups as defined above. Thus we prefer to refer to such well established organisations as ‘highly institutionalised’. These groups focus primarily on mobilising extremism from the social sphere and promoting the values listed above.

Recently, France, Germany and other European countries have seen the rise of these highly institutionalised organisations. According to Minkenberg, these new associations try to influence public debate and the minds of the people rather than voting behaviour. Minkenberg does not refer to these organisations as interest groups but rather as think tanks, intellectual circles and political entrepreneurs. Many new organisations in Europe are committed to at least several features of extreme right-wing ideology. Prominent among these groups are Nouvelle Droite in France, Neue Recht in Germany and the Italian Nouva Destra.⁴¹

As a result of their high levels of institutionalisation and strong ties to party politics, such organisations may be seen as a derivative of political parties. Though they rarely take part in elections, many of these organisations use legislators for the purpose of promoting their goals. Hence, such extreme groups hold an indirect ability to influence the policy-making process.

Social movements

We can call most violent extreme right, as well as neo-Nazi subcultures, ‘social movements.’ These movements are characterised by a low standard of organisation. Activity in them is not necessarily based on a stable or permanent organisation, but rather on somewhat less consolidated patterns of leaders and followers. Unlike more institutionalised organisations, such social movements are not necessarily eager to maintain a legitimate image, and thus do not hesitate to become engaged in provocative activities, ranging from brutal rallies and demonstrations to terrorism. A prominent example of this pattern is the Skinhead subculture. Skinhead groups are referred to as bigotry’s shock troops and street fighters for xenophobia. The Skinhead movement is active in no fewer than 33 countries on six continents. Skinheads aim to achieve their goal of destabilising society through the direct application of violence and intimidation. This modus operandi has had its impact. In the years following the collapse of the Berlin wall, the Skinheads launched many attacks against refugees and guest workers in Germany. In some German cities these attacks gained wide support which encouraged the activists who felt that they represent the positions of the communities.⁴²

Skinheads are not the sole representatives of ‘uncivil social’ movements. Multiple types of neo-Nazi social movements are operating in Europe at this time. Some are focused on propaganda, others are engaged in varying levels of violent activity. There are even special organisations such as the HNG and the IHV in Germany, which aim to support Nazi political prisoners and Holocaust deniers.

Another interesting feature of this form of ‘uncivil society’ is its internationalism. Many of the European extreme right-wing social movements have become affiliated with extreme right-wing American organisations and thus have formed a type of ‘international far right culture’⁴³ It should be noted that the structure of these movements in the United States differs from the structure of counterparts in Europe, and includes militias as well as Skinheads and neo-Nazis. The Southern Poverty Law Center’s Intelligence Project identified 217 extremist American groups active in 1999. Of these, 68 were militias, four were ‘common-law courts’ and the remainder fit into a variety of categories such as publishers, ministries, citizens’ groups and ‘others’. Generally, these groups define themselves as opposed to the ‘New World Order’; they advocate or adhere to extreme anti-government doctrines.⁴⁴ These organisations, and especially the militias, are capable of perpetrating violent and terrorist acts.⁴⁵ Hence, ‘uncivil society’ of the American type presents a rather different threat to democracy than its European counterparts. The sub-cultures and groups gathered under this category are united by their commitment to extreme right-wing ideology; unlike political parties and highly institutionalised organisations, some of these groups do not hesitate to incorporate violence into their modus operandi.

Grassroots activity

Between 1880 and 1960, lynching by mob was a violent ‘grassroots’ activity rooted in an American culture of violence.⁴⁶ Though lynching is no longer a common phenomenon, the subculture of violence still manifests itself in both Europe and America in what can be seen as modern ‘lynchings’, i.e. milder attacks by angry citizens and mobs against foreigners. In Sweden, for example, over a hundred attacks on refugee camps occurred between 1989–91. These attacks were not arranged by any organisation. Rather, according to Merkl, they were a grassroots manifestation of sentiments against the government’s policy enacted by citizens living close to the refugee camps.⁴⁷ Another version of grassroots political activities, milder than the ones described above, are citizens’ attempts to drive out people belonging to minority groups from their neighbourhoods and working places. In June 1998 a neo-Nazi activist led a demonstration in the German town of Lüneburg, described as ‘an initiative of citizens of Lüneburg who are seeking employment’. The demonstrators chanted slogans such as ‘Work for Germans first’.⁴⁸ Grassroots attacks, violent or non-violent, against specific populations are not only aimed at hurting targeted people, but also serve to protest against governmental policies and sometimes even the moral foundations of a regime.

Media

According to Choen, the independent media may be counted as another component of ‘civil society’. The same is true for ‘uncivil society’. As mentioned earlier, internationalisation of an extreme right ‘uncivil society’ has occurred in recent years. Technological developments (especially the Internet) have supported this trend. According to a report by the German Federal Office for Protection of the Constitution (BfV), the number of far right Internet sites available in Germany in 1998 has quintupled in five years to some 200, making it the most important propaganda medium for right-wing extremists and neo-Nazis. Neo-Nazis are not alone in using the Internet. The Hate Watch report presents 12 categories of extremist sites (white supremacy, racist music, racist skinheads, neo-Nazism, Holocaust denial, anti-Semitism, Christian identity, black racism, anti-gay, anti-Christian, anti-Muslim, anti-Arab, anti-women) available on the Internet. The great advantage of the Internet for extreme right-wing activists is its global dimension. By using this free medium, different movements of the far right are capable of planting the attitudes of the right not only in their respective countries but all over the globe. One of the most popular subjects on global far right Internet sites is the Holocaust. Virtually every leading Holocaust denier maintains his own web site.⁴⁹ In 2000, the Wiesenthal Centre counted no fewer than 72 sites on this subject. Thus, technology and trends of

globalisation induce the expansion of right-wing extremism and have the potential to turn local or even national issues into global ones.

We turn now to two critical questions: Has ‘uncivil society’ replaced the political party as the real linkage agent between society and the state? In the alternatives, does ‘uncivil society’ co-operate with political parties and thus present even greater challenges to democracy?

The limitations of the ‘trade off hypothesis’

We contend that the concept ‘uncivil society’ should not be equated solely with the violent behaviour of various groups. A close examination of the European extreme right-wing scene suggests that the nature of the relations between ‘uncivil society’ and political parties depends upon the way ‘uncivil society’ is defined. If we define ‘uncivil society’ as necessarily inherently violent, then the European scene seems to confirm the ‘trade off hypothesis’. According to this hypothesis, countries where the parliamentary extreme right is prosperous seem less affected by racist violence than countries which are less prosperous. However, a broader definition of the ‘uncivil society’, even in Germany (referred to by Backes and Mudde as a ‘country of extremism without successful parties’), allows us to recognise the co-existence of political parties with varying elements of ‘uncivil society’. We can even see clear signs of co-operation between extreme right-wing parties and ‘uncivil society’: ‘The new chairman (of the NPD), Udo Viogt, has decided to rejuvenate the party by opening it up to the neo-Nazi scene. He accentuated the anti-capitalist elements in the party and chose an activist course. Consequently, the party and notably its youth wing (Young National Democrats) have become [attractive to] young neo-Nazis who have been looking for a new organisation after the 1990s party bans’.⁵⁰

Such co-operation between extreme right-wing political parties and ‘uncivil society’ groups, is not limited to the German political scene. In Austria, the integration of right-wing extremists and neo-Nazis into the Freedom Party, which began in 1986, continued with the Freedom Party’s entry into the government. Rene Schimanek, brother of a leading activist of the neo-Nazi Volkstreue Ausserparlamentarische Opposition (VAPO), served briefly as personal secretary of Freedom Party Justice Minister Michael Krüger. FPÖ Minister of Infrastructure Michael Schmid employs former neo-Nazi activist Gerhard Sailer as an assistant. The latter still writes for *Fakten (Facts)*, an extreme right-wing monthly, issued by the Partei Kritische Demokraten (Party of Critical Democrats), which evolved out of the neo-Nazi Liste NEIN zur Ausländerflut (‘NO to the Foreigner Flood’ List).⁵¹

These are clear indications that new extreme right-wing parties and an emerging ‘uncivil society’ do not consider themselves rivals but, rather, partners. The ascending Progress Party in

Norway supplies a striking example of such collaboration. Since its beginnings as the anti-taxation party of Anders Lange in the early 1970s, the Progress Party has attracted racist and neo-Nazi elements; extremist groups attempted to join the party collectively. The association between party and ‘uncivil’ elements continued with the party’s rise in popularity and influence. In the early 1990s, for example, it became clear that the party had given considerable amounts of financial support to a racist radio station in the city of Bergen. In 1995, a scandal in the Norwegian media revealed that Øystein Hedstrøm, MP, a senior party figure, had attended a meeting organised by the extreme rightist Norwegian Association, together with several leading far right activists in Norway. In 1996, evidence came to light that the neo-Nazi Viking group, headed by Eirik ‘Mikro’ Solheim, had infiltrated FpU, the party’s youth movement. Even today, the Progress Party continues to unite forces of the extreme right.⁵²

Actually, an examination of recent reports about the European extreme right reveals that in almost every country where parties are successful there is also a prosperous ‘uncivil society’. In Switzerland the successful People’s Party led by Christoph Blocher is accompanied by several groups representing ‘uncivil society’. Some are non-violent, such as The New Right intellectual movement, led in Switzerland by Geneva lawyer Pascal Junod. Others are violent, such as the Skinhead subculture that holds neo-Nazi and Holocaust denial meetings, like those organised by the New Right, and lead assaults on asylum seekers, left-wing activists and foreigners. According to the Swiss Federal Police, the number of minors in Skinhead ranks is rising and the network is becoming more international and more radical than before.⁵³

Even in Denmark, where the extreme right has not achieved much success in recent years, it seems that political parties and elements of ‘uncivil society’ are now drawing closer. The emerging Dansk Folkeparti (Danish People’s Party DPP), according to the polls, has the potential to obtain 15 per cent of the vote (26 parliamentary seats) in the 2002 national elections, compared to 7.4 per cent in the March 1998 election. This rise in popularity is accompanied by a very active ‘uncivil society’ which enjoys a remarkable prosperity. The Danish National Socialist Party (DNSB) has a small membership, but receives considerable media attention as a result of its members’ anti-Semitic and racist views. Recently, the DNSB lost considerable ground to the newer and more violent Nazi group Blood & Honour/Scandinavia, which opened its Danish branch on 31 October 1998. During the following year, Danish Blood & Honour organised a series of six concerts in which the violent component was an integral part. Further, Nationalpartiet Danmark (National Party Denmark), under the leadership of Kaj Vilhelmsen, runs a web site called the Common List Against Immigration (Faelleslisten mod Indvandringen). The web site includes a variety of racist, anti-Semitic and ultra-nationalistic information, including a ‘black list,’ with the names and pictures of Danes proclaimed to be public enemies.

In these contexts, we may conclude that, rather than replacing the parties as the linkage

agents between society and the state, ‘uncivil society’ serves as a platform for re-establishing such connections. Furthermore, political parties recognise advantages in the activities of the ‘uncivil society’ (for example, the state’s difficulty in supervising the activities of such organisations) and use these advantages to better root themselves within the society.

The co-operation, or in some cases lack of competition, between segments of the European extreme right (including Eastern European groups) poses diverse threats to European democracies, a fact that should encourage regimes to become more alert and require the adoption of combined strategies for defending democracy. Outlawing extreme parties is not enough, since new parties may emerge instead; banning extra-parliamentary organisations is not effective either, as noted by Backes and Mudde:

The 1990s saw also an increasing vigilance of the German authorities with regard to extreme right groups and several were banned. The government reacted to the wave of anti-immigrant violence of the first post unification years, which had put it under considerable domestic and international pressure to act. The result of the bans was simply the reconstructing of the scene. Instead of well organised action groups, with formal membership and internal hierarchies, loosely organised ‘circles of friends’ appeared.⁵⁴

Conclusions

This article has three objectives. First of all, we wanted to explore how changes that took place in European politics over the last few decades affected the vitality of extreme right-wing activity. Second we wished to define the boundaries of the European political scene by clarifying the concept ‘uncivil society’. Third, we wished to estimate whether the new enemies of democracy have replaced old ones or, in the alternative, whether they now co-operate.

The changing role of the party institution in recent decades has indeed had a dramatic effect on the extreme right. Until the 1980s the extreme right was rather marginal. Since the 1980s a new wave of extreme right-wing parties has flooded the European political arena. These parties, like their counterparts from most contemporary party families, can be generally defined as ‘cartel parties’ that enjoy rather weak connections with their society. Given that weak connection, the gap between cartel parties and society has been filled by new forms of political organisation which we call ‘uncivil society’. New types of organisation not only support the vitality of the extreme right-wing camp but also help its expansion.

Though they share similar ideas with extreme right-wing parties, the new forces of extremism and violence are varied in structure and fluid in shape. This fluid structure makes it very hard to prove the success of the ‘uncivil society’. Yet, a close look at reports indicating the number of extra-parliamentary far right organisations operating in Europe, as well as recent hate crime statistics and the expanding volume of extreme right-wing web sites, indicate the real power and potential danger of what we have called the ‘uncivil society’.⁵⁵

In general, ‘uncivil society’ includes well-established groups, which enjoy close relations with politicians and party members, as well as less tangible alliances. The aim of well-established groups is to spread and promote their non-liberal ideas by means of persuasion, lobbying and contacts with the public. This segment of the ‘uncivil society’ is rather similar in its structure and modes of operation to political parties, yet its aim is not to govern but to act behind the scenes, and to influence decision-makers, in order to promote its goals. While such groups still want to subvert liberal democracy by old-fashioned political methods, social movements aim in other directions. Their strategies are focused on inducement of violence and unrest. These social movements are much closer to the society than the political parties. They recognise that constituencies with high levels of extremist attitudes support the rooting of their attitudes, and mobilise such constituencies by symbolic and violent means. While symbolic action, i.e. rallies and demonstrations, serves to show both society and government the strength of social movements and the support they enjoy, the enactment of violence against specific ethnic groups or even government officials by certain social movements is a brutal attempt to destabilise a regime by using means of terror. As for grassroots activities, this may be the most genuine feature of ‘uncivil society’. Local grassroots activities committed to a far right agenda manifest the intolerance and hatred available within a society. Though they seem less dangerous for the regime than well-organised groups and identifiable social movements, they enjoy protection as a result of their elusive character. A low level of organisation makes it very hard to find and stop perpetrators who choose to enact violence. Moreover, grassroots unrest has the potential to expand rapidly from one place to another. Finally, the media and especially the Internet – have the potential to support the activities of the aforementioned forms and to spread ideas, mobilise animosity and even serve as a global virtual community of all forms of the ‘uncivil society’.

As for our third aim, in recent years several scholars have argued that there is a ‘trade off’ dynamics between political parties and other forms of extreme right-wing activity. According to this contention, wherever extreme right parties gain electoral success, fewer manifestations of violence on the extra parliamentary scene may be found and vice versa. We argue that the validity of this claim depends on the definition of ‘uncivil society’ we employ. While reducing the ‘uncivil society’ concept to its violent features tends to confirm the ‘trade off hypothesis’, a broader understanding of the concept reveals not only that parties and ‘uncivil society’ do not replace each other, but in some cases they co-operate, mobilising resources and support for one other. At the dawn of the new millennium, it seems that many liberal democratic European countries are less protected from right wing challenges than ever before. Though the role of the political party has changed in Europe, the party as a form of organisation has not declined and still represents the extreme right-wing ideology in many parliaments. The fact that these cartel parties are thin in organisational structure and thus are unable to establish militias and troops to storm the streets is not a real source of comfort. The ‘uncivil society’ fills

the gap, helping the cartel parties to survive and in certain ways fulfil their agendas. Meanwhile, ‘uncivil society’ poses a variety of threats outside the parliamentary arena.

Finally, while the old agents of extremism tended to attack democracy directly, the new agents of extremism often launch their attacks indirectly. They aim to exploit animosity against the principles of liberal democracy and then mobilise adherents against social policies, the legal system and even different groups of citizens and other inhabitants by using violence.

Notes

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[2](#) Richard S. Katz and Peter Mair, ‘Changing Models of Party Organization and Party Democracy – The Emergence of the Cartel Party’, *Party Politics* 1/1 (1995), pp.5–28.

[3](#) Piero Ignazi, ‘The Silent Counter-Revolution – Hypotheses on the Emergence of the Extreme Right-wing Parties in Europe’, *European Journal of Political Research* 22/1 (1992), p.3.

[4](#) Robert C.A. Sorensen, ‘Civic Action Groups in Switzerland: Challenge to Political Parties?’, in Kay Lawson and Peter H. Merkl (eds.), *When Parties Fail: Emerging Alternative Organizations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), pp. 137–69.

[5](#) Ronald Inglehart, ‘Value Change in Industrial Society’, *American Political Science Review*, 81/4 (1987), pp.1289–303.

[6](#) Scott C. Flanagan, ‘Changing Values in Advanced Industrial Societies – Inglehart’s Silent Revolution from the Perspective of Japanese Findings’, *Comparative Political Studies* 14/4 (1982), pp.403–444.

[7](#) Michael Minkenberg, ‘The Renewal of the Radical Right: Between Modernity and Anti-Modernity’, *Government and Opposition*, 35/5 (2000), p.175.

[8](#) See, for example, Roger Eatwell, ‘The Rebirth of the “Extreme Right” in Western Europe?’, *Parliamentary Affairs* 53/3 (2000), pp.407–425.

[9](#) Lawson (note 1), pp.13–38.

[10](#) Maurice Duverger, *Political Parties* (New York: John Wiley & Son, 1954), p.50.

[11](#) For further details regarding the political opportunity structure of the fascist parties please see Eric J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1994).

[12](#) Hans-Georg Betz, *Radical Right-wing Populism in Western Europe* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1994), pp.1–4.

[13](#) Cas Mudde, ‘Right-wing Extremism Analyzed: A Comparative Analysis of the Ideologies of Three Alleged Right-wing Extremist Parties (NPD, NDP, CP’86)’, *European Journal of Political Research* 27/2 (1995), p.206.

[14](#) Betz (note 12).

[15](#) Eatwell (note 8), pp.414–18.

[16](#) Ignazi (note 3); Cas Mudde, ‘The Paradox of the Anti-Party Party. Insights from the Extreme Right’, *Party Politics* 2/2 (1996), pp.265–76.

[17](#) Eatwell (note 8), p.424.

[18](#) Eurobarometer, *Opinion Poll Racism and Xenophobia in Europe*, No.41 (1997).

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[20](#) Ruud Koopmans, ‘Explaining the Rise of Racist and Extreme Right Violence in Western Europe: Grievances and Opportunities?’ *European Journal of Political Research* 30/2 (1996), p.210; Eatwell (note 8) pp.424–5.

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[28](#) William L. Eubank and Leonard Weinberg, ‘Terrorism and Democracy within One Country: The Case of Italy’, *Terrorism and Political Violence* 9/1 (1997), pp.98–108.

[29](#) Berman (note 25).

[30](#) William Kornhauser, *The Politics of Mass Society* (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1959), p.227.

[31](#) Michael W. Foley and Bob Edwards, ‘The Paradox of Civil Society’, *Journal of Democracy* 7/3 (1996), p.39.

[32](#) John A. Booth and Patricia Bayer Richard, ‘Civil Society, Political Capital and Democratization in Central America’, *Journal of Politics* 60/3 (1998), pp.781–2.

[33](#) Foley and Edwards (note 31).

[34](#) Booth and Richard (note 32).

[35](#) John Keane, *Civil Society – Old Images, New Visions* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), Ch.7.

[36](#) This argument, but from a different angle, is also supported by Smith. See Philip Smith, ‘Barbarism and Civility in the Discourses of Fascism, Communism and Democracy: Variations on a Set of Themes’, in Jeffery C. Alexander (ed.), *Real Civil Societies* (London: Sage Studies in International Sociology 48, 1998), pp.115–37.

[37](#) Keane (note 35), p.141.

[38](#) Ignazi (note 3), pp.3–34.

[39](#) Francis Fukuyama, ‘Social Capital, Civil Society and Development’, *Third World Quarterly* 22/1 (2001), p.8.

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[41](#) Minkenberg (note 7), p.179.

[42](#) *The Skinhead International – A World Wide Survey of Neo-Nazi Skinheads* (ADL Publication, 1994), pp.1–2.

[43](#) See Jeffrey Kaplan and Leonard Weinberg, *The Emergence of a Euro-American Radical Right* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1998).

[44](#) <http://www.eu.hatewatch.org/frames.html>.

[45](#) *Antisemitism and Extreme Movements in the World – Data, Characteristics and Evaluations* (Tel-Aviv: Tel-Aviv University, 1998) pp.172–3.

[46](#) James W. Clarke, ‘Without Fear of Shame: Lynching, Capital Punishment and the Subculture of Violence in the American South’, *British Journal of Political Science* 28/2 (1998), pp.269–89.

[47](#) Peter Merkl, ‘Radical Right Parties in Europe and Anti-Foreign Violence: A Comparative Essay’, *Terrorism and Political Violence* 7/1 (1995), p.102.

[48](#) <http://www.tau.ac.il/Anti-Semitism/asw98-9/germany.htm>.

[49](#) See for example: The Committee for Open Debate on the Holocaust at <http://www.codoh.org>. The Institute for Historical Review at <http://www.ihr.org>. The Zundelsite at <http://lebensraum.org/index.html>.

[50](#) Backes and Mudde (note 19), pp.464–5.

[51](#) <http://www.tau.ac.il/Anti-Semitism/asw99-2000/austria.htm>.

[52](#) <http://www.tau.ac.il/Anti-Semitism/asw99-2000/norway.htm>.

[53](#) <http://www.tau.ac.il/Anti-Semitism/asw99-2000/switzerland.htm>.

[54](#) Backes and Mudde (note 19), p.464.

[55](#) See, for example, The German Federal Bureau for Protection of the Constitution reports: <http://www.verfassungsschutz.de>; The Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem Report at <http://sicsa.huji.ac.il/>; Antisemitism in the World Today report of the Institute for Jewish Policy Research at <http://www.jpr.org.uk/antisem>; The Stephen Roth Institute for the Study of Contemporary Anti-Semitism and Racism at Tel Aviv University Report at <http://www.tau.ac.il/Anti-Semitism/annual-report.html>.

Racist extremism in Central and Eastern Europe

Cas Mudde

Given the substantial attention paid to the topic of racist extremism in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), and the often bold assertions made in the (Western) media and academic literature, one would expect the topic to be at the forefront of academic and journalistic interest. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Indeed, as one of the few academic scholars in the field, Michael Minkenberg, has noted, “Studying the radical right in transformation countries in Central and Eastern Europe not only resembles shooting at a moving target but also shooting with clouded vision.”¹ There is a poignant lack of reliable information on racist extremism in the region, both academic and nonacademic, and I hope that this article, and the volume upon which it is partly based,² will not be the last attempt to fill this void.

Obviously, the two key terms in this article are not without problems. The definition of racist extremism that is employed in this study is “organized discrimination or violence against persons belonging to another national/ethnic, religious or linguistic group in society and/or speech that incites or condones such behavior.”³ The geographical description CEE here refers to the post-communist states that either joined the European Union in 2004 or will do so in (probably) 2007: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia.

The aim of this article is threefold: (1) to provide a comparative summary of racist extremism in CEE,⁴ (2) to compare the situation of racist extremism in CEE to that in Western Europe, and (3) to come to some further insights about racist extremism in the region.

A map of extremist groups

Although racist extremist groups have been able to operate more or (increasingly) less freely in CEE for only fifteen years now, some clear developments are already noticeable within

much of the region. First and foremost, in organizational terms, racist extremists are increasingly mobilizing independently, instead of as parts of larger (right-wing or anti-communist) umbrella organizations. Second, the vast majority are truly post-communist phenomena, addressing post-communist issues (corruption, minorities, EU enlargement) rather than harking back to a communist or pre-communist past.⁵

Political parties

In various CEE countries, racist extremists were (a small) part of the broad anti-communist movement. After the fall of the communist regimes, they have mobilized in two different ways: some founded their own racist extremist organizations, while others chose to continue to work as part of large anti-communist umbrella parties. However, after the founding elections, that is, the first elections in post-communist times, the developments of these umbrella parties, and their relationship to the extreme right, started to diverge significantly.

In some countries, such as former Czechoslovakia, the umbrella parties imploded almost directly after the founding elections, leading to the formation of a plethora of new political parties, including racist extremist ones. In other countries, the umbrella party survived for a longer time, but lost its dominant role within the right-wing of the political specter. This has been the case, for example, with the Hungarian Democratic Forum (Magyar Demokrata Fórum [MDF]), which was weakened by splits—notably from the racist extremist faction under the leadership of István Csurga—and by the increasing competition from the transformed Fidesz-Hungarian Civic Movement (Fidesz-Magyar Polgári Szövetség [Fidesz-MPS]). Finally, in one or two countries, the umbrella party was able to consolidate its leading role for a longer time, thereby limiting the electoral space on the extreme right. This was the case in Poland, for example, with the Solidarity Electoral Action (Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność [AWS]), which explains to a large extent why it took until 2001 before a racist extremist party was able to enter the Parliament on the basis of its own electoral result.

In sum, fifteen years of racist extremist mobilization have shown an amazing diversity in developments, and clear regional trends are difficult to discern. With regard to racist extremist political parties, although each CEE country has at least one, their electoral results and organizational patterns are far more different than similar.

In a first group of countries, racist extremist parties have never been electorally successful. This is the case in Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia,⁶ and, though to a somewhat lesser extent, Lithuania. True, racist extremists have at times been in Parliament, but they were elected as a member of a nonracist extremist party (list), such as in Bulgaria, or individually in small-member districts, not through party lists, such as in Lithuania.

In the second and largest group of countries, racist extremist parties have had some

electoral success but have been unable to consolidate their organization and support. This has been the case, most notably, in the Czech Republic, where the Association for the Republic–Republican Party of Czechoslovakia (Sdružení pro republiku–Republikánská strana Československa [SPR–RS Č]) has been in Parliament for two consecutive terms (1992–96 and 1996–98) but has since gone bankrupt and has not been succeeded by any credible heir. In Hungary and Slovakia, racist extremist parties are currently out of Parliament but might be able to come back (though probably as a relatively marginal electoral factor). In Slovenia, the Slovenian National Party (Slovenska nacionalna stranka) has been in Parliament since 1992 but has been unable to expand on its electoral or political power (and has moderated ideologically). Finally, in Poland, the electoral success of racist extremist parties is still fresh, and it remains to be seen whether the two parties are able to consolidate their position—given the volatility of Andrzej Lepper, the leader of Self-Defence (Samoobrona) and the lack of organizational strength of the League of Polish Families (Liga Polskich Rodzin [LPR]), the chances for successful long-term consolidation seem rather small.

In the third “group” of countries, racist extremist parties have established themselves as important political actors. At the moment, this is only the case in Romania, where the Greater Romania Party (Partidul România Mare [PRM]) is the largest and most stable opposition party. Until the split in the Slovak National Party (Slovenská národná strana [SNS]) in 2001, Slovakia also belonged to this group—the SNS has been twice in government, but it remains to be seen whether the party will be able to reunite not just its elites, but also its voters.

In short, then, racist extremist parties are not really a major political force in CEE. Indeed, if compared to their “brethren” in Western Europe, they look somewhat pathetic: (far) more extremist, but (far) less successful. While currently two governments in Western Europe include racist extremist parties, the Austrian Freedom Party (Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs [FPÖ]) in Austria and the Northern League (Lega Nord [LN]) in Italy,⁷ no government in CEE does.⁸ Moreover, only one of the ten new and future Eastern EU countries has a strong racist extremist party (Romania), compared to five of the fifteen old Western EU member states (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, and Italy).

Organizations

Compared to political parties, the importance and strength of racist extremist organizations are far more difficult to assess and compare. First of all, they mobilize in very different ways; for example, some might (try to) organize mass demonstrations, while others will lobby political parties or even individual ministers. Which of these will be more influential might be impossible to establish, if only because processes like lobbying are not very transparent.

Second, only very little truly comparative data are available on racist extremist

organizations. Incidentally, this is not just a problem with regard to CEE but also to the Western part of the continent. Most comparative scholars of the extreme right focus on (successful) political parties, while nonparty organizations tend to feature only in single-country studies, which often tend to be fairly idiosyncratic and difficult to use in cross-national comparisons.⁹

Again, roughly three groups of countries can be distinguished with respect to the strength and importance of racist extremist organizations. In the first group, these organizations are either virtually absent or hardly relevant. This is actually the case in the majority of the ten countries, namely, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Slovenia.

A second group of countries counts some relevant racist extremist organizations, but they operate more or less isolated from the political mainstream. This group includes only one country at this moment.¹⁰ In Hungary, a few relatively strong organizations exist around the Hungarian Justice and Life Party (Magyar Igazság és Élet Pártja [MIÉP]), most notably the Circles of Hungarian Way and the Hungarian Forum (Magyar Fórum) weekly magazine. While these organizations are important, most notably to keep MIÉP alive in the current extraparliamentary period, their influence does not go much beyond the racist extremist scene.

The third group includes countries where racist extremist organizations are either very strong by themselves or provide a bridge between racist extremist parties or subcultures and the political mainstream. Currently, this group includes Poland, Slovakia, and Romania. In Poland, Radio Marya (Maria) and the Family of Radio Maria (Rodzina Radia Maryja [RRM]) are the organizational arms of a huge Catholic-nationalist subculture. Although officially independent from any political party, Radio Maria and its leader Father Tadeusz Rydzyk have been instrumental in the success of racist extremist politicians and parties, most recently the LPR. In Slovakia, the “Slovak National Movement,” with the (at times) highly influential Slovak Motherland (Matica Slovenská) organization at its core, has played a crucial role in the integration of the racist extremist SNS into (mainstream) Slovak politics.¹¹ In Romania, finally, the PRM is supported by a wide range of racist extremist organizations, including the Marshal Antonescu League (Liga Mareșal Antonescu [LMA]), which reach deeply into mainstream politics.¹²

As said, it is difficult to compare the situation in CEE with that in Western Europe, because of a lack of reliable comparative data. If one compares the region to the United States, racist extremist organizations in CEE are relatively weak. However, this is mainly because the U.S. party system provides little chances for racist extremists, who are consequently forced to mobilize almost exclusively through nonparty organizations.¹³ In most Western European countries, with the notable exception of Great Britain, the party political situation is more similar to that in CEE countries. However, it seems that racist extremist organizations tend to be somewhat weaker and more isolated from mainstream politics in Western Europe—there

are important exceptions though, such as the Carinthian Homeland Service (Kärtner Heimatdienst) in Austria.¹⁴

Subcultures

The distinction between a network of organizations and a subculture is not always easy to make. Here, the term *subculture* is used first and foremost for a group of people whose common identity is based on a similar culture (including ideas and symbols), rather than on an institutional affiliation. In practice, I mainly focus on the most radical subcultures, namely, that of skinheads and/or hooligans.

While skinhead (and football) “gangs” exist in all CEE countries, they are not relevant everywhere. In Latvia and Romania, skinheads are such an isolated phenomenon that one cannot speak of a true subculture. In Bulgaria, Estonia, Lithuania, Hungary, and Slovenia, skinheads have reached a level of mobilization, and sometimes (noninstitutional) organization, that one can speak of a weakly developed subculture. In the case of Slovenia, the recent foundation of a Slovenian division of the international National Socialist organization Blood & Honour (B&H) might lead to an increased importance of the skinhead subculture. That said, in many countries the cooperation between B&H and the skinhead movement has not been without its problems.

This leaves a third group of countries, in which skinheads constitute a strong, and often violent, subculture. This is the case in the Czech Republic, Poland, and Slovakia.¹⁵ While in all three countries various organizations and parties mobilize individual skinheads, the skinhead movement (subculture) is much larger and transcends the borders of these organizations. Moreover, the significance of the skinheads lies not as much in the actions of their organizations as in the threat and violence of its members. In fact, the skinhead subculture in these countries has become recognized nationally and internationally as a problem, most notably because of its high level of violence.

Again, comparison with the West is difficult, given the lack of reliable data on skinhead subcultures in the various countries. However, one can make the rough assertion that in most Western European countries, racist extremist skinheads had their heydays in the late 1980s and early 1990s.¹⁶ Today, strong skinhead subcultures can be found in only a few Western European countries, most notably Germany. In the United States, a skinhead subculture does exist, but it lacks a strong enough infrastructure to span the whole country.

A global study by the Anti-Defamation League seems to support the strength of the skinhead subculture in Central and Eastern Europe: “The countries where Skinheads are found in the greatest numbers are Germany (5,000), Hungary and the Czech Republic (more than 4,000 each), the United States (3,500), Poland (2,000), the United Kingdom and Brazil (1,500

each), Italy (1,000 to 1,500), and Sweden (over 1,000).¹⁷ This study is already somewhat dated and overestimates the numbers in some Western countries somewhat (most notably Sweden and the United Kingdom), while it underestimates the numbers in some Eastern countries (most notably Russia and Serbia, but also Slovakia).

Legal framework

International framework and international involvement

It might have taken more time in some cases, and less pushing in others, but all ten CEE countries have signed and ratified most if not all of the important international conventions in the field of human rights, including the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.¹⁸

Most of the CEE countries have been the subject of serious international pressure with regard to minority rights, notably in the (early) 1990s. In Estonia and Latvia, the situation and the rights of the large Russophone minority was criticized, particularly the creation of a significant group of stateless people. The fate of the Hungarian-speaking minorities in Romania and Slovakia has been the topic of much international debate as well, not least because of the vocal advocacy of the first post-communist government in Hungary. Although there are still some tensions and complaints, most international actors nowadays consider this issue more or less resolved. The same applies to the treatment of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria and of the ex-Yugoslav minority in Slovenia.

The most important contemporary minority issue in the region is the position of the Roma minority. Particularly in countries with sizeable Roma populations, like the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Romania, Roma are not only the victims of much state and societal discrimination, they are also the prime targets of racist extremist incidents (see below). Western states and NGOs have been criticizing the lack of protection of Roma from racist attacks harshly. In various cases, they even accused the local police of allowing the attacks or even instigating them. Given the complexity and extent of the discrimination of the Roma population, and the deep-seated anti-Roma sentiments in the region, this issue will undoubtedly remain on the international agenda for some time. The question is whether EU membership will lead to a more or to a less critical position of the EU in this respect.

Most critiques and recommendations have merely addressed broader issues of minority discrimination (housing, jobs, education, etc.). Still, the rather high levels of racist extremist

violence in some CEE countries have been the subject of critique of foreign states and international organizations, including the United States, the Council of Europe, and the European Union. This has been the case particularly with regard to racist violence by state officials, generally local police officers, such as in Bulgaria and Romania. Racist violence by nonstate actors, for example, racist skinheads, has generally been addressed by NGOs.

In contrast, nonviolent racist extremism in CEE has been largely ignored by the international community. Only occasionally have reports addressed the electoral success of racist extremist political parties or the (mobilization) actions of similar organizations and then generally using only vague formulations. For example, the first European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) report on Latvia stated, “Instances of aggressive nationalism, racism and anti-Semitism have been observed in Latvia.”¹⁹ However, in 1999, the same organization did address “the infiltration of the extreme right into mainstream politics” in Poland.²⁰

The domestic legal framework and practice

Initially, most post-communist states were quite reluctant to introduce legal restrictions that would limit freedom of speech. This is not surprising, given that the first governments were often made up of former dissidents who had been fighting for the freedom of expression and other democratic rights for decades under the communist regimes.²¹ Just more than a decade later, not much of this reluctance remained, and most CEE countries now have a comprehensive legal instrument to combat racial intolerance and extremism at their disposal.²²

All constitutions stipulate the equality of all citizens regardless of their nationality, ethnicity, religion, and so on, albeit in various different formulations. Still, some constitutions at the same time include controversial ethnic statements: for example, in Slovakia, the preamble starts with the phrase, “We, the Slovak nation”; while in Romania, article 4.1 states that “the foundation of the State is based on the unity of the Romanian people.” All countries also have a comprehensive legal framework to combat discrimination on a variety of grounds, including ethnicity and race, quite often in part as a consequence of pressure from international and domestic actors.

With specific regard to racist extremism, a variety of legal measures are available in the region. First, countries require political organizations, notably political parties, to be registered officially. In most cases, registration can be withheld from organizations that are considered extremist or racist by the responsible ministry. This decision can be appealed in court. Indeed, in many countries racist extremist organizations, including would-be parties, have been denied registration.²³

In all CEE countries, extremist (i.e., antidemocratic) and racist organizations can be banned.²⁴ However, there exists a wide variety of formulations. Some countries use a collection of narrowly defined reasons to ban political organizations (e.g. the Czech Republic and Poland), yet others employ (also) fairly broad definitions. In Bulgaria, political parties “based on ethnic, racial or religious grounds” are prohibited; while in Romania, parties and organizations that “militate against political pluralism” are illegal. This notwithstanding, in all countries the (ultimate) decision is in the hands of legal actors, ranging from the Supreme Court in most countries (e.g., Slovakia and Slovenia) to district courts in Lithuania.

Finally, all countries have legal provisions against “hate speech” and incitement to racial and ethnic hatred. That said, the level of punishment differs from country to country: for example, in Estonia and Slovenia, incitement is punishable to up to two years in prison; while in Lithuania, it can go up to ten years (if the incitement has caused severe consequences). Holocaust denial is illegal in some countries (e.g., Poland, Romania, or Slovakia), but not in others (e.g., Czech Republic and Latvia). In only a few countries is racist motivation a circumstance that can lead to an increase in penalty: for example, in the Czech Republic, racially motivated crimes can be punished with up to two years more than similar crimes with other motivations.

So at least on paper, CEE countries are quite well protected against racist extremism. However, despite the well-established legal frameworks, there are important shortcomings in the implementations. Very few organizations have been banned, and the relatively few cases of racist extremist incidents that have been taken to court involved racist extremist violence, in which often the violence was punished, not the racist extremist content of it. In this respect, the region seems to lag behind (some) Western European countries.

Racist extremist incidents

Comparing the number of racist extremist incidents cross-nationally is a notoriously hazardous operation.²⁵ Not every country has an official organization that collects information on such incidents. In fact, this is only the case in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. In both countries, the state started to register racist extremist incidents only after some years of high levels of violence and as a consequence of significant national and international pressure, not least from local antiracist NGOs.

In some countries, nonstate actors have filled the void and have started registering racist extremist incidents. Most often these are human rights and antiracist NGOs with only limited means. Obviously, the variety in organizations responsible for the registration leads to a variety in definitions, facilities, and counting methods that are employed. At the very least, an

antiracist organization will generally be more open to register an incident as racist extremist than a state institution that depends on registration by local police (who are sometimes more sympathetic to the culprits than to the victims).

That said, if we compare the CEE countries with regard to the occurrence of racist extremist incidents, and focus first and foremost on violent acts against persons and property, we can distinguish again three groups of countries. In the first group, racist extremist violence is absent or highly incidental. This group of countries includes the three Baltic states.

The second group includes countries where racist extremist violence does occur regularly but the level is not (yet) severe. Here we think of Slovenia, where there are short waves of “moderate” levels of racist violence; and Romania, where serious outbursts of racist extremist violence have occurred at a few occasions, but overall the level is not that high and, importantly, is decreasing.²⁶

In the third and last group of CEE countries, high levels of racist extremist violence are a structural and long-term problem. This is the case in half of the countries, namely, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Slovakia; although Hungary might be moving toward the second group. In all these countries, Roma are the main victims of racist extremist violence, but the main culprits differ somewhat. While in most of the countries, the skinhead movement is the main perpetrator of racist attacks, in Bulgaria, attacks are mainly the work of communal groups and, though decreasingly, police officers.

In some countries, recent immigrants and asylum seekers have become targets of racist extremists (e.g., Poland and Slovenia). This is a worrying development, particularly given the fact that so far, most CEE countries have been confronted with only limited numbers of these two groups. But with EU membership, most CEE countries will no longer be mere transition countries for immigrants and refugees, and their numbers are bound to rise. Given the dramatic experiences with racist extremist violence toward these groups in the former communist part of Germany, this is a serious source of concern. There is no reason to assume that (parts of) the populations of the post-communist countries will deal with these newcomers in a more tolerant manner than in the West, as the example of the “illegal immigrant crisis” of 2001 in Slovenia attests.²⁷

While a comparison of the level of racist extremist violence within a region is already very problematic, comparisons between regions are almost impossible. This notwithstanding, it seems justified to postulate that the level of racist extremist violence in CEE is *on average* higher than in Western Europe. Only in Germany is a similarly violent racist extremist subculture active as in the Czech Republic, Poland, and Slovakia.²⁸

State and civic responses

State institutions

In all countries, the key state institutions to deal with all forms of political extremism are the national security service and the police. In some countries, a special unit is charged exclusively with monitoring political extremism. Sometimes the Ministries of Interior and Justice are also actively involved in the monitoring of, and sometimes reporting on, racist extremism. This is generally only the case in countries where severe racist extremist incidents are a common phenomenon and where (national and international) NGOs or foreign countries have been pushing for a more vigilant state reaction (e.g., Czech Republic and Slovakia).

In practice, much comes down to the local police, and it is here that there are significant differences in the way the issue is dealt with, both *between* and *within* countries. It would be only a slight exaggeration to state that in general, police in urban areas are more professional in their dealing with racist extremists than their colleagues in rural areas. Police personnel in local communities have closer ties to the local population, which can lead to more sympathy toward local racist extremists.

Particularly in the first decade of post-communism, sections of the state apparatus were quite sympathetic toward racist extremists, which hindered their effective repression. Even worse was the situation in countries like Bulgaria, where state officials were actively involved in racist extremist activities, or Romania, where the security service (Serviciul Român de Informații [SRI]) has been involved in extremist incidents.²⁹ Nowadays police officers will be less often involved in racist extremist actions, although it remains a problem in some countries (e.g., Bulgaria and Slovakia), and the likelihood of punishment is much higher. That said, attitudes will hardly have changed, and prejudices against minorities (most notably the Roma) and sympathy for racist extremists (“just local boys”) remain widespread.

In recent years, it has become more common for high-ranking state officials to speak out against racist extremism. In most cases, the speeches have been reactions to particularly severe physical attacks on minorities or highly publicized demonstrations of anti-Semitism and neo-Nazism; cases of “everyday racism” have generally been ignored or even marginalized. In some instances, it seemed that the main audience was the international rather than the national community.

Political parties and civil society

Racist extremism is not considered to be a major issue in the public and political arenas of CEE. Mainstream political parties are particularly passive in this regard and seem to become active only when their political position is threatened by racist extremist parties. The Czech Republic is the only country where a parliamentary racist extremist party was consistently

kept outside of mainstream politics. Romania and Slovakia have been the other extreme; here, racist extremist parties were taken into the government. In most other countries, racist extremist parliamentary parties have been treated as fairly normal by most parties, although too close and open cooperation has been shunned (e.g., Hungary, Poland, Slovenia).

In virtually all countries, elements of the racist extremist discourse can be found in the discourse of mainstream parties, most notably (though not exclusively!) in moderate nationalist and conservative liberal parties. Particularly in the first years of post-communism, ethnic issues featured prominently on the political agendas of the region, and the borders between racist extremists and mainstream politicians were at times hard to establish. In recent years, mainstream parties have generally moderated their discourse and distanced themselves more clearly from racist extremist actors.

In some countries, the issue of racist extremism has become integrated into the broader political struggle. This is particularly the case in the Baltic countries, where the Estonian/Latvian political parties, civil groups, and media focus mainly on racist extremism by Russophone groups, while the “Russians” condemn predominantly Estonian/Latvian racist extremism; this is to a lesser extent the case with the “Hungarian” parties in Romania and Slovakia. In Hungary, the political scene has become increasingly polarized on political grounds in the past years. Here, socialist and liberal politicians have used the struggle against racist extremism as part of their campaign against the right-wing Fidesz-MPS, arguing that they would bring the racist extremist MIÉP into the government (which Fidesz-MPS has always denied).

As could be expected, civil society is heavily divided on this issue (too). Each country has various human rights and antiracist groups that actively campaign against racist extremism. Their influence is difficult to ascertain, and probably also depends on who is in government, but overall it seems fair to state that they have been influential in only a few countries (most notably Poland and Slovakia). Some successful antiracist campaigns have been “Be kind to your local Nazi,” by the Czech People in Need Foundation (Nadace Člověk Tísní), and the Anti-Fascist Happening (Antifašistický happening) by the Slovak People against Racism (Ľudia proti rasizmu) organization.

There have been only a few large-scale antiracist demonstrations in the region, despite the fact that most countries have experienced at least some brutal attacks by racist extremists. For example, in 1997, some ten thousand people demonstrated in reaction to the murder of a Sudanese student in Prague. Significantly, very few demonstrations have followed racist extremist attacks on the most common victims, the Roma, despite the often gruesome character of the attacks.

In a few countries, antifascist groups have emerged, which try to fight the racist extremists “in the streets.” The militant anarchistic Anti-Fascist Action (AFA), which has “chapters” in many Western countries, is active in some CEE countries (e.g., the Czech Republic and

Slovenia); in Poland, the main antifascist organization is the Anti-Nazi Group (Grupa Anty-Nazistowska). The success of these militant antifascist groups is questionable, both in terms of physically preventing racist extremists from mobilizing and in terms of raising public awareness about the dangers of racist extremism.

On the other side, various “uncivil” groups operate within the civil societies of post-communist CEE. These include both the racist extremist organizations themselves and various groups that sympathize with them. In general, the latter fall into one of two groups: moderate nationalists and orthodox religious. High-ranking representatives of virtually all major religions, with the notable exception of Judaism, have at times given credibility to racist extremist organizations or issues (see below). However, more important have been (moderate) nationalist groups, who have at times built bridges between the racist extremists and the mainstream.

Overall, the mainstream media have kept their distance from racist extremists and their organizations. Few if any provide space for racist extremist organizations. While initial reporting on racist extremists and their organizations was quite positive and ill informed, nowadays the mainstream media report (strongly) negative on most events and organizations, particularly if involving neo-Nazis or skinheads. In some countries, particular media will also cooperate with antiracist activists and NGOs when writing on the topic (e.g., Czech Republic, Poland, and Slovakia). That said, some of the coverage of racist extremist incidents, and much of the reporting on ethnic (and religious) minorities (particularly the Roma), has been highly ambiguous at best and inciting at worst.

The Internet has been a very important source of information and recruitment for racist extremists everywhere. In some CEE countries, Internet Service Providers (ISPs) have been very cooperative, and even proactive, in closing racist extremist Web sites (e.g., Czech Republic and Hungary), while in others they have been rather obstructive (e.g., Poland). Still, whenever ISPs in one country become too vigilant, racist extremists will simply move to ISPs in another country (mostly Russia and the United States).

Religious organizations in CEE countries play a far less visible role in the struggle against racist extremism than in the West. While in many West European countries, high-ranking religious leaders are at the forefront of antiracist actions and campaigns, in the East, most of them remain silent on the issue. The general exceptions are the Jewish organizations, although they often focus first and foremost on the anti-Semitic aspects of the racist extremists.

And while religious groups rarely play a role within the racist extremist milieu in the West,³⁰ this is not the case in some Eastern countries. Most notably, the Orthodox Churches in Bulgaria and Romania harbor various influential extremist factions, which target mainly, but not exclusively, religious minorities. In certain other countries, including Slovakia, orthodox factions within the Catholic Church perform important support and even organizational functions for racist extremist organizations. This is most extremely the case in Poland, where

the Catholic-nationalist Radio Maria, which can make or break racist extremist political parties, is supported by the nationalist wing of the Catholic Church.

Finally, academics have been almost absent in the debate over, as well as the struggle against, racist extremism in CEE. This is in itself not that surprising, given that racist extremism is hardly studied by academics in the region.³¹ Yet it is in sharp contrast to the situation in Western Europe. In countries like Germany and France, racist extremism is a highly popular topic of academic research, and various academics are at the forefront of the antiracist struggle.

The education system and public opinion

Most CEE countries have put increased emphasis on issues like minorities, multiculturalism, and racism within the curricula of their educational system. In some cases, special courses were developed to provide a deeper understanding of specific issues, such as civics, ethics, and tolerance. In addition to the special programs by the national governments, NGOs in many countries have been actively involved in the development of courses or the pressuring of governments to introduce courses to foster tolerance and mutual understanding.

In recent years, virtually all countries in the region have put special emphasis on Holocaust education. Various interesting initiatives were developed with regard to this topic. For example, in 2003, the Czech minister of education organized an essay contest (“Daniel 2003”) for the students of secondary schools on the topic “Holocaust and Today.” Tellingly, of the current sixteen member states of the Task Force, one of the prime purposes of which is to enhance the importance of Holocaust education, four are from the region: the Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, and Poland.³²

This notwithstanding, the educational systems still contain a strong national or ethnic bias and continue to transmit stereotypical images with regard to some minorities. In Estonia, for example, history textbooks regard “Russians” as oppressors and Estonians as the main victims of Stalinist repressions. In Romania, largely as a consequence of the influence of the Romanian Orthodox Church (Biserica Ortodoxă Română [BOR]), religious education fosters an intolerant and suspicious attitude toward non-Orthodox beliefs and non-Romanian identities.

Regarding public opinion, surveys show consistently that prejudices toward ethnic minorities are widely spread within the region. Of all ethnic out-groups, the Roma are far and away the most disliked. Other ethnic minorities that are the subject of extensive prejudices, though far less than Roma, are groups that are associated with the former “occupier”: Muslims and Turks in Bulgaria, Russians in the Baltics (excluding Lithuania), Hungarians in Romania and Slovakia, and “ex-Yugoslavs” in Slovenia. Particularly since the horrific attacks in the United States on 9/11, prejudices against Muslim minorities (mostly refugees, such as

Chechens and Afghans) are sharply on the rise. Finally, anti-immigrant sentiments are increasing in CEE countries, equaling if not overtaking the situation in the West.³³

Anti-Semitic prejudices are no longer predominant in the region, even though the levels in some countries are still far higher than in most Western countries.³⁴ For example, in Poland some 50 percent declared negative feelings toward Jews and/or Israelis.³⁵ In Lithuania and Slovenia, 23 percent of the population would not like to live in a neighborhood with Jews, compared to 5 percent in Latvia and Germany, or 2 percent in Sweden.³⁶ However, while the levels at mass level might not be alarming (in general), anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial are far more widespread among the elites of CEE countries than of the West.³⁷

Interestingly, the highest levels of prejudice are most often directed against religious and social out-groups rather than ethnic ones (with the possible exception of the Roma). For example, the percentages of Romanians who believed Romania should *not* be inhabited by a certain group were the following: gays and lesbians (both 40 percent), Jehovah's Witnesses (25 percent), Muslims (19 percent), Roma (13 percent), Hungarians (7 percent), and Jews (4 percent). Similar results were found in the Czech Republic, where the following groups were most disliked as neighbors: drug addicts (85 percent), Roma (79 percent), alcoholics (78 percent), people with a criminal past (78 percent), homosexuals (42 percent), aliens (33 percent), people with a dark complexion (25 percent), and Jews (10 percent).³⁸ In Latvia, the least trusted group are the homosexuals.³⁹

There are some optimistic trends, too. Prejudices against most minorities are declining, though not always very fast or significantly. Moreover, while some minorities remain excluded and rejected (most notably the Roma), others are increasingly accepted (e.g., Germans in Poland).

Conclusion

If one compares the state of racist extremism in CEE to that in Western Europe, the differences seem less striking than is often assumed. CEE is neither a hotbed of racist extremism nor a safe haven for racist extremists. Indeed, in terms of political parties, the CEE countries face a less serious challenge than the West, with the notable exception of Romania (and possibly Poland). And with regard to racist extremist organizations and subcultures, the situation in some countries is worrying, but so it is in some West European countries.

Still, István Gyarmati, senior vice president of the East-West Institute and a former Hungarian deputy defense minister, expressed a common concern, when he said,

There is a general trend in Europe which is the re-emergence of the extreme right, as various radical elements look for solutions outside the system.... But in Central Europe, this is more dangerous than in Western Europe, because in

Central Europe, democratic thinking and the democratic public are not quite so stable.⁴⁰

Though sympathetic to the claim, I am not sure whether it is still valid for all ten countries addressed in this article. Obviously, the two regions, Central and Western Europe, are not as homogeneous as is often assumed. The quality of democracy in Western Europe varies quite significantly: for example, a country like Sweden has a very different political culture than, say, Italy or Greece. Similarly, it is debatable whether in terms of “democratic thinking,” Estonia or Slovenia have more in common with Bulgaria or Romania than with Finland or Austria.⁴¹

That said, mainstream political parties in CEE are less willing to speak out against racist extremism than in the West. They are also more reluctant to distance themselves clearly from racist extremist actors. This can be seen not only in the formal coalitions that have existed between mainstream and extremist parties but also in various other forms of cooperations between them.⁴² And most worrying, mainstream political parties in the region are more often sources of (moderate) nationalism than in Western Europe. This is, for example, the case with parties as varied as the right-wing Fidesz-MPS in Hungary and the left-wing HZDS in Slovakia.⁴³

In addition, within the civil societies of CEE, the racist extremists are far from isolated. In various countries, influential NGOs are either racist extremist themselves or are willing to cooperate with racist extremist organizations: for example, Slovak Motherland in Slovakia or elements within the respective Orthodox Churches in Bulgaria and Romania. Even the potentially violent skinhead subcultures are not always shunned by others, as can be seen in the warm ties between skinheads and “metalists” in Lithuania, for instance. At the same time, antiracist and promulticultural groups remain rare and on average powerless, relying heavily on funding and support from foreign states and organizations.

So while the impact of racist extremism in CEE might not be as great as is often assumed, a lot remains to be done. This is even more important now that these countries are or will soon be members of the European Union, which will bring new sources of resentment and tensions. At least two of these, Euroscepticism and mass immigration, have already proved profitable for racist extremism organizations in the “old” EU member states.

Notes

¹ Michael Minkenberg, “The Radical Right in Postsocialist Central and Eastern Europe: Comparative Observations and Interpretations,” *East European Politics and Societies* 16:2(2002): 361.

² This article is a revised version of my concluding chapter in Cas Mudde, ed., *Racist Extremism in Central and Eastern*

Europe (London: Routledge, 2005). This book is the collective end result of a unique, comparative research project, generously sponsored by the Open Society Institute, and directed by Nils Muižnieks.

[3](#) See Nils Muižnieks, “Preface,” in Mudde, *Racist Extremism*, iv.

[4](#) If not indicated otherwise, this chapter draws upon the data and insights from the country chapters in Mudde, *Racist Extremism*.

[5](#) On the distinction between pre-communist, communist, and post-communist extreme right parties, see Cas Mudde, “Extreme Right Parties in Eastern Europe,” *Patterns of Prejudice* 34:1(2000): 5–27. For a similar typology, if somewhat different assessment, see Michael Shafir, “Marginalization or Mainstream? The Extreme Right in Post-Communist Romania,” in Paul Hainsworth, ed., *The Politics of the Extreme Right: From the Margins to the Mainstream* (London: Pinter, 2000), 247–67.

[6](#) With the possible exception of the People’s Movement for Latvia (Tautas kustība Latvijai [TKL]), which gained 15 percent of the vote in the 1995 parliamentary elections, only to disappear into political oblivion after falling back to a mere 1.7 percent in 1998. More important, while the party was the creation of a German-Latvian right-wing extremist, Joachim Siegerist, the racist extremist content of the party is disputed.

[7](#) One might include also the National Alliance (Alleanza nazionale [AN]) in the Italian government, or the Swiss People’s Party (Schweizerische Volkspartei [SVP]) in the Swiss government, but their racist extremist status is debated in the public and scientific arena. See, inter alia, Marcho Tarchi, “The Political Culture of the Alleanza Nazionale: An Analysis of the Party’s Programmatic Documents (1995–2002),” *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 8:2(2003): 135–81; and Christopher T. Husbands, “Switzerland: Right-Wing and Xenophobic Parties, From Margin to Mainstream?” *Parliamentary Affairs* 53:3(2000): 501–16.

[8](#) Admittedly, this situation has been different in the past: the Slovak National Party (Slovenská národná strana [SNS]) has been a coalition partner in two Slovak governments (1993–94 and 1994–98), while the Greater Romania Party (Partidul România Mare [PRM]) and the Party of Romanian National Unity (Partidul Unitatii Nationale Române [PUNR]) have been part of the Romanian government (1992–96).

[9](#) One notable exception is the work of Michael Minkenberg; see most notably “Radical Right”; with T. Beichelt, “Rechtsradikalismus in Transformationsgesellschaften. Entstehungsbedingungen und Erklärungsmodell,” *Osteuropa* 52:3(2002): 247–62; and *Die neue radikale Rechte im Vergleich. USA, Frankreich, Deutschland* (Opladen, Germany: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1998).

[10](#) With the increasing marginalization of racist extremist parties and organizations in Slovakia, that country might also fall in this category soon.

[11](#) See Darina Malová, “The Slovak National Movement: A Case of Successful Contention,” in Petr Kopecký and Cas Mudde, eds., *Uncivil Society? Contentious Politics in Post-Communist Europe* (London: Routledge, 2003), 55–73.

[12](#) Michael Shafir, “Marshal Antonescu’s Postcommunist Rehabilitation: *Cui Bono?*” in Randolph L. Braham, ed., *The Destruction of Romanian and Ukrainian Jews during the Antonescu Era* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 349–410; and Mark Temple, “The Politicization of History: Marshall Antonescu and Romania,” *East European Politics*

and Societies 10:3(1996): 457–503.

13 See Minkenberg, *neue radikale Rechte*.

14 In the 1980s, the Group for the Study of European Civilization (Groupement de recherches et d'études pour la civilisation européenne), the main organization of the New Right (*nouvelle droite*) in France, seemed to be able to establish itself within the mainstream right-wing, but in recent years they seem to have become more isolated from parties such as the Rally for the Republic (Rassemblement pour la République). In other countries, such as Belgium or Germany, the influence of the New Right has always remained fairly marginal. See, for example, in Germany, Armin Pfahl-Traughber, “Brücken zwischen Rechtsextremismus und Konservatismus,” in Wolfgang Kowalsky and Wolfgang Schroeder, eds., *Rechtsextremismus. Einführung und Forschungsbilanz* (Opladen, Germany: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1994), 160–82.

15 For some additional literature on skinheads in these countries, see László Kúrti, “The Uncivility of a Civil Society: Skinhead Youth in Hungary,” in Kopecký and Mudde, *Uncivil Society?*, 37–54; European Roma Rights Center (ERRC), *Time of the Skinheads. Denial and Exclusion of Roma in Slovakia* (Budapest, Hungary: ERRC, 1997).

16 In the cradle of the skinhead movement, Great Britain, the racist extremist skinhead subculture has even been decreasing since the early 1980s.

17 Anti-Defamation League, *The Skinhead International: A Worldwide Survey of Neo-Nazi Skinheads* (New York: Anti-Defamation League, 1995), 1.

18 See appendix 1 in Mudde, *Racist Extremism*.

19 European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), *Report on Latvia* (Strasbourg, France: Council of Europe, 13 March 1999), 7.

20 See <http://www.coe.int/ecri>.

21 For an interesting account of the Hungarian situation in this respect, see László Szőcs, “A Tale of the Unexpected: The Extreme Right *vis-à-vis* Democracy in Post-Communist Hungary,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 21:6(1998): 1096–1115.

22 See also ECRI, *Legal Measures to Combat Racism and Intolerance in the Member States of the Council of Europe* (Strasbourg, France: Council of Europe, 1998).

23 E.g., the National Socialist Block (Národně sociální blok [NSB]) in the Czech Republic, the Russian National Unity (Russkoe natsional'noe edinstvo [RNE]) in Latvia, or the National Social Union of Slovenia (Nacional-socialna zveza Slovenije [NSZS]) in Slovenia.

24 See on this also Venice Commission, “Venice Commission: Guidelines on Prohibition and Dissolution of Political Parties and Analogous Measures” (Adopted by the Venice Commission at its 41st plenary session, Venice, Italy, 10–11 December 1999).

25 This is also the Achilles heel of most cross-national comparative studies on racist violence in Western Europe. See, most notably, Ruud Koopmans, “Explaining the Rise of Racist and Extreme Right Violence in Western Europe: Grievances or Opportunities?” *European Journal of Political Research* 30 (1996): 185–216; and Jaap Van Donselaar, *De staat paraat? De bestrijding van extreem-rechts in West-Europa* (Amsterdam: Babylon-De Geus, 1995).

- [26](#) The only exception to this “moderate” level of racist extremist violence was the attempted coup d’État in Romania.
- [27](#) See Vlasta Jalusič, “Xenophobia or Self-Protection? On the Establishing of the New Slovene Civic/Citizenship Identity,” in Monica Pajnik, ed., *Xenophobia and Post-Socialism* (Ljubljana, Slovenia: Mirovni Inštitut, 2002), 45–72. According to some research, East Europeans already hold less tolerant views towards immigrants; see Endre Sik, “The Level and Social Basis of Xenophobia in Contemporary Hungary,” In Zsolt Enyedi and Ferenc Erős, eds., *Authoritarianism and Prejudice. Central European Perspectives* (Budapest: Osiris, 1999), 196.
- [28](#) And even in Germany, the level of racist extremist violence is disproportionately high in the former communist part in the east. On racist extremist violence in Germany, and the role of the neo-Nazi and skinhead subcultures in it, see, inter alia, Thomas Grumke and Bernd Wagner, eds., *Handbuch Rechtsradikalismus. Personen—Organizationen—Netzwerke vom Neonazismus bis in die Mitte der Gesellschaft* (Opladen, Germany: Leske + Budrich, 2002); and Koopmans, “Racist and Extreme Right Violence.”
- [29](#) Even today, the security service (Serviciul Român de Informații [SRI]) still cooperates with nationalist and chauvinist groups and expresses some of their ideas.
- [30](#) A notable exception is the Lefebvre-group around Bernard Antony in the French National Front (Front national [FN]). See, inter alia, Jean-Yves Camus, *Le Front national* (Paris: Laurens, 1997).
- [31](#) Notable exceptions include the groups of researchers at the Faculty of Social Studies of Masaryk University in Brno or at the Peace Institute (Mirovni Inštitut) of the University of Ljubljana.
- [32](#) See <http://taskforce.ushmm.org/>.
- [33](#) See, for example, chart 1 in Sik, “Social Basis of Xenophobia,” 196.
- [34](#) Although certain surveys have found disturbing levels of anti-Semitism in Western Europe as well. See, for example, <http://www.jewishsf.com/bk021101/us48.shtml>.
- [35](#) *Tolerancja, przeciwdziałanie rasizmowi i ksenofobii. Wyzwania jednoczącej się Europy* 1 (2001).
- [36](#) Based on the European Values Studies of 1999; see *Europa ir mes* (Vilnius, Lithuania: n.p., 2001), 236–38.
- [37](#) See, for example, Michael Shafir, “Between Denial and ‘Comparative Trivialization.’ Holocaust Negationism in Post-Communist East Central Europe,” *Analysis of Current Trends in Antisemitism* 19 (2002); and Leon Volovici, “Antisemitism in Post-Communist Eastern Europe: A Marginal or Central Issue?” *Analysis of Current Trends in Antisemitism*, 5 (1994).
- [38](#) CVVM (Public Opinion Research Center) press release by Miluše Rezková on 24 March 2003, available at <http://www.cvvm.cz>.
- [39](#) Baltijas Datu nams, *Petijumu un ricibas programma “Cela uz pilsonisku sabiedribu” Atskaite* (Riga, Latvia: Baltijas Datu names, 1998), 89–90.
- [40](#) *New York Times*, 12 May 2002.
- [41](#) On the political culture of Central and Eastern European countries, see, inter alia, Detlef Pollack, Jörg Jacobs, Olaf Müller,

and Gert Pickel, eds., *Political Culture in Post-Communist Europe: Attitudes in New Democracies* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2003); and Franz Plasser, Peter A. Ulram, and Harald Waldrauch, *Democratic Consolidation in East-Central Europe* (Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan, 1998).

[42](#) Recently, this was the case with the relationship between the Fidesz-Hungarian Civic Movement (Fidesz-Magyar Polgári Szövetség [Fidesz-MPS]) and the Hungarian Justice and Life Party (Magyar Igazság és Élet Pártja [MIÉP]), despite considerable national and international pressure on Fidesz-MPS and its leader, then-Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, to disassociate themselves from MIÉP and its ideology. See, for example, Thomas Land, “Frustrated Hungary Flirts with Far-Right Politics,” *Contemporary Review* 278:1620(2001): 1–5.

[43](#) See, respectively, Csilla Kiss, “From Liberalism to Conservatism: The Federation of Young Democrats in Post-Communist Hungary,” *East European Politics and Societies* 16:3(2002): 739–63; and Tim Haughton, “HZDS: The Ideology, Organisation and Support Base of Slovakia’s Most Successful Party,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 53:5(2001): 745–69.

Conservative and right-wing movements

Kathleen M. Blee and Kimberly A. Creasap

Introduction

In the late twentieth century, the right became a political force in the United States. Conservative movements influenced public policy, elections, and public discourse on issues such as same-sex marriage, abortion, sex education, taxes, immigration, and gun ownership. Extremists with racist, xenophobic, and/or anti-Semitic agendas proliferated as well. Their violent potential became clear in 1995 when Timothy McVeigh, a traveler in the shadowy networks of organized racism, bombed the federal building in Oklahoma City.

The resurgence of the right in the United States has stimulated considerable attention in sociology. We focus on movements, not political parties or intellectual currents, which are reviewed elsewhere (Klandermans & Mayer 2006a, Nash 1998, Rydgren 2007). We open with terminological and conceptual issues. Then we review recent work on conservative and right-wing movements. A final section discusses the methodological and ethical issues of studying the right. We conclude by suggesting possible avenues for future research.

Terms and definitions

There is little uniformity in how scholars characterize the right in modern Western societies. Some terms imply a political continuum, with far-right movements positioned to the right of right-wing movements and both more rightist than conservative movements. Others focus on a single or few criteria—disavowal of democratic processes, strategies of violence and terrorism, conspiratorial belief, intense nationalism, and/or support for criminal action—as what separates an extreme right from other rightists (Durham 2007, Eatwell 2004, MJ Goodwin 2006, Vertigans 2007). Descriptors can indicate political significance, so modifiers such as ultra or extreme cast some movements as more marginal or less influential than others (McGirr 2001), but the same terms are used to distinguish movements based on racist

ideologies from other movements on the right (Durham 2000, Eatwell 2004). Some scholars identify rightist movements as fundamentalist to underscore how they mirror religious fundamentalism in their dualisms of good and evil, millennialism, and sharp boundaries between believers and others (Joseph & Sharma 2003, Marty & Appleby 1991). Especially outside the United States, extreme right is used for social movements and right-wing for political parties, although some parties are also labeled extreme right (Giugni et al. 2005, Klandermans & Mayer 2006b). The label fascist is applied to European neo-Nazis and skinheads, evoking the continent's genocidal history (Mann 2004), but it is rarely used for similar groups in the United States. In the United States, radical right can denote movements that are conspiratorial but not race-based, extreme right as those committed to white/Aryan supremacy, and far right as including both radical and extreme rightists as well as ultranationalists (Durham 2000).

Scholars and the rightists they study use somewhat different vocabularies. Although conservatives embrace that particular label—conservative—they generally reject others, such as right-wing, racist, extremist, and far right, as negative or belittling (DeWitte 2006). Some racist activists prefer to be called white separatists, a practice adopted by some scholars (Dobratz & Shanks-Meile 2000). Other scholars use white nationalist or white supremacist to underscore the centrality of racial domination in these movements (Blee 2002, Zeskind 2009).

To what these terms apply also varies. Definitions of the right, as Minkenberg (2003, p. 171) notes, often "resemble mere shopping lists of criteria." Indeed, the scholarship we review labels as extreme, conservative, traditional, or fundamentalist a variety of movements as well as their ideologies, cultural doctrines, strategies, styles of organizing, and tactics (Berlet & Lyons 2000, Gamble 2007, MJ Goodwin 2006). We use conservative for movements that support patriotism, free enterprise capitalism, and/or a traditional moral order and for which violence is not a frequent tactic or goal. We use right-wing for movements that focus specifically on race/ethnicity and/or that promote violence as a primary tactic or goal. We use rightist as a generic category.

In practice, movements are difficult to label as either right-wing or conservative. A single movement is likely to have conservative and right-wing aspects. Antiabortion movements are conservative in their support for traditional morality, but some practice violence against abortion clinics (Doan 2007). Patriot movements are right-wing on race but conservative in their embrace of free markets. Many right-wing and conservative movements use similar strategies and rhetoric of vulnerability, fear, and threat (Durham 2007).

Theoretical orientations

Sociological work on the right has shifted substantially in recent years. Few sociologists today

regard rightist movements as a collective manifestation of individual pathology and authoritarian families, a dominant theory in earlier efforts to explain German Nazism (Adorno et al. 1950). Factors such as fear, ignorance, psychological disorder, and status anxiety are rarely evoked in modern sociological studies because there is considerable evidence that rightist movements attract fairly ordinary and often middle-class people, not the frustrated, downwardly mobile, and socially marginal (Blee 1991, 2002; McGirr 2001; Vertigans 2007), although some studies find that psycho-developmental factors affect vulnerability to rightist recruitment (Edelstein 2003, Lio et al. 2008).

Sociologists today generally approach the right as a social movement, not as an outcome of personality disorders. This conceptual turn has not been without problems. Rightist movements fit awkwardly into the theoretical templates of social movements that were largely developed in studies of feminism, the New Left, and civil rights. Such progressive movements, based on “claim making by disadvantaged minorities” (McAdam et al. 2005, p. 2), are poor models for movements of privileged groups (Blee 2006, Wright 2007). Yet concepts from social movement theories have been valuable for directing attention to how rightist movements originate with movement entrepreneurs, frame their messages, respond to external political opportunities, forge collective identity, develop strategies and tactics, and serve as a source of vision and voice (however destructive) for their adherents (Stein 2001).

Rightist movements tend to be known for what they are against, not for what they support (Durham 2007, Lo 1982). Antigay movements are mobilized by LGBT gains. The antiabortion movement fights legal abortion. Anti-immigrant movements are fueled by the advances of immigrants. As counter-movements, their rhetoric and tactics are influenced by opposing movements (Fetner 2005, 2008; Staggenborg & Meyer 1996). White supremacists borrow slogans from civil rights movements and claim equal rights for whites. British rightists adopt the tactics of boycotts from their progressive counterparts but direct them at businesses owned by nonwhites (Atton 2006, Berbrier 2000).

Right-wing movements are shaped by their interaction with the state (Karapin 2007). A disorganized network of self-styled patriots was transformed into a cohesive force of antigovernment warriors in the late twentieth century as they adopted military tactics and language used by federal agencies in the war on drugs (Hamm 2002, Wright 2007, Zeskind 2009). State action can weaken rightist extremism as well, evident in federal government efforts to end Ku Klux Klan (KKK) violence against the civil rights movement (Chalmers 2003).

U.S. conservative movements

U.S. conservative movements support anti-collectivist economic policies, fervent patriotism, and/or traditionalism and conventional morality.

Conservative economic movements include citizen tax revolts [such as ballot initiatives popular in California starting in the late 1970s (Burg 2004, Martin 2008)] and campaigns against government spending on social welfare programs [especially those that aid immigrants, poor people, single mothers, and people of color (Hardisty 2000, Reese 2007)]. Conservative economic beliefs also fuel antienvironmental movements, such as those that oppose measures to halt global warming (McCright & Dunlap 2000, 2003).

The conservative focus on patriotism finds expression in movements against supranational political entities, especially the World Court, United Nations, World Bank, and Trilateral Commission. Until the collapse of the Soviet Union, conservative anti-internationalism was grounded in fear of worldwide socialism and communism (Minkenberg 2003), but now conservative nationalists promote the superiority of the United States over all other countries. Despite their expressions of nationalism, many conservatives chafe at government authority. They favor individual rights vis-à-vis the state, as evident in campaigns for parental choice in schooling and against regulation of business, professions, and private life (Durham 2000, Flint 2004b, Soule & Van Dyke 2002).

Conservative traditionalism is found in movements to ban the teaching of evolution and sex education in schools as antithetical to Biblical teachings and in movements that oppose state efforts to increase gender equality as a violation of the natural order (Irvine 2002, Jacobs 2006, Lienesch 2007, Rose 2005). Traditionalist movements also seek to limit access to abortion, pornography, gambling, and prostitution as violations of morality, and they support the death penalty and other forms of harsh punishment for criminals as essential for a moral social order (DeWitte 2006, McGirr 2001, Minkenberg 2003).

A particular kind of conservative movement known as the New Right (NR) emerged in the 1970s, a time when the right had little electoral or cultural influence. Fragmented groups of free market enthusiasts, libertarians, anticommunists, and social conservatives found common interest, shaping a movement that rapidly became a force in political life. The NR's explosive growth challenged long-held scholarly assumptions about conservative mobilization. For one, the NR did not primarily attract social groups in decline, such as the status-insecure middle class and Protestant fundamentalists that Bell (1963) identified as the core of the Old Right. Rather, its campaign to return America to political, economic, and moral strength mobilized a wide range of social groups, including economically successful middle classes (Durham 2000, Johnson 2000, McGirr 2001). Too, the NR's success was not due primarily to its strong leadership, a common description of the Old Right (Ribuffo 1983). Instead, its leaders inspired grassroots action. For instance, antifeminist spokesperson Phyllis Schlafly fought against gender equity by mobilizing women fearful that they would be drafted into the military or that men would relinquish economic responsibility for their families (Critchlow 2005,

Schreiber 2008).

Scholars are divided on the racial nature of the NR. Some argue that the NR relied on racially coded messages to mobilize white evangelical activists. Race, one scholar of the NR writes, was used to connect “recipes for national revival to racialized and often exclusionary images of the national community,” particularly those of immigration, affirmative action, welfare, and traditional values (Ansell 2001, p. 189). Such racial ideology, unlike earlier forms of white racism, was not based on biological claims of white superiority. Rather, it rested on ostensibly nonracial values, such as disdain for government policies of equal opportunity (Ansell 1997).

Other scholars see the NR as more complicated on issues of race. Nonwhites, they note, have been involved in NR movements, such as Native Americans in evangelical movements for prison reform and against gendered violence (Smith 2008) and African Americans in pro-family movements (Lewis 2005). A well-studied example of a racially complex NR movement is the evangelical Promise Keepers (PK). PK began in 1991 as a small men’s gathering in Colorado and within six years was able to bring a half-million men to Washington, DC, to march for traditional family values. Not only was PK multiracial, but it also declared racism a sin and advocated that men undertake racial reconciliation by developing personal relationships with men of other races (Allen 2000, Bartkowski 2004, Diamond 1998, Hardisty 2000, Heath 2003).

Contextual factors

Two historical shifts were instrumental in the rapid rise of the NR in the United States. One was the alliance of free market advocates and social conservatives, traditionally separate wings of U.S. conservatism. The other was the entry of large numbers of conservative Protestant evangelicals into secular political life.

Social and economic conservatives found common ground in the NR in part because of changes within the right itself. Social conservatives, especially in the South, had long embraced openly racist agendas that divided them from more libertarian free market conservatives. In the wake of the civil rights movement, however, white Southern political leaders were less inclined to explicitly support racial separation and white privilege. Instead, they espoused a discourse of freedom, rights, and individual liberty that nonetheless justified continued white economic and political dominance. The new rhetoric of Southern social conservatives cloaked racial politics as concern about federal intervention into local schools, residential patterns, and economic structures, an antigovernment message that resonated as well with supporters of free market economics (Crespinio 2007, Kruse 2005, Lowndes 2008). Outside the South as well, social conservatives in the late twentieth century distanced

themselves from extremists, rejecting overt forms of anti-Semitism and anti-Catholicism and forming coalitions with economic conservatives on issues such as crime, state spending, and patriotism (McGirr 2001).

The NR's growth was fueled too by the politicization of religious conservatives, especially evangelical Protestants. To a lesser extent, Catholics also became part of the NR, mostly in movements against abortion and LGBT rights. Once considered in decline in postindustrial societies, religion became a powerful force for mobilizing new constituencies on the right in the 1980s as evangelical Christians sought to "evangelize and organize" by building pressure groups such as the Moral Majority and Focus on the Family (Jacobs 2006, p. 360). Ironically foreshadowing a later move by Islamic fundamentalists across the globe (Davidson 2003), this New Christian Right (NCR) decried the secularization of the West and urged a repoliticization of religion (Burack 2008, Fetner 2008). Despite evangelical preacher Jerry Falwell's claim that a "pervasive anti-Christian sentiment and religious intolerance" permeated U.S. society (quoted in Burack 2008, p. 111), the NCR grew dramatically in size, resources, and political strength through the 1990s. By supporting like-minded candidates for election, lobbying intensively for policy changes, and organizing rallies and protests, the NCR fought to wield moral authority through the state, bring Christian evangelical believers into positions of state power, and curb the actions and expressions of nonbelievers (Burack 2008, Smith 2001). NCR campaigns against secular and liberal influence in politics and cultural life ignited culture wars that raged for decades over issues as diverse as AIDS, sexually explicit art, and inner-city crime (Ansell 1997).

Mobilization strategies

The NR was able to rapidly mobilize large numbers of grassroots activists, including those previously uninvolved in political life. How they did so has been the subject of considerable sociological interest. Two questions underlie much of this research. How did people become convinced that the agenda of the NR represented their interests? And how did the NR create a united movement with issues that ranged from states' rights and criminal sentencing to social welfare and family values (Lowndes 2008)? Sociological studies focus on three elements: culture, enemies, and gender.

Culture was a crucial factor in the NR's efforts to mobilize activists and set a conservative agenda. Its music, family events, computer games, and amusement parks reached deep into mainstream America, bringing new social groups into politics (Diamond 1998). So did its media empire, which began with radio and extended to book publishing houses, bookstores, televangelist superstar preachers, and Internet social networking sites. Such cultural projects helped shape an identity for conservative evangelicals distinct from both mainline

Protestantism and other evangelicals (Bartkowski 2004, Rogers & Goodwin 2008, Smith 2002).

Identification of enemies was another key to the success and growth of the NR. New enemies were needed to replace those that had become less relevant to conservatives, such as Soviet-era communists. Immigrants, liberals, working women, counter culturists, abortion providers, welfare recipients, secular humanists, feminists, and later, global jihadists and Muslim terrorists became its new targets. A particular focus was sexual minorities (Burack 2008, Fetner 2008, Richardson 2006, Stein 2001). To some in the NR, sexual minorities were similar to Nazis and communists of the past. They were deviant and threatening, hidden, able to bring on chaos, powerful out of proportion to their numbers, and unstoppable unless confronted (Burack 2008). Others in the NR were more sympathetic, arguing for compassion toward gays and lesbians yet insisting that homosexuality was a deviant sexual practice (Burack 2008). Still others sought to distance themselves from the label of homophobic by arguing that they opposed homosexuality because gay men had been associated with World War II-era German Nazis (Durham 2000).

The NR's antigay efforts achieved notable victories. An antigay campaign in Cincinnati framed itself as opposing special rights for gays, while progay forces were bogged down in a confusing variety of symbols and rhetoric (Dugan 2005). In Oregon, a Citizen's Alliance stopped what it regarded as special status for gays, but ultimately widened public discussion of sexuality (Stein 2001). On a national level, the antigay movement won a number of legislative battles, especially to prevent same-sex marriage, but also stimulated dramatic growth in membership and resources and the development of sophisticated tactics and campaign strategies by LGBT countermovements (Fetner 2008).

Not all antigay campaigns were successful, even in the short run. The ex-gay movement, which encouraged gay men and lesbians to return to their inherent heterosexuality by mimicking behavior it considered gender appropriate (Robinson & Spivey 2007), is an example. People who enrolled in ex-gay programs more often reported religious transformation than changes in sexual behavior or desire (Erzen 2006). More troubling for the antigay movement, it provided the opposing LGBT movement with a focus and model for advertising (Fetner 2005).

Gender, too, was key in the NR. Significant numbers of women were involved in conservative politics in earlier decades, such as the anti-women's suffrage movement, antiradicalism during the 1920s Red Scare, efforts to stop U.S. entry into World War II, and the anti-New Deal movement (Benowitz 2002, Marshall 1997, Nielsen 2001), and some of these women joined NR movements. Phyllis Schlafly, author of the widely read 1960s conservative tract, *A Choice, Not an Echo*, who became a leader in NR antifeminism, is an example (Critchlow 2005, Hardisty 2000, Schreiber 2008). The NR also brought significant numbers of women into conservative politics for the first time, especially religious evangelicals and suburban housewives; these women brought new tactics to the movement. Small groups of

women assembling to write letters to politicians, for instance, created a model of kitchen table activism that became a mainstay of the NR (Hardisty 2001, McGirr 2001, Nielsen 2001).

Some conservative women worked primarily on economic issues. The Independent Women's Forum (IWF) was organized by supporters of the nomination of Clarence Thomas to the U.S. Supreme Court who saw the need for an institutional presence for women with conservative economic politics. The IWF claimed to represent the interests of all women, but its members were largely socially well-connected, professional women. Its advocacy of economic self-sufficiency led the IWF to criticize federal regulation and social programs such as day care subsidies, violence against women laws, Title IX gender-equity measures, and broad claims of sexual harassment and workplace discrimination (Schreiber 2008).

NCR groups were more successful in attracting large numbers of grassroots activists, especially evangelical women. One of the largest, Concerned Women for America (CWA), was headed by Beverley LaHaye, wife of Moral Majority leader Tim LaHaye. Its dramatic growth reflected both its fusion of religion and gender politics and its avid embrace of the cultural trappings of modern politics. CWA conventions, according to one observer, were “bigger, more media savvy, more stage-produced, more fun, and more explicitly Christian” than the more stodgy gatherings of the Old Right (Hardisty 2000, p. 82). By opposing abortion, LGBT rights, U.S. funding for the United Nations, and stem cell research and by supporting the regulation of pornography, abstinence-based sex education, and prayer in public schools, CWA sought to “protect and promote biblical values among all citizens” (Schreiber 2008, p. 26).

Right-wing movements

Right-wing movements in the United States openly and virulently embrace racism, anti-Semitism, and/or xenophobia and promote violence. They include long-standing racist movements such as the KKK; white supremacist, neo-Nazi, and white power skinhead groups; and racialist and violent groups of nationalists and patriots (Gallaher 2004, McVeigh 2009, Zeskind 2009). Their historical orientations vary, with the KKK focused on the Confederacy of the Civil War era, neo-Nazis focused on World War II-era Nazi Germany, and nationalists/patriots focused on the 1776 American Revolution (Durham 2007). Their locations also vary, as the KKK is generally in the South and Midwest, neo-Nazis across the country, and nationalists/patriots in the West and Southwest (Flint 2004a).

Most right-wing groups are viciously white supremacist and anti-Semitic, regarding non-whites and Jews as inferior, destructive, and fearsome and seeking to preserve the power and privileges of white Aryans (Blee 2007b, Fredrickson 2002). Some are antielitist, populist, or even anticorporate (Berlet & Lyons 2000, Bhatia 2004, Zeskind 2009); others believe that

invisible, powerful Jewish conspirators control the world's economy and polity as well as the smallest details of daily life (Blee 2002, Durham 2000). Many regard whites as under attack and advocate the isolation or extermination of nonwhites and Jews by means of an apocalyptic race war (Berbrier 2000, 2002; Durham 2007; Vertigans 2007). These latter views are particularly prevalent among advocates of Christian Identity (CI), a racist pseudotheology that regards Jews as the literal descendants of Satan and nonwhites as nonhuman (Barkun 1994, Gardell 2003). CI adherents reject traditional Christianity as overly influenced by Jews, and they tend to be atheist or follow precepts of Odinism, occultism, or paganism (Barkun 1994, Durham 2007, Gardell 2003).

Xenophobia is a long-standing characteristic of right-wing movements around the world (DeWitte 2006, Edelstein 2003, Fichter 2008, Giugni et al. 2005, Mudde 2005a). Historically, right-wing movements in the United States have been highly xenophobic and nationalist, working to stop immigration of nonwhites through law, force, and violence (Blee 1991, Flint 2004b, McVeigh 2009, Zeskind 2009). This may be changing with the spread of pan-Aryanism and the desire for transnational alliances with other white supremacists around the world (Daniels 2009). The nationalism of right-wing movements also is tempered by their antagonism to the U.S. government, which they describe as a Zionist Occupation Government that works on behalf of Jewish overlords to take away the rights and guns of white, Aryan citizens. Such ideas were solidified by episodes of disastrous violence between government agents and citizens in the 1980s and 1990s, including a federal investigation of a residential compound in Waco, Texas, that ended in a siege in which 76 people died (Durham 2007, Vertigans 2007).

Violence is ubiquitous in right-wing movements as an action and/or a goal. Violence can be strategic, chosen among alternative tactical actions to achieve a goal, often by highly insular groups intently focused on their perceived enemies (Blee 2002, Crenshaw 1992, J. Goodwin 2006, Payne 2000). Strategic violence is targeted at enemy groups, such as Jews, racial minorities, or federal government installations. Other right-wing violence is more performative. Performative violence binds together its practitioners in a common identity, as when white power skinheads enact bloody clashes with other skinhead groups and each other (Blee 2002).

Contextual factors

A number of studies examine how context matters for right-wing movements (Brustein 1996, Karapin 2007, McVeigh & Sikkink 2005, Soule & Van Dyke 2002, Widfeldt 2004). These generally stress competition/threat or opportunity as critical in right-wing mobilization.

Economic competition and threat are commonly studied in right-wing mobilization, at least

in part because of their importance in the rise of German Nazism, often regarded as a prototype of right-wing mobilization. In the United States, national economic cycles do not correlate strongly with right-wing activity, although studies on a subnational level have found links between right-wing activity and economic conditions. In Indiana in the 1920s, for example, the KKK grew in areas dominated by corn farming, reflecting its support for government aid to farmers and opposition to high tariffs, big business, and labor unions (McVeigh et al. 2004). In the 1990s, right-wing patriot and militia groups appeared more often in places that were losing jobs, especially in farming and manufacturing sectors (Soule & Van Dyke 2002).

Right-wing activity can also emerge in response to threat and competition posed by the changing racial composition of a population. In the 1920s, the KKK was most popular among whites in areas with increasing populations of immigrants, African Americans, and Catholics, all targets of the Klan (McVeigh et al. 2004). Studies of today's right-wing movements find mixed results. Several find that racist groups or racist events are more likely when the population of racial minorities in an area is increasing, but the effect of the proportion of nonwhites in a population on racist activity is inconsistent (Beck 2000, Soule & Van Dyke 2002). In areas with proportionately high nonwhite populations, however, those with less racial integration are more likely to have racist groups perhaps because nonwhites are regarded by whites both as threatening and as strangers (McVeigh & Sikkink 2005).

Right-wing mobilization also responds to political opportunities. In the 1920s, political realignment spurred the growth of the KKK, which could point to the declining electoral influence of white native-born Protestant men in the face of women's enfranchisement and the surge in immigration (McVeigh 2009). Perceptions of a decline in the political influence of white male citizens have provided similar opportunities for right-wing groups in the United States in recent years (Gallaher 2004, Zeskind 2009).

Mobilization strategies

What motivates people to join right-wing movements? One set of explanations focuses on the conditions that make people receptive to right-wing ideas and the trajectories that lead them into right-wing movements. "Predisposing risk factors" (Horgan 2008) include social class background, family environment, trouble in school, and neighborhood racial conflict (DeWitte 2006, Fangen 1999, Linden & Klandermans 2007, Milo 2005, Vertigans 2007). Another set of explanations emphasizes the importance of particular settings in right-wing mobilization. White power music concerts and street clashes between racist and antiracist skinhead groups bring young people into contact with right-wing activists, sometimes for the first time. Neighborhood crime prevention meetings, environmental groups, gun shows, and prisons

serve the same purpose for older women and men (Blazak 2001, Blee 2002, Durham 2007, Kimmel 2007, Virchow 2007). Studies vary regarding whether right-wing beliefs are the cause or the effect of right-wing activity. In some, people are assumed to join right-wing movements to act upon their rightist ideas. In others, people adopt right-wing ideologies by taking part in right-wing activity (Blee 2002, Lowndes 2008, Munson 2008).

Three aspects of mobilization into right-wing movements are the focus of much new scholarship. One is the increasing use of alternative media, a term generally identified with leftist movements (Atton 2006). Right-wing groups create virtual communities through Web sites, blogs, social networking sites, chat rooms, and online discussion boards (Adams & Roscigno 2005, Burris et al. 2000, Daniels 2009, Gerstenfeld 2003, Levin 2002, Reid & Chen 2007, Simi & Futrell 2006). These serve several purposes. Some researchers claim that right-wing groups use virtual means, especially the Internet, to recruit new members. Others argue that only personal contact can bring people into movements that are hidden from public view (Gerstenfeld 2003, Vertigans 2007). In any case, the Internet certainly has allowed right-wing movements to distribute propaganda to supporters and the general public. Right-wing sites often visually mimic more mainstream sites to make them familiar to viewers, while infusing racist and/or xenophobic rhetoric into their messages (Daniels 2009, Futrell et al. 2006, Gerstenfeld 2003).

Virtual means such as the Internet provide anonymity for movements that promote hate speech and violent actions. Interactive online forums allow people to be involved in radical or extremist movements with little risk to their reputations, jobs, or family relationships (Simi & Futrell 2009). They also permit contact among right-wing activists that would otherwise be difficult because of geographical distance or fear of being observed and prosecuted (Blee 2002, Futrell et al. 2006, Gerstenfeld 2003, Levin 2002, Reid & Chen 2007).

Furthermore, virtual communities offer a sense of belonging, companionship, and social support networks (Gerstenfeld 2003, Simi & Futrell 2006). Because mainstream media tend to portray right-wing movements negatively, right-wing activists create virtual communities to control their images (Gerstenfeld 2003, Simi & Futrell 2009). In interactive forums, such as blogs and discussion boards, users shape “virtual identities,” which are “people’s online performances of who they want others to think they are” (Anahita 2006, pp. 143–44).

A second focus of new scholarship on right-wing mobilization is the subcultural scenes that surround white power skinhead and neo-Nazi movements (Futrell et al. 2006, Milo 2005, Minkenberg 2003, Mudde 2005a, Pankowski & Kornak 2005, Varga 2008). These scenes revolve heavily, but not exclusively, around music and media. Activists, bands, media and music fans (who are not necessarily activists, but may be sympathizers), and networks of their friends cluster in performance places, bars and coffee houses, radio stations, ‘zines, newspapers, and virtual communities that are, at least temporarily identified as right-wing spaces (Futrell et al. 2006). For committed activists, such scenes sustain involvement by creating fun experiences

that vitalize their involvement. For younger, newer activists, these scenes revitalize a movement that may seem outdated (Futrell et al. 2006, p. 297). For fans and sympathizers, scenes are a low-risk way to be involved in right-wing movements, one that does not require as much time or commitment as planning demonstrations or producing media. They can also provide entrée into more committed forms of activism (Eyerman 2002, Futrell et al. 2006). Music and media scenes also create international links between movements through media distribution and concerts (C'akl & Wollmann 2005, Pankowski & Kornak 2005).

Scenes draw upon “particular cultural attitudes and emotions [to] draw participants into shared understandings of music, politics, lifestyle, and associated symbols” (Futrell et al. 2006, p. 276). They are free spaces where activists are encouraged to present themselves as white power activists or skinheads, which might be discouraged in other social contexts such as work or school (Fangen 1999, Futrell & Simi 2004, Futrell et al. 2006, Simi & Futrell 2009). In scenes, symbols of belonging are expressed through style. For racist skinheads, the markers of racist style include behaviors (Nazi salutes), appearance (shaved heads), body art (swastika tattoos), musical tastes (white power hardcore), and language (racial slurs). By such display, racist activists convey their authenticity (Brown 2004, Cooter 2006, Simi & Futrell 2009).

A third focus of scholarship on right-wing mobilization is the increasing participation of women in such movements (Blee 2002; Cunningham 2003, 2008; Ness 2008c). Although not historically unprecedented (Blee 1991), the incorporation of women into right-wing movements, including those that use violence, is somewhat surprising. Right-wing propaganda commonly depicts women as nonpolitical, as mothers and wives who support activist men and nurture their families, nations, and race (Bedi 2006, Lesselier 2002). Moreover, right-wing movements are generally highly masculinized, with all-male leaderships and a strong culture of white male dominance that excludes women (Anahita 2006, Ferber 2000, Ferber & Kimmel 2004, Hamm 2002, Vertigans 2007).

Despite the barriers, women are joining right-wing movements in increasing numbers worldwide, including in the United States. Why they do so is not fully understood. Studies from other countries suggest that women are mobilized into right-wing movements when their male intimates are threatened with economic harm (Bedi 2006) or when women feel victimized as women by external and racialized enemies (Sehgal 2007). The limited data on women in U.S. right-wing movements suggest a somewhat different pattern. U.S. women generally enter right-wing movements by being recruited to work for seemingly mainstream causes such as school quality or community safety (Blee 2002).

Once mobilized, women face a complicated gender environment in right-wing movements. Despite their increasing numbers, right-wing men still view their women comrades as motivated by familial or maternal responsibilities and emotions rather than by ideological zeal (Lesselier 2002, Ness 2008b). In some movements, overt conflicts have erupted over the place of women (Blee 2002, Dobratz & Shanks-Meile 2004, Durham 2007). An analysis of an online

skinhead community, for instance, found a widespread sentiment that true skin-heads are hypermasculine, heterosexual men with shaved heads; questions in the online forum about whether or not women could be involved in skinhead scenes were dismissed because “only men are skinheads” (Anahita 2006, p. 153). Other studies find women skinheads who regard men as simply accessories to the cause of white power (Blee 2002, Milo 2005).

Methods

Scholarship on the right faces unusual challenges of data and analysis. In contrast to progressive movements to which scholars often have access through personal contacts or their own participation, many rightist movements are so far from the political experiences of most scholars as to be “mysterious, frightening and irrational” (Wintrobe 2002, p. 23). They can be difficult to understand with categories and logic of analysis used for other social movements (Lee-Treweek & Linkogle 2000, Minkowitz 1998, Sehgal 2007). Rightist movements also are difficult to access. Even moderate conservative activists often regard researchers with skepticism, fearing that their projects will be depicted unsympathetically. Extremists want to hide their identities and obscure the activities and goals of their movements, wary of arrest or of being attacked by antiracist activists. Moreover, researchers who deal directly with rightist activists struggle to establish empathy and rapport without implying sympathy for the goals or tactics of these movements (Berezin 2007; Blee 2007a, 1993; Sehgal 2009; Team Members 2006).

Scholars of the right, especially those who collect data through fieldwork, face a variety of physical risks. In highly confrontational groups such as fascists and racial/ethnic extremists, violence is often a possibility (Blee 2003, Sehgal 2009, Virchow 2007). The threat is not only from extremists themselves; simply attending right-wing gatherings “may be enough to make a researcher a target of counter-demonstrators, law enforcement activity or at risk of retaliation from other groups in society” (Jipson & Litton 2004, p. 156).

There are ethical dilemmas as well. Researchers are obliged to protect the privacy of those they study, but this is complicated when subjects are involved in illegal or violent activities. Whether such activists understand the legal consequences they might face from being studied is a concern, as are the issues of whether scholarship might publicize or even promote socially harmful groups (Blee 1998, Blee & Vining 2010, Cunningham 2004, Sehgal 2009).

Although covert research is uncommon today because of institutional review board regulations and ethical codes, scholars of right-wing groups commonly wrestle with the limits of self-disclosure in field research. A scholar of the Hindu far right in India reflected that her fieldwork was neither completely overt nor fully covert but based on “partial disclosure and

partial secrecy” (Sehgal 2009, p. 336). Scholars of less extreme rightist groups face similar issues. A researcher of the antigay movement in Oregon, concerned about the effect that her identity as a Jewish lesbian might have on her study, decided not to reveal her identity unless directly asked (Stein 2001).

As a result of such problems, much scholarship on right-wing movements either focuses on the external conditions that nurture them or relies on publicly available information from Web sites, newspaper accounts, reports of antiracist organizations and government authorities, or the speeches and written propaganda of self-proclaimed spokespersons of those groups (MJ Goodwin 2006). Data published by rightist groups are useful for understanding their self-presentation to outsiders but can be misleading as indicators of the beliefs or motives of activists (Blee 2002, 2005; Durham 2000).

Future directions

Despite the voluminous scholarship on U.S. rightist movements in recent years, there are significant gaps and opportunities for future research. One is the relationship of right-wing movements to the spaces, networks, and subcultures that surround them. There is considerable research on how conservative movements build on mainstream cultural and social life by organizing through churches or civic groups. To date, there are few studies of this dynamic among right-wing movements, although studies of Europe suggest that extremists recruit members and spread ideologies through a variety of social arenas, including those that are ostensibly nonpolitical. For example, European racist skinheads contribute to the violence of sports hooliganism with racist songs and chants at soccer matches (Milo 2005, Pankowski & Kornak 2005). In Germany, the right wing has made inroads into mainstream culture with Nazi-esque lyrics and violent references to Hitler in the music of mainstream hip-hop artists (Putnam & Littlejohn 2007). There is some evidence of comparable practices in the United States, such as racist skinheads who attend NASCAR auto races and other gatherings of whites they regard as likely to be receptive to their message (Cooter 2006). Whether such practices are widespread or increasing among right-wing groups is unknown. More broadly, more study is required of how right-wing movements draw from, and themselves shape, their social and cultural environments to serve political agendas.

Second, there is a need for more research on global connections among rightist movements. Significant right-wing movements exist in many places, from neo-Nazis in Western Europe and the former Soviet Union (Eatwell 2004) to far-right Hindu nationalists in India (Basu & Roy 2007), but the extent to which these are linked across nations and continents is unclear. Certainly, right-wing movements are connected across borders through ideas broadcast on the

Internet. But is there much actual collaboration among these movements? Some studies point to regional cooperation on the right such as when Eastern European skinhead groups stage white power concerts to raise funds and recruit members (Milo 2005, Pankowski & Kornak 2005). More research is required to assess the scope of such transnational efforts, including the circulation of money and weapons through right-wing networks. Additional studies also are needed on the globalization of conservative movements, especially given new efforts by the U.S. Christian Right to develop transnational religious alliances (Butler 2006).

A third valuable avenue for research is the relationship between U.S. right-wing movements and institutional politics. Studies of the European right find right-wing movements and parties to be synergistic, each facilitating the other (Art 2006, Berezin 2009, Mudde 2005a). In Russia, right-wing organizations, parties, and skinheads are connected through an implicit division of labor in which parties and organizations promote and instigate violent attacks on their enemies, which skinheads then carry out (Varga 2008). In several Latin American nations, uncivil movements use both violence and the institutions of democracy to secure their demands (Payne 2000). The extent to which right-wing movements in the United States similarly intersect with conservative electoral politics is not clear.

New avenues for research on the U.S. right also can be found in the extensive literature on rightist movements and parties in Europe that points to the importance of nonactivist sympathizers in bolstering the right (Berezin 2009). Research in areas of eastern Germany finds that significant minorities of young people support the ideas and violent tactics of the right wing even if they are not committed participants (Art 2006, Miller-Idriss 2009). Similarly, rightist parties such as Le Pen's National Front in France and Haider's Freedom Party in Austria have found support among voters who do not regard themselves as rightists but nonetheless support the party's overt racist and xenophobic appeals (Art 2006). Findings such as these suggest that rightist movements can build on the overlap between their agendas and the beliefs of subpopulations of general citizens (Sniderman & Hagendoorn 2007); whether a similar situation is developing in the United States merits more study.

Finally, future studies of the right could be enriched by greater attention to two research literatures: those on terrorism and those on religion. Since the 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York, the study of terrorism has expanded dramatically. Despite the growing tendency of some right-wing groups to adopt the organization, goals, and strategies that are commonly associated with terrorism, however, studies of the right make little use of the findings and concepts of terrorist studies (Blazak 2001, Blee 2005, and Hamm 2002 are exceptions). In particular, work on the strategic use of terrorism and political violence could be useful for studies of the right (Turk 2004, J. Goodwin 2006). Research in the sociology of religion, too, could benefit studies of the right because religions, like social movements, seek to establish alternative institutions and value systems. Literatures on religion and social movements have been used together in some studies of recent Islamic movements (Snow &

Byrd 2007, Sutton & Vertigans 2006, Wiktorowicz 2005), but these efforts are complicated by the assumptions of democracy, autonomy, and civil society in social movement theory (Bayat 2007). Nonetheless, more attention to the dynamics of religious commitment and belief, particularly as these undergo change, could prove valuable for studies of the right.

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Part III

Leaders, members and voters

This section entails a selection of articles and book chapters that deal explicitly with the leaders, members, and voters of populist radical right parties and organizations. The readings address the main demographic characteristics and motivations of the different groups within these organizations.

Despite the fact that populist radical right parties are often depicted as so-called *Führerparteien* (leader parties), there are few studies of leadership within radical right organizations. **Roger Eatwell** addresses the role of populist radical right leaders with regard to Max Weber's famous concept of 'charisma,' offering both deeper insights into populist radical right leadership and an innovative approach to an often-abused concept. Drawing upon a large cross-national study **Bert Klandermans** chronicles the life stories of activists in five European countries, focusing specifically on their recruitment into populist radical right movements. In a similar vein, **Kathleen Blee** analyzes the personal narratives of female activists of 'racist organizations' in the United States.

While leaders and members remain understudied, voters of populist radical right parties belong to the most studied subjects in political science. **Kai Arzheimer** portrays the 'typical' voter of populist radical right parties on the basis of both attitudinal and demographic characteristics. **Terri Givens** analyzes the stunning 'gender gap' of populist radical right electorates, which is stronger than for any other party family, but defies simple explanations.

Revision questions

Eatwell

- What are Weber's three dimensions of charisma?
- What is 'coterie charisma'?
- Why does Eatwell consider Jean-Marie Le Pen and Vladimir Zhirinovsky 'charismatic leaders'?

Klandermans

- Why do links with the past appear to be an ambivalent issue?
- What is a ‘movement’s mobilization potential’?
- What are the three types of ‘life histories’ of populist radical right activists? How do they relate to the characteristics of the ‘right-wing extremist’ movement?

Blee

- What is the role of women in organized racist groups today?
- What are the three strategies that women activists mention as explanation of their participation in racist groups?
- What are the main implications of the inclusion of women into an analysis of racist movements?

Arzheimer

- What can we learn from the social base of the electorate of populist radical right parties?
- Do old and new populist radical right parties have similar electorates? How does the process of ‘proletarization’ relate to this?
- What is the profile of the ‘typical’ voter of a populist radical right party?

Givens

- What is the ‘gender gap’ of populist radical right parties? Do all right-wing parties have such a gender gap?
- What are the most common explanations of the ‘left-right gender gap’?
- Is the gender gap of populist radical right parties a result of gender differences in terms of populist radical right attitudes?

Discussion points

1. Do all populist radical right leaders possess coterie charisma?

2. Are there any populist radical right leaders today that have ‘mass affective charisma’?
3. How can you prove that a specific leader is ‘charismatic’?
4. Can you speak of *the* (stereotypical) populist radical right activist? If so, how would you describe her/him?
5. Do activists from countries with a ‘heroic past’ display different personality traits than those from other countries?
6. Do women join populist radical right groups for different reasons than men?
7. Is there a difference between a populist radical right voter and a voter for a populist radical right party?
8. Are the female voters of populist radical right parties different from the male voters?
9. Do populist radical right parties have a ‘gender gap’ or is it really a ‘class gap’?

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12

The rebirth of right-wing charisma?

The cases of Jean-Marie Le Pen and Vladimir Zhirinovsky

Roger Eatwell

Introduction

The term ‘charisma’ derives from a reference in the New Testament’s Corinthians II, which describes the forms in which the gifts of divine grace appear. The term was secularised by Max Weber in the early twentieth century.¹ Weber was concerned that a charismatic style of leadership might emerge to challenge what he saw as the existing two main forms of political legitimacy – the traditional and the legal-rational. Weber depicted charisma as having three main dimensions:

1. The charismatic leader, who is someone characterised by (superficially at least) traits such as a sense of radical mission, self-confidence and rhetorical skills.
2. The mass following, which is likely to emerge suddenly at times of crisis, and which is characterised by a bond based on a great sense of affective trust in the leader and a lack of concern with rational economic issues.
3. The routinisation of the fleeting pure phenomenon, for example by the acquiring of a specific office (such as a presidency), or through the development of clans.

However, Weber never elaborated on his ‘ideal type’ concept (definition), and especially the theory (explanation) in relation to specific contemporary and historical examples. As a result, it has been left to others to expand on, and to operationalise, Weber’s typologies and hypotheses.²

The term ‘charisma’ has been applied to a remarkable variety of leaders, including Mahatma Gandhi, Winston Churchill and John F. Kennedy. However, charisma has featured particularly frequently in analyses of the extreme Right, both in the inter-war era and in its

contemporary manifestations.³ Major historians such as Emilio Gentile and Ian Kershaw have adopted Weber's approach as the key to explaining the rise and nature of the dictatorships of Benito Mussolini and Adolf Hitler (Gentile portrays Mussolini as the prototype of the twentieth-century charismatic leader).⁴ Leading political scientists such as Hans-Georg Betz have stressed the importance of charismatic leaders in order to explain the upsurge in extreme Right voting in western Europe, and Herbert Kitschelt has stressed the importance of charisma more generally to voting in many former communist countries in eastern Europe.⁵ Among those who feature prominently in the Pantheon of recent extreme Right charismatic leaders are Umberto Bossi, Pim Fortuyn, Jörg Haider, Slobadan Milošević, Jean-Marie Le Pen and Vladimir Zhirinovsky.

However, it is important to stress that the vast majority of historians who have sought to analyse the rise of inter-war fascism stress structural factors, such as Germany's alleged *Sonderweg* or the specific nature of the inter-war German economic crisis, rather than agency. Similarly, most social scientists do not see charisma as a major factor in the revival of the contemporary extreme Right. Analyses mainly stress 'demand' rather than 'supply' factors, (even academics who stress the importance of charisma normally hold that demand is a necessary precondition). Arguably the five most important explanations of the revival of the extreme Right in the contemporary western European sphere have been: (i) the single issue (immigration) thesis; (ii) the protest (anti-Establishment) thesis; (iii) the social breakdown (anomie) thesis; (iv) the reverse post-material (a reaction to the 'new' politics of ecologism, feminism and so on) thesis; and (v) the economic interest (the losers in the process of modernisation) thesis. In the context of eastern Europe, the second, third and fifth factors tend to be stressed, together with the weak social implantation of the major parties (other than the communists or their successors, like the PDS in former East Germany).⁶

Moreover, there is a large body of social science thought which is critical of the concept of charisma. Indeed, some have even gone so far as to suggest removing the term from the historical-political science lexicon.⁷ In popular usage, 'charisma' has become a totally debased term, referring to little more than public personality: thus we live in an age characterised by 'charismatic' film stars such as Julia Roberts, soccer stars such as David Beckham and so on! Even social scientists, and especially historians, rarely define the concept except by occasional passing references to Weber.⁸ As a result, apparently notably different types of leader are sometimes lumped together under the vague heading of 'charismatic'. This is not just an issue of comparing leaders from different social systems and times, such as Gandhi and Kennedy. Even within the contemporary European extreme Right there appear to be differences. For instance, what exactly does the ill-kept, and often garrulous, Bossi have in common with Fortuyn, who was well-dressed and who could construct a high level of rational discourse? Similarly, the image of the two classic charismatic fascist leaders was in many ways different. Hitler sought to portray a godlike persona – vide the opening scenes of *Triumph of the Will*,

Leni Riefenstaht's film of the 1934 Nuremberg rally. This was especially characteristic of his image after 1933, when he benefited from the charisma bestowed by the Chancellorship in a country where there was a widespread longing for a great leader. In contrast, while Mussolini was fond of posturing in military uniform, he was also happy to be photographed engaged in sports such as fencing or riding, and on the beach in swimming costume. He even appeared as a man of the people, working with peasants in the fields.

It could be argued that this argument glosses over similarities, and that it unduly focuses on the nature of the charismatic leader rather than the specific charismatic bond – namely its intensely affective nature. Certainly there has been a fashion recently to revive the view that fascism was a political religion, characterised by a highly emotional, intense and irrational following. Michael Burleigh has gone so far as to write that: 'Among committed [Nazi] believers, a mythic world of eternal spring, heroes, demons, fire and sword – in a word, the fantasy world of the nursery – displaced reality.'⁹ A charismatic leader is typically seen as a crucial part of engendering this emotional mass response. However, it is important to note that the evidence about the motives for fascist voting, especially outside Germany, is somewhat tenuous. Moreover, while there have been different interpretations of the motives for voting Nazi, many academic analyses stress protest and rational economic motives more than affective factors.¹⁰ Among activists and core members of the Nazi Party there appears to have been more of an affective Hitler factor. But even here other influences, including specific aspects of Nazi policy and local factors such as group membership and opinion leaders, seem to have been very important.¹¹

In this article I seek to examine charisma in the contemporary context, as this allows the use of extensive opinion poll and other information about the nature of the leader–follower bond.¹² Reversing the Weberian methodology, I follow this introduction with two synoptic case studies of the men who have arguably been the most-cited extreme Right leaders in Europe in recent years – namely Le Pen¹³ and Zhirinovksy.¹⁴ From the time of the first national electoral breakthrough in the 1984 Euro elections, Le Pen and his *Front National* (FN) have been the prototypical, consistently 'successful' extreme Right leader and party – a trend which culminated in Le Pen coming second in the first ballot of the 2002 presidential elections with almost 17 per cent of the vote (less than 3 points behind the leading candidate). Zhirinovsky's presidential scores have been less substantial, but his Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) achieved the most spectacular recent extreme Right national electoral leap forward, when it achieved almost a quarter of the vote in 1993 (making it the largest party in the popular vote). Moreover, there are good reasons to hypothesise that if charismatic leadership has existed in Europe in recent years, it is especially likely in these countries. Russia has been afflicted by various economic and political crises since the fall of Communism, which have led to parallels being made with the Weimar Republic. By West European standards, France too has had notable economic and political problems since the early 1980s, including

high unemployment and income differentials. Other factors which could be hypothesised as encouraging charismatic leadership include national traditions of ‘great’ leaders (Peter the Great, Lenin, Napoleon, de Gaulle and so on), and the institution of a directly elected, strong presidency in both countries.

In the concluding section, I focus on concept rather than developing systematic theory. I argue that Le Pen and Zhirinovsky can be considered *charismatic leaders*, as they exhibit what is the core Weberian defining trait of such leaders: namely a sense of mission. However, in terms of the *charismatic bond*, the classic Weberian conception of affective *mass charisma* has little relevance to the cases of Le Pen and Zhirinovsky. Nevertheless, it is possible to reconceptualise charisma so that it remains an important weapon in analytical political vocabulary. Some political leaders exert a strong affective *coterie charisma* over a relatively small band of supporters, who tend to form the basis of the movement’s organisation. Moreover, some voters come to view politics through the matrix of strong leaders, who become the *personification of party* (or of politics if they belong to no party). As such they offer a form of low-cost signalling to voters about policy, and tend to counter policy dissonance which often characterises more pluralistic parties. In other words, the support for such leaders – far from being based on purely affective motives – encompasses an important element of rational choice of key policies. Although the argument cannot be developed within the confines of this article, these conclusions raise major questions about the extent to which earlier extreme Right leaders, like Hitler, exerted such a Weberian mass-affective appeal.

Vladimir Zhirinovsky

Vladimir Zhirinovsky was born in 1946 at Alma-Ata in Kazakhstan. His father died before he was born and he was brought up in poverty by his mother and uncaring step-father. Although not a high-flying student academically, Zhirinovsky graduated from Moscow University in Oriental languages, subsequently adding a law degree. A variety of relatively unsuccessful career paths were followed, including a probable liaison with the KGB, before Zhirinovsky became a lawyer for the *Mir* publishing house in the 1980s.

Much remains unclear about Zhirinovsky’s early life. He was certainly never a member of the Communist Party (CPSU). What is clear is that by the late 1980s he was becoming increasingly politically active in the more liberalised climate introduced by Mikhail Gorbachev – and the CPSU was the target of many of his attacks. Zhirinovsky was also critical of specific policies, in particular the disastrous war in Afghanistan. In 1990, he was the key figure in setting up the Liberal Democratic Party, only the second officially-registered party in the USSR (after the CPSU). Zhirinovsky became the party’s president, calling the new group the

'first opposition party' in the USSR. The event attracted significant media attention, and Zhirinovsky began to emerge as a personality who specifically courted media attention.

Many have argued that this relatively privileged access to the media reflected continued KGB links, though some informed observers have rejected the charge.¹⁵ Certainly in the 1991 Russian presidential elections Zhirinovsky did not receive favourable treatment compared to the frontrunner, and scourge of the old CPSU, Boris Yeltsin. Zhirinovsky received only two-and-a-half hours of coverage on central television, compared to 24 hours for the favourite. Yeltsin duly won comfortably, but Zhirinovsky came a notable third with 7.8 per cent of the vote.

Zhirinovsky's campaign was characterised by a number of interesting features. One concerned his style. Whereas the typical Soviet politician had been long-winded and boring, Zhirinovsky was humorous and spoke in the first person. He claimed that he was the representative of 'ordinary common folk', and his propaganda was written in simple terms, often using binary oppositions. The trials of his early life often featured in speeches, though he said little about his father, whom some opponents claimed had been Jewish (Zhirinovsky famously retorted: 'My mother was a Russian while my father was a lawyer'). In general, his programme was vague, but specific promises included the implementation of strong measures against the growing criminal element, and a commitment to cut drastically the price of vodka! Zhirinovsky also exhibited an almost messianic commitment to halting the breakup of the USSR on ethnic lines, in favour of regional government which would be based on the Tsarist provinces. He argued that this would diminish the growing ethnic hostility that was accompanying the collapse of the Communist system.

Zhirinovsky's support appears to have been relatively broadly based socio-economically. However, he did especially well among those who feared the rapid economic changes which were taking place. This meant that his supporters could be found not simply among the least educated and skilled, but also among more élite groups in threatened sectors such as the military-defence estate.

After his 'success' in 1991, Zhirinovsky went on widespread tour, asking LDPR voters and others to tell him about local corruption and problems so he could denounce such criminals by name, and speak about other local issues. This in turn attracted local media coverage, an important factor as voters seem to trust the local media.¹⁶ By the end of 1992, Zhirinovsky claimed a membership for the LDPR approaching 100,000.¹⁷ The party's core members comprised two main groups. First, there was a group of acolytes who in some cases even called him 'the great leader' (*vozhd*).¹⁸ There was also a group of more dubious 'business' elements, who helped provide local organisation in some areas, for instance the Vologda Popular Movement. Certainly by this time, Zhirinovsky's party was relatively well funded, and the LDPR published a variety of printed propaganda, including newspapers such as *Pravda Zhirinovskogo* and *Sokol Zhirinovskogo*, which were sold at a low price or even given

away.

Zhirinovsky also attracted considerable media attention through a series of provocative statements concerning foreign policy. He opposed Operation Desert Storm, visiting Saddam Hussein in 1992. He also visited the German neo-fascist publisher and leader of the German People's Union (DVU), Gerhard Frey, and duly responded with throwaway remarks praising Hitler. More generally, there was a growing anti-Western rhetoric, including the claim that there was an Anglo-Saxon-Israeli plot against Russia. More menacingly, threats (including nuclear ones) were issued to peripheral states, including Japan and Turkey. In his semi-autobiographical *The Final Push to the South* (1993), Zhirinovsky clearly set out his vision of a new Russian empire that would extend even beyond the Tsarist one, reaching south to the Indian Ocean and taking Alaska back from the US. The book became a bestseller in the run-up to the December 1993 *Duma* elections.

In these elections, the pro-government parties received by far the most television coverage, but Zhirinovsky used his television opportunities well.¹⁹ Various 'experts' in mass manipulation also helped Zhirinovsky. However, some were eccentrics more than professionals, and Zhirinovsky's main assets were more his own personality and the way in which he dominated his party. Whereas the pro-government parties split their airtime between different leaders, all LDPR coverage focused on Zhirinovsky, who as a result received more coverage than any other personality. He was also helped by benign questioning, in part a continuation of Soviet traditions. On the state networks this may also have reflected the fact that he supported Yeltsin on constitutional reform, and was initially not perceived as a major threat electorally (polls in October gave the LDPR under 5 per cent of the vote). A last-minute anti-Zhirinovsky television broadcast sought to defuse his rapidly rising support, but this probably had the opposite effect by further disseminating his image and making his party's threat seem more credible.

Zhirinovksy described the LDPR as a 'centre right, moderate conservative party, standing on a patriotic platform', though he also talked of his party representing a 'third path' (he sometimes even talked of 'national socialism'). The latter description is in some ways more accurate, because his economic policies included an element of both marketisation and defence of the big state. Statism was in part linked to a campaign which targeted specific groups of potential supporters, including ones in peripheral areas such as the Far East, state employees such as teachers, doctors and military officers, and state beneficiaries such as pensioners and students. All were promised much higher wages or allowances. Unemployment would be abolished, not simply through higher state spending but also by bringing women back into the home (this was dressed up in language honouring women as the true centre of the family). Zhirinovsky claimed that this programme could be funded by cutting aid to countries in the 'near' and 'far' abroad, by stopping the privatisation of arms factories (to the benefit of the '*dem-nomenklatura*'), and engaging in an international campaign of military hardware sales.

Other groups specifically targeted included the religious, with Zhirinovsky promising to rebuild Orthodox churches (as part of his campaign to appeal to the religious he had earlier confirmed his marriage vows in church, with Le Pen among the guests).

The result was that the LDPR won 22.9 per cent of the list vote, coming first in 64 out of 87 regions contested – although it did much less well in the (equal number of) constituency seats. Whilst the LDPR had managed to establish local organisations in some areas, often tailoring campaigns to specific localities, it had neither the local roots of the reborn-Communists (KPRF) nor the influence and patronage of the government parties. A major motive in voting LDPR was undoubtedly protest.²⁰ A majority of Russians complained that their family income was not enough to live on, and almost two-thirds thought that the economic situation would get even worse. However, protesting is not necessarily inconsistent with choosing the LDPR on rational policy grounds. Although all the parties were nationalistic, the LDPR in December 1993 was arguably the most nationalist (helped by a ban on some parties after the parliamentary coup earlier in the year). This was no handicap in a country where almost two-thirds of voters agreed that ‘recent changes are turning us into a colony of the West’, and more than two-thirds agreed ‘there are parts of neighboring countries that really should belong to Russia’.²¹ Zhirinovsky’s success in late 1993 was to have used campaigning to broaden this core support, which mainly lay in working-class males under 40, to other groups, including those in small peripheral towns, the young, older voters and even women.²² These voters had a particularly low trust in political institutions and leaders, but a high degree of identification with Zhirinovsky.

In the 1995 *Duma* elections, Zhirinovsky fought a campaign which was in many ways a rerun of 1993 in terms of themes, while the style became even more outlandish. Stunts included producing his own brand of beer and vodka (complete with portrait on the labels), and throwing a glass of orange juice over the governor of Novgorod on a popular television show. Sexual allusions, which had been a feature of the 1993 campaign, figured even more prominently. One television advertisement showed a couple watching television in bed and turning sleepily away after seeing Leonid Brezhnev and Gorbachev, but saying ‘Now, this is good’ after seeing Zhirinovsky and starting to make love! In another advert, Zhirinovsky appeared on stage with an erotic stripper who told him: ‘Spank me, I want a man who will spank me!’ However, in general media coverage was much less favourable to Zhirinovsky than in 1993. The state-controlled media favoured the governing parties, while independents tended to favour the reform parties or the KPRF. On the main television channel (ORT), 30 per cent of news coverage during the election went to the main government party compared to four per cent for the LDPR.²³ When the votes were counted, the LDPR had come second, but it took only 11.1 per cent of the vote. Much of its 1993 vote appears to have gone to the Communists, whose leader, Gennady Zyuganov, was the antithesis of charismatic, and who bought very little television time.²⁴ However, his strongly nationalistic line further competed

with the LDPR's, and the KPRF's more clearly oppositionist stance to Yeltsin helped it to capitalise on discontent (in spite of Zhirinovsky's rhetoric, in parliament he had often supported Yeltsin, which reduced his appeal as an anti-Establishment figure). The LDPR had also been weakened after 1993 by various splits over personality and policy.

The 1996 presidential elections proved even more of a disappointment for Zhirinovsky, who came sixth with 5.8 per cent of the vote. For much of the period after 1992, Yeltsin had lost his appeal as the man who had played the crucial role in overthrowing Communism. Indeed, he appeared an electoral lost cause as discontent (and rumours of his drinking) grew. However, in 1996 Yeltsin skillfully manipulated fears of a Communist comeback, which brought many of the independent media owners into line, portraying the election as a battle between democracy and renewed Communist dictatorship. Polls show that Yeltsin was not liked, but he was seen as a safer choice than Zyuganov. The media largely ignored Zhirinovsky, or pilloried him. His retort that the media were dominated by Jews did not stem the rot. Zhirinovsky appears to have become increasingly viewed as at best a buffoon, and at worst as dangerous. Of the candidates who gained over 5 per cent of the vote in these elections, he had the highest zero opinion poll 'thermometer' reading (where zero indicates intense dislike). Forty-three per cent of respondents ranked him at this level. The next was Zyuganov at 24 per cent.²⁵

In the 2000 presidential elections, Zhirinovsky's support fell even further, winning just 2.7 per cent of the vote in a contest which Vladimir Putin won outright on the first ballot. Although Putin had been virtually unknown shortly before and his programme was unclear, he benefited from an aura of youthful technocratic efficiency, improvements in the economy, the apparently victorious Chechen war, and the fact that he had held both the office of Prime Minister and acting President after Yeltsin's sudden resignation in December 1999. In a country where parties were neither firmly implanted nor popular, Putin also benefited from not being a member of a party. Indeed, he chose not to campaign directly (the pro-Putin 'party', Unity, which emerged in 2000 denied that it was a party, claiming that it was simply an association of people fed up with seeing others decide their fate!). However, his office(s) and manipulation of the state media, which polls showed were particularly trusted, meant that he was rarely off television screens.

The sample size for analysing Zhirinovsky's vote in 2000 is dangerously low, but polls and focus groups do provide interesting information about his support.²⁶ Zhirinovsky's supporters were the most likely to be willing to delegate power to the leader (74 per cent), but this does not prove that they were authoritarians seeking a dictatorial leader as the vast majority also held that elections were the only way of legitimating power. Asked why they had supported Zhirinovsky, the highest percentage stressed programme (38 per cent), with his sense of mission second (35 per cent), and his powers of persuasion third (32 per cent). Focus groups showed that his supporters were especially well-informed about his policies, though many specifically referred to his 'charismatic' (*kharizmaticheskii*) appeal – a term not used for any

other Russian leaders in these focus groups. Long after Zhirinovsky had passed his sell-by date for most Russians, he retained the aura of an extraordinary leader among a minority.

Jean-Marie Le Pen

Jean-Marie Le Pen was born in 1928 at La Trinité sur Mer in Brittany. His father was a fisherman, who died in the war when his boat hit a mine. Le Pen became active in nationalist politics while a student in Paris, and in 1956 he was elected to the Chamber of Deputies as a Poujadist. Rejecting the sedentary life, he returned to the army, fighting in Algeria (accusations of employing torture there were later regularly to dog him). By the 1960s, he had lost his parliamentary seat, but he remained active in extremist politics. In 1972, he became leader of the newly formed *Front National*, as he was broadly acceptable to its different constituent groups (neo-fascists, nostalgics for Vichy or *Algérie française*, fundamentalist Catholics and so on), who came together in the hope that the party could lead the extreme Right out of the electoral wilderness. However, in the 1974 presidential elections, Le Pen won a mere 0.7 per cent of the vote. Seven years later he could not achieve the 500 signatures necessary to stand for the presidency, while in the ensuing 1981 legislative elections the FN won less than 0.3 per cent of the vote.

The FN made its first national breakthrough in the 1984 elections to the European Parliament, gaining 11 per cent of the vote (which meant that Le Pen, first on the party list, was elected an MEP). There was no strong socio-economic bias in the FN's new-found electorate, though it was primarily male, older rather than younger and middle rather than working class. Politically, FN voters were mainly converts from the mainstream Right parties, but almost a quarter had voted for the Left in 1981. However, outside a group of hard-core extreme Right voters, most FN supporters were not especially interested in politics. Forty-nine per cent stated that they were only a 'little' interested, 22 per cent 'very little' and 6 per cent 'not at all'. Almost one-fifth of FN supporters had not voted in 1981.²⁷

One reason for the FN's leap forward concerns media coverage. Until 1982 the national media, especially the state-dominated television, had largely shunned the FN. In 1982, President François Mitterrand appears to have ordered that Le Pen should be given airtime – almost certainly in an attempt to weaken the mainstream Right, which was rapidly regrouping as the new socialist-communist administration's reflationary-statist policies ran aground.²⁸ Polls showed that after Le Pen's appearance on *L'heure de la vérité* in early 1984, the FN's ratings doubled from 3.5 to 7 per cent.²⁹ Evidence of high levels of interest among viewers helped gain more invitations. Le Pen had become a personality, the public face of the FN.

As well as appearances on television programmes, Le Pen's speaking abilities meant that he

attracted increasing coverage on news programmes too. He deftly combined the image of the visionary who had made a long crossing of the desert to save France, with that of an ordinary man of the people (in a famous aphorism, he claimed: ‘I only say out loud what other people are thinking’).³⁰ He called for military preparedness to resist Communism, more free market policies to help restore the economy, and more social discipline to fight decadence (including the criminalisation of homosexuality and abortion, which he portrayed as a form of white genocide). His most recurring theme was immigration, which was often linked to rising unemployment and the threat to French social values. At times the tone was crudely racist. At one meeting in 1984, Le Pen told his audience that he was ‘the unspeakable beast who had risen’ to lead the resistance against an immigrant invasion. At another he warned that: ‘Tomorrow, immigrants will … eat your soup and they will sleep with your wife, your daughter and your son.’ However, at other times, he showed that he was aware of *Nouvelle Droite* ‘differentialist’ arguments, which sought to legitimise a new language of exclusion by stressing the importance of defending traditional cultures and the ‘naturalness’ of communities.³¹ Le Pen also cleverly exploited the traditional French assimilationist attitude towards immigration, which held that new arrivals should immerse themselves in French culture: Le Pen portrayed Muslims, in particular, as unwilling to assimilate.

Nevertheless, it is important not to overstate the importance of Le Pen and his discourse, and more generally of media coverage (which often remained hostile, while the FN’s own press remained low circulation). Prior to the 1984 European elections, the FN had made a breakthrough in the small town of Dreux. Since the late 1970s, Jean-Pierre Stirbois and his wife had been building up FN organisation in the town, in particular by exploiting anti-immigrant sentiment and targeting appeals to different political and social groups. In local elections in 1983, the FN won almost 17 per cent of the vote, enough to persuade the mainstream Gaullist and Giscardien parties (RPR and UDF) to form an alliance with the FN, giving it seats on the council.³² Dreux underlines the importance not just of the immigration issue, but also of good party organisation and of legitimisation by other parties. Although in general the mainstream parties were to shun direct contact with the FN, at times they undoubtedly helped set an anti-immigrant agenda. Nor was this simply a feature of the Right. Indeed, in the early 1980s at the local level it was often French Communists (the PCF) who were in the van.³³

An interesting study of FN *cadres* reveals that Le Pen’s leadership was viewed as only the second most important factor in the party’s breakthrough: 35.7 per cent (compared to 32.1 per cent) cited the election system as the more important facilitator.³⁴ Certainly, the introduction of a national list system for the 1984 European elections eliminated the wasted vote syndrome which afflicts small parties in majoritarian electoral systems, (the fact that it was a second order election also encouraged voting for minor parties). Moreover, for the 1986 legislative elections Mitterrand ordered a change to regional lists. Although the FN vote slipped back to

9.7 per cent, this was almost certainly more than it would have won under the previous two-ballot single-member system. The change also resulted in 35 FN deputies being elected (after the system was changed back to the old one in 1988, higher FN votes typically led to no deputies being elected). These developments in turn helped attract local notables to the party and an influx of funds, which further contributed to the growth of organisation (spearheaded by Stirbois). Whereas the party in 1983 claimed only 10,000 members, by the end of the decade it was claiming a figure approaching ten times this.

In late 1987, the FN slumped in opinion polls after Le Pen referred on radio to the Holocaust as a ‘detail’ of history. This heightened fears that – while appearing to accept democracy – the FN, in reality, harboured dangerous extremists. The fall also seemed to confirm the view of many analysts who saw the FN surge in the mid-1980s as a form of flash movement, reflecting a temporary protest – like the Poujadists in the mid-1950s.

However, the 1988 presidential elections offered Le Pen an opportunity to bounce back. For the first time, all candidates were given equal time on state television channels. But apart from this free time, Le Pen was largely marginalised by the national media (though his extensive travels to speak at meetings received widespread local press coverage). The main media attention focused on the two favourites for the second round, Mitterrand (who after the onset of cohabitation in 1986 adopted an almost above-politics appeal) and the Gaullist leader, Jacques Chirac (whose rhetoric on immigration and related themes was clearly influenced by Le Pen).³⁵ Le Pen responded by campaigning as an outsider. One campaign poster pictured him in front of a horse race, and actually used the word ‘outsider’. His rhetoric was highly hostile to the mainstream parties (whom he referred to as the ‘gang of four’). Immigration and related themes again figured prominently. The general tone was bruising, with Le Pen sometimes appearing in combat fatigues. However, he also targeted specific groups of voters, for example middle-aged women; a campaign picture was taken in the style of 1950s film stars, complete with signed personal message in the corner.

When the votes were counted, Le Pen emerged with 14.4 per cent of the vote. Although there was an undoubtedly protest element in this, it is clear that many voters chose the FN for policy reasons. As well as concern about immigration and related issues, Le Pen voters were characterised by high levels of fear about economic issues (although they were not an especially underprivileged group).³⁶ They were also characterised by relatively high levels of social isolation and distrust.

The 1995 presidential elections, in which Le Pen won 15.5 per cent of the vote, confirmed the importance of policy in voting for the FN. Sixty per cent of FN voters specifically said that they voted for Le Pen because of the party’s programme (the highest of all the first round candidates). Immigration remained important, but Le Pen put more stress on other issues than in 1988.³⁷ In 1988, FN voters had listed as their top three concerns immigration, law and order, and unemployment (59–55–41 per cent respectively). But by 1995 unemployment was the

number one issue (mentioned by 73 per cent). Growing signs of anti-European Union sentiment encouraged Le Pen to attack the EU for causing unemployment, (deploying his usually colourful language he also damned the ‘fédérastes’ threat to national identity and interests). Economic policies, such as the importance of ‘national preference’ featured more. There was also a movement from the more free market views of the early 1980s and self-depiction as a party of the ‘national Right’, toward anti-globalisation and a ‘neither Left nor Right’ rhetoric. This was in part clearly intended to target former Left voters, or young voters who previously would have voted Left. The strategy was successful, with 30 per cent of the working class voting for Le Pen in 1995, compared to 19 per cent in 1988. One leading commentator on the FN even began to talk of ‘gaúcho-lepénisme’.³⁸

In spite of the record FN vote in 1995, there was growing evidence that Le Pen was a hindrance to further party progress. Some within the party viewed him as having a special mission, and even referred to him in terms of ‘charisma’.³⁹ At the annual *Bleu, Blanc, Rouge* party-festival, bottles of wine bearing Le Pen’s face sold well. But among Le Pen voters in 1995, his thermometer rating at 24 degrees was below that of all the other candidates – and 45 per cent of voters rated him an ice-cold zero! During the 1997 legislative elections, Le Pen committed other gaffes, including assaulting a Socialist female candidate. By 1998 the party’s number two, Bruno Mégret, clearly had ambitions to secure the leadership, holding that support had plateaued around 15 per cent and that an understanding with the mainstream Right was necessary for further progress. Le Pen responded by trying to marginalise Mégret, and the party split, with the latter forming a new group entitled the *Mouvement National Républicain* (MNR). This attracted about two-thirds of the party cadres, but in the 1999 elections to the European Parliament the MNR took a mere 3.3 per cent of the vote, while the FN won 5.7 per cent. Mégret’s party seems to have been harmed not only by his lacklustre personality, but also by his confused strategy, which meant that he often combined his own extreme views with an appeal to the Centre-Right!

For the 2002 presidential elections, both Le Pen and Mégret announced that they would stand. Polls at the turn of the year showed that the combined support for the two parties was down on the FN’s 1995 tally, though the FN had widened its lead over the upstart. Mégret had failed not only to inspire voters, but even many of his activists returned to the Le Pen fold as the presidentials approached (Le Pen specifically courted both MNR cadres and voters by using the wasted vote argument). Le Pen’s policies in general were relatively similar to 1995. He told voters: ‘Economically I’m on the Right, socially on the Left and nationally I’m for France’. But in terms of tone, Le Pen was even more restrained than in 1995 – more ‘presidentiable’ – as his media advisers sought to smooth the rough edges. Even so, the media still largely ignored him – partly because 16 candidates were to run on the first ballot and there were interesting other non-mainstream candidates, such as the Trotskyite Arlette Laguiller. Most attention focused on the two apparent front-runners, President Chirac and

Socialist Prime Minister Lionel Jospin. In the period 1 January–15 March 2002 they received on television news and information programmes 4 hours and 47 minutes and 4 hours and 16 minutes respectively, compared to Le Pen's 47 minutes.

By this time, polls were picking up that Le Pen's support was rising, but the result of the first ballot in 2002 was an undoubted shock. Le Pen had come second with 16.9 per cent of the vote, less than three per cent behind Chirac. It is important to note that there was a record low turnout, and Le Pen only won 250,000 votes more than in 1995. However, Mégret also won 2.3 per cent of the vote, so the extreme Right camp in general had extended its support. The key issue was growing concern with law and order. A SOFRES poll shortly before the election showed that this was mentioned as the most important issue by 64 per cent, with unemployment in second place at 58 per cent (immigration was in eighth place at 23 per cent). Crime was rising, and after 11 September there were heightened fears about Muslims in France. Chirac had also hyped the issue, believing that Jospin was weak on this. But as President since 1995, he could hardly avoid blame too, and polls showed that many voters thought Le Pen had the best policies. The importance of programme is born out by another SOFRES poll which asked people on what criteria they would choose their candidate. In first place came programme with 62 per cent, whereas personality ranked fifth at 29 per cent. Nevertheless, it is important not to dismiss Le Pen's role entirely. One of the key groups in which the FN had made gains since the mid-1980s was among voters who did not align themselves closely with Left or Right, and who tended to have low levels of interest in politics ('*le marais*'). SOFRES work indicates that this group rose from 19 to 22 per cent of the electorate between 1981 and 1991, and by 2001 had reached 31 per cent. In 2002, it was especially among this group that IPSOS found 41 per cent of electors shortly before polling day who had not decided how to vote. Other work indicates that it was especially among this type of voter that strong leaders exert appeal.

An interesting postscript relates to the second ballot. Le Pen went down to a crushing defeat, receiving just over 19 per cent of the vote – exactly the same number who told pollsters that they often found themselves in agreement with the policies of the FN.

Reconceptualising charisma

The two aspects of Weber's conceptualisation of charisma noted at the outset of this article which are relevant to Le Pen and Zhirinovsky concern the charismatic leader and the charismatic bond. To what extent do these cases correspond to the ideal types?

For Weber, the most crucial trait of the charismatic leader was the special sense of mission to save the nation or relevant group. Should Le Pen and Zhirinovsky be seen as having such a

messianic goal? It could be argued that term ‘charismatic’ should be reserved for leaders like Hitler, who by 1924 at the latest believed that he was the *Führer* sent to save Germany, a man of destiny and exceptional talents. Le Pen and Zhirinovsky have, in general, sought a more populist appeal. Their image has been more that of everyman than superman. However, it is important to reiterate that Hitler’s godlike image was developed mainly after acquiring office. Beforehand, he projected himself as a complex mix of the ordinary man-of-the-trenches, tinged with allusions to being the longed-for great leader. Even in his first speech to the German people after becoming Chancellor (broadcast from Berlin’s *Sportpalast* on 19 February 1933), Hitler began with a populist greeting to his German ‘racial comrades’ (*Volksgenossen*), and then reminded his audience that in 1918 he was a simple solider along with millions of others. Shortly afterwards at the official opening of the Reichstag in the symbol-laden Potsdam *Garrisonkirche*, Hitler reverently played second fiddle to the ageing Reich President, Field Marshall Hindenburg. Although the balance is different, Le Pen and Zhirinovsky have similarly combined both man-of-the-people with messianic leader images.

But image is not the same as reality, nor is charisma necessarily a spontaneous phenomenon. Hitler, for instance, practised rhetorical gestures before his court photographer, Heinrich Hoffmann, and Josef Goebbels was in many ways a prototypical spin doctor, who worked from the late 1920s to develop the Hitler cult (though for Goebbels, this was a labour of love rather than mere professionalism). Today we live in a world of ubiquitous spin, in which even a sense of mission can be created for a politician who is in many ways pragmatic (especially in moments of crisis, as Yeltsin demonstrated in the early 1990s). As a result, some academics have suggested that in most contemporary cases it is more accurate to talk of pseudo-charisma.⁴⁰ The term has merit if the point is to highlight a ‘charismatic’ leader who is largely devoid of true goals other than personal aggrandisement. A case could be made that Zhirinovsky might fit this bill, but it is possible to counter that his views since the 1980s at least have consistently focused on the resurrection of a Greater Russia. The ascription ‘pseudo’ would seem much less appropriate for Le Pen who, while using image advisers in recent years, has been passionately involved from an early age in seeking to revive the French extreme Right. On balance, therefore, it seems reasonable to conclude that both can be termed ‘charismatic leaders’ in a Weberian sense.

Ultimately, the issue of whether a leader is driven by a true sense of mission, or rather creates the image of having one, is irrelevant to what Weber considered to be the main aspect of charisma – namely the leader–follower bond. One of Weber’s most noted recent social science disciples, Ruth Wilner, lists four archetypal traits which characterise this bond:

1. The leader is perceived to be somehow superhuman.
2. The followers blindly believe the leader’s statements.
3. There is an unconditional compliance with the leader’s will (even at the expense of

personal sacrifice).

4. The followers give strong emotional support to the leader (a commitment more typical of religions).⁴¹

On the basis of the evidence presented above, it seems clear that the vast majority of both Le Pen's and Zhirinovsky's supporters have exhibited nothing like such traits. There are differences of opinion among interpreters about the exact balance of factors such as the appeal of emotion, interest, policy and protest. But there is widespread agreement that most support was not essentially affective, and that most voters were not seeking some form of radical change in socio-economic and political arrangements (though Zhirinovsky's supporters were in general unhappy with the post-Communist new economic order).

As noted in the introduction, the vast majority of the academic literature on the rise of the extreme Right tends to stress the demand rather than supply side factors. In my opinion, this is a mistake, for the demand side tells us more about the social preconditions than the factors which specifically trigger the tendency of extreme Right parties to make sudden electoral take-offs (as the FN did nationally in 1984 and the LDPR in 1993, or the Nazis in 1930). In order to understand such take-offs, it is necessary to look at a variety of supply side factors, including political opportunity structures, encompassing élite actions and institutional arrangements. It is also important to look at the programmes and organisation of the insurgent extreme Right party – and the nature of their leadership.⁴² Indeed, I want to conclude that there has been a charismatic bond between Le Pen and Zhirinovsky and their supporters in two important senses. In one sense, this involves a major modification of Weber. In the other, it is necessary to break with Weber.

First, whilst both Zhirinovsky and Le Pen failed to attract mass charisma, they unquestionably attracted significant *coterie charisma*. In other words, they attracted a hardcore of supporters both in their inner courts and more locally who held that a special mission drove the leader, and who accorded this leader great loyalty and were willing to make special efforts on behalf of the cause. Many of Zhirinovsky's closest colleagues and core supporters have seen him as the great leader, even termed him 'charismatic'. There is evidence that Le Pen, too, has been seen by some colleagues and core supporters in similar terms. Such supporters are especially important in terms of issues such as holding a party together when there are little or no spoils to distribute, and in terms of building national and local organisation.

My second point relates to the way in which Le Pen and Zhirinovsky are more than just examples of the general personalisation of politics which has taken place, especially at election times. They are archetypal examples of the *personification of party*. While using the term charisma to refer to the first clearly involves excessive conceptual stretching,⁴³ I want to argue that it is reasonable to use it in cases where many voters come to see parties (like the FN or

LDPR) through a matrix of their leaders. Here the issue is not so much whether leaders are viewed in terms of having a great mission, as whether they have the ability to project themselves, typically through the media, as the embodiment of the party/politics. Le Pen and Zhirinovsky managed to achieve this for some voters, and this mattered in at least two important ways. First, they offered a low-cost form of signalling, which helped send key policy messages to potential supporters. One of the most striking things about the poll evidence for both leaders is that many voters are clearly attracted by policy, in spite of the fact that many appear to be among the voters least interested in politics and socially most isolated (thus lacking strong signals from the influences which have traditionally conditioned voting, such as class and religion). Second, by becoming the epitome of their parties they helped to overcome the dissonance which might have been created by the market segmentation politics which both leaders pursued. The Weberian conception of charisma implies a leader dominated by a single mission, but Le Pen and Zhirinovsky both went out of their way to target appeals at different sectors of the electorate. To some extent this even involved potentially contradictory discourses (for example, Le Pen's evocation of Vichyite themes with his attempt to court left-wing voters). Dissonance was partly resolved by developing these discourses most fully through coteries at the local level. But many individual voters, by perceiving politics through the medium of the national leader, appear to have used a form of cognitive dissonance to homogenise their party image in a way which would have been much less likely had their primary focus been on policies, and the party in general.

This raises an important postscript about the extent to which the classic fascist dictators should be seen as 'charismatic', especially in the period before achieving power. Hitler undoubtedly exerted a greater affective appeal than Le Pen or Zhirinovsky have ever done, not least within his inner court, which remained remarkably loyal until near the end. But as noted earlier, there is strong evidence that the Nazis attracted support for protest and policy reasons too, including the attractiveness of Nazi economic policies (especially after 1928 when more attention was paid to developing sector-specific as well as general national policies). Fascist support explanations which stress charisma also feature a binary approach which focuses on macro (societal) or micro (individual) factors. However, local and group (meso) perspectives are also crucial to understanding classic fascist support (as they are for the FN and LDPR).⁴⁴ For example, in Schleswig-Holstein, the only region where the Nazis gained over 50 per cent of the vote prior to 1933, voting appears to have been highly influenced by support from local notables. Conversely opposition within strong networks (especially Catholic and working-class) limited Nazi advances. Even among those who were personally attracted by Hitler, it is far from clear that the relationship was essentially affective rather than a form of more rational choice based on factors such as low-cost signalling. Certainly the Nazis were often known as the 'Hitler party', and there is evidence that the Nazis (like the FN and LDPR) exerted a strong appeal to those who were not especially interested in politics, including

people who had previously been non-voters.

Clearly these last points raise vast issues, especially if the focus moves to classic fascist support in general. Moreover, it is important not to assume that lessons from contemporary France or Russia are necessarily applicable to the inter-war years, (though arguably the main difference between post-Communist Russia and Weimar Germany concerns the prevalence of international democratic norms, which is more relevant to élite than mass behaviour). It is also important to underline that the contemporary scene has only been analysed in this article through two relatively brief case studies. Nevertheless, I hold that this article does provide good evidence for two broad conclusions:

1. That the Weberian conception of a mass affective bond with the charismatic leader has little relevance to politics in twentieth- and twenty-first-century European societies.
2. However, the concept of charisma remains a useful tool in the historians' and social scientists' armoury if we focus on coterie rather than mass affective charisma, and the way in which some leaders become the personification of politics, which helps send clear policy signals to some voters.

Notes

¹ See especially S.N. Eisenstadt, *Max Weber on Charisma and Institution Building* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968).

² Among the most notable books seeking to expand on charisma are C. Lindholm, *Charisma* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990); D. Rustow (ed.), *Philosophers and Kings: Studies in Leadership* (New York: George Braziller, 1970), esp. the chapter by R.C. Tucker, 'The Theory of Charismatic Leadership', pp.69–94; A. Schweitzer, *The Age of Charisma* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1984); and A.R. Wilner, *The Spellbinders: Charismatic Political Leadership* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984).

³ This article does not discuss the issue of party-family terminology, and adopts the term 'extreme Right' simply as a convenient shorthand for leaders and parties which have variously been termed 'fascist', 'extreme Right', 'radical Right' and 'populist'. On defining fascism, see R. Eatwell, 'On Defining the "Fascist Minimum": The Centrality of Ideology', *Journal of Political Ideologies* 1/3 (1996), pp.303–19; on defining the extreme/radical Right, see C. Mudde, 'The War of the Words: Defining the Extreme Right Party Family', *West European Politics* 19/2 (1996), pp.225–48; on defining populism, see P. Taggart, 'New Populist Parties in Western Europe', *West European Politics* 18/1 (1995), pp.34–51.

⁴ I. Kershaw, *Hitler, 1889–1936: Hubris* (London: Allen Lane, 1998), esp. p.viii; and E. Gentile, 'Mussolini's Charisma', *Modern Italy* 3/2 (1998), pp.219–35.

⁵ H.-G. Betz and S. Immerfall (eds.), *The New Politics of the Right* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), esp. p.9; and H. Kitschelt,

'Formation of Party Cleavages in Post-Communist Democracies', *Party Politics* 1/4 (1995), pp.447–72.

6 See R. Eatwell, 'Theorizing the Revival of the European Extreme Right: The Importance of the Three Dimensional Approach', in P. Merkl and L. Weinberg (eds.), *The Revival of Right-Wing Extremism* (London: Frank Cass, 2003).

7 For instance, W. Spinrad, 'Charisma: A Blighted Concept and an Alternative Formula', *Political Science Quarterly* 106/2 (1991), pp.295–311.

8 Kershaw is a rare example of an historian who has sought to elaborate on charisma. See especially I. Kershaw, *The 'Hitler Myth'* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), esp. pp.8–10.

9 M. Burleigh, *The Third Reich: A New History* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), pp.8–9.

10 For an extreme form of economicistic interpretation, see the 'rational choice' analysis of the American sociologist, W. Brustein, *The Logic of Evil* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996). A good recent example of more mainstream historical writing on Nazi voting is C. Fischer, *The Rise of National Socialism and the Working Classes in Weimar Germany* (Oxford: Berghahn, 1996).

11 See especially, P.H. Merkl, *Political Violence under the Swastika* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975).

12 The analysis of the 2000 Russian presidential elections relies in part on polls and focus groups specially commissioned to study charisma from the Moscow State University. I am grateful to the European Union (INTAS Project No.99-00245) and the British Academy for sponsoring this project, of which I was Coordinator (the study also covered Belarus and the Ukraine). On this project, see R. Eatwell, 'The Rebirth of Charisma? Concepts, Theories and the Problem of Operationalisation', *Sociologicheskiye Issledovaniya [Sociological Studies]*, Moscow (forthcoming 2002). Analysis of the 2002 French presidential elections relies in part on polls available through the Internet from three of the main French polling agencies, IFOP, IPSOS and SOFRES (<http://www.ifop.fr>, <http://www.ipsofrance.com>, and <http://www.sofres.com>). I am also grateful to the British Academy for three smaller grants to work on the extreme Right in France.

13 For instance, P. Hainsworth, *The Politics of the Extreme Right* (London: Pinter, 2000), esp. p. 18; N. Mayer, *Ces Français qui Votent FN* (Paris: Flammarion, 1999), esp. p.24f.; and M. Vaughan, 'The Extreme Right in France: "Lepenisme" or the Politics of Fear', in L. Cheles *et al.* (eds.), *Neo-Fascism in Europe* (Harlow: Longman, 1991), esp. p.226.

14 For instance, S.E. Hanson, 'Ideology, Uncertainty and the Rise of Anti-System Parties in Post-Soviet Russia', in J. Löwenhardt (ed.), *Party Politics in Post-Communist Russia* (London: Frank Cass, 1999), esp. p.103; V. Solovyov and E. Klepikova, *Zhirinovsky: The Paradoxes of Russian Fascism* (London: Viking, 1995), esp. p.xii; Vera Tolz, 'The Radical Right in Post-Communist Russian Politics', in P. Merkl and L. Weinberg (eds.), *The Revival of Right-Wing Extremism in the Nineties* (London: Frank Cass, 1997), esp. p.187.

15 For example, V. Kartsev, *!Zhirinovsky!* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), esp. p.59.

16 D.S. Hutcheson, 'Parties in Putin's Russia: The View from the Volga', BASEES (British Association for Slavonic and East European Studies) paper 2002, p. 14.

17 R. Sakwa, 'The Russian Elections of December 1993', *Europe-Asia Studies* 47/2 (1995), pp. 195–227.

[18](#) Solovyov and Klepikova (note 14), esp. p.21.

[19](#) P. Lentini (ed.), *Elections and Political Order in Russia* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1995), p.97ff.

[20](#) S. White, R. Rose and I. McAllister, *How Russia Votes* (Chatham, NJ: Chatham House, 1997), esp. p.xvii.

[21](#) B. Miller, S. White, P. Heywood and M. Wyman, *Zhirinovsky Voters*, Press Release 5, Glasgow University, 1994, ts.

[22](#) M. Wyman, S. White, B. Miller and P. Heywood, 'Public Opinion, Parties and Voters in the December 1993 Russian Elections', *Europe-Asia Studies* 47/4 (1995), pp.591–614.

[23](#) L. Belin and R.W. Orttung, *The Russian Parliamentary Elections of 1995* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1997), esp. p. 102.

[24](#) White *et al.* (note 20), p.214.

[25](#) T.J. Colton, 'The Leadership Factor in the Russian Presidential Election of 1996', in A. King (ed.), *Leaders' Personalities and the Outcomes of Democratic Elections* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p.190.

[26](#) C. Lawson and H. White, 'Images of Leadership in Ukraine and Russia: Preliminary Findings', BASEES paper, 2002.

[27](#) E. Plenel and A. Rollat, *L'effet Le Pen* (Paris: La Découverte/Le Monde, 1986), p.121ff.

[28](#) F. Gerber, *El la presse créa Le Pen* (Paris: R. Castells, 1998), esp. p.27.

[29](#) SOFRES, *Opinion publique 1985* (Paris: Gallimard, 1985), p.200.

[30](#) See his semi-autobiographical *Les Français d'abord* (Paris: Carrère, 1984).

[31](#) P-A. Taguieff, 'La stratégic culturelle de la nouvelle droite en France (1968–1983)', in R. Badinter (ed.), *Vous avez dites fascismes?* (Paris: Montalba, 1984).

[32](#) J.-P. Roy, *Le Front National en région centre, 1984–1992* (Paris: Harmattan, 1993); and E. Gaspard, *A Small City in France* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995).

[33](#) On legitimization, see M. Schain, 'Immigration and Changes in the French Party System', *European Journal of Political Research* 16/6 (1988), pp.597–621.

[34](#) E.G. Declar, *Politics on the Fringe: The People, Policies and Organization of the French National Front* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999), p.71ff.

[35](#) J. Gaffney (ed.), *The French Presidential Election of 1988* (Aldershot: Dartmouth, 1989).

[36](#) N. Mayer, 'The National Front and Right-Wing Extremism, 1988–1995', *Research on Democracy and Society* 3 (1996), pp. 197–222.

[37](#) J. Gaffney and L. Milne (eds.), *French Presidentialism and the Election of 1995* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997).

[38](#) See especially P. Perrineau, *Le Symptôme Le Pen: Radiographie des électeurs du Front National* (Paris: Fayard, 1997).

[39](#) See specially Declar (note 34), p.215; see also Mayer (note 18), pp.170–1.

[40](#) For example, J. Bensman and M. Givant, 'Charisma and Modernity', in R.M. Glassman and W.H. Swatos, Jr. (eds.), *Charisma, History and Social Structure* (New York: Greenwood, 1986), p.55.

41 Wilner (note 2), p.8ff.

42 Eatwell (note 6).

43 G. Sartori, 'Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics', *American Political Science Review* 64/4 (1970), pp.1033–53.

44 On the often-neglected meso dimension, see also R. Eatwell, 'Towards a New Model of the Rise of Right-Wing Extremism', *German Politics* 6/3 (December 1997), pp. 166–84; and R. Eatwell, 'The Dynamics of Right-Wing Electoral Breakthrough', *Patterns of Prejudice* 32/3 (1998), pp.3–31.

13

Extreme right activists

Recruitment and experiences

Bert Klandermans

Between 1995 and 1999 we conducted life-history interviews with 157 activists of extreme right organizations in Flanders (Belgium), France, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands. Based on these interviews I try to answer the following questions: How did these activists become involved in the extreme right and how did it change their lives?¹ During the 1990s, when we conducted our interviews, the shape of right-wing extremism (RWE) in the five countries differed: it was marginal and dispersed in Germany and the Netherlands, and sizeable and united in Flanders, France, and Italy. Moreover, in Germany and the Netherlands RWE was associated with the dark era of National Socialism, while in France, Flanders, and Italy it was rooted in a ‘heroic’ nationalist past. As a consequence, affiliating with RWE meant different trajectories and had different consequences in these countries. This chapter begins with a comparison of RWE in the five countries at the time of our interviews. In the sections that follow I will compare patterns of recruitment into activism and the experience of activism, respectively. Recruitment patterns appear to differ contingent on the state of RWE in the various countries. The same held for the experience of being an active member of an extreme right organization, as demonstrated by a discussion of stigmatization.

Five countries: five times extreme right

Legacies from the past

In each of the five countries, today’s right-wing extremism is linked with the past, but the structures that support the extreme right in the various countries and shaped its trajectory are quite different. Links with the past appear to be an ambivalent asset. On the one side,

abeyance structures provided contemporary RWE with connections to former movements, a reservoir of experienced activists, ready-made action repertoires, and ideological interpretation frames on which to lean. On the other hand, links with Nazism and fascism are essentially de-legitimizing. RWE movements are better off when they can rely on a more diversified set of abeyance structures, as is the case in Flanders, because of the pre-existing nationalist movement, and in France, with its two centuries-old tradition of reactionary and revolutionary right. Italy is yet another case. *Alleanza Nazionale* (AN) is the direct heir of fascism and has built on the existing networks ever since the war, but Italian fascism was perceived as a lesser evil than Nazism, especially in the south, its traditional strongholds. In northern Italy a two year-long bloody civil war (1943–45) opposing partisans to the fascist Republic of Salò strongly rooted anti-fascism in the region. In the south fascism had a better image, associated with public works and social integration. There was no civil war and the ‘liberation war’ ended two years earlier than in the north. Moreover, AN is now offering the image of a democratic ‘post-fascist’ right-wing party and has marginalized the nostalgia of the old *Movimento Sociale Italiano* (MSI).

Psychologically speaking, the differences discussed above between the five countries are significant differences. The history of a group is an important element of its members’ social identity. A heroic past is something to be proud of and to identify with, but a dark history makes one feel ashamed and guilty (Doosje *et al.* 1998; Klandermans *et al.* 2008; Lagrou 2000). In Flanders, France, and Italy the extreme right has a history that can be framed independently from Nazism. Although in all three countries the RWE did collaborate with German Nazism during the war, it has more than that to refer to and thus in which to take pride. In Germany and the Netherlands such a possibility did not exist. There the extreme right has nothing but a dark past. Hence, individuals were recruited into different movements.

Demand for RWE movement activity

During the years that we conducted our interviews, a substantial reservoir of support for platforms advocated by the radical right existed in all five countries (Lubbers 2001). Such a reservoir can be defined as the movement’s mobilization potential. Elsewhere I have characterized this as the demand side of protest (Klandermans 2004). The more support a movement finds in a society, the more demand there is for the movement’s activities. Significant differences appeared from one country to another. In 1989, on a xenophobia scale combining 10 items about ethnic minorities, the highest proportion of agreement was found among Belgian respondents (56 percent) and the lowest (30 percent) in the Netherlands (Dekker and van Praag 1990). In the Euro-barometer of 1997, people were asked to position themselves on a 10-point scale ranging from “not at all racist” to “very racist.” Belgians came

first, 55 percent of the sample scoring between 6 and 10, compared with 48 percent of the French, 34 percent of the Germans, 31 percent of the Dutch and 30 percent of the Italians. Whatever the reasons for these differences, of our five cases, at the time of our interviews Belgian citizens were potentially the most receptive to the xenophobic appeals of extreme right-wing parties and Italian and Dutch citizens the least. In other words, demand for RWE activities was the highest in Belgium and the lowest in Italy and the Netherlands.

Supply of RWE movement activity

Even a strong demand would not generate a strong movement if strong and effective organizations do not supply opportunities to participate. This I called the supply side of protest. A strong supply in combination with a strong demand lays the groundwork for successful mobilization (Klandermans 2004). The supply of RWE politics appeared stronger and more effective in Flanders, France, and Italy, and therefore more attractive to potential supporters than in the two other countries. In the Netherlands, although the demand for an extreme right movement was relatively low, it was large enough for a viable movement to develop, had the supply been more attractive.² However, the *Centrumdemocraten* (CD) were weak, in an outspokenly hostile environment. In Germany the context of extreme right activism was even bleaker, despite an apparently stronger anti-immigrant sentiment than in the Netherlands. In view of public opinion, the objective of the *Republikaner* (REP) to create a political option to the right of the CDU/CSU (Christian Democratic Union of Germany/Christian Social Union of Bavaria) made sense. However, RWE in Germany was so much burdened by the past, and the political and legal opportunities were so limited that it was hardly possible to turn that potential demand into a viable movement.

Very different was the situation in the other three countries. In France there was a clear demand for a RWE movement and a strong supply. The French extreme right had a long history with which people could identify, but the political opportunities to turn organizational strength into political influence were limited. The *Front National* (FN) could turn this into an advantage by defining itself in opposition to the political establishment and the mainstream parties (the “gang of four” in the words of Jean-Marie Le Pen). Such a configuration helped create a politicized collective identity, uniting the militants against “the rest of the world” (Simon and Klandermans 2001; Bizeul 2003). In Flanders the situation was even more favorable for RWE mobilization. People could take pride in the past of the extreme right because of its link with Flemish nationalism, and most importantly there was both a strong demand and a strong supply, without many legal restrictions. On top of that entering the political arena was easy. The only difficulty was the counter-movement and the *cordon sanitaire* strategy of the other political parties that kept the extreme right in an isolated

position. Though again, like in France, this could be turned into an advantage. Indeed, the *Vlaams Blok* (VB, Flemish Block) made use of the movement-counter-movement dynamic by developing into an anti-system party and creating among its members an oppositional identity. The friendliest environment existed in Italy. AN offered an attractive supply as a populist right-wing party with political influence and faced very little opposition or restriction. In fact, it had some powerful allies that made it even more influential. Nor was there much societal opposition expressing itself due to the absence of a strong counter-movement.

Mobilization

The presence of demand for and a supply of the extreme right is not a sufficient explanation for right-wing activism. Mobilization is the process that brings demand and supply together and makes people join the movement and become activists (Klandermans 1997, 2003). Such a process of mobilization may be initiated by the individual or a movement organization. We hold that often critical events play a crucial role in the process of mobilization. Such events may include an encounter with someone who already belongs to the movement, or some media event (a television or radio program; reading a newspaper article, magazine, or book), or being confronted with some dramatic situation which involves the movement directly or indirectly. Critical events are hard to predict. Obviously, many people who encounter these same events will never join a movement. It is the potentiality as it has developed before that gives the event its impact on a specific life course. This is not to say that the convergence of demand and supply in the event is completely accidental. Indeed, potential participants may have been seeking direction and signs that tell them what to do and where to go, and that may actually have brought them to the event (Teske 1997). Therefore we have chosen to conduct life-history interviews as a device to reconstruct the socialization and experiences that create potentialities and turn them into actual commitment to a RWE movement. Obviously, a life-history interview generates a social reconstruction of the interviewee's life course. Inevitably, it consists of facts *and* fiction. It is the world according to the interviewee.

In sum, the contexts in which these life histories evolve are significantly different; therefore we expect recruitment processes to be significantly different as well. Indeed, a strong demand and supply make for a movement that is visibly present in a society. Moreover, a strong supply and/or demand imply that relatively large numbers of people grow up in a RWE milieu. Under such circumstances it is less difficult to recruit activists.

Table 13.1 Right-wing extremism: demand and supply

Strong demand	Weak demand

Strong supply	Flanders, France	Italy
Weak supply	Germany	Netherlands

This is what we observe in both Flanders and France. Italy, on the other hand, demonstrates that a strong supply with a relatively weak demand can still make for successful recruitment. A weak supply, however, makes effective recruitment difficult even in the context of a relatively strong demand, as the German case illustrates. Activist recruitment is the most difficult when both demand and supply are weak, as is the case in the Netherlands. What holds for the recruitment process similarly holds for processes of stigmatization: the strength of demand and supply will influence the experience of being an activist.

Recruitment

We encountered three types of life histories: continuity, conversion, and compliance. *Continuity* refers to life histories wherein movement membership and participation are a natural consequence of the preceding political socialization (Roth 2003; Andrews 1991; Teske 1997). *Conversion*, on the other hand, relates to those trajectories where movement participation implies a break with the past. Often critical events play a role in these life histories. Conversion rarely comes out of the blue. It is rooted in growing dissatisfaction with life as it is; usually the critical event is the last push toward change (Teske 1997). The third trajectory our interviews revealed was *compliance*, which refers to the situation where people enter activism more or less in spite of themselves. Compliance stories usually tell of friends or family members who persuaded someone to become actively involved in the extreme right.

Which trajectory recruitment into activism takes appears to be contingent on characteristics of the RWE movement in a country. In Flanders, France and Italy—with their viable RWE sectors—socialization, especially by the family, contributes most to the recruitment of activists. This holds for Germany as well. To be sure, in Germany the supply side was relatively weak, hence few were recruited into RWE activism, but those who were recruited grew up in an extreme right milieu. Thus in these four countries continuity was the dominant trajectory. In the Netherlands the weak demand and supply meant that very few people grew up in extreme right-wing families; consequently, only half of the Dutch interviewees told stories of continuity while the other half told stories of conversion or compliance. Moreover, the stories of continuity were stories of self-educated right-wing extremism rather than stories of socialization in the family.

Flanders

In Flanders almost all the respondents considered their present activism as the continuation of a commitment that originated a long time ago. In general, their activism followed a gradual and often “obvious” course. At the center is a family tradition of Flemish nationalism, which has sometimes developed over several generations. This is how Paul describes it: “In our house people were always very pro-Flemish. We talked a lot about Flemish politics … We took it in with our mother’s milk” (Paul, *Vlaams Blok*, male, 27). Or: “It has always been a part of me … I was brought up on that … I was raised as a Flemish nationalist” (Kris, *Vlaams Blok*, male, 50). The dominant role of the family was perhaps most strongly worded by Anton:

To give you one small example: every time you used a French word in our house, for example, or an English word, it cost you half a frank or a quarter. We had to pay a fine for using a word which had a Dutch equivalent. No French was used in our house, English neither, nor German.

He continues:

In the evenings there were discussions about the issues of Flanders, Flemish songs were sung in our house, we went on the IJzer pilgrimage,³ we went to the “Flemish-National Song festival.”⁴ So you got the impulses at home. My parents were pro-Flemish.

(Anton, *Vlaams Blok*, male, 59)

One-third of the Flemish activists come from a so-called “black family”: their parents or grandparents were radically pro-Flemish before and during World War II, and were active in organizations collaborating with the German occupiers. There are frequent references to positions within the *Vlaams Nationaal Verbond* (VNV, National Flemish League),⁵ and some fought with the Germans against communism on the Eastern front (Russia). After the war, many were convicted because of their involvement. Within radical Flemish circles, outspoken and uncompromising Flemish nationalism is linked to a right-wing world view (de Witte 1996). The convictions of these parents did not disappear after World War II, and were kept alive in the family circle. Many interviewees refer to discussions pertaining to “Flemish issues,” to the presence of the radical Flemish-national weekly *’t Pallieterke* in their house, and to the participation in Flemish-national manifestations. When one considers the life histories of this group of interviewees, one is struck by the continuity in their evolution. The torch is lit at home and is passed on. Those involved thus become ever more integrated into the greater radical right-wing Flemish-national movement.

One-quarter of the interviewees grew up in families with a “moderate” Flemish-national orientation. The parents (mostly the father) are described as pro-Flemish, although they mostly do not participate actively in politics. In most cases they were pro-*Volksunie* (VU, People’s Union).⁶ Two interviewees in this group indicated more active involvement on their parents’ side: they participated in Flemish-national manifestations and were active within the VU. Annemie (*Vlaams Blok*, female, 33) puts it as follows:

My father was already involved in politics [the VU]. And from the time I was six or seven I went along to stick up posters with my older brothers and their friends. It's something that comes from childhood.

For most of them this was not the case, however. The interviewees often describe their parents as “modest” or “half-hearted” Flemish nationalists, in contrast to their own more radical involvement. Still, this does not mean that the parents did not play a socializing role. Marij (*Vlaams Blok*, female, 26) comments as follows:

The thing about wanting to be Flemish actually comes from home. Being Flemish had its importance in our house. If my father crossed the street and someone asked him the way in French, he would refuse, or he would have to be sure that it was a Frenchman.

France

What makes the *Front National* different from the other parties looked at in this study is that it is the descendant of a literally centuries-old tradition, going back to the Revolution in 1789. Over such a long time the French extreme right has gradually absorbed contrasting ideological currents. This makes the FN more diverse and heterogeneous than its counterparts elsewhere. Indeed, many of the activists we interviewed grew up in one of those extreme, radical right milieux and many of them joined the movement before 1972 (the year when the FN was founded). The FN found its roots in the historical extreme right, in anti-communism, in the Algerian liberation war, and in the new right. Continuity was the dominant recruitment trajectory in France as well, as evidenced by the following two quotes, referring to a personal history in French nationalism and the French colonist’s resistance against Algerian independence, to mention two currents.

My grandfather was a member of Action Française ... I was eleven; we were sitting around the family table and I used to listen to them talking about it ... Once I was invited to an extreme right meeting held by a nationalist party ... There were about fifty of us, people my age who were speaking ... Some other people there, about 80 years old, and thus slightly older than me, who had lived at the time when the right wing, the real right, was well-established, recounted the whole story as told by Zeev Sternhell.⁷ And there were young people in the room who were dumbfounded by the richness and abundance of ideas, and they were also slightly disappointed to discover they didn’t know anything ... They drank in these people’s words, these people who had lived all this. The right of Drumont etc. Drumont’s “La France Juive,” Charles Maurras, Léon Daudet, all that ... Look at this: this is my grandfather’s [right-wing] library [a cupboard with seven shelves in it!]: Henri Dupont 1853–1931. And nowadays all this is not well known, and even though it is rightfully part of our history, it’s regarded in a very biased way!

(Hubert, FN, male, 78)

Well, word got round that [Tixier-Vignancour] was organizing his first meeting ... Of course, friends of mine were in his entourage, and as they needed me, they phoned me ... After that, you know, things went quiet for a while—I kept campaigning with “X” and, then we were invited, for instance, to funerals of mutual friends when they died, and my friends and myself often met famous soldiers—Algerian War veterans—at these funerals, and that’s how it began.

(Jacques, FN, male, 65)

Anti-communism was another root of French RWE, as the following quote illustrates:

As a young man of 16, and from a farming and Gaullist family, I've always been deeply committed to the right wing, and so, anti-left-wing and above all, anti-communist. I was 17 when I saw the events of May 1968, and in a way, I was rather revolted by it all, and took a stand against it, which I suppose is normal, just reacting against something. At the time, the "against something" for us was to be standard bearers for the convictions of General De Gaulle: proud to be French. That's it, ... France first ... You made a commitment against something? Against the Communist Party, against anarchy, against the shit-mongers, against the person who said "it is forbidden to forbid" because that goes against being part of society ... [1968] was the point I became conscious, when everybody was saying "the Reds are here," well I'm anti-Red. That's all.

(Jean-Pierre, FN, *Mouvement National Republicain* (MNR), male, 46)

Italy

In Italy RWE is rooted in fascism as many of the interviewees acknowledged. Most of our interviewees when describing how they had become involved in politics made frequent reference to fascism, both as the ideology they wanted to follow in joining the party and as the reason why they suffered discrimination from the very beginning of their political involvement. This was true both for older interviewees, who had directly experienced the fascist era, and for younger interviewees, whose knowledge of fascism was only indirect, acquired through different sources. Many of our interviewees started their political activity within the MSI and they claimed that they had joined that party exactly because it defended the fascist worldview. This is consistent with Orfali's (2002) finding that in 1990 and 1994 MSI activists still preferred the label of "fascists" as self-description rather than the label of "right-wing extremists." For example, when Salvatore recalls the reason why he and other MSI supporters joined the party, he says:

We young MSI supporters had taken that side not simply because it was a right-wing party, rather because we had assimilated the fascist idea ... the original idea of fascism and ... the fascism of the Repubblica Sociale Italiana.

(Salvatore, *Movimento Sociale-Fiamma Tricolore* (MS-FT), male, 42)

Our analysis highlighted that most interviewees, both in northern and southern Italy, could find some kind of social support inside their own families. Many interviewees reconstructed commitment to fascist values and to membership in extreme right-wing parties as a heritage they took over from their parents, or from their larger families. The case of Vittorio is exemplary. His father was a true fascist who after the war was taken by US troops; his mother founded the post-fascist *Movimento Italiano Femminile* (Italian Movement of Women), the aim of which was to look for fascists who had been arrested or who were missing after the war. Accordingly, Vittorio reconstructs his decision to get involved in active politics within the ranks of the MSI party as a natural consequence of his coming from a fascist family:

In 1945 I was about thirteen, so I experienced, for example, even the civil war: I mean, I saw it, I absorbed it, I breathed it

... I, being the son of a fascist ... I absorbed it through my family; I breathed this political atmosphere of great and tragic events. So it was only natural for me, as a young boy, immediately to get involved in politics, you know, the usual route: enrolment in juvenile organizations, enrolment in the party, activism, militancy, it all came natural to me.

(Vittorio, MS-FT, male, 65)

As these quotes demonstrate, most interviewees developed a feeling of belonging to an ideological position the distinctive feature of which was a positive interpretation of fascism in their families first. However, interviewees were not just passive receivers of ready-made positive images of fascism; rather, they carried out their own positive reconstruction of fascism, as it is well described in Davide's words:

When you enter, since right-wing culture is very composite, you are not given a sacred text, you are not given a Bible that can make you know how to be a perfect right-wing guy. There are really many books you can read; you can approach right-wing culture through many different experiences ... construction of a strong identity is a long personal process, very long and complex, that keeps developing, and that cannot be reduced to a couple of books.

(Davide, AN, male, 21)

Germany

Our German activists tell yet another story. More than any of the other activists they define themselves as nationalists rather than extreme right. To be sure, we found that in all five countries, but most among our German interviewees. This is made evident over and again in the interviews. It is mostly in their family that our interviewees developed the nation-centered worldview that made them potentially receptive to RWE ideas.

Many interviewees actually described their parents as "not politically interested." Only eight interviewees could clearly state their parents' impact on their worldview. The case of Hans (*Junge Freiheit* (JF), male, 36), whose father was an official in the *Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands* (NPD, National Democratic Party), came as an exception: Though Hans's father disapproved of the political activities of his 15-year-old son, both Hans's political interest in politics and his choice of information were clearly determined by his father:

So principally, I was already interested maybe since when I was 14, 15 [years old]. So actually the most important things, for example, were TV newscasts and newspapers. So actually I started to read newspapers in a quite funny way, very early on. [Amused] Because my father always read several newspapers and he marked the very important articles. And I always cut these items out for him, and in this way, I started to read what he had marked or what else I found interesting ... So from that time on, I actually tried to get involved at a very early stage.

(Hans, JF, male, 36)

However, even for those who were not aware of a direct influence from their parents, the interviews reveal that parents provided fundamental elements of their current political viewpoint, mainly conservative ideas oriented to the "German question" which made them sensitive to the ideas of the REP later on. For instance, many interviewees refer to the difficult

experience their parents went through as expellees, displaced after the end of the war. Michael's father was a member of the CDU (Christian conservatives) until the 1970s; later he voted for the FDP (free market oriented), while his mother voted for the SPD (social democrat). Yet what marked him is the fact his parents were, as he described them, "national conscious" and it made him interested in German history:

And we often talked about politics. But I was always interested in politics, because history was already my favorite past time in elementary school ... So I liked to read history books, historical novels, etc., etc.

(Michael, REP, male, 41)

Franz remembers his father as following the tradition of Prussian officers:

His attitude was: an officer doesn't join a political party ... So he completely condemned the idea that officers made a career due to their party membership book, just like the SPD-generals in the 70s. Because he said: "an officer is a government official representing the state, not a party." So from this viewpoint, I didn't have any political models.

(Michael, REP, male, 41)

However, during the interview there was a clearer indication of his father's influence on his political development:

INTERVIEWER: "But did you generally have political discussions?"

FRANZ: "Yes, with my father, that's clear. Well, of course he was conservative, also right-wing and nationally oriented. That's right. What's funny is, I never built up an anti-attitude as some people do, who want to obviously be the absolute opposite of their fathers. Although we didn't agree with each other in many things, in a funny way, we had the same political opinion. But he didn't try to impose his ideas on me or to indoctrinate me, but it happened by itself."

(Franz, REP, male, 41)

Heinrich, after also describing his parents as people who held Prussian traditions and virtues, confirmed his mother's impact on his development:

My mother was very nationalistic, ... but national-conservative, upright, without any extreme tendencies of course ... My father was a bit more reserved; I would say he was a liberal nationalist ... But it was always a dream of my mother that I should march here, through Berlin, as an officer of the guard.

(Heinrich, REP, male, 78)

Silke describes her parents as very conservative. Silke explained:

Principally I always had a conservative attitude, actually with an affinity to the CDU. I knew that from the magazines my parents received ... Our teachers didn't mould us differently, either ... We still grew up with classical ideals, [amused] which are no longer valid today.

(Silke, REP, female, 56)

The Netherlands

Unlike the activists in the other countries in our study, those in the Netherlands were hardly

influenced by their parents. Indeed, those who refer to an early interest in right-wing politics were rebelling against rather than following their parents and teachers. Two kinds of *continuity* stories are told by significantly different types of activists: educated angry young men who want to revolt versus much older political wanderers who end up in extreme right politics having traveled from one party to the other in search of a political home.

The involvement in extreme right politics of the “revolutionaries” (as we named them) started invariably as a manner of provocation at an early age. They are all involved in the radical sector of the extreme right.

At age 13 I began to read creepy booklets about the Third Reich and the SS. Eh, hm, that was, of course, cool. My mother wasn’t really happy with it I remember and god at school I was already a special case. The creepy booklets were about Hitler and the Third Reich and so on. I even brought such booklets to school, eh, that surprised the teachers a little bit, though … Yeah, I did have problems at school … I began to rebel, so to say. At some point, I was kicked out of school.

(Michael, *Centrumpartij* ‘86 (CP ‘86), male, 34)

The “political wanderers” are not only much older, as a natural consequence of their rambling through the political landscape, but they entered the extreme right movement much later in their lives than the “revolutionaries.” When he was 19 years old, Chris began his political career in the Social Democratic Party (PvdA), the party of his parents. He would have preferred a party with a more nationalistic platform, but couldn’t find a proper political home. It took 15 years before he left the party, although the discrepancy between his political ideas and those of the PvdA grew over the years. After a period of detachment from politics, he started to look around again.

In 1980 I read *Vrij Nederland* and the *Haagsche Courant* [two Dutch weeklies] and saw that Janmaat and Brookman [two founding members of an extreme right party] were involved in something that appealed to me. Somewhat with more national consciousness, but not extreme right. He [Janmaat] was immediately defined as “that goes in the wrong direction,” and so on, but I did not think so at all. In my view it went precisely in the right direction. Janmaat’s appeal to a more nationalistic attitude. “Netherlanders first” and obviously that related to frittering away Netherlands’ interests to the multiculturalism or the capital or both.

(Chris, CD, male, 56)

All but one of the activists who told a *conversion* story were men who joined the movement in the early 1990s when the extreme right peaked in the polls and the elections. Kathleen Blee (2002) describes how stories of conversion are built around events from the individual’s past. Henk’s story brings us to the city of Schiedam. Migrants had opened a coffeehouse and mosque which were both seen to be a nuisance to Henk’s neighborhood. This came on top of a whole lot of other problems in the community.

All of a sudden there were a coffeehouse and a mosque. The municipality knew nothing of it and the police had heard about it, that it was going to happen and that it happened without permission. But that nobody makes work of it, that it is winked at! Eventually we were left holding the baby. Look I won the lawsuit and I had the whole neighborhood behind me from the very beginning. I did that properly. But if you then see what you come across, how the municipality and the police are treating you, that is unreal … As a matter of fact we are discriminated against.

Interestingly, all but one of the women we interviewed told stories of *compliance*. This seems to contradict Blee's (2002) assertion that not all women in movements of the extreme right are compliant followers of the men in their lives. Our findings seem to confirm that stereotype. Stories of compliance may be more typical for the women we interviewed, but it does not necessarily mean that these women were just compliant followers. To be sure, it was friends, husbands or brothers who pulled them in, but as Maria's story illustrates, this does not make them necessarily marginal figures in the movement. This is confirmed by the example of Janneke:

In fact, I became only active just before the city council elections in 1994. He [her husband] was already a member, I not yet, I also had my doubts, the same prejudices you hear everywhere until he came home with the platform and then you study it in more detail and in fact it wasn't that bad. Then, it was said we want women on the list [for the elections] would that be something for you? I said you can put me on the list but at the bottom. But as a matter of fact, he became number one and I number three, and thus we both were elected.

(Janneke, CD, female, 36)

Indeed, RWE activists in Belgium, France, Germany and Italy predominantly tell continuity stories when it comes to their recruitment into activism. Half of the Dutch activists, on the other hand, tell compliance and conversion stories. As expected, a strong demand and/or supply ensures that comparatively many people grow up in RWE milieux, and therefore define their recruitment into RWE activism as a logical continuation of their socialization at home. The case of Germany, however, exemplifies that demand alone is not sufficient. The weak RWE supply in that country results in a weak movement. Obviously, movement strength is a self-perpetuating phenomenon. Strong movements easily attract many activists and employing many activists keeps the movement strong.

Stigmatization

RWE movements and organizations are not particularly well-liked in the countries where they are active. Indeed, activists experience varying degrees of stigmatization. We would expect most stigmatization in countries where both the demand and the supply side of right-wing extremism are weak. This seems indeed to be the case. More than anywhere else, RWE activists in the Netherlands were confronted with stigmatization. This is not to say that the Netherlands was the only country where we encountered stigmatization. On the contrary, in each country included in our study the interviewees reported that they suffered from discrimination by a hostile environment. Reprobation reaches its climax in the Netherlands and in Germany. In those countries, being an extreme right activist not only isolates from

mainstream society but can jeopardize one's job, career, and sometimes life. It is at its lowest level in Italy where a party like *Alleanza Nazionale* has become part of the political establishment. This hierarchy is mirrored by the experts' judgment collected by van der Brug and van Spanje (2004) in their study of policies countering "anti-immigrant parties" in Europe. Germany and the Netherlands ranked highest among the 11 countries they studied. Lower in the rank order one finds Flanders and France where the Flemish *Vlaams Blok* and the French *Front National* have succeeded on the partisan and electoral level, but were kept out of office. Italy ranks at the very bottom as the country where the AN not only attracted voters and militants but gained access to power. The hierarchy of ostracism reflects the political achievement of these movements. The more stigmatized they are, the more costly it is to join them, the more difficult is their electoral and partisan development. Yet stigmatization is at the same time a resource for the movement, helping it to hold together, as shown in the French interviews. These findings confirm the experience of the French journalist Anne Tristan who joined a local section of the FN, in the under-privileged northern housing projects of Marseille. She lived there for two months. She concludes the book she wrote on her experience by quoting Albert Cohen's comment about his experience of anti-Semitism in Marseille: they are "decent people who love each other from hating together" (Tristan 1987: 257).

Flanders

In Flanders, like in Italy (as we will see later) some of our interviewees refer to the stigmatization of their parents or grandparents because of their role during World War II. After the war, they were sentenced because of collaboration with the German occupier.

And so I grew up in a Flemish-national family, with the consequences one can imagine, that is: my father and mother had problems after the war. Not because they were in league with the Germans, because I never thought that they really knew what was going on, but because they were Flemish nationalists, part of the VNV, that was the reason why they were convicted after the war.

(Anton, *Vlaams Blok*, male, 59)

Of greater importance for our subject were the feelings of collective discrimination because of their membership in a political movement. Nearly all interviewees complained that their organization and their viewpoints were wrongly represented in the media. Maria (*Voorpost*, female, 39): "You're right-wing and you're put in people's black books and associated with violence." They also complained that they were being denied the right to express their opinions freely and have meetings. A few of them gave examples of discrimination. They were threatened with dismissal or persecuted because of their views. In conclusion, some pointed to the fact that they were in danger of being seized in a physical and violent manner. Rita (*Voorpost*, female, 46) explains: "The general climate in the country is against nationalists.

Twenty years ago it was easier in that sense. Now it's becoming more and more difficult to defend our own ideas." Note that this unfair treatment was not what prompted them to become active in their organization, but rather *resulted* from it. It's *because* of their activism that the threats and negative treatment fell to their lot. Through their strong involvement in ethnic nationalism, these extreme right-wing militants in fact stand a greater chance of experiencing discrimination, since they are being stigmatized by society for taking this radical political stand.

France

Interestingly, in France the stigmatization applied to the extreme right works to inspire militants of all ages: they collectively feel this negative sentiment of being pariahs, of being excluded from the political arena. This feeling of exclusion and injustice is the cement that binds these militant groups together despite their social and political incompatibilities: the shared experience of stigmatization is the common ground and the means to identify with one another. The cement is in fact skillfully wielded to this end by the FN party machine.

FN militants can identify with crusaders whose set task it is to defend the memory of forgotten martyrs, to re-establish for all future generations a social order that had all but disintegrated, and to be the sacrificial lambs of contemporary politics. For the militants the FN is like a family linked by the idea of exclusion. Working in the FN is like finding a family for Algerian veterans who reconstructed their old support networks in the party, rediscovering conviviality in the process, and for young recruits seeking strong social ties alike.

We have evening get-togethers, we get together in groups for a pizza, at a friend's house or at home, I always end up cooking for seven or eight, it's always spontaneous, we never plan in advance, that's what's great, is that we're one big family . . . Here it's very fraternal, they call me Miss, if you like I'm a sort of girlfriend, well not really, but the girlfriend of a boyfriend, a girlfriend to the group . . . We are a large, not family exactly, but group, sort of.

(Blanche, FN, MNR, female, 22)

The stigmatization of the FN deflects each individual back into their personal difficulties such as how to acquire a social role or a job, so they are in phase with contemporary social struggles. The FN becomes in this way a refuge where the face that cannot possibly be shown anywhere else can be developed with fervor: this is the face of one or several fictional heroes. Mobilizing with the FN is also for some a way of re-affirming a social domination that was out-moded and had become inoperative, but which was still going strong in a micro-society like the FN.

We are knights in armor in the strongest sense of the word. Warriors, yes, I feel like a knight, just the fact of swimming against the tide, not going with the current trend, it almost seems aristocratic, it means refusing the present, it means refusing what we are presented with. So it's quite a chivalrous or noble spirit, because it's hard, you have to fight.

Italy

When we asked our Italian interviewees about stigmatization many began to tell stories about how they or their families were persecuted by “the other side.” This was true both of interviewees who had witnessed World War II and interviewees who had not because they were born after the end of the war. For example, Vittorio was born in 1932 and both his parents were fascists. When asked whether there were any crucial events that drove him to political militancy, he answers:

Actually, I was already convinced, consciously or unconsciously I do not know ... because it was a natural passage. My father was arrested; my father went to a concentration camp [that is, a US prisoner of war camp]; my father was the first person to be made a prisoner in the province of [XXX], so ... it was this.

(Vittorio, MS-FT, male, 65)

Also younger interviewees reported episodes of discrimination because of their political ideas, which happened mainly during their adolescence or early adulthood, at high school or at the university. Many of these interviewees said that extreme left-wing students had assaulted them verbally or physically, exclusively because they supported fascist ideals. In fact, those episodes did not discourage them from professing fascist views. Rather, they fostered their decision to get involved in active politics and to join extreme right-wing parties. In this light, Davide’s account of how he decided to go to the MSI party local office for the first time is exemplary:

Well, I approached MSI juvenile movement, which was called *Fronte della Gioventù* [Youth Front], in December 1992, mainly as a consequence of an event I was involved in ... I was assaulted just in front of my high school, the Leonardo Da Vinci scientific lyceum, by a group of extreme left-wing students attending the Faculty of Political Science at the university of Milan ... When I came here [that is, the party local office in Milan] and said: “Look, I’m that guy who was beaten in front of the Leonardo School last month,” they were very surprised and answered: “Yeah, we didn’t know we had any supporters there, and we were wondering who the hell they were. So here you are. Great.”

(Davide, AN, male, 21)

The activists we interviewed described a host of material and social disadvantages they experienced due to prejudice towards extreme right-wing parties. With regard to material disadvantages, practically all interviewees said that there was nothing to gain from supporting their party. Rather, there was a lot to lose, and they made a long list of material costs they paid for their political membership: injuries suffered from public disturbances; time subtracted from study, leisure or other social activities; low grades at high school and/or at university; difficulties finding a job. With regard to social disadvantages, interviewees described a wide range of social costs they paid for their militancy. Other costs were closely related to

membership in a group that was politically stigmatized. Actually, almost all interviewees recalled that MSI had been kept out of Italian social and political life for the entire time of its existence. For example, when asked to think about advantages and disadvantages of membership in that party, Bartolomeo answers:

No advantages ... No advantages ... [Rather] disadvantages ... disadvantages could be many. For example, being discriminated against at school ... when one said that he supported MSI, he was discriminated against. In the 1960s, admitting to having right-wing views was bad enough, but if right-wing meant fascist, it was even worse ... there were slogans like "fascist berets go to hell," killing fascists was not considered a crime ... because the State allowed it ... the State did not intervene ... and it did not punish.

(Bartolomeo, MS-FT, male, 51)

For many Italian extreme right-wing activists social isolation and political stigmatization improved after the AN party was founded. AN interviewees admitted that activities and recruitment of new members were much easier in AN than they had been in MSI; furthermore, in some municipalities the party could also exert real political power since it had got some seats in city councils. However, AN interviewees declared that they still happened to encounter some difficulties because the burden of their previous membership in an "embarrassing" party was often brought against them, and they were required to show that they had really changed.

Germany

Most German interviewees refer to some kind of stigmatization, friends whom they lost, difficulties at work, threats by opponents, threatening phone calls, and so on. While some complain about the media neglecting their party, others complain about the biased, prejudiced picture the news media are giving. For instance, Heinrich (REP, male, 78) remarks that "the reputation of the REP is so run down by media that you are often ashamed to stand for the party." As a consequence, his children didn't like his engagement with the REP. His wife didn't like it either but she agrees that REPs are treated unfairly by society. Klaus (REP, male, 48) takes a party meeting in Hannover (October 1996) as an example of the way the media treat the party. He himself was very impressed by the discussions and by the resulting platform, even if there was a "horrible time-pressure," but "The distortion in the press was really astonishing. Initially, you would think, you've visited a different meeting."

Klaus also refers to the many costs involved in his affiliation with the REP: he himself was physically attacked by a foreign ANTIFA (anti-fascist) activist, and he tells about how his children became targets at school by classmates who exclaimed: "Hi [name], how many Jews has your father gassed today?" Asked about perceived threats, Heinrich tells about threatening phone calls such as "You pig, we'll beat you to death," and about writings on his house like

"REP = Nazis, Nazis raus, Nazis = pigs." To be engaged in the REP, in the words of Silke (REP, female, 56), always means "to swim against the tide," i.e. to defend against "propaganda" and "slander." In former times "we also had obscene phone calls, threats and so on." In addition, some time ago at a "left-wing meeting [point]" in Aschaffenburg—a "hashish-dump"—she was called names such as the "people's enemy number 1." Concerning professional disadvantages she has had some trouble with one of her superiors. Also, her husband was removed from his position due to his political stance. Once he confronted a Turkish woman (a client) with a Turkish flyer against Germany, and asked her "inconvenient questions" about it. As the woman had nothing to do with it, this became one of the reasons he was removed. In private life, too, there were negative consequences. For instance, when a former school friend and her husband visited Silke and her husband, they insisted on not talking about politics. Because Silke didn't want to talk only about cooking recipes she broke off the relationship.

Jakob's (REP, male, 63) family fears that he will be elected to the *Bundestag*, because of the trouble they expect. If he then were to go to Berlin, "father won't live very long anymore." Of course, Jakob doesn't agree, but he nonetheless brings it up. He often talks about stigma and taboos, i.e. the REP is blamed for bringing up taboo themes, which he says actually interest many people in Germany. In this context he also tells about repression against the REP. For example, in his hometown Tübingen party meetings were prevented by the police, because "the security of citizens would not be ... guaranteed." After a fire assault on his house and car it is not surprising that he perceives himself to be threatened, but on the other hand, it doesn't scare him too much. "Without being prepared to take risks, nobody would ever enter politics ... nobody would be able to live," he reasons, as every decision in life includes doubts and risks. He is disappointed, though, by former friends who turned their back on him because of his engagement with the REP. He calls them "the weak ones," and recollects how some of them, "even very Catholic, very serious, felt very sorry for it and then said good-bye." What disappointed him most was that nobody was willing to discuss things in a friendly, fair manner.

The Netherlands

All our Dutch interviewees explain how they have experienced stigmatization, be it in the form of repression, attacks from the counter-movement, or exclusion from their social environment. Organizations and individuals were repeatedly brought to court because of the leaflets or statements they issued. If not prohibited by authorities, events and meetings were interrupted by anti-fascist organizations or demonstrations. In the political arena proper representatives of the RWE were neglected or boycotted. In their personal life interviewees and their families were blackmailed and threatened; they lost their job or business, or

experienced problems with their employer or colleagues. Many interviewees lost friends and were ousted from organizations or groups to which they belonged.

As far as repression is concerned, the authorities for a long time banned any demonstration by the RWE and tended to prohibit meetings. Leaflets and other written material were scrutinized and individuals or organizations were prosecuted if unlawful passages were found. One of the parties (CP '86) was prosecuted and eventually sentenced for being a criminal organization, which in fact meant the end of the organization. Frans remembers how he and the other members of CP '86 in his hometown were rounded up by the police because he stood for CP '86 in an election:

FRANS: Six o'clock in the morning the police stood at the door.

Q: At your door?

FRANS: Yeah, wanting me at my door. I had to come with them, suspected of membership in a criminal organization. Yeah, they can take everybody into custody for that in principle thus that, ehm ...

(Frans, VNN, Voorpost, male, 34)

In terms of attacks by the counter-movement, Cor remembers his swearing-in as a member of the city council:

Ehm ... the whole event, the whole, ehm, ehm ... the whole ceremony heh, that was ehm, you see that the whole hall is completely jammed with, ehm ... punkers and squatters heh, that are just your arch-enemies and then it takes an hour and a half for the police to bully everybody out that is just a great, great, great pity.

(Cor, CD, *Nederlands Blok* (NB), male, 47)

The archetypical attack by the counter-movement to which every interviewee referred is the hotel fire of Kedichem in 1986. The anti-fascist organizations in the country used to besiege meetings of the extreme right if they became aware of them, which often resulted in violent confrontations. As a consequence, most owners of meeting spaces tended to refuse to rent space to extreme right-wing organizations. In turn, these organizations reacted to the situation by attempts to rent meeting space secretly in disguise (as an organization and as individuals), or to go to places individually and set up a meeting on the spot rather than rent space collectively. Kedichem was one of those meetings set up in the late 1980s between representatives of the CD and CP '86 to discuss a possible merger. The anti-fascist movement got the information about the meeting and turned the place into a battlefield. Be it deliberately or by accident, the hotel was set on fire and several attendees of the meetings were seriously wounded—*inter alia* Cor, one of our interviewees.

In the political arena proper the representatives of the extreme right are neglected and excluded by their colleagues. Paula describes how representatives of other parties refuse to work with her or even talk to her. All this came to a climax with the death of her son Bart.

Bart then passed away. I received a card from only two council members, I mean, that's not normal! I really think so ... I find that really ... Of course, they could have read it in the newspaper. They knew it all too well, because I sent a card to

the mayor, to the aldermen who sent a letter of condolence, to be sure, but not a single personal gesture because you must not think that Opstelten [the then mayor] will shake hands with me, so sorry for the wife of [Bart], forget it . . .

(Paula, NB, female, 45)

Making public someone's affiliation to the extreme right is a common strategy of the counter-movement. First of all, every person who is known to be a member of an extreme right organization is listed on several websites of the counter-movement, including personal information about him or her the counter-movement can get hold of. Second, several of our interviewees found themselves confronted with information in the media meant to publicize their involvement in the extreme right. Willem is one of them. One day an anti-fascist magazine had an article titled "The Nationalistic Shopkeeper."

The article with the name of the shop and the street has the title "The Nationalistic Shopkeeper" with statements like "the odd man, a wolf in sheep's clothing, the smartest and an erudite man." Well, that was flattering, of course, as such it made me smile. Thus far, my activism had not provoked any reaction. It was in that paper on Thursday. I [was] scared stiff, I had my heart in my throat. The day after I met some colleagues who pounded me on my shoulder saying don't let them put you down.

(Willem, *Voorpost*, male, 34)

Eventually, Willem had to give up his business.

Almost every interviewee reports stories of exclusion. Be it friends or members of their family who do not want to meet them anymore, a job they lost or could not get, a business that was troubled. Maria, for instance, concludes a long story about how the reactions of her friends have shocked her by saying:

They put me down . . . I mean, . . . I was always ready for everybody, also for the people who dropped me, for whom I really did everything. But they never gave me the chance to explain what my motives were. In fact, there should be no need to do so. For, if they were real friends then we would discuss a lot with them. Real friends must be able to do so. Indeed, they should then know my motives. They could perhaps throw at me "Maria, this is not the way." That would have been fine, but it didn't happen, it left me embittered.

(Maria, CD, female, 56)

Johan had planned to finish his studies before he ran for the municipal elections, but then a car accident ruined his plans.

I was still busy with my thesis when I was already running for the elections. When my supervisor got to know that, he withdrew. He didn't want to supervise my thesis anymore, because yeah initially he was very enthusiastic, because yeah it would be publishable, and yeah we could turn it into a book, because nobody had ever written about it. Thus he was very enthusiastic about it, because he thought, of course, that could be nice for him too, that his name would be on it as well, but yeah then he discovered who I was and then he didn't find it so nice anymore that his name would be on it.

(Johan, CP '86, male, 33)

He could not find anybody else willing to supervise him, and in fact never finished his studies.

Edwin lost his job after his boss saw him on television taking part in a right-wing demonstration. It was the first time that a mayor allowed a demonstration by the extreme

right in his community. The first Monday after the weekend when Edwin went to work his boss said:

I saw you on television. What were you doing there? I don't want you here anymore. Your future here is over ... And of course, quite a few members of my family did not know. Must be scary all those bald heads and then they think are you part of this? I have always seen you as a nice guy. Their whole ideal fell apart so to say.

(Edwin, *Voorpost*, male, 29)

Although we encountered different levels of stigmatization in the five countries—the Netherlands being the extreme—the most significant finding in this respect is perhaps that RWE activists in *all five* countries experience stigmatization. Many of them comment on the unfairness of being suppressed and stigmatized while other parties or political organizations are not. At the same time this does not make them quit. On the contrary, many of them respond with entrenchment. For our activists, as diverse as they are, one could well say: it's being hated together that makes them love each other all the more.

Conclusion

RWE parties and movements are on the rise in Europe. In this paper I have reported on the life histories of the activists who are the leaders of this expansion. So far, little is known about the organizers of the extreme right. In this paper we have tried to understand how organizers were recruited and how being visibly active in the RWE impacted their lives. I have argued that recruitment into activism and the experiences of activism are context dependent. Contextual differences can be characterized in terms of the demand and supply of RWE activities. In order to assess the impact of such contextual variation one needs to conduct comparative research. In this study we compared life histories of activists in Flanders, France, Italy, Germany, and the Netherlands. Compared to Germany and the Netherlands, Flanders, France and Italy have relatively strong RWE movement sectors. The latter three countries accommodate a relatively strong supply of RWE movement activity in combination with a relatively strong demand for such activities. As a consequence, the RWE movements in these countries are relatively strong. The Netherlands and Germany, on the other hand, have relatively weak RWE movements. Recruitment and the experience of stigmatization appear to depend on these contextual differences. Interestingly, differences in the supply side of the RWE movement seem to have more influence than differences in the demand side. In a way this is understandable. A modest mobilization potential can still turn into a mass movement if an appealing supply of movement activities is staged.

Appendix 1: methods

The objective of our study was to interview militants rather than mere supporters of extreme right organizations. It was agreed that in each country we would aim for people at different levels in the movement, with an emphasis on the lower echelons in the organizations rather than the leaders. As for the selection of the organizations, for each country we composed a list of organizations that indisputably were perceived as extreme right. Members of any of these organizations qualified as interviewees. We also agreed that we would try to interview activists from both political parties and other types of organizations. Furthermore, we decided to restrict ourselves to those organizations that, as far as we were able to see, stayed within the rules of the law. Finally, we attempted to diversify our interviews in terms of gender, age, region, and other background variables. In each country the study was introduced as a study on political engagement initiated by the Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam. It was emphasized that we would treat the information provided in the interviews confidentially.

Within this framework the actual sampling strategies differed in the five countries, although a mixture of snowball sampling and approaching potential interviewees at meeting places was used everywhere. Indeed, options such as sampling from membership lists were not feasible, as such lists did not exist or were not made available to us.

In the course of the interview the interviewer and the interviewee try to reconstruct a specific part of the interviewee's life. As our study concerned the interviewee's career in a given RWE movement, the interview started with the question of when and how the interviewee became involved in this movement. Subsequently, it moved on to questions about what it is like to be actively involved in this field and whether the interviewee had considered occasionally quitting activism. Two important additional sections of the interview concerned social and political beliefs and attitudes, and what it meant to the interviewee personally to be involved in such an organization. Towards the end of the interview the interviewees were asked to answer a set of biographical queries about their age, education, profession, position in the organization, duration of their membership, etc.

The interviews were conducted by the junior members of our team, who took part in interview training sessions. After the first few interviews were conducted the team convened to discuss the experiences. On the basis of this discussion the interview scheme was finalized. In the course of the interview period the junior members of the team met to discuss progress and experiences.

The majority of the interviews were conducted in 1997 and 1998. Some interviews were conducted in 1999, as were some follow-up interviews. We left the interviewee the choice of the location for the interview. All interviews were audio taped. The interviews lasted from one hour to many hours, but the modal interview was approximately three hours long. In

preparation for an interview, interviewers tried to deepen their understanding of the organization in which the interviewee participated and, if possible, the role of the interviewee in the organization. Much was done to gain the confidence of the interviewee. Many of these people have negative experiences with interviews and journalists and were initially very distrustful. On the whole, however, we believe that we succeeded in establishing the rapport needed for reliable and valid interviews.

Data processing took place in several steps. First, all 157 interviews were fully transcribed in their original language. Second, on the basis of our interview scheme and theoretical notions we developed a tentative coding scheme. This tentative coding scheme was tested on the first five interviews. The experiences with the coding were evaluated and used to improve the coding scheme. Third, on the basis of the key questions in the coding scheme the interviews were summarized and exemplary quotes were selected for each interview. The summaries and exemplary quotations were translated into English. Fourth, the actual coding and analyzing of the full interviews was undertaken by the individual country teams on the basis of the interviews in their original language.

Notes

¹ See Appendix 1 for a description of the methods employed.

² In the years following our study this was evidenced by the electoral successes of Pim Fortuyn's party (the Lijst Pim Fortuyn—LPF) first and Geert Wilders's party (the Partij voor de Vrijheid—PVV) later.

³ The 'IJzer pilgrimage' is a large-scale political manifestation of Flemish nationalism, held yearly in Diksmuide at the *IJzertoren* (a tower erected in memory of fallen Flemish soldiers of World War I). Several thousand Flemish nationalists attend this manifestation, in which the Flemish movement expresses its demands and agenda. At the margins of this manifestation, extreme right-wing groups from all over Europe organize annual meetings and exchange ideas and texts.

⁴ The Flemish National Song Festival (*Vlaams Nationaal Zangfeest*) is a yearly mass gathering of Flemish people, who sing Flemish (ethnic) folk songs, watch Flemish folk dances, and listen to a choir singing Flemish songs. The first of these manifestations was held in 1933, so this festival has a long tradition.

⁵ The VNV is a Flemish-national political party, founded in 1933. Its ideology was closely related to authoritarianism and 'new order' ideas (e.g. extreme right-wing ideology). During World War II, the VNV collaborated with the German occupier.

⁶ *Volksunie* is a Flemish nationalist party.

⁷ Israeli historian and specialist of the French historical extreme right.

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14

Becoming a racist

Women in contemporary Ku Klux Klan and neo-Nazi groups

Kathleen M. Blee

The study of organized racism is deeply, but invisibly, gendered. From the Reconstruction-era Ku Klux Klan to contemporary neo-Nazis, the committed racist appears as male. Women racists exist in shadow, lurking behind husbands and boyfriends. A recent social psychology of modern racist activists gives an account of Raymond, a longtime adherent of violent white supremacy. At the edge of Raymond's story appears his "dreadfully myopic" girlfriend:

Rosandra would stoop over the sink in the gloom, doing dishes. I have never seen a dish sink so poorly lit; there was perhaps a fifteen-watt bulb. Given that bad light and her terrible vision, she would have to bring the plate within a few inches of her eyes to see it well enough to wash it. Rosandra became pregnant almost at once: Raymond "didn't believe in" contraception.

(Ezekiel 1995, 244)

Nothing in this narrative allows the reader to understand Rosandra's place, if any, in the racist movement, nor her motivation to maintain a relationship with Raymond. She appears directionless, manipulated, and victimized.

This depiction of Rosandra is typical of scholarly and popular media accounts of women in racist groups. Women are seen as apolitical in their own right, attached to the racist movement only through the political affiliations of their husbands, boyfriends, or fathers. The logic is circular: Organized racism is a male province. Women who join must be the ideological appendages of racist men. Thus, women's attitudes, actions, and motivations are derivative, incidental, and not worthy of scholarly consideration. What is important about organized racism is knowable by studying men.

As a result of such reasoning, scholarship on women in modern racist groups in the United States is virtually nonexistent (Blee 1996; West and Blumberg 1990)—although studies of women in the 1920s' Ku Klux Klan (Blee 1991) and in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Britain (Ware 1992), contemporary Hindu fascism in India (Mazumdar 1995), the German Nazi

movement (Koonz 1987), and World War II-era Italian fascism (De Grazia 1992) find that women have not been incidental to reactionary, racist, and anti-Semitic movements. Examinations of rightist movements that are not specifically racist in orientation, such as those opposing abortion or gender equality, also conclude that women have played significant and active roles in many groups (Chafetz and Dworkin 1987; Conover and Gray 1984; De Hart 1991; Klatch 1987; Luker 1984; Marshall 1986).

The lack of specific attention to contemporary U.S. women racist activists has two consequences that limit our ability to understand the modern racist movement and that undermine efforts to design effective strategies against the politics of organized racial, religious, and ethnic bigotry. First, the common (but unexamined) assumption that women are not active in the racist movement, or that such movements are restricted to men, has made it difficult to explain the adherence of substantial numbers of women to organized racism today. In the past decade, the number of racist groups in the United States has increased dramatically,¹ which is due in large part to efforts to broaden and diversify membership beyond the small enclaves of Southern white male supporters who traditionally formed the nucleus of militant racism (Center for Democratic Renewal 1990–94; Ridgeway 1990; Rose 1992; Southern Poverty Law Center 1985–95, 1990–95). Such strategies, and the resultant public visibility of organized racism, have shaped a modern racist movement in which women constitute an estimated 25 percent of the membership (and nearly 50 percent of new recruits) in many groups.²

Women are particularly active in some neo-Nazi groups, especially in those, like racist skinheads, whose members tend to be younger and less bound by the male-exclusive practices of many earlier racist movements. Although small Nazi chapters who trace their ideological lineage to World War II-era Nazis still exist, the more rapidly growing segment of the Nazi movement consists of violently racist and anti-Semitic “skinheads” modeled after similar earlier groups in England and Canada. The so-called Christian Identity sects are a network of theological communities that regard Jews and African Americans as the offspring of Satan and white Christians as the true lost tribe of Israel (Barkun 1994; Bennett 1988; Bjorgo 1993; Christensen 1994; Dobie 1992; Eatwell and O’Sullivan 1989; Hamm 1993; Himmelstein 1990; Levin and McDevitt 1993; Merkl and Weinberg 1993; Weinberg 1993).

Women also are actively sought as members by the Ku Klux Klan, which is now splintered into at least two dozen competing Klans, many with strategic alliances to neo-Nazi groups. For the Klan, women not only serve as additional bodies in a crusade for white, Christian supremacy but are key to stabilizing membership among men. A Southern Klan leader’s description of his rationale for pursuing women recruits is typical:

In order to bring in men, the men will follow the women. If a wife is against the husband’s being involved, you can just about, you know, forget the husband hanging around for long. . . . The other way, if the wife is into it, she’ll drag the husband along. I’ve seen that too many times to ignore it, so we don’t hold women back from promotions or climbing the

ladder. We can't afford to not let them have whatever positions they want to work for.³

But if women increasingly are active and visible within the organized racist and anti-Semitic movement, they seldom are found in positions of power. Some groups, like Christian Identity sects, assign women an overtly separate, subordinate, and ancillary role within the movement as the helpmates of men and the nurturers of the next generation. Others—such as some white power skinheads and Aryan neo-Nazi groups and a few Klans—espouse a more gender-inclusive organizational ideology, but even in these only a few women have developed significant, autonomous positions. In addition, the agenda of most (but not all) groups supports very traditional familial and political roles for white Aryan women, although this is increasingly less true for racist skinheads and other neo-Nazi groups.⁴ Nonetheless, women constitute a significant component of the membership, and a small but important part of the leadership, in today's organized racist groups. The lack of attention to such women distorts, and may cause us to seriously underestimate, the destructive potential of this movement.

Second, the exclusive attention to men in organized racist movements has deformed theoretical understanding of the process whereby individuals become racial activists. Explanations of rightist affiliation tend to take several forms. Some theories interpret right-wing participation as an outgrowth of individual or collective social-psychological factors. Perhaps the most noted of these is Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, and Sanford's (1950) thesis that individuals with low tolerance for ambiguity and a high need for rigid, stereotyped views (i.e., the "authoritarian personality") are attracted to the uncomplicated, authoritative, and conspiratorial ideologies that characterize right-wing extremism. Hofstadter's (1965) frequently cited characterization of a "paranoid style" in rightist politics also emphasizes the connection between psychological factors and political ideologies of the Right by suggesting that the conspiratorial claims that buttress many right-wing political arguments represent the projection of individual pathologies into public life.

Such works have engendered familiar understandings of adherence to extremist right-wing movements as the outgrowth of authoritarian parenting, educational deficits, personal ignorance, or irrational prejudices, and led to the presumption that most participants in rightist politics are irrational, frustrated, or deluded (Brinkley 1993). Although explanations based on deficiencies and pathologies remain standard in commonsense understandings of far-right politics, they have lost favor with researchers, in part because such theories have been unable to explain the variation among, and the historically rapid growth and decline of, right-wing extremist groups in the United States and elsewhere (see Billig 1978, 46–7).

Theories of "status politics," developed in a series of studies of McCarthyism and other rightist movements of the 1950s, attempted to address the explanatory limitations of personality-based theories. They argued that radical right-wing movements are best understood as collective reactive efforts to safeguard threatened social statuses or group

values. According to one common version of this theory, right-wing groups gain adherents from among those who experience a gap between their expected and actual status and power and thus deeply resent current social arrangements. Such status inconsistencies and anxieties then can be mobilized and projected onto symbolic political targets, even those far removed from the actual causes of discontent (Bell 1964; Lipset 1964). Protestant fundamentalists in an era of religious liberalism, for example, could express their frustrations through crusades against secular education, and small business owners in a period of corporate consolidation might be susceptible to anticommunist movements.

A number of excellent studies of women in conservative and antifeminist movements draw on these ideas of status and symbolic politics, arguing that the mobilization of women into “new right” and antiabortion movements is essentially a reaction to progressive and feminist social gains, especially to the perceived resultant threat to the status of homemaker (e.g., Conover and Gray 1984; Petchesky 1981). Luker’s (1984) examination of the antiabortion movement, for example, meticulously uncovers the language of symbolic politics around which women are mobilized to oppose abortion to defend the social status, lifestyle, and worldviews of mothers and homemakers (see also Ginsburg 1987).

A theoretical approach based in solely status and symbolic politics, however, is problematic in the study of racist movements. Many racist groups (especially neo-Nazis) draw their adherents from fairly class-heterogeneous populations and from among employed women as well as housewives, from mothers and wives as well as single women. In addition, many racist groups fluctuate over time less than would be predicted from status or reactive theories. And racist movements, more so than antifeminist or conservative movements, are unlikely to displace their concerns onto distant political targets. For most in the racist movement, African Americans (or Jews, Asian Americans, etc.) are both the intended and the actual target of political mobilization.

Scholars also have sought to develop theories that link participation in extremist right-wing movements more closely to rational interests, moving away from symbolic and ideological levels of explanation. A number of studies of World War II-era fascist movements, for instance, have explored the connections between German and Italian fascist party platforms and the economic interests of their supporters (Brustein 1991; Brustein and Markovsky, 1989). In the United States, Himmelstein (1990) and others have argued that parts of the modern U.S. Right were a product of corporate opposition to New Deal and collectivist policies. Such theories are especially promising for the study of racist politics because they challenge the idea that rightist politics are essentially reactive—and thus episodic, fleeting, and confined to groups that see themselves as immediately threatened. Instead, these theories highlight the connections between rightist or racist ideologies and the perceived enduring interests of specific groups in society.

Feminist scholarship, too, has drawn on interest-based theories, often in combination with

status theories. Marshall's (1986, 1984) important studies of antifemale suffrage and modern antifeminist movements and Klatch's (1987) innovative research on "social conservatives" and "laissez-faire conservatives" are two examples of works that situate the political affiliations of conservative women within both rational understandings of their gendered interests (as housewives or as employed women) and anxieties about perceived threats to female social roles.⁵

In studies of racist movements, however, the calculation of group interests is difficult and traditionally has been intensely gendered. Most studies of organized racism that seek to establish an interest-based account do so by highlighting the connection between certain tenets of rightist/racist ideology—especially individualism, antiegalitarianism, nationalism, and moralism/traditionalism—and the social and economic positions of their adherents (Betz 1994; Hamm 1993; MacLean 1994; Weinberg 1993). According to this approach, organized racism flourishes when people embrace *individualism* as a legitimate, rational means to preserve or construct their authority over members of their households; *antiegalitarianism* to guard against competition for jobs or resources; *nationalism* to strengthen political identities of citizenship; and *moralism/traditionalism* to justify nuclear, patriarchal, and inequalitarian family and social structures. In this view, participation in rightist/racist politics can be understood as rational when the agendas of rightist/racist groups work to advantage the social or economic positions of their adherents.

Through a feminist lens, it is clear that such claims of rational action implicitly rest on a view of right-wing and racist activists as white Christian men. Although women constitute a substantial element of conservative and rightist politics, both historically and in the contemporary United States, few women hold the social and economic positions that are said to provide a rational base for right-wing action. Most women would not gain from the enhancement of patriarchal privileges. Women have little identity-stake in the concepts of citizen from which they have been historically excluded. Moralism and fears of intergroup competition do not uniquely motivate women to join right-wing movements since these also form the basis for many women's rights and antielite struggles. This leaves a dichotomous—and unsatisfactory—explanation: Men enlist in right-wing and racial politics to preserve or extend their obvious, identifiable interests and privileges; women join because they are confused, led astray by male intimates or incorrectly identify their interests with those of the extreme Right. Such gender-dichotomous explanations—essentially again attributing to women's racist activity in psychological and relational factors—are unable to account for historical fluctuations and variability in women's participation in racial politics.

In this article, I attempt to address these problems by examining what happens when women join racist movements—how women reconcile the male-oriented agendas of the racist movement with understandings of themselves and their gendered self-interests. By so doing, I situate the political actions of women racists in rational, if deplorable, understandings of self

and society.

Methodology

Data are from in-depth interviews with 34 women racist activists conducted between September 1994 and October 1995. I began this study by collecting and reading a one-year series of all newsletters, magazines, flyers, and recordings of music and speeches published by every currently active self-proclaimed white power, white supremacist, white separatist, Ku Klux Klan, skinhead, Nazi/neo-Nazi, and similar group that I could identify through existing lists of racist groups, through personal contacts with self-proclaimed racist activists, and through reference in racist periodicals.⁶ This resulted in a collection of publications by more than 100 different groups,⁷ most with items issued at least two or more times during the year. Through these publications, I identified all groups that claimed significant numbers of women members or that identified at least one woman as a spokesperson or leader. These groups became a sampling frame for this study. From this list of groups, I selected approximately 30 that varied in regional location, age of member, and type of group.

This approach allowed me to identify groups with women activists but did not produce names of specific members since racist activists generally use aliases or code names (e.g., "Viking Mary") in their publications. I was able to make contact and secure interviews with several women activists directly through their groups. Such a direct approach was, however, inadvisable for most groups because they are highly suspicious and hostile to unknown outsiders. To secure the majority of interviews, I relied on a more indirect approach, using personal networks, including parole officers, correctional officials, newspaper reporters, other racist activists and former activists, federal and state gang task forces, attorneys, other researchers, and my own contacts with individuals in this movement to make contacts with individual members of the targeted groups. Initial interviews with a few key informants gave me additional entrée to other racist activists. Throughout, I continued to select respondents from groups in the original sample list rather than by pursuing a snowball sample or a sample of convenience to ensure variability in experience and perspective. As much as possible, I selected respondents of disparate ages who held different positions or had varying levels of commitment to the racist movement.

Respondents included 4 leaders who are known both within the movement and outside, 10 leaders who are not known publicly, and 20 rank-and-file members of racist groups. They ranged in age from 16 to 90, with a median age of 24. In general, members of the Ku Klux Klan groups were older and skinheads were younger, but one informant, the editor of a skinhead newsletter, was in her 80s and several Klanswomen were in their early 20s. The

respondents lived in 15 different states, with the greatest concentrations in Georgia (6), Oklahoma (5), Oregon (4), and Florida (4). They were dispersed across regions as well, with 11 from the South, 10 from the West Coast, 10 from the Midwest, and 3 from the East Coast.

Contrary to the prediction from both psychological and status-based theories that economic marginality prompts racist activism, the majority of informants held middle-class jobs (e.g., as occupational therapists, nurses, teachers, and librarians), were attending college, or were not employed but were married to stably employed men. About one-third could be described as living in economically precarious conditions—holding jobs as waitresses, lay ministers in tiny, nonaffiliated churches, or teachers in marginal private schools; or being married to insecurely employed men. Significantly, in almost half of these cases, it is clear from the life histories that peripheral employment was a consequence rather than a cause, of involvement in racist politics. Some women (or their husbands) lost their jobs when employers found out about their racist involvement or when they were caught proselytizing racism to customers or fellow employees. Others sought employment within racist enclaves, for example, as teachers in Christian Identity schools, to escape what they regarded as the nefarious influences of the outside world and to contribute to the future of the racist movement.

Women had a variety of reasons for participating in the study. Some may have hoped initially that the interview would generate publicity for their groups or themselves—a common motivation for granting interviews to the media—although, to avoid this, I made it clear that no personal or organizational names would appear in the research. Many respondents seemed to view the interview as an opportunity to explain their racial politics to a white outsider, even one who was decidedly unsympathetic to their arguments. To them, it was personally important that the outside world be given an accurate (even if negative) account to counter superficial media reports that portray racial activists as uniformly deranged or ignorant. Others agreed to interviews to support or challenge what they imagined I had been told in earlier interviews with racist comrades or competitors. Also, despite their deep antagonism toward authority figures, others (especially the younger women) may have participated in the study because they were flattered to have their opinions solicited by a university professor or because they had rarely encountered someone older and middle-class who talked with them without being patronizing, threatening, or directive.

The boundaries of many racist groups today are quite fluid and respondents typically move in and out of a number of groups over time. Thus, few respondents can be definitely characterized by a single group membership, or even by a single philosophical position. If respondents are categorized according to their most significant involvement with an organized racist group, they include 14 neo-Nazis (other than skinheads), 6 members of Ku Klux Klans, 8 white power skinheads, and 6 members of Christian Identity or similar white supremacist groups.

Gathering accurate information about the lives of members of organized racist groups is

notoriously difficult. Racist activists tend to be disingenuous, secretive, intimidating to researchers, and prone to give evasive or dishonest answers. Standard interviews often are unproductive, yielding little more than organizational slogans repeated as personal beliefs (Blee 1993).⁸ Group propaganda, too, can be misleading because it is often wielded as much for its shock value as to express the group's agenda or collective beliefs (Bjorgo 1993). In addition, typical interviews and questionnaires yield information in such a way that makes it impossible to disentangle cause and effect. For example, women racial activists often identify their boyfriends or husbands as being part of the racial movement, reinforcing the perception that women are recruited into racist groups as the girlfriends or wives of male activists. But it is equally plausible that intimate relationships between women and men racist activists are formed within the racist movement; that is, that women form ties to those who have beliefs and ideas similar to their own (Aho 1990).

A life history approach overcomes many of these methodological problems. By beginning with the respondent's own life story rather than with questions of belief or organizational commitment, respondents are less likely to present group dogma as personal sentiment. The focus on life histories is particularly well-suited to understanding the sequence and patterning of life events and thereby untangling causes and effects of political affiliation. Also, unlike the more common attention to political mobilization in discrete periods of intense collective action, life histories can capture the rhythm of social movement participation and withdrawal over an individual's lifetime. They illuminate both the events that crystallize consciousness and mobilize action and the social structures and networks that nourish (or fail to nourish) activist identities and beliefs during periods of political inactivity.⁹

Life history interviewing also generates personal narratives, what Hart described as "analogous to a story with a beginning, middle and end; with a plot; with main characters, scoundrels and paragons; and with background settings" (1992, 634). Such stories provide a route to understanding the motivations and self-understandings of actors (like racist activists) who are otherwise reluctant or unable to disclose the intersection of their personal biography with their ideological worldview. As Somers contends, "it is through narrativity that we come to know, understand, and make sense of the social world, and it is through narratives and narrativity that we constitute our social identities" (1994, 606). (See also Bruner 1991; Taylor and Whittier 1992). Life history narratives by women racial activists thus reveal how these women "make sense" of their world and their place in that world—how they identify themselves; what they perceive as the major events and significant turning points of their lives; how they understand their own racial activism and racist beliefs; and how they define themselves in relation to political issues, to other racial or religious groups, and to the racist movement.

The extensive life history interviews that constitute the data for this study followed a common format. At the beginning of each interview, I asked each woman to tell the story of

her life, how she came to be where and who she is today. To observe how each woman would compose her own life story—how she would select and causally connect the events that she regarded as most significant—I did not intervene to suggest particular directions in the narrative but only to encourage a full exposition of her life. After the conclusion of the life history, each respondent was asked a series of questions about her education, work history, family background, recruitment and entry into racist politics, role in the racist movement, beliefs, and personal contacts. In this part of the interview, careful attention was paid to constructing a precise chronological account of the respondent's life, especially the sequence of events prior and immediately subsequent to her first affiliation with an organized racist group. The resulting interviews ranged from two to six hours in length. They were taped and later transcribed. A few informants would not permit me to interview them in person and instead completed written life histories and questionnaires.

It is impossible to create an accurate sampling frame of a secretive movement, so the respondents do not represent a random sample of women who are involved in organized racist groups. Nevertheless, interviews with these women do represent the most comprehensive data existing on modern U.S. women racist activists. They provide an in-depth look at the self-perceptions, motivations, and understandings of women at different levels of involvement in racist and anti-Semitic groups. Because all the life histories collected for this study are from women, they do not reveal gender differences among racist activists but they do indicate specific ways in which women create a place for themselves in the traditionally male sphere of racist politics. Also, the way in which women racists describe their entrance into racist politics and how they present themselves and give meaning to their actions in an interview situation are gendered in important ways.

Findings

What happens when women join racist groups? What is it about their lives, as they reveal them, that seems to coincide with the agenda of racist politics? How do they tailor their understanding of self or of racial politics to “make sense” of racist commitments? Life histories reveal some of the means by which women activists establish a rational basis for their participation in racist groups through strategies of conversion, selective adoption, and resignation. Each strategy represents attempts by women activists to create coherent personal narratives by actively reconfiguring the “fit” between themselves and the goals of the racist movement.

Conversion

One way that women activists create a rational basis for their involvement in organized racism is by retrospectively constructing their entry into racial politics as the outgrowth of dramatic personal transformation. Reflecting back on an earlier, nonpolitical life, these women come to view their current political commitments as the result of a single sensational event or series of events through which their personal goals and beliefs became fused with the agendas of the racial movement. In the life histories, accounts of personal transformation typically take the form of a conversion story, not unlike the accounts of those who have been converted to religion, sobriety, or feminism (see Bearman and Stovel 1993; Brereton 1991; Cain 1991; Goldberg 1990; Hart 1992). As converts to racial activism, these women construct the stories of their lives as narratives of passage from racial naïveté to racist enlightenment. In such conversion stories, the more mundane details of actual recruitment to racist groups fall to the wayside. What is highlighted—indeed, what is remembered—in the life narratives is a sense of self-transformation.

Such racial “awareness” is more often a *consequence* of association with members of racist groups than a *cause* motivating participation. Of the 34 respondents, more than one-third (13) were recruited into the movement by friends or acquaintances (such as fellow “bikers”); another 10 were convinced to join by parents, siblings, cousins, or children.¹⁰ Three were recruited through a husband or boyfriend. Only 8 (less than one-quarter) sought out contact with the racist movement themselves, on the basis of prior ideological conviction. For most, conversion to the principles of racist activism followed from personal association with other racists and from participation in racist actions, not the reverse. Conversion stories thus cannot be taken as a literal account of ideological transformation but rather provide respondents with an ordered and agentic undergirding to what otherwise might seem a disorderly, even chaotic, series of life events and decisions (see Rosenthal 1991, 36). And they accord intent, calculation, and meaning to radically changing self-identities.

In line with racist ideologies that radically separate “us” from “them,” activists’ conversion stories usually assume a dichotomous narrative form. They relate the abandonment of a previous weak, distorted, ignorant, directionless, and naive self and the construction of an all-knowing, committed, impassioned self. The narratives pivot around a precise event of decisive awakening, in which the essential difference between good and evil, between clarity and confusion, and between likeness and otherness is revealed and explained.

Related abstractly as rationales for subsequent racial activism, respondents’ conversion stories imply a singular and personal experience that crystallized understanding and prompted a voyage of discovery, a passage from darkness into light. In the conversion narratives, activists claim that this experience made them acutely aware that Jews—or African Americans or government agents—caused and controlled the economy, or politics—or even the minutiae

of daily life. For nearly all informants, the narrative of conversion pivoted on a single dramatic life event—a near death experience, loss of a loved one, even the death of a pet—an ordeal that clarified perception, sharpened value priorities, and seemed to reveal the racial and ethnic dynamics of history.

Alice,¹¹ a 23-year-old racist skinhead, interviewed on death row in a Southern state where she was incarcerated for a series of murders and robberies, cited a car accident as her personal turning point, after which “it’s like, my whole attitude changed . . . my mind focused more on white supremacy.” “Since the day I was born,” Alice recalled, she had been taught racist attitudes by her parents, but, like them, she had never felt the inclination to act on those beliefs until she awoke from a coma after her car accident. In Alice’s narrative, descriptions of the loss of control she felt as a hospital patient—“IVs in my arms, tubes in my nose”—blurred together with images of African American nurses surrounding her bedside, probing and invading her body. Assertions of self against institutional dehumanization and bodily invasion thus took on a racialized cast for which her earlier belief system served as an ideological template: “I said [to the African American nurses] ‘don’t touch me. Don’t get near me . . . leave me alone.’” It was this incident, she concluded, that brought her into permanent “racial awareness” and that set the stage for her subsequent involvement in neo-Nazi gangs. Indeed, Alice’s narrative of life after her hospitalization reflected this new sense of racial commitment. Speaking of a cousin who married an African American man, she recalled that before the accident she saw family loyalty as more important than racial background, but after her racial “awakening,” “that was it . . . I walked out the door and I haven’t spoken to her since.”¹²

Other conversion-by-near-death stories embedded the antecedents, rather than the outcomes, of personal catastrophe in racial terms. Typical of this was the life history narrative of Judy, a very prominent middle-aged Aryan leader on the East Coast. For her, racial commitment was born when she was seriously injured in a hit-and-run accident while living in an impoverished area of Cleveland.

Initially, Judy’s life story provided little hint that racism and racial activism would become pivotal in her life. Instead, her initial life narrative revolved around issues of domesticity—pregnancy, marriage, child rearing—and a determination to avoid social issues by remaining wrapped within the family and following her parent’s advice: “Don’t be prejudiced, try to get along, do your best you can do.” Even a series of personal calamities—a miscarriage, divorce, and rapid downward economic mobility for herself and her two small children—did not transform Judy’s account of herself as determined and self-possessed.

It is when Judy took her children to Cleveland in search of better employment that her narrative shifts. Now, it is the accident—and the racial implications that followed from it—that becomes the fulcrum around which her life story unfolds. All discussion of her time in Cleveland is antecedent to the accident; subsequent racial activism flows from the accident. Taking nearly an hour to relate, Judy’s accident story provides a dramatic illustration of how

racist understandings can be constructed through personal experiences.

In the first part of the Cleveland story, Judy gave a long description of the struggle to maintain a “decent” life amid the squalor of the neighborhood, providing a bridge between a preaccident self-assurance and a postaccident racial awareness. Judy presents herself as confident, but also, in retrospect, as naive about “the neighborhood.”

Now, mind you, the neighborhood is not good at all. But I’m thinking, okay, no problem, I just started this job . . . I’ll stay here ’til the end of summer, by winter I’m straight, I got myself a good job. I can transfer my job. I reestablish myself and then I’ll be back on towards [another neighborhood], which is a very good area.

Thus far, the neighborhood is described without racial attribution. It is “not good at all,” but the referent for this judgment is economic (“I’ll stay here ’til . . . I got myself a good job”) rather than racial. As the story progressed toward the accident, however, its protagonists became less abstract and more racialized: The hard work of Whites (to get to work, to keep a job, to find baby-sitters) was counterposed against the inactivity of neighboring African Americans. Now, racial factors are clear. “They” are responsible for the “bad” neighborhood, and to Judy, “they” are Black.

I want to make my money and get the hell out of this bad neighborhood. And it was bad, but I thought, “Oh, I can do this, I’ll just be real quiet and they won’t mess with me and they won’t have no problem with me anyway.” (laugh) Well, then the Blacks started to holler after me when they catch me coming in and out. . . . And it’s like, “Hey,” you know, “Hey, Woman, we want you come on down here. What you got, don’t talk to Black people?” You know, I was just trying to mind my own business.

Why did Judy’s increasingly firm racial attitudes translate into racial activism? According to Judy’s account, it is because she changed. Her ability to maintain harmony and to ignore the retrospectively obvious proclivity of her African American neighbors for crime and indolence had depended on racial naïveté. Once she became more “aware,” such unconscious acceptance was no longer possible. The car accident then became the narrative moment that destroyed Judy’s innocence and began a process of self-transformation. Key to this process was her certainty that “they” were responsible for the accident. Although she acknowledges that she did not see the driver who hit her, Judy nonetheless maintained that it “must have been” an African American man from a neighboring house. “I ignored them, but then I was hit by that car . . . I swear they hit me on purpose . . . because I would not have anything to do with them.”

As in Alice’s account, Judy’s racist action followed, almost unbidden, from racial awakening: “Of course, after I got hit by a car, that was *it* . . . I started getting into politics.”¹³ An African American driver was the only possibility that seemed to make sense of this otherwise random tragedy, to accord it intent and purpose. In addition, such a racial lens made sense of her other hardships of her financial marginality and limited opportunities. Such racialized understanding, however, did not come incrementally or as the result of Judy’s economic frustrations alone.

Rather, Judy relates the process of becoming a racist as a sudden, metamorphic process. The world was now revealed as purposeful, conspiratorial, and rent by deep racial fissures. Such understanding then furnished Judy with a sense of purpose. From that point, she relates, her life's mission was one of devotion to furthering white, Aryan supremacy and African American subordination.

Jan, a 55-year-old Nazi from a small midwestern city related a similar story, describing her complicated medical history in increasingly conspiratorial tones, as a prototype of the struggle between Aryan and Jew. Consider Jan's memory of the operating room when she was being prepared for surgery:

There was nobody in there. No instruments, nothing. Then a man appeared from behind me and said he's my anesthesiologist. We started talking. I sat on that operating table, that iron metal thing, and he said, "Where are you from?" I said, I'm from Germany. I had long blond hair and my face was clear, wonderful complexion. At that time still I believed and trusted completely. . . . He said, "Well, I'm gonna give you the anesthesia now." I inhaled and realized that I couldn't exhale . . . he was just sitting there watching me . . . I wanted to say, I can't breathe, [but] I had no more voice.¹⁴

In this account, Jan's German (Aryan) naïveté is counterposed against a disembodied but menacing presence who can literally take away her voice and her breath. Much later in the story, Jan gives the explanation for this encounter, simultaneously providing causality and plot to the narrative of her life story. She relates her discovery that the anesthesiologist was Jewish, that, in fact, the hospital—along with the media, the government, nearly everything—was owned and controlled by Jews. Jews are both sinister and invisible, Jan concludes. That is the key to their awesome power to control the fate of unsuspecting Aryans.

If such stories reveal one common way that activists mold themselves to the ideologies of racist groups, it is also clear that they are not reliable accounts of actual political recruitment or ideological conversion. On the contrary, virtually all informants, when pressed to construct chronological life histories, reveal a pattern of recruitment to racial-based politics quite at odds with the pattern of conversion-by-striking event described in more abstract accounts. The Cleveland activist's accident, for example, was not simply the blinding moment of awareness that she recounts in her life history but also one that brought her into contact with a locally prominent neo-Nazi who offered to take her in during her convalescence. Similarly, it was in the process of investigating a medical malpractice claim that the middle-aged Nazi activist became acquainted with a local white power activist who monitored local hospitals and doctors.

Thus, these conversion stories are best understood as *learned* narratives, retrospectively formatted by the political, ideological, and even stylistic conventions of racist group imagery. They have the moncausal structure of racist ideology in which the world is sharply divided between friend and foe and historical agency is assigned to specific groups, usually Jews or African Americans. Racial activists thus learn to align themselves with racial goals, in part, by transforming their understandings of self. As a Southern Klan woman put it:

It is not so much that I am in the Klan, it is the fact that the Klan is in me. By the Klan being in me I have no choice other than to remain. I can't walk away from myself.

Conversion narratives are formatted in particular, gendered ways. Although the life experiences of these racist activists differed considerably, the memories to which they return, or which they construct, as the fulcrum of racial conversion are amazingly similar. It is bodily experience that forms a core to conversion. Negatively, it is assaults on one's body—in the form of invasion, attack, or trauma—that are presented as the causes of ideological conversion. Positively, it is the absorption of racial commitment into one's bodily self (“I am in the Klan [and] the Klan is in me”) that marks successful conversion and racial commitment.

Learning to become a racist—conversion—is an endless process. Within racist organizations, recruits continue to learn new, more complicated understandings of the racial order. This is most clear in the life history accounts of experiences with Jews and African Americans. Virtually all of the respondents could point to incidents in their past that they perceived as negative with African Americans or other people of color, even if the negative evaluation was only retrospectively applied. Nevertheless, none of the respondents recounted any past experience—positive or negative—with anyone who was Jewish. Anti-Semitism—more than anti-African American racism—seems to be *learned* within racist groups. Women join racist groups because of an antipathy toward African Americans or other racial minorities. Once they become associated with the racist movement, however, they are taught that it is Jews who manipulate racial tension. As a midwestern Nazi put it, “When I first joined [her group], it was for dislike of Blacks. Now I realize the Jews are controlling their puppets, the Blacks, for their own means.”¹⁵

Selective adoption

A second way that women create coherent narratives of their involvement in the racist movement is by transforming their sense of the goals of organized racism. Just as through “conversion” women adjust themselves to conform more closely to the goals of the racial movement, women racial activists also transform their understandings of racial activism by selectively disregarding aspects of the ideologies or agendas of racial groups that are at variance with their personal goals or allegiances. For these women, “collective identity”—what Gamson refers to as the process of defining “being part of a ‘we’ who can do something” (1992, 84)—is highly fragmentary, based on the selective adoption of group agendas and identities. This discrepancy between personal and group understandings and identities explains why the organizational texts and public propaganda of racist groups often differ in significant ways from individual members’ attitudes and political motivations and even from members’ perceptions of the group’s goals and agendas.

Life history narratives indicate that many women members undergo a fairly convoluted and incomplete process of political and rhetorical socialization into organized racism. This is reflected in the shallow explanations that activists provide for their participation, such as a middle-aged midwestern Klanswoman who said she joined the Klan because “you can meet celebrities . . . you know, [referring to talk show Klansmen] people you see on television.”¹⁶ But it is obvious also in the pains that informants take to point out their disagreements with the racist movement overall or even with their particular group. Several Klanswomen confided their support for legal abortion and their disagreement with the Klan’s negative stand on homosexuality. A young neo-Nazi leader on the West Coast disclosed that her best friend was married to an African American and that their children play together. And an Aryan supremacist in New England told of her involvement in a lesbian-dominated goddess-worship group, dismissing the suggestion that this runs counter to the antihomosexual politics of her group by saying, “Oh, we’re just great friends . . . none of us really believe in the label thing.” Almost one-third (11) of the informants volunteered information on mixed-race or homosexual family members with whom they were on friendly terms.¹⁷

Even the attitudes of very committed racists do not always mirror the groups to which they are dedicated. Nearly all informants (29), including those in leadership positions, dissented from at least part of the organizational doctrine, typically based on personal experiences such as having family members or work colleagues of another race, religion, nationality, or sexual orientation. Several Klanswomen complained that their Klan chapters were too male oriented, too sexist. Others complained that movement men only want women to have white babies; one countered that she tells young women recruits to “get an education and be somebody first.”¹⁸ Women in groups with rigidly male-dominant ideologies, as expected, were more likely to dispute their organizational positions than were women in groups with more gender-inclusive philosophies.

A variant of this tendency toward selective adoption is the belief that race, religion, and ethnicity can only be known through actions. People who are “on your side” therefore are *necessarily* white, Aryan, or Christian—regardless of their appearance. Conversely, those who wrong you must be nonwhite, non-Aryan, or Jewish. Such a logic is evident in a number of interviews where respondents sought to distinguish someone’s *true* racial identity from their superficial racial markings. When a Southern neo-Nazi described her best friend, an African American man, for instance, she explained that, as a confidante, he was “really white.” Having an interracial friendship thus did not disturb her racist beliefs because she assigned race on the basis of loyalty, not skin color.¹⁹

Adherence to organized racism, therefore, does not presuppose complete ideological transformation. Rather, at least some recruits selectively disregard, transform, or choose to violate the very principles that appear central to the mission and agenda of racist groups. And such ideological distancing is intensely gendered. It allows these respondents to participate in

racist groups whose goals and agendas—largely forged by the beliefs of male racist leaders—are not fully consonant with the lives and relationships of women recruits. As women enter racial politics, they adopt the ideas that least threaten their own lives and personal commitments; the rest are simply ignored.

Surprisingly, such apparent inconsistencies rarely seem to threaten either the ideological coherence of the group or members' allegiance to the group's overall agendas. At least in part, this is due to the relatively fluid and disorganized nature of many contemporary racist groups in which dissent from organizational doctrine is widespread and fairly accepted among subgroups of members, like these women activists.²⁰ Indeed, ideological flexibility may be key to the ability of racist groups at this stage of development to recruit from among mainstream white populations.

Resignation

A third narrative strategy is resignation. Stories of men's political commitment—on the Left or Right—typically convey a tone of excitement, of self-satisfaction. Ezekiel comments on such a sense of personal fulfillment through racist political action: "Organizing is the leader's jones. He has to have it. Like every jones, it is his world, his lover, his identity. Without it he is nothing; when engaged, he is God" (1995, 64).

This sense of satisfaction and lack of reservation, widely reported among male racist leaders (Billig 1978; Hasselbach 1996; also Luchterhand and Wieland 1981) and evident in the self-aggrandizing autobiographies that pepper the literature of contemporary racist groups, is not found among women racist activists. Racial "enlightenment" is presented, at best, in terms of passive resignation, more often in despair—as a burden, an onerous responsibility, an unwanted obligation. There is little bluster, almost no swagger, among these women when they are discussing their racial mission. In contrast to Billig's (1978) interview with a male member of the British National Front who was anxious to impart the party line to others, these racist women were much more reluctant to see political knowledge as preferable to ignorance. As one Nazi member put it, "It's painful, it hurts, it's all consuming when you have the knowledge." Another commented. "If I had to do it over again, I wouldn't want to know anything." A member of an Aryan supremacist group stated. "It's hard feeling this duty to alert other people."²¹

Although almost one-half (16) of the respondents said that they had tried to recruit others into the movement, almost everyone was hesitant, or even negative, about the possibility of enlisting immediate family members, especially their own children or prospective children. As one Nazi survivalist stated, "I won't teach my children to be political . . . I don't want them to have that burden." A Klanswoman said that she "wouldn't encourage anyone to join, it's just

something I did.”²²

Many respondents took pains to deny their own racial activism. Even highly visible racial leaders claimed that they were not activists, that they tried not to be “too active,” or that they were active only when it was “necessary for survival.” As one prominent Aryan supremacist commented when discussing her own affiliation with a violent racist group, “I was in kind of an unaware state [when I joined].”²³

Even when activists described acts of personal political agency—searching out what they invariably called “the truth” in literature or through movement contacts—their descriptions of these activities were passive, even despondent. Political histories, especially from those involved with gender-traditional groups like the Klan or Christian Identity sects, were related primarily in terms of victimization.

These women racists also present themselves as victims of public perception, unjustly characterized negatively by the world at large. A white separatist complained that she needed to hide her real feelings about African Americans and Jews for fear of losing her job. A Nazi protested that she didn’t “like the way people view me as a hater.” An Aryan supremacist said, “People look at us as though we are sick, as though we are the problem of society.” To counter this, informants routinely distance themselves from what they claim are more extreme elements of the movement, claiming, as a Klanswoman did, that their group “is no different than being in the Girl Scouts” but that, conversely, “most of the [other] people in the movement have too much hate.” Similarly, a skinhead related a story of another woman racist leader who “used to tell me people that had brown hair and brown eyes [like me] were just filth and trash and wasn’t worthy of being around. She really scared me.”²⁴ More commonly, women object to the restrictions placed on their racial activities by movement men or complain about the disparaging remarks about women that pervade much racist literature and the conversation of male racist leaders.²⁵

It is not a sense of ideological passion or the desire to spread racist ideas and thereby change the world that characterizes the ways in which women understand their role in organized racism. Rather, a sense of hopelessness pervades both descriptions of the “degenerate” society that surrounds them and the possibilities for changing that situation. For them, racism is a politic of despair. Male racial activists talk of becoming empowered by racial knowledge and racial activism, boasting of their connections to violence and their abilities to change undesired situations (e.g., Billig 1978, 226–27). For women, the talk is very different. Activism is seen solely as a recourse for protecting their children or themselves from a troubled society that they have come to understand in racialized terms, but a means that stands little chance of success. As a white supremacist said, “I would like my future to be a little house on the prairie picture . . . but it will not be like that. I think we’ll be struggling my whole life . . . surrounded by immorality and corruption.”²⁶ Activism thereby is a defensive stance. It does not deliver a sense of self-satisfaction and power. For these women, the racist

movement promises the possibility for fending off the social forces that they see as threatening to engulf them and their families, but it promises, and delivers, little to them personally.

The emotional resignation found among these women activists reflects a final form of “sense making.” To the extent that racist politics does not deliver obvious and tangible rewards for women activists, they construct their participation in the movement as involuntary, automatic, and unconscious. Consider the passive nature of the political narrative related by a 19-year-old Rocky Mountain state racist skinhead:

Q: Do you remember the first thing that brought you in [to the white supremacist movement]?

A: Uh, well, they used to have like Bible Studies here, the white supremacists here . . . I went to them even though I’m not necessarily all for the Bible, but I went there and started getting involved with them, and they would have like demonstrations and marches and stuff around here. So I started going with them to offer support and then . . . well, a friend of mine went to one of their meetings one time and she told me about it and then I went to it the next week, and then I started getting involved in it and stuff.²⁷

Little in this narrative suggests the sense of confidence, self-direction, or personal agency that is often assumed to be a compensation for participation in social movements (Gamson 1992, 186). Rather, this informant presents racial involvement as something that just happened *to* her, the end result of a series of minor actions chosen without a particular political objective.

Making sense of racial politics by denying personal agency is a common response of those involved in political causes that are widely condemned and serves to normalize the consequences of involvement. Rosenthal (1991, 39) found such assertions in a study of Germans who witnessed World War II but did not face persecution. The narratives of women racist activists, however, express more than just self-justifications. Instead, the declarations of resignation convey both hopelessness in the face of outside social or political forces and powerlessness to reconcile the contradiction between what they see as lofty movement goals of white, Aryan supremacy and the actual experiences of white, Aryan women within the racist movement. All activists concur that the movement’s abstract goals of racial purity are laudatory, but many also indicate that the process of working toward these goals provides them little gratification. It is in this sense that the resignation of women racial activists—their expressions of self-denigration, emotional pain, victimization, and lack of awareness—represents a gendered response to experiences within male-defined racist politics.

Implications

The inclusion of women into an analysis of racist movements, and the explication of how women reconcile their perceived interests with those of the racist movement, suggests several implications about the process whereby people become members of organized hate groups. First, the divergent understandings and incorporations of movement goals by members highlight the multidimensionality of political positions within organized racism. Even within the most extreme racist groups, there is no simple relationship between gender, or sexual orientation or abortion politics, and the ideologies of race, nation, morality, or family that we typically bundle together as “right wing” or “reactionary” (Yohn 1994). Not all members favor gender inequality, oppose abortion, or favor the death penalty for homosexuality. Indeed, the organizing momentum of the racist movement in recent years, and its ability to attract substantial numbers of women recruits, may reflect its ability to accommodate some measure of ideological dissension within its ranks even while maintaining a facade of political unity.

Second, this analysis indicates that women’s involvement in organized racism is more rational, and less capricious, than earlier research suggests. Women’s entrance into organized racism is not a simple matter of their obliviousness to the political agenda of racist groups nor of personal gullibility on the part of individual recruits. Rather, women work to create a rational connection between themselves and the goals of racist politics.

This reconceptualization also has implications for political organizing. If the conditions of women’s participation in organized racism indeed are social and rational, rather than psychological and irrational, then it should be possible to design political measures to counter the recruitment of women by racist groups, even to recruit women away from racial politics. Further, if the narratives through which women construct an understanding of the intersection of their personal biographies and the politics of racist organizing are themselves gendered, it is the case that antiracist organizing also needs to be gendered. We cannot counter the appeal of racist groups to some women, or lure women from these groups, by assuming that racial activism is gender neutral. Rather, it is clear that women’s understandings of their racial activism rest on a foundation of fear of bodily threat, a valuation of personal relationships, and a sense of personal passivity that may differ significantly from the self-evaluations of male racists, and these need to be addressed in effective antiracist politics.

Given the paucity of research on women in racist groups, it is premature to posit specific strategies, but some general guidelines can be inferred from the findings of this research. Most important, if personal allegiances are as important as ideological commitments to many women racist activists, then relationships whose nature is at variance with racist goals (e.g., interracial friendships) are a possible route for “conversion” *out* of racist politics. Moreover, to the extent that women experience their participation in racist politics through a lens of resignation and despair, alternative political agendas that empower, rather than restrict, women members may be attractive. Finally, given the critical role of personal recruitment into racial politics, tactics that seek to disrupt or prevent contacts between racial activists and

potential recruits are critical. At present, the racist movement is enjoying considerable success in recruiting women. However, well-designed strategic efforts by antiracist activists can play a considerable role in reversing this trend.

Author's note

This research was supported by funds to the author as the University of Kentucky Research Professor for 1994–95. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 1995 meetings of the American Sociological Association. The author thanks Beth Schneider and the reviewers, Rebecca Klatch and Becky Thompson, for helpful comments.

Notes

[1](#) Although many of the new racist groups are small—often consisting of little more than a handful of members with a post office box—some command substantial numbers of members. (See periodic reports from the Center for Democratic Renewal, P.O. Box 50469, Atlanta, GA 30302 and the Southern Poverty Law Center, 400 Washington Avenue, Montgomery, AL 36104.)

[2](#) These estimates are based on private discussions between the author and several national and regional Ku Klux Klan and neo-Nazi leaders. Secret and transient memberships of these groups make it impossible to verify these figures, but they generally coincide with information provided by state police officials and national antiracist, anti-Semitic monitoring groups such as the Center for Democratic Renewal and the Southern Poverty Law Center.

[3](#) Interview conducted by the author, May 20, 1995. All informants were promised anonymity, so names and locations of interviews are not included in citations.

[4](#) This characterization is based on content analysis of the literature of more than 100 white supremacist, anti-Semitic and Aryan separatist/supremacist groups in the United States collected by the author.

[5](#) Although not guided by feminist theory, Jeanssonne's (1996) study of women's participation in the pro-fascist U.S. "mother's movement" during World War II also points to both status and psychological (scapegoating) factors.

[6](#) Lists of contemporary racist groups exist in the Wilcox Collection at the University of Kansas, but the ephemeral nature of many groups and their constant relocation to evade authorities makes any list outdated almost as soon as it is published.

[7](#) Because racist groups change their names and memberships very quickly, it is impossible to tell exactly how many distinct groups are represented in this list.

[8](#) Such problems have prompted many researchers to focus primarily on the literature produced by hate groups, but this

provides little reliable information on what motivates people to join hate groups. or how members are recruited.

[9](#) This is similar to Taylor's (1989) conception of "abeyance structures" in social movements, although the focus here is on individual participation rather than movement continuity.

[10](#) Family ties were a common route into racial activism, but by no means were all racial activists raised in white supremacist households. More than one-third of my informants identify their parents' ideological leanings as progressive or leftist.

[11](#) This, and all names, are pseudonyms.

[12](#) Interview conducted by the author, March 10, 1995.

[13](#) Interview conducted by the author, December 5, 1994.

[14](#) Interview conducted by the author, March 1, 1995.

[15](#) Interview conducted by the author, September 3, 1994.

[16](#) Interview conducted by the author, November 20, 1994.

[17](#) Interviews conducted by the author, February 10 and 11, May 30, February 17, April 20 and June 28, 1995. Such sentiments should not be confused with the fraudulent expressions of affinity for victims that are frequently found in retrospectives of war or violent activity (e.g., Luchterhand and Wieland 1981, 281).

[18](#) Interview conducted by the author, February 17, 1995.

[19](#) Interview conducted by the author, December 11, 1994.

[20](#) By contrast, dissent within the tightly organized Nazi party after the mid-1930s was possible only among intimate groups, if at all (Peukert 1982, 77).

[21](#) Interviews conducted by the author, March 4 and 5 and April 20 and 22, 1995.

[22](#) Interviews conducted by the author, June 18 and January 15, 1995.

[23](#) Interviews conducted by the author, June 1 and April 17, 1995.

[24](#) Interviews conducted by the author, January 15, June 20, and June 1, 1995.

[25](#) Although it is beyond the scope of this article, several studies examine the contradictions between the desire for female participation in racist/fascist movements and the idealization of apolitical maternal women in the ideologies of these movements (see Blee 1991; Koonz 1984).

[26](#) Interview conducted by the author, January 5, 1995.

[27](#) Interview conducted by the author April 2, 1995.

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Electoral sociology – who votes for the Extreme Right and why – and when?

Kai Arzheimer

This chapter profiles the social base of electoral support for the parties of the Extreme Right¹ in Western Europe, i. e. the question of whether some groups in society are more susceptible to the appeal of these parties than others. This issue is relevant for a number of reasons: First, by looking at the social composition of European societies we might be able to better understand why parties of the Extreme Right are more successful in some countries than in others. Second, a careful analysis of the link between the social and the political might help us to gauge the potential for future right-wing mobilization in countries which currently have no electorally successful parties of the Extreme Right. Third, knowing who votes for a party might help us to get a clearer understanding of the underlying motives to cast a vote for the Extreme Right.

Over the last fifteen years or so, analyses of the Extreme Right's electorate(s) have become a minor industry within the larger context of (comparative) Political Sociology. By necessity, this chapter aims at summarizing the main findings from this research program, but cannot strive for a comprehensive presentation of all that has been achieved during these years. More specifically, findings from national and small-n studies are (almost) completely ignored. Much by the same token, I will not delve into the fascinating literature on the social bases of the Interwar Extreme Right in Germany and in other countries.²

Recent events in Central and Eastern Europe provide an intriguing complement to this Western perspective.³ However, much like Central and Eastern European parties and electorates themselves, our (comparative) knowledge of the social base of the Extreme Right in CEE is still very much in flux. Therefore, the chapter aims to provide a comparative perspective on developments in Western European electoral politics since the 1980s.

I. Theory

1. Definitions

Much of the early literature on the Extreme Right is devoted to the twin debates on the correct label and on the proper criteria for membership in this party family. Initially, the newly successful parties of the “Third Wave” that began in the late 1970s were seen as closely linked to the Extreme Right of the Interwar years.⁴ While such connections do exist in many cases, scholars soon began to pinpoint the differences between a) the current and the Interwar right and b) between different members of the emerging new party family. As a result, scholars came up with a plethora of definitions, typologies and labels, including (but not limited to) the “New Right”, “Radical Right”, “Populist Right” and “Extreme Right”, to mention only the most popular ones. As recently as 2007, Cas Mudde, one of the most prolific scholars in this area, made an attempt to bring a semblance of order to the field by suggesting that “nativism”, the belief that states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the “native” group, is the largest common denominator for the parties of the Third Wave including those in Central and Eastern Europe.⁵ Like a Russian doll, this family contains two subgroups which are nested into each other: Parties of the “Radical Right” combine nativism and authoritarianism, whereas the “Populist Radical Right” add populism as an additional ingredient to this mixture. In a departure from his earlier work, the label “Extreme Right” is reserved for anti-democratic (extremist) parties within the all-embracing nativist cluster.⁶

While Mudde’s proposal is remarkably clear and was very well received in the field,⁷ it matters most to students of parties. Scholars of voting behavior, on the other hand, tend to go with a rather pragmatic approach that was concisely summarized by Mudde a decade earlier: “We know *who* they are, even though we do not know exactly *what* they are”.⁸ As this quote suggests, there is (definitional questions notwithstanding) actually a very broad consensus as to which parties are normally included in analyses of the Right’s electoral base. These include the *Progress Party* in Norway, the *Danish People’s Party* and the *Progress Party* in Denmark, *New Democracy* and the *Sweden Democrats* in Sweden, the *National Front*, *National Democrats* and *British National Party* in Britain, the *National Front* and the *National Republican Movement* in France, the *German People’s Union*, *Republicans* and *National Democrats* in Germany, the Centre Parties, *Lijst Pim Fortuyn* and the *Freedom Party* in the Netherlands, the *Vlaams Blok/Belang* and the *National Front* in Belgium, the *Freedom Party* and the *Alliance for the Future* in Austria, the Italian *Social Movement/National Alliance*, the *Northern League* and the *Tricolour Flame* in Italy, the *Falange Parties* in Spain, *Political Spring*, the *Popular Orthodox Rally* and various smaller and short-lived parties in Greece, and the *Christian Democrats* (PDC) in Portugal. There is even a remarkable agreement on which parties should best be seen as borderline cases: the Scandinavian Progress Parties before they transformed themselves into anti-immigration parties during the early 1980s, the *National Alliance* after Fini began to develop its “post-fascist” profile in the mid-1990s, the Swiss

People's Party in Switzerland before it became dominated by its 'Zurich Wing' led by Blocher and the *True Finns* in Finland and the *Social Democratic Centre/Popular Party* in Portugal.

Amongst scholars of voting behavior, there is little doubt that these parties attract similar voters and should be grouped together in a single, albeit very heterogeneous, party family. "Extreme Right" is currently the most popular label for this group. Its use does not (necessarily) signify the respective parties' opposition to the principles of liberal democracy but rather adherence to a convention in the field.

This is not to imply that differences between these parties do not exist, do not matter for voting behavior or should be analyzed by different typologies. The German NPD, for instance, is unapologetically neo-fascist, whereas the Norwegian *Progress Party* is, at least on the surface, remarkably moderate and libertarian. Rather, it is next to impossible to incorporate the existing differences between parties into studies of voting behavior because it is very rare to concurrently observe two or more electorally viable parties of the Third Wave competing for votes. Therefore, party sub-type effects are inseparable from other constant and time-varying country effects.

2. Explanations

Over the last eight decades or so, historians, sociologists and political scientists have developed a multitude of theoretical accounts that aim to explain the electoral support for the Interwar and modern Extreme Right. While many of these accounts are highly complex, they can usefully be grouped into four broad categories.⁹

A first group of scholars focuses on largely stable and very general attributes of the Extreme Right's supporters, that is, personality traits and value orientations. The most prominent example of this line of research is without doubt the original study on the so-called "Authoritarian Personality's" support for the Nazi party by Adorno and his collaborators.¹⁰ More recent contributions include work by Altemeyer and Lederer, who both aim at developing "modern" scales for measuring authoritarianism.¹¹ In a related fashion, authors like Ignazi and Kitschelt have proposed a link between allegedly stable value orientations and voting for the Extreme Right.¹² Both authors interpret the success of the Extreme Right as part of an authoritarian-materialistic "backlash" against the Green and Left-Libertarian parties that emerged from the New Social Movements of the 1970s.¹³

If there is a correlation between one's social position on the one hand and one's personality traits and value orientation on the other, these approaches should go some way towards identifying the electoral base of the modern Extreme Right. And indeed, ever since the first studies on the social bases of the original Nazi movement were published, social scientists have suspected that the working class, the lower middle-classes and particularly the so-called

“petty bourgeoisie” exhibit stronger authoritarian tendencies than other social groups.¹⁴ This alleged link between class (and, by implication, formal education) was made explicit by Kitschelt, who argued that the very nature of jobs in certain segments of the private sector predisposes their occupants towards a mixture of market-liberal and authoritarian ideas that was at one stage promoted by the *National Front* in France and the *Freedom Party* in Austria.¹⁵

A second strand of the literature is mainly concerned with the effects of social disintegration, i.e. a (perceived) breakdown of social norms (“anomia”) and intense feelings of anxiety, anger and isolation brought about by social change. Allegedly, this mental state inspires a longing for strong leadership and rigid ideologies that are provided by the Extreme Right. A classic proponent of this approach is Parsons in his early study on the Nazi supporters. More recently, these ideas have returned in the guise of the “losers of modernization” hypothesis, i. e. the idea that certain segments of Western societies feel that their position is threatened by immigration and globalization and therefore turn to political parties which promise to insulate them from these developments.¹⁶

Interestingly, the losers of modernization hypothesis identifies more or less the same social groups – (unskilled) workers, the unemployed and other persons depending on welfare, parts of the lower middle classes – as the main target of Extreme Right mobilization efforts.

A third class of accounts draws heavily on theories from the field of social psychology. In this perspective, group conflicts are the real cause of support for the Extreme Right. Unlike the two aforementioned approaches, this strand is relatively heterogeneous. At one end of the spectrum, it includes classic theories of purely emotional, hardly conscious scapegoating.¹⁷ In this perspective, ethnic minorities including immigrants provide convenient targets for the free-floating aggression harbored by a society’s underclass. These minorities are at the same time a) suitably different from and b) even more power- and defenseless than the members of this group.

At the other end of the spectrum, theories of Realistic Group Conflict that can be traced to the early work of Sherif/Sherif emphasize the role of a (bounded) rationality in ethnic conflicts over scarce resources like jobs and benefits.¹⁸ This idea is especially prominent in more recent accounts.¹⁹

Theories of “ethnic competition”,²⁰ “status politics”,²¹ “subtle”, “modern”, “symbolic” or “cultural” racism²² and social identity²³ cover a middle ground between these two poles, while the notion of “relative deprivation” – the idea that one’s own group is not getting what they are entitled to in comparison with another social group – provides a useful conceptional umbrella for these somewhat disparate ideas.²⁴

Again, no matter what specific concept from this research tradition is applied, the usual suspects emerge: those social groups who deem themselves threatened by immigration and

related processes. But not all members of these groups vote for the Extreme Right. Rather, the Extreme Right vote shows a considerable degree of variation both between and within countries in Western Europe. Some of the differences between countries might be explained by differences in the social composition of the respective societies. However, these differences cannot explain the huge differences in Extreme Right support between otherwise reasonably similar countries: Norway is hardly more deprived than its neighbor Sweden. By the same token, it is difficult to imagine that the authoritarian underclass in Austria is six or seven times larger than its counterpart in neighboring Germany. Moreover, personality traits, value orientations, group membership and even social and economic position change slowly, if at all, whereas support for the Extreme Right often exhibits a great deal of variability within countries.

One factor that is often overlooked, perhaps because it seems too obvious, is the core variable of the social-psychological model of voting, i. e. party identifications. Historically, Western European parties of the centre left and the centre right have been able to absorb considerable authoritarian potentials in their respective societies, and even today, some voters who might otherwise be lured by the Extreme Right are simply not available for those parties because they are still firmly attached to one of the more established parties.²⁵ Similarly, ties to other organizations, notably churches and trade unions, are likely to reduce the probability of an Extreme Right vote. This implies that the ongoing processes of de-alignment in Western European societies will increase the potential for right-wing mobilization, everything else being equal.²⁶

However, varying degrees of de-alignment are not the only differences between Western European societies that can help to explain levels of support for the Extreme Right. Moreover, party identifications are also supposed to be stable over time. Therefore, processes of de-alignment and re-alignment cannot explain short-time fluctuations of Extreme Right support within the same country.

These insights have triggered interest in a fourth, additional perspective that has come to the fore in recent years and aims to complement the three major approaches. In Winkler's original survey of the literature, this emerging perspective was presented under the label of a "political culture" that constrains the posited effects of individual factors on the Extreme Right vote. However, since the mid-1990s, interest in a whole host of other, more tangible contextual factors has grown tremendously, and it is now widely believed that the interplay between group conflicts and system-level variables can help explain the striking differences in support for the Extreme Right over time and across countries. Building on previous work by Tarrow and Kriesi and his associates,²⁷ Arzheimer/Carter have argued that these factors should be subsumed under the concept of "political opportunity structures", which compromise short-, medium- and long-term contextual variables that amongst them capture the degree of openness of a given political system for political entrepreneurs.²⁸ As it turns out, however, the

concept of “opportunities” for new political actors might be too narrow: Many context factors like unemployment or immigration will not only provide the political elite with an incentive to mobilize, but will also have a direct and possibly more important impact on voters’ preferences. Empirically, it is not possible to separate these two causal mechanisms since we have no reliable information on the mental calculations made by (would-be) politicians. Therefore, it seems reasonable to subsume the notion of opportunity structures under the even more general concept of contextual factors.

Over the last fifteen years or so, studies have looked at a whole host of such contextual variables, including but not limited to:

1. Opportunity structures
 - a. In a strict sense: political decentralization and electoral thresholds²⁹
 - b. In a wider sense: positions of other parties,³⁰ media coverage³¹ and “discursive opportunity structures”³²
2. Variables related to the Extreme Right parties themselves (e.g. availability of “charismatic leaders”, policy positions, reliance on populism, party sub-type)
3. Macroeconomic variables: unemployment, growth, and their trends
4. Other political variables: immigration figures

All accounts of the role of contextual variables assume – sometimes explicitly but more often implicitly – some sort of multi-level explanation in the spirit of Coleman’s ideal type of sociological explanations.³³ Put simply, these explanations assume that changes at the macro-level (a declining economy, rising immigration figures, a new anti-immigrant party) bring about changes in individual preferences, which lead to (aggregate) changes in individual political behavior, i. e. an increase in electoral support for the Extreme Right. Since different groups in society have different prior propensities to vote for the Extreme Right, and since they react differently to changes in the social and political environment, both micro and macro information are required to fully model and understand the processes that transform latent or potential support for the Extreme Right into real, manifest votes.

II. Data

All empirical analyses of the nexus between the social and the political require data that fall into two broad categories: aggregate (macro) data which provide information on the behavior and properties of collectives (electoral districts, provinces, countries...), and micro data, which

relate to individuals and are typically based on standardized interviews. Both categories can be further subdivided by including additional dimensions:

1. Macro data

- a. Source: census data, electoral results, macro-economic and government data
- b. Temporal coverage: cross-sectional vs. longitudinal data
- c. Geographical coverage: one, few or many countries
- d. Level of aggregation: wards, constituencies, subnational units or the whole country

2. Micro data

- a. Source: national opinion polls vs. comparative multi-national studies
- b. Temporal coverage: cross-sectional, trend and panel studies
- c. Geographical coverage: one, few or many countries
- d. Level of aggregation: individual cases vs. aggregated survey results

The analytical leverage of the data depends on these sub-dimensions as well as on the reliability of the information and the level of detail they provide. As a result of technological progress and huge individual and collective investments into the infrastructure of social science research, the quality and availability of comparative data on the electorates of the Extreme Right in Western Europe have vastly improved over the last decade. Consequentially, scholars of the Extreme Right are nowadays in a much better position to analyze the social base of these parties than fifteen or even five years ago.

Nonetheless, they still face some awkward trade-offs. Generally speaking, micro-level data is preferable to macro-level data, especially if the level of aggregation is high. After all, aggregate measures are usually restricted to human behavior but provide no information on the motives behind the aggregated actions.³⁴

Moreover, aggregation discards individual information. Therefore, inferences from correlations at the macro-level to the behavior of individuals are plagued by the infamous ecological fallacy unless the aggregates are homogeneous.³⁵ This is most easily illustrated by an example: At the level of the 96 departments of metropolitan France, there is a sizable positive correlation between the number of foreign-born persons and the vote for the *National Front*. It is, however, highly unlikely that immigrants have an above-average propensity to vote for the Extreme Right. Rather, the aggregate correlation reflects a mixture of a) the below-average propensity of immigrants to vote for the *National Front*³⁶ and b) a hostile reaction of other voters to the presence of immigrants. Without individual-level data, it is not possible to disentangle these two effects.³⁷

A famous historical example for the perils of aggregate correlations concerns two time-series that moved in sync: electoral support for the NSDAP and the unemployment rate in Weimar Germany. Their positive relationship suggests that the unemployed turned to the Nazi party as their economical situation declined.³⁸ However, at lower levels of aggregation (Länder and Kreise), the relationship between unemployment and the NSDAP vote was actually negative. Presumably, the unemployed were less likely to vote for the NSDAP while those who (yet) had a job had a higher propensity to support the Nazis that further increased as the economy deteriorated.³⁹

So why would anyone want to base their analyses on macro data? As it turns out, quite often there is no alternative because (comparable) surveys were simply not conducted at some point in time relevant to the intended analysis, at least not in all countries that are supposed to be studied under a given design. The United Kingdom is a point in case. Until recently, the parties of the Extreme Right in this country were so weak that it was next to impossible to study their supporters by means of survey data.

Moreover, survey studies suffer from a number of limitations of their own: Even seemingly simple questions do not translate well into other languages, interviewers are tempted to take shortcuts, respondents might not be able (or willing) to accurately recall past behavior and might be too embarrassed to admit to racist feelings and (presumably) unpopular opinions, and so on. As a result, survey data are often plagued by relatively high levels of systematic and random error. Macro data on the other hand are usually collected by government agencies and are therefore highly reliable. In summary, researchers are forced to choose between richness and reliability, in-depth and “broad picture” perspectives, theoretical adequacy and data availability.

But not all is bleak. (Relatively) recent initiatives in the collection, dissemination and processing of survey data have gone a long way to improve the situation of the subfield. The European Social Survey⁴⁰ with its module on immigration (2002/2003) provides a pan-European, state-of-the-art perspective on the hearts and minds of the voters of the Extreme Right. Similarly, the Mannheim Trend File⁴¹ represents a major effort to harmonize and document the multitude of Eurobarometer surveys that have been collected in the EC/EU member states since the early 1970s. Finally, electoral support for the Extreme Right is now often analyzed by means of statistical multi-level models,⁴² which allow for the joint analyses of micro and macro data, thereby alleviating some of the problems outlined above.

III. Findings

While men were always overrepresented amongst the French *National Front's* voters, it is

well documented that its electoral base has changed considerably over time.⁴³ Initially, the Front appealed primarily to the petty bourgeoisie, but it quickly transformed itself into a non-traditional workers' party. In between, it managed to attract occasional support from segments of the middle classes. The Front has been dubbed the "master case" of a successful New Right Party, and its strategies have been adopted by other parties of the European Right.⁴⁴

Therefore, it seems at least plausible that other parties of the right have followed a similar trajectory of "proletarianization".⁴⁵ At any rate, it seems safe to assume that new, relatively unknown parties rest on relatively fluid and less than well-defined social bases, whereas older parties that have competed for votes in three or four consecutive elections build a more consolidated electoral base, often with a distinct social profile.

As it turns out, the electorates of most parties of the Extreme Right do indeed consist of a clearly defined social core that is remarkably similar to the French pattern. The most successful of these parties – the *Freedom Party* in Austria, the Norwegian *Progress Party* and some others – have regularly managed to attract votes from beyond this core so that their profile became less sharp, whereas those that project the most radical political images (e. g. the German NPD or the British BNP) were bound to frighten off the middle classes and have therefore been unable to achieve this feat. This notwithstanding, a very clear picture emerges from three decades of national and comparative studies of the Extreme Right.

1. Socio-demographics

1.1 Gender

Most national studies have found huge differences in the propensity of men and women to vote for the Extreme Right, even if other factors such as occupation, education and age are controlled for. While findings vary across time, parties, countries and details of operationalization and model specification, men seem to be roughly 40% more likely to vote for the Extreme Right than female voters.⁴⁶ Even amongst the voters of the Norwegian *Progress Party* and the *Danish People's Party* (which have been both led by women for the last four/fifteen years respectively), about two thirds are male.⁴⁷ An important exception from this general observation, however, is the Italian *National Alliance*, which appeals to both men and women. This somewhat unusual finding seems to coincide with the party leadership's attempts to re-define the Alliance as a Christian-conservative party that eventually paved the way for the AN's merger with *Forza Italia* in 2009.

Comparative studies that rely on various data sources confirm this general pattern.⁴⁸ A whole host of explanations for this phenomenon have been proposed in the literature,

spanning a multitude of approaches from psychoanalysis to rational choice. Common arguments include that

- some parties of the Extreme Right (like the Interwar Right) still project images of hyper-masculinity that are intrinsically off-putting for women;
- women are moving towards the left of men in most post-industrial societies;⁴⁹
- women are inherently conservative and therefore more likely to be offended by the Extreme Right’s radicalism and more likely to identify with parties of the centre-right.

Related to the last point is a methodological argument: If effects of conformism and social desirability are stronger in women, they might simply be less likely to admit that they support the Extreme Right in an interview situation. However, analyses of the “German Representative Electoral Statistics”, a special sub-sample of ballot papers that bear marks which record the gender and age-bracket of the elector, have shown that the gender gap is real, at least in Germany. Moreover, gender effects do not completely disappear when attitudes are controlled for. As Betz noted more than fifteen years ago, the magnitude of the right-wing voting gender gap is and remains “a complex and intriguing puzzle”⁵⁰.

1.2 Education

Like gender, education is a powerful predictor of the Extreme Right vote in Western Europe. Virtually all national and comparative studies demonstrate that citizens with university education are least likely to vote for the Extreme Right. Conversely, the Extreme Right enjoys above average levels of support in lower educational strata.

This relationship is neither perfect nor necessarily linear. Some parties of the Extreme Right – most notably the Austrian *Freedom Party* – have managed to attract considerable numbers of graduates in some elections. Moreover, there is scattered evidence that the Extreme Right is even more popular amongst those with middle levels of educational attainment than in the lowest educational strata, although differences between these two groups are rarely statistically significant. By and large, however, the statistical association between educational attainment and right-wing voting is remarkably strong.

There are basically three types of explanations for this relationship. A first approach claims that citizens with higher levels of educational attainment for various reasons tend to hold more liberal values than others⁵¹ and are therefore less likely to support the authoritarian policies of the Extreme Right.

A second argument holds that supporters of the Extreme Right are primarily motivated by ethnic competition.⁵² Since immigration into Western Europe is mostly low-skilled, it poses a

threat only to those with low to medium levels of attainment. In fact, low-skilled immigration might be seen as a benefitting graduates, as it might bring down wages in some sectors of the service industry (e.g. childcare or housekeeping), thereby increasing their ability to purchase these services.

Third, graduates might be more susceptible to effects of social desirability, which would lead them to under-report support for the Extreme Right. This attainment-specific bias would result in overestimating the effect of education.

1.3 Class and age

Social class is a notoriously complex concept, but voting studies usually rely on either some variant of the classification developed by Erikson/Goldthorpe/Portocarero⁵³ or some simple typology that pits the “working class” against one or more other broadly defined occupational groups. Either way, class (in this sense) is closely related to formal education.

As outlined above, many parties initially appealed primarily to the so-called “petty bourgeoisie” of artisans, shopkeepers, farmers and other self-employed citizens. As this group has been subject to a constant and steady numerical decline in all European societies, the Extreme Right has been forced to broaden its social base. Nowadays, non-traditional workers, other members of the lower middle classes and the unemployed form the most important segment of the Extreme Right’s electorate. Conversely, managers, professionals, owners of larger businesses and members of the middle and higher ranks of the public service are the groups least likely to vote for the Extreme Right. This chimes with the effect of educational attainment, although both variables are not perfectly correlated and operate independently of each other.

Apart from the effect of class, many studies demonstrate an effect of age, with younger (<30) voters being more likely to vote for the Extreme Right. Presumably, this age group is less firmly attached to the established parties, has a more intensive sense of ethnic competition, is subject to lower levels of social control and more prone to experiment with their vote.

1.4 Social ties and other socio-demographic factors

Various studies have looked at the respective effects of other socio-demographic factors, often inspired by a variety of disintegration, reference-group or cleavage theories. For rather obvious reasons, trade union membership is often a strong deterrent to right-wing voting. Slightly less self-explanatory is the negative effect of church attendance, which contradicts

earlier American findings. As Arzheimer/Carter demonstrate, this effect is mostly due to pre-existing party loyalties that tie religious voters to Christian/Conservative parties.⁵⁴

Other alleged factors include household size and marital status, which are both interpreted as indicators of social isolation and anomia. The effects of these variables are, however, weak and inconsistent.

2. Attitudes

Especially during their early years, parties of the Extreme Right were often seen as vehicles for “pure”, allegedly non-political protest.⁵⁵ To be sure, the parties of the Extreme Right have very mixed roots,⁵⁶ and attitudes such as distrust in and disaffection with existing parties and Euro-Skepticism have strong effects on the probability of a right-wing vote. Yet, as immigration emerged as their central issue during the 1980s, anti-immigrant sentiment arose as the single most powerful predictor of the right-wing vote.

Anti-immigrant sentiment is a complex attitude, and there is no consensus as to which sub-dimensions it entails and how it should be operationalized. Just as not all parties and politicians of the Extreme Right are extremists, not all immigration skeptics are xenophobes or racists.⁵⁷ But whatever their exact nature is, concerns about the presence of non-Western immigrants go a long way towards understanding support for the Extreme Right. While not all citizens who harbor such worries do in fact vote for the Extreme Right (many support parties of the Centre Left or Centre Right), there are next to no right-wing voters who have a positive view of immigrants and immigration. Even if the “single-issue thesis”⁵⁸ of right-wing support does not paint an accurate picture of these parties and their voters, it is difficult to overstate the importance of immigration for the modern (post-1980) Extreme Right.

Finally, identifications with either a party of the Extreme Right or another party compromise another important class of attitudes that help to understand and predict the Extreme Right vote. As outlined above, party identifications are often ignored in models of right-wing voting, presumably because their likely effects are self-evident. This is, however, a grave mistake, as this omission can seriously bias the estimates for other variables and ignores the fact that many right-wing parties have consolidated their electoral base over the last decades.

3. Contextual factors

Since the mid-1990s, contextual (mostly system level) factors have aroused a great deal of interest as they were increasingly seen as key variables for explaining the huge variation in

right-wing support. Some technical issues notwithstanding, the analysis by Jackman/Volpert was groundbreaking in many ways.⁵⁹ In an aggregate study that spans 103 elections held in 16 countries between 1970 and 1990, Jackman/Volpert analyze the impact of various economic and institutional variables on the Extreme Right vote. Their main results are that the Extreme Right benefits from high unemployment, PR voting and multi-partyism, whereas high electoral thresholds are detrimental for the Extreme Right.

Later studies have elaborated on these findings by dealing with some of the technical and conceptual problems,⁶⁰ using aggregated survey data,⁶¹ and considering a mediating effect of the welfare state.⁶² Around the turn of the century, the view that immigration (usually operationalized by the number of refugees or asylum seeker applying or actually taking residence in a country) has a substantial positive effect on right-wing voting was firmly established, whereas the effects of inflation and of (aggregate) unemployment appeared to be much less consistent.

The useful study by Lubbers/Gijsberts/Scheepers represents another important step forward, as these authors were the first to model right-wing voting in a multi-level perspective that combines individual-level and system-level predictors.⁶³ From a methodological point of view, multi-level modelling is currently the most appropriate approach to the research problem. The study by Lubbers et al. was also important because they complemented their model with political factors, namely characteristics of the Extreme Right parties.

This approach was taken one step further again by Arzheimer/Carter, who include various measures for the ideological positions of other parties as well as institutional characteristics, unemployment and immigration rates into a comprehensive model of “opportunity structures” for the Extreme Right.⁶⁴

As it turns out, immigration and unemployment work in the expected direction, though their effect is moderated by welfare state interventions that insulate vulnerable social groups from their impact. Moreover, the established parties have a substantial impact on the success of their right-wing competitors: If they publicly address issues such as immigration, the Extreme Right benefits presumably because it gains some legitimacy and relevance in the eyes of the public. If, however, they simply ignore the issues of the Extreme Right, these parties seem to suffer.⁶⁵

The studies discussed in this section provide a detailed and nuanced account of the interplay between social, economic, institutional, political and individual factors required to transform the Extreme Right’s electoral potential into actual votes. There is, however, a rather large elephant in the room: the media. If, as Arzheimer argues, party manifestos (that are usually of little relevance for the general public) have a sizeable impact on the right-wing vote, it is reasonable to assume that media effects of agenda setting and priming are even more important. Country-level studies for the Netherlands and for Germany demonstrate that this is

indeed the case.⁶⁶ There are, however, no comparative studies on media effects (yet) because the necessary data are not available.

IV. Summary and outlook

Conceptual and data problems notwithstanding, Political Sociology has come up with a clear image of the “typical” voter of the Extreme Right: male, young(ish), of moderate educational achievement and concerned about immigrants and immigration. While some parties of the Extreme Right have been remarkably successful in making inroads into other strata, this group forms the core of the right-wing electorates in Western Europe, making the Extreme Right a family of non-traditional working class parties.

As the size of this group is largely stable and roughly similar across countries, the interest in contextual factors that may trigger the conversion of potential into manifest support has grown during the last decade. While immigration, unemployment and other economic factors emerge time and again as variables that play a central role, recent studies demonstrate that political factors, which are (up to a degree) subject to political control and manipulation, act as important moderators.

The most glaring omission so far is the lack of comparative studies on the impact that media coverage of immigrants and immigration policies has on the prospects of the Extreme Right. Another area where more research is needed concerns the effects of smaller spatial contexts on the right-wing vote. After all, social, political and economic conditions vary massively at the sub-national, e. g. across provinces, districts, towns and even neighborhoods. It stands to reason that citizens rely on these local conditions, which have a massive impact on their everyday lives, to evaluate politicians, parties and policies at the national level. This approach has been fruitfully employed at the national level.⁶⁷ Comparative studies, however, have been hampered by vastly different subnational divisions and a lack of comparable micro- and macro-data. New initiatives for the geo-referencing of survey data and the pan-European harmonization of small-area government data will hopefully help us to overcome that impasse in the future.

Notes

¹ A staggering number of labels and definitions have been applied to the parties whose electorates are analyzed in this chapter (see section 1.1). For simplicity’s sake, I use the term “Extreme Right”, arguably the most prominent in the international literature. This does not imply that all or indeed a majority of the relevant parties are “extremist”, i. e.

opposed to the values of Liberal Democracy.

[2](#) See Childers, The Nazi Voter; Falter, Hitlers Wähler; King/Tanner/Wagner, Ordinary Economic Voting Behavior; Küchler, The NSDAP Vote in the Weimar Republic; O'Loughlin, The Electoral Geography of Weimar Germany.

[3](#) See Mudde, Racist Extremism in Central and Eastern Europe.

[4](#) Prowe, ‘Classic’ Fascism.

[5](#) Mudde, Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe, pp. 18–24.

[6](#) Ibid., p. 24.

[7](#) Cf. the symposium in Political Studies Review 2009.

[8](#) Mudde, The Paradox of the Anti-Party Party, p. 233.

[9](#) See Winkler, Bausteine einer allgemeinen Theorie des Rechtsextremismus.

[10](#) See Adorno et al., The Authoritarian Personality.

[11](#) See Altemeyer, The Authoritarian Specter; Lederer/Schmidt, Autoritarismus und Gesellschaft; and Meloen/Linden/Witte, A Test of the Approaches of Adorno et al.

[12](#) See Ignazi, The Silent Counter-Revolution; and Kitschelt, The Radical Right in Western Europe.

[13](#) See Inglehart, The Silent Revolution.

[14](#) See e. g. Parsons, Some Sociological Aspects of the Fascist Movements.

[15](#) See Kitschelt, The Radical Right in Western Europe, pp. 4–7.

[16](#) See Scheuch/Klingemann, Theorie des Rechtsradikalismus in westlichen Industriegesellschaften, for the original, rather complex approach; and Betz, Radical Right-Wing Populism in Western Europe, for a modern and more streamlined take.

[17](#) See e. g. Dollard et al., Frustration and Aggression.

[18](#) See e. g. Sherif/Sherif, Groups in Harmony and Tension.

[19](#) E.g. Esses/Jackson/Armstrong, Intergroup Competition.

[20](#) See Bélanger/Pinard, Ethnic Movements and the Competition Model.

[21](#) See Lipset/Bendix, Social Status and Social Structure.

[22](#) See Kinder/Sears, Prejudice and Politics.

[23](#) See Tajfel et al., Social Categorization and Intergroup Behaviour.

[24](#) See Pettigrew, Summing Up.

[25](#) See Arzheimer/Carter, Christian Religiosity and Voting.

[26](#) See Dalton/Flanagan/Beck, Electoral Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies.

[27](#) See Kriesi et al., New Social Movements and Political Opportunities in Western Europe; Tarrow, Power in Movement.

[28](#) See Arzheimer/Carter, Political Opportunity Structures, p. 422.

[29](#) See e. g. Carter, The Extreme Right in Western Europe.

[30](#) See Arzheimer, Contextual Factors and the Extreme Right Vote; Arzheimer/Carter, Political Opportunity Structures; and Lubbers/Gijsberts/Scheepers, Extreme Right-Wing Voting in Western Europe.

[31](#) See Boomgaarden/Vliegenthart, Explaining the Rise of Anti-Immigrant Parties; How News Content Influences Anti-Immigration Attitudes.

[32](#) See Koopmans/Muis, The rise of right-wing populist Pim Fortuyn; Koopmans/Olzak, Discursive Opportunities; Ter Wal, The Discourse of the Extreme Right; and Wimmer, Explaining Xenophobia and Racism.

[33](#) See Coleman, Foundations of Social Theory.

[34](#) Aggregated survey data are a somewhat degenerated special case.

[35](#) Robinson, Ecological Correlation and the Behavior of Individuals.

[36](#) This is illustrated by very low levels of support for the “Front National” in those departments around Paris that have the highest shares of immigrants.

[37](#) See the exchange between Arzheimer and Carter, How (not) to operationalise subnational political opportunity structures; Kestilä/Söderlund, Subnational Political Opportunity Structures; and Kestilä-Kekkonen/Söderlund, Rejoinder.

[38](#) See Frey/Weck, Hat Arbeitslosigkeit den Aufstieg des Nationalsozialismus bewirkt?

[39](#) See Falter/Zintl, The Economic Crisis; and Falter et al., Arbeitslosigkeit und Nationalsozialismus.

[40](#) See <http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org>.

[41](#) See <http://www.gesis.org/en/services/data/survey-data/eurobarometer-data-service/eb-trends-trend-files/mannheim-eb-trend-file>.

[42](#) See Arzheimer, Contextual Factors and the Extreme Right Vote; and Lubbers/Gijsberts/Scheepers, Extreme Right-Wing Voting in Western Europe.

[43](#) See Mayer, The Front National in the Plural; and Mayer/Perrineau, Why Do They Vote for Le Pen?

[44](#) See Rydgren, Is Extreme Right-Wing Populism Contagious?

[45](#) See Oesch, Explaining Workers’ Support for Right-Wing Populist Parties in Western Europe.

[46](#) See Givens, The Radical Right Gender Gap.

[47](#) See Heidar/Pedersen, Party Feminism.

[48](#) See Arzheimer, Contextual Factors and the Extreme Right Vote; and Lubbers/Gijsberts/Scheepers, Extreme Right-Wing Voting in Western Europe.

[49](#) See Inglehart/Norris, The Developmental Theory of the Gender Gap.

[50](#) Betz, Radical Right-Wing Populism in Western Europe, p. 146.

[51](#) See Weakliem, The Effects of Education on Political Opinions.

[52](#) See Bélanger/Pinard, Ethnic Movements and the Competition Model.

[53](#) See Erikson/Goldthorpe/Portocarero, Intergenerational Class Mobility.

[54](#) See Arzheimer/Carter, Christian Religiosity and Voting.

[55](#) See Van der Brug/Fennema, Protest or Mainstream? for a highly critical assessment of this thesis.

[56](#) Anti-tax movements in the case of the Scandinavian Progress Parties, regionalism for the Leagues in Italy and the “Vlaams Blok/Belang” in Flanders, a social movement to improve local infrastructure for the Dutch LPF and Liberalism for the Austrian Freedom Party, to name just a few.

[57](#) See Rydgren, Immigration Sceptics, Xenophobes or Racists?

[58](#) Mudde, The Single-Issue Party Thesis.

[59](#) See Jackman/Volpert, Conditions Favouring Parties.

[60](#) See Golder, Explaining Variation.

[61](#) See Knigge, The Ecological Correlates of Right-Wing Extremism.

[62](#) See Swank/Betz, Globalization, the Welfare State and Right-Wing Populism.

[63](#) See Lubbers/Gijsberts/Scheepers, Extreme Right-Wing Voting.

[64](#) See Arzheimer/Carter, Political Opportunity Structures.

[65](#) See Arzheimer, Contextual Factors and the Extreme Right Vote.

[66](#) See Boomgaarden/Vliegenthart, Explaining the Rise of Anti-Immigrant Parties; How News Content Influences Anti-Immigration Attitudes.

[67](#) See Kestilä/Söderlund, Local Determinants of Radical Right-Wing Voting; and Lubbers/Scheepers, French Front National Voting.

The radical right gender gap

Terri E. Givens

Introduction

Radical right parties gained ground in several countries during the 1980s and 1990s. In France and Denmark they have received from 9% to 15% of the vote and have even become part of governing coalitions in Austria and Italy. This electoral success has led to a great deal of scholarly interest in the radical right. Many authors have noted that radical right parties tend to be more attractive to male voters. The difference between men and women's votes for radical right parties has been generalized as a reflection of the messages of the radical right, which women may negatively construe as ultraconservative and antifeminist (Kitschelt, 1995; Mayer, 1998; Plasser, Ulram, & Sommer, 2000; Simmons, 2001).

There are grounds for these generalizations. For example, radical right parties tend to have male-dominated hierarchical structures. They also tend to be antiabortion and to support plans for giving women money (*kinderschecks*) for each child they have. However, these types of positions have not kept women from voting for conservative parties in the past. As I discuss in more detail in the following, several studies have shown that until recently, women have tended to vote in higher percentages than men for conservative parties.

Although the aforementioned authors describe a gender gap in the vote for the radical right, none of these studies have used the tools developed in the literature on gender gaps to determine if this gender gap exists when controlling for structural, situational, or political variables. Studies of gender gaps and differences in voting behavior between men and women have generally focused on mainstream parties or broad differences in left-right placement. In this article, I first examine if there is a gender gap in the vote for radical right parties. This analysis uses techniques drawn from the literature on gender gaps in voting. Authors such as De Vaus and McAllister (1989); Studlar, McAllister, and Hayes (1998); and Howell and Day (2000) have used survey data and regression analysis to explore the complexities of the gender gap. These types of analyses provide a theoretical basis for understanding the structural factors, situational factors, and political issues that influence voting behavior.

My analysis of the radical right gender gap also examines the impact of the immigration issue on the vote for the radical right. Immigration has been an issue used by the radical right to attract voters. One hypothesis to be explored is that the gender gap in the vote for the radical right (where it exists) is driven by gender differences in attitudes toward immigration.

I also examine several hypotheses drawn from the gender gap literature. One of the main arguments is that a gender gap in left/right voting can be explained by differences in employment levels and other socioeconomic factors. Women are less likely to work, which has been shown to be an explanatory factor in the left/right gender gap. Women are also less likely to be blue-collar workers, who have become an important constituency for the radical right. Differences in positions on political issues/policies are also used to explain the gender gap. I explore differences in attitudes toward democracy and the economy along with attitudes toward immigration. The goal of this analysis is to determine what can be explained by these factors versus gender alone.

Few studies of radical right parties have attempted to explain in any detail why men are more likely to vote for the radical right than women. [Table 1](#) displays gender differences in the vote for radical right parties in Austria, France, and Germany from exit surveys. In elections from 1988 to 1999 the radical right's electorate (based on survey evidence) has been around 40% female and 60% male. The only case in which the percentage of men and women was equal was in the 1993 French legislative election.¹ Also, it is possible that this gap may disappear when controlling for differences in level of employment and other socioeconomic or political variables.

Despite the positions they may take, radical right parties are not unaware of the importance of the women's vote. Women have sometimes played important roles in the leadership of radical right parties. The Austrian Freedom party has had a woman as party chief, and several women in the French Front National (FN) have stood for office (however, this is usually in place of their husbands who have been banned for campaign irregularities). Women may not play a major role as candidates in these parties, but this is true for most political parties. In general, the radical right parties have not ignored women in their quest for electoral success. Despite these moves, the gender gap has not closed.

[Table 1](#) Gender basis of radical right vote (percentage)

Year and type of election	Gender	Austria (<i>Freiheitliche Partei Österreich</i>)	France (Front National)	Germany (<i>Republikaner</i>)
1988 (Leg.)	Female		39	
	Male		61	
1989 (Euro)	Female		43	36

	Male		57	64
1990 (Leg.)	Female	40		42
	Male	60		57
1992 (Reg.)	Female		47	
	Male		53	
1993 (Leg.)	Female	44	50	
	Male	56	50	
1994 (Euro)	Female		42	40
	Male		58	60 ^a
1994 (Leg.)	Female	40		
	Male	60		
1995 (Pres.)	Female	38	40	
	Male	62	60	
1997 (Leg.)	Female		40	
	Male		60	
1999 (Leg.)	Female	38		
	Male	62		

Note: Leg. = legislative; Euro = European; Reg. = regional; Pres. = presidential.

^a Estimate based on previous election data.

Source: Betz (1994), Perrineau (1997), and Plasser, Ulram, and Sommer (2000).

Many authors who have written analyses of the radical right have commented on the gender gap in the vote for radical right parties. For example, Kitschelt (1995) notes “the importance of the authoritarian antifeminist thrust in the contemporary extreme right” (p. 76). Kolinsky (1993) argues that policy competence has become more important to women, “thus parties of the extreme right have elicited more support from men than from women, and this gender difference has remained in place regardless of the lifespan of the party” (p. 123). These analyses would indicate that men and women have different attitudes toward particular issues, but such conclusions have not been tested empirically.

Other authors argue that the radical right’s nostalgia for the past is not attractive to female voters. Perrineau (1997) notes that the increase in women’s participation in the workforce and the fight for equality has led to insecurity in men. He argues that changes in the way politicians deal with nationalism have led some male voters to search for a “father figure” supplied by the Front National in the form of the party leader, Le Pen (Perrineau, 1997). Although Perrineau points to women’s participation in the workforce as a factor in the radical right vote, he focuses on men’s insecurity rather than the smaller number of women who fit

the profile of workers attracted to the radical right.

Betz (1994), on the other hand, argues that women's workforce participation plays an important role in the gender gap. He states, "Since the proportion of women actively engaged in the workforce is generally lower than that of men, it should come as no surprise that women are underrepresented among radical right-wing voters" (p. 145). However, Betz does not make the next logical step, that it is not just workforce participation but also the structure of that participation that may play a role in the gender gap.

In her analysis of the vote for the French Front National, Nonna Mayer (1999) finds that women are much less likely to be part of the group that is most likely to vote for the FN—blue-collar workers. She also finds that in the 1997 legislative election, the vote for the FN was higher among women younger than age 40 with no college degree than men in the same category (29% vs. 26%). The vote was equal between male and female blue-collar workers younger than 40 who were born and married into lower-class families. This would indicate that the gender gap might be partially due to the limited number of female blue-collar workers in France.

Despite these initial findings, Mayer (1999) argues that the physical and verbal violence of the FN acts as a check on women's support for the party. Rather than expanding on her findings related to occupational structure, she returns to an explanation that focuses on the violent nature of the party. However, other parties, such as the Austrian Freedom party, do not project the same image of violence that the FN does, and the percentage of men versus women voting for these parties is similar.

Harvey Simmons (2001) has conducted a more recent examination of women and the extreme right. He begins his analysis by examining the relationship between women and the Nazi party. The more current section of the analysis focuses on the vote for the Front National in France by examining recent work on women who support the Front National. He finds however that "in-depth studies of NF women supporters and militants are based on small or vaguely defined samples" (p. 11). Although he finds that Mayer's (1999) analysis of survey data is useful, he notes that

French survey data for the various elections could provide a mine of information on the socio-economic and attitudinal characteristics of extreme right women, and provide as well a basis for comparison with extreme right men and with mainstream men and women.

(p. 18)

This analysis attempts to take up this challenge.

Each of the analyses described earlier theorizes about the women's vote without providing much data to support their arguments. This article provides empirical support for my arguments and tests a variety of alternative hypotheses. In the following section, I begin by examining research on women's voting patterns. The next section develops the hypotheses to

be tested as well as alternative hypotheses, followed by a section in which the hypotheses are tested using survey evidence. The final section concludes.

Background

To understand the radical right gender gap, I begin with an examination of women's general voting patterns and the impact these might have on the vote for radical right parties. In this section, I begin with a general summary of women's voting patterns and then discuss authors' analyses of gender gaps cross-nationally and in individual countries.

Women's voting patterns

Joni Lovenduski (1999) notes "much of the research on women and voting between 1945 and 1979 was very perfunctory, what there was tended to rest on untested popular psychological assumptions about women and politics and implicit beliefs about appropriate behavior" (p. 196). During this time period, women tended to vote for conservative parties, and studies tended to focus on explaining this vote. More recent studies of the "women's vote" in Europe have shown that this gender gap in the vote for conservative versus left parties varies across Europe. In Britain, Italy, and France, women tend to vote more often for conservative parties than men do. However, women tend to vote more often for left parties in Denmark, Germany, and Portugal (Norris, 1996). It is difficult to find a similar cross-national trend in the women's vote for mainstream conservative and left parties. Norris (1996) does find that there are generational differences in the gender gap. Younger women tend to vote more than younger men for left parties, whereas older women tend to vote more than older men for conservative parties.

In a 1980s analysis of men and women's left-right self-placement, De Vaus and McAllister (1989) find that in 10 of 11 countries, women appear to be more conservative than men. However, once they control for differences in workforce participation and religiosity, women are shown to be more leftwing than men in 6 of 10 countries. The authors are critical of studies that argue that women are more conservative than men. They argue that "rather than reflecting greater political conservatism, the female preferences for the conservative parties may simply indicate that they are more moderate than males or that they are more opposed to extremes" (p. 242). In fact, they find that in countries where there is no gender gap or women tend to be less conservative than men, women tend to be less conservative than men when controlling for structural and situational variables.

In general, left parties have paid more attention to putting more female candidates on the

ballot in recent elections in Europe, and women's issues have played a prominent role in many legislative elections. Although the general trend is for women to vote for left parties, in many countries women are more likely to support conservative parties. An increase in women's support of left parties is no indication that women are less likely to support a more extreme party on the right. However, De Vaus and McAllister's (1989) findings would indicate that a radical right gender gap may persist even when controlling for structural and situational variables.

In their study of the United States, Britain, and Australia, Studlar et al. (1998) examine the gender gap while controlling for socioeconomic, situational, and political factors. They find that in Australia and Britain, when one controls for socioeconomic and situational factors, the gender gap virtually disappears. It is not necessarily gender-related political issues that are driving women's vote: "It is factors such as women's particular occupational experiences as well as their greater familial commitments that continue to explain the gender gap in both these countries" (p. 795).

In the United States, Studlar et al. (1998) find that political factors are more important in explaining the gender gap, but there may be factors related to socialization that influence gender differences in political issues. Therefore, although they find that women are more likely to vote for left parties, this gender gap disappears when controlling for the three sets of factors they consider. Their results indicate that the gender gap and the factors behind it vary from country to country. Therefore, I may find that the different sets of variables may have a different impact on the radical right vote in each of my cases.

Single-country studies have shown that the underpinnings of a gender gap can be complex. For example, Howell and Day's (2000) analysis of the gender gap on specific issues in the United States indicates that gender gaps vary from issue to issue. They also find that certain variables such as education have a greater liberalizing effect (i.e., making them more likely to place themselves on the left) on women than on men. My analysis does not have access to the same types of variables that exist in the national election study used by Howell and Day, but their analysis is indicative of the types of complexities that may arise in this type of analysis.

In a study of Denmark however, Togeby (1994) argues that the most important factor in the development of women as more leftwing than men is their participation in the workforce. As women's workforce participation has increased, they have become more aware of inequality between the genders. Although the women's movement may have had some impact, Togeby argues that it is social development that has had the most important impact on women's political development. As with the comparative studies discussed earlier, Togeby emphasizes the importance of workforce participation as a factor in the development of a gender gap. I explore this issue as well as the nature of that participation in more detail in the following.

In the case of France, a study by Bashevkin (1985) indicates that women there have also become more politicized and leftwing over time. She argues that this shift is related to

attitudinal change of voting cohorts after 1968 and the decline in the influence of the Catholic Church. Although the influence of the church may be declining, it may still have some influence on the gender gap in the French case as women are more likely to identify themselves with the Catholic Church than men.

My analysis uses the same techniques and variables used to explain the left-right gender gap, but I also look at variables that may play an important role in a radical right gender gap, specifically immigration and the support of blue-collar workers. In the next section, I develop my hypotheses relating to the radical right gender gap, beginning with a discussion of occupational differences between men and women. I then discuss the possible connection between immigration and the gender gap in the radical right vote.

Explanations of the radical right gender gap

In this section, I begin by describing differences in occupational structure between men and women and develop a hypothesis related to the impact that this difference may have on the gender gap. I then examine the importance of immigration to the radical right vote and develop hypotheses on how attitudes toward immigration might influence the gender gap. The empirical analysis in the next section begins with a test of the null hypothesis that no gender gap exists.

Occupational structure

If workforce involvement plays a role in the gender gaps described earlier, it may also play a role in the radical right gender gap. In general, men are more likely to be employed than women. It is not clear, however, if being employed makes one more or less likely to vote radical right. Also, radical right parties tend to draw a large portion of their votes from blue-collar workers. Can differences in the areas that men and women work explain the radical right gender gap? An *Economist* article from September 1996 (“Men: Tomorrow’s second sex,” 1996) argues “Women are catching up with men for economic reasons (‘women’s jobs’ are growing faster than men’s) and social ones (‘men won’t do women’s work’). Both reasons hit unskilled and ill-educated men disproportionately hard” (p. 23). Men may be more likely than women to lose their jobs or be forced into lower-paying jobs in the new global economy. If men are more likely to be the “modernization losers,” then men may also be more likely to vote for radical right parties.

A study of occupational segregation of men and women in Europe indicates that women are benefiting from the expansion of the service sector, whereas men are suffering from

declines in the industrial sector (Rubery & Fagan, 1993). Rubery and Fagan (1993) find that women have increased their relative share of the service sector. Also, women in the industrial sector tend to be in clerical positions that are less vulnerable to redundancy. As the numbers of industrial jobs have declined in Europe, blue-collar workers have been hit hard.

[Table 2](#) displays women's share of the agricultural, industrial, and service sectors from 1983, 1987, and 1990. Although women are only 40% of the workforce in Germany, they represent 50% of all service workers. The results are similar for the other countries in the survey, depending on women's participation in the workforce. At the most, women represent only 25% of industrial workers. This is the sector in which the radical right has had the most success.

As noted earlier, women tend to be clustered more in the service sector than the industrial sector. The service sector has been one of the fastest growing sectors of the economy in Europe. Women are less represented in the industrial sector of the economy, which has been hardest hit by globalization. The process of globalization might affect female workers less directly than men. Other issues, such as equal pay, child care, and education, may be more important issues for women than men, thus making them less likely to be attracted to the appeal of radical right parties. I argue that women work in sectors that have actually benefited from globalization, which leads them to be less likely to vote for radical right parties.

Hypothesis 1: Women are less likely to vote for the radical right because there are fewer women who are employed and work in the sectors (manufacturing/blue-collar) that are attracted to the radical right.

I test a variety of structural and situational variables in my empirical analysis, but I expect that controlling for whether a respondent is employed or a blue-collar worker will reduce the radical right gender gap.

[Table 2](#) Concentration and segregation of women's employment by major industrial sector

Country	<i>Women's share of employment (percentage of total workforce)</i>			Total
	Agriculture	Industry	Services	
Belgium				
1983	28.6	18.7	42.8	34.3
1987	28.4	19.6	44.0	35.8
1990	26.0	19.4	46.4	37.5
Germany				
1983	49.9	23.6	49.1	38.6
1987	45.5	24.4	49.2	39.1
1990	43.9	25.4	50.8	40.4

France				
1983	36.3	24.5	50.6	40.7
1987	35.2	24.3	51.6	42.0
1990	34.4	24.8	51.8	42.5
Italy				
1983	35.4	23.4	37.0	32.0
1987	33.6	23.5	38.7	33.2
1990	35.4	24.5	39.4	34.2
United Kingdom				
1983	20.4	22.4	52.5	40.9
1987	20.8	22.9	53.1	42.4
1990	22.7	23.2	53.9	43.2

Source: Rubery and Fagan (1993).

Radical right voters and immigration

Immigration is an important theme for radical right parties. The leader of the French Front National, Jean-Marie Le Pen, has consistently linked the number of immigrants in France to the number of unemployed. His plan to repatriate immigrants and give French citizens preference in the job market has struck a chord with many working-class French, particularly since France has experienced high levels of unemployment. Likewise in Austria, the Freedom Party's Austria First petition drive was an attempt to push the grand coalition government to toughen immigration control. The Freedom Party's leader, Jörg Haider, has connected the number of immigrants to the number of unemployed in Austria, and the party has called for a reduction in the number of immigrants in Austria until full employment of Austrians has been reached (Freiheitliche Partei Österreich, 1997). The Berlin Republikaner also recommends the prevention of the flow and employment of foreigners to avoid unemployment of German workers (Die Republikaner, 1995). Several surveys from the mid to late 1990s in Europe have shown that a majority of voters considered unemployment one of the most important problems facing their country.

The presence of foreigners is another factor that may lead to an increased vote for the radical right. The radical right's xenophobic stance has an added appeal for those who feel that cultural homogeneity is being attacked or that foreign workers threaten their jobs or wage levels. Although there may be no direct connection between unemployment and immigrants, voters may perceive that a relationship exists, particularly when certain industries such as construction tend to employ large numbers of immigrants during periods of high

unemployment.

In analyses of the relationship between unemployment, immigration, and the radical right vote, authors such as Jackman and Volpert (1996), Lewis-Beck and Mitchell (1993), and Martin (1996) have found a relationship between these factors, particularly in the case of France. In more recent work, Givens (2000) has also found a similar relationship in Austria, although not in Germany. This may have to do with the fact that immigrants in France and Austria tend to live close to low-income blue-collar workers who vote for the radical right (Martin, 1996).

It is clear that radical right parties have used the issues of immigration and economic uncertainty as part of their electoral campaigns. Voters who live in regions with high numbers of immigrants and unemployment may feel that these immigrants are in competition with them for jobs. However, this competition may have a different effect on men than it does on women. If women do not feel that they are in competition with immigrants, then immigration may not have as much of an effect on their vote as it would on men's.

The process of globalization has put many workers in a position in which they feel they are competing with foreign workers. In general, immigration flows during the period of labor importation were geared toward men who would work in the host country for a limited time. The numbers of female immigrants have increased since the labor migrations of the 1960s and early 1970s due to family reunification and the increased flow of female workers (Kofman, 1999). Despite the "feminization of international migration" (Kofman, 1999), the process of migration still tends to be characterized as a male-dominated activity. In the media, immigrant laborers are generally portrayed as male (e.g., on television, illegal immigrants shown streaming through the channel tunnel in Europe and across the Mexican border are nearly all male).

Because immigration is considered a male-dominated activity, women may not feel as directly threatened as men. Although women have entered the workforce in great numbers, there are still large numbers of women who work at home. Also, those who do work tend to be clustered in female-dominated areas and the service sector, which tend to have fewer immigrants in them.

Before exploring the gender gap, it is useful to determine if immigration is an important factor in the radical right vote. If it is important, I would expect to find that radical right voters would have stronger anti-immigrant positions than the general public. In his 1994 analysis of the radical right vote, Betz found that voters for the Republikaner, Freiheitliche Partei Österreich (Freedom Party), and Vlaams Blok (Flemish Block) all had much stronger anti-immigrant positions than green voters and voters in general.

[Table 3](#) displays the answers that the different parties' voters gave to questions related to foreigners in their countries. In the case of the German Republikaner, none of the party's voters strongly agreed with the statement that "Foreigners' way of life can enrich our way of life." Also, only 13% agreed with the statement that they "do not mind there being many

foreigners in Germany.”

The results were similar for the Freiheitliche Partei Österreich in Austria and the Vlaams Blok in Belgium. To provide some comparison, I also show the response of voters for left parties (green or socialist) and all voters. For example, 75% of green party voters and 45% of all voters in Germany agreed with the statement that they “do not mind there being many foreigners in Germany.” Voters for the radical right in these cases have stronger anti-immigrant attitudes than the general public. Because the radical right attracts more men than women, I hypothesize that women may have different attitudes toward immigration than men.

Table 3 Attitudes toward immigrants and foreign residents (in %)

	<i>Greens</i>	<i>German Republikaner</i>	<i>All</i>
<hr/>			
Foreigners’ way of life can enrich our way of life (Germany 1989)			
Strongly agree	39	0	9
Strongly disagree	3	38	15
Do not mind there being many foreigners in Germany (1993)			
	75	13	45
	<i>Greens</i>	<i>Freiheitliche Partei Österreich</i>	<i>All</i>
<hr/>			
Find having Turks as neighbors is (Austria 1992)			
Pleasant	29	0	13
Unpleasant	12	52	25
Don’t care	57	36	55
The Freiheitliche Partei Österreich’s demand that foreigners should not be given the right to vote (Austria 1992)			
Opposed	43	6	25
	<i>Parti Socialiste (Socialist Party)</i>	<i>Front National</i>	<i>All</i>
<hr/>			
Do you think that there are too many immigrants in France? (1997)			
Agree completely	20.2	70.1	30.9
Somewhat agree	24.3	23.7	28.1
Somewhat disagree	23.3	3.6	19.1
Disagree completely	31.2	6.4	19.8

Source: Centre d'étude de la vie politique Française (1997).

Hypothesis 2: Men are more likely vote for the radical right than women because they have stronger anti-immigrant attitudes than women.

Controlling for attitudes toward immigration should decrease the impact of gender on the radical right vote. However, I also test gender directly with immigration as the dependent variable to determine if there is a gender difference in anti-immigrant attitudes.

If occupational structure is a factor in the gender gap, then it may be that attitudes toward immigration vary based on occupation. Occupation rather than gender may define one's attitudes toward immigrants.

Hypothesis 3: Those occupations that are most affected by globalization and immigration (i.e., blue-collar industrial workers) will be more anti-immigrant than those in other sectors.

To test this hypothesis, I examine the same set of variables as used to test the radical right gender gap with attitudes toward immigration as the dependent variable. As with the test on the radical right gender gap, I test the range of situational and structural variables on the gender gap in attitudes toward immigrants. Controlling for whether a respondent is employed and/or a blue-collar worker should reduce any gender gap in attitudes toward immigrants.

Data analysis

The cases chosen for this analysis are France, Denmark, and Austria. Each of these countries has a relatively successful radical right party in terms of percentage of vote received in legislative elections. These countries are all part of the European Union and have similar economic and social living standards.

The data used in this analysis come from the Austrian 1999 Post-Election Study (FESSEL-Gfk), the Danish Election Survey 1998, and the French 1997 Post-Election Survey. I have set up a series of measures to replicate as closely as possible the analysis of Studlar et al. (1998). The variables are described in [Table 1](#), and I have also noted where a variable is not available for a particular case. For each case, gender is coded 1 for female and 0 for male.

To test for the radical right gender gap, I have measures for the three competing explanations described in Studlar et al.'s (1998) article. A description of the variables used is in the Appendix. The first set of variables is structural or socioeconomic factors, represented by religious affiliation (1 for Catholic, 0 for other), age (see Appendix for groupings), education, occupation (1 for blue collar, 0 for other), trade union membership (1 for union member, 0 for other), and income. Situational variables are measured by marital status (1 for married, 0 for

not) and employment status (1 for actively employed, 0 for not). Few political variables were available from these surveys (none in the Austrian case), so I was only able to code for attitudes toward democracy, immigration, and whether the respondent felt the economic situation was getting better or worse. The dependent variable, radical right vote, is coded as 1 for a radical right vote and 0 for other. The descriptive statistics for the variables used in each case are also available in the Appendix. Due to the nature of the dependent variable, a logistic regression model is used in the first set of analyses.

In the second set of data analyses, I use attitudes toward immigration as the dependent variable. The same variables are examined using ordinary least squares regressions because the immigration dependent variable is continuous. The immigration variable was not available in the Austrian data set, so the second set of regressions only includes France and Denmark.

Results—gender and the radical right vote

The results of the logistic regression model are displayed in [Table 4](#). The first hypothesis tested is the null hypothesis, namely, whether a gender gap exists or not. In the first column for each country case, I run a logistic regression with gender as the only independent variable. In each of the cases, the coefficient on gender is negative, indicating that women are less likely to vote for the radical right than men. However, the coefficient for gender is not significant in the Danish case. The data indicate that women are less likely to vote for the radical right, but the size of the gap varies across the country cases. In Austria and France, the size of the coefficient and the odds ratio is similar.

In the next set of regressions, I include the situational and structural variables.² This allows Hypotheses 1 and 2 to be tested. In the Austrian case, all of the independent variables are significant with the exception of employed. Being Catholic makes one less likely to vote for the radical right. As age and level of education increase, one is also less likely to vote for the radical right. To compare the explanatory power of each variable, I can compare the exponentiated β statistic or odds ratio. As the odds ratio moves away from 1 (either positive or negative) the impact of a variable on the odds of voting radical right increases or decreases,

[Table 4](#) Gender and the radical right vote logistic regression results

		Austria				Plus situational			
		No controls		Exponentiated β^a		β		Exponentiated β	
		β^a	Exponentiated β^a	β	Exponentiated β				
Gender (female = 1)				-0.54* (0.10)	0.58 (1.72)	-0.67* (0.11)	0.51 (1.96)		
Catholic						-0.33* (0.12)	0.72 (1.38)		
Age						-0.12* (0.02)	0.89 (1.12)		
Education						-0.24* (0.05)	0.78 (1.28)		
Blue-collar						0.39* (0.12)	1.45		
Trade union						-0.58* (0.12)	0.56 (1.79)		
Employed						-0.09 (0.12)	0.91 (1.10)		
Constant				-0.77* (.06)		0.94* (0.24)			
Model chi-square [df]				30.234* [1]		136.738* [7]			
Percentage correct predictions				73.23		71.98			
Gender (female = 1)	-0.25 (0.16)	0.78 (1.28)	-0.27 (0.17)	0.76 (1.35)	-0.20 (0.18)	0.82 (1.22)	-0.23 (0.20)	0.79 (1.27)	
Age			0.03 (0.03)	1.03			-0.02 (0.03)	0.98 (1.02)	
Education			-0.27* (0.07)	0.77 (1.30)			-0.14* (0.07)	0.87 (1.15)	
Blue-collar			-0.39 (0.27)	0.68 (1.47)			-0.39 (0.28)	0.68 (1.47)	
Income			0.03 (0.04)	1.03			0.03 (0.04)	1.03	
Married			0.12 (0.18)	1.13			0.13 (0.19)	1.14	
Employed			0.62* (0.31)	1.86			0.52* (0.32)	1.68	
Democracy							-0.36* (0.09)	0.69 (1.45)	
Economy							-0.01 (0.09)	0.99 (1.01)	
Immigration			0.69* (0.07)	1.99			0.71* (0.08)	2.03	
Constant	-2.31* (0.11)		-4.75* (0.31)		-2.16* (0.30)		-3.22* (0.66)		
Model chi-square [df]	2.264 [1]		132.173* [2]		24.721* [7]		160.649* [10]		
Percentage correct predictions	91.91		71.07		72.72		73.24		
<i>France</i>									
		No controls		Immigration		Structural and situational		Plus political	
		β	Exponentiated β	β	Exponentiated β	β	Exponentiated β	β	Exponentiated β
Gender (female = 1)	-0.51* (0.15)	0.60 (1.67)	-0.60* (0.16)	0.55 (1.32)	-0.52* (0.16)	0.59 (1.69)	-0.64* (0.18)	0.53 (1.89)	
Catholic			-0.02 (0.17)	0.98 (1.02)	-0.02 (0.19)	0.77 (1.30)			
Age			-0.08* (0.03)	0.92 (1.09)	-0.08 (0.03)	0.92 (1.09)			
Education			-0.13* (0.04)	0.88 (1.14)	-0.02 (0.03)	0.98 (1.02)			
Blue-collar			0.25 (0.18)	1.28	0.00 (0.20)	1.00			
Class			0.00 (0.07)	1.00	0.00 (0.07)	1.00			
Married			-0.17 (0.16)	0.84 (1.19)	-0.30* (0.17)	0.74 (1.35)			
Employed			-0.18 (0.17)	0.83 (1.20)	-0.28 (0.19)	0.75 (1.33)			
Democracy					-0.54* (0.11)	0.58 (1.72)			
Economy					0.58* (0.12)	1.79			
Immigration			1.13* (0.11)	3.10	1.14* (0.12)	3.12			
Constant	-2.21* (.10)		-6.04* (0.41)		1.07* (0.38)		-4.09* (0.71)		
Model chi-square [df]	11.528* [1]		176.585* [2]		37.386* [8]		250.464* [11]		
Percentage correct predictions	93.52		71.18		85.3		79.08		

a For all coefficients, standard error indicated in parentheses.

b In the case of values less than one, the inverse effect ($1/\beta$) on the odds (the odds of the event *not* occurring) is indicated in parentheses.

* Significant at the .05 level.

holding all the other variables constant. For example, being a blue-collar worker makes the odds of voting for the radical right 1.45 times greater in the Austrian case. One can take the inverse of the odds ratio to determine the effect on the odds of an outcome not occurring. For example, being a member of a trade union makes the odds of not voting radical right 1.79 times greater in the Austrian case. For continuous variables, the odds ratio is for each increment increase in a variable, so the odds of not voting radical right is 1.12 times greater for each increment increase in age.³

In each regression, the gender gap persists in the Austrian case. Controlling for the structural and situational variables actually slightly increases the odds that a woman will not vote (from 1.85 to 1.96) for the radical right. Unfortunately, I cannot control for attitudes toward immigration or the other political variables in the Austrian case.

As mentioned earlier, gender is not significant in the Danish case. Education, being employed, and attitudes toward democracy and immigration are the only significant variables.

When comparing the odds ratios, clearly attitudes toward immigration have a large impact on the odds of voting radical right in the Danish case but do not have a significant impact on the gender gap.

In the French case, gender is significant, and the odds of voting radical right decrease when adding the political variables. Attitude toward immigrants (there are too many immigrants) has the largest odds ratio at 3.12, and going from a 1 (*disagree*) to a 4 (*strongly agree*) has an odds ratio of voting radical right of 30.57! Attitudes toward democracy, the economy, and being married are the only other significant variables in the full model, however the odds ratio for these variables comes nowhere near that for the immigration variable. The gender effect also pales in comparison at an odds ratio of not voting radical right of 1.89.

The Danish and French cases indicate that the political variables, particularly attitudes toward immigration, may be playing more of a role in the vote for the radical right than gender or structural or situational variables. However, even controlling for immigration, the gender gap persists and is significant in the French case. This indicates that there are other variables not included in this model that may be influencing the gender gap or that simply being female makes one less likely to vote radical right, as suggested by authors such as Mayer. Contrary to my expectations, controlling for blue-collar or employed did not decrease the gender gap in the radical right vote.

This part of the analysis indicates however that something important is going on with the immigration issue. To explore the immigration issue further, I examine the impact of gender and situational, structural, and political variables using immigration as a dependent variable.

Gender and immigration

The aforementioned analysis clearly indicated that in the French and Danish cases, immigration was the most important factor influencing the radical right vote. Is there a gender difference in attitudes toward immigration? Although controlling for attitudes toward immigration did not change the impact of gender on the radical right vote, this does not necessarily tell us if there is a gender difference in attitudes toward immigration. To test Hypotheses 2 and 3, I run the same set of independent variables as in the previous analysis. Because immigration is a continuous variable, I use an ordinary least squares regression model. I can only run this model for France and Denmark as I do not have an immigration variable for the Austrian case.

In [Table 5](#), I begin the analysis with gender as the only independent variable. There is a gender gap, but in the case of France, women are actually more likely to be more anti-immigrant

Table 5 The effect of gender on attitudes toward immigration (ordinary least squares)

France								Denmark								
No controls				All controls				No controls				All controls				
	β	SE	Standardized β		β	SE	Standardized β		β	SE	Standardized β		β	SE	Standardized β	SE
Gender (female = 1)	.11*	.04	.05		.08*	.04	.04		-.05	.07	-.02		-.23*	.07	-.07	
Catholic					.36*	.05	.15					n/a				
Age					.02*	.01	.07					.08*	.01	.17		
Education					-.11*	.01	-.25					-.23*	.02	-.24		
Blue collar					.20*	(.05)	.07					.19* (.11)	.06			
Income					n/a							.07	.02	.01		
Class					.04*	.02	.04					n/a				
Married					.13*	.04	.06					.06	.08	.02		
Employed					.10*	.04	.05					-.11	.12	-.03		
Democracy					-.14* (.03)	-.10						-.26* (.04)	-.15			
Economy					.06*	.03	.04					-.03	.04	-.02		
Constant	2.66*	.03			2.66*	.13			2.90*	.05			4.20*	.22		
Regression sum of squares [df]	9.297*	[1]			513.605*	[10]			1.049	[1]			503.656	[9]		
Adjusted R^2	.002				.148				0				.113			

* Significant at the .05 level.

than men, whereas in Denmark, women are less likely to be anti-immigrant, with gender being insignificant in the Danish case. Gender is significant in both cases in the second set of regressions, with all of the control variables included. This model indicates that there are cross-country differences, but in general, blue-collar workers, those with lower education levels, and people who feel that democracy is not functioning well are more likely to be anti-immigrant. Controlling for structural, situational, and political variables makes it less likely in both cases that women will be anti-immigrant. There is no support for my hypothesis that women are less anti-immigrant than men. However, there is support for my hypothesis that blue-collar workers are more anti-immigrant. Controlling for blue collar along with age, education, attitudes toward democracy, and being employed in the French case does reduce the likelihood that women will be anti-immigrant.

Discussion

This analysis indicates that the gender gap in the radical right vote does vary across countries. However, I was not able to find any variables that reduced the gender gap in these countries. Unlike previous studies of gender gaps, I find that there is a persistent gender gap when controlling for social, economic, and political variables. Although the gender gap in the vote for mainstream parties may have complex underpinnings, it would appear that in the case of the radical right, simply being female may make one less likely to vote for these parties. Unfortunately, I was not able to control for political issues that may have special meaning to female voters such as abortion. However, like Studlar et al. (1998) find in the U.S. case, I find that attitudes toward political issues, particularly immigration, are having a disproportionate

impact on the probability of voting radical right but not on the gender gap specifically.

The Danish case supports Togeby's (1994) findings that there are fewer differences between men and women in Denmark as compared to the case of France. Gender was not significant in the Danish case except when using immigration as a dependent variable and controlling for the situational, structural, and political variables. It may be the case that social development in Denmark and egalitarian gender roles are having an impact on women's political behavior as compared to France and Austria.

Conclusion: the gender gap, immigration, and occupation

This analysis began with the observation that men are more likely to vote for the radical right than women. I did find that women are less likely to vote for radical right parties. However, I did not find support for my arguments that gender differences in attitudes toward immigration and occupational structure could explain the gender gap in the vote for radical right parties. Other factors must play a role in women's disproportionately low vote for the radical right. The results from the data analysis did support my third hypothesis. Blue-collar workers were more likely to be anti-immigrant than those in other sectors.

This analysis has implications for understanding the nature of the radical right vote and their potential for success. Future research could examine in more detail the reasons behind the radical right's appeal to blue-collar workers. The fact that my data show that blue-collar workers tend to be more anti-immigrant has implications for understanding not only the radical right vote but shifts in the vote for mainstream left parties, which appealed to these workers in the past. However, as the industrial sector contracts and workers are channeled into different types of occupations, the radical right appeal to blue-collar workers may actually have a negative impact on their vote. As the number of blue-collar workers declines, the number of radical right voters may decline unless they are more successful in attracting other voters, including women.

This analysis also has implications for studying gender gaps in the vote for mainstream parties. Although blue-collar workers have generally supported socialist parties, clearly this cannot explain women's increased support for socialist parties. Although women's increasing levels of employment are not an important factor in the radical right vote, this employment does have an impact on their political attitudes. As women become more involved in the workplace, we may see even greater shifts in their support for particular parties. They may become more like male voters or more oriented toward socialist parties, depending on the structure of social support, as Togeby (1994) found in the Danish case. However, this analysis indicates that increasing employment levels of women is not likely to have an impact on

women's vote for the radical right. These parties are not attractive to women and would likely have to make major changes in strategy to attract more female voters.

Appendix

Variables drawn from surveys

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Description</i>
RR	Radical right vote, coded 1 if voted radical right, otherwise 0
Gender	Coded 1 for female, 0 for male
Structural variables	
Religion	Coded 1 for Catholic, 0 for other (not available for Denmark)
Age	The variable is categorical and is coded into the following categories: 1 = 18 to 24 years old, 2 = 25 to 29 years old, 3 = 30 to 34 years old, 4 = 35 to 39 years old, 5 = 40 to 44 years old, 6 = 45 to 49 years old, 7 = 50 to 54 years old, 8 = 55 to 59 years old, 9 = 60 to 64 years old, 10 = 65 to 69 years old, 11 = 70 years old and older
Education	The variable is categorical and varies from lowest to highest educational level: Austria = 1 to 5, Denmark = 1 to 6, France = 1 to 9
Blue-collar	Coded 1 for blue-collar worker, 0 for other
Trade union	Coded 1 for trade union member, 0 for other (not available for France or Denmark)
Class	The variable is categorical and varies from lower to upper class: France = 1 to 6 (not available for Austria or Denmark)
Income	The variable is categorical and varies from lower to upper income: Denmark = 1 to 16 (not available for Austria or France)
Situational variables	
Married	Coded 1 for married, 0 for not (not available for Austria)
Employed	Coded 1 for employed, 0 for not
Political variables	The variable is categorical and varies from <i>dissatisfied</i> (1) to <i>very satisfied</i> (4 or

Democracy	6) with democracy in the country: Denmark = 1 to 4; or that democracy functions <i>not well</i> to <i>very well</i> : France = 1 to 6 (not available for Austria)
Economy	The variable is categorical and varies from feeling the economic situation has become much worse to much better in the country in the last 12 months: Denmark = 1 to 5; or in the next 12 months will get worse or better: France = 1 to 3 (not available for Austria)
Immigration	The variable is categorical and varies from <i>disagree</i> to <i>strongly agree</i> that immigration is a serious threat to national culture: Denmark = 1 to 5; or that there are too many immigrants: France = 1 to 4 (not available for Austria)

Survey variable descriptive statistics

Variable	Number	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
Denmark					
RR vote	2,001	0.00	1.00	8.091E-02	0.2728
Gender	2,001	0.00	1.00	0.5116	0.5000
Age	2,001	1.00	11.00	5.7814	3.2944
Education	1,991	1.00	6.00	2.9442	1.6120
Blue-collar	2,001	0.00	1.00	0.5733	0.4947
Income	2,001	0.00	16.00	4.9746	3.3145
Marriage	2,001	0.00	1.00	0.4456	0.4972
Employed	2,001	0.00	1.00	0.5567	0.4969
Democracy	2,001	0.00	4.00	3.0755	0.7302
Economy	1,922	0.00	5.00	3.0713	0.9685
Immigration	2,001	0.00	5.00	2.8805	1.5690
Valid N(listwise)	1,914				
Austria					
RR vote	2,200	0.00	1.00	0.2677	0.4429
Gender	2,200	0.00	1.00	0.4763	0.4996
Religion	2,200	0.00	1.00	0.7922	0.4058
Age	2,200	1.00	11.00	5.47	3.07
Education	2,199	1.00	5.00	2.53	1.19
Blue-collar	2,200	0.00	1.00	0.1178	0.3224
Union member	2,200	0.00	1.00	.3013	0.4589
Employed	2,200	0.00	1.00	0.6300	0.4829
Valid N(listwise)	2,199				
France					
Binary gender recode	3,010	0.00	1.00	0.5239	0.4995
Too many immigrants	2,949	1.00	4.00	2.7155	1.1134
Religion	3,010	0.00	1.00	0.7289	0.4446
Education	3,010	1.00	9.00	4.55	2.68
Blue-collar	3,010	0.00	1.00	0.2013	0.4011
Class	2,980	1.00	6.00	3.3292	1.1389
Marriage	3,010	0.00	1.00	0.5412	0.4984
Employed	3,010	0.00	1.00	0.4970	0.5001
Democracy	2,994	1.00	4.00	2.2715	0.7862
Economy	2,841	1.00	3.00	1.9419	0.6857
Age	3,010	1.00	11.00	5.7346	3.3558
RR vote	2,431	0.00	1.00	0.0798	0.2710
Valid N(listwise)	2,211				

Author's note

This article was written with assistance from Megan Campbell. I would like to thank my research assistants Adam Luedtke and Xun Cao. I would also like to thank the anonymous

reviewers for their helpful comments.

Notes

- [1](#) This result may have had to do with the Front National's emphasis on law and order issues prior to this election.
- [2](#) I have omitted the step of adding the structural then situational variables as in Studlar et al. (1998) because there is little change in the coefficients from one model to the next.
- [3](#) To calculate a change from one age value (x_j) to another (x'_j), the formula is $\exp((x'_j - x_j)\beta_j)$, so that the odds ratio from a value of 1 to 5 for the age variable for Austria would equal $\exp(5 - 1) - .12$ or an odds ratio of .62.

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Part IV

Causes

This section includes a selection of articles and book chapters that aim to explain the successes (and failures) of populist radical right parties. It presents general theories of the rise of the contemporary populist radical right by the most prominent scholars in the field, which have informed much of the scholarship in the past decades.

Piero Ignazi's seminal article on ‘the silent counter-revolution’ was the first to integrate insights from the study of political parties into the study of the populist radical right and to integrate populist radical right parties into the study of political parties. Both **Hans-Georg Betz** and **Herbert Kitschelt** came to the study of populist radical right parties after studying the rise of that other new party family, i.e. the Green or left-libertarian parties. They offered related theoretical frameworks that have dominated the field ever since.

Michael Minkenberg is one of the most important scholars of the populist radical right in Europe and one of the few to focus on both parts of the continent. His article presents his first comparative observations on the populist radical right in post-socialist Central and Eastern Europe. **Roger Eatwell**, one of the most influential scholars of historical fascism and a doyen of populist radical right studies, presents not just the ultimate summary of (ten) theories of the populist radical right, but also a highly original theory, which has unfortunately remained without much influence so far. **Cas Mudde**, finally, offers a meta-theoretical critique of the field, arguing that the populist radical right is not simply a ‘normal pathology’ of western democracies.

Revision questions

Ignazi

- How does Ignazi define ‘extreme right parties’ (ERPs)?
- What is the basis for his distinction between ‘new’ and ‘old’ ERPs?
- What is the ‘silent counter-revolution’?
- What is the relationship between his typology of ERPs and electoral success?

Betz

- What distinguishes ‘radical right-wing populist’ parties from the established parties?
- What is the ‘two-third society’ and how does it relate to the rise of populist radical right parties?
- What is the social basis of the ‘politics of resentment’?
- Is the contemporary populist radical right ‘postmodern’?

Kitschelt

- What defines the ‘master case’ of the ‘New Radical Right’ (NRR) and how does it relate to the New Left?
- What are ‘communicative experiences and capabilities’ and how do they relate to support for populist radical right parties?
- What are ‘vote-maximizing’ and ‘office-maximizing’ strategies? Do populist radical right parties differ from centrist parties in terms of these strategies?
- What are the three key variables of Kitschelt’s theory? How do they relate to the different types of parties he distinguishes?

Minkenberg

- What are the main differences between Central and Eastern Europe and Western Europe in terms of populist radical right issues and mobilization potential?
- What are the three organizational structures of the populist radical right?
- Who are the ‘losers of transformation’ and why do they support the populist radical right?
- Why are populist radical right parties not more successful in postsocialist Central and Eastern Europe?

Eatwell

- What does Eatwell mean by ‘demand-side’ and ‘supply-side’ theories?
- What is the ‘(reverse) post-materialist thesis’?
- What is the ‘political opportunity structure’ thesis?
- What is the ‘LET’ hypothesis?

Mudde

- What is the ‘normal pathology thesis’?
- What is ‘banal nationalism’? Think about some contemporary examples.
- What is the ‘pathological normalcy thesis’?
- What are the main consequences of his proposed ‘paradigmatic shift’ from ‘normal pathology’ to ‘pathological normalcy’?

Discussion points

1. Does the silent counter-revolution explain the success of populist radical right parties in the twenty-first century?
2. Is the distinction between ‘new’ and ‘old’ ERPs still relevant today? If so, is it still related to electoral success?
3. If neoliberal economics does not really define the core of their party ideology, can the theories of Betz and Kitschelt still explain the electoral success of populist radical right parties?
4. Are (all) populist radical right parties still pure vote-maximizing parties today?
5. Do Minkenberg’s arguments still explain the situation of the populist radical right in Central and Eastern Europe today?
6. Which of Eatwell’s ten theories do you find most convincing?
7. How would you test his LET hypothesis?
8. Is the populist radical right still a ‘pathological normalcy’ today?

Further reading

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The silent counter-revolution

Hypotheses on the emergence of extreme right-wing parties in Europe

Piero Ignazi

Party system change and the emergence of extreme right parties

West European party systems are facing a period of change (Crewe and Denver 1985; Dalton 1988; Dalton et al. 1984; Daalder and Mair 1983; Mair 1984, 1989a,b; Wolinetz 1988). This change is observable at two levels, electoral and partisan.

At the electoral level, intraparty volatility has progressively accelerated in the 1980s and 'there is little evidence that this flux is likely to abate' (Mair, 1989b: 169). At the partisan level, a series of indicators show the accelerated process of 'decomposition of established party ties' (Dalton, 1988). The decline of party identification, of the number of party members and of the degree of partisan involvement (Mair, 1984) all indicate that the previous enduring ties between the electorate and established parties are progressively fading away, thus enabling the emergence of new parties and/or new agencies for the aggregation of demands (Mair, 1984, 1989a; Reider, 1989).

Party system change: causes

The origin of such change is related to modifications in society and in the polity. Relevant modifications in society concern: long term change in the socioeconomic structure (Bell, 1973) which has liberated the citizen by traditional alignments, fidelities and ties; a shift in the value system toward autodirection (as opposed to eterodirection) and self-affirmation (as opposed to group solidarity) (Inglehart, 1977; Dalton, 1988). As a result, voting is no longer the

confirmation of ‘belonging’ to a specific social group but becomes an individual choice (not necessarily a rational one), an affirmation of a personal value system: the ‘issue voter’ tends to replace the traditional ‘party identification voter’ (Nie et al., 1979; Dalton et al., 1984).

The third vector of change has to do with the party itself. The organizational change from the mass party to the catch-all party has brought about a weakening of the party-membership linkage (Lawson and Merkl, 1988b). Moreover, the spread of the mass media, of ‘video-power’ (Sartori, 1989), and of a new ‘party personnel’ of experts and special advisers (Panebianco, 1988: 264ff) reinforce this tendency. This organizational change, still in the making, determines looser loyalties in the relationship between party and electorate: the party no longer offers voters a strong and clear cue.

Party system change: outcomes

According to the present debate (Daalder and Mair, 1983; Flanagan and Dalton, 1984; Mair, 1984, 1989b), party system change should lead to three main outcomes: a higher electoral volatility, the rise of new parties and the decline of party as such. Leaving aside the third potential outcome (party decline), the first two elements could account for the sudden rise or revival of extreme right parties (hereafter ERPs) in the 1980s. In most European countries, parties generally defined as ‘extreme right’ have gained parliamentary representation (in many cases for the first time) or have dramatically increased their votes (see [Table 1](#)). This upsurge has been totally unexpected by almost all politicians and opinion leaders but, even more, has not been taken into account as a possible outcome by scholars of party system change. There are three main reasons for this omission.

First, a widespread and well-grounded pessimism about the probability of new or marginal parties emerging. As Pedersen (1982, 1991), Harmel and Robertson (1985), Müller-Rommel and Pridham (1991) and Rose and Mackie (1988) have shown, few new parties have emerged, even in the turbulent and highly politicized 1970s. Moreover, those that did emerge tended to have a short life-span; the very few that succeed in passing the threshold of ‘relevance’ (Pedersen, 1991: 98), do not persist for a long time – disappearing or falling back into a marginal role.¹

Second, changes at the societal and partisan level have not undermined the cleavage structure. Socioeconomic change, secularization, new value systems and party re-organisation have affected the relation between citizens and politics in the direction of less involvement, less emotional attachment, a less ideological approach and, finally, less partisan loyalty. But votes remain overwhelmingly within each political family, switching between related parties (Bartolini and Mair, 1990; Mair, 1989a, b). As a consequence, it is difficult for a new party *outside the main blocs* to profit from the higher volatility. As convincingly argued by Bartolini

and Mair (1990), the long-awaited ‘unfreezing’ of partisan alternatives has yet to come.

Third, Inglehart’s thesis of the silent revolution (Inglehart, 1977) focuses on value change on the left pole of the political spectrum, omitting the right.² In many of his publications, Ronald Inglehart has been arguing that a new materialist/postmaterialist dimension is shaping political attitudes in the West and Japan. The emergence of a new set of values which emphasises non-materialist values (such as freedom, participation, self-realization) have given rise to the New Politics (Inglehart, 1984; Dalton, 1988). For Inglehart, this shift in the value system towards a steady and progressive increase of postmaterialism (Inglehart, 1988: 252) affects partisan preferences. In particular, the postmaterialists are massively inclined in favor of leftist parties (Inglehart, 1987: 1299–1302, 1989: 89 ss). In other words, value change has produced new political alignments and new political movements *on the left side* of the political spectrum.

The unaccounted for outcome: the rise of extreme right parties

The two more structured interpretations of outcomes of party system change – the persistence of cleavages and the rise of ‘new politics’ left-wing parties – do not account for the emergence or recovery of ERPs in the 1980s.

Mair’s persistence thesis could hold only if ERPs were considered part of the conservative area. But this is not the case: ERPs have a peculiar distinctiveness and they cannot merely be assimilated to other neighbouring political families. Moreover, ERPs’ peculiarity consists in their capacity to mobilize votes from all social strata and from all previous political alignments. As shown by the interwar electoral earthquakes caused by the ERPs’ ancestors³ and by electoral studies of several present-day ERPs, extreme right parties differ from conservative parties in being able to attract highly diversified voters (on the French Front National see Mayer and Perrineau, 1990; Perrineau, 1989; Ysmal, 1989, 1990a; on the German Republikaner see Westle and Niedermayer, 1990; in comparative terms see Betz, 1990a; Oppenhuis, 1990; Ysmal, 1990b).

The inconsistency of Inglehart’s thesis with the rise of ERPs is even more puzzling. Why, in an era of mounting postmaterialism and economic growth, do we find an increasing number of rightwing voters? And why has the affirmation of the new politics not shranked the space for the extreme right? Our hypothesis is that, together with the spread of postmaterialism, in Western countries in the 1980s, a different cultural and political mood, partially stimulated by the same ‘new politics’ (Minkelberger and Inglehart, 1989; Flanagan, 1987) has also been taking root. This change in beliefs and attitudes has been partially expressed in the so-called neoconservatism (and has been partially interpreted by conservative parties). But, to a large extent, it remained underground until the recent rise of ERPs. Such an underground melting

pot of attitudes and sentiments includes the emergence of new priorities and issues not treated by the established parties, a disillusionment towards parties in general, a growing lack of confidence in the political system and its institutions, and a general pessimism about the future.

In a sense, it could be said that the Greens and the ERPs are, respectively, the legitimate and the unwanted children of the New Politics; as the Greens come out of the silent revolution, the ERPs derive from a reaction to it, a sort of ‘silent counter-revolution’.

But before arguing our thesis on this point, however, we need to specify and describe the extreme right parties rather more precisely.

A family of extreme right parties?

Klaus vom Beyme has recently regretted the near impossibility of finding common ground around the right wing pole (von Beyme, 1988). The variation in historic references, issues and policies is certainly relevant on the right, but probably not much higher than in other ‘political families’. The point is that, in our opinion, the fascist or extremist or right wing family has been frequently considered in previous classifications as a sort of residual category⁴ with an easily identifiable pivotal party, the Italian MSI (plus, *in secundis*, the German NPD) and a series of other ‘protest’ or ‘populist’ parties.

Previous classifications

Daniel Seiler, who has elaborated an ambitious theoretical framework for the analysis of party families inspired by the categories of Marx and Rokkan, defines the extreme right parties as ‘deviant cases’, distinct from the bourgeois parties. His extensive and accurate overview of this family – which he subdivides into the categories of ‘nostalgic reaction’, ‘fascist reaction’, ‘common man protest’, ‘rural pauperism’ and ‘*incivisme* of the guaranteed’ – is significantly labelled as ‘*le bestiarie du conservatisme*’. (Seiler, 1980: 207–213; see also Seiler, 1986).

This classification difficulty is due to an underestimation of the need for rigorous criteria in defining party families in general and the extreme right family in particular. Most of the authors who aggregate parties by types or families (von Beyme, 1985: 29–31; Smith, 1989: 124; Lane and Ersson, 1987: 94–97; Henig, 1969: 515 ss) do not escape this pitfall. Lane and Ersson’s classification of parties⁵, for example, adopts an ad hoc criterion for defining ‘ultra rightist parties’. In this case, after having recognized that ‘it is difficult to point out parties that belong to the set of ultra-right parties’ they utilize the ideological criterion, while in the case of

'discontent parties' they refer to a set of different elements: issues (protest), ideology (populism) and style of leadership (charismatic) (Lane and Ersson, 1987: 103).

Finally, perhaps the best-documented survey of 'contemporary right wing extremism' (Husbands, 1981) among the very few devoted specifically to this family, is not based upon analytical distinctions.

In sum, the existing literature does not provide a set of shared criteria for identifying the family of ERPs. Therefore we face a twofold problem. On one hand we need to identify some common feature of the parties we label 'extreme right'; on the other hand we need to trace a clearcut borderline between ERPs and their neighbours, the conservative/confessional/centrist liberal parties.

The alternative approach that we propose points to three distinct criteria:

- a. placement in the political spectrum (spatial);
- b. declared party ideology and its reference to fascism (historic-ideological);
- c. attitude toward the political system (attitudinal-systemic).

The combination of those criteria will be used to identify the family of extreme right parties.

The spatial criterion

The first criterion takes into consideration the placement of the parties along the left-right continuum, identifying those parties which have been placed most on the right. In the absence of universal and comparative data rating *all* the parties along the left-right continuum (minor parties are often disregarded in comparative data sets) we have to refer both to mass survey evidence and expert judgements.⁶ When we set out to select the parties most to the right we immediately face the crucial problem of deciding how far to the right a party should be in order to be included in the extreme right family. In the absence of a standard measure we cannot give a definite answer to that, *Rebus sic stantibus*, the spatial criterion is limited to providing a broad overview of the right pole of the political spectrum.

Moreover, the spatial criterion cannot alone determine membership of the extreme right family, without the contribution of other criteria. Even if the widely debated relationship between the concepts of left and right on one hand, and 'conservative' and 'progressive' on the other, could support the mechanical transfer between spatial location and political values (Huber, 1989; Fuchs and Klingemann, 1989), we cannot infer too much from the spatial location in itself.

Keeping in mind this limitation, we proceed by listing the parties located most to the right in each European country. The following list includes all the parties that contested elections at least once in the 1980s and disregards either that parties vanished (the French Parti des Forces

Nouvelles, for example) or minor chapels devoted to violent actions and/or *gestes exemplaires*.⁷

This initial mapping includes:

<i>Italy:</i>	MSI (Movimento Sociale Italiano – Italian Social Movement)
<i>France:</i>	FN (Front National – French National Front)
<i>Germany:</i>	REP (Die Republikaner – The Republicans)NPD (Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands – National Socialist Party)DVU (Deutsche Volksunion List D – German People’s Union)
<i>Great Britain:</i>	BNP (British National Party)NF (National Front)
<i>Greece:</i>	EPEN (Ethniki Politiki Enosis – National Political Union) ⁸
<i>Belgium:</i>	V1B (Vlaams Blok – Flemish Bloc)FNb (Front National – National Front)PFN (Parti de Forces Nouvelles – New Forces’ Party) ⁹
<i>Netherlands:</i>	CD (Centrumdemocraten – Centre Democrats)CP’86 (Centrumpartij ’86 – Centre Party ’86)
<i>Spain:</i>	AP (Alianza Popular – Popular Aliance), now PP (Partido Popular – Popular Party)FNs (Frente Nacional – National Front) ¹⁰
<i>Switzerland:</i>	AN (Action Nationale – National Action)
<i>Austria:</i>	FPÖ (Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs – Austrian Liberal Party), and the NDP/BRB/EHI ¹¹
<i>Denmark:</i>	FRP (Fremskridtspartiet – Progress Party)
<i>Norway:</i>	FRPn (Fremskrittspartiet – Progress Party)
<i>Portugal:</i>	CDS (Partido do Centro Democrático Social – Democratic Social Center Party)PDC (Partido do Democracia Cristã – Christian Democratic Party) ¹²
<i>Ireland:</i>	FF (Fianna Fáil – Soldiers of Destiny)
<i>Sweden:</i>	MS (Moderata Samlingspartei – Moderate Party)
<i>Finland:</i>	KK (Kansallinen Kokoomus – National Coalition Party)

As one can see, such a list includes long established parties and brand new ones, large parties as well as small ones at the verge of *groupusculaire* status (NF and BNP in Great Britain, Frente Nacional in Spain, EPEN in Greece, PFN in Belgium, the various Gruber’s Formations in Austria, and the new born Portugese Forca National). Moreover, it raises immediate and legitimate problems about the plausibility of including all these parties – which range from *sui generis* conservative parties such as FF to neo-fascist parties such as MSI, from the bourgeois moderate MS to the racist FN, from the ‘liberal’ FPÖ to xenophobic – in the same class. Therefore, it is necessary to use a more substantive criterion (and one that is much more

difficult to handle), that of party ideology.

The ideological criterion

Let us start with a bold statement. The *only* ideological corpus for the extreme right has been provided by fascism. This reference to fascist ideological doctrine instead of the widely used psychoanalytical approach (Adorno, et al. 1950) or middle class extremism (Lipset, 1960), is motivated by three considerations. First, fascism is the only ideology more or less unanimously recognized as an extreme right ideology.¹³ Second, fascist ideology (except in some marxian-Third international interpretations of fascism as a variant of bourgeois domination – see Guerin, 1956 (orig. ed. 1936); Kühnl, 1973), is different and, in some ways alien from conservative thought. Third, up until the 1970s, all extreme right groups and parties had referred to and were inspired by the most influential party of this tendency in Europe, the Italian MSI which was patently, by any standard, a neofascist party (Caciagli, 1988, Ignazi, 1989a, 1989b). The MSI openly stated its inspiration in fascist doctrine, recruited old fascist party members and, for a long time, was active in promoting meetings and supporting ‘neofascist’ groups all over Europe (Del Boca and Giovana, 1969; Gaddi, 1974).

Taking for granted the centrality of fascist ideology in defining our *tendance*, we now have to stipulate some basic traits of this ideology. This is a very difficult task because fascist ideology is a *mare magnum* where different sources melt together. Such sources range from anarchosyndicalism to nationalism and revanche, from futurism to clericalism, from a revolutionary aspiration towards a new order and a new man to petty-bourgeois conservatism, from industrial modernism to ruralism, from authoritarian corporatism to *laissez faire*¹⁴ (Cofrancesco, 1986; De Felice, 1969, 1975; Gentile, 1974; Nolte, 1967 (ed or 1963); Payne, 1980; Sternhell, 1976, 1989; Zunino, 1985).

The strongholds of fascist ideology common to all of its various streams¹⁵ are: belief in the authority of the state over the individual; emphasis on natural community – hence nationalism, ethnocentrism and racism; distrust for the individual representation and parliamentary arrangements; limitations on personal and collective freedoms; exaltation of the strength of the state; collective identification in a great national destiny – against class or ethnic or religious divisions; and acceptance of hierarchical criteria for social organisation. In extreme synthesis, state or nation comes prior to the individual.¹⁶

The heritage of fascism can be seen either in terms of 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. Given the crucial importance of aesthetics and image in fascism (Mosse, 1975 (ed or 1974)) we have to account for both elements. However while aesthetic expression is a probable indicator of adhesion to fascist

ideology and recall of the fascist interwar experience, the reverse might not be true. In order to avoid stigmatization, ERPs could have toned down symbolic references to fascism.

If we apply an ideological criterion to the parties mentioned above, controlling for party manifestos/platforms and leader's interventions (our unit of analysis is party not individual members or voters as in Falter and Schumann (1988), Oppenhuis (1990), Ysmal (1990b)) then we can identify parties linked to fascist tradition. These include:

- the Italian MSI (Ignazi, 1989a, b, 1990);
- the German NPD and DVU (Stöss, 1988; Westle and Niedermayer, 1990);
- the British BNP and NF¹⁷ (Husbands, 1988; Lewis, 1987; Thurlow, 1987);
- the Greek EPEN (Seferiades, 1986; Groupes des Droites Européennes (s.d. but 1986); Clogg, 1987; Papadopoulos, 1988);
- the Austrian NDP/BRB/EHI (Gartner, 1990);
- the Spanish FNs (Gunther et al., 1986);
- the Portuguese PDC (Costa Pinto, 1990);
and, with some cautions:
 - the Dutch CP86 (Voerman and Lucardie, 1990).

Even if in some cases the distinction is not always very sharp, all of the above parties either recall keystones of fascist ideology of whatever internal tendency, or regret the glorious past, or exhibit the external signs of such imagery or, finally, call for a third way beyond capitalism and communism; in short, they themselves indicate their roots in the interwar fascist experience.¹⁸ Other parties on the extreme right do not show a clear linkage with fascism, with the exception of the Spanish AP.

The case of the AP is worth a brief discussion however, to highlight the main problems we face when making such classifications. First, we might question the presence of AP (and many parties, as we will see later on) in the extreme right family. AP is member of the European Democratic Union and the European People's Party grouping in the European Parliament, and is defined a conservative party by many scholars of the Spanish party system (see, for all, Lopez Nieto, 1988). Nevertheless the spatial self-placement of the party supporters and expert judgements of the party's location on the left-right scale are unequivocal. In 1986, 53 per cent of the electorate placed AP at the 'extreme right' and 42 per cent at 'right'. In 1984 the mean score on the 1–10 left-right scale of AP leader Manuel Fraga was 8.3; between 1982 and 1986 AP supporters moved from right to extreme right (Montero, 1988: 156 ss). As José Montero says, 'AP voters have become more conservative. The distance between AP and the other political parties had widened' (Montero, 1988: 159). And the same trend has been highlighted by the time-series survey data presented by Sani and Shabad (1986: 620–621). Thus, as far as the spatial criterion is concerned, AP identification is not questionable. Concerning ideology,

however, even if AP represents some continuity with the Francoist regime, and given that Fraga himself was an old Franco Minister, it should be recognized that, in the transition to democracy, AP has left to Fuerza Nueva (now Frente Nacional) the role of the fascist-like party. (Nostalgia for the past is often, however, present in AP political discourse; see, for example, Gunther et al., 1986: spec. 346–347).

Attitude to the system

The third criterion adopted to highlight the distinctiveness of ERPs involves their role in (and their relationship to) the political system. This approach highlights the role of opposition parties in democratic regimes.

Kirchheimer identifies two types of opposition (Kirchheimer, 1966a: 237). The first is opposition of principle, where ‘goal displacement is incompatible with the constitutional requirements of a given system’; the second is loyal opposition, which implies just a ‘goal differentiation’. In the same tradition, Sartori defines an ‘antisystem party’ as one characterized by activity that undermines the legitimacy of the regime, and ‘a belief system that does not share the values of the political order within which it operates’ (Sartori, 1976: 133). More recently, Gordon Smith has proposed a typology which combines ‘compatibility of aims and acceptability of behaviour’ and has underlined the existence of a ‘grey zone of acceptability’ according to different time and context; in other terms, what is considered ‘incompatible with the system in one era may be accommodated in other’ (Smith, 1987: 63–64). The evolution of the socialist parties illustrate very well how parties can progressively accommodate themselves to the system’s rules.

In theory, the extreme right parties should exhibit an ‘opposition of principle’ and should express an ideology which undermines the constitutional rules of the democratic regime. If we refer to fascism as *the* extreme right ideology, this ideology is, by any standard, alien and extraneous to liberal-democracy; but, by proceeding this way, we come back to our previous criterion, the ideological one. In order to escape from this vicious circle we will not refer to a well structured ideology, but will inquire about the presence of ‘antisystem’ political attitudes and beliefs. This distinction reflects Sartori’s differentiation between ‘a broad and strict definition of ‘antisystem’ (Sartori, 1976: 132).

As far as we know from the content analysis of party manifestoes, platforms and leaders’ writings and speeches, ERPs share some common features which are clearly antisystem. These include antiparliamentarism, antipluralism and antipartyism. Even if such parties do not openly advocate a non-democratic institutional setting, they nevertheless undermine system legitimacy by expressing distrust for the parliamentary system, the futile discussions provoked by ambitious leaders, excessive freedom, the weakness of the state, the disruption of the

traditional natural communities, and ‘unnatural’ egalitarianism.

In sum, while most ERPs do not share any ‘nostalgia’ for the interwar fascist experience, and may even refuse any reference to fascism, they nevertheless express antidemocratic values throughout their political discourse. Their criticism is inspired by a refusal of modernity, a hate of divisions and a search for harmony, an exaltation of natural community and a hostility towards foreigners, a faith in hierarchical structures and a distrust of parliamentary debate.

New and old ERPs

Summing up, our search for a valid *criteria definitionis* of the extreme right *tendance* has produced a typology according to which parties more on the right of the political spectrum are categorized according to the presence or absence of a fascist heritage and the acceptance or refusal of the political system. In order to be included in our class of ‘extreme right’ parties, the most rightwing parties, should either fulfil the historic-ideological fascist criterion, or should exhibit a delegitimizing impact, through a series of issues, values, attitudes (rather than a structured and coherent ideology), which undermines system legitimacy. If a party fits the historic-ideological criterion as well as the systemic one, we can think of it as belonging to the ‘old right’ type. If a party is not linked to fascism but has an antisystem profile, we can think of it as belonging to the ‘new right’ type.¹⁹

The adoption of this framework helps us to settle on the borderline between ERPs and conservative parties. The different spatial location (the conservative parties are more to the centre), the different ideology (conservatism belongs to another ideological class), the different attitudes toward the system (conservatives are supportive or engage in ‘goal opposition’, but never endanger system legitimacy) clearly make the distinction between the two classes.

The ‘new right-wing’ party type in practice

Doubtful cases

As we have already indicated, not all parties at the right-wing end of the left-right scale can properly be considered to be extreme right parties. In the first place, we can remove from our analysis the rightmost parties of Sweden, Ireland and Finland. While the Moderata Samlingspartei, Fianna Fáil and the Kansallinen Kokoomus may be seen as the most right-wing parties of their respective countries they do not exhibit any antisystem attitudes (nor, a

fortiori, fascist tendencies).

In the case of FF, given the low distance from its closest competitors (Fine Gael and the Progressive Democrats) and its position on the left-right spectrum – not exceeding point 7.0 on a 1–10 left-right scale (see Gallagher, 1985) – the exclusion of this party is uncontentious. In the two other cases, the Finnish KK is surely located close to the right-wing pole (Sani and Sartori, 1983) but it is a conservative, pro-establishment party; and the same goes for the Swedish Moderata party. Therefore, while conservative, both cannot be seen as having antisystem attitudes.

While the three parties considered above are unequivocally outside the extreme right family, the cases of AP, CDS, FPO, FRPn and FRP are debatable and need to be treated carefully.

The Spanish Alianza Popular has already been partially discussed; it is located at the extreme right but, thanks to the presence of a declared neofascist party, Frente Nacional, (plus other minor groups as the Falange de la JONS), it is not an old right-wing party. However, the attitude expressed by party's declarations and programmes clearly points to it having a delegitimizing impact on the Spanish system. AP moved to the right in the early 1980s, which suggest that it is 'becoming increasingly representative of the rightist and authoritarian sectors of the Spanish politics' (Montero, 1988: 157). Moreover, AP seems unable to overcome its 'deficit of democratic legitimacy and to modernize its ideological proposals on the same track of neoconservatism'. AP emphasizes an 'excessive conservatism (not devoid of a certain authoritarianism) and a rigid defence of traditional values' (Montero, 1987: 9). Yet, after Fraga's dismissal from the party leadership in 1986 and the renewal of the coalition with a new name, Partido Popular (PP), most of the antisystem attitudes seem to have been replaced by a concern with 'goal opposition'. Thus, while the new PP is probably moving away from the ERP class, for a large part of the 1980s AP should be considered full member of this class.²⁰

An inverse route has being followed by the FPÖ. The 1986 takeover of the party leadership by the Haider faction has swept away the liberal group (the 'Attersee circle') which had conquered the party in the late 1970s. The short predominance of an authentically liberal leadership had been incapable of modyfing the nationalistic and antidemocratic heritage of the party. Even in the mid 1980s 'authoritarian, anti-semitic and similar attitudes' (Luther, 1988: 232) had their largest concentration in the FPÖ. And while Richard Luther warns against a superficial labelling of FPÖ as antisystem he must recognize that after the change of leadership 'the FPÖ had opted ... to revert to its traditional role of a party of protest rather than a party of government' (Luther, 1988: 247). The new leadership and the dubious past of Haider's inner circle (Gartner, 1990), the non-discouraged support from minor radical right groups, the anti-semitic, xenophobic and nationalistic issues highlighted, suggest the post-1986 FPÖ as a member of the extreme right class.

Beyond the marginal PDC – which does not overcome the 1 per cent threshold – and the

new comer Forca Nacional, the Portuguese right lies in the CDS.²¹ But is it conservative or ‘extreme right’? The spatial location of CDS in 1986 would support the latter hypothesis; the mean location on a 1–10 left-right scale is 7.7 and 36 per cent of respondents put it at the extreme right (points 9 and 10) (Bacalhau, 1989: 253). Moreover, as Nogueira Pinto clearly states, the ‘the rightmost party of the Portuguese system is the CDS’ (Nogueira Pinto, 1989: 204). However, as far as ideology and attitudes towards the system are concerned, the party’s inclusion in the ERP class is questionable. The CDS recruited some supporters and leaders of the old regime but the party does not manifest any particular attachment to this regime, nor any fierce opposition to the democratic decision-making process and institutions. Its presence in government for some years together with the PSD has inevitably helped the CDS to rid itself of antisystem attitudes. Finally, the CDS is member of the European People’s Party. On the basis of this evidence, we are inclined to drop the CDS from the extreme right class.

The remaining two parties, the Norwegian Progress Party (FRPn) and its Danish counterpart, FRP, present quite different stories. Both erupted in the political scene in the early 1970s mainly as single-issue anti-tax parties. Both then went beyond their ‘single’ issue, which anyway comprehended many topics related to the welfare system and government spending, by dealing with immigration, as well as law and order issues.

While there is full agreement on the extraneousness of both Progress Parties to the fascist tradition (minuscule chapels keep this ideology alive in Denmark and Norway: see O’Maoláin, 1987) more debatable is their antisystem attitude. On one side Lars Bille (1989: 49–50) argues that, taking Sartori’s broad definition of antisystem, the FRP ‘tried to undermine the legitimacy of the regime of the old parties in the sense that by regime is understood the ideology, norms, rules and habits of the welfare *state* system’ (Bille, 1989: 49). If we add to this narrow concern with the welfare state regime a set of attitudes that expresses distrust with parties *as such*, party system, and parliamentarism, (Andersen, 1991, Andersen and Bjørklund, 1990) then we have a delegitimizing impact on the democratic system. To the extent that the FRP is moving along these lines, it should be included in the ERP class. However after the 1984 change of leadership (when the founding father of the party, Mogens Glistrup, went to jail) the FRP has softened its policy and bargained its support for the bourgeois coalition.

The case of the Norwegian FRPn is similar. Kurt Heidar considers the Progress Party ‘an alloy of extreme economic liberalism and right-wing populism’ and he defines it as ‘an anti-consensus party (but not an antisystem)’ (Heidar, 1989: 147). On the other side, William Lafferty underlines FRPn’s radical opposition to the social democratic state, negative attitudes toward immigrants, and violent attacks on ‘politicians’ and ‘bureaucrats’. Consequently he includes the FRPn in the extreme right category (Lafferty, 1989: 95–96), and we agree with this classification. More recently, Valen (1990: 281–282) has shown that the centrist electorate rejects every hypothetical coalition with the FRPn²² (see also Madeley, 1990).

Therefore, while some perplexities still remain, as highlighted by Andersen and Bjørklund’s

(1990) thorough analysis of both Progress Parties, we include them in the ‘new right-wing’ type of the extreme right party family.

To summarize this discussion of doubtful cases three parties have proved, by any standard, extraneous to the extreme right class – these are FF, MS and KK. The same applies (with somewhat more uncertainty) to the CDS. The other parties that we have considered – AP, FPO, FRP and FRPn – do appear to be sufficiently qualified for inclusion in the ‘new right-wing’ type.

Prototypes new right parties: FN, REP, FnB, VIB, PFN, CD, AN/Vigilantes

The French Front National, the German Republikaner, the Belgian Front National, Vlaams Blok and Parti de Forces Nouvelles, the Dutch Centrumdemocraten and the Swiss Action National plus its Geneva sister party Vigilantes, are the most representative parties of the new right-wing type. They refuse any relationship with traditional conservative parties, they define themselves outside the party system, they are constantly in fight against all the other parties, they accuse the ‘ruling class’ of misconsideration of the ‘real’ problems of the people, they blame the incapacity of the system to deal with the most salient issues, law and order and immigration. Finally, they deny any reference to fascism.

Sources of ERP success in the 1980s: hypotheses on ‘the silent counter-revolution’

New and old ERPs: a diverging electoral performance

In the previous section we highlighted a cleavage between old right-wing parties and new right-wing parties, defined by the persistence of a fascist imprint in party ideology, value system or aesthetics. In the first group we found parties that declared themselves to be the heirs of the collapsed fascist regimes, including the leader of postwar neo-fascism, the MSI, and the less successful NPD, DVU, EPEN, Frente Nacional, NDP/BRB/EHI, BNP, NF, CP86, PDC.

If we look at the recent electoral outcomes ([Table 1](#)) we see that the old right-wing parties have tended to decline or even to disappear. (The few exceptions are due to the most recently-born party (CP86), the DVU-Liste D in the Bremen Land election of 1987 and the NPD in the Frankfurt local election of 1989).

On the other side, the parties of the new right-wing type have generally increased ([Table 2](#)).

Table 1 Electoral results of ERP's in the 1980s; percentages of vote

Country	Party	81	82	83	84	84E	85	86	87	88	89	89E
Austria ¹	FPÖ	—	—	5.0	—	—	—	9.7	—	—	—	—
Belgium ²	V1B	1.1	—	—	—	1.3	1.4	—	1.9	—	—	4.1
Denmark	FRP	8.9	—	—	3.6	3.5	—	—	4.8	9.0	—	5.3
France ³	FNs	0.2	—	—	—	11.2	—	9.8	—	9.6	(14.4) ⁴	11.7
Germany ⁵	NPD	—	—	0.6	—	0.8	—	—	0.6	—	—	1.6
	REP	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	7.1
Greece	EPEN	—	—	—	—	2.3	0.6	—	—	—	0.3	1.2
	KP	1.7	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Italy	MSI	—	—	6.8	—	6.5	—	—	5.9	—	—	5.5
The	CP+	0.1	0.8	—	—	2.5	—	0.4	—	—	—	—
Netherlands ⁶	CP86	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.1	—	—	0.9	0.8
	CD	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Norway	FRPn	4.5	—	—	—	—	3.7	—	—	—	13.0 ⁷	—
Portugal	PDC	—	—	0.6	—	—	0.7	—	0.5E	—	—	0.7
Spain	AP	—	26.2	—	—	—	—	26.0	24.7E	—	25.8	21.4
	FNs	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.6E	—	—	0.4
Switzerland ⁸	Falange	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.1E	—	0.1	0.2
	AN/ Vigilantes	—	—	3.5	—	—	—	—	2.9	—	—	—

¹ The other minor parties have been excluded from the table. For more details on these parties, see note 10 in the text.

² The relevance of the Flemish Vlaams Blok and the Walloon PFN and FNB is provided by their recent electoral scores in local elections. In 1989 Bruxelles regional election they got, respectively, 2.1%, 1.0% and 3.3%. But the strength of the Vlaams Blok is better ascertained by looking at its scores in some large Flemish cities. For example, at the 1988 local election in Anvers, the second largest city in Belgium, VIB reached 17.8% of the votes.

³ Computed on the 'expressed votes' (*suffrages exprimés*) at the first ballot.

⁴ 14.4% refers to Le Pen score at the 1988 Presidential election, first ballot.

⁵ The Republikaner score at the European Election comes after a series of successes in Lander elections and, above all, in Berlin, 7.5% (1989). See Westle and Niedermayer (1990).

⁶ In the 1990 local election CD and CP86 have dramatically increased their votes; in the four main Dutch cities their scores range from 1.2% to 3.3% (CP86) and from 3.8% to 4.4% (CD). See Voerman and Lucardie (1990).

⁷ This result has been anticipated by the unforeseen success in the 1987 local election: 12.3%.

⁸ There is a striking difference between AN and Vigilantes scores at federal and local level; at local level their electoral trend is upward. For example, in recent communal elections AN got 10.9% (+ 5.1%) in Bern, 9.9% (+ 6.0) in Zurich, 14.2% (+ 14.2%) in Lausanne and the Vigilantes reaches 19.0% (+ 11.3) in Geneva cantonal election. See Husbands, 1988, 1990.

What are the conditions for the development of the new right-wing type all over Europe? Are there any changes in the Western societies that can account for the rise of new right-wing parties? Is there any common feature that links these parties and might explain their success.

As the upsurge of ERPs is a recent phenomenon and comparative research is at a very early stage (Falter and Schumann's 1988 essay represents a pioneering attempt but utilizes data up to 1985) it is difficult to give a final answer to these questions. However, there is a series of possible explanations both on the societal side and on the side of the party system. Without pretending to give full account of all aspects of this, and while relying on existing empirical evidence, we will focus on the following elements:

- a. the rise of a new 'neo-conservative' cultural mood;
- b. a tendency toward radicalization and polarization;
- c. the presence of an underground but mounting legitimacy crisis of the political and (above all) party system;
- d. security and immigration issues.

Table 2 Size, type and electoral trend of ERPs in the 1980s

Type	Size	Electoral trend	
		Stable/decreasing	Increasing
Old	small (-5%)	EPEN PDC FNs + Falange NDP NDP/BRB/EHI NF	CP86
	large (+5%)	MSI	
New	small (- 5%)		CD FNb PFN
	large (+ 5%)		AP AN/Vigilantes FN Rep. FRP FRPn FPO VlB

The impact of neo-conservatism

As Daniel Bell underlined, some intellectuals in the 1970s, mostly disillusioned by leftist ideology, oriented themselves toward the right creating a neoconservative movement for the first time since World War II (Bell, 1980: 149–150). Neoconservatism emerged as a reaction against the postwar consensus on Keynesian political economy and the ‘collectivist age’, and the rapid growth and cost of the Welfare system. This movement advocates, in contrast to the ‘overloading’ burden of the state provision, the revival of the liberal *laissez faire* principles of the free market, individual entrepreneurs, privatization of the public sector, and cuts in the welfare system. This new attitude to socio-economic policy came together with major value changes, as a result of which authority, patriotism, the role of the family and traditional moral

values have been partly re-emphasized and partly redefined in response to postmaterialist issues. As a consequence, the new cultural movement of the 1980s is nurtured by different and even contradictory contributions: ‘liberals’ concern with liberty, freedom and progress does not correspond with conservatives’ emphasis upon the organic unity of society and the state, hierarchy and the negative consequences of economic activity’ (King, 1987: 24–25). However, in our opinion, the dominant emphasis is not on freedom and individualism against the danger of a bureaucratic and collectivistic society but rather on traditional and neo-conservative values.

The distinction between traditional and neo-conservative values is necessary because contemporary conservatism does not just recall the traditional moral values of the past but also offers an ‘alternative and parallel view of reality’ in juxtaposition to the leftist-progressive one (Girvin, 1988: 10). The main future of neo-conservatism, in fact, lies in presenting itself to the mass public as a non-materialistic answer to the agenda of the New Politics: ‘the New Left issues … have helped to crowd the economic issues off the agenda and have provoked the emergence of the … New Right set of moral and religious issues. … This new set of issues includes right to life, antiwomlib, creationism, antipornography, support for traditional and moral values, strong defence, patriotism, law and order enforcement, antiminority rights, xenophobia’. (Flanagan, 1987: 1308, 1312).

This cultural movement has become highly influential all over Western societies in the 1980s and it has contributed in the affirmation of conservative-confessional-liberal parties. Great Britain, West Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark, Belgium, Portugal (and France for two years, 1986–88) turned to the right and were governed by conservative parties or coalitions. And, even where the socialists gained or kept control of the government as in Spain and France, they were obliged to take into account some of the liberal creeds.

The tendency towards polarization

The effects of this new cultural mood are important. Neo-conservatism has provoked, directly and indirectly, a higher polarization both in terms of ideological distance and in terms of ideological intensity (Sartori, 1976: 126). Such reasoning could hold only if – at the risk of being accused of sociological bias (Sartori, 1969) – we identify the *primum mobile* of the process of polarization at the cultural-ideological level. Therefore, if we assume that the ‘conservative’ parties (we adopt the term conservative for sake of parsimony, but they might be confessional, or agrarian, or liberal) have absorbed the neo-conservative tendency and thus have moved to the right, we should see an increase in the ideological intensity and distance in the political system. As conservative parties moved to the right and the leftist parties kept their positions, polarization should have increased.

If this is true we face another problem. Since party systems have become more polarized thanks to a shift to the right of conservative parties, how can we account for the emergence of new right-wing parties? According to spatial theory, a party that moves toward the right pole of the left-right continuum should occupy this territory and thus inhibit the rise of more extreme right-wing parties. Yet, the mechanics of polarization implies the development of a politics of outbidding, according to which either a ‘conservative’ party or a radical right-wing party move more and more to the right. The first possibility is quite risky for a conservative party. As it moves more and more to the right, leaving its traditional ‘hunting territory’, a potentially successful competitor might emerge on its left. The conservative party risks losing its ties to its traditional electorate by moving too much to the right. Therefore, the second outcome seems more plausible: a new right-extremist party may voice the most radical promises without any strategic hindrance. Apparently, this latter outcome did materialize, the shift to the right of the conservative parties did not inhibit the emergence of more extreme parties – as spatial theory postulates – rather, it paved the way for ERPs.

Does this theoretical scheme fit the reality of 1980s party systems? In the absence of comprehensive cross-national time-series data on the party locations on the left-right continuum (for a useful summary of existing data see Laver and Schofield, 1990), we should refer to country specific analyses. To the best of our knowledge, the literature does indicate a general move to the right by conservative parties followed, in some cases, by a simultaneous shift to the left by socialist parties – as in Great Britain, the Netherlands and West Germany in the early-mid 1980s (Girvin, 1988a). It also documents the rise of Green parties and ERPs at the two extremes of the left-right scale.

[Table 3](#) presents a tentative classification of party systems into those that are non-polarized, ‘polarizing’ and polarized. Needless to say, given the scope of this essay, we do not pretend to offer a full-scale alternative typology of party systems, rather, we focus on Sartori’s ideological ‘control variable’ (Sartori, 1976: 132), leaving aside his ‘format variable’. Keeping in mind this single-variable approach, we can say that most countries have experienced, or are experiencing, a process of radicalization which has led to an increasing ideological distance in the party system and which has favoured the development of extreme parties. As a consequence, many segmented societies are driven toward ‘polarization’, looking only at party ideologies and not taking into account the *relevance* of the new parties. This seems to be the case in France, Belgium, Norway, Germany, the Netherlands, Denmark and Greece.²³ Moreover, [Table 3](#) suggests a relationship between the polarizing drive of a party system and emergence of ERPs. Indeed, the new right-wing parties are overwhelmingly concentrated in the polarizing systems. This suggests that a process of radicalization at the cultural-ideological level, favouring the enlargement of the political space and hence increasing ideological distances, has been a propitious condition for the development of ERPs.

System legitimacy

The third factor that may be related to the rise of new right-wing parties concerns the specific issues or value systems promoted. As we have already stated, neoconservatism had introduced or revitalized themes which have been only partially interpreted by the ‘conservative’ parties. Thanks to the radicalization we have just been discussing, more extreme positions have gained ‘legitimacy’ but ‘conservative’ parties have not identified themselves with these positions. Inevitably, the ERPs have claimed the right to represent such positions more adequately. Specifically, ERPs ask for the total dismantling of the welfare system, an aggressive nationalism, a form of social darwinism, the restoring of moral traditionalism, an authoritarian state and xenophobic policies towards foreigners.

But the distinctiveness of ERPs is based not just on the ‘intensity’ of their neoconservative approach. They are distinct because they endanger the legitimacy of the system. The adoption of a more radical version of neoconservative values by ERPs is intended to undermine the foundation of the system by delegitimizing the parties and the party system, the parliamentary procedure, the principle of equality, and sometimes even the rule of law. Why has there been a move toward such antisystem positions?

Table 3 ERP’s presence and party system ideological status

	<i>Non polarized</i>	<i>Polarizing</i>	<i>Polarized</i>
No ERPs	Ireland Sweden		Finland
New ERPs	Austria Spain (AP) Switzerland	Belgium Denmark France Germany (Rep.)	
		Netherlands Norway	
Old ERPs	Great Britain Portugal Spain (FNs)	Germany (NPD) Greece	Italy

Our tentative answer points to the emergence of what we might think of as a ‘silent counter-revolution’. As neoconservatism has flourished at the cultural-intellectual level, there has also been a change in attitudes and behaviours in the mass public. This change has been perceived only very partially because few studies have been designed to look at it

(Flanagan, 1987, Minkenberg and Inglehart, 1989, Minkenberg, 1990). In particular, Inglehart's thesis about the continuous growth of postmaterialism is a good example of this misperception.

It is well known that Inglehart's paradigm of materialism/postmaterialism is based on four crucial issues and that the 'materialist' issues concern inflation and order. While there is no doubt about the 'materialist' substance of those issues, the point is that in the 1980s *they were no longer salient*. In the wake of the 1970s—when the research on the silent revolution took off after the student turmoils – inflation and order in the streets were salient issues for tapping materialist concerns. But in the 1980s, when inflation declined sharply and clashes with the police were replaced either by consumerism or by peaceful demonstrations on ecologist/antimilitarist themes, the old materialist issues had lost much of their salience. Therefore we have had a bias towards the 'progressive' side of the change in Western societies and an underestimation of the 'conservative' side.

In addition to this probable misperception of value change in Inglehart's scheme, there are scattered pieces of evidence of a general feeling which could account for the growth of antisystem attitudes, the creeping legitimacy crisis in Western societies. This 'crisis of confidence' can be analysed at two different levels, the behavioural and the attitudinal.

At the level of observable individual behaviour, two indicators are pertinent: the decline in electoral turnout and the decline in party and trade-union membership. Even if such general trends have been reversed in some cases (Norway for example) there is wide consensus on this point. One may argue that this evolution might be counterbalanced by the growth of non-partisan politics (Dalton, 1988, Smith, 1987) or by new parties not organized along the mass membership model (Heidar, 1989, Kitschelt, 1989). However, these two indicators show the existence of a certain malaise *vis-a-vis* the traditional parties. And, while there seems to be a higher interest in politics in general, thanks to new non-party movements (Dalton, 1988: 23), we agree that 'parties are increasingly under pressure and may have to give away some of their original ground to other intermediary organizations' (Kaase, 1990a: 64; see also Lawson and Merkl, 1988a: 5).

Turning to attitudinal data, the decline in party identification (Harding et al., 1988, Mair, 1989b) reinforces the argument. As far as the system support is concerned, the prevailing interpretation points to a widening gap between the citizen and the system (Kaase, 1988: 131). As Russell Dalton summarizes, 'feelings of mistrust have gradually broadened to include evaluations of the political regime and other institutions in society. The lack of confidence in politics and political institutions is widespread' (Dalton, 1988: 239). Following the same track, Ulrich Wiedmaier, on the basis of the Globus Model, has hypothesized that 'regime legitimacy will decline' (Wiedmaier, 1990: 152; see also Wiedmaier, 1988: 239). Lipset and Schneider (1983: 382) take a step further, arguing the prevalence of a 'general anti-elitist, anti-power ideology'. In sum, even in absence of definitive empirical evidence, it could be sustained that the Western

public has experienced a period of malaise, probably repressed and cooled by the time of the economic recovery after 1982.

But what is the relationship between the weakening legitimacy of Western systems and the rise of ERPs? Dissatisfaction towards parties, the way in which democracy works and the output of the system in relation to physical security tend inevitably to feed opposition and/or antisystem parties. The distrust facing parties and institutions and the loss of confidence in the traditional channels of participation (Harding et al., 1988: 77–81, Kaase, 1990) have thus found their expression not only in new left politics but also in the extreme right. Only ERPs offer the electorate a right wing radical alternative to the establishment's political discourse. Only ERPs want to 'throw the rascals out' and modify the rules, kicking out politicians and hiring honest technicians. Only ERPs offer simple remedies to unemployment and tax burden. Only ERPs play upon an harmonious and idyllic past where conflicts and anxiety about the future did not exist. Only ERPs, *last but not least*, invoke law and order and a xenophobic policy against Third world immigrants.

Immigration, law and order

As already underlined, attitudes to immigration and security are indicators of a new value dimension. The issue of immigration, in particular, has been transformed into a salient political theme all over Europe only in the 1980s – only Switzerland and Great Britain had faced the problem in an earlier period (European Parliament, 1985, European Commission, 1989, Husbands, 1988, Layton-Henry, 1988). The inability of the established parties to provide an answer to this problem in due time has favoured the development of extreme right parties which advocate xenophobic and racist positions.

The case of the French Front National is, in a way, exemplary. Numerous studies have demonstrated that the FN supporters and voters place the highest priority on the immigration issue, closely followed by that of security (Charlot, 1986, Ignazi, 1989c, Lagrange and Perrineau, 1989, Mayer and Perrineau, 1990, Taguieff, 1985, 1988, 1989). The ability of Le Pen's party to 'politicize' a hidden issue is generally recognized as the keystone of its success. In a way or another, the same has happened in countries such as Belgium (Delwit, 1990), Norway (Lafferty, 1989, Madeley, 1990), Denmark (Andersen and Bjørklund, 1990), the Netherlands (Voerman and Lucardie, 1990), West Germany (Betz, 1990b, Westle and Niedermayer, 1990), Great Britain (Husbands, 1983), Switzerland (Church, 1989: 44, Husbands, 1988: 714–716).

In the world views of many extreme right supporters, immigration is closely linked to security. Where the immigrants are concentrated it is assumed that delinquency increases.

Law and order issues have been also agitated by moderate-conservative parties from time to time, independently of immigration. But no conservative party has ever put as much

emphasis on these issues, nor taken as extreme positions, as the ERPs have done.

Therefore, the inability of the established parties to perceive, and to deal with relevant issues such as immigration and security, and the failure of conservative parties to suggesting tough policies, are related to the rise of ERPs.

In conclusion, the new cultural movement of neoconservatism has engendered a process of radicalization and antisystem polarization not controlled by the ‘conservative’ parties, from which the more extreme right-wing parties have benefited. In addition, mass public attitudes and behaviour characterized by a growing crisis of confidence in institutions, parties and party systems, the working of democracy, and by non-response to salient issues such as immigration and security, have favoured the development of ERPs.

Conclusion

In this paper we have tried to identify and define more clearly the category of the extreme right party. In so doing we have stated three criteria: spatial, historic-ideological and attitudinal-systemic. The first has been employed as a preliminary screening, in order to identify parties on the extreme right of the left-right continuum. The second criterion applies to the shared ideology inside the ERP family. Having adopted the reference to fascism as the distinctive element, we noted that only a minority of parties located on the extreme right retain a fascist heritage. The third criterion, the presence of antisystem attitudes, enables us to identify those non-fascist parties that belong to the ERP class and not to the conservative one. All of the parties located at far right which show a fascist heritage and/or which manifest antisystem attitude are included in the class of the extreme right. This class is composed by two types, according to the existence of fascist imprint: the old right wing parties (MSI, EPEN, NPD, NF, BNP, FNs, PDC, NPD/BRB/EHI, CP86) and the new right-wing parties (FN, AN/Vigilantes, FPO, FNb, PFN, Vlb, Rep, FRPn, FRP, AP, CD). While some difficulties emerge about the inclusion of a party in one type or the other (in particular CP86 and AP) we are quite confident in the inclusion of FRPn, FRP, FPO and AP in the extreme right class. To the best of our knowledge, their political discourse tends to undermine the legitimacy of the democratic system by discrediting the parliamentary decision-making process, party government and the representative procedure; finally, through their strong xenophobic stances, they undermine one of the keystones of democracy, equality of men.

The second aim of this paper has concerned the attempt to highlight the origins of the recent rise of many ERPs. First, we noted the different fortunes of old and new ERPs. While old ERPs are stable or declining (with the exception of the recently born CP86 and the German DVU and NPD), the new ERPs which have emerged in the 1980s have attained

considerable success, even more than 10 per cent of the votes (FN, FRPn, AP). The explanation of this sudden success lies in two basic changes – one at the cultural level, and the other at the societal level.

At the cultural level, the neoconservative mood has legitimized a series of ‘right-wing’ themes which were previously almost banned from political debate, pushing the ‘conservative’ parties to the right. This in turn has enlarged the political space and provoked an increased polarization; in this process of outbidding, the more extreme right parties have succeeded.

At the societal level, a different but simultaneous movement was taking place during the 1980s. The decline of the party as such has been coupled with a growing dissatisfaction *vis-a-vis* the political system and a corresponding decline in confidence in its efficacy. A mounting sense of doom, in contrast to postmaterialist optimism, has been transformed into new demands, mainly unforeseen by the established conservative parties. These demands include law and order enforcement and, above all, immigration control, which seems to be the leading issue for all new right-wing parties. This value change, stimulated by the reaction to postmaterialism and by new combination of authoritarian issues, might be identified as a silent counter-revolution.

Acknowledgements

A very preliminary version of parts of this paper was presented at the ECPR workshop on ‘The Extreme Right in Europe’, Bochum, April 2–7, 1990. I wish to thank Stefano Bartolini, Lorenzo Ornaghi, Angelo Panebianco, Colette Ysmal and all of the participants of this workshop for their insightful comments.

Notes

¹ Peter Mair (1991: 61–63) has shown that the ‘small’ parties born after 1950 have an upward tendency in electoral terms.

This finding contrasts with the pessimistic outlook above underlined (and shared by Pedersen (1982, 1991)). The point is that Mair includes in his analysis parties with up to 15% after vote which contested at least three elections: our ‘intuitive’ idea of small parties refers to much smaller ones.

² This is the main criticism by Flanagan (1987). However, in a recent contribution coauthored with Minkenberg, Inglehart recognizes the influence of the New Politics for the emergence of non-materialist right-wing attitudes (Minkenberg and Inglehart, 1989).

³ The electoral attractiveness across social classes of fascist and nazi parties has been highlighted by Gentile (1989: 544–571)

and Petersen (1975) for the PNF and by Childers (1983: spec. 253–257), Kater (1983: spec. 236–238), Mühlberger (1987: spec. 96, 124–125) for the NSDAP. *Contra* see Hamilton (1982).

⁴ It should be underlined that even Stein Rokkan did not include fascist parties in his analysis. In a sense, this might be related to the *terminus ad quem* of the process of democratization: the mass enfranchisement in the early 1920s on the eve of the rise of the two new political phenomena of the twentieth century, fascism and communism. But, in reality, communism is led back to the cleavage structure, and the Bolshevik Revolution is considered a sort of fourth ‘critical juncture’ (Rokkan, 1970: 131). On the other hand, fascism is totally ignored; it is not included in the set of alternatives offered to the citizens. Only in his last contributions Rokkan started to reflect on the emergence of fascist parties and regimes, including them in his geopolitical-geoeconomic macro-model (Hagvetet and Rokkan, 1980). However, his study on fascism was mainly focused on regimes and the process of democratization (or breakdown of democracy) rather than on the origin of the fascist *parties*.

⁵ Lane and Ersson (1987: 97) divide the parties in *structural and non-structural* ones; while the former group includes the parties derived by or attached to a major societal cleavage the latter does not display any distinctive origin. Following such a scheme, they are not at ease dealing with the so called ‘non-structural’ parties.

⁶ Laver and Schofield (1990: 245) have recently reported four methods of constructing empirical scales: (1) expert judgements, (2) analysis of legislative behaviour, (2) analysis of mass survey and (4) analysis of content of policy documents. However, these four methods could be reduced to just two categories according to whether the *researcher judgement* is present (first, third and fourth method) or not (second method): precisely as we argue. At any rate, Laver and Schofield’s Appendix B provides a useful survey of the various attempts at locating political parties on empirical policy scales.

⁷ There is one exception to this rule and it regards the two British parties, National Front and British National Party. The peak of their political fortunes, in particular of the National Front, goes back to the 1970s, but even then they were not able to present candidates all over the country. However, the very poor vote shares they got are also related to the peculiarity of the English electoral system. At any rate, while electorally irrelevant (the National Front has presented just one candidate at the 1989 European Election receiving 0.8% of the votes), both parties have been regarded as a political presence in the British landscape. The numerous studies carried on them highlights this: Husbands, 1983, 1988, Lewis, 1987: 231–256, Taylor, 1982, Thurlow, 1987: 275–297, Walker, 1977.

⁸ Few words should be spent for justifying the exclusion of the Greek conservative party, Nea Demokratia (New Democracy). The ND spatial location is very skewed to the right pole: according to Papadopoulos (1988: 63) ‘ND appears paradoxically as a far-right party: 34.8 per cent of its electorate is located at level 10’ (on the 1–10 left-right continuum). But despite the consequent remarkable ideological distance between ND and Pasok electorates, the same author denies the ‘presence of any presumably ‘antisystem’ party’ (Id. 68). In fact ND, while strongly conservative, has not shown any clear antidemocratic stance (see also Featherstone, 1989, 1990; Seferiades, 1986; Verney, 1990). However, the virtual disappearing of the extreme right parties after the four elections of 1989–90 may have an impact on ND attitudes in the short run.

⁹ The two francophone extreme right parties, Parti des Forces Nouvelles and Front National, presented candidates in few *arrondissements* in the 1985 and 1987 legislative elections, and no list in the 1989 European election. However their

presence and score in the 1988 municipal and 1989 regional elections (see note 2 to Table 1) qualify them for inclusion in our analysis. Another Belgian party has been frequently labelled as an extreme right-wing party: the UDRT (Union Démocratique pour le Respect du Travail – Democratic Union for the Respect of Labour); however, its brief life – founded in 1978 and disappeared in 1985 – and its ideology suggest exclusion from our analysis (Delwit, 1990). Finally, some minor extreme right groups contested legislative elections in the 1980s but without any follow-up: the UN (Union Nationale des Francophones – National Union of French speaking): 0.3% in 1981; the UND (Union Nationale et Démocratique – National and Democratic Union): 0.6% in 1985; the PLC (Parti de la Liberté du Citoyen – Citizens' Freedom Party): 0.5% in 1985 and 0.6% in 1987 (Delwit, 1990).

[10](#) Frente Nacional is the heir of the better known Fuerza Nueva. It was founded in 1987 by the historic leader of Spanish neofascism, Blas Pinar, former leader of Fuerza Nueva. Another – even smaller – representative of the Spanish extreme right is the Falange Espanola de las JONS (Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional-Sindicalistas) – Spanish Phalanx of the Boards of the National-Syndicalist Offensive. This movement and Fuerza Nueva contested together the 1979 parliamentary elections in the Uniòn Nacional alliance.

[11](#) We have grouped together three minor movements, different but linked in many ways. The NDP (Nationaldemokratische Partei – National Democratic Party) was founded in 1967 by Norbert Burger, a prominent representative of the Austrian extreme right. The most relevant NDP success is due to Burger candidacy for Presidency in 1980 when he got 3.2% of the votes. When the NDP was banned (1988) Burger created the BRB (Burger Rechts Bewegung – Movements for Citizens' Rights). The third group, EHI (Einz Herz fur Inlander – A Heart for the Indigeneous), is a small neo-nazi party locally based in Lower Austria where it got 1.2% in the 1988 local elections. The systemic relevance of these movements is modest (Gartner, 1990).

[12](#) A new party, Partido Forca National, was founded in 1989 by the merging of two youth organizations: Forca National and Nova Monarquia (National Force and New Monarchy) (Costa Pinto, 1990).

[13](#) One could argue that the counter-revolutionary thought pertains to the domain of extreme right ideology; but, while this observation is true, the coming of fascism has, in a way, superimposed itself on that tradition, reducing to a handful the followers of de Bonald and de Maistre. Moreover, another frequently used term, 'populism', is still in search of a clear definition outside the specific context where it is employed – XIX–XX century United States and Russia, XX century Latin America (see Curtis, 1985).

[14](#) The Italian leading scholar on fascism, Renzo de Felice, has suggested reducing the variety of fascist cultural and ideological references by distinguishing between fascism-regime (corporatist, statecraftic, clerical) and fascism-movement (revolutionary, anticapitalist, antibourgeois) (de Felice, 1975).

[15](#) As Zeev Sternhell has acutely synthetized '(fascist) political culture is communitarian, anti-individualist and anti-rationalist, and it is founded, first, on the refusal of the Enlightenment and of the French Revolution heritage, and then, on the elaboration of a total overthrowing' (Sternhell, 1989: 15).

[16](#) The distinction between state and nation refers to the two streams highlighted by the Felice (see note 13); the emphasis on the *state* points to the power of a hierarchical organisation while the pre-eminence of the *nation* points to a 'spiritual fusion' in a collective body, the nation.

- 17 At present the National Front is split in two factions: the Pierce-Webster faction is traditional neo-fascist (antisemitic, authoritarian), while the Griffin-Holland faction is moving towards an Evolian (Ferraresi, 1988) and ecological path (Husbands, 1988). The Griffin-Holland faction might be difficult to classify in our scheme.
- 18 The Dutch CP86 seemed having gone through a remarkable radicalization, reviving fascist references and defining itself as ‘the Dutch vanguard of the New Order in Europe’ at the time of its decline. Its recovery and unexpected success in very recent years has apparently encouraged the party to abandon its fascist inspiration (Voerman and Lucardie, 1990).
- 19 In order to avoid a misunderstanding it should be stressed that, while the English term ‘New Right’ refers *grosso modo* to the neoconservatism, the French term ‘Nouvelle Droite’ refers to a totally different cultural-ideological stream. The ‘Nouvelle Droite’ has arisen in France, in the mid-1970s, around the philosopher Alain de Benoist. It is exclusively a cultural movement, with branches almost everywhere in Europe, which looks for a new theoretical foundation for the right (see Taguieff, 1985).
- 20 AP is the most dubious case in our classification. We have to decide the AP fits into ERP class or not and, if so, into which type. Our final decision is in favour of inclusion, but we recognize that AP is a limit case.
- 21 A further right-wing party closely linked to the CDS is the PPM (Partido Popular Monárquico – Monarchist Popular Party); on the basis of the scattered information available on this party, it should not be considered an extreme right-wing party (Gallagher, 1989).
- 22 Madeley states in fact that ‘the great majority of parliamentarians (treats) the PP . . . as an antisystem or pariah party’ (Madeley, 1990: 292).
- 23 The polarizing cases have been identified on the basis of the most recent country studies. Moreover, it should be underlined that, while the consensus on the polarizing tendency in France, Norway, Greece and Denmark seems quite general, Belgium and the Netherlands collect different evaluations; and Germany is clearly a puzzling case due to the dramatic changes undergone since November 1989. A more rigorous analysis has been carried out, up to the mid 1980s, by Powell who has adopted an ‘index of polarization’ created by ‘the standard deviation of the left-right scores of the electorate grouped by means scores of the supporters of each party’ in order to classify some Western countries. On the basis of his index, in the mid 1980s, Austria and Great Britain appear as ‘depolarizing’, Belgium, Switzerland and Germany as ‘reflective’ and Italy, France, Denmark and Finland as ‘polarizing’ (Powell, 1987: 179).

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The new politics of resentment

Radical right-wing populist parties in western Europe

Hans-Georg Betz

In the decades following the second world war, the liberal democracies of western Europe enjoyed a remarkable degree of social and political stability. Sustained economic growth, growing individual affluence, and the expansion and perfection of the welfare state each contributed to a social and political climate conducive to political stability while eroding support for extremist solutions on both the left and right. However, stability and consensus were only short-lived. The resurgence of ideological and political turbulence in the late 1960s, rising social conflicts in the early 1970s, and the spread of mass protest by new social movements in the 1980s were symptoms of a profound transformation of West European politics. Its contours are becoming visible in the early 1990s.

Crucial to this transformation was the political climate of the 1980s. It was marked by disenchantment with the major social and political institutions and profound distrust in their workings, the weakening and decomposition of electoral alignments, and increased political fragmentation and electoral volatility. New political issues emerged, promoted by new social actors outside and often against the established political channels. Growing awareness of environmental degradation generated rising ecological protest; advances in general welfare led to demands for social equality and greater opportunities for political participation from women and minorities.

It was expected that these conflicts would benefit the left, even if the demands of students, women, and minorities were not necessarily compatible with those of the traditional left. Indeed, the 1980s saw a significant fragmentation of the left. Distancing themselves from what they considered the growth-oriented “old politics” of socialists and social democrats, left-libertarian parties established themselves in a number of advanced West European democracies.¹ Yet despite significant electoral gains, the left-libertarian project appears to have fallen short of the expectations of both supporters and detractors. However, the stagnation and partial exhaustion of several left-libertarian parties—for example, in Germany, Sweden, Italy, and Switzerland—have not automatically benefited the traditional parties. Instead, West

European party systems have increasingly come under heavy pressure from a radical populist right.

Radical right-wing populist parties are radical in their rejection of the established sociocultural and sociopolitical system and their advocacy of individual achievement, a free marketplace, and a drastic reduction of the role of the state. They are right-wing in their rejection of individual and social equality, in their opposition to the social integration of marginalized groups, and in their appeal to xenophobia, if not overt racism. They are populist in their instrumentalization of sentiments of anxiety and disenchantment and their appeal to the common man and his allegedly superior common sense. In short, they tend to combine a classic liberal position on the individual and the economy with the sociopolitical agenda of the extreme and intellectual new right, and they deliver this amalgam to those disenchanted with their individual life chances and the political system.

The recent success of the radical populist right

During the past several years, radical right-wing populist parties have been able to multiply both votes and parliamentary representation. The Austrian FPÖ (Freedom Party) is a prominent example. Owing to a number of political blunders, the party had virtually ceased to exist as a relevant political force in Austrian politics in the mid 1980s. However, electoral fortune returned after the young charismatic and populist Jörg Haider was elected to the chair of the party in 1986. In the following general election the party received more than 9 percent of the vote and eighteen seats in parliament. It almost doubled its electoral support in 1990, receiving thirty-three parliamentary seats. Finally, in the 1991 regional election in Vienna the party received 22.6 percent of the vote and became the second largest party in Vienna.

Even more dramatic has been the success story of the *Lega Lombarda*. Founded in the early 1980s by Umberto Bossi, the party scored 3 percent in the 1987 national election in Lombardy. This gave Bossi a seat in the Italian senate. After that the *Lega* advanced rapidly in Lombardy. It won 8.1 percent in the European elections, followed by 18.9 percent in the 1990 regional elections. After the *Lega Lombarda* united with other leagues to form the *Lega Nord/Lega Lombarda*, the party received 24.4 percent of the vote in the 1991 local election in Brescia. The general election of April 1992 confirmed the *Lega*'s prominent position in northern Italy. With 20.5 percent in Lombardy, 17.3 percent overall in the North, and 8.7 percent nationally, it became the fourth largest party in Italy.

Similarly, the *Front National*, founded in 1972 by right-wing radicals, has established itself in the French party system. Under Jean-Marie Le Pen it emerged from virtually zero in the 1981 general election to 9.6 percent of the vote in 1988. In the presidential elections Le Pen

even gained more than 14 percent of the vote. However, the regional elections of March 1992 showed that the advance of the *Front National* might have reached its limits. With 13.9 percent of the vote, the party remained considerably below its own expectations.

Impressive, if less dramatic, have been the recent developments in Switzerland, Belgium, and Sweden. In Switzerland, the *Autopartei* (Automobile Party), founded in 1985, succeeded in increasing its parliamentary representation from two seats in 1987 to ten seats in 1991. In Belgium, the *Vlaams Blok*, founded in 1978 as a Flemish regionalist party, increased its parliamentary representation from two seats in 1987 to twelve seats in 1991. Finally, in Sweden, the *Ny Demokrati* (New Democracy) party, founded in 1990, gained 6.8 percent of the vote in the 1991 general elections and twenty-five seats in parliament.

Sweden has not been the only Scandinavian democracy with a significant radical right-wing presence. In fact, the Danish and Norwegian Progress parties have been among the established radical right-wing populist parties in western democracies. Founded in the early 1970s by charismatic newcomers to politics as antitax and anti-welfare-state protest parties, they initially did rather well at the polls, yet lost much of their support in the early 1980s. However, by the end of the 1980s the political fortunes of both parties began to improve. In the 1988 general elections, the Danish party received 9 percent of the vote, almost twice as much as in 1987. One year later the Norwegian party became, with 13 percent of the vote, Norway's third largest party.

The electoral history of the German *Republikaner* has been similar. Led by a former television talk show host, the party emerged in the early 1989 elections in Berlin, where it received 7.5 percent of the vote, followed by 7.1 percent in the European elections. However, the collapse of East Germany and quick reunification left it without much of its program or electoral support. In the first all-German elections of 1990 the *Republikaner* scored a mere 2.1 percent of the vote. After a number of leading party figures defected from the party, the *Republikaner* seemed to be at an end. However, the state election in Baden-Württemberg in April 1992, in which the *Republikaner* received almost 12 percent of the vote, showed that the party might still represent a strong challenge to the political system of unified Germany.

This short survey of the rise of radical right-wing populist parties shows the degree to which these parties have penetrated West European politics. Often led by charismatic and telegenic leaders, they have successfully mobilized a considerable portion of the West European electorate. In what follows, we will examine why radical right-wing populist parties have been able to make such significant gains at the polls. We will explore whether the rise of the radical populist right reflects merely temporary resentment and single issue protest or whether it represents a response to structural problems of advanced western democracies. An analysis of the program and social basis of these parties shows that their success depends on two factors: their ability to mobilize resentment and protest and their capability to offer a future-oriented program that confronts the challenge posed by the economic, social, and

cultural transformation of advanced West European democracies.

Racism revisited

It has become commonplace to attribute the growing appeal of radical right-wing populism to the recent explosion of hostility towards immigrants in much of western Europe. According to a 1989 study on racism and xenophobia, between 11 and 14 percent of the population in the European Communities was troubled by the presence of people of other nationality, race, or religion. Among the citizens of the EC, Belgians, Germans, French, and Danes were particularly sensitive about immigrants. Overall, 5 percent of the population of the member states considered immigrants the most important problem facing their respective countries.² A number of reasons explains this hostility. For one, there is growing concern about the dramatic increase in the number of refugees and illegal immigrants looking for a better life in western Europe. During the 1980s, the number of political refugees in western Europe grew from some 75,000 in 1983 to almost 320,000 in 1989.³ Since 1989, these numbers have dramatically increased. Switzerland alone counted 41,000 refugees in 1991, and Germany more than 250,000. In addition, Germany had to deal with a growing number of ethnic German resettlers from eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. As a result, the question of how to reduce, if not stop, the influx of refugees has become one of the most important political issues throughout western Europe.

Not only the sheer numbers but also the changing composition of refugee and immigrant populations has contributed to the xenophobic upswell. Whereas in the past the large majority of foreigners in western Europe were other West Europeans or Turks, the majority of recent arrivals comes from the Third World. As a result, in many West European countries the proportion of West European foreigners has remained fairly stable, while the non-European population has increased. One of the first to experience this trend was France. In 1968, roughly two million European immigrants lived in France, and 650,000 Africans, 95 percent of whom were from the Maghreb. By 1982, the number of Africans was almost as large (1.57 million, 90 percent from the Maghreb) as the number of Europeans (1.75 million).⁴

By the late 1980s, developments in the rest of western Europe started to resemble those earlier in France. In Denmark, for example, between 1982 and 1991 the number of foreigners from Scandinavia and the EC countries increased slightly from 46,000 to 51,000. At the same time the number of Africans and Asians increased from 19,000 to over 45,000. In 1991, almost 50 percent of all registered foreigners in Italy and more than 40 percent of all refugees in Switzerland were from Asia and Africa.⁵ As a result, West European countries are confronted with a sizable number of non-Europeans, whose physical difference makes an impression far

beyond their number. This has contributed to the perception that Europe is being “invaded” by alien traditions, culture, and religion.⁶

Against the background of a growing influx and increasing visibility of non-Europeans, the success of radical right-wing populist parties marks the revival of racism in western Europe. The success of the *Front National* in the European elections of 1984 and the growing electoral success of other radical populist right-wing parties in the late 1980s show that the growing presence of a non-European population has evoked anxiety and resentment. The radical populist right has been particularly astute in translating these sentiments into political gains without couching them in outright racist terms. Instead, they have echoed those critics of the West European refugee policy who have focused public attention on the growing financial burden that refugees impose on the host countries.⁷ The central argument is that the vast majority of refugees only claim to be political refugees. In reality they are driven by economic motives. This hurts West European societies twice. Immigrants not only burden social services with new expenditures, but they also take away scarce jobs from the native unemployed.⁸ Therefore, illegal immigration and “asylum tourism” should be stopped. Instead of “privileging” foreign immigrants, West European governments should give preference in regard to employment, housing, and social assistance to natives and Europeans.⁹ As the German *Republikaner* put it succinctly: “Eliminate unemployment: Stop immigration!”¹⁰

The situation of foreign workers in advanced West European democracies shows that these claims and demands are seriously flawed. In most of these countries, the vast majority of the immigrant labor force has low levels of education and performs unskilled or semiskilled labor which the indigenous population increasingly refuses to do. In 1989 in Austria, 61 percent of foreigners and 84 percent of Turkish guest workers had no more than compulsory education, compared to 28 percent of the Austrian work force. As a result, the majority held low level positions.¹¹ The situation was similar in Germany and in France, where immigrant workers had lower levels of education and fewer chances to advance from unskilled to qualified positions and were considerably more at risk to lose their jobs than French workers.¹²

Not only is the degree to which immigrant workers deprive natives of job opportunities rather questionable. It is also open to discussion whether they represent a burden or not rather a net gain for West European societies. Generally, immigrant workers have made significant contributions to these societies. Recruited to fill vacant positions during the period of high economic growth, they played a vital part in laying the foundation for affluence and prosperity in western Europe. Furthermore, immigrant workers represent not only a work force but also consumers, taxpayers, and contributors to social security and pension systems.¹³

Particularly the latter aspect assumes increasing importance for Western European societies. Because of falling birth rates, much of western Europe is experiencing a significant shift in the age pyramid. This is expected to have serious consequences both for the labor market and the

social security systems. Population statistics show that in order to keep the labor force stable and to guarantee social security for a growing older generation it might be necessary to recruit more foreign labor. Thus, the French have projected that between 2000 and 2039 they might have to recruit between 165,000 and 315,000 new immigrants annually to prevent a decline in the active population.¹⁴

The *Front National*, the *Vlaams Blok*, and the FPÖ were among the first parties to draw a connection between falling birth rates and foreign immigration. In their propaganda pamphlets the *Front National* graphically connects rising immigration, an increase in the number of mosques, and “empty cradles” to drive home their message that there is “a great risk that we will no longer be able to pay our pensions and, above all, that we will see disappear our thousand-year old identity and the French people itself.” Immigration “threatens the survival of the French nation, the security of its territory, the integrity of its patrimony, its culture, its language.”¹⁵ These words and images appeal to diffuse sentiments of anxiety and growing general insecurity over the fact that in the future western Europe’s well-being might increasingly depend on non-Europeans whose growing numbers threaten its cultural and national identity. Umberto Bossi makes this quite clear when he accuses the established parties of wanting to transform Italy into a “multiracial [*multirazziale*], multiethnic, and multireligious society” which “comes closer to hell than to paradise.”¹⁶

Its success at the polls shows that the radical populist right has become the champion of growing resentment and hostility towards foreigners. Against the prospects of a future multicultural, multiethnic European society, right-wing populist parties have successfully promoted themselves as the advocates and guardians of an exclusive national culture. This culture is firmly grounded in national identity and a closely circumscribed European tradition. Xenophobia has proven to be such a powerful political issue that even the Scandinavian Progress parties have increasingly resorted to mobilizing antiforeigner sentiments in order to revive their political fortunes.¹⁷ However, it would be wrong to attribute the appeal of the radical populist right exclusively to its antiimmigrant program. Success at the polls depends on more than the mobilization of xenophobia.

The neo-liberal agenda

What distinguishes most radical right-wing populist parties from the established parties is not only their militant attacks on immigrants but also their pronounced neo-liberal program. Although varying in emphasis and importance, radical right-wing populist parties have tended to hold strong antistatist positions. They find articulation in a sharp criticism of high levels of taxation, of the bureaucratic state in general, and of welfare outlays. Some of these parties—in

particular the two Progress parties—trace their origin to the tax-welfare backlash of the 1970s. Others, such as the New Democracy party, have emerged out of the more recent crisis of the welfare state. Their critique of the interventionist state fuses resentment against the state, the bureaucracy, and politicians with a populist appeal to freedom and democracy. This appeal is pronounced not only in the case of the two Progress parties, but also in those of the *Lega*, the New Democracy party, and particularly the FPÖ and the *Autopartei*, which promotes itself as the champion of “Freedom—Prosperity—Joy of Life.”¹⁸

The resulting political program marks a revival of radical liberalism. It calls for a reduction of some taxes and the abolition of others, a drastic curtailing of the role of the state in the economy and large-scale privatization of the public sector including the state controlled media, a general deregulation of the private sector, and a restructuring and streamlining of the public sector. The main beneficiaries of these measures should be small and medium-sized enterprises which are expected to play a central role in the further development of advanced western societies, particularly since new technologies allow them to compete effectively with larger enterprises.¹⁹

However, the radical populist right’s neo-liberal program is only secondarily an economic program. Primarily, it is a political weapon against the established political institutions and their alleged monopolization of political power which hampers economic progress and suppresses true democracy. The opponent is the bureaucratic, centralized state which is living off the work of the productive forces in society. Bossi has put this most poignantly when he declares that the political battle in Italy is between Rome and Milan, between “the capital of parasitism and clientelism, which is Rome, and the capital of the economy, which is Milan.”²⁰ From this perspective, Le Pen’s appeal to create “50 million proprietors” in a “popular capitalism” takes on an almost revolutionary spirit.²¹ It would not only loosen the state’s grip on power, but also guarantee that decisions are made from an economic and profit-oriented, thus efficiency-conscious perspective rather than on the basis of political and electoral considerations.

The radical populist right’s hostility to the state is equaled by its hostility to the established political parties. Particularly Umberto Bossi but also Jean-Marie Le Pen and Jörg Haider have skilfully translated popular disaffection with the established parties into poignant attacks against the *palazzo*, against corruption and inefficiency, and against the “arrogance” of the *classe politique* which refuses to listen to the views of the common person. Against that Bossi boldly asserts that only with him Italy will have “honesty, cleanliness, transparency, and above all TRUE DEMOCRACY.” Under his guidance the Italians will recover “everything of which they have been shamefully robbed” during forty years of rule by the political establishment.²² Similarly, Jean-Marie Le Pen charges the political establishment with having led France into a deep crisis, which threatens the country’s existence, its prosperity, and its freedom.²³

The established political parties are accused of having constructed, to the detriment of the

average citizen, an all-encompassing system sustained by interventionism, clientelism, and favoritism.²⁴ It is against this “system” that the radical populist right goes on the offensive. Behind its strategy is the expectation that the relationship between voters and parties is profoundly changing, that voters no longer “function” according to the demands of party politics. The radical right addresses its appeal for political support to the emerging “working, sovereign citizen, who carries responsibility for family and occupation and who can judge for himself.”²⁵

The radical populist right’s rise to political prominence has come in the wake of a profound and diffuse disaffection and disenchantment with the established political parties throughout western Europe. According to a study from 1989, almost half of the Italian public and 35 percent of the French thought the established parties were absolutely incapable of representing them on the major issues; 33 percent of the French public thought that the political parties were most responsible for the ills affecting French society.²⁶ In 1991, more than half of the Italian public held the political parties incapable of resolving Italy’s institutional and economic crisis; 44 percent thought political parties contributed little to facilitate participation in Italian society.²⁷

Undoubtedly, the general malaise towards politics and political parties and a growing crisis of political representation has benefited radical right-wing populist parties.²⁸ By appealing to lingering sentiments of powerlessness, to widespread alienation from the political process, and to growing resentment against the prevailing political system, radical populist right-wing parties present themselves as the true “antiparty parties.” Regional studies on the *Lega*, the *Republikaner*, and the FPÖ show that these parties successfully attracted and mobilized voters who abstained from voting in previous elections.²⁹ According to Italian surveys, protest against the established parties was an important motive in voting for the *Lega Lombarda*, subordinate only to the desire to express a general discontent with “Rome,” symbol of the inefficiency of the Italian bureaucracy.³⁰ Survey data from Germany show that in 1989, at the height of support for the *Republikaner*, only 11 percent of its supporters trusted the political parties, and 26 percent the government (as compared to 73 percent of the supporters of the established center-right parties). For 80 percent of *Republikaner* supporters politics had failed in important areas.³¹

These findings suggest that an explanation of the radical populist right’s success has to go beyond xenophobia. Its success can be explained in part as a protest against the established political parties and their politics. However, these populist right parties represent more than mere vehicles of protest. Behind their seemingly incoherent programs and contradictory positions stand concrete political objectives. Their antiimmigrant positions only appear to contradict their neo-liberal program. From a liberal position, unemployment problems stem not from immigrants but from too much state intervention. “Provided the proper incentives . . .

immigrants invariably prove to be net contributors to an economy.”³² However, only the New Democracy party has drawn the consequences. It demands that all immigrants, including temporary foreign workers and refugees, be allowed to work in Sweden.³³

The other parties either consider xenophobia too potent a political weapon to be sacrificed to programmatic coherence or hold it compatible with their neo-liberal program. This is only possible if their promotion of a neo-liberal program is part of a larger strategy to combat what particularly the *Front National* and the *Lega* consider the main threats to the very existence of the nation or a particular region. These threats stem not only from a loss of national or regional identity, but also from global economic competition which threatens to exacerbate domestic economic problems and to marginalize individual West European countries. The radical populist right’s programmatic mixture of xenophobia and neo-liberalism might thus be seen as a response to current global changes which produce winners and losers. It is an attempt to meet the global challenge by promoting individual initiative and entrepreneurship while at the same time eliminating whatever might hamper initiative, drain resources, and thus impede competitiveness.³⁴ The resulting ideology might be characterized as neo-isolationism in a future “fortress Europe.”³⁵ This might explain why radical right-wing populist parties have done particularly well in some of the most prosperous regions of western Europe (Lombardy, Flanders, Bavaria, Baden-Württemberg), where there is growing resentment not only against immigrants but also against fellow countrymen from less advanced regions (for example, southern Italy, Wallonia, and perhaps even former East Germany), both seen as a drain on resources.

If this notion of threat partly explains the seemingly contradictory nature of the radical populist right’s program, a second explanation appears equally plausible. According to this explanation, different programmatic positions appeal to different constituencies. In fact, the electoral success of the radical populist right can be attributed to the particular mixture of its program. This program combines a populist mobilization of resentment with a seemingly future-oriented response to the challenge of a profound social, cultural, and political transformation of advanced western societies. This transformation has variously been described as the coming of an information, consumer, or postindustrial society.³⁶ Behind these formulations is the assumption that the present accelerated process of technological modernization, particularly in the communication and information sector, has led to nothing less than revolutionary changes in the social structure of western democracies.

The social costs of accelerated modernization

Central to this process are two developments: on the one hand, a shift from modern mass

production and mass consumption to what has been defined as a new regime of flexible accumulation, that is, the production of highly specialized, customized products through flexible manufacturing systems supervised by a highly skilled work force; on the other hand, a renewed acceleration of the shift from the secondary to the tertiary sector. As a result of both the diffusion of high tech production systems and the expansion of highly qualified jobs in organization and management, research and development, and consulting, there is a growing demand for higher levels of formal education, higher skills, and longer training. At the same time there is a marked decrease in unskilled and semiskilled jobs in production, cleaning, transportation, and sales. The result is a growing bifurcation of labor markets.

The social space of the advanced postindustrial societies is similarly characterized by the emergence of a “two-thirds society:” on the one hand, an affluent, well-educated, and secure new middle class of employees, civil servants, and new professionals and a “polyvalent” blue collar work force employed in the “postfordist” factory; on the other, an increasingly marginalized sector of unskilled and semiskilled workers, young people without complete formal education and training, and the growing mass of the long-term unemployed. They represent a readily identifiable underclass of the permanently unemployed, underemployed, or marginally employed who are quickly turning into the losers of the accelerated modernization process.³⁷

Finally, the cultural sphere is characterized by the dominance of consumption, the fragmentation of taste cultures, and individuality in choice and in life style, made possible by the new production regime.³⁸ In this view, the high standard of living and high level of social security characteristic of advanced western democracies have led to the dissipation of class distinctions and subcultural class identities. The result has been a process of “individualization” of life styles, which give rise to a new system of social diversification and stratification.³⁹ By rewarding individual effort, self-promotion and self-advertisement, and the ability to design one’s own existence, it reinforces the trend towards social bifurcation.

Both the rise and political success of left-libertarian as well as radical right-wing populist parties have been attributed to the broad transformation of advanced West European democracies. One side has been the radical populist right as a response of modernization losers to deprivation and marginalization.⁴⁰ Others have argued that these parties represent a response to a broader transformation of the political culture of advanced democracies: the radical populist right occupies one pole on a new axis of conflict over social values. It represents a largely materialist reaction to the postmaterialist aspirations of the libertarian left and the libertarian left’s promotion of environmental issues, new concepts of morality, new ways of political participation, and vision of a multicultural society. The reaction to this agenda has been an increased emphasis on “old politics”: sustained economic growth, technological progress, economic stability, a tough stand on questions of law and order, and a return to traditional moral values.⁴¹

Neither interpretation sufficiently explains the ambiguities and paradoxes represented by the radical populist right. One of their most serious deficits is that they see the radical populist right largely as representing “reactions against change, rather than change in a new direction.”⁴² However, the radical populist right’s central programmatic positions are only reactionary (in the sense of the desire to impede or prevent change) as far as they refer to immigrants and refugees: instead of accepting growing ethnic and cultural heterogeneity they seek to return to an ethnically and culturally homogeneous past. Their neo-liberal stance, on the other hand, explicitly anticipates, supports, and endorses radical change and thus hardly appeals to those threatened by these changes. Rather than seeking to return to the comprehensive corporatist and welfare-state-oriented policies of the past, they embrace social individualization and fragmentation as a basis for their political programs. In what follows, we will argue that one possible explanation of the ambiguities of this program is the particular social basis to which the radical populist right appeals for support: an alliance between losers and winners of the present acceleration of the modernization process.

The social basis of political resentment

Studies of the social basis of support for various radical right-wing populist parties show that these parties attract voters across the social spectrum. However, in a number of cases political support is concentrated in particular social groups. An exemplary case is the Norwegian Progress Party. In the 1989 elections, blue collar workers and white collar workers were overrepresented, and public white collar workers were underrepresented among its voters. Its supporters were predominantly male, and a considerable proportion was under thirty years of age. A majority of its voters had low and medium incomes.⁴³ Similarly in Austria, in the 1990 elections the FPÖ did particularly well among workers and employees, but also among pensioners. As in the Norwegian case, the party’s voters were predominantly male, and a considerable portion was under thirty.⁴⁴ Although a large portion of the supporters of the *Front National* are from the traditional middle and lower middle class, the party has also been able to attract a considerable proportion of working class voters. As a result of the overrepresentation of “farmers, artisans, and small shopkeepers as well as higher level employees and the self-employed, Le Pen’s voters resemble those of Gaullism and liberalism; as a result of the overrepresentation of medium and lower level employees, workers, and the unemployed, they resemble those of socialism and communism.”⁴⁵

The *Lega*, the *Republikaner*, and the *Vlaams Blok* deviate somewhat from the Norwegian, Austrian, and French cases. Unlike the latter, the *Lega* has attracted a considerable number of young supporters who distinguish themselves by their high levels of educational and

occupational status.⁴⁶ The typical *leghista* has been described as a relatively young, well-educated male “who tends to occupy a medium-high professional position and has an income that is higher than the national or regional average.”⁴⁷ However, recent studies show that with growing support from working class voters the *Lega* increasingly resembles other radical right-wing populist parties.⁴⁸ The *Republikaner* and the *Vlaams Blok* are even more blue collar parties. At the height of their electoral appeal the *Republikaner* attracted a segment of German society that was characterized by lower levels of education, particularly among younger voters, and blue collar working class status. In Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg, the party’s strongholds, unskilled and semiskilled workers and, to a lesser degree, qualified workers were particularly attracted to the *Republikaner*.⁴⁹ Finally, the voters of the *Vlaams Blok* are characterized by low levels of education and blue collar status. Often they are former socialist voters “disappointed by the promises of growth made during their youth.”⁵⁰

This brief survey of the social basis of the radical populist right shows that those parties which have been most successful at the polls have forged an electoral alliance between segments of the working class and segments of the new middle class. This might have something to do with the particular mixture of their program. Surveys show that there is a close relationship between levels of education and occupational status, on the one hand, and views on immigrants, on the other. In Austria, for example, a considerably larger proportion of those with primary degrees than college entrance and university degrees considers limiting the number of immigrants an “extraordinarily important” question. So do more of the self-employed, unskilled and semiskilled workers, and skilled workers and pensioners compared to employees, civil servants, or students.⁵¹ In addition, foreign blue collar workers, who often are Maghrebins and Turks, tend to be concentrated in working class areas.⁵² Increasingly, foreigners have also moved into the suburban areas surrounding large cities like Paris characterized by low rent housing, a high concentration of workers, a high proportion of young people without complete education, and high levels of youth unemployment.⁵³ As Nonna Mayer and others have shown, it is in these working class areas that the *Front National* has attracted considerable political support.⁵⁴

One might suspect that right-wing radical parties direct their xenophobic message to those social groups which have to compete with non-European immigrants. The resulting climate of insecurity, particularly among unskilled or semiskilled workers and unemployed youth without complete education, is one of the potential breeding grounds of xenophobia and radical right-wing populist support.⁵⁵ However, an exclusive focus on marginalized groups is hardly enough to increase a party’s support at the polls. Only by appealing to segments of the new middle class and thus broadening their electoral base have parties like the Norwegian Progress Party, the *Lega*, and the FPÖ become a serious threat to the established parties.

It appears that these parties attract a considerable portion of the private sector segment of

the new middle class, particularly nonmanual employees.⁵⁶ By contrast, the public sector segment of the new middle class is underrepresented. This can be explained in terms of these parties' vigorous support of the market against state intervention and their critique of the inefficiencies of the welfare state. Portions of the new middle class might also be attracted at least to some of these parties by their liberal position on questions of individual morality, individualism, and self-determination.⁵⁷ Even in the case of the *Front National*, authoritarian positions that touch upon individual morality, such as abortion, find no clear majorities.⁵⁸ A recent study of the *Lega* even finds postmaterialists with high tolerance towards foreign immigrants among its supporters.⁵⁹

These examples show that the radical populist right appeals as much to the modernization winners within advanced western democracies as to those segments threatened by marginalization. If one looks at their neo-liberal program, it appears that these parties attempt to appeal particularly to emerging groups which accept the market as the ultimate arbiter over individual life chances and which, as a result of their relative high level of education, are well-prepared to play the game of individual effort, self-promotion, and self-advertisement. To these groups the new populist leaders like Haider and Bossi increasingly try to appeal.⁶⁰

A postmodern right?

In this essay we have argued that the recent political success of radical right-wing populist parties is a result of the particular electoral alliance they have been able to forge. Radical right-wing populism represents itself as an at first sight paradoxical coalition of rather heterogeneous social groups. On the one hand, it appeals to the losers of the modernization and individualization process—marginalized blue collar workers, young people with lower levels of education, and the unemployed. As French and German studies have shown, these groups tend to live in the anonymous housing projects on the periphery of metropolitan areas which are increasingly becoming the homes of newly arriving immigrants. They are driven by diffuse fears of encirclement and invasion and by growing resentment over the fact that they have been abandoned by the rest of society and can not escape. Disappointed by the left-wing parties' failure to address their plight and ambiguous positions on immigration, they vote for the radical populist right out of general frustration and resentment.

Radical right-wing populist parties also appeal to groups which belong to the winners of the accelerated modernization process and benefit from the individualization process which it has set in motion. Particularly interesting are the so-called "new professionals," defined as young men and women who have created their own jobs. One might assume that this trend is particularly pronounced in advanced western democracies with large student populations and

diminishing job prospects in the public sector. Thus, Italy in the 1980s saw the rise of more than 160 new professions with more than 275,000 people employed.⁶¹ It has been argued that due to the “determination of their market position” young highly educated people may be frustrated and politically restless and therefore support new political parties. The expectation has been that they would support left-libertarian parties.⁶² However, the growing appeal of parties such as the FPÖ and the *Lega* to young people suggests that these groups might be an important electoral reservoir for the radical populist right.⁶³

Ideologically, the radical populist right is still a right-wing phenomenon, although considerably different from the traditional extreme right. In its liberal commitment to individual effort but also autonomy and its adaptation to a changing cultural and political climate it resembles the libertarian left. However, whereas the libertarian left is committed to equality, the radical populist right’s antiforeigner positions as well as its economic program start from the assumption of basic inequality. Not everyone has the same abilities; the indigenous population should come first and should get the jobs and basic welfare provisions. This programmatic mixture might partly explain why the radical populist right has been so successful. Its antiforeigner program poses little threat to new middle class voters, nor does its neo-liberal program pose a threat to its working class supporters. In fact, unemployed youth and marginalized blue collar workers might harbor resentments similar to those of the private sector segment of the new middle class. For both, the opponents are politicians, unions, and the state, which protect the interests of established, organized groups while preventing outsiders from marketing themselves even if they are eager to work.

The rise and success of radical right-wing populism in western Europe can thus be interpreted as the result of the increasing social and cultural fragmentation and differentiation of advanced western societies. Both developments are a consequence of the general individualization process of postindustrial society, which is gradually destroying the basis of the great all-encompassing projects of modern politics.⁶⁴ In a social, cultural, and political climate characterized by fluidity and insecurity, radical right-wing populism appeals to the new ego-centrism which prevails throughout the advanced western world and which finds expression as much in the picture of the “fortress Europe” and the renewed outbursts of nationalist separatism as in the hostility towards foreigners and the denunciation of the welfare state. If this is correct, then radical right-wing populist parties are symptoms as well as distasteful by-products of the general turbulence of the present age.

Notes

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The contemporary radical right

An interpretative and explanatory framework

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Western Europe has experienced an unprecedented rise of new extreme “rightist” parties some of which took off in the 1970s but most of which came into their own in the 1980s and early 1990s. They run in elections under such labels as “National Front” in Britain, France, and Wallonia; “Progress Party” in Denmark and Norway; “Republicans” and “German People’s Union” in Germany; “Center Party” in the Netherlands, or regional self-identifications as the “Flemish Block” in Flanders and the “Northern League” in Italy. In Austria, even an established party, the “Freedom Party,” is often counted as a member of the extreme Right after its strategic reversal in the mid-1980s. Beyond the vague feeling, however, that all these parties are somehow “on the right,” it is unclear from the existing comparative literature whether these parties really can be lumped together. Do they represent a similar political appeal and electoral coalition? What is the meaning of their “rightist” appeal? Why are they sometimes successful, but sometimes not?

At least four hypotheses have guided the debate on the rise of the extreme “Right.” The first is that it represents a revival of fascist and national socialist ideology in the midst of an economic crisis with high unemployment. According to the second hypothesis, the contemporary extreme Right is a single-issue racist and xenophobic backlash against the multi-culturalization of Western European societies caused by the influx of immigrants from non-Occidental civilizations, particularly from the Islamic, African, and Far Eastern regions. A third hypothesis focuses on domestic institutional changes in advanced capitalist democracies and singles out the increasing control of individual lives by a coalescing “class” of political and corporate leaders as the trigger for a “right-libertarian” and “populist” backlash against big government and consociational or corporatist politico-economic elites.

In this book we will argue that none of these perspectives is correct. Instead, we will advance an alternative hypothesis. Societal change in contemporary capitalism has increased the salience of political partisan appeals to economically rightist positions favoring market allocation over political re-distribution of economic resources. At the same time, these

positions support authoritarian and paternalist modes of collective decision making in the state, the corporation, and the family. The structural change of society that has made possible the rise of the extreme Right is the transition to a postindustrial economy in which citizens' political preferences and salient demands differ from those that prevailed in the Keynesian Welfare State of the post–World War II era, peaking in the 1960s. In a structural perspective, the New Right constitutes the mirror image and opposite political pole of a New Left that began to mobilize in the 1960s (Andersen and Björklund 1990; Inglehart 1990, 11; Leggewie 1990, 10). On the one hand, the New Left stands for "leftist" income redistribution by way of encompassing social policies in the economic sphere and "libertarian" democratic participation and maximum individual autonomy in politics and the cultural sphere. The New Radical Right (NRR), on the other hand, advocates rightist free market economics and "authoritarian" hierarchical arrangements in politics, together with a limitation of diversity and individual autonomy in cultural expressions. In other words, postindustrial politics is characterized by a main ideological cleavage dividing left-libertarians from right-authoritarians.

Up to this point, however, our line of theoretical reasoning can account for the often confusing variety of rightist parties and movements as incompletely as its rivals. Therefore, we must identify additional arguments that can be logically related to the master hypothesis and can explain in a systematic way different appeals and electoral payoffs of new rightist parties. We must explore why economically rightist and politico-culturally "authoritarian" appeal is sometimes approximated in the actual strategy of the new parties but sometimes discarded in favor of other strategies. While common tendencies of the contemporary Right may be driven by the change of popular demands for political messages, the variance in the rightist parties' appeals across countries, and even within countries over time, requires a theory of political institutions and strategic choice within party systems and party organizations. This argument builds on three elements.

First, structural and sociological analysis of political preference changes does not develop a theory about the "supply side" of parties that serve right-authoritarian constituencies, but merely the "demand side" of electoral constituencies. In some cases, right-authoritarian voters may be represented by moderate-conservative parties that, in turn, will do everything to preempt the emergence of an independent NRR. In some instances, such efforts fail and right-authoritarians build their own vehicles of political articulation. In order to understand the phenomenon of the NRR in the arena of political mobilization, and particularly party competition, we therefore must analyze the strategies established political actors have chosen to address the demand for right-authoritarian politics and the political institutions that have constrained their choices. The sociological account of right-authoritarian politics remains incomplete without a reconstruction of the strategies of political entrepreneurs that seize on opportunities to build genuinely new right-authoritarian parties.

Second, the rise of the contemporary Right is not just conditioned by the choices of the

established moderate conservatives but also by the capabilities and choices of the incipient rightist entrepreneurs and parties themselves. Politicians may face a favorable opportunity structure but fail to create strategies that enhance their power at the polls and in legislatures. Before resorting to ad hoc explanations that attribute such failures to a lack of information on the part of decision makers or a lack of interest in accumulating more power, it is worth checking how internal party structures of interest aggregation as well as the composition of the party activists constrain parties in their strategic choices. Sometimes variance in the appeal of the contemporary Right, therefore, may be due to the intraorganizational dynamics of incipient new parties. This is particularly likely where rightist parties fail to choose a strategic formula that takes advantage of the opportunities the party system offers them to gain electoral ground at the expense of established parties.

Third, empirical evidence shows that the contemporary extreme Right is not a “single-issue” phenomenon that can be solely understood as a response to economic crisis or the rapid influx of non-Occidental immigrants into hitherto homogeneous Western European societies. To the contrary, a sense of alarm about such developments, taken by itself, is typically a weak predictor of right-extremist support, as will be shown both by ecological- and individual-level analysis in later chapters. Nevertheless, economic crisis and surges of immigration can serve as *catalysts* that crystallize right-wing extremism on the level of party competition if political entrepreneurs can embed xenophobic slogans in a broader right-authoritarian message for which they find a receptive audience. Structure-induced dispositions of the electorate and opportunities for party competition interact with conjunctural issue attention cycles in the rise of new parties. Strategic political entrepreneurs skillfully bring together long-term and short-term opportunities to mobilize voter coalitions. In light of such processes, it would be naive to expect the disappearance of the NRR, as soon as a particular issue—such as immigration—became less important on the political agenda.

Although contemporary rightist parties make a variety of appeals and attract different electoral coalitions, none of the NRR’s incarnations precisely correspond to the “old” extreme Right with fascist or national socialist labels. The old Right and the NRR not only have different structural origins but also different constituencies and substantive demands. Moreover, the NRR is strong in countries where the fascist and national socialist Right of the interwar period remained weak. Most importantly, where contemporary parties build on the legacy of the interwar extreme Right, they typically fail to attract significant electorates.

The metaphors “left” and “right,” and even more so such labels as “fascism” and “national socialism,” are embroiled not only in scholarly, theoretical controversies but also in a political war of words: opponents of the NRR like to label such parties as (neo)fascist; their adherents deny the accuracy of such characterizations. But the conceptual assimilation of the New to the Old Radical Right may be theoretically inadequate to explain the new phenomenon as well as politically dangerous—particularly for the foes of the NRR. Bad analysis rarely leads to

effective political (counter)strategy.

The tasks for this opening chapter are thus quite clear. First, we outline a theory of the “demand” for rightist parties in contemporary advanced industrial democracies. Next, we develop theoretical propositions about the “supply” of rightist parties, the conditions under which their appeal is expected to vary, and the electoral payoffs such parties derive from different appeals. Based on this analysis, we then specify the evidence that would count as support or falsification of our own theory and three rival arguments that we will discuss in detail. The final section of this chapter will be devoted to a discussion of the contemporary extreme Right and the historical fascist Right. We will argue that the two Rights are very different in their ideological appeal and their electoral coalitions. Moreover, we will show, they were produced by different societal conditions.

The demand for NRR party alternatives

Political systems involve (1) a delineation of who is a “player” or citizen, (2) a choice of collective decision modes among players, and (3) policies that determine the ground rules for allocating scarce resources among players. Different views of citizenship, decision modes, and resource allocation therefore provide the critical dimensions along which opinions and beliefs in democracies may vary. With respect to citizenship, the alternative is between a narrow, exclusive definition of citizenship rights (e.g., excluding women, immigrants, adherents of certain ethnocultural groups) and a broad, inclusive, and universalistic conception of citizenship. If we focus on ethnocultural relations, the polarity can also be described as a conflict between “cosmopolitan” and “particularist” conceptions of citizenship. With respect to collective decision modes, the alternative is between individual freedom of political and cultural expression, combined with participatory choice procedures of collectively binding policies, at one extreme of the continuum, and collective norm compliance, combined with hierarchical choice procedures, at the other. We may refer to this polarity as the division between “libertarian” and “authoritarian” political preferences. Finally, with respect to the allocation of scarce resources, the key division is between (1) at one extreme, proponents of spontaneous market allocation and proportional (if not flat) taxation of citizens’ income, regardless of differences in wealth and (2) at the other extreme, advocates of egalitarian resource redistribution calling for progressive income taxation on citizens who are better off or radical measures of direct expropriation of those who own the means of production. Here, a market-liberal view is pitted against a “populist” or “socialist” preference for redistribution.

Positions on the three dimensions may not vary independently from each other, but the precise way cosmopolitan versus particularist, libertarian versus authoritarian, and

redistributive versus market-liberal views interact with each other may be historically contingent. In this section, we argue that contemporary postindustrial democracies generate a limited but distinctive demand for a political combination of ethnocentric, authoritarian, and free market liberal appeals. This demand is not evenly distributed across the entire population but is more likely to surface among social groups characterized by distinctive experiences and deprivations of life chances.

Conventional approaches that ground the emergence of political demands in social structure have typically latched on to class divisions, defined in terms of economic property rights, and simple occupational categories, such as manual versus nonmanual labor, shop floor versus managerial tasks, and so on. In advanced capitalism, however, simple class conceptions and related occupational distinctions constitute crude tracers of the social and economic conditions that shape political preferences over conceptions of citizenship, democratic procedure, and resource allocation. We will therefore present a somewhat more sophisticated, though still oversimplifying, phenomenology of citizens' social experiences that enables us to reconstruct the process of political preference formation in advanced capitalism and to show why promarket, authoritarian, and particularist dispositions, on the one hand, and redistributive, libertarian, and cosmopolitan positions, on the other, form important clusters of public opinion. Since this theory of social preference formation in postindustrial capitalism has been outlined in more detail in another publication (Kitschelt 1994), we will summarize the argument in a few paragraphs. We will then offer an explanation of how this sociological theory of preference formation relates to socio-psychological accounts of the divide between authoritarians and libertarians that was first presented in Adorno et al.'s (1950) study of the authoritarian character.

If economic class, in the Marxian sense of property relations, cannot explain the constitution of political preferences by itself, two other avenues may allow us to construct a linkage between social structure and political consciousness. In economic terms, drawing on Max Weber and much recent rational choice theorizing, citizens' "market situations" may be presumed to shape their political consciousness, particularly when policy alternatives between economic redistribution and spontaneous market allocation are concerned. Market situation concerns actors' skills and capabilities, their social ties, and their location in a particular economic sector.

In advanced capitalism, in a period of increasing international competition and accelerating pressures for structural and occupational learning within industries and at a time when most actors realize that short-term insulation from structural innovation in response to market pressures can be had only at the expense of long-term industrial adaptation, most employees develop an interest in the market viability of their firms and industrial sectors. As a consequence, where comprehensive welfare states exist that absorb considerable resources in order to protect citizens from downward mobility, employees in internationally competitive

sectors become reluctant to endorse further redistributive measures that would drain resources from investment and private consumption. This preference for investments to enhance market flexibility over further redistributive policies tends to be greatest among sectors and occupations that are most vulnerable to the competitive pressures of the international economy, such as manufacturing and financial services. In contrast, employees in the public-service sector (but also many private-sector nontradable services) as well as industries sheltered from foreign competition, are more favorably disposed to redistributive social policies than are employees in the internationally exposed manufacturing industries or in financial and business services. Unlike internationally competitive sectors of the economy, domestic services can roll rising labor costs and social contributions into prices.

Economic left/right attitudes are not simply influenced by employment sector but also by individual market skills, which determine opportunities to move across sectors. At the individual level, actors who have the option and intention to work in sheltered nontradable domestic sectors because of their unique skills and qualifications tend to be more sympathetic to economic redistribution. The orientation on the economic left/right dimension is thus primarily a matter of occupational qualifications and employment sector rather than of economic class. Overall, both the proportion of jobs in competitive and internationally exposed sectors, but also in public, protected social service sectors, have increased at the expense of private, domestically sheltered manufacturing and services. As a consequence, popular support for redistributive policies has declined among private sector workers and employees. This has brought about an increasing political polarization between private competitive and (quasi)public, sheltered sectors, both of which have grown in the last several decades at the expense of private domestic sectors.

People's market experience and occupational market power, however, are not the only conditions that shape their political consciousness. A second dimension that can be loosely derived from Habermas's distinction between strategic and communicative interaction sheds light on another aspect of the process of political preference formation. People's orientation toward definitions of citizenship (universalistic-cosmopolitan or particularistic-culturally parochial) and modes of collective decision making (egalitarian-democratic or hierarchical-authoritarian) are shaped by their *communicative experiences and capabilities*. These communicative experiences occur both in work organizations as well as in the private sphere of family, friends, and neighborhood. In our simplified model, we will focus only on experiences in work organizations.

Most importantly, individuals who work in symbol- and client-processing organizations where social relations are at the heart of the work process—such as in education, social work, health care, or cultural production—have a much stronger orientation toward a reciprocal, egalitarian design of democratic politics and cultural institutions than do individuals who work in strategic and instrumental economic settings where they manipulate objects, documents,

and spreadsheets generated by other instrumental players. In this second type of task structure, which is heavily guided by rules and orders, actors will find authoritarian visions of collective decision making more natural. Due to a shortage of suitable surveys, the empirical evidence for this hypothesis is still fragmentary, but generally supportive.

In addition to the phenomenology of the work situation, people's cognitive capabilities play a critical role in predisposing them to more libertarian or authoritarian conceptions of citizenship and collective decision making in advanced industrial society. Individuals with greater cognitive skills develop a sense of mastery of their social environment that leads them to raise claims to political participation, equality, and self-governance in all social institutions. Higher education thus reinforces libertarian politics. Conversely, individuals with few cognitive skills, who are capable of only crude schematizations of social reality, are more inclined to opt for authoritarian modes of collective decision making.

Instrumental or communicative orientations in politics and culture may also be indirectly related to gender. Women's socialization predisposes them toward more communicative and symbol-producing occupations and, in fact, the occupational profile of sectors with different communicative experiences is clearly characterized by a sex bias. Younger, educated, professionally employed women should therefore display the strongest predisposition toward libertarian politics.

The six indicators of market and organizational experiences thus yield a two-dimensional space of political orientations, with one set of experiences impinging primarily on economic preferences over rightist spontaneous or leftist redistributive allocation of resources and the other on political and cultural preferences over libertarian-cosmopolitan versus authoritarian-particularist views of collective decision making. This scheme, however, does not illuminate why the combination of economically rightist and politically authoritarian beliefs—the configuration we have postulated to characterize the NRR—as well as its opposite, the combination of economically leftist and politically libertarian orientations, should be more common than the other combinations of left-authoritarian or right-libertarian views in the disposition of voters and especially the appeal of politicians who put together programmatic “packages” and advertise them under party labels.

The “elective affinity” between economic leftism and political libertarianism, on the one side, and between economic rightism and political authoritarianism, on the other, is not intrinsically rooted in postulates of political and economic theory. Rather, it is rooted in the historically contingent clustering of market and work experiences to which individuals are exposed in advanced postindustrial capitalism. The occupations and sectors that are protected from international competition also tend to offer work experiences that require high educational qualifications and afford reciprocity with clients and colleagues and thus foster libertarian orientations. Conversely, occupations and sectors exposed to international competition tend to provide work experiences that often rely on limited skills or, more

importantly, structure interaction in instrumental and strategic ways. Most jobs in manufacturing, communication, and transportation industries, but also in financial and insurance services, are typical examples.

At the same time, bundles of job experiences that would favor authoritarian socialist orientations are becoming less frequent, for example, lower clerical tasks in the general public administration or in formerly state-owned enterprises, such as the railroads, utilities, and postal systems, or blue- and white-collar jobs in highly subsidized heavy industries—all areas that are now exposed to international competition. Conversely, only some tasks in marketing and advertising agencies, the news media, and in some business services provide experiences that encourage the combination of libertarian-capitalist orientations.

At the macrolevel, the specific clustering of occupational experiences in advanced capitalism has been brought about by well-known technical and institutional processes that have been too widely discussed to deserve more than a brief enumeration: namely, the introduction of knowledge-intensive flexible and specialized production systems, the expansion of the welfare state, the decline of transportation and communications costs, and the ensuing intensification of global market competition.

Of course, citizens' preferences over economic distribution and the cultural and political organization of collective decision-making processes are not entirely driven by occupational and educational experiences. A full theory of political preference formation would have to include a phenomenology of *consumption styles* in which residential patterns of living, family organization, age, and exposure to environmental pollution would have to play a critical role. Nevertheless, occupational experiences provide good tracers of the potential coalitions and divisions in society in the postindustrial era. In contrast, class categories reflect political divisions only in a highly indirect, fractured fashion.

To single out just one group, the “working class” is increasingly divided into different segments by sectoral market and occupational experiences. The shrinking number of less skilled workers in declining but protected sectors has an inclination to opt for left-authoritarian politics. Their market situation removes them from competitive pressures and predisposes them toward a more “leftist” economic policy preference. At the same time, their occupational experiences (processing objects) and their limited education predispose them toward more authoritarian political appeals. Higher skilled workers in internationally competitive industries, in contrast, are more likely to support middle-of-the-road economic policies and moderate cultural and political views. A culturally parochial and politically authoritarian potential is particularly strong among the losers of the economic modernization process within the working class, primarily manual workers with few or obsolete skills. Given their economic predicament, they may not fully endorse procapitalist economic policies, but they are available to the NRR primarily because of the latter's authoritarian and racist appeals. Such political visions may be particularly attractive for young workers who have never

established close organizational and cultural ties to socialist parties, labor unions, and ancillary organizations surrounding them. In fact, it has been suggested that the rigidity of labor markets in Western European welfare states makes it so difficult for young unskilled workers to get an economic and a political foothold in these systems that they turn toward market liberalism in order to smash the institutions exacerbating their weak position in labor markets.

Tests of the theoretical argument that we will present face the following empirical obstacles. Surveys typically do not allow us to measure several of the critical variables that are hypothesized to impinge on political preference formation, particularly private- or public-sector employment, domestic or internationally competitive sector employment, and occupational experience in client-symbol- or object-documents-processing task structures. At the same time, existing occupational and class categories muddle linkages between market-organizational experience and political preferences. Nevertheless, given this predicament, empirical research is forced to resort to traditional job classifications that are readily available and may reflect occupational experiences only in a very indirect fashion. In the empirical analysis, we will distinguish four categories of respondents and analyze their political and party preferences:

1. *Blue-collar workers*: Given the sectoral division between competitive and domestic sectors, blue-collar workers, as a whole, should no longer be economically leftist in a pronounced way. At the same time, given that the bulk of blue-collar workers is involved in object- and document-processing, has comparatively little education, and is predominantly male, this occupational group may express above average dispositions toward particularist and culturally parochial conceptions of citizenship and authoritarian decision making.
2. *“Petit bourgeois” small independents such as craftspeople, shopkeepers, and farmers*: Through manufacturers and wholesalers, small independent businesspeople tend to be exposed at least indirectly to the pressures of international competition. They are therefore likely to voice intense aversion to redistributive welfare state policies. Moreover, they are more involved in object- and document-processing than social and symbolic tasks. They have received below average education and tend to be predominantly male. Among this group, both a particularist-authoritarian as well as a market-oriented liberal political preference structure may be dominant.
3. *White-collar employees, professionals, students*: These groups tend to be more typically employed (or strive for such employment) in the public or in nonprofit sectors, have high education, and work in client-interactive task structures. Many younger women can be encountered in these organizational settings. Overall, particularism and authoritarianism should be substantially below average among all of these groups. At the same time, these groups are internally divided over economic

questions of allocation, with public-sector employees tilting to the redistributive side and private-sector employees and professionals supporting market allocation. Independent professionals, such as lawyers, accountants, and providers of other business services, are probably the group with the greatest disposition toward economically rightist and politically libertarian conceptions.

4. *Residual population without employment (pensioners, homemakers, the unemployed):*

Given the age distribution of the residual population, they typically have below average education and are more likely to have held jobs in object- and document-processing organizations, favoring distinctly authoritarian tendencies. With respect to economic left/right divisions, no clear tendency may be detected in this group. Working-class individuals on fixed incomes (public pensions, unemployment payments, etc.) will express more leftism, but other members of this broad category may be more supportive of free market capitalism.

In general, we would hypothesize that the potential to vote for new right-wing authoritarian parties is higher than average among blue-collar workers, petit bourgeois, and lower salaried employees. It tends to be lower than average among higher white-collar employees, business professionals, and especially social service employees and professionals. The former groups have a higher potential for authoritarian and ethnocentric dispositions and, at least in the case of the petit bourgeois, for vigorously market-liberal views against the tax burdens imposed by the welfare state as well. The relationship between actual voting for extreme-rightist parties and these general dispositions, however, may involve some unexpected complications.

In European advanced capitalist and democratic welfare states, vigorous racist, ethnocentric campaigns, but also the call for substantial reductions in the welfare safety net and for a reassertion of free markets, are nonconformist, if not outright challenges to taboos. In the same vein, supporting a new and radical party is an act of nonconformism that challenges the status quo. In contrast, authoritarian dispositions are often closely linked to conformism and compliance with the status quo. In other words, how can racist and market-liberal supporters of radical rightist parties also be authoritarians if voting for extremist parties goes against the grain of authoritarian compliance with order and hierarchy? We will argue that while supporters of radical rightist parties are in general more authoritarian than the population at large, there may be a marginally declining propensity to vote for new radical rightist parties beyond a certain threshold of authoritarianism. Empirically, therefore, voters of radical rightist parties are not necessarily more authoritarian than the voters of conventional conservative parties. If we compare the electorates of moderate conservative and of radical rightist parties, one of three configurations is likely. First, extremist voters are indeed more market liberal, authoritarian, and racist than conservatives. Second, radical rightist voters are more market

liberal and more racist than the comparison group supporting conservative parties, but not more authoritarian. Third, at the level of voter dispositions, there are hardly any differences between conservative and radical right voters. The reason then why a significant proportion of individuals in the general right-authoritarian pool votes for radical parties rather than mainline conservatives is entirely accounted for by the strategic behavior of the conventional conservatives who for one reason or another are not able to project a credible image and build a reputation for serving right-authoritarian preferences. This leads us into the consideration of party elites and their behavior in the competitive electoral game, the subject of the next section.

Before we get to the analysis of party strategy, however, we will step back and confront the sociological and economic explanation of political preferences with rival and possibly complementary sociopsychological theories that also identify the importance of a cosmopolitan/particularist (in-group versus out-group) and a libertarian/authoritarian dimension in political attitudes. Adorno et al. (1950) were among the first to recognize that ethnocentric attitudes are not an isolated “single issue” but part of a broad constellation of authoritarian attitudes and beliefs. It is a different matter, however, to explain the emergence of such beliefs. Sociopsychological accounts can be roughly divided into psychoanalytical theories and social learning theories (cf. Altemeyer 1988, 51–55). The psychoanalytical theories that informed the Adorno et al. investigation of the authoritarian character put greatest emphasis on the early parent-child interaction and are clearly inconsistent with our framework. They ignore later learning experiences or even the explicit political ideology of the parents, which may be transmitted to children. Fortunately, the psychoanalytical theory of libertarian/authoritarian preference formation has found little support in empirical research. Its major measurement instrument, the F-scale (F stands for fascism) is biased and must be modified (Altemeyer 1988, chap. 1). Moreover, recent tests of the linkage between a shortened version of the F-scale and political party preference has found no correlation once political authoritarianism has been controlled for (cf. Middendorp 1993).

The relationship between sociopsychological learning theories of authoritarianism and the sociological approach outlined above is more complicated. On the one hand, there are a number of elements in learning theories that are directly consistent with the sociological approach. For example, education is seen as a major contributor to greater libertarianism. The role of education is also highlighted in Lipset’s (1981, 101–14) provocative argument that the working class has authoritarian dispositions because it lacks cognitive sophistication, power to abstract from concrete experience, and imagination (108). Moreover, there are some indirect tracers of job experience measured in experiments of learning that are consistent with the role attributed to occupational experiences in our sociological framework. For example, Altemeyer’s (1988, 93) comparison of changes of authoritarianism in liberal arts and

administrative science majors shows that the former move faster and further toward libertarian politics than the latter over the course of four years of college education. In general, learning theory puts great emphasis on social encounters and interactions, a perspective that is critical for our sociological account as well.

At the same time, there are a number of areas where the predictions of sociological and learning theory are not directly comparable or are potentially inconsistent. We have not found empirical studies that would directly test the impact of organizational experiences on political consciousness because sociopsychological learning theories typically do not examine occupational life as a source of preference formation and ideology. Most difficult for the sociological theory may be finding learning theories that argue that the family and peer groups have a definite impact on libertarian-authoritarian dispositions, that is, experiences made long before individuals enter the labor market. Our sociological account suggests that there is no memory that connects what people experienced in their youth to their occupational life or even a medium-range memory that connects the succession of jobs they held during their occupational life.

At this point, we will make a partial concession to learning theory that, however, does not undermine the empirical regularities our sociological account has hypothesized, although it modifies the underlying causal model of preference formation. People's political consciousness may in fact derive in part from their parents' and their peer group's outlook on life; moreover, the choice of occupational career paths, for example, between client-interactive or document-processing occupations, may be in part endogenous to dispositions acquired in the socialization process. At the same time, however, the dispositions and interpretations of society that parents transmit to their offspring are linked to their own market and occupational experiences. Moreover, given that constraints on social mobility keep most people in similar market and occupational situations as their parents, the transmission of parental ideas often tends to be reinforced by the market and organizational experiences made in adult life. In this vein, sociological and sociopsychological theories of preference formation offer not necessarily contradictory but often complementary and mutually reinforcing accounts.

Finally, sociopsychological theories implicitly rely on sociological theories without fully recognizing this fact. Altemeyer (1988, chap. 1) notes that sociopsychological scales of authoritarianism require updating from time to time because some issues no longer load on the critical dimensions to be measured. Overall, in a fixed 12-item scale of right-wing authoritarianism annually tested on cohorts of students, the interitem correlation fell from .25 in 1973 to .13 in 1984 and then recovered slightly to .17 in 1987 (28). The changing response patterns over time to items in the scale, such as gender relations, sexual morality, the communist threat, authority, and interethnic relations, reflect social transformations that cannot be reduced to personality changes. Sociopsychological studies cannot explain why the salience of certain attitudes increases and why dispositions become more intense and

politically salient. These limitations again show that socio-psychological research is not directly competing with or cannot serve as a substitute for sociological approaches to the study of political preference formation. Both approaches are based on the mechanism of learning, but in different ways. A complete model of the causal determinants of authoritarianism would have to take into account parental style and beliefs, education, as well as work and other experiences in daily life.

Party competition and the supply of radical rightist parties

Let us first recapitulate the sociological situation with which parties are confronted in advanced capitalist democracies. Due to the expansion of public-sector employment, particularly in personal services with highly sophisticated professionals, the proportion of the population with economically leftist and libertarian orientations has been increasing. At the same time, the broader exposure of private-sector workers and employees in manufacturing and business services to international competition has triggered a general shift of popular opinion to the economic right, toward limiting the general economic burden of the welfare state. This shift has occurred both in the working class as well as in a variety of non-working-class occupations.

Overall, due to educational and occupational change the proportion of individuals in social locations that favor authoritarianism has, in general, declined. In particular, the share of people whose position makes them likely to support both authoritarian and leftist political preferences has eroded. Why, then, have explicitly authoritarian and rightist parties found greater support in the 1980s and 1990s than in the decades immediately following World War II?

This puzzle can be solved only if we abandon the idea that parties are nothing but the reflection of mass-level sentiments. This, of course, is an insight widely shared by theorists of party formation. Parties seek power in a variety of ways, and voter preferences enter their calculations to the extent that they advance such political objectives. Thus, the distribution of political preferences in a space where most citizens and voters are located close to an axis ranging from left-libertarian to right-authoritarian positions does not by itself determine the shape of the party system of advanced postindustrial democracies. A sociological theory of preference formation can identify the clienteles of authoritarian politics, particularly elements of the working class and lower white collar sector, and of both authoritarian and promarket politics, particularly small business. It is insufficient, however, for predicting the rise of right-authoritarian parties because their emergence depends on the strategic interaction of existing parties in the competitive system. Not in all circumstances where right-authoritarian popular

preferences are intense will corresponding parties manage to garner a substantial share of the electorate.

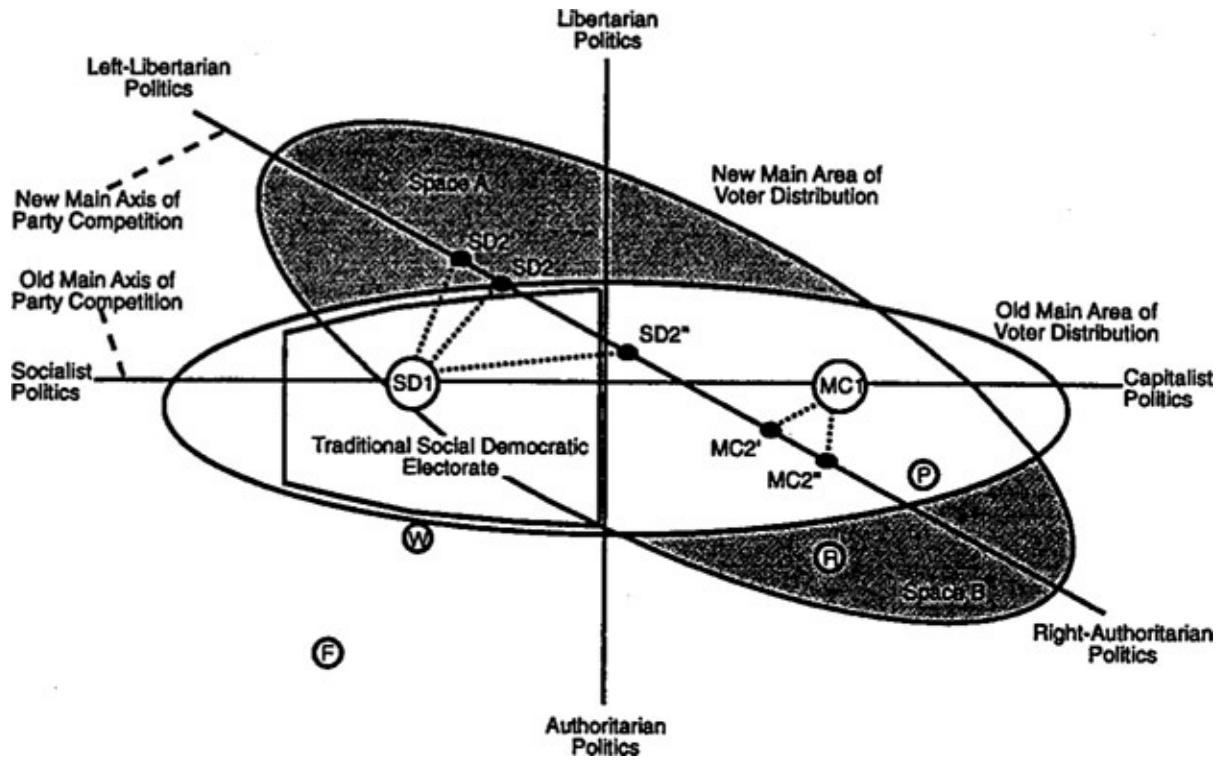
The future of the radical Right cannot be read from structural trends in the transformation of “post-Fordist” production systems, welfare states, or intensified international competition nor from the corresponding microlevel changes in the market location, task structures, and qualifications of individual employees. These macrochanges provide the scenario within which politicians choose objectives and strategies that influence the fate of political parties. Whether a successful NRR party emerges depends on the opportunity structure of party competition. Only if voters are sufficiently disaffected with the existing moderately conservative and moderately leftist or social democratic parties will the reservoir of potential right-authoritarian voters rally around a new political force.

The disaffection with moderate conservatives is also more likely where electorally successful radical left-libertarian parties exist that appear to authoritarian constituencies to be a political provocation not adequately countered by the existing moderate conservatives. The success of new rightist parties, however, does not entirely depend on the behavior of their competitors. Even if a strategic opening for a new rightist party does exist, right-wing political entrepreneurs must be able to build organizations and to design the appropriate appeal that seizes the moment and exploits the strategic weakness of the existing parties. New parties must assume issue leadership to crystallize a potential electorate and mobilize it around a new cluster of political demands.

The electoral opportunity structure for the emergence of NRR parties can best be understood against the background of the strategic dilemmas faced by conventional mass parties of the moderate Left and moderate Right. Previous work by one of this book’s authors employed a scheme designed to shed light on the strategic difficulties encountered by the social democratic Left (Kitschelt 1994, chap. 1). A modified version of the scheme, reproduced here as [figure 19.1](#), can be utilized to analyze strategic dilemmas on the Right as well as the opportunities for the emergence of extreme-rightist parties.

[Figure 19.1](#) constructs an ideal-typical rendering of the voter distribution and ignores the effects of short-term issue cycles, variance in parties’ issue leadership, and cross-national variations in the extent to which the main axis of competition rotates from a left/right to a purely economic left-libertarian versus right-authoritarian position. The curves that enclose the clear area constitute the main voter distribution in the previous cold war era of left/right competition when voters were primarily concerned with economic issues, such as the expansion of the Keynesian Welfare State. The curves that envelope the shaded area around the diagonal axis in [figure 19.1](#) represent the main area of voter distribution from left-libertarian to right-authoritarian alternatives in advanced capitalist democracies. The overall share of authoritarians in the cold war era was certainly not smaller and was most likely greater than in postindustrial democracies. Yet they are now differently distributed. A

relatively greater proportion of authoritarians is also located on the economically capitalist side of the political spectrum (shaded space *B*). At the same time, while support for the economic left has generally diminished, a strong new left-libertarian sector has emerged (shaded space *A*).



[Figure 19.1](#) The competitive space for political parties in Western Europe in the 1980s.

Consider now the strategic choices social democrats (SD) or moderate conservatives (MC) face relative to the evolving main space of voter distribution in advanced capitalist democracy. If voters act rationally in a Euclidean space and support parties close to their own ideal position, most but not all parties will strategically locate their appeals within the ideological range covered by each time period's main area of voter distribution—provided the parties attempt to maximize their electoral support or legislative seats. Only parties representing small pressure groups on specific secondary issues may garner limited electoral support with positions outside these basic regions of the space in [figure 19.1](#).

In the first decades after world war II, when libertarian/authoritarian issues had only limited salience and voters were primarily divided along the socialist versus capitalist political axis, conventional leftist and rightist parties were positioned best at moderate positions on the socialist/capitalist axis, yet (almost) neutral on the libertarian/authoritarian axis (positions *SD*₁ and *MC*₁). With the rotation and rightward shift of the main area of voter distribution and, consequently, also of the main axis of party competition, social democratic parties have been well advised to move toward (1) more libertarian and (2) more capitalist positions, for example location *SD*₂. Moderate conservatives may stay in place near *MC*₁ because more

voters now share nonsocialist convictions about economic governance structures. Yet, at the same time, the structural transformation of postindustrial capitalism has created a new reservoir of voters for whom authoritarian positions become highly salient, particularly with the rise of a libertarian Left at the opposite end of the axis of political competition.

Space *A* represents the area where most libertarians are situated. Since they typically also subscribe to (moderate) social democratic economic positions, this competitive space is up for grabs between repositioned social democratic parties (located at SD_2 , SD_2' , or SD_2'') and explicit left-libertarian parties in positions more extreme than SD_2' . Space *B* comprises a generally smaller but significant core space of those individuals who are economically on the moderate to extreme Right yet who are distanced from the center of the competitive space primarily by their support of authoritarian and racist positions. Electorally successful new rightist parties must situate themselves somewhere in this space. Their success depends, however, on the strategic appeal of MC and, to a lesser extent, SD parties, both of which are faced with strategic dilemmas.

Let us begin with the MC party. If the party stays near MC_1 , it has the greatest chance to capture the “pivot” of the electoral space and stave off a leftist majority, that is, of social democratic and left-libertarian parties. At the same time, however, it creates a vast uncovered electoral space that may invite an NRR party to locate at strategic position *R*. As long as SD offers a fairly pronounced alternative to MC_1 , for example, by staying at position SD_1 or by moving to SD_2' , MC_1 may still be attractive to voters sympathetic to the authoritarian Right by presenting itself as the “lesser evil”: Only a moderate conservative government, uninhibited by a more right-wing competitor at *R*, can prevent a government even more unpalatable to the far Right than an MC government. This appeal of the moderate Right is particularly plausible and attractive, as long as that party is confined to the opposition benches and a social democratic government is in office.

Yet as left parties move toward the median voter, for example, by assuming position SD_2'' , the moderate conservative’s appeal to the lesser evil loses plausibility for sympathizers of the authoritarian Right. Voters in the right-authoritarian opinion sector become cynical about politics, just as left-libertarians do who see social democratic parties move toward “centrist” positions. Cynical voters see no difference among the established parties and believe that party politicians form a closed “political class” that is only out to help itself to wealth and power at the expense of the “common man” in the streets. On the political right, this loss of trust in moderate conservatism is accelerated by longer episodes of mainstream conservative government that is likely to reveal the similarity of the policies pursued by moderately leftist and moderately rightist governments. Voters of the far Right will then perceive a “cartel” of established moderate SD and MC parties that have become virtually indistinguishable. *Convergence of SD and MC parties, together with an extended period of government participation by the moderate conservatives thus creates the electoral opening for the*

authoritarian Right that induces voters to abandon their loyalty to established conservative parties. MC parties are then caught in a dilemma between “vote-maximizing” strategies that often may force them to appeal more clearly to their right-authoritarian supporters and to move their parties to MC_2' or even MC_2'' , particularly in the presence of an NRR competitor, and “office-maximizing” strategies to capture the median voter and make the party pivotal for government coalitions and policy formation in the party system. Such office-maximizing strategies, however, may entail serious electoral losses benefiting new challenging NRR parties.

The same dilemma, of course, applies to social democrats as well, though with a twist. Given the disappearance of a fundamentalist socialist, or even Marxist, Left from the end of the 1970s onward, and especially after the fall of communism, social democrats have had to abandon position SD_1 to stay electorally viable, regardless of specific strategic considerations. Once they approach the new main axis of party competition, however, further strategic moves are likely to be *either* toward a more left-libertarian (SD_2') *or* a more centrist appeal (SD_2''). Where they will locate themselves depends on (1) their electoral objectives and (2) their competitors’ positions.

In a simple spatial model of multiparty competition among short-term vote maximizers, parties have an incentive to spread out across the ideological space rather than to gravitate toward the median voter (Cox 1990; Shepsle and Cohen 1990). If social democrats try to maximize votes in the short term, the most “profitable” location then depends on the “crowdedness” of the competitive space to the party’s libertarian Left and its authoritarian Right. The more crowded a market segment is with serious competitors who can overcome entry costs into the game, the less attractive it is for parties to approach that segment. Rational parties locate themselves in the middle of their market, as far away from competitors as possible. Social democrats may also pursue a different strategy than short-term vote maximizing, such as maximizing chances to hold government office by occupying the pivot of the competitive electoral space. Often a strategy of “pivoting” by moving to position SD_2'' will, on balance, cost the party votes but may increase its bargaining weight in coalition and policy formation. In this vein, social democrats experience exactly the same dilemma as moderate conservatives.

In general, the constraints of the electoral arena compel vote- or office-seeking social democrats to move away from the left-authoritarian quadrant of [figure 19.1](#). Such movements, however, have significant consequences for the parties’ traditional working-class and lower white-collar clienteles and particularly those segments that are drawn to leftist positions because they are employed in a public sector or domestically protected or subsidized industry. The same groups are often attracted to authoritarian political positions because they have little education and work in object-processing occupations, for example, workers in heavy industries, but also lower blue- and white-collar employees in the post office, the railroads, or

the security forces (police, military). Such occupational groups may be located near position W in [figure 19.1](#). The further social democratic parties move from SD_1 to SD_2 , the more alienated such traditional social democratic worker and lower white-collar constituencies will feel from their previously preferred party and the more such voters might be tempted to support, say, racist and xenophobic party R , which appeals to authoritarian resentments even though it diverges to some extent from these voters' commitment to the welfare state and redistributive economic policy. Alternatively, voters in position W may stay home and no longer vote in elections.

The success of NRR parties, however, is contingent not only on the choices of SD and MC and the general crowdedness of the party spectrum in different areas of the competitive space but also on the choices of the up-and-coming new rightist parties themselves. *Depending on where they locate themselves, they will draw different electoral coalitions and will have different "yield ratios" within the electorate.* In other words, contingent upon the new parties' strategic appeals, the composition of their following will be more working class or more non-working class, especially petite bourgeois and lower white collar. Positions P , R , W , and F in [figure 19.1](#) are only ideal-typical examples of a continuum of positions over which new rightist parties may be distributed. If this theoretical conceptualization of their position is correct, however, each position should be associated with (1) different electoral constituencies and (2) different electoral payoffs. We will now describe the conditions under which each of these ideal-typical strategic positions of the contemporary Right may be chosen as well as the electoral coalitions and payoffs that are associated with them. This analysis will provide the hypotheses that will be initially explored in the comparative investigation of [chapter 2](#) and then in more depth in the case study chapters that follow.

The “master case”: authoritarian and capitalist appeal of the NRR

The ideal-typical NRR position is associated with both authoritarian and capitalist appeals in the region of position R in [figure 19.1](#). In our view, this position is the “master case” for the contemporary extreme Right because it promises a high electoral return given that it can appeal to a cross-class alliance: it attracts segments of the working class based on racist-xenophobic and authoritarian appeals. It rallies small business on additional promarket and antistate slogans, calling for the dismantling of public bureaucracies and the welfare state. In this scenario, the main underrepresented social category will be white-collar professionals. As indicated above, the occupational categories are but indirect tracers of the true market and organizational experiences that characterize the electoral coalition around the NRR. If data were available to explore the proposition empirically, we would expect the lowest support for the NRR by far among university-trained professionals in public social service agencies

(education, social welfare, etc.) and the highest support among craftspeople, shopkeepers, and blue-collar workers in industries that are losing ground in the international market competition.

The European NRR is commonly associated with two political issues that have become salient since the 1970s and 1980s in a variety of countries: the revolt against higher taxes, primarily direct income and property taxes, and the rejection of immigrants from non-Occidental cultures, nationalities, and ethnicities. Yet these two issues only highlight broader ideological orientations and dispositions toward political action that encompass a more complex universe of beliefs and aspirations on the three interrelated dimensions we have already introduced above: the scope of citizenship, the organization of collective decision-making procedures, and the principles of allocating scarce resources. In terms of citizenship, the NRR stands for an exclusionary, particularist definition of citizenship rights confined to a culturally homogeneous group of residents. In terms of collective decision-making procedures—whether in politics, enterprise, family, or church—the NRR stands for strong authoritarian-paternalist procedures and rejects participatory debate, pluralism based on the equal worth of citizens' voices, tolerance for disagreements in the decision process, and compromise between conflicting interests. In terms of economic and social policies, the NRR advocates the spontaneous allocation of resources through market institutions but rejects redistributive schemes of planned allocation regardless of whether they are guided by a central bureaucracy or democratic collective decision making. The state should be strong and authoritarian, but small. The NRR generally favors an ethic of hard work and investment that is reinforced by the individualization of choice in the marketplace over an ethic of consumption and hedonistic enjoyment that is promoted by collective and redistributive allocation modes. The conflict between authoritarian Right and libertarian Left thus extends over a wide range of policy issues among which the following presently enjoy particular salience:

1. *Gender conflict*—paternalism in the family versus gender equality and difference (policy issues: public child care, abortion rights, women's representation in politics);
2. *Multicultural conflict*—cultural homogeneity in an ethnically exclusionary society versus cultural pluralism in a cosmopolitan society (policy issues: immigration and political asylum, voting rights for residents with foreign nationality, the right to practice different religions and beliefs in public spaces, the role of national symbols, such as the flag, anthem, etc.);
3. *Environmental conflict*—protection and enjoyment of the environment, permitting only minimal intrusion by industry, versus industrial growth, a subordination of nature to material production, and the primacy of the Protestant work ethic;
4. *Modes of political participation*—compliance with political authorities and participation only through voting versus a participation through sometimes disruptive

forms of direct action in social movements (demonstrations, sit-ins, plant occupations).

The radical Right with an authoritarian bent is “new” because it combines promarket and authoritarian appeals. We will discuss the relationship between this “new” Right and the “old” interwar extreme Right in the final section of this chapter. We can now generate several hypotheses about the NRR:

Hypothesis 1. NRR parties are most likely to appear and to be electorally successful

- a. in postindustrial societies with large welfare states and
- b. in circumstances where there has been a convergence between the main moderate left and right conventional parties.

Hypothesis 2. NRR parties will attract the following electoral coalition:

- a. blue-collar workers will be somewhat overrepresented
- b. small business will be most overrepresented
- c. inactives in the labor market will be proportionally represented or somewhat overrepresented
- d. white-collar employees, professionals, and students will be underrepresented.

Populist antistatist appeals

In [figure 19.1](#), the populist antistatist strategy is symbolized by position *P*, but this is only one possibility among a range of positions that go from *P* up toward a procapitalist and actually more neutral, if not slightly libertarian, appeal. In other words, populist antistatist appeals are primarily directed against “big government” and the “political class” that dominates a country’s politics through the conventional parties, but to a much lesser extent against the libertarian themes of multiculturalism, environmentalism, gender liberation, and direct political participation.

Populist antistatism thus should not be lumped together with the NRR. Political entrepreneurs might find populist antistatism electorally profitable where the established moderate left and right parties are firmly bound to a status quo in which a deregulation and liberalization of the economy also undercuts party power. This is typically the case in democracies with large public industries where governance of such industries has been run as a patronage racket shared by all the major parties. Under these circumstances, moderate conservative parties are totally unable to incorporate free market appeals in a credible way. Moreover, in such systems, the distance between moderate conservative and moderate leftist parties should be even smaller than in other countries where the convergence of the conventional Left and Right has triggered the possibility of NRR mobilization. The call for market liberalism on the populist Right is thus primarily a challenge to the incumbent political elites and their often corrupt and self-serving policies.

Populist antistatist parties are also likely to attract a different and broader electorate than NRR parties, where conditions are favorable for this strategy. Faced with a patronage-driven, clientelist traditional party establishment, many educated white-collar professionals will also be cynical about the established parties and sense a desire to “teach them a lesson.” If they are uninclined to vote for a left-libertarian party, no other alternative is more convenient than a populist antistatist party. For the populist and antistatist strategy, we can thus derive the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 3. Populist antistatist parties are most likely to appear and to be electorally successful:

- (a) in postindustrial societies with large welfare states and
- (b) in circumstances where there has been a convergence between the main moderate left and right conventional parties *and* this convergence is cemented by a clientelist/patronage-driven political economy;

Hypothesis 4. Populist antistatist parties will attract a true “cross-class” electoral alliance in which no single group will be clearly over- or underrepresented.

Racist authoritarian and “welfare chauvinist” appeals

This position is symbolized in [figure 19.1](#) by the region in the vicinity of *W* (welfare chauvinism) and can stretch all the way to *F* (for fascism). Here, political entrepreneurs emphasize racist and authoritarian slogans but studiously stay away from an admiration of market-liberal capitalism. The main point is the mobilization of resentment on the authoritarian/libertarian axis. The attack on foreigners, the vilification of feminist and environmentalist movements (for example, in the fight against abortion rights or speed limits on freeways), and the stress on national symbols and historical reminiscences are critical for the racist-authoritarian strategy.

The racist-authoritarian strategy may explicitly move to the defense of income redistribution and of the “little people” in the street against the large corporations and trusts. At the same time, income redistribution and protection from the risks of labor markets can be woven into the racist-authoritarian message by appealing to “welfare chauvinism.” The welfare state is presented as a system of social protection for those who belong to the ethnically defined community and who have contributed to it. Immigrants are depicted as free-loaders who do not contribute to the system but claim its benefits. Welfare chauvinism is particularly likely among social groups whose economic well-being is critically dependent on fiscally viable social policies that furnish satisfactory public pensions, medical benefits, and unemployment insurance. Quite clearly, citizens with lower incomes—blue-collar workers, lower clerks, pensioners—and few assets (stocks, bonds, real estate) are most sensitive to any threat to the continuing viability of social insurance systems. Since the generally below average level of education in these groups also renders them vulnerable to authoritarian

appeals, such groups are most likely to express “welfare chauvinist” resentments.

A welfare chauvinist party strategy is not identical with a fascist authoritarianism that, at least in its rhetoric, directly attacks liberal capitalist market relations. At position *F*, we often encounter a combination of terrorist activities against foreigners and other targets of ethnic hatred with a resentment against capitalist market processes. As we will argue below, fascist parties, situated in historical settings with very different social structures and citizens’ preferences than advanced capitalist democracies, under certain circumstances were able to become electorally successful with such appeals. In postindustrial capitalism, however, social fascist positions are likely to maneuver right-wing parties into a political desert. Strategy *F* appeals only to a minute constituency of people socially marginalized because of their youth, their lack of marketable skills, and other deficiencies that undermine their ability to compete in the marketplace. In contrast to the era in which fascist parties mobilized, in postindustrial democracies position *F* is typically propagated not by political parties aspiring to a mass following but by small sects for whom their internal communal life and their violent external pursuits, for example, against foreigners, are more important than winning votes.

Due to increasing affluence in advanced industrial capitalism, the potential target groups for welfare chauvinist appeals are also quite limited. Authoritarian, ethnocentric, and anticapitalist appeals are likely to fall onto much more fertile ground in less affluent postsocialist societies (cf. Kitschelt 1992; 1995). Why, then, would political entrepreneurs in advanced capitalism choose authoritarian welfare chauvinist appeals? How could a winning coalition be formed around such a strategy? In fact, short of a major economic catastrophe, it appears unlikely that the gradual structural transformation of Western economies will ever threaten or actually cut free a sufficiently large proportion of the workforce into unemployment to provoke the rise of significant authoritarian welfare-chauvinist parties. Parties with such appeals may do well for a while in depressed industrial areas or in regional protest elections but rarely on a national scale and for an extended period of time. There is no “structural location” in advanced capitalism in which they can entrench themselves.

This hypothesis implies that parties that follow the new rightist authoritarian and market-liberal “master strategy” should lose votes if they emphasize immigration, xenophobia, and race as their key issue but neglect market liberalism. In terms of [figure 19.1](#), a movement from positions *P* or *R* toward *W* or *F* leads to a narrowing of the electoral coalition that can be rallied behind rightist parties.

At the systemic level of party competition, our theory has no explanation for the choice of welfare chauvinist strategies by the contemporary extreme Right that restrict electoral support coalitions. As a consequence, we must change the level of analysis and examine how *intraparty politics* may condition strategic choices such that the leadership will not pursue vote-maximizing power strategies. We are searching for internal impediments to a “rational” choice of party appeals at the systemic level of party competition. One obvious hypothesis has

to do with the political experiences and inclinations of the extreme-rightist activists. Where these activists were socialized into a fascist tradition that patterns their political interpretations, it is unlikely that extreme-rightist parties can fully seize upon the opportunities offered by the contemporary electoral marketplace. In countries with a historical tradition of the extreme Right, particularly those where fascist movements founded fascist regimes, the perpetuation of an extreme-rightist discourse is organized such that a “winning coalition appeal” with a procapitalist and authoritarian strategy of the NRR is unacceptable to most hard-core followers of extreme-rightist parties. Where the fascist tradition involves more social, if not socialist, elements, parties may locate between the strategic points *W* and *F* in [figure 19.1](#). It is, however, possible that neofascist forces express more traditionalist authoritarian views that value property and hierarchical status outside the framework of a liberal market society. Also, here, neofascist parties will be unable to appeal to market liberalism and often also to racism as well. Yet they will not be welfare chauvinist and will have little ability to attract workers, but their authoritarian traditionalism will primarily rally small business and lower white-collar employees.

We are now ready to specify hypotheses for the authoritarian welfare-chauvinist strategy:

Hypothesis 5. Authoritarian and welfare chauvinist parties will not be electorally successful in advanced capitalist democracies.

Hypothesis 6. Such parties will draw on a clientele that overrepresents only blue-collar voters, yet none of the other main socioeconomic groups.

Hypothesis 7. The systemically “irrational” authoritarian welfare chauvinist appeal will be chosen only by those parties of the extreme Right that are steeped in a legacy of strong fascist movements and political regimes with a national socialist bent.

Hypothesis 8. More traditionalist neofascist groups also will be unable to increase their electoral appeal because they fail to highlight market competition and racism in their programs. They will draw primarily on small business and lower white-collar constituencies.

Theoretical propositions about the contemporary extreme right and rival hypotheses

To conclude this analysis, we can now specify the empirical findings that lend support to or falsify the theory we have laid out in this chapter ([fig. 19.2](#)). First, right-authoritarian or populist anti-statist electoral success presupposes an advanced industrial capitalism. Outside advanced capitalist democracies, the party appeals and electoral coalitions that may attract a significant following inside contemporary Western democracies should find only weak support. Outside advanced Western societies, fascist parties may be quite attractive, provided they rise in an otherwise favorable political opportunity structure, which we will contrast with that promoting the contemporary Western extreme Right in the final section of this chapter.

Within today's Western democracies, a convergence of the main moderate left and right parties is the next precondition for the emergence of a powerful extreme Right. Where this condition is absent, no extremist party will be electorally important, no matter whether its appeal is fascist, NRR, or populist and antistatist. Among countries with a moderation of party competition, two further cases will be distinguished. Where this moderation is associated with a patronage-based political economy, populist antistatist parties with a broad cross-class basis will be electorally most attractive. Where there is a more clear-cut separation of politics from business, the "winning formula" of the extreme Right will be NRR, assembling an electoral coalition in which workers and small business are overrepresented. Populist antistatist appeals, but also welfare chauvinist appeals, are not particularly attractive in these circumstances.

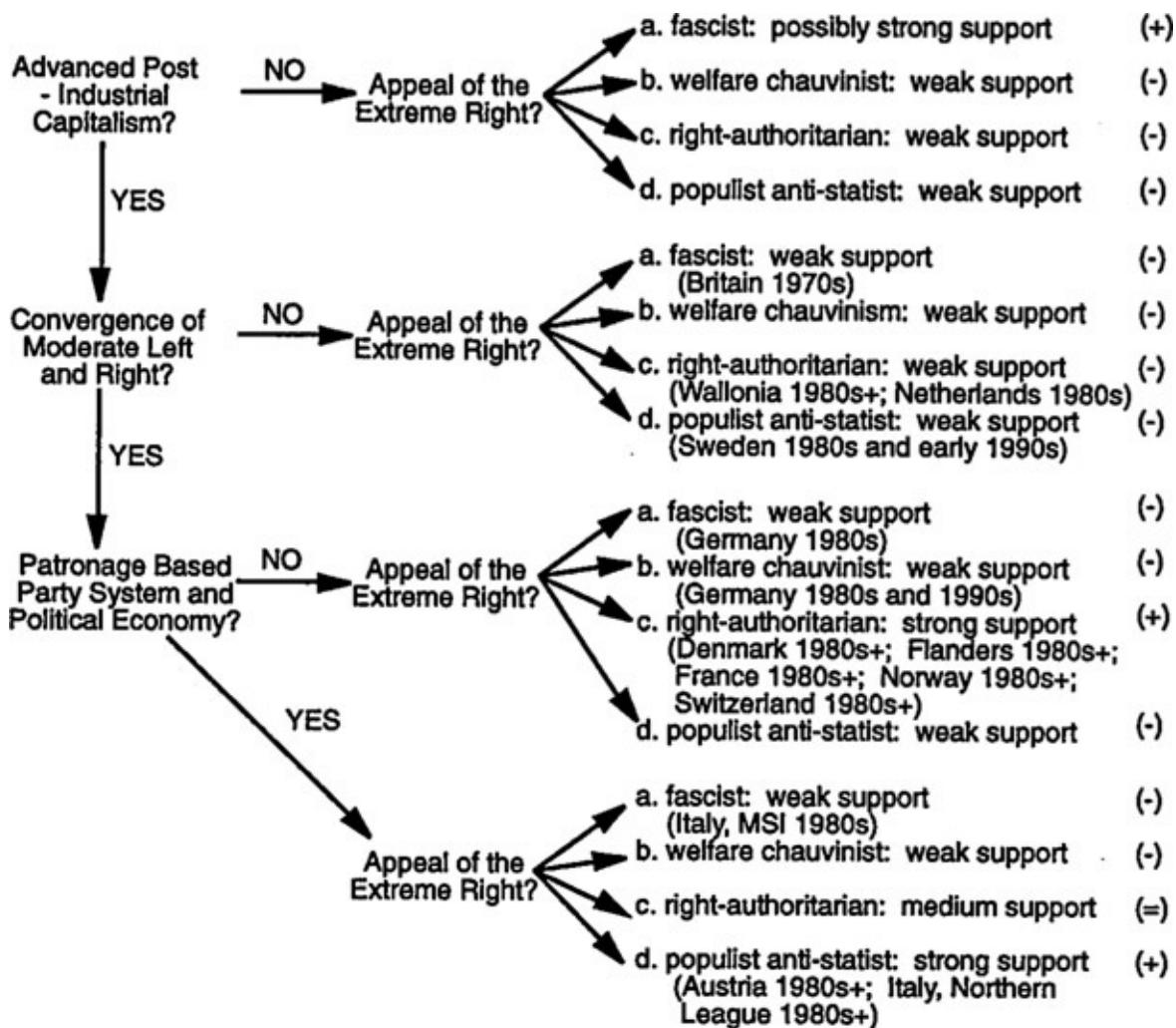


Figure 19.2 Theoretical predictions of successful and unsuccessful extreme-rightist parties.

We are now in a position to contrast our explanatory framework with several alternative views of the contemporary extreme Right that have been advanced in various scholarly and political debates. For each of these alternatives, we can specify a set of hypotheses that differs from the set of propositions we have introduced above.

The contemporary Right as “single-issue” politics. Interpretations of right-wing extremism in Western Europe as single-issue mobilization have focused on two separate issues that are hypothesized to stir political support—the fight against progressive income taxes in the 1970s and the opposition to the influx of immigrants and asylum seekers from non-Western European regions, particularly from the Middle East and from Africa. If the rightist parties in the 1980s mobilize around a single issue, their voters should be dispersed over the entire range of ideological alternatives on all other economic and sociopolitical issues but clearly stand out on a separate issue dimension dividing racist and parochial supporters of the New Right from the more cosmopolitan and universalist supporters of all the other parties. In contrast, if NRR parties assume a distinctive configuration of positions on a broader cluster of issues that constitutes a dominant dimension of competition in a party system, spatial theories of multiparty competition may provide a superior account of their success. The extent to which racist and ethnocentric appeals explain voters’ support for the extreme Right thus sheds light on the adequacy of rival theories of party competition.

Three “rival hypotheses” to those presented above can be derived from the “single-issue” theory of directional competition:

Rival Hypothesis 1. Voters of extreme-rightist parties should stand out from the supporters of all other parties in only one respect, their support of containing and reversing the inflow of foreigners from different races and ethnicities. On all other issue dimensions, their position should vary randomly around the population mean.

Rival Hypothesis 2. There is little social structuration of the extreme rightist parties of the electorate, whether measured in terms of market position, organizational affiliation, or age and education.

Rival Hypothesis 3. In macrocomparison, those regions and countries that had to swallow the heaviest load of immigrants give rise to the strongest right-wing extremist parties.

The contemporary Right as a “right-libertarian” protest. In this view, the main momentum of the extreme Right is not right authoritarianism but right-libertarian politics, combining a commitment to free markets with an anti-authoritarian social individualism and a quest for antielitist, participatory politics, directed against the established party states. Contrary to our own argument, right-wing party followers should combine economic market liberalism with libertarian attitudes. Advocates of the hypothesis that the new Right revolves around libertarian market enthusiasts further claim that the extreme Right’s commitment to racism is an exception within its otherwise libertarian bent, a single issue that has been grafted onto the much more crucial agenda of lowering taxes, reducing the welfare state, and dismantling state regulation in favor of market transaction.

The “right-libertarianism” hypotheses is to a large extent, but not entirely, inconsistent with our framework. Under the clearly specified circumstances of a highly party-penetrated patronage political economy, our propositions also envision that right-wing political entrepreneurs will tone down an authoritarian appeal in favor of populist antistatism. However, we would not go so far as to claim that this strategy can lead to the extreme of a right-libertarianism, that is, a strategy that combines promarket positions with opposition to

hierarchical authority, support of unconventional political participation, and endorsement of feminism and of environmentalism. Moreover, the conditions under which right-libertarian appeals are more successful than right-authoritarian appeals are clearly constrained. In contrast, the “right-libertarianism” hypothesis advances the following more general hypotheses:

Rival Hypothesis 4. Successful extreme-rightist parties are for the capitalist marketplace and support libertarian views of personal freedoms to choose lifestyles, women’s equality and unique desires, environmentalism, and a broadening of political participation to unconventional forms of political action.

The contemporary Right in the fascist legacy. A third rival hypothesis to our own argument places the contemporary European Right in the context of earlier fascist movements that tapped a populist anticapitalism of the “common man” against the elite of large organizations in state, corporate, and labor union bureaucracies and invoked an authoritarian-corporatist vision of social order as the alternative to liberal market society. Contrary to the “right-libertarian” interpretation of the extreme Right, this view would expect right-wing extremist parties to emphasize authoritarian and racist political and cultural themes but not to endorse a distinctly procapitalist, promarket economic program. It would also entail that extreme-rightist parties rally a mass following that encompasses all social groups and may even overrepresent white-collar and businesspeople, as did fascist parties in the past. The main rival hypotheses of this perspective, therefore, are the following:

Rival Hypothesis 5. The contemporary extreme Right combines anti-capitalist with authoritarian appeals.

Rival Hypothesis 6. The contemporary extreme Right assembles a cross-class alliance in which middle-class professionals are at least not underrepresented.

The contemporary Right as protest politics. A final possibility is to interpret the extreme Right as an issueless protest against the political establishment, as a general sign of the political malaise in an era when political ideologies have decayed and voters are overcome by cynicism about what democratic politicians are able to accomplish. The hypotheses that could be derived from the protest hypotheses primarily concern the political opportunity structure but would otherwise agree with much that was already said about the single-issue hypothesis. Voters supporting the extreme Right should be ideologically amorphous and only united by their dissatisfaction with the democratic “system.” The unique rival hypothesis that follows from the interpretation of the contemporary right as protest politics is the following:

Rival Hypothesis 7. The new extreme Right will be electorally powerful wherever the existing parties have become similar in their electoral appeals and government policies. The substantive appeal of the extreme Right makes no difference for its electoral chances and its electoral coalition is diffuse.

One suggestion that has been made throughout the presentation of our theoretical framework, as well as in the introduction of rival hypotheses, is that the contemporary

extreme Right is most likely different from the fascist or national socialist Right of the interwar period. Having specified various ways to interpret the contemporary Right, the last task in this chapter is to refer back to the interwar period and explore the extent to which contrasts between the historical and the contemporary extreme Right may be justified.

Contrasting the NRR to the old fascist right

Debates about the concept of fascism have continued since the emergence of the phenomenon in the early 1920s (cf. Eatwell 1992a). This study has no ambition to provide an exhaustive analysis of these debates, let alone to contribute an entirely new definition and explanation of fascism that pretends to resolve existing scholarly disputes. Nevertheless, the various academic analyses of the phenomenon usually suffer from an epistemological problem that has to do with the relationship between definition and explanation of political phenomena. One group of scholars engages in “essentialist” conceptual discussions to define the phenomenon of fascism in a semantically clear fashion but then does not explore whether a coherent explanation for the timing and the strength or weaknesses of fascism so defined can be supplied. Another group explores causal explanations of fascism but relies on intuitive lists of cases and implicit notions of fascism rather than an explicit theoretical definition of the explanandum. In most instances, scholars divorce the definitional and explanatory tasks from each other and thus render the entire debate about fascism rather sterile.

In our discussion of the contemporary extreme Right, we have introduced the ideal type of the NRR as an empirically grounded theoretical concept that corresponds to a sufficient number of empirical referents in contemporary democracies to be explained in coherent ways. We have then introduced additional hypotheses to account for contemporary rightist strategies that diverge from the NRR “master case” in a systematic way. Populist antistatist strategies are electorally profitable in patronage-based political economies; xenophobic welfare chauvinism prevails where the extreme Right is hampered in its strategic mobility by activists who are steeped in the fascist tradition. In other words, only one of the limitational cases of the contemporary extreme Right is historically and ideologically linked to the fascist extreme Right in a straightforward way.

Fascist ideology and the contemporary extreme right

The definition of fascism that allows us to highlight its difference from the NRR “master case” emphasizes ideology and movement practice. Following the advice of a number of scholars, fascist movements must be distinguished from fascist regimes (Payne 1980, 200–204; Sternhell 1976, 318). Whatever ideology fascist movements may have expressed, the historical realities

of national institutions limited their ability to implement fascist visions, even where fascist movements took over the state apparatus. For example, fascist parties rarely reorganized the economy to the extent their rhetoric and ideology had called for. The specific ideology and organizational practice of fascism thus stands out much better in fascist movements than in fascist regimes. Moreover, present-day NRR parties have not established political regimes and can therefore be compared only to fascist movements.

Fascist movements and mass parties were antiliberal, antisocialist, and anticonservative (cf. Linz 1976, 15–23; Nolte 1966, 21; and Sternhell 1976, 345–50). They called for the reassertion of a communitarian spirit and in this vein supported a new “fraternalism” (Brooker 1991). Fascism opposed the dominance of markets and bureaucracy and instead advocated an authoritarian, hierarchical, and communitarian order under the leadership of charismatic individuals. This community was expected to provide “salvation through unity” (Weber 1964, 36), an achievement that requires clear-cut external boundaries separating friends from foes of the community. In this sense, fascism was *exclusionary and particularist*. Whether that exclusionary momentum was expressed by nationalist, racist, or imperialist sentiments, however, is a matter of historical contingency. Racism was not a constitutive element of fascism although a number of fascist movements expressed racist beliefs. Central to all fascist movements was the effort to establish boundaries between insiders and outsiders and to institutionalize a particularist vision of community.

The fascist effort to (re)draw the boundaries of social order went against a conservative clinging to status quo institutions. Instead, it called for an activist construction of a new society that was based on authoritarian principles. Although fascism expressed a hierarchical and organic vision of society, its belief that political action can reshape the entire social order betrayed a hypermodern trust that social organization is essentially at the disposal of political “engineers,” whereas reactionary and antimodern thinking conceives of society as an immutable or incrementally growing organic entity not accessible to conscious social planning. The activist, authoritarian political creativity in fascism also implied a deeply antifeminist thrust that glorified decisive male action, particularly in war, and condemned gender equality.

The fascist communitarian and authoritarian spirit involved an anti-capitalist thrust. In contrast to Marxian socialism, which was primarily concerned with property rights, fascist anticapitalism left private property rights alone but attacked the primordial governance structure of the capitalist system: the competitive marketplace and its behavioral correlates, individual self-reliance and the tolerance for a diversity of personal tastes and opinions. Fascism intended to substitute market exchange by state-regulated resource allocation, especially in the financial and the raw materials sectors, and by state-led hierarchical corporatist interest intermediation. Fascists expected a statist, corporatist economy to create political harmony between different economic classes and thus to overcome the socialist challenge.

The fascist vision of communitarian, corporatist anticapitalism also sheds light on the contingent role of race in fascist rhetoric. Where Jews represented a significant share of the educated urban professional and bourgeois classes, as was the case particularly in Central and Eastern Europe, fascist anti-Semitism combined an ethnically coded anticapitalism with the quest for drawing boundaries around a particularist community that defined Jews as foes and outsiders. In contrast, where Jews were not popularly perceived as an important social group, such as in Italy, anti-Semitism could not play a role in fascist mobilization.

To sum up, the rhetoric of fascism is distinct from the rhetoric of the NRR in at least three respects. First, fascism expresses an anticapitalist, corporatist thrust, whereas the NRR endorses free market capitalism with a strong, but small, state. Fascism and the NRR share, however, the propensity to mobilize individuals around collective friend/foe divisions and particularist conceptions of social collectivities. Within the contemporary extreme Right, therefore, only welfare chauvinist appeals come close to incorporating the fascist heritage. Populist antistatist appeals, in contrast, are furthest removed from the fascist legacy.

Second, the NRR and fascism are both authoritarian, but each authoritarianism has different sources and implications for social organization, particularly market capitalism. The NRR's authoritarianism derives from its defense of capitalist governance structures, not the fascist rejection of a free market economy, and therefore at least implicitly draws on the thinking of conservative apologists of liberal market capitalism. Such theorists of the free market understood, but rarely articulated on an explicitly theoretical level, that the basic unit of capitalist society is not the individual but the traditional multigenerational family with clearly distinct sex roles. The defense of capitalism therefore calls for a protection of paternal authority that is instrumental for the preservation of the traditional family (Schumpeter 1950). If the time horizon of economic decision making is the continuity of the multigenerational family, incentives for accumulation reach beyond each individual's life span and capacity to consume. The capitalist ethic of work and accumulation is undermined by feminism and individualism because they cultivate a hedonistic ethnic and limit the time horizon of economic choices to that of the individual decision maker's biography. Capitalism may call not only for cultural but also for political authoritarianism. Although capitalist competition contributes to a decentralization of political power, market liberals call for imposing limits on political democracy to prevent the latter from disturbing the operation of the market (Hayek 1979). In an individualist and hedonistic culture, democratic demands for redistribution may undermine capitalist mechanisms of accumulation.

Third, whereas racism and ethnocultural parochialism were contingent phenomena in fascism that were in some movements replaced by militarism and nationalism, they are central components of the NRR appeal. While racist dispositions probably are always present in certain population groups, they become politically virulent for the contemporary NRR precisely because of the historical conjuncture of a rapidly changing occupational structure and

an increasing international vulnerability of economic sectors in industry and services. On the level of direct economic interests, they are fueled by the fear of less skilled workers and marginal small producers that they will be displaced by immigrants and foreign competitors producing with cheaper labor. On a deeper level, the multiculturalization of European societies offends individuals whose authoritarian dispositions and experiences harbor little tolerance for cultural and ethical difference and nonconformism. European fascist movements emerged before the advent of European multicultural societies; the NRR is in part the product of this process of multiculturalization.

Fascist movement practice and the NRR

In addition to contrasts between the ideological appeals of fascist movements and the NRR, it may also be possible to identify differences in the organizational practice of these two forces. Given the recent appearance of the contemporary extreme Right and the rather novel institutional settings and historical circumstances in which they have begun to mobilize, clear-cut hypotheses about a lasting contrast between the organizational modes of the fascist “old” and the “new” extreme Right may be on somewhat shakier ground.

Nevertheless, wherever fascist movements gained strength over an extended period of time before coming to power or subsiding, they created mass organizations that subjected members to the authority of a charismatic leader. Most importantly, fascist parties usually organized paramilitary units that provided the violent shock troops in their efforts to establish the political boundaries between friend and foe and to take over political power from their adversaries. Paramilitary mass organization is a practical expression of an authoritarian, communitarian, anticapitalist, and anti-individualist ideology.

In contrast to fascist paramilitary mass organizations, the organizational efforts of the NRR tend to focus on the construction of modern “framework parties” that rely on a few highly visible individuals and a staff of professional managers, together with a rather limited following of party activists. One might therefore predict that the member/voter ratio of NRR parties will remain much lower than that of fascist movements in the interwar period. Only parties with a clearly welfare chauvinist appeal in the contemporary Right have a tendency to associate a rather large number of activists with the organization and to entertain the affiliation of paramilitary wings within the limits that the democratic state sets on their mode of operation.

Both fascist and NRR parties, however, share in common the prevalence of charismatic leadership and the relative absence of formal-rational bureaucratic internal party structure. Such organizational features are bound to fuel feuds among subleaders that can be exploited by the hegemon of the party to consolidate his power. In the contemporary extreme Right,

where the power of the charismatic leader is not backed up by absolute control over a paramilitary organization and where the main arena of politics is the electoral campaign, the absence of a clear bureaucratic chain of command generates often highly divisive and publicly visible internal factional battles that endanger the cohesiveness of the parties and sometimes damage their electoral fortunes. It thus appears that the contemporary Right faces rather different organizational challenges than the interwar fascist Right. Again, we admit, however, that it may still be too early for conclusive judgments in this regard.

Fascist and NRR social constituencies

So far we have almost entirely avoided the contentious issue of the socioeconomic and demographic backing of fascist movements and parties and a comparison to the social constituencies supporting the contemporary radical Right in its right-authoritarian, populist antistatist or welfare chauvinist modes of operation. The number of studies on fascist electoral constituencies is legion, although the evidence remains empirically ambiguous, given that European fascism precedes the age of opinion surveys. Ecological analyses of voting patterns and changing party fortunes as well as investigations of the parties' membership records constitute the main indirect empirical indicators for shedding light on this question. What appears clear, however, is that where established socialist, Catholic, or bourgeois parties had organizationally encapsulated a large proportion of the electorate, they lost relatively few voters to fascist movements. Fascism thrived among voters who lacked firm bonds to political organizations.

In occupational and class terms, such established party-constituency ties were particularly strong among skilled blue-collar workers in core industries who were organized in unions affiliated with socialist parties and among members of the Catholic middle and working class closely linked to Catholic parties. Fascism made strong inroads among politically less attached groups such as marginal workers in industry and agriculture, the new white-collar salariat, independent family farmers and small businesspeople, but also the professions, intellectuals, and the bourgeoisie. Fascist parties thus very nearly reflected the overall socioeconomic division of the population, although the working class remained underrepresented and the independent small middle class was overrepresented. The petite bourgeoisie may have been the fascist hard core (de Felice 1977, 183–86; Lipset 1981, chap. 5), but it constituted only one of many groups in the entire fascist coalition and could not provide the bulk of the fascist electorate.

Also, the electorate of the contemporary extreme Right quite clearly reflects a broad range of groups in the occupational structure of advanced industrial democracies. The fuzziness of rightist support is in part a consequence of the imprecise conventional class and stratification

schemes employed in run-of-the-mill opinion surveys. They do not satisfactorily reflect the special sectoral and occupational experiences we have hypothesized to be associated with support for the various expressions of the extreme Right. Nevertheless, even a crude comparison of occupational support patterns shows that contemporary extremist right-wing parties over- or underrepresent different groups and socioeconomic regions compared with European fascism in the interwar period. Today rightist parties overproportionally gain votes in large industrial metropolitan areas, not in small towns and urban middle-class areas, where fascists were strong. In contrast to fascist movements, blue-collar workers—even when they are unionized—are not underrepresented in rightist electorates but tend to be overrepresented, particularly among the youngest age cohorts. Just as in fascist movements, the independent middle class (farmers, shopkeepers, craftspeople) still has an overproportional tendency to support the extreme Right, but they represent a quantitatively much less important electoral constituency than at the time of the fascist movements in the 1920s and 1930s.

Most importantly, groups for whom fascist parties proved attractive in the interwar period now provide precious little support to the NRR, even though they have grown tremendously in the modern occupational structure: educated white-collar employees, professionals, and intellectuals. The anti-intellectualism of the NRR is much more pronounced and electorally consequential than that of earlier extreme-rightist movements who could build on the disaffection of preindustrial elites with liberal democracy. Also the character of late twentieth-century intellectuals and professionals is different than that of their precursors in previous generations and makes today's highly educated groups less available to right-wing appeals. The share of academics and professionals, particularly women, working in public-sector social service and cultural occupations is rather high in the late twentieth century. Citizens with such market locations and occupational experiences tend to be oriented toward the libertarian Left rather than the authoritarian Right. In contrast, the fascist Right could count on considerable support from intellectuals and professionals. A good example of this tendency were the 1928 elections to the German university student representative organs. At a time when the Nazi party collected not even 3 percent of the vote in national elections, the Nazi student organization emerged as the strongest political group on German campuses. Such a success would be inconceivable in contemporary universities.

Table 19.1 Old and new extreme right: the electoral coalitions

Party type	Electoral constituencies		
	<i>Small business and agriculturalists</i>	<i>Blue-collar workers</i>	<i>White-collar employees and professionals</i>

Fascist parties	Overproportional support	Underproportional support	Overproportional support
Welfare chauvinist parties	Underproportional or proportional support	Overproportional support	Underproportional support
New radical right: Right-authoritarian parties	Overproportional support	Overproportional support	Underproportional support
Populist, antistatist parties	Proportional support	Proportional support	Proportional support

[Table 19.1](#) summarizes the differences between the electorates of the old fascist Right and of the various modes of the contemporary Right. For simplicity's sake, we have left out the electorally minuscule upper bourgeoisie and the nonparticipants in labor markets (students, homemakers, pensioners, the unemployed). We should also restate again that the occupational categories in [table 19.1](#) are not ideal, though empirically measurable, for comparisons of right-wing parties among each other and to other party electorates. The table shows that the electorate of the fascist Right is quite different than that of any contemporary extreme-rightist party. Whereas fascist parties typically under-represented blue-collar constituencies, this is not the case for any of the modes of contemporary right-wing extremism. Moreover, whereas the fascist Right overrepresented the new middle strata, this is clearly not the case for welfare chauvinist and mainline NRR tendencies and may be so for the populist antistatist Right only because it is anyway questionable whether this current is still adequately captured under the umbrella of the extreme Right. Only small business and farmers tend to be overrepresented both in the fascist and the contemporary extreme Right.

Explaining fascist movements versus explaining the contemporary extreme right

The fascist Right has not only a different physiognomy than the three modes of the contemporary extreme Right but also a different etiology. The phenomenon of fascism can be as little accommodated by a moncausal explanation as that of the NRR. Instead, different social demand and political supply conditions must be brought into play. Drawing on a range of theories of fascism, a combination of three forces appears to be most important in accounting for the strength of fascist movements in the interwar period: (1) intermediate levels of industrialization; (2) the persistence of precapitalist elites, particularly in the state apparatus, and the recent introduction of liberal democracy; and (3) a sharp economic crisis of industrialization dislocating a large segment of the citizenry especially in traditional employment sectors.

1. *Intermediate socioeconomic modernization.* To oversimplify matters, fascist movements

appear only in the transition from agricultural to industrial society, whereas NRR movements emerge in the transition from industrial to postindustrial society. For modernization theories, this socioeconomic periodization of fascist movements is the centerpiece of the explanatory account (e.g., Organski 1968). Fascist movements have a backward-looking, antimodern and a forward-looking, modern face. They try to embrace the modern technical and organizational implements of an industrial market society but reject the cultural correlates of economic modernization, the decline of collective identities, and the rise of individualism. This is why fascist movements attract particularly those who are not fully anchored in industrial society: small businesspeople, intellectuals, higher civil servants, the military and professionals who experience a status decline, but also first-generation, often unskilled peasant workers who are not yet fully assimilated into the working-class organizations.

Although purely socioeconomic modernization theories, taken by themselves, provide an insufficient base for explaining the strength of fascist movements, they nevertheless highlight the *content* and *ideological thrust* of fascism. With the decline of normative and “mechanical” solidarity in the transition from a status-based social order to a market-based competitive and individualist system with formal bureaucracy in private corporations and public agencies, economically dislocated producer groups develop a yearning for a new community that would reconstitute normative integration under the changed conditions of industrial production. Unlike simple reactionary movements, fascism aims at an “antimodern modernism” that combines visions of an organic, hierarchical, communitarian socioeconomic order with an affirmation of the operational capabilities of modern industry, synthesized through political mass mobilization based on the latest technologies of human manipulation and organizational control.

In postindustrial capitalism, in contrast, few people long for a new encompassing solidary community and the different modes of the contemporary extreme Right therefore cannot thrive on a strong communitarian revulsion against modernity, a sentiment that is now confined to some rightist fringe sects. Both historical and contemporary extreme Right strive to draw lines between friends and foes, but such efforts are placed within different contexts. At the end of the twentieth century, racism and authoritarianism feed on different sources than communitarian antimodern modernism. In fact, the boundary-drawing efforts of the contemporary extreme Right are focused on the preservation of a particular image of capitalist modernity opposed to the further cultural transformation and pluralization of Western societies. If anywhere, a communitarian and antimodern spirit, but in an antiauthoritarian fashion, has migrated to a libertarian-anarchist Left that celebrates community through voluntary association among autonomous individuals situated outside market and bureaucratic institutions.

2. *Organization and political process.* Sophisticated modernization theories realize that economic change at best provides one necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for the advent

of powerful fascist movements. In addition, the specific configuration of political divisions and coalitions among different socioeconomic groups and classes must be taken into account to explain the strength of fascist movements. In general, fascist movements are particularly likely when two conflicts over the allocation of scarce resources coincide in the process of industrial capital accumulation. On the one hand, the urban and rural elites struggle over the distribution of the cost and the pace of industrialization. On the other, the urban elites are already simultaneously challenged by socialist working-class movements insisting on a redistribution of resources from the capital owners to workers. The new bourgeois elites, faced with a battle on two fronts against reactive agricultural and proactive working-class movements, then cannot instate liberal democracy as the institutional form to assert their own political hegemony and to resolve the redistributive conflicts. Instead, they are compelled to resort to authoritarian political management. In this context, fascism is a “second-best” alternative to pacify and demobilize the working class and to organize a compromise between urban and rural elites (Organski 1968, 29–30).

In practice, fascist parties may have gained a slightly overproportional share of the vote in the countryside, but urban groups, such as small business, white-collar employees, and also dislocated elements of the unorganized working class, really dominated the politics of fascist movements (Poulantzas 1974, 281, 288). Needless to say, fascist *regimes* in fact privileged industry over agriculture and continued the modernization of industrial capitalism, though in a corporatist rather than a liberal free market framework (Forgacs 1986, 8; Schoenbaum 1967). In this sense, it may be difficult to maintain that fascism expressed a compromise with the landed elites. Nevertheless, fascism crafted a particular *balance of socioeconomic groups* that undercut the hegemony of a liberal-democratic bourgeoisie (Andreski 1968; Poulantzas 1974).

Fascist movements thus gained strength only where, in addition to intermediate socioeconomic modernization, (1) elements of premodern agrarian elites still controlled important political institutions, such as the military, the bureaucracy, or the judiciary; (2) agrarian and bourgeois elites were unable to organize firm ties to broad mass constituencies through clientelistic or mass parties; and (3) liberal democracy had been recently introduced. In such settings, weak and divided bourgeois and right-wing parties, hampered by a state apparatus that resisted liberal democracy, quickly eroded citizens’ confidence in the viability of parliamentary democracy. The crisis of democracy was exacerbated when strong socialist movements challenged the new regime at the same time.

Linz (1976) has emphasized the importance of late democratization together with weak associative linkages between elites and masses for the rise of fascist movements. Moore (1966) has highlighted the importance of the survival of tenacious agrarian elites who had colonized the state apparatus and prevented the emergence of stable liberal democracies early on in the process of industrialization and thus created a key precondition for fascism in a later period. Among the democratic latecomers of the era immediately following World War I, it is quite

striking that only tightly organized subsocieties, such as Catholic and socialist parties together with their surrounding economic and cultural networks, successfully resisted the electoral progress of fascist movements, whenever other conditions favored the surge of the extreme Right. The failure of social democratic or Catholic mass parties to incorporate the small independent peasantry into the framework of mass politics may have facilitated the spreading of fascism in the countryside (Linz 1976, 29; Luebbert 1991, 277–85). In contrast, where the small family peasantry was tied into the progressive social democratic coalition, as in Scandinavia, or where urban and rural elites had organized elaborate clientelistic networks to the lower classes, such as in much of Latin America, fascist movements could not become dominant in the countryside. One should add, however, that the organizational encapsulation of the urban middle classes, for example, through Catholic or Protestant parties in Belgium and the Netherlands, in Switzerland, and even in Austria, were just as important for increasing a polity's resilience to fascism as the organizational penetration of the countryside.

Elite organization and dominance of the state also had an international aspect that highlights the role of nationalism and militarism so often associated with fascist movements. As Hagtvet and Rokkan (1980, 146–47) observe, fascist movements became strong in countries that had belonged to the core of the sixteenth-century world system but had subsequently entered a period of peripheralization within the geopolitics of capitalism. In such late industrializers, deliberate military-industrial alliances employed fascism as one strategy to reestablish their international position.

The political and institutional forces that affected the career of fascist movements do not play the same role in the rise of the contemporary extreme Right. Fascism grew out of the crisis of liberal parliamentarism in transition to mass democracy (Sternhell 1976, 348). “Twentieth century Fascism is a by-product of disintegrating liberal democracies” (Weber 1964, 139). But by the end of the twentieth century, when NRR and lesser extreme-rightist parties have begun to appear, premodern elites have by and large vanished and democratic regimes have proved to be lasting and economically effective. Whereas fascist mass movements thrived on their linkages to antidemocratic economic, bureaucratic, and cultural elites, the contemporary extreme Right lacks such points of access to the social and political power structures of postindustrial society almost entirely. While fascist movements drew strength from a synergism between elite and mass discontent with liberal capitalist democracy, contemporary rightist parties are almost invariably supported by powerless constituencies that have lost access to scarce resources and ties to the political elites. One similarity between the “old” fascist and the “new” Radical Right, however, remains, and this is the importance of crises as a catalyst of mobilization.

3. *Economic and national crisis.* Even in countries where structural and institutional conditions were most favorable to fascist movements, their sudden surge would have been inconceivable without the severe and sudden economic and political disruptions of depression,

inflation, and war. Fascist movements leaped forward only under economic crisis conditions, as the Italian and German cases quite clearly demonstrate. In Germany, over a period of four years of economic stabilization, the Nazi party fell from 6.6 percent in May 1924 to 2.6 percent of the popular vote in the 1928 parliamentary election. In the subsequent four years of the Great Depression, it shot up to 37.3 percent in the July 1932 parliamentary election. In other countries as well, the extreme volatility of the fascist electorate, together with that of the fascist party and movement membership, illustrates the importance of crisis conditions. Fascist success was made possible by structural and institutional arrangements, but it was directly determined by economic crisis conditions.

The contemporary extreme Right develops in an era of socioeconomic dislocation due to a structural change in production systems, the internationalization of economic competition, and the crisis of the welfare state. Yet the human suffering caused by these dislocations is mild compared to the economic and social catastrophes of the interwar period. Moreover, whereas the crisis of the 1920s and 1930s was a generalized phenomenon affecting all social groups and regions, the crisis of the 1980s and 1990s has very uneven effects sectorally and geographically. While some occupational groups, sectors, and regions continue to thrive, others within the same countries are caught up in a structural crisis. This stratification of economic and social pain restricts the share of the electorate that may be available for rightist appeals.

[Table 19.2](#) partially operationalizes the three sets of variables that influence regime outcomes in the interwar period. The share of the active population working in agriculture serves as an operational measure for modernization theories of fascism. The age of democracies by the 1930s is an indicator of the Barrington Moore-type hypothesis postulating a linkage between elite coalitions and the institutional infrastructure of democracy. Finally, the severity of the economic crisis in the interwar period operationalizes the conjunctural force of the Great Depression in bringing about antidemocratic movements.

Economic modernization is high when the agricultural share of the labor force has fallen below 25 percent, intermediate when it ranges from 25 to 50 percent, and low when it exceeds 50 percent. In fact, all countries with strong fascist mass movements and later on fascist regimes fall into the middle tier, but far from all countries with a medium-sized agriculture became fascist. Industrial modernization was a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for fascist mobilization. Where competitive democratic regimes had already been in existence for twenty years or more at the time of the most critical fascist challenge, fascist movements never could rise beyond a fairly modest level. This linkage remains true, regardless of how severe the economic dislocations of the early 1930s were. In stable democracies, party systems had sufficiently consolidated elite-mass linkages that reduced the free-floating electorate available to fascist mobilization.

Regardless of the severity of economic crisis, European countries with a small share of agriculture always remained democratic in the interwar period. Countries with a very large

agricultural population, in contrast, always developed traditional semiauthoritarian regimes, with the partial exception of Finland. In these semiauthoritarian agricultural polities, the traditional incumbent elites preempted mass mobilization by coopting challenging groups into the regime, for example, through new elite positions in the state bureaucracy or by isolating and undercutting the emerging fascist movements through strict repression. As a consequence, none of the East European countries developed fascist mass movements or fascist regimes at least until the commencement of World War II and German military supremacy in the area (cf. Luebbert 1991, 261–63).

Within the intermediate tier of economic development, fascist mass movements occurred only in countries with severe economic disruptions. Moreover, the interaction between levels of economic development and severity of economic crisis may explain the *extent* to which antidemocratic movements and regimes assumed a fascist character. Countries with a comparatively mild interwar crisis and a still relatively large agricultural sector at the very upper bound of the intermediate development tier (45 to 50 percent agrarian labor force) engaged in only very limited democratic experiments and eventually created military-authoritarian regimes. Fascist mass movements, preceding the installation of an authoritarian regime, did not manage to exceed a relatively small size in these countries (Japan, Spain). It is hence questionable whether Spain and Japan's modernizing military dictatorships can be called fascist at all.

In contrast, in countries suffering a severe economic crisis, the level of fascist mass mobilization increased only where democratic regimes were fragile and the elites were still divided

Table 19.2 Conditions for the mobilization of fascist mass movements

	<i>Competitive democracy older than 20 years</i>	<i>Competitive democracy younger than 20 years</i>
<i>Share of the active population employed in agriculture</i>	<i>Mild economic crisis, 1929–32^a</i>	<i>Severe economic crisis, 1929–32^a</i>
Less than 25 percent	Britain (A: 6; E: -17) ^b	Belgium (A: 17; E: -31)
		Netherlands (A: Switzerland (A: 21; E: -38)

(21; E: Moderate)

Between 25 and 50 percent	Czechoslovakia (A: 26; E: -36)
	Germany (A: 29; E: -42)
Denmark (A: 35; E: -9)	
Sweden (A: 35; France (A: 37; E: E: -11) -31)	Austria (A: 37; E: -39)
Norway (A: 36; E: -7)	
	Japan (A: 45– 50; E: Mild)
Ireland (A: 50; E: Mild)	Spain (A: 46; E: Italy (A: 49; E: Mild) -33)
More than 50 percent	Hungary (A: 51; E: -23)
	Portugal (A: 57; E: Mild)
	Finland (A: 68; Poland (A: 65; E: E: -16) -46)
	Yugoslavia (A: 76; E: N.D.)
	Rumania (A: 80; E: -11)
	(Bulgaria: N.D.)
	(Greece: N.D.)

Source: Merkl (1980, 776–78), except estimate of agriculture for Japan (based on Beasley 1990, 121) and agricultural occupations in Sweden (based on Flora et al. 1987, vol. II).

[a](#) Cutoff point is a decline of industrial output of 20 percent from 1929 to 1932.

[b](#) “A” refers to the percentage of the labor force working in agriculture; “E” to the economic decline from 1929–32 measured by industrial production.

over the merits of democracy. Germany, the most advanced country in this group, was

characterized by a broader fascist mass mobilization than Austria or Italy and eventually built a regime that established a more tightly knit totalitarian governance structure than the latter two. In Austria, the existence of close and polarized elite-mass linkages in the dominant Catholic and socialist subcultures reduced the level of fascist mobilization, and Catholic semidictatorship preempted a fascist strike until 1938. In Italy, the fascist movement grew around and against Mussolini (Payne 1980, 55) and never fully developed a fascist state (Kogan 1968, 16; Payne 1980, 101). Particularly in the least-developed predominantly agricultural South, fascism was no mass movement but turned into a new form of local state to which the old ruling class and local notables adapted (Forgacs 1986: 6).

An interesting country where the absence of fascism at first sight appears to defy explanation in terms of economic development, democratic institutionalization, and economic crisis is Czechoslovakia. In terms of economic modernization, age of democracy and economic crisis, it had conditions that closely resembled the German situation, yet it remained democratic until the Nazi state crushed it between September 1938 and March 1939. Closer analysis, however, reveals that Czechoslovakia did not have a homogeneous political regime. The Czech part of the country was economically as advanced as the most industrialized areas of Western Europe and built a stable democracy with close party-mass linkages. In more agrarian Slovakia, in contrast, the authoritarian and then increasingly clerico-fascist Hlinka party received 25 to 40 percent of the vote and eventually set up a fascist puppet regime under Hitler's tutelage (cf. Jelinek 1980).

The comparative analysis of fascist movements and regime formation in the interwar period by no means suggests that fascism is a historical phenomenon confined to a particular epoch in Western Europe. Fascist or protofascist regimes may emerge in other areas of the world that exhibit a similar configuration of conditions as countries with strong fascist movements in the interwar era. In this vein, some of the more agricultural new democracies in Eastern Europe as well as some Middle Eastern industrializing countries that attempt to make the transition to competitive democracies may encounter rather strong quasifascist mobilization. Both the historical fascist movements and the contemporary fascist potentials, however, involve a very different dynamic of political mobilization than the contemporary extreme Right in Western Europe under conditions of an advanced capitalist democracy.

Conclusion

The task of this chapter has been to identify the appeals of the contemporary extreme Right in the context of a theory of preference formation (demand for rightist politics) and a theory of party competition (supply of rightist alternatives) in advanced capitalist democracies. Three

variants of the extreme Right have been highlighted. First, the “master case” of the NRR combines economic promarket and political authoritarian and xenophobic messages. The NRR has a considerable potential to attract an electorally significant coalition that over-represents workers and small business. Second, the marginal case of welfare chauvinist and authoritarian mobilization is less successful because it appeals primarily to blue-collar groups. Finally, there is populist antistatist politics that is a borderline case of the extreme Right, especially where it is electorally successful. Against this backdrop, the variants of the contemporary extreme Right have been compared to the “old” European fascist Right of the interwar period. The old Right was fueled by different ideological appeals, brought together a different support coalition, and was propelled by different social, economic, and political conditions than the contemporary extreme Right in Western Europe.

On the phenomenological level, there are certainly some striking rhetorical resemblances between the fascist and the contemporary extreme Right, but important contrasts remain. Both the old and the contemporary Right share an exclusionary view of citizenship, a willingness to subscribe to conspiracy and scapegoat theories, a call for strong leadership and law and order, an intolerance of political disagreements and pluralism of ideas, and a rejection of democratic competition. But these appeals occur within contrasting contexts and discursive universes that are shaped by the unique experiences of economic and political transformation in different episodes of capitalist industrial and postindustrial development. Fascism is a matter of recently founded volatile liberal democracies still faced with a large agricultural sector, whereas the contemporary extreme Right flourishes in stable competitive democracies faced with the transition to a postindustrial or Post-Fordist economic structure.

The NRR and the populist antistatist Right have given up on corporativist economic solutions and advocate the free market. Most NRR parties accept, at least for tactical reasons, parliamentary democracy and refrain from paramilitary mobilization; and racist beliefs are now by and large divorced from nationalist and imperialist visions but primarily originate in economic fears and cultural intolerance toward the emerging multicultural world society, which is reflected in an increasing pluralization of national societies as well.

The NRR is the offspring of the postindustrialization of advanced capitalist economies, of changes within the patterns of competition within democratic party systems, and of political entrepreneurs finding new electoral “market niches” they are able to exploit with racist, authoritarian, and procapitalist slogans. In contrast, the European fascist Right of the interwar period originated in the problems of rapidly industrializing societies with weak democratic institutions, strong antidemocratic elites, and severe economic crises. The fascist rhetoric was authoritarian, communitarian, and anticapitalist, a rather different blend of appeals than that of the NRR.

These schematic and somewhat oversimplified contrasts between fascism and the NRR, as the main manifestation of the contemporary extreme Right, may help to clarify the historical

uniqueness of each phenomenon. As we said in the opening pages of this chapter, there is little analytical or political mileage to be gained by insisting on the sameness of the old and the new extreme Right. Also situating both political forces on the “right” does not mean much, because the meaning of “right” and “left” has remained contested terrain from the time of the French Revolution when these categories first entered the political discourse (Eatwell 1989, 33–34).

The propositions and materials presented in this chapter illustrate why the left/right semantics has continued to be controversial and confusing in political debates. First of all, the meaning of the spatial metaphor has varied over time and is closely intertwined with the historically changing social and political organization of industrial societies and competitive democracies. Second, the spatial metaphor, by itself, may have no symbolic or substantive content. American attitudinal research has found that citizens associate the liberal/conservative continuum, the American equivalent of “left” and “right,” with party preferences for the Democrats or the Republicans, but less with policy issue positions and views of society (Conover and Feldman 1981). A study of European issue opinions and party preferences, however, concludes that issue positions are a much better predictor of left/right self-placements than party preferences (Huber 1989). At least in Western Europe, “left” and “right” do have a substantive content for a fairly large proportion of the population.

The third and most difficult problem in the interpretation of spatial metaphors in politics is that their issue content may be multidimensional. In the historical environment of the French Revolution of 1789, for example, the Left stood for a complex cluster of positions. In political terms, it supported republicanism against monarchy; in cultural terms, it defended a secular order against the Catholic Church; and in economic terms, it called for a protection of the poor and an abolition of privileges derived from status and property (Eatwell 1989). But cultural, political, and economic conceptions of left and right may vary independently from each other. The issues that divide the Left and the Right are linked in ways contingent upon time and place.

The problems of historicity and multidimensionality make it impossible to fashion an “essentialist” definition of left and right that would provide a strict and invariant conceptual linkage between substantive issue positions and the spatial imagery. Instead, concrete historical configurations of social order and political institutions shape the cognitive process by which actors construct the linkage between issue positions and project them onto the left/right metaphorical space. As we have argued in this chapter, the critical question, then, is to develop a theory that explains the use of left and right in varying historical contexts.

An example may serve to illustrate the difference between essentialist conceptions seeking an invariant meaning of the Right, and the pragmatic, historical, and contextual approach advanced in this book. Eatwell (1989, 47) reports contemporary definitions of the political Right that single out (1) moral conservatism, (2) political authoritarianism, and (3) economic liberalism as constitutive properties of rightist beliefs. Eatwell then goes on to criticize these

definitions because certain political currents most scholars intuitively locate “on the right” do not exhibit all the elements of this definition. Fascism at least fails to include market liberalism (element 3), whereas laissez-faire market liberalism has nothing intrinsically to do with moral conservatism or political authoritarianism. Eatwell correctly concludes that we need a typology of different rightist aspirations and belief systems, but the combination of authoritarian and promarket beliefs, that is, what we have introduced as the most important incarnation of the extreme Right in advanced postindustrial democracies, does not even appear in his proposed typology. The search for general conceptions of the Left and the Right and the design of typologies, divorced from historical and contextual analysis, miss the historical specificity of left/right spatial metaphors and yield essentialist definitions of political alternatives that have little relevance for contemporary party and power relations. The worst consequence of the a historical mode of analysis is to lump all forms of authoritarian extremism under the label of fascism and thus create more confusion than enlightenment about the nature of the contemporary extreme Right.

The radical right in postsocialist Central and Eastern Europe

Comparative observations and interpretations

Michael Minkenberg

The writer Tom Wolfe is said to have observed that “the specter of fascism is constantly hovering over America but always seems to land in Europe.” With the break-up of the Soviet empire and the world of socialist (and “anti-fascist”) regimes in Eastern Europe, there seems to be even more landing ground now. But in contrast to the widespread literature on the transformation process in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE),¹ scholarly attention to right-wing radical or ultranationalist parties and movements in the region and their impact on democratic consolidation is scattered. So far, only a few essays and contributions to edited volumes have addressed the topic; most of the literature is journalistic rather than academic, and country-specific rather than comparative.² Often, analogies are drawn between the post-1989 CEE radical right and interwar fascism in terms of images of a “Weimarization” of Eastern European politics and the return of the precommunist, ultranationalist or even fascist past.³ However, with few but notable exceptions such as Russia or Croatia, these groups have very little success at the polls. Thus, another interpretation of the phenomenon argues that since Central and Eastern European party systems increasingly resemble their West European counterparts, so does the radical right, at least where it is successful electorally.⁴

Another line of thought, explored here however, suggests that the Central and Eastern European radical right after 1989 is neither a return of the pre-democratic and precommunist past, nor the equivalent of today’s Western European radical right. The dominant forces of the radical right in the transformation countries are ideologically and structurally different from most western varieties: Ideologically, they are more extreme and openly antidemocratic, organizationally they are less a party and more a social movement phenomenon. Besides country-specific histories and opportunity structures, the overall analytical frame for the CEE radical right is a multiple modernization process, i.e., a transformation from authoritarian

regimes to liberal democracies, from state-socialist to capitalist market economies, and from industrialism to postindustrialism. The resulting strains of economic and political insecurity, especially the uncompleted process of democratization and consolidation of the new regimes, provide opportunities for the radical right which present western democracies do not, but at the same time, the “transformation” of these movements into solid political parties and electoral success is limited.

The radical right in perspective: some conceptual remarks

A workable definition of right-wing radicalism in comparative perspective seems best tied to the theoretical concepts of social change that underlie most analyses of the radical right. Here, modernization theories provide some conceptually grounded criteria for such analyses. Generally, modernization can be understood as a growing autonomy of the individual (status mobility and role flexibility) and an ongoing functional differentiation of the society (segmentation and growing autonomy of societal subsystems).⁵ In this light, right-wing radicalism can be defined as the radical effort to undo such social change. The counter-concept to social differentiation is the nationally defined community, the counter-concept to individualization is the return to traditional roles and status of the individual in such a community. It is this overemphasis on, or radicalization of, images of social homogeneity that characterizes radical right-wing thinking. The historical origins of right-wing radicalism are seen to lie in the interdependence of nation-building, democratization, industrialization, and the growing importance of the natural sciences. Variants of right-wing radicalism can be distinguished according to the criteria of ideology and organizational structures (for the application of the following to CEE, see [table 4](#)).

Ideology. Right-wing radicalism is defined as a political ideology, whose core element is a myth of a homogeneous nation, a romantic and populist ultranationalism directed against the concept of liberal and pluralistic democracy and its underlying principles of individualism and universalism. This definition focuses explicitly on the idea of the nation that lies somewhere between the poles of *demos* and *ethnos*. The nationalistic myth is characterized by the effort to construct an idea of nation and national belonging by radicalizing ethnic, religious, cultural, and political criteria of exclusion and to condense the idea of nation into an image of extreme collective homogeneity. Several ideological variants can be identified according to the respective concept of nation and the exclusionary criteria applied: authoritarian-fascist, classical racist (including colonialist), xenophobic or ethnocentric, and religious-fundamentalist versions. All four variants have in common a strong quest for internal homogeneity of the nation and a populist, anti-establishment political style, but the latter two share the

characteristic of a culturally (rather than biologically) defined rejection of ethnic differences. In reality, some groups (e.g., Deutsche Volksunion (DVU) or skinheads) may spill over into several categories but generally this classification can be applied analytically to structure the field of right-wing radical actors.⁶

Structures. Starting from the concept of party or movement “families,”⁷ it is important to ask when the radical right manifests itself in the form of a movement rather than a party and how much other organizational forms of the radical right support or constrain the particular organization’s mobilization efforts.⁸ The organizational variants are distinguished by their approach to institutional political power and public resonance. Parties and electoral campaign organizations participate in elections and try to win public office. Social movement organizations try to mobilize public support as well but do not run for office, rather they identify with a larger social movement (a network of networks with a distinct collective identity) and offer interpretative frames for particular problems.⁹ Finally, smaller groups and sociocultural milieus operate relatively independent of either parties or larger social movements and do not exhibit formal organizational structures but can also be characterized as networks with links to other organizations and a collective identity which tends to be more extreme than that of the parties or movement organizations (including higher levels of violence). They represent a “micromobilization potential” for the radical right.¹⁰

An explanatory approach of the success of right-wing radicalism, which dwells on the central aspects of nationalism and modernization theory and follows earlier work by Theodore W. Adorno and Seymour M. Lipset, is provided by German sociologists Erwin Scheuch and Hans-Dieter Klingemann.¹¹ Their model is based on the assumption that the potential for radical right-wing movements exists in all industrial societies and should be understood as a “normal pathological” condition. In all fast-growing, modernizing countries there are people who cannot cope with rapid economic and cultural developments and who react to the pressures of readjustment with rigidity and closed-mindedness. These reactions can be mobilized by right-wing movements or parties offering political philosophies that promise an elimination of pressures and a simpler, better society. These philosophies do not describe any conceivable utopia but usually a romanticized version of the nation before the first large wave of modernization. That is, the two sociologists postulate that the core of the problem consists of a specifically asynchronous reading of the past, especially a dissent about the evaluation of modernity in the respective societies.

The notion that the mobilization of the radical right often occurs in times of accelerated social and cultural change provides a fruitful starting point for explaining right-wing radical mobilization in both Western Europe (before and after 1989) and Eastern Europe (after 1989). The rebirth of the radical right in the West can be understood as a result of a general modernization shift in the wake of “1968,” and specific mobilization shifts in the context of

each country's opportunity structures.¹² The modernization shift includes a transition of western industrial societies into a phase of "postindustrialism" and a new political dynamism that opened opportunities for new parties on the left and right along a new, value-based cleavage, with the latter mobilizing the "normal pathological" right-wing potential. This new radical right is not simply the extension of conservatism towards the extreme right but the product of a restructuring of the political spectrum and a regrouping of the party system. Ideologically and sociologically, it represents the right-wing pole of a new conflict axis which cuts across the established lines of partisan conflict and societal cleavages while politically, it establishes a (neo)conservatism and an explicitly antidemocratic, latently violent right-wing extremism. The new radical right is distinguished from the old by its softening of antidemocratic rhetoric, its playing according to the rules of the game, and its emphasis on ethnocentrism rather than classical biological racism while its electoral base, especially the growing number of working-class voters, signifies a new place in the changing structures of party competition and cleavages. In terms of its support, the new radical right does not simply represent "modernization losers" since most of their supporters are not "losers" in any objective sense. As shown elsewhere,¹³ these supporters constitute an ideologically motivated segment of the public that reacts to the social and cultural changes outlined above by trying to slow the effects of these changes and overcoming its own insecurities by scapegoating immigrants, leftists, and feminists as threats to the integrity of the national community. As such, these voters or supporters are modernization opponents or "subjective" modernization losers.

A closer look at the German scenario reveals some distinct East-West differences as a consequence of German unification, the ongoing process of transformation in the East, and some legacies of the past. To these belongs the official ideology of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) which contained a symbolic framework around the principles of antifascism, democracy, and socialism. But the continuous repression of an open discourse about Germany's Nazi past and the constant interpretation of fascism as a consequence of capitalism amounted to the dogma of an "antifascism by decree" rather than a truly antifascist education of the GDR's population. Not surprising, by the second half of the 1980s, a right-wing extremist youth culture developed in the GDR in conscious demarcation from the Socialist Unity Party (SED) regime.¹⁴

In general, the situation is characterized by a general fragmentation of the spectrum along with higher levels of radicalization and violence in the new *Länder* (see [table 1](#)). While the total number of adherents of the radical right fluctuates at a rather high level compared to

[Table 1](#) Development of the German radical right groups (upper row) and members (lower row) 1990–1999 (Reports of the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution)

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Militant right-wing extremists, skinheads ^a				4	1	3	5	3	5	5
		4200	6400	5600	5400	6200	6400	7600	8200	9000
Neonazis	27	30	33	27	33	43	48	40	41	49
	1400	2100	1400	2450	2940	1980	2420	2400	2400	2200
Political parties				8	4	4	3	3	3	3
				55130	45400	35900	33500	34800	39000	37000
“National-freiheitliche”/DVU	3	3	3							
	22000	24000	26000	26000	20000	15000	15000	15000	18000	17000
“National-demokratische”/NPD	5	5	5							
	7300	6700	5300	5000	4500	4000	3500	4300	6000	6000
“Republikaner”				23000	20000	16000	15000	15500	15000	14000
others	34	38	41	40	45	56	52	63	65	77
	2900	3900	4000	3120	3830	3560	2660	4300	4500	4200
<i>Sum total^b (minus multiple memberships)</i>	<i>32200</i>	<i>39800</i>	<i>41900</i>	<i>64500</i>	<i>56600</i>	<i>46100</i>	<i>45300</i>	<i>48400</i>	<i>53600</i>	<i>51400</i>

Sources: Michael Minkenberg, *Die neue radikale Rechte im Vergleich. USA, Frankreich, Deutschland* (Opladen/Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1998), 301, table 7.19; Bundesministerium des Inneren, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 1999* (Bonn 2000), 18.

Notes:

^a After 1995, militants of the extreme right included manifestly violent persons and those with sufficient evidence of a tendency towards violence.

^b Beginning with the 1994 Report (i.e., 1993 data), the “Republikaner” were included, thus the dramatic increase of total membership.

pre-1989 West Germany (when total membership was around 25,000), the membership in radical right-wing parties—where East Germans are clearly underrepresented¹⁵—has significantly declined from its all-time high in 1993. But in the late 1990s, signified by the elections in Saxony-Anhalt in April 1998, when the DVU entered the state parliament with 12.9 percent of the vote, there has been an upswing for the radical right among East German voters. In the new *Länder*, the more extreme DVU receives more support than Die Republikaner (REP), although both parties are West German imports. The DVU attempts to appeal to the GDR’s past by combining in its electoral campaigns social and nationalist messages and cultivating the East German distinctness. This is also accomplished by the much smaller, but well organized and more extreme Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands (NPD) which behaves more like a political movement than a political party. Organizationally, there is a big difference between the REP and the DVU since the DVU is largely run by one man, its wealthy leader Gerhard Frey, and has no identifiable intraparty organizational structures. There are also striking East-West differences among the supporters and voters of these parties. While both the REP and the DVU enjoy a disproportionate support among male and working-class voters, East German adherents of the parties of the radical right are much younger than the REP voters in the West.

In the non-party sector of militant and violent right-wing extremists, the number of individuals has increased since unification, reaching a record-level of 9,000 at the end of the decade, with almost half of them in the eastern *Länder*. Considering that only one-fifth of the German population lives in the East, this is a remarkable overrepresentation.¹⁶ From the early nineties on, movement-type activities and subcultural milieus of the extreme right flourished in the East, especially among younger East Germans. One could observe the emergence of cliques and a “structural integration” of the extreme right-wing scene by various neo-Nazi organizations.¹⁷ This trend was accompanied by a dramatic increase in right-wing violence in the second half of the nineties, again with the center of gravity in the East. When measuring

official reports of right-wing violent acts in proportion to population size, all five new *Länder* have consistently topped the list over the past years.¹⁸

Finally, recent survey data add to the picture of a higher degree of radicalization in the East (see [table 2](#)). Whereas 13 percent of all Germans adhere to a right-wing radical agenda, this figure is significantly higher in the East than in the West. But while there are no East-West differences regarding nationalistic, pro-Nazi and anti-Semitic attitudes, East Germans tend to be more authoritarian, xenophobic, and “welfare chauvinistic” than West Germans, the latter defined as the refusal to share the nation’s wealth with “foreigners.” This means that we are not dealing with the return of the Nazi past but a reaction to the radical transformation of East German politics, society, and economy in terms of the aforementioned rigidity and “normal pathology” in fast-changing societies.

The radical right in central and eastern Europe: text

The overview of East-West differences within Germany leads to some questions regarding the radical right in Central and Eastern Europe as a whole. They concern the emergence and strength of right-wing party formation in comparison to movement-type or other non-party groups; the nature of the radical right as a response to the process of transformation or the return of old, deep-seated traditions; the degree of ideological extremism, especially antidemocratic (anti-system) and racist attitudes; and the support patterns.¹⁹

In general, the mobilization potential for the radical right in Eastern Europe seems rather large but not significantly larger than in western democracies.²⁰ Survey data reveal sizable currents of nationalism, anti-Semitism and right-wing self-identification among the public of various Eastern European countries (see [table 3](#)). Patriotic or nationalist attitudes are only slightly higher in the East than in the West but not as high as in the United States. Anti-Semitism is relatively strong in Poland as are irredentist feelings regarding “lost territories.”²¹ In general, there is a greater concern among East Europeans over territorial issues, especially in Hungary, Poland, and Romania, where sizable ethnic minorities live in neighboring countries, and/or a large part of the former territory was lost after the Second World War. On the other hand, anti-migration feelings seem rather low compared to western countries, a result of the general direction of migration in Europe from East to West while there is widespread resentment of the largest regional minority, the Roma, which, except for Poland, ranges between 5 percent (Hungary) and 9 percent (Romania) of the population in Central and Southeast Europe.²² These trends occur in the context of a declining trust in democracy and low levels of confidence in parliament and political parties. For example, between 1993 and 1996, the proportion of Romanian respondents who would support an authoritarian “iron-hand

government” rose from 27 percent to about 33 percent.²³ And between 1991 and 1995, the proportion of those satisfied with the present working of democracy shrank from 34 percent to 21 percent in Hungary, 46 percent to 14 percent in Bulgaria, 62 percent to 27 percent in Lithuania, and 18 percent to 7 percent in Russia. Only in the Czech Republic and Poland, were the trends reversed.²⁴ In sum, it seems that the attitudinal profile of the Eastern European mobilization potential for the radical right is shaped in rather classic terms by high levels of nationalism mixed with anti-Semitism and territorial concerns and fed by sizable anti-system affects. This, in fact, resembles the situation in Weimar Germany. But how do these attitudes translate into political behavior?

Table 2 The right-wing radical attitude potential in Germany (in percent) 1998

	<i>Germany</i>	<i>West</i>	<i>East</i>
<i>In ideological components</i>			
Authoritarianism	11	10	16
Nationalism	13	13	13
Xenophobia	15	14	20
Welfare chauvinism	26	23	39
Pro-Naziism	6	6	5
Anti-Semitism	6	6	5
<i>In occupational groups</i>			
Unemployed	14	7	22
Workers	19	18	24
Employees	8	7	12
Civil Servants	2	1	11
Self-employed	12	12	15
Non-working	15	15	18
<i>Total</i>	13	12	17

Source: Richard Stöss, *Rechtsextremismus im vereinten Deutschland* (Bonn: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 1999), 30, 35.

To begin with, radical right-wing parties exist in almost all of the transformation countries, but their electoral success varies greatly from less than 1 percent in some countries to more than 10 percent in Russia, Slovenia, Slovakia, and, most recently, in Romania. At first glance, most of these parties exhibit clear tendencies of authoritarian and antidemocratic orientations, justifying their classification as “fascist” in the sense outlined above, and of racist and/or anti-

Semitic attitudes with blurred lines between biological racism and ethnocentrism. An overview of these parties and other groups and movements that do not fall into the category of political party is presented in [table 4](#). In Russia, the Liberal Democratic party (LDPR) dominates the right. Its leader Vladimir Zhirinowsky entertained relationships with the French intellectuals of the *Nouvelle Droite* as well as with Jean-Marie Le Pen and Gerhard Frey.²⁵ Other groups such as the Russian National Unity (RNU) supporting Russian revolutionary ultranationalism, the Russian National Assembly (RNA), and the Front of National Rescue (FNR), an alliance of about 40 parties and movements, failed to attract a significant number of votes. However, they claim to have more members than the LDPR; estimates put the LDPR at some 50,000 members while the other groups range at around 120,000. Whether Gennadii Zyuganov's Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF) by far the most important of today's Russian parties, with its blend of Russian imperialism and nationalist reinterpretation of Stalinism falls into the category of the radical right, as some observers argue,²⁶ is debatable. After all, nationalism and xenophobia are not core elements of the CPRF's ideology although contacts between Zyuganov and ultranationalist and anti-Semitic organizations are documented.²⁷

[Table 3](#) The radical right-wing mobilization potential in East and West (early 1990s data)

	<i>L-R (1)</i>	<i>Patriot. (2)</i>	<i>Right or wrong (3)</i>	<i>Irrident (4)</i>	<i>Control (5)</i>	<i>Author (6)</i>	<i>Anti-semit (7)</i>
USA	—	88	55	—	—	—	6
UK	—	72	56	20	79	—	14
F	—	64	37	12	86	—	—
E	—	70	46	48	66	—	—
I	—	69	39	29	84	—	—
GR	—	72	28	39	70	—	—
D-W	—	74	31	43	70	—	26
D-E	—	69	16	25	70	—	—
CS	31	70	28	39	65	17/26*	14/33*
H	13	70	30	68	68	27	11
PL	20	75	47	60	58	26	34
BG	23	75	53	52	38	—	9
R	9	60	42	22	45	45	22
UR	—	62	36	24	31	46	22
LI	26	63	39	46	54	23	10

Sources: Klaus von Beyme, "Rechtsextremismus in Osteuropa," in Jürgen Falter et al., eds., *Rechtsextremismus. Ergebnisse und Perspektiven der Forschung*, special Issue of *Politische Vierteljahresschrift* 27/1996 (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1996), 429, 438; Gert Pickel, "Tendenzen der Demokratisierung und politischen Unterstützung in Osteuropa," in Gert Pickel et al., eds., *Demokratie. Entwicklungsformen und Erscheinungsbilder im interkulturellen Vergleich* (Frankfurt/Oder and Bamberg: VDF, 1997), 115.

Questions:

- (1) Right-wing self placement in 1992/1993 (in %, EU average 20%)
- (2) "I am very patriotic" (% agree)
- (3) "We should fight for our country, right or wrong" (% agree)
- (4) "There are parts in neighboring countries which belong to us" (% agree)
- (5) "We should increase the control of access to our country" (% agree)
- (6) Authoritarianism
- (7) (negative opinions about Jews).

Countries: UK: United Kingdom, F: France, E: Spain, I: Italy, GR: Greece, D-W: West Germany, D-E: East Germany, CS: Czechoslovakia (*Czech Republic/Slovakia), H: Hungary, PL: Poland, BG: Bulgaria, R: Russia, UR: Ukraine, LI: Lithuania.

Table 4 Dominant actors in the Central and Eastern European radical right-wing family (after 1989): Russia (R), Romania (RO), Poland (PL), Czech Republic (CR), Hungary (H)

	<i>Party/campaign organization</i>	<i>Social movement organization (SMO)</i>	<i>Subcultural milieu</i>
Fascist-authoritarian right	PL: ROP		
	R: LDPR	R: Pamyat	R: Werewolves
	RO: PRM	R: RNU	skinheads
		RO: MPR	
		RO: PDN	
		PL: PNR	
Racist-ethnocentrist right	PL: KPN	RO: Vatra	skinheads

H: MIÉP	Romaneasca
CR: SPR-RSC	PL:PWN-PSN
RO: PSM	PL: Radio Maryja
RO: PUNR	
Religious-fundamentalist right	PL: ZChN
	PL: Radio Maryja
	PL: LPR

Note: KPN: Konfederacja Polski Niepodleglej (Confederation for an Independent Poland); LDPR: Liberal-Democratic Party of Russia; LPR: Liga Polskich Rodzin (League of the Polish Family); MIÉP: Magyar Igazság és Élet Pártja (Hungarian Justice and Life Party); MPR: Miscarea pentru Romania (Movement for Romania); PDN: Partidul Dreapta Nationala (Party of the National Right); PNR: (Polish National Rebirth); PRM: Partidul Romania Mare (Party for Greater Romania); PSM: Partidul Socialist al Muncii (Socialist Workers Party); PUNR: Partidul Unitatii Romane (Party of Romanian Unity); PWN-PSN: Polska Wspólnota Narodowa: Polskie Stronnictwo Narodowe (Polish Nationalist Union); RNU: Russian National Unity; ROP: Ruch Odbudowy Polski (Reconstruction of Poland); SPR-RSC: Sdruzení pro republiku—Republikánská strana Československa (Republicans); Vatra Romaneasca: Romanian Cradle; ZChN: Zjednoczenie Chrzes'cijan'sko—Narodowe (Christian National Union).

A similar situation exists in Romania, where easily identifiable right-wing radical parties coexist with the successor party of Ceausescu's Communist party. Among the former are the Party for Greater Romania (PRM) and the Party of Romanian Unity (PUNR). The PRM, founded in 1991 by Eugen Barbu and Corneliu Vadim Tudor and led by Tudor, claimed 35,000 members in the mid-nineties and is characterized by an openly anti-Semitic and xenophobic, i.e., particularly anti-Hungarian and anti-Roma, ideology coupled with an antidemocratic and anti-western doctrine derived from a glorification of the Partida Nationala, a nationalist movement of the 1830s, the fascist ideology of the Iron Guards, and the communist past under Ceaușescu. In the 2000 presidential and parliamentary elections, Tudor and his party attracted more votes than ever. The party is now the second largest in parliament, and Tudor managed to enter the second round of the presidential elections where he received one-third of the vote against Iliescu (see [table 5](#)). By comparison, PUNR, founded in 1990 but recently dissolved, seemed slightly less extreme. They were also chauvinist, dirigist, and particularly anti-Hungarian, but not as openly anti-Semitic and antidemocratic as PRM. The Socialist Workers party (PSM), which succeeded the Romanian Communist party but fares less well than other postcommunist parties in CEE, fuses nationalist with socialist ideas and openly rejects democracy and western values and culture. All three parties were temporary members of an informal majority coalition from 1992 to 1994 under the leadership of the Party of Romanian Social Democracy.²⁸

Similarly, the Polish situation is characterized by a high degree of fluidity which often leads

to a restructuring of the party system and a reorganization and renaming of individual

Table 5 Electoral performance of the Central and East European radical right: Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Russia

<i>Country and date</i>	<i>Election type</i>	<i>Candidate/party</i>	<i>Votes (in %; bold if seats)^a</i>
<i>Poland</i>			
1990	Pres. ^b	Leszek Moczulski (KPN)	2.6
1991	Parl. ^c	KPN	7.4
		ZChN and allies	8.7
1993	Parl.	KPN	5.8
		ZChN and allies	6.3
1997	Parl.	[AWS] ^d	[33.8]
2001	Parl.	LPR	7.9
<i>Czech Rep.</i>			
1990 ^e	Parl.	—	—
1992 ^e	Parl.	SPR-RSC	7.5
1992	Parl.	SPR-RSC	6.0
1996	Parl.	SPR-RSC	8.0
1998	Parl.	SPR-RSC	—
<i>Hungary</i>			
1990	Parl.	MIÉP	—
1994	Parl.	MIÉP	1.6
1998	Parl.	MIÉP	5.5
<i>Russia</i>			
1991	Pres. ^b	V. Zhirinowsky (LDPR)	7.8
1993	Parl.	LDPR	22.9
1995	Parl.	LDPR	12.0
1996	Pres. ^b	V. Zhirinowsky (LDPR)	5.7
1999	Parl.	Zhirinowsky Bloc	6.0
2000	Pres	V. Zhirinowsky	2.7
<i>Romania</i>			
1991	Parl.	—	—
1992	Parl. ^c	PUNR, PRM, PSM	14.6

1996	Parl. ^c	PUNR, PRM, PSM	11.4 ^f
1996	Pres. ^b	Gheorghe Funar (PUNR)	3.2
		Corneliu Vadim Tudor (PRM)	4.7
2000	Pres. ^b	Corneliu Vadim Tudor (PRM)	28.3
2000	Parl. ^c	PRM	19.5

Notes:

^a Most East European electoral systems are based on the principle of proportional representation with a threshold of 4 or 5 percent (in Poland, electoral alliances such as AWS needed at least 8 percent to enter parliament)

^b Presidential election, first round only

^c Parliamentary elections, first chamber only

^d An alliance of the moderate right (Solidarność) and radical right (ROP, ZChN, Radio Maryja)

^e Czech part of the CSFR's national assembly

^f No seats for PSM.

parties. There were six radical right-wing parties in Poland in the early 1990s but none of them entered parliament in the first elections.²⁹ The most important are the National Front Party of the Fatherland (Stronnictwo Narodowe 'Ojczyzna' [SN]) which advocates an explicit anti-Semitic and anti-German platform and is based on the nationalist ideas of Roman Dmowski of the interwar period,³⁰ and the Confederation for an Independent Poland (Konfederacja Polski Niepodleglej [KPN]) which is ideologically modeled on the ideas of Pilsudski. Finally, as a Polish peculiarity, there is a clerical-nationalist party, the Christian National Union (Zjednoczenie Chrześcijańsko-Narodowe [ZChN]) which advocates that Catholic dogma should be the basis of Polish politics and which claims to embrace the interests of ethnic Poles in all of Eastern Europe.³¹ Unlike the previous two country cases, the Polish radical right parties have only a small following owing to the lack of "a persuasive target against which to mobilize constituents."³² However, with the growing importance of accession to the European Union (EU), the Polish radical right, like that in the following two country cases, might very well get such a persuasive target. This is shown by the results of the most recent parliamentary election in September 2001, which combine the elements of fluidity in the party system on the one hand, and of stability and even some growth in support for the far right on the other. While older right-wing parties such as the KPN and ROP virtually disappeared, a new party—the fundamentalist League of the Polish Family LPR (Liga Polskich Rodzin)—that is allied to Radio Maryja and oriented to the ideas of Roman Dmowski, scored 7.9 percent of the vote (see [table 5](#)). Like the right-wing populist Self-Defense of Andzrej Lepper (Samoobrona) which gained 10.2 percent in 2001, the LPR mobilized their electorate around

the issue of opposition to Poland's accession to the EU.

In the Czech Republic, the most important party on the radical right is the “Republicans” (Sdruzení pro republiku—Republikánská strana Československa, [SPR-RSC]), founded in 1989 and led by Miroslav Sládek. Modeled on the Russian LDPR and the German Republikaner, this openly xenophobic party is the only Czech party that does not accept the secession of Slovakia. Its dreams of an “ethnically pure” greater Czechoslovakia (comprising only Slavic people) are combined with visions of a paternalistic and corporatist, i.e., authoritarian, state.³³ In 1994, the party had about 25,000 members, thus making it the third largest party in the Czech Republic and, compared with the German Republikaner or DVU, an unusually strong radical right-wing party.³⁴ Nonetheless, in the 1998 parliamentary elections, the SPR-RNC lost all their seats.

The Hungarian radical right is dominated by István Czurka's Hungarian Justice and Life party (Magyar Igazság és Élet Pártja [MIÉP]) which split in 1993 from the conservative Hungarian Democratic Forum (Magyar Demokrata Fórum) [MDF]), one of the major players in the 1989–90 velvet revolution. The MIÉP espouses anti-Semitic and biological-nativist views and advocates a recovery of the old Hungarian territory that now belongs to Romania, Ukraine, and Slovakia, thus refusing to accept the Treaty of Trianon of 1919 which settled the current borders between Hungary and its neighbors. Although Czurka claims that he is not anti-Semitic, he shares with openly anti-Jewish neo-Nazis the goal to expose what he sees as a worldwide Judeo-liberal-cosmopolitan conspiracy, including the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and George Soros.³⁵

An overview of the electoral fate of these parties or their candidates reveals signs of an electoral strength of the Eastern European radical right which is comparable to that of the Western European new radical right (see [table 5](#)). Obviously, these parties are not temporary protest organizations, but can attract a significant portion of the electorate over several elections. When looking at the social characteristics of this electorate, one finds a mix of working-class and rural support in addition to specific regional variations. In Poland as in Hungary, the radical right is stronger in the East than in the West, i.e., in regions that lag in economic development. Data from the Czech Republic show that in 1996, working-class voters constituted 35 percent of the Republicans' electorate, more than in any other party's electorate.³⁶ Thus, the Czech case resembles strongly the Western European situation where by the mid-to-late 1990s, the electorates of the new radical right contained a higher proportion of workers than in any other party. The Romanian case deviates from this pattern since only the PSM can count on lower-class support, mainly in rural areas whereas the PRM is supported largely by medium-to-higher status strata and has a disproportionately young electorate with 90 percent of their voters under 40 years.³⁷

In the movement sector, the group Pamiat (Remembrance) played an important role in the last days of the Soviet Union. A right-wing social movement organization led by Dimitri

Vasiliev (who since 1992 has portrayed himself as a fascist and monarchist), Pamyat was formed in the mid-1980s and began to fragment after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. But many of the current leaders and activists of the Russian radical right went through Pamyat in the late 1980s and early 1990s.³⁸ One of the numerous Nazi organizations in Russia, the Werewolves, officially supports the National Socialist ideology but disintegrated when its leaders were arrested in 1994. In the mid-1990s, experts counted some 30 extreme right organizations in Russia, with the RNU the biggest and best organized. According to one estimate, the RNU has attracted around 6,000 hard core, armed members and 30,000–50,000 active non-member supporters.³⁹ In Romania, too, there is a visible and active movement sector. Most prominent is Vatra[®] Romaneasca, the Romanian Cradle, made infamous by its violent activities against ethnic minorities, especially the sizable Hungarian group, right after the fall of Ceausescu's regime. Vatra[®] Romaneasca has been considered an extra-parliamentary arm of PUNR.⁴⁰ Other groups include the Movement for Romania (MPR), the first movement to openly acknowledge its descent from the Iron Guard, and the Party of the National Right which adopted the Iron Guard's statutes and organizational structures (including identical uniforms) and favors an ethnocratic, authoritarian state. Though neither group is registered as a party, both court support especially among Romania's youth.⁴¹

The Polish case also reveals a strong and partially violent movement sector of groups that act and mobilize support in the pre-institutional arenas. One of the larger groups is the neofascist movement Polish Nationalist Union (Polska Wspólnota Narodowa: Polskie Stronnictwo Narodowe [PWN-PSN]) led by Boleslav Tejkovski, which numbers about 4,000 members and became notorious internationally with its attacks on Jewish property and the Catholic Church in 1991 and 1992.⁴² Another right-wing movement organization is the Party of National Rebirth (PNR), the major fascist organization in Poland, under the leadership of 30-year-old Adam Gmureczyk, PNR set up local branches in many cities, including Lodz, Krakow, and Warsaw.⁴³ Finally, since the mid-1990s, the ultra-Catholic radio station Radio Maryja has attracted millions of listeners and followers, mainly poor retired workers, the unemployed, and all kinds of "transformation losers," with its mix of religious, anti-modernist, nationalist, xenophobic, at times also anti-Semitic, messages. Although not a political party, Radio Maryja nonetheless scored a significant political success in the late 1990s by finding parliamentary allies in several representatives of the Solidarność group Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność AWS in the Sejm.⁴⁴ Beyond these organizations, a growing right-wing extremist scene of violent groups and Nazi skinheads is evident across Poland—in many towns, meetings of several hundred militants are rather frequent events, as are anti-Semitic or fascist graffiti on buildings.⁴⁵ Also in the Czech Republic, there is a visible scene of violence-prone, right-wing extremists who by targeting Roma people (see above) can count on some sympathy from their fellow citizens. As in Poland and in Hungary, the Roma were/are the least-liked ethnic

minority in Czechoslovakia (followed by Arabs, blacks, Asians, Russians, and Jews).⁴⁶ Between 1990 and 1998, a total of 21 people have died in the Czech Republic in racist attacks which, considering the country's population, sharply exceeds the level of racist violence in neighboring Germany.⁴⁷

Taken together, these sparse figures suggest an active and violent subcultural milieu of right-wing extremism in Central and Eastern Europe. That it unfolds under the conditions of transformation implies a particular dynamism of this development towards growth and expansion rather than a downswing or disappearance.

The radical right in Central and Eastern Europe: context

If radical right-wing mobilization is a reaction to intense modernization processes and resulting insecurities, as argued above, then we should have expected, 10 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of state socialism, an active and growing scene of radical right-wing parties and movements in Eastern Europe. But the data yield mixed results. The party sector is not as strong as in some western democracies (especially France, Austria, Belgium), and the militancy of the movement sector is less than in others (especially Germany, Sweden, and the United States). Is Eastern Europe only “catching up” with the West, or is right-wing radicalism in the East a genuinely different variant? Several reasons suggest that the latter is closer to the truth, and they concern the nature of the transformation process, traditions of nationalism, the political culture, and the new cleavage structures and emerging party systems.

The transformation process in Eastern Europe is more far-reaching, deeper, and complex than the current modernization process in the West.⁴⁸ First, it includes the collapse not only of political regimes but also of their legitimating ideologies. Thus, a simple return to left-wing or socialist ideas as a recourse by the “losers” of this modernization process is not a viable option. Right-wing groups or those that combine socialist with nationalist ideas can benefit from this constellation. Second, the democratization of regimes is accompanied by an economic and social transformation that touches all aspects of life (thus making it different from earlier waves of democratization or “redemocratization” as in German and Italy after the Second World War). The complexity of the transformation process produces large “transformation costs” which can benefit the radical right. Third, the exchange of entire social systems causes high levels of social disorientation and ambivalence towards the new order. Again, political entrepreneurs who offer simple solutions and appeal to the people or nation rather than a particular social class or universalist vision of progress have a competitive advantage. In sum, these transformation-induced opportunity structures, which lie behind the institutional settings

of liberal democracy as they are put into place in most Eastern European countries, must be seen as generally favorable to the radical right. It is also clear that these processes differ fundamentally from the western transition from industrial to postindustrial society, one of the key context factors for the emergence of a new, or postindustrial, radical right (see above). However, the transformation process is still more complicated because it is a multiple modernization process, i.e., the transition to liberal democracy and market capitalism, along with elements of change from industrialism to postindustrialism, which often involves aspects of simultaneous nation- and state-building as well. Thus, the radical right combines postindustrial aspects such as the use of modern mass media and the decreasing role of mass (party) organizations with the ideologies of a particular past, i.e., the mix of traditional nationalism in the East and the legacy of state socialism. Organizationally, they belong to a new type of party that has emerged in postcommunist Eastern Europe: “associations of sympathizers run by a political elite and professional party apparatus as tertiary sector organizations providing political services for a loosely constituted electoral clientele.”⁴⁹

Unlike many cases of western nation-building, most Eastern European nations did not emerge in conjunction with a bourgeois revolution, a strong liberal movement, or the establishment of liberal democracy. In general, the western type of nation can be characterized as a “political nation” as opposed to a cultural or even an ethnically/racially defined nation. As is well known, the German path to national unity and the subsequent national identity diverges from the western model in its heavy emphasis on the German *Kulturnation* that after unification in 1871, resulted in the myth of an ethnic community of Germans, or *Volksnation*. Its legacies today are, among other things, the outdated citizenship laws of 1913, the absence of an immigration policy despite the fact of immigration, and the problem for the new radical right to find its political space between the moderate right, which clings to the *völkisch* concept of the German nation, and the openly racist and antidemocratic extremists.⁵⁰

If the German experience is that of a late nation-building and a mix between political and cultural nationalism, then the Eastern European model is that of a very late or blocked nation-building and the prevalence of cultural and ethnic nationalism.⁵¹ Even as the western process of nation-building entered a phase of consolidation and liberalization (the last third of the nineteenth century), almost all of Eastern Europe was subject to multinational empires, i.e., the Hapsburg, the Russian, and the Ottoman empires. Nation-building here was always in the style of the *risorgimento*,⁵² directed against the existing order and dependent upon its collapse. The dates of national independence were 1881 for Romania, 1882 for Serbia, 1908 for Bulgaria, and 1919 for all the others. In sum, the dominant pattern was (a) the emergence of a national identity without the nation-state, i.e., an ethnic nationhood, and (b) the establishment of a nation-state along with democratization after the first World War, i.e., in the context of the first wave of democratization.⁵³ Except for Czechoslovakia, in the interwar period all Eastern European nations experienced a relapse into authoritarianism. And apart from the brief

democratic *intermezzo* between 1944 and 1948, this constellation was extended after the Second World War with the forced transition from a right-wing to a left-wing dictatorship and the “dissolution” of the nation-state into an international socialist order.

Against this background, the development of political cultures in Central and Eastern Europe diverges from the West. What has been found for the intra-German situation after unification,⁵⁴ seems to hold true for Europe in general, too. Only the Czech Republic exhibited early signs of a civic culture with relatively high and stable levels of “system affect”, underpinned by pluralistic principles.⁵⁵ Beyond significant intraregional differences, the political cultures of Central and Eastern Europe, shaped by socialization in the socialist past and by the rigors of the present transition, tend to be characterized by a lower acceptance of liberal market principles than in the West (a commitment to somewhat socialist and egalitarian values), by dissatisfaction with the transformation process and its outcomes, and by what Ronald Inglehart calls values of “traditional authority” (as opposed to secular-rational authority) and “survival values” (as opposed to values of well-being).⁵⁶

Because participation cannot be equated with liberalism and tolerance, occasional outbreaks of protest activities in Eastern Europe are not necessarily indicators of a participatory political culture. Instead, and in sharp contrast to the democratization of (West) Germany after 1945, the anticommunist thrust of the 1989 upheavals has automatically rehabilitated the nation-state in Eastern Europe. Thus, nationalist rhetoric and the ethnic concept of nationhood are widespread among the political class and the public and are not a fringe phenomenon, which explains why, despite the enormous pressures and insecurities of the transformation process, and the potential for radical right-wing mobilization, the ultranationalist messages receive only limited support from the voters. This also helps explain why the radical right in Central and Eastern Europe, in order to distinguish itself from the nationalist but also nominally democratic parties of the moderate right and the rest of the political spectrum, advocates clearly antidemocratic and anti-system visions of a new political order. Usually, theirs is a nationalism explicitly derived from the myth of an organic, ethnically pure nation and from the glorification of authoritarian regimes of the not so distant national past.

Finally, the Central and Eastern European cleavage structures and party system differ markedly from those in western democracies. In the West, the new radical right is situated at the right-wing pole of a New Politics cleavage that cuts across the older class-and religion-based cleavages.⁵⁷ In Central and Eastern Europe, all cleavages are new (or renewed) and must be seen in the context of the transformation process. If Lipset and Rokkan’s “freezing hypothesis” was already questionable for western party systems in the 1970s and 1980s, then it is even more difficult to apply to Eastern Europe simply because there were hardly any stable party systems in the 1920s that could have frozen. Traditional cleavages re-emerged only in those countries where the most dominant conflict, that between supporters of the old regime and supporters of the new order, was settled and democratic consolidation had advanced.⁵⁸

Accordingly, Klaus von Beyme identifies eight cleavages in the East but hastens to add that the older, presocialist cleavages (urban-rural, state-church, monarchist-republican) have been eroded by state-socialist modernization policies.⁵⁹ This leaves four others: center-periphery and workers-owners, which von Beyme suggests are irrelevant for the radical right, and westerners-indigenists and internationalists-nationalists, which are better seen as two sides of the same coin than two distinct cleavages.⁶⁰

Most research on party systems in postsocialist Central and Eastern Europe identifies some central cleavages such as the one between forces that promote the ideas of market liberalism and those that favor political redistribution, or between modernizers and opponents of modernization.⁶¹ But there is disagreement about the number and characteristics of other cleavages unrelated to the first one, and where to situate parties of the radical right. For example, Plasser et al. suggest considering two more cross-cutting cleavages, one between transformation losers and transformation winners and another between orientations of self-reliance and the need for guidance. But “self-reliers”, transformation winners, and market liberals do not appear sufficiently distinct as a basis for different cleavages. On the other hand, Glaesner suggests condensing all conflict models into one between “structural conservatives” (including ex-communists, nationalists, social populists, etc.) and “modernizers” (market liberals, forum parties, etc.).⁶² This approach, however, oversimplifies the conflict structure and overlooks the variety of cleavages within and across countries. Thus, the idea of a dual modernization conflict along a socio-economic axis and along a sociocultural or value-related axis seems more persuasive because of the distinct logical and historical differences of the two cleavages.⁶³ For the case of Central and Eastern Europe, Kitschelt and collaborators have adopted his earlier model to the context of transformation and redefined the two main cleavages as one between market liberals and social protectionists on the one hand, and secular libertarians and religious authoritarians on the other.⁶⁴ When applied to the radical right in the five Central and Eastern European countries under discussion here, this model suggests situating the parties at the authoritarian end of the libertarian-authoritarian axis and closer to the state end of the market liberal and social protectionist axis. So far, however, the evidence is not conclusive. While Kitschelt et al. show that in Poland and Hungary the parties in question are situated at the far end of the authoritarian scale (with the exception of the Czech SPR-RSC) but in the center of the protectionism scale, others find these parties at the far end of both cleavages.⁶⁵ This, in fact, is congruent with the findings for the new radical right in western democracies, but it does not determine the degree of electoral success of these parties. Alternative models of institutional opportunity structures such as electoral systems do not explain much by themselves, either.⁶⁶ Therefore, it is important to consider political traditions such as nationalism, the particular ideologies of the Central and Eastern European radical right in comparison to that of other actors, and the degree of radicalization and

militancy beyond the party spectrum as potentially limiting or reinforcing factors.

Conclusions

Studying the radical right in transformation countries in Central and Eastern Europe not only resembles shooting at a moving target but also shooting with clouded vision. Because of the region's distinct history both before and during the days of state socialism, in particular its lack of democratic experience and practice, and because of the dynamism and openness of the transformation process, resulting, among other things, in unstable political alliances and a fluid party system, the categories and approaches of analyzing the radical right in western democracies must be applied with caution. Generally, a radical right springing from populist and antidemocratic ultranationalism has emerged in most of these countries, and the socio-economic and political conditions for its appearance seem rather favorable. But so far, these groups have had only limited electoral success so that at the moment, the radical right is no serious threat to the transformation and democratization process in Eastern Europe.

It could be shown that the dominant forces of the radical right in these countries are ideologically and structurally different from most western varieties. Organizationally, the Central and Eastern European radical right is less developed than its western counterpart, a fate it shares with most other political parties in the region. Thus an analysis of the phenomenon must take into account both its party-type and its movement-type characteristics. Such a combined look reveals that the party sector—measured in both electoral and organizational strength—is not as strong as in most Western European democracies, in particular Austria, Belgium, or France. On the other hand, the militancy of the movement sector is hard to assess but does not seem as high as in Germany, Sweden, or the United States. Moreover, given that the most robust right-wing radical parties in terms of membership and votes have emerged in Romania, Hungary, and—until 1998—in the Czech Republic suggests there is no direct relationship between the degree of democratic consolidation and the strength of these parties. Ideologically, the radical right in Central and Eastern Europe is more reverse oriented than its western counterpart, i.e., more antidemocratic and more militant. In most countries where democracy is not yet “the only game in town” (Linz), opportunities exist for the radical right that are preempted in the West. But at the same time, the political space for radical right-wing parties is rather limited because nationalism informs the ideology of most dominant actors and because historical fascism is largely discredited. Therefore, the behavior of elites and the political class seems more crucial for the further development of the radical right than such institutional arrangements as electoral hurdles or laws against racism.

Notes

- [1](#) “Central and Eastern Europe” and “Eastern Europe” are used interchangeably throughout.
- [2](#) See, e.g., Luciano Cheles et al., eds., *The Far Right in Western and Eastern Europe*. 2nd ed. (London/New York: Longman, 1995); Peter Merkl and Leonard Weinberg, eds., *The Revival of Right-Wing Extremism in the Nineties* (London: Frank Cass, 1997); Sabrina Ramet, ed., *The Radical Right in Central and Eastern Europe* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999); Paul Hainsworth, ed., *The Politics of the Extreme Right: From the Margins to the Mainstream* (London: Pinter, 2000). Among the truly comparative pieces are Klaus von Beyme, “Rechtsextremismus in Osteuropa,” in Jürgen Falter et al., eds., *Rechtsextremismus. Ergebnisse und Perspektiven der Forschung*; special issue of *Politische Vierteljahrsschrift* 27 (1996) (Opladen: West-deutscher Verlag, 1996):423–43; and Cas Mudde, “Extreme-right Parties in Eastern Europe,” *Patterns of Prejudice* 34:1 (2000): 5–27.
- [3](#) See Paul Hockenos, *Free to Hate. The Rise of the Right in Post-communist Eastern Europe* (New York/London: Routledge, 1993); Walter Laqueur, *Fascism. Past, Present, Future* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), chap. 3.
- [4](#) Mudde, “Extreme-right Parties in Eastern Europe,” 25.
- [5](#) See Dieter Rucht, *Modernisierung und neue soziale Bewegungen* (Frankfurt/New York: Campus 1994).
- [6](#) See Michael Minkenberg, *Die neue radikale Rechte im Vergleich. USA, Frankreich, Deutschland* (Opladen/Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1998), chaps. 1, 7, esp. 236–45.
- [7](#) Klaus von Beyme, *Parteien in westlichen Demokratien* (München: Piper, 1984); Rucht, *Modernisierung*.
- [8](#) See Minkenberg, *Die neue radikale Rechte*, chap. 8.
- [9](#) See Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 135f.; Rucht, *Modernisierung*, 177.
- [10](#) Werner Bergmann, “Ein Versuch, die extreme Rechte als soziale Bewegung zu beschreiben,” in Werner Bergmann and Rainer Erb, eds., *Neonazismus und rechte Subkultur* (Berlin: Metropol, 1994), 183–207.
- [11](#) Erwin Scheuch and Hans Dieter Klingemann, “Theorie des Rechtsradikalismus in westlichen Industriegesellschaften,” *Hamburger Jahrbuch für Wirtschafts- und Gesellschaftspolitik* 12 (1967); 11–29.
- [12](#) See Michael Minkenberg, “The Renewal of the Radical Right: Between Modernity and Anti-modernity,” *Government and Opposition* 35:2 (Spring 2000), 170–88.
- [13](#) See, e.g., Kitschelt, *The Radical Right in Western Europe* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995).
- [14](#) See Michael Minkenberg, “German Unification and the Continuity of Discontinuities: Cultural Change and the Far Right in East West,” *German Politics* 3: 2 (Aug. 1994); 169–92.
- [15](#) See Richard Stöss, “Rechtsextremismus in einer geteilten politischen Kultur,” in Oskar Niedermayer and Klaus von Beyme, eds., *Politische Kultur in Ost- und Westdeutschland* (Opladen: Leske and Budrich, 1996), 123.

[16](#) Richard Stöss, *Rechtsextremismus im vereinten Deutschland* (Bonn: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 1999), 100.

[17](#) See Bergmann, “Ein Versuch,” 192f.

[18](#) See Minkenberg, *Die neue radikale Rechte*, 306.

[19](#) Although East Germany is not typical of the rest of Eastern Europe, and one must be careful with generalizations, it remains a (special) case of postsocialist transformation, see Helmut Wiesenthal, ed., *Einheit als Privileg. Vergleichende Perspektiven auf die Transformation Ostdeutschlands* (Frankfurt/Main: Campus, 1996); Patricia Smith, ed., *After the Wall. Eastern Germany since 1989* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1998).

[20](#) For the concept and measuring of the radical right-wing mobilization potential which includes components of right-wing self-identification, nationalism, anti-system orientations, anti Semitism and racism, authoritarianism and religious fundamentalism, see Minkenberg, *Die neue radikale Rechte*, chaps. 5 and 6. For the problem of nationalism in Eastern Europe, see Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[21](#) An international comparison of anti-Semitic attitudes in Poland, Hungary, and the Czech and Slovakia Federation Republic (CSFR) revealed that Poland ranked consistently higher than the other two countries across various measures. Communication by Werner Bergmann, Technische Universität Berlin, Zentrum für Antisemitismusforschung (February 1999). See also Wolf Oeschlies, “Antisemitismus im postkommunistischen Osteuropa (I),” in *Berichte des BIOst* 21 (1995).

[22](#) See Zoltan Barany, “Ethnic Mobilization and the State: the Roma in Eastern Europe,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 21: 2 (March 1998), 308–27.

[23](#) Data in Michael Shafir, “Marginalization or Mainstream? The Extreme Right in Post-Communist Romania,” in Hainsworth, ed., *Politics of the Extreme Right*, 264.

[24](#) Gert Pickel, “Tendenzen der Demokratisierung und politischen Unterstützung in Osteuropa,” in Gert Pickel et al., eds., *Demokratie. Entwicklungsformen und Erscheinungsbilder im interkulturellen Vergleich* (Frankfurt/Oder and Bamberg: VDF, 1997), 121.

[25](#) Martin L. Lee, *The Beast Reawakens* (Boston, Mass.: Little, Brown, 1997), 318ff., 325ff.; Judith Revlin, *Slavophiles and Commissars: Enemies of Democracy in Modern Russia* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), 138–56.

[26](#) See Christopher Williams and Stephen Hanson, “National-Socialism, Left Patriotism, or Superimperialism? The ‘Radical Right’ in Russia,” in Ramet, ed., *Radical Right*, 257–77.

[27](#) Mudde, “Extreme-right Parties in Eastern Europe,” 16; see also Williams and Hanson, “National-Socialism, Left Patriotism, or Superimperialism?” 267; and Revlin, *Slavophiles and Commissars*, 157–80.

[28](#) See Shafir, “Marginalization or Mainstream?”, and Anneli Ute Gabanyi, “Politische Parteien in Rumänien nach der Wende,” *Südosteuropa* 44:1–2, (1995); 1–50; id., “Rumänien: Parlaments-und Präsidentschaftswahlen 1996,” *Südosteuropa* 46:3–4 (1997): 119–45. See also Tom Gallagher, *Romania after Ceaușescu: The Politics of Intolerance* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), 25–47.

[29](#) For a detailed but very descriptive overview of all post-1989 national, nationalist, and right-wing radical parties, see Tomasz Kalina, “Polskie Partie Narodowe” (master’s thesis, Institute of Political Science, Warsaw University, Warsaw

2000); see also Bogumił Grott, “Ruch narodowy w Polsce postkommunistycznej,” *Arka* 53/54 (1994), 13–34; and Anita J. Prazmowska, “The New Right in Poland: Nationalism, Anti-Semitism and Parliamentarianism,” in Cheles et al., eds., *The Far Right*, 198–214.

[30](#) See Andrej Walicki, “The Troubling Legacy of Roman Dmowski,” in *East European Politics and Societies* 14:1 (Winter 2000), 12–46.

[31](#) See Kalina, “Polskie Partie Narodowe,” 78–82, 114–18; see also Thomas Szayna, “The Extreme Right Political Movements in Post-Communist Central Europe,” in Merkl and Weinberg, eds., *The Revival of Right-Wing Extremism*, 116; David Ost, “The Radical Right of Poland: Rationality of the Irrational,” in Ramet, ed., *The Radical Right*, 98ff.

[32](#) Ost, “The Radical Right in Poland,” 88.

[33](#) See Szayna, “The Extreme Right Political Movement,” 125.

[34](#) Guido Brendgens, *Demokratische Konsolidierung in der Tschechischen Republik* (master’s thesis, University of Heidelberg, 1998), 60.

[35](#) See Laszlo Karsai, “The Radical Right in Hungary,” in Ramet, ed., *The Radical Right*, 143.

[36](#) Brendgens, *Demokratische Konsolidierung*, 60.

[37](#) Gabanyi, “Politische Parteien in Rumänien,” 22–28.

[38](#) See Revlin, *Slavophiles and Commissars*, 23–30, 34–60.

[39](#) Victor Parfenov and Marina Sergeeva, “Russia: Showing Nationalist Grapes of Wrath,” *Transitions* 5 (July 1998); 34. A recent estimate reports more than 40 right-wing radical and ultranationalist groups, along with a growing number of skinheads, see *Berliner Zeitung*, 18 July 2000, 9.

[40](#) Gallagher, *Romania after Ceaușescu*, 194ff.

[41](#) See Shafir, “Marginalization or Mainstream?” 255–59.

[42](#) Prazmowska, “The New Right in Poland,” 208f.

[43](#) Ost, “The Radical Right in Poland,” 96.

[44](#) Letter to the author from Dr. Karol Kostrzębski, Inst. of Political Science, Warsaw University, 12 June 2000.

[45](#) *Die Tageszeitung*, 13 November 1998, 13.

[46](#) Data from Werner Bergmann, “Euro Social,” Meinungsprofile Ostmitteleuropa 1991.

[47](#) Stanislav Penc and Jan Urban, “Czech Republic: Extremist Acts Galvanize Roma Population,” *Transitions* 5 (July 1998); 39.

[48](#) Klaus von Beyme, *Systemwechsel in Osteuropa* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp 1994), 12–14.

[49](#) Paul Lewis, *Party Structure and Organization in East-Central Europe* (Cheltenham and Brookfield: E. Elgar, 1996), 184.

[50](#) See Kitschelt, *The Radical Right*, chap. 6; and Minkenberg, *Die neue radikale Rechte*, chap. 9.

[51](#) It has been argued that this typology makes little, if any, sense; see Stefan Auer, “Nationalism in Central Europe—A Chance or a Threat for the Emerging Liberal Democratic Order?” in *East European Politics and Societies* 14:2 (2000), 213–45. However, ignoring the relevance of particular historical trajectories of nation-building or democratization in certain parts of Europe seems overly ahistorical.

[52](#) See, for example, Peter Alter, *Nationalism* (New York: Arnold, 1985).

[53](#) Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

[54](#) See Dieter Fuchs, “The Democratic Culture of United Germany,” in Pippa Norris, ed., *Critical Citizens: Global Support of Democratic Governance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); also Michael Minkenberg, “The Wall after the Wall: On the Continuing Division of Germany and the Remaking of Political Culture,” *Comparative Politics* 26:1 (October 1993); 53–68.

[55](#) von Beyme, *Systemwechsel*, 340 f.; and Pickel, “Tendenzen der Demokratisierung,” 121.

[56](#) von Beyme, *Systemwechsel*, 349–54; Ronald Inglehart, *Modernization and Postmodernization* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997), 93; William Miller, Stephen White, Paul Heywood, *Values and Political Change in Post-Communist Europe* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998).

[57](#) See Kitschelt, *The Radical Right*, chaps. 1, 2; Minkenberg, *Die neue radikale Rechte*, chaps. 7, 8.

[58](#) See Timm Beichelt, *Demokratische Konsolidierung im postsozialistischen Europa* (Opladen: Leske and Budrich, 2001).

[59](#) von Beyme, “Rechtsextremismus in Osteuropa,” 424 f.

[60](#) See Richard Stöss and Dieter Segert, “Entstehung, Struktur und Entwicklung von Parteiensystemen in Osteuropa nach 1989—eine Bilanz,” in Dieter Segert, Richard Stöss, Oskar Niedermayer, eds., *Parteiensysteme in postkommunistischen Gesellschaften Osteuropas* (Opladen: Leske and Budrich, 1997), 379–428, esp. 386–98.

[61](#) Herbert Kitschelt, “The Foundations of Party Systems in East Central Europe,” *Politics and Society* 20:1 (1992) 31; Fritz Plasser et al., *Politischer Kulturwandel in Ost-Mitteleuropa. Theorie und Empirie demokratischer Konsolidierung* (Opladen: Leske and Budrich, 1997), 134; Stöss and Segert, “Entstehung, Struktur und Entwicklung,” 398–401.

[62](#) In Stöss and Segert, “Entstehung, Struktur und Entwicklung,” 400.

[63](#) Ibid., 399.

[64](#) Herbert Kitschelt et al., *Post-Communist Party Systems Competition, Representation, and Inter-Party Cooperation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

[65](#) Jürgen Dieringer, “Die ungarischen Parlamentswahlen 1998,” *Zeitschrift für Parlamentsfragen* 29 (Dec. 1998): 656; and Brendgens, *Demokratische Konsolidierung*, 77.

[66](#) In part because they are also the result of the emerging structures of the party system; see Dieter Nohlen and Mirjana Kasapovic, *Wahlsysteme und Systemwechsel in Osteuropa* (Opladen: Leske and Budrich 1996); and Timm Beichelt, “Die Wirkung von Wahlsystemen in Mittel- und Osteuropa,” *Zeitschrift für Parlamentsfragen* 29 (Dec. 1998); 605–23.

Ten theories of the extreme right

Roger Eatwell

Introduction

During the last 20 or so years, a variety of extreme right political parties have leapt to electoral prominence across Western Europe.¹ Consider the four most cited examples. The first major breakthrough came in France, when Jean-Marie Le Pen's FN won 10 per cent of the vote in the 1984 European Parliament elections. By 1995 Le Pen was supported by 15 per cent of French people in the first round of the French presidential elections. In Italy, the AN (the reborn neo-fascist MSI) won 15 per cent of the vote in the 1994 elections, and together with the LN briefly entered government with Silvio Berlusconi's conservative Forza Italia. In 2001 the same parties again formed an administration under Berlusconi. In Austria, the FPÖ won a record 27 per cent of the poll in 1999 and entered government early on in 2000, in coalition with the conservative ÖVP (although its controversial and media-genic leader, Jörg Haider, was forced to relinquish hopes of immediate national office in the face of a wave of international protest). In Belgium, by 2001 the VB enjoyed the allegiance of 33 per cent of voters in its Antwerp heartland, and more like 20 per cent in Flanders as a whole. However, the general European pattern of extremist voting is by no means one of ever-growing support – nor is the pattern of such support amenable to simple explanation.²

Even where it has been ‘successful’, the extremist electoral record has often been volatile. During 1998–99, the FN split badly and support dropped to under 10 per cent – before Le Pen rebounded in the 2002 presidential elections to enter the second ballot with 17 per cent of the vote. The FPÖ has lost votes since entering office – reflecting the dangers of ‘anti-system’ parties appearing to become part of the system. Both the AN and LN lost votes in the 2001 elections compared to their 1990s’ peak, when they attracted around 15 per cent of the vote nationally and 30 per cent of the northern vote respectively. Extremist support has often risen and fallen rapidly especially at the local level (although it is important to note that there are also long-standing extreme right strongholds, such as FPÖ leader Jörg Haider’s home state of Carinthia, where his party has polled over 40 per cent of the vote). The German DVU won 13

per cent of the vote in the 1998 Saxony-Anhalt regional elections, but slumped to a tenth of this level in the same area for the subsequent 1998 federal elections. Conversely, the British BNP won less than 4 per cent of the vote in the 1999 European Parliament elections in Oldham West, but won over 16 per cent in the 2001 general election (the common argument holds that fringe parties do better in ‘second order’ rather than major national elections). Support can also vary notably within similar areas of a country at the same time. The first local breakthrough of the FN came in Dreux during 1982–83, a town which was experiencing notable structural change. Yet Evreux, a relatively similar town just a few miles away, saw no such breakthrough. And in some countries, such as Ireland, Portugal and Spain, the extreme right hardly exists (although there is evidence that anti-immigrant sentiment is growing in some of these countries).³

The purpose of this chapter is not to expand on selected examples of these particular cases. Rather, the main focus is methodological and theoretical. This chapter seeks to set out better tools and hypotheses which could help answer a number of questions – although the more individualistic, complex nature of postmodern society means that such predictions would always need to be accompanied by considerable caveats.

In the opening two sections of this chapter, I develop a critique of the current main theoretical explanations of electoral support for the extreme right.⁴ I identify five key ‘demand’ and five ‘supply’ side arguments. By ‘demand’, I mean arguments that focus primarily on socioeconomic developments, such as the impact of immigration, unemployment or rapid social change. By ‘supply’, I refer more to the messages which reach voters – which means studying factors such as the leadership and programmes of the insurgent and mainstream parties, or the media. Although many arguments overlap, separating them in this way has heuristic advantages – not least, by raising the issue of the primacy of agency or structure. In line with recent historical and social science fashion, approaches typically stress the primacy of demand factors over supply, of structure over agency.⁵

Unquestionably, Europe has experienced major socioeconomic changes in recent years, changes which have weakened the allegiance to (if not always voting for) mainstream parties. However, in the conclusion I argue that there is a need to develop a (double) three-dimensional model, which focuses on the attitudes of individuals (the *micro*-level), who are embedded in various groups and local (*meso*) and wider national and international (*macro*) contexts.⁶ More specifically, this chapter concludes that a fertile avenue for further empirical work is the hypothesis that extreme right supporters tend to be characterized by a combination of three traits which are strongly influenced by supply-side factors as well as demand-side factors, namely: growing perceptions of ‘extremist’ *legitimacy* + rising personal *efficacy* + declining political *trust*.

Demand-side theories⁷

The single-issue thesis⁸

Initially, the most common demand-side approach to the revival of extreme right voting in Western Europe was the single-issue thesis.⁹ This places considerable emphasis on the attractiveness of anti-immigrant politics – or issues which can be related to this, such as law and order, unemployment or welfare.¹⁰

The rise of the FN in France during the 1980s appears to offer an excellent verification of this thesis. The party made its electoral leap forward after adopting an increasingly strident anti-immigrant line. By the time of the 1995 presidential elections, 22 per cent of the French electorate considered immigration as a top political priority – and a remarkable 53 per cent of Le Pen's voters. Xenophobia was a particularly good indicator of the likelihood of FN voting.

The single-issue approach implies that extreme right parties will do especially well at times when there are major concerns about new immigration. Austria appears to provide a good example of such a linkage. Here the number of legal immigrants more than doubled between the late 1980s and 1993, and illegal immigration rose too as communism collapsed. By the late 1990s, over 9 per cent of Austria's population were immigrants (the second highest figure in the EU, after Luxembourg). The immigration issue was forcefully exploited by the FPÖ, which saw its vote surge during these years. Recently, Haider has continued to exploit the issue, arguing that the EU's eastward expansion policies would open Austria's borders to a flood of new immigrants, which he characterized as in effect declaring war on his country.

However, there are several problems with the single-issue thesis. The most fundamental problem stems from the fact that most extreme right parties do have broad programmes, covering more than race-related matters.¹¹ For example, when the FN began life in 1972 it was not primarily concerned with immigration. Even after picking up the issue forcefully, it has put forward a variety of well-publicized and relatively detailed policies on economic and social matters. At the local level, the FN occasionally did not concentrate on immigration as it tried to build support, preferring instead to cultivate sympathetic coteries and their ideological concerns (most typically, nostalgia for past forms of the right, such as Marshall Pétain's Vichy government).¹²

Moreover, whilst xenophobia was unquestionably important to the FN vote, a notable minority of its supporters were attracted by what they saw as its underlying authoritarian-conservative (even revolutionary-right) ideology.¹³ Another important group of 'neither left nor right' ('*niniste*') supporters were motivated more by their general disillusionment with the left as the defender of their economic interests.¹⁴ Turning to other cases, immigration did not

play any significant role in the AN's breakthrough in Italy during 1992–94.¹⁵ There is also little evidence that immigration was the major cause of voting for the LN at its peak in the 1990s. Indeed, LN support waned at the turn of the new millennium, precisely the time it adopted a more strident anti-immigrant stance (at the same time, the focus turned from immigrants coming from Southern Italy to the growing numbers entering Italy from outside the EU).¹⁶

A further problem for the single-issue thesis concerns chronology. Extreme right success does not necessarily follow new waves of immigration. The FN leapt forward during the early 1980s when immigration to France was relatively low. Similarly, the German REP made its first major breakthrough in the 1989 European and Berlin senate elections, when immigration was not a national public issue – although immigration had for some time been an issue in Berlin.

This last factor highlights yet another problem with the single-issue thesis: namely the meso-spatial relationship between immigration and extremist voting. The most common argument has been to claim that there is some form of 'halo' effect, that anti-immigrant voting is strongest in areas surrounding concentrations of immigrants – areas where there is a perceived threat of 'invasion' into housing and job markets.¹⁷ However, there is no necessary connection, as can be seen from the fact that the extreme right in Britain has in general been weak in spite of significant concentrations of 'immigrants' in some urban areas. Extreme right parties can even be strong in areas where there are few immigrants.

In many ways, the immigration issue appears to be one of perception more than reality. For example, in Germany support for the extreme right tends to rise when immigrants in a particular area are perceived as causing some form of socioeconomic problem or receiving over-favourable treatment. Turning to the more macro-level, the revival of the Norwegian FRPn during the 1990s (a time when polls showed that Norwegians were becoming more tolerant towards immigration) was almost certainly related to the belief that immigrants were entitled to the generous welfare benefits accorded to Norwegians.

The protest thesis

During the 1990s and after, commentators have increasingly stressed protest or 'anti-politics' as the key factor explaining the rise of the extreme right.¹⁸ This thesis typically holds that such parties lack any serious ideology and that their programme amounts to little more than a negative attack on the political establishment (even the immigration issue can be turned against elites by blaming past governments for laxity in this field). Extreme right 'supporters' are seen as vehicles for expressing discontent with the mainstream parties. As a result, there is little or no social structure to the extremist vote, which tends to be volatile.

Evidence for this thesis can be found in features such as the declining share of the vote

going to most mainstream parties, and falling turnouts in most European countries (often dramatic falls, such as the record low 59 per cent in Britain in 2001). Attendance at political meetings has in general slumped, with voters now quenching their (distinctly limited) thirst for political information by imbibing television news (which in turn has gone down market in an attempt to maintain viewer interest). German-language states even have a specific word for being fed up to the teeth with party politicians: '*Politikverdrossenheit*'.

FPÖ voters at the time of the 1999 legislative elections rated immigration behind hostility to the political establishment (66 per cent mentioned the latter to pollsters, compared to 47 per cent who said they voted FPÖ because of immigration). FPÖ voters resented the mainstream parties' domination of Austrian life since World War II, particularly the clientelistic-corrupt 'party-card economy'. In France, dislike of the political establishment was second only to xenophobia in the traits which help identify the typical 1990s FN voter. For many, this was part of a wider loss of faith in parties as legitimate democratic vehicles. To avoid being tarred by the same brush, some groups, such as the FPÖ, have sought to call themselves a 'movement' rather than a party (a terminological sleight of hand which seems unlikely to inoculate them from the voters' ire should they achieve office).

There can be no denying that conventional 'politics' is held in increasing contempt by many, but this does not mean that the protest thesis is essentially correct. One crucial problem concerns the fact that it is possible both to protest and to make a rational choice in terms of voting. For instance, whilst polls clearly show that VB voters do not like mainstream parties or the Belgian state, many have chosen the party precisely because they are attracted to its policies.¹⁹ In most countries, there is a choice of 'protest' parties, but it is the extreme right which recently has made the main electoral progress in Western Europe. Alternative extreme left and green parties, which in general tend to be 'pro-immigrant', have in some cases even lost votes – the main exception before the 2002 elections was the PDS in East Germany, whose ideology bears some resemblance to that of the extreme right. People tend to vote for parties with which they have some form of ideological affinity.²⁰ They also act rationally by voting for parties which they believe will have some form of policy impact (though this does not necessarily mean that such parties have to enter office). The last point is especially important, as it implies that small parties tend to stay small because they are perceived as powerless.²¹ This has been especially true where a relatively large conservative party, such as the Dutch Conservative Party (VVD), German CDU/CSU or British Conservatives have at times played on anti-immigrant sentiments.

The protest theory also posits that the extreme right vote is socially unstructured and transient. Certainly such parties can exhibit 'flash' characteristics, where they suddenly rise and fall. However, in general the major contemporary West European extreme right parties have had relatively stable and socially structured electoral constituencies. During the 1980s, when the first major signs of extreme right revival became clear, parties such as the French

FN had most typically recruited from centre-right supporters, or people who were normally non-voters. Sociologically, they tended to be strongest among males, middle-aged-to-older voters, and within the small business and artisan sectors of the economy. Aspects of this profile remained important in the 1990s; especially the male-oriented side (although there are exceptions, for instance the Italian LN). But during the 1990s the extreme right also came to pose a threat to centre-left parties. In the first ballot of the 1995 presidential elections, Le Pen attracted more working-class votes than any other candidate (30 per cent); by this time, the FN supporters were the most loyal in France. Similarly, by 1999 the FPÖ was attracting major working-class support in Austria (47 per cent). Nevertheless, it is important not to overstate extreme right working-class support. For example, the Italian AN typical voter has tended to be a lower-middle-class public functionary.

The social breakdown thesis

Some commentators have sought to relate the revival of the extreme right to anomie, which leads to feelings of insecurity and inefficacy.²² More specifically, the thesis holds that traditional social structures, especially those based on class and religion, are breaking down. As a result, individuals lose a sense of belonging and are attracted to ethnic nationalism, which according to psychological research increases a sense of self-esteem and efficacy. For similar reasons, they may be attracted to family and other traditional values. Young people especially, who have never experienced a secure milieu, are most likely to fall victim to this syndrome.

Certainly extreme right groups tend to defend traditional values. The FPÖ, for example, developed in the late 1990s the idea of a *Kinderscheck*, a form of new child benefit designed to help keep women in the home (previously welfare programmes had not figured in FPÖ campaigns, other than through its stress on immigrant parasites). They also tend to be hostile to forms of sexual liberation, such as homosexuality. Extreme right groups also tend to be nationalist, although a notable minority stress ethnoregionalism as the primary source of identification (the homogenous, relatively limited geographic region is often portrayed as a ‘natural’ rather than bureaucratic barrier to immigration). As such, it is important not to overstate the extent to which the current extreme right discourse is nationalist and centralist: it can even celebrate a form of ethnic diversity, albeit within a more overarching unity (thus Padania, the LN’s term of Northern Italy, as a separate but integral part of white, Christian Europe – and so on).

There are undoubtedly studies which have found a connection between a high level of urban social isolation, including low religious and trade union ties, and voting for parties such as the FN or the REP. In the Netherlands, a significant correlation has been found between ethnic Dutch nationalism, a preference for anti-immigrant parties and feelings of social

isolation.²³ Work on anti-immigrant voting in a former ‘red’ working-class district in Belgium indicated that the typical supporter was rarely a member of any form of organization, even a club.²⁴ Conversely, in Germany practising Catholics whose views in many ways coincided with those of the REP tended not to vote for this party, but remained loyal to the CDU/CSU. Potential French FN supporters also tended not to switch voting if they were part of traditional, leftist working-class networks (although culturally such milieux could be notably racist).²⁵

However, there are major problems with the social breakdown thesis. One crucial issue concerns the fact that no matter how isolation is measured, it is clear that many extreme right voters are not suffering from anomie. Certainly the rate of associational membership is not significantly different for French FN voters than for other parties. In Italy, whole (extended) families could go over to voting for the LN, with the young often acting as the socializing agent.²⁶ These examples points to two important perspectives. First, that the family is often a more powerful form of socialization (including reverse socialization) than the associational group. And secondly, that networks can be both a prophylactic and recruiting agent. Strong opinion leaders within networks can be an especially important form of influence (and help resolve the rational choice paradox of why people vote at all). There are major problems in hypothesizing that associational membership encourages a sense of belonging, and democratic traits, without considering the specific nature of groups. For example, *pieds noirs* (Algérie française) sub-cultures have been strongly related to voting for the FN in areas such as the south of France.

A variation on the social breakdown thesis holds that its impact has been particularly notable on the party system in countries such as Austria, Belgium and Switzerland. In these countries the classic consociational party system was founded on socially isolated groupings, in particular through the Church and working-class organizations. Although the resulting elite accommodation-clientelistic politics opened the way for populist attacks, the social structure made it difficult for parties to emerge which sought a horizontal, trans-class appeal. However, as these structures broke down, so opportunities opened for new parties – especially ones which celebrated the national (or regional) community. This process was helped by the old antagonisms between the various pillars at the mass social level, which made it difficult for voters to switch to another established party. Moreover, as sociopolitical structures within the pillars had tended to be deferential, their voters were open to the new authoritarian, leader-oriented appeals of the extreme right.

This argument undoubtedly contains some insights, but most countries in Europe have not had party systems based on pillared societies. Even within those that have, most voters have not turned to extreme right parties. Moreover, in the Netherlands – another of the classic consociational European democracies – before 2002 there was relatively little extremist voting (possible explanations for the weakness of the extreme right in the Netherlands include: a

relatively open elite; the existence of left oppositional groups; a Calvinist culture which has limited corruption; and various forms of repression). The late Pim Fortuyn's sudden rise (his party won 17 per cent of the vote in the 2002 parliamentary elections) illustrates the potential for new party breakthrough. But whilst the breakdown of traditional partisanship may be a necessary condition for the rise of an insurgent party, it is by no means a sufficient condition.

The (reverse) post-material thesis

During the 1970s and 1980s many sociologists came to argue that the more wealthy Western societies were moving towards a 'post-material' society, characterized by features such as a diminishing concern with traditional class and economic interests; greater concern for lifestyle issues, such as feminism and environmentalism; a loss of faith in traditional parties and growing interest in more issue-based and protest politics; and a declining faith in national institutions. The rise of green movements seemed to demonstrate that these cultural changes were exerting an important political impact.

By the 1990s this argument was adapted to explain extreme right voting in Western Europe.²⁷ The new post-material agenda is seen as irrelevant for many voters. It may appeal to a section of the educated and young, but it has little appeal for many others – especially unskilled males. Such voters see the new post-material agenda as totally unconnected to their material concerns, which if anything have become greater against a background of globalization and growing job insecurity in many countries. Moreover, the post-material emphasis on sexual and other freedoms threatens traditional values both within the family and society. The thesis further holds that mainstream, especially left of centre, elites are typically blamed for social liberalization, which increases the alienation from conventional politics.

Certainly many extreme right parties have picked up aspects of the Anglo-American New Right agenda of the post-1970s, including both its traditionalism and its more economic agenda focusing on the need for greater efficiency through free markets (thus boosting growth and rewarding the hard-working). However, it is important to note that many extreme right parties – such as the VB and DVU, and to a lesser extent the French FN – have an anti-materialist philosophy. They overtly stress the primacy of politics over economic matters. More specifically, many have picked up aspects of the post-material rhetoric, such as a stress on political participation, even environmentalism. It is true that the latter aspect often has 'blood and soil' conservationist connotations rather than radical ecological ones. Extreme right environmentalism is also sometimes a surrogate for overt anti-immigrant politics – 'this land is *your* land'. Nevertheless, the activist aspect can be more genuine, and marks an important difference with traditional conservative (and Anglo-American New Right) politics.

It could be countered that the study of party programme and 'philosophy' tells us little or

nothing about voting. The fact that the main support for most extreme right parties comes from less-skilled males seems to offer strong sociological credence to the reverse post-materialist thesis's emphasis on alienation among this group. The strong nationalism and xenophobia exhibited by many extreme right voters may also in part be a reaction against post-material internationalist values. However, whilst the reverse post-material thesis has a general plausibility at this level, it offers little by way of specific explanation.

The broad hypotheses of the thesis is that extreme right voting will be greatest where post-material values have developed most strongly and weakest where they are least developed. This may help to explain why the extreme right is so weak in Eastern Europe, but it has only a weak fit in Western Europe. Post-material values are generally seen as being strongest in countries such as (West) Germany, the Netherlands and the Scandinavian ones. But these are countries where in general the extreme right is weak electorally. Post-material values are lower in France, but it was here that the extreme right made its first major breakthrough during the last generation. Post-material values were even lower in Britain in the 1970s, but this did not stop the National Front (NF) making notable headway in some areas, such as the East End of London and Leicester where it could attract 20–30 per cent of the vote in these economically depressed, high immigrant areas.²⁸

The last point highlights the fact that extreme right success is often very localized. What does the reverse post-material thesis tell us about why the BNP has been relatively successful in the 2001 general election in a handful of northern cities such as Oldham, but not in neighbouring Blackburn (though it won a 2002 local election seat here). A comparative political science theory cannot be refuted by a single counter-example, but clearly the reverse post-material thesis is incapable of explaining variation within like socioeconomic cases.²⁹

The economic interest thesis

In spite of the anti-materialist philosophical side of many extreme right parties, there has been a long tradition of trying to associate economic interests with extremist voting, typically arguing that such support comes from the losers in the competition over scarce resources and/or those who suffered from some form of relative deprivation. Predictably, this approach has been used to explain contemporary extreme right voting.³⁰

Some extreme right parties undoubtedly play on economic interest as part of their appeal. For instance, in February 2000 Haider claimed that the FPÖ had replaced the social democrats as the true defenders of the working class. Whilst such rhetoric has to be understood within the context of his campaign to play down extremism, Haider was also pointing to the way in which his party's anti-EU and anti-immigrant policies promised job protection for many workers. The Italian LN also stressed economic issues during the 1990s, including the threat

from parasitical Southern Italian and other ‘immigrants’, and the rapacious Italian state (which over-taxed and interfered in the Northern economy).

Specific studies of voting further seem to bear out the broad socioeconomic correlation. For example, in Germany the unemployed at the turn of the 1990s were especially likely to vote for the REP; so too were those who felt some form of relative deprivation. Fears about social exclusion and the future appear to have been especially strong among the young in many countries. In France, 47 per cent of unskilled young voters supported the FN in the 1997 legislative elections.³¹ The FPÖ vote also tends to come from younger rather than older working-class voters.

The economic argument can be expanded by hypothesizing that extreme right voters are not simply likely to come from those already suffering disadvantage, but from those who fear economic change. Globalization poses a particular threat to two types of worker. First, there are those who work in industries vulnerable to foreign competition. Secondly, there are state-sector employees likely to be hit by the pressures to cut taxes and state expenditure, which have accompanied the general process of globalization (although most Western European countries have so far not significantly undertaken reform programmes in this area, not least because of the electoral dangers of such change). Thus the crucial socioeconomic cleavage is not a working-class versus middle-class one, but is more sectoral. Certainly, there is evidence in both Austria and Northern Italy that this type of structural change has affected voting (though it is important to note that public-sector worker support for the MSI/AN has more historic roots in fascist clientelistic politics). This helps to explain why relatively rich countries and regions may spawn extreme right support.

However, the exact linkages between socioeconomic interest and extreme right voting in Western Europe are far from clear. Most unemployed people, poor people, those suffering from relative deprivation, or holding fears about the future, do not vote for the extreme right (this is also true in Eastern Europe, where the economic situation is in general much worse). This includes people who see a significant threat from immigration/ethnic minorities. In Britain, for example, a study at the turn of the new millennium found that more than half of the working class agreed that immigrants took jobs away from people, and over a third agreed that equal opportunities for blacks had gone too far.³² But extreme right voting remains unimportant outside a handful of localities. In France, economic issues are central for all the mainstream parties, but this is much less true for FN voters – who tend to be more concerned with Arabs, etc. Intriguingly, in Belgium the FN has, in general, done poorly in French-speaking Wallonia, which has suffered notable economic decline – yet the VB has been one of the most successful parties in the more affluent Flemish part of Belgium.

Nevertheless, picking up a point made earlier, there is some evidence that socioeconomic problems have a particular impact when immigrant groups, especially in a localized context, are seen as being in some ways treated more favourably, that ‘they do more for them than us’,

to quote one study of the industrially depressed, and former ‘red’, area of Seraing (Liège) in Belgium. The same point could be made about extreme right support in Britain in areas such as Oldham.³³ The issue is one of perception more than reality – which raises the crucial question of how people move beyond simple socioeconomic interest to understand the political world.

Supply side theories

The political opportunity structure thesis

The political opportunity structure (POS) thesis has increasingly been adopted by commentators in recent years.³⁴ The approach focuses on two broad sets of political factors which are largely external to the insurgent party. First, it stresses the extent to which the actions and programmes of mainstream parties help or hinder insurgents. Secondly, there is the question of the degree of ‘openness’ of political institutions to insurgent parties.

The POS approach holds that extremist parties are likely to make a breakthrough when mainstream parties cluster around the centre, and fail to pick up issues which are of growing voter appeal. For example, the French FN increasingly exploited anti-immigrant sentiment at the turn of the 1980s when this was being ignored by the mainstream parties (the socialists were even promising more rights to immigrants).

More indirectly, the extreme right can be legitimized when political discourse becomes contaminated by its themes, especially ones relating to immigration.³⁵ For example, by the mid 1980s, key figures within the French centre-right, notably Jacques Chirac and Charles Pasqua, had clearly discerned the threat from the FN and modified their language accordingly. Even some socialists dabbled in watered-down forms of anti-immigrant politics. Moreover, at the local level, informal electoral arrangements emerged between the mainstream and ‘extreme’ right. At times this contamination of discourse can defuse the insurgent movement, as happened when the German CDU during 1991–92 picked up the issue of constitutional reform to limit the arrival of asylum-seekers (over 400,000 arrived in 1992 alone, a trend which helped to provoke extremist violence during 1991–92). But the technique can backfire too. During 1997 in Hamburg, the local Social Democrats adopted policies such as opposition to the Euro currency and stricter treatment of foreign criminals, but it was the DVU which was the main beneficiary locally. Although the connection is less clear-cut, British politicians taking an increasingly hard line on the growing number of asylum-seekers helped to legitimize the BNP in 2001–2 (and to inflame ethnic minority alienation, which helped fuel rioting during

2001).

The mainstream can also legitimize extremism directly. The rise of the Italian AN was helped by the way in which President Cossiga was clearly willing to accept that the ‘post-fascists’ could be made part of a new centre-right to replace the Christian Democrats (DC), who were drowning in a sea of corruption (the fact that the MSI, like the DC, were good anti-communists was an important credential). Cossiga called for hammer-blows to demolish the corrupt old Republic – a theme which the MSI picked up in its 1992 election campaign, when it produced a campaign badge showing a pickaxe and ran on the slogan ‘every vote a hammer-blow’. The extensive support of the media magnate, Silvio Berlusconi – whose new Forza Italia party allied with the AN in the run up to the 1994 elections – added further legitimacy to the MSI/AN. This situation was very different to the one in Austria in early 2000, when the president was far more suspicious of the FPÖ’s entry into government and virtually invited the EU to intervene (the ban was also influenced by the Belgian prime minister’s and French president’s desire to tag their own extreme right parties as beyond the pale).³⁶

Institutional aspects of POS approaches often focus on electoral systems – typically claiming that proportional representation helps new parties. For instance (socialist) President Mitterrand altered the French National Assembly election system from single-member constituencies to regional lists for the 1986 elections in order to increase FN representation, and weaken the mainstream right. In Germany, the 5 per cent cut-off in many elections makes it more difficult for small parties to convince voters they will be successful and gain some form of bandwagon effect. Conversely, federal systems can offer extremists the chance to make a major breakthrough locally. Haider, for example, has been most successful in his home region of Carinthia. Another important institutional aspect concerns the power to ban, or brand parties. The German Office for the Protection of the Constitution (BVS) can effectively de-legitimize a party by officially labelling it ‘extreme’. Although this does not mean a party will necessarily fail to attract support, this device almost certainly harmed the REP in the early 1990s (previously they had been labelled merely ‘radical’). Tough court sentences on racist violence or harassment also send out powerful signals about what is socially acceptable.

The POS approach undoubtedly offers important insights. However, it has a variety of problems. In particular, it is possible to find countries where there has been ‘space’ for extremist parties, where there has been a proportional electoral system, etc., but where there has been minimal extremist voting. For instance, the Netherlands has a highly proportional electoral system with a low entry threshold, but has not seen a sustained, successful extreme right movement. And countries such as Portugal and Spain, which also have proportional representation systems, have seen no significant extreme right activity. The electoral argument can be shored up if the stress is placed on district magnitude (namely the number of seats per district: the greater the number, the more small parties tend to benefit). However, it is important to remember that the FN has done well in terms of votes (if not in terms of

representation) in legislative elections based on a form of majority voting. In Sweden the leading parties, especially the Social Democrats, have taken a major role in anti-racist campaigns, but there has been no sustained, successful extreme right party, although there is space for such a party. Is the issue that this is de-legitimized space? Or are extreme right parties more successfully marginalized by mainstream parties picking up part of their rhetoric (a trend which has helped halt the rise of the greens)? The POS approaches seem to have little to say about this. Ultimately, they seem of more use for *ad hoc* national explanations rather than systematic international comparison.

The mediatization thesis

A further criticism of the POS approach is that even within its own ‘high politics’ terms, it tends to ignore what is now arguably the most important instrument in political communication – the media.³⁷ Certainly, there is a growing literature on the role of the media in promoting racism.³⁸ Studies have sought to prove that the media are riddled with positive stereotypes of the indigenous population and a negative presentation of the ‘Other’. Among the specific issues which the media tend to focus on are illegal immigration, bogus asylum-seekers, overly favourable treatment of immigrants, crime (especially drugs and prostitution), and problematic cultural differences (especially the impossibility of assimilating Islamic immigrants).

However, whilst the media may at times pander to racial stereotyping, in general they are hostile to the extreme right. The reporting of violence against immigrants is often linked to the dangers of a revival of Nazism (a common tabloid moral panic). Whilst this may encourage copy-cat violence, its main effect has probably been to further de-legitimize the extreme right electorally. At times, the media attack the electoral extreme right directly. For example, in Britain the tabloid press picked up the ‘National Front is a Nazi front’ theme (begun by anti-fascist activists) during the late 1970s, when there were fears that the Front was about to make a major electoral breakthrough. More typically, the extreme right is largely starved of publicity. While Italian television was heavily under state influence, it rarely mentioned the MSI; and more recently, the media seem to have taken a decision to avoid giving the LN excessive publicity.

Nevertheless, there have been occasions when parts of the media have overtly supported the extreme right. The rise of the MSI/AN during 1993–94 coincided with remarkably favourable coverage from the Berlusconi media empire, which included the three most-watched private television channels. The FPÖ too, especially key statements on immigration by Haider, has received important support from the *Neue Kronen Zeitung* which, relative to potential readership, is the most widely read newspaper in the world (over 40 per cent of

adults have read the paper in recent years).

The media have also indirectly helped the extreme right through their agenda-setting function. The issue is not simply one of their coverage of issues such as the threat from immigrants. The media, especially television, encourage a focus on personality, which helps leader-oriented parties. The growth of face-to-face debates and interview programmes makes it more difficult for journalists to act as gatekeepers. Declining state control and the growth of private media channels has also stressed entertainment values, which further encourages a concentration on lively personalities and the new. It has also encouraged more quizzing of mainstream politicians, especially about broken promises and corruption.

It is also important to consider local as well as national media. Sometimes the local media are more apolitical, prone to report events neutrally. For instance, in Oldham before the 2001 general election the local press reported the growing BNP activities, including their own press releases, with little or no editorial comment. The Oldham press also gave considerable coverage to three events in 2001 which fitted the BNP's agenda: a police report stating that racially motivated attacks on whites were more common than those by whites on non-whites; an apparently racially motivated serious attack on a 76-year-old war veteran; and a claim made by an Asian youth on BBC national radio that there were 'no go' areas for whites in Oldham. In spite of this, the BNP launched its own Oldham website which stated: 'This site cuts through the controlled media's paper curtain of politically correct censorship about what's going on in Oldham.'³⁹

It seems easy to conclude that the media played a major part in the BNP's ensuing general election 'success'. However, it is important to note that there are major methodological problems involved in assessing media effects. Discourse analysis tends to adopt a Gramscian approach which accords the media considerable power on the basis of alleged 'hegemonic' content without any empirical analysis of voters. It is true that apparent correlations can be found, as in Oldham. But it is not clear what role the media played compared to demand-side factors, or shrewd local BNP campaigning (including how to use the media). Nevertheless, noting methodological problems serves as a warning about sweeping claims concerning media power rather than as a refutation of more limited claims. Circumstantially, it seems clear that the media can play an important role in legitimizing (or delegitimizing) issues and parties. A sudden increase in coverage of a fringe party also seems likely to create a sense that the party is on the move, creating a form of bandwagon.

The national traditions thesis

The national traditions thesis helps to illustrate another methodological problem – namely, the dangers of grand social science theory which is blind to specific national cultures. The thesis

holds that extreme right parties are most likely to be successful when they can portray themselves as in some way a legitimate part of the national tradition.

One version of this thesis holds that parties which exhibit clear affinities with fascism (especially Nazism) find it difficult or impossible to legitimize themselves.⁴⁰ For example, the German DVU and NPD, whose propaganda shows a marked fascination with the Nazi era, have failed to gain sustained support in spite of evidence that in 1981, 12 per cent of West Germans had an extreme right view of the world and 37 per cent shared aspects of this worldview; in 1998, 12 per cent in the old *Länder* still held such views, and 17 per cent in the new *Länder*.⁴¹ Several subsequent studies have shown that such views are even more common in the former East Germany. The problem is less serious in Italy, where historians during the last generation have been increasingly willing to normalize rather than demonize the fascist era. Certainly AN leader Gianfranco Fini was for a time in the 1990s Italy's most popular politician, in spite of his enigmatic references to the AN as 'post-fascist' and his defence of Mussolini as a great statesman.

In other countries the fascist legacy is also highly problematic. For instance, part of British national identity is linked to anti-fascist images (the 1940 Battle of Britain, etc.). This has posed a major problem for the British NF and BNP, whose main leader – John Tyndall – openly wore Nazi-style uniform before joining the NF. A study in the late 1970s found that 76 per cent of voters thought the NF had a Nazi side to it. In France, Le Pen was chosen to lead the FN, which included small fascist *groupuscules*, partly because he had no overt fascist past. Nevertheless, the claim that the FN was 'fascist' has undoubtedly limited its appeal in traditional left-wing areas where 'anti-fascism' has long been a rallying cry.

The national traditions thesis has also been applied to the issue of the extent to which extremist parties can create a legitimate discourse about immigration and conceptions of citizenship (sometimes referred to as the 'discursive opportunity structure').⁴² This is important because psychological work has revealed that in the contemporary Western world 'prejudice' tends not to be expressed in unambiguous statements about racial hierarchies. People like their views to appear reasonable and acceptable to peers.⁴³

Across Europe, there have historically been very different conceptions of who can become a member of the national community. Although practice is more complicated, three ideal types are typically delineated. The first is the French Jacobin conception, which holds that anyone willing to be assimilated into the culture could become French. The second is the German model where citizenship has traditionally been based on 'blood'. The third is the British model, which is multi-national/cultural – a reflection of the fact that Britain was historically made up of different nations and was the 'Mother' country to an empire. The British conception has made it difficult to construct a legitimate discourse of exclusion. On the other hand, the French FN has been able to point to Arab immigrants as unwilling to assimilate. Opinion polls at the time of the 1989 Creil incident, when Muslim girls were turned away from school because

their traditional garb was seen as flouting secular rules, highlight the continued resonance of the Jacobin model. The German model also potentially underpins anti-immigrant politics (although in this case the Nazi legacy provides a powerful counter).

A comparison of British, French and German traditions highlights another point about democracy. The dominant British historic discourse has stressed parliamentary sovereignty and the role of intermediary organizations. The Jacobin tradition has celebrated the ‘Republic one and indivisible’, and has been hostile to parties and pressure groups. Clearly the latter tradition serves further to legitimize a discourse which demonizes mainstream parties, and backroom parliamentary deals. An element in the French political tradition also celebrates strong leadership, which also helps legitimize forms of extreme right politics. This last point also applies to Germany. Whilst the Nazi legacy provides a powerful counter, it is worth noting that the two longest-standing of Germany’s postwar Chancellors, Konrad Adenauer and Helmut Kohl, have attracted a father-like, personalist following.

However, national traditions are clearly facilitating factors rather than direct causal ones. In particular, they need interpreting, recounting, by others – not least by an insurgent party capable of constructing a sophisticated general political discourse.

The programmatic thesis

Sometimes the programmatic thesis essentially argues that extreme right parties – contrary to the protest thesis – do have a serious ideology, but do not seek specifically to relate this to voting.⁴⁴ Two versions directly relate programme to support. The first holds that political campaigning is becoming increasingly issue-based – and extremist parties have often been successful at exploiting specific issues, especially when they form part of a broad party programmatic ‘direction’ which can be picked up by even the least politically sophisticated.⁴⁵

The second holds that there is a particular ‘winning formula’, which involves combining authoritarian anti-immigrant politics with free market economics (an approach linked in its most sophisticated, although ultimately misleading, form with a sectoral demand-side analysis).⁴⁶

There has been a growing tendency among academics to use the term ‘populist’ for many of the more successful contemporary parties, like the FPÖ. One reason for this is to highlight the way in which they pick up issues which concern the electorate, but which are largely ignored by the mainstream parties. The term ‘populism’ is also used to denote the way in which parties like the FN and FPÖ portray themselves as the true democrats and representative of the people. For instance, the 1993 FN programme devotes three chapters to different procedures which could increase the power of the people. Arguably, the most commonly suggested answer is an increased use of the referendum.⁴⁷ More generally, the

epithet ‘populist’ is designed to underpin the claim that this family of parties is not truly ‘extreme’.

Certainly some extremists, for instance the BNP, have recently concluded from the FPÖ’s success that a relatively democratic-moderate approach attracts voters (although they are aware that this can cause problems with hard-core members). For this reason, the BNP has changed its core policy from the compulsory repatriation of ‘immigrants’ to one of voluntary repatriation. The BNP has also attempted recently to follow the French FN line of playing down the traditional racist language in favour of a ‘new racism’ which stresses cultural difference. Thus Arabs in France are not so much inferior as a people who have their own culture, which cannot be assimilated.⁴⁸ Exclusion can even be made ‘democratic’ by extremists who ask whether people in Dreux (Oldham, etc.) were ever asked if they wanted local schools which are entirely or primarily Muslim, and so on.

The FPÖ’s economic policies also reveal a notable break with the interwar extreme right. Like all the successful contemporary extreme right parties, it is critical of highly statist economics. However, commentators who stress the free market side of these parties gloss over crucial points.⁴⁹ One concerns the fact that the state sector is too large in many Western European countries, and has often been ‘colonized’ by the mainstream parties. More fundamentally, it is important not to confuse market values with market mechanisms. For example, the AN’s Verona theses of 1998 accept the necessity of more market capitalism so long as *homo œconomicus* does not supersede spiritual and political man. The Euroscepticism of many extreme right parties also in part reflects this suspicion of globalization and markets. Nevertheless, it is important to note that not all extreme right parties are Eurosceptic: the LN in particular has used a ‘Europe of the regions’ rhetoric to help legitimize its attack on the central state.

Some on the contemporary extreme right are more accurately characterized as supporters of ‘Third Way’ economics (even if the actual term is not always employed). Put another way, they seek to achieve a modern balance between private and public sector. Haider, for instance, has stated that ‘We are neither right nor left, we’re just in front.’⁵⁰ Many other parties, including the FN, LN and Norwegian FRPn, have at times all used some form of neither left nor right rhetoric. Whilst such rhetoric can have an electoral dimension (Third Way rhetoric potentially appeals across the political spectrum), such syncretism has been a classic feature of extreme right ideology. Especially since the New York terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001, Third Way rhetoric has also pointed to the twin dangers of Islamic fundamentalism and US global capitalism. In countries with significant Islamic populations, the extreme right has tended to see the Twin Towers attack as a godsend for its cause – although this has sometimes been tempered, for instance in the case of Le Pen, by pro-Arab and anti-Israeli and anti-US sentiments.

These arguments point to three broad conclusions about the relationship between support

and programme. The first is that specific issues can attract support, especially if the issues are portrayed in a way which gives them some form of legitimacy. Such issue-based politics seems to be especially attractive to voters who are relatively unsophisticated. The second is that the most successful parties have tended to have a somewhat ambivalent economic programme, which allows them to attract both supporters of freer markets and others who still look to the state for protection (at the time of the 1997 legislative elections in France, such *ninistes* made up 25 per cent of the electorate, with the largest single group voting for the FN). More generally, except perhaps at times of major crisis, most voters are risk averse and prefer to seek change which seems limited rather than ‘extreme’.

The charismatic leader thesis

There is a growing literature suggesting that party democracy is in decline and, especially for a de-aligned electorate, media-oriented leaders become crucial.⁵¹ Some commentators hold that the emergence of ‘charismatic’ leaders, such as Jean-Marie Le Pen, is an important factor in the rise of the extreme right.⁵² This charismatic impact is normally considered in terms of the leader’s direct appeal to voters, but it can also be considered in terms of an ability to hold a party together (the external and internal dimensions of charisma).

An immediate problem concerns definition. The social science use of the term ‘charisma’ stems from Max Weber, who associated it with a leader characterized by a quasi-religious sense of great vision, and who attracted a body of unquestioning, affective supporters. Defined this way, there have been few – if any – major charismatic leaders in the last hundred years. (Hitler is perhaps a rare European example.)⁵³ This has led some commentators to use a weaker definition of charisma, or to use terms such as ‘pseudo-charisma’. In this case, the emphasis moves towards a more diverse set of characteristics.

This still leaves open the question of what defines a (pseudo) charismatic leader. Usually a formal definition is not offered, but it is possible to set out some commonly ascribed attributes of contemporary charismatic leadership. These include: oratorical confidence and especially an ability to use the media; a sense of mission which tends to be inclusionary and/or about building identity; the use of narratives about the leader’s life, often stressing sacrifice and struggle; the use of friend-enemy, Manichaean, categorizations; and the use of macho language and symbolism. However, a problem which afflicts this approach is one which afflicts all list-definitions. Namely, is it necessary for a leader to possess every trait in order to be deemed charismatic? Umberto Bossi, the leader of the LN, has often been termed ‘charismatic’, but his gangly appearance and unkempt dress do not conform to the classic image.

This points to the fact that the concept of charisma is about audience receptivity as well as leadership traits. Here the focus turns more to the demand side, to why leadership may appeal

to voters. Various arguments relating to this have already been considered in passing. For instance, leadership is to some extent culture-specific. (Bossi's appeal may in part be a reaction to Mussolinian machismo.) The more authoritarian extreme right voter is clearly attracted to strong leadership (a feature of an important section of the FN vote). The decline of class- and religious-based parties also raises the issue about how voters receive political signals in a de-aligned world. Although rational choice theory tends to be hostile to vague concepts like 'charisma', it is possible to write leadership into utility-maximizing analysis by seeing it as a form of low-cost signalling. Voters are attracted to appealing leaders because they offer an easy way of understanding the political message. Leader-oriented parties are also appealing if this means that dissent, which could cause dissonance, is minimized. The extensive focus on Haider in parts of the Austrian media, and his control of the party before splits began to emerge during 2000–2, almost certainly played its part in the rise of the FPÖ. Charismatic appeal can further be related to arguments about rapid socio-economic change and/or economic crises. Such developments can produce a sense of powerlessness, which may lead to non-voting. The charismatic leader increases voter efficacy because they can create a sense that politics is not pointless. This is achieved both through the belief that the leader can change things, and by encouraging the belief that the leader is somehow part of the people, that he can be influenced by the people. This can be termed 'proxy control'⁵⁴ a term which illustrates the dangers of believing that voters attracted by charismatic leaders are necessarily seeking some form of authoritarian dictatorship.

This discussion highlights something which has been implicit in much of the preceding argument. This is that whilst there is a relatively large body of work which probes issues such as the age, class and sex basis of voting for the main extreme right parties, ultimately there are still major gaps in our knowledge. The charismatic thesis offers an excellent illustration of this point. In general, the existing empirical evidence counts against the thesis. For instance, more voters seem deterred by Le Pen, especially his gaffes on issues such as the Holocaust, than are attracted by him. Similar sentiments appear to apply to Bossi. But there are major problems operationalizing the charismatic thesis, and there has been a lack of original research design (such as focus groups) which might help further our knowledge of the cybernetic processes by which voters are attracted to the extreme right. It is also important not to ignore the internal charismatic dimension of leadership – namely the ability to hold often ideologically diverse parties together, with little or nothing to offer by way of spoils.

Moving on

The preceding arguments clearly underline the complexity of the task which faces anyone

who seeks to theorize about the extreme right. It is particularly important to underline that there is no single extreme right supporter, corresponding to the ‘authoritarian personality’ or any other model. Indeed, there are notably different types of extreme right voters.

It should be clear from the foregoing analysis that no one factor can explain such a diverse pattern of extreme right voting. Demand factors are undoubtedly the necessary prior condition for extreme right success. But they are clearly not sufficient. A complex mix of supply factors are necessary to help launch a party. A key argument in the above analysis is that most of those who vote for the more successful extreme right parties are not random protesters, but voters who are choosing a party which is seen to approximate to their views. But the way in which voters perceive such parties is influenced by a variety of factors, such as mainstream parties’ campaigning, the media and the activities of the extremist parties themselves.

Moreover, as well as considering demand and supply factors, contingency must also be added into the equation. For instance, the ‘success’ of the BNP in Oldham in the 2001 general election stemmed in part from chance factors which attracted notable media coverage.

Nonetheless, it is important not to lapse into a postmodernist mindset, where events have multiple and varied causes, lacking any discernible pattern. Comparative political science may not have the precision of the ‘hard’ sciences, but it should seek to develop methodologies which allow such complex issues to be studied and produce testable hypotheses. I therefore seek to make two main points by way of a forward-looking conclusion.

1. *The macro–meso–micro approach*: Current analyses place far too much emphasis on macro rather than meso and micro analysis. The meso-level is often ignored, not least because it requires detailed local and group level research. Moreover, such work would require repeating in different contexts, both national and international, in order to develop a ‘grand theory’. Although some primary work has been done on individual extreme right voters, much micro-theory is deduced from mainly macro-level analysis since mass surveys are expensive (and sometimes fail to pick up extremist supporters, who prefer to hide such sentiments). More work needs to be done at the micro level, especially work which moves beyond the conventional socioeconomic categories, or age, sex, class, etc. We need to know more about ‘extremist’ beliefs. We need more work which relates macro-theory to microviews/behaviour. We also need more evidence about what combination of political-psychological sentiments triggers extreme right voting.

2. *The legitimacy, efficacy and trust (LET) hypothesis*: Given the point about the diversity of extreme right support, there are clear dangers in constructing any new form of archetypal extremist voter. However, I want to argue on the basis of the above arguments that a notable increase in extreme right voting is likely to stem from a combination of three (partly related) perceptions. These are

It is impossible in a short chapter to develop fully this hypothesis. Nevertheless, some pointers can be given which briefly reiterate arguments which have already been noted above.

Legitimacy refers to the belief that a party is in some way socially acceptable, most typically by creating the impression that it is a legitimate part of the national tradition. Careful packaging of policies, for instance the ‘new racism’, can also help. This approach highlights the role of the party itself, especially its leaders and ‘intellectuals’, in constructing discourse. Legitimacy can also be accorded by mainstream politicians picking up ‘extremist’ themes and policies – even if these are adapted in a watered-down form (for instance, limiting immigration rather than totally banning it, let alone pursuing mass repatriation). Important opinion leaders, especially the media, can also play a part in setting an agenda which, whilst not necessarily endorsing extremist parties, can help their cause. Such legitimacy may be achieved at a relatively broad level, but it can emerge only within specific local political contexts (which may then give the party the boost it needs to expand in other areas).

Efficacy refers to an individual’s belief that she/he can affect what happens politically (people with low efficacy tend not to vote). This raises two issues. First, what makes people feel more efficacious? And secondly, how do insurgent parties create the impression that they can become bigger/have an effect? Feelings of self-efficacy can rise for various reasons, including group membership and the impact of charismatic leadership. Small parties can gain credibility in various ways. Proportional representation can help (although, as has already been pointed out, there is no simple correlation between electoral system and extremist voting). Some form of agreement with mainstream parties can be crucial. Parties also need to be able to disseminate their message. In the past, this meant an effective organization. Today some form of access to the media is more important. Lack of division within the party also helps low-cost programmatic signalling (although discrete local differentiation can help, especially during take-off).

Trust refers to feelings about the ability of the economic and political system to deliver desired goods. The decline of class and religion has meant that specific issues have increasingly become important in determining voting. Economic ones tend to predominate in most voters’ minds, although anti-immigrant politics reflect wider cultural concerns. Trust declines when governments fail to deliver on key issues: the World Values Survey seems to indicate that rapidly rising unemployment would have a particularly notable effect on trust. Trust also declines when politicians become involved in scandals – a trend which has attracted growing media attention in recent years. So far this decline in trust has mainly affected mainstream parties rather than the system itself. There have been no major economic crises in Western Europe in recent years which might de-legitimize capitalism (although social inequalities have grown in many countries). Moreover, democracy has become a near-universal shibboleth.

However, whilst democracy has become a near-universal concept, its exact connotations are being increasingly challenged. As long as the communist ‘evil empire’ existed, Western

democracy could in an important sense define itself by the ‘Other’. Following the collapse of the dictatorial Soviet empire, the spotlight has turned inward, towards democracy’s basic principles and linked socioeconomic structures. What does democracy mean in a world increasingly characterized by ‘globalization’? The reality seems to be one of growing multinational corporate power. What exactly does international ‘multi-level governance’ mean in terms of democracy? Such new institutions may seek to protect (liberal) democracy in terms of rights, but they offer little or no possibility for (direct) democratic participation. These arguments clearly point to the growing possibility of constructing a legitimate discourse which is critical of the system rather than just of mainstream parties. This in turn may affect voter attitudes. The proportion of authoritarians within the extremist constituency may well grow if democratic legitimacy declines. A serious economic downturn could have even more dramatic effects. In recent years it has been rational not to seek extreme solutions because ‘crises’ were of limited extent. Capitalism may have become increasingly inequalitarian, but it could still legitimize itself through ‘big cake’ arguments. Serious national or sectoral crises, brought about by growing globalization, could dramatically reduce trust in the system. So might the need to cut welfare and other benefits in the face of global economic pressures.

Such arguments are clearly highly speculative – and this chapter has not sought to predict the future. But they point to the dangers of assuming that the extreme right challenge can be tamed by mainstream parties, which are rapidly approaching their sell-by date. Indeed, the last paragraph points to the dangers of believing, like Francis Fukuyama, that history has ended and that liberal democracy truly has won.

Notes

¹ There is considerable controversy as to whether some of the parties discussed in this chapter are better termed ‘radical right’ or ‘populist’. As this chapter is concerned with theory (support) rather than concepts (definition), it adopts the term ‘extreme right’, arguably the most common generic term, simply as a convenient shorthand. As has been noted in passing, there are undoubtedly important differences between the ‘extreme right’ parties – programmatic differences which play a part in some theories. For a distillation of the different definitions which have been given to the ‘extreme right’ and ‘radical right’ see C. Mudde, ‘The War of the Words Defining the Extreme Right Party Family’, *West European Politics*, 19.2 (1996). On the definition of ‘populist’ see P. Taggart, ‘New Populist Parties in Western Europe’, *West European Politics*, 18.1 (1995). See also M. Fennema, ‘Some Conceptual Issues and Problems in the Comparison of Anti-Immigrant Parties in Western Europe’, *Party Politics*, 3.4 (1997); and the excellent chapter by U. Backes, ‘L’extrême Droite: les multiples facettes d’une catégorie d’analyse’, in P. Perrineau (ed.), *Les Croisés de la société fermée. L’Europe des extrêmes droites* (Paris: Editions de l’Aube, 2001).

² Predictably, these developments have attracted an extensive academic literature. For notable recent surveys of the

European scene in the last 20 years, see H.-G. Betz, *Radical Right-Wing Populism in Western Europe* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994); H.-G. Betz and S. Immerfall (eds), *The New Politics of the Right* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1998); L. Cheles, R. Ferguson and M. Vaughan (eds), *The Far Right in Western and Eastern Europe* (Harlow: Longman, 1995); P. Hainsworth (ed.), *The New Politics of the Right* (London: Pinter, 2000); H. Kitschelt (in association with M. McGann), *The Radical Right in Europe* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1995); P. Merkl and L. Weinberg (eds), *The Revival of Right-Wing Extremism in the Nineties* (London: Frank Cass, 1997). Special issues of journals include 'Far Right in Europe: In or Out of the Cold?', *Parliamentary Affairs*, 53.3 (2000).

- [3](#) In Spain, a report published in 2000 by the government's Centre for Sociological Research found that 49 per cent of Spaniards were hostile to foreign cultures (Maghrebian influence was the main fear), a notable increase on the previous results.
- [4](#) There is some overlap between these theories and those which seek to explain extreme right violence, but violence is not a major concern of this chapter. Note, there has been some dispute about whether electoral success breeds extremist violence, or whether violence is more a substitute for electoral success. For the latter thesis, see R. Koopmans, 'Explaining the Rise of Racist and Extreme Right Violence in Western Europe: Grievances and Opportunities', *European Journal of Political Research*, 30.3 (1996). The thesis is difficult to analyse satisfactorily as there are major problems in terms of the collection of data on extremist violence.
- [5](#) See, for example, the empirical testing of four 'dominant' (demand) theories in M. Lubbers and P. Scheepers, 'Individual and Contextual Characteristics of the German Extreme Right-Wing Vote in the 1990s. A Test of Complementary Theories', *European Journal of Political Research*, 38.1 (2000).
- [6](#) On the importance of the macro-meso-micro approach, especially the neglected meso level, see R. Eatwell, 'The Dynamics of Ethnocentric Party Mobilisation' in R. Koopmans and P. Statham (eds), *Challenging Immigration and Ethnic Relations Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). For more detail of this argument applied to the British and French cases, see R. Eatwell, 'The Dynamics of Right-Wing Electoral Breakthrough', *Patterns of Prejudice*, 32.3 (1998).
- [7](#) For the sake of brevity, this chapter does not seek to offer a full bibliographic survey of theories. Nor does it provide detailed referencing in relation to party programme, voting statistics, etc. The primary purpose of the notes is to list mainly English-language illustratory examples of each main theory and related points.
- [8](#) The various theories which follow are not always referred to in the same terms by commentators: for instance, the single-issue thesis is sometimes presented in terms of 'anti-immigrant' politics.
- [9](#) For example: D. Arter, 'Black Faces in the Blond Crowd: Populist Racism in Scandinavia', *Parliamentary Affairs*, 45.3 (1992); C.T. Husbands, 'The Other Face of 1992: The Extreme Right Explosion in Western Europe', *Parliamentary Affairs*, 45.3 (1992).
- [10](#) J. Billiet and H. de Witte, 'Attitudinal Dispositions to Vote for a "New" Extreme Right Party: The Case of "Vlaams Blok"', *European Journal of Political Research*, 27.2 (1995).
- [11](#) C. Mudde, 'The Single-Issue Party Thesis: Extreme Right Parties and the Immigration Issue', *West European Politics*, 22.3 (1999).

- [12](#) On local differentiation see J.-P. Roy, *Le Front national en région centre, 1984–92* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1993).
- [13](#) G. Ivaldi, ‘Conservatism, Revolution and Protest: A Case Study in the Political Cultures of the French National Front’s Members and Sympathies’, *Electoral Studies*, 15.3 (1996).
- [14](#) N. Mayer, *Ces français qui votent FN* (Paris: Flammarion, 1999).
- [15](#) P. Ignazi, *Postfascisti?* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1994).
- [16](#) A. Bull and M. Gilbert, *The Lega Nord and the Northern Question in Italian Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001).
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[53](#) Compare the stress on Hitler’s charisma in I. Kershaw, *Hitler. 1889–1936, Nemesis* (London: Penguin, 1998), with the rational choice explanation of W. Brustein, *The Logic of Evil. The Social Origins of the Nazi Party, 1925–1933* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996).

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The populist radical right

A pathological normalcy

Cas Mudde

Today the politics of the radical right is the politics of frustration – the sour impotence of those who find themselves unable to understand, let alone command, the complex mass society that is the polity today.

The quote above could have been from practically any book on the contemporary radical right published in the late twentieth century. In fact, it dates from the early 1960s, and summarises Daniel Bell's (1964: 42) assessment of the US radical right of the 1950s. It is indicative of a variety of dominant positions in the academic debate on the populist radical right, which I refer to here as the 'normal pathology thesis'. Short and simple, the thesis holds that the radical right constitutes a pathology in (post-war) western society and its success can only be explained by 'extreme conditions' (i.e. 'crisis'). Authors working within this paradigm often consider the radical right in psychological terms and focus almost exclusive on the demand-side of populist radical right politics.

Recent scholarship on the populist radical right has noted the limitations of a pure demand-side approach (e.g. Betz 2004; Carter 2005; Givens 2005; Norris 2005). Although demand-side factors do help explain the success of populist radical right parties in (Western) Europe, they often fail to account for significant differences between and within countries. Hence, authors have started to emphasise the importance of supply-side factors in the explanation of populist radical right party success. While this shift in focus has been mostly data-driven, i.e. inspired by empirical findings, this article will advance a (meta)theoretical argument for the importance of supply-side factors.

This article first provides a concise overview of the scholarship within the normal pathology paradigm, laying out the basic tenets of the thesis. It will argue that the thesis is not upheld by empirical analysis; i.e. populist radical right attitudes and ideological features are rather widespread in contemporary European societies. This calls for a paradigmatic shift in the understanding of the contemporary populist radical right: from a normal pathology to a pathological normalcy. The article finishes by outlining the most important consequences of

this paradigmatic shift for the study of the contemporary populist radical right.

The normal pathology thesis explained

According to traditional scholarship on the populist radical right, (western) democracy and radicalism in general, and extremism in particular, are based upon fundamentally opposed values. However, much of this scholarship makes no distinction between the two terms, i.e. extremism and radicalism, using them interchangeably. Obviously, this is incorrect. In fact, extremism and radicalism do not simply differ in degree, they differ in kind in their relationship to western democracy.

In line with traditional scholarship, I define *extremism* as the antithesis of democracy, i.e. as anti-democracy (e.g. Backes 1989). However, democracy is defined here in a minimal or procedural way. In the famous definition of the Austrian economist Joseph Schumpeter (1949: 250), democracy is ‘an institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions which realises the common good by making the people itself decide issues through the election of individuals who are to assemble in order to carry out its will’. In short, extremism rejects the belief in popular sovereignty, normally executed by a ‘one person, one vote’ election system.

In contrast to some scholarship, notably the extremism-theoretical school, I define *radicalism* as being in opposition to *liberal* (or constitutional) democracy (Mudde 2007). Importantly, in this definition radicalism accepts procedural democracy, whereas extremism does not. However, radicalism challenges both the liberal basis of it, notably the positive value of pluralism, and the constitutional limitations to popular sovereignty. The core of radicalism is monism, i.e. the tendency to treat cleavages and ambivalence as *illegitimate*.

Much scholarship on the ‘far’ (i.e. extreme and radical) right goes beyond the ideological opposition between radicalism and democracy, and considers the far right (in its various permutations) in psychological terms, mostly as a pathology of modern society. The most influential studies in this tradition are the psychoanalytical analyses of fascism, such as Wilhelm Reich’s *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* (1970; originally 1933) and Theodor W. Adorno and his collaborators’ *The Authoritarian Personality* (1969; originally 1950). Reich (1970: xiii, xiv) considered fascism to be ‘the basic emotional attitude of the suppressed man’ and argued that ‘[i]n its pure form fascism is the sum total of all *irrational* reactions of the average human being’.

As research on the post-war radical right was heavily influenced by studies of historical fascism, it comes as no surprise that the pathology approach initially also dominated that field. Early scholarship on the post-war American radical right seemed particularly affected. For example, Daniel Bell’s classic article ‘The Dispossessed’ (1964) provides an analysis of the

'psychological stock-in-trade', rather than the ideology, of the radical right, and is filled with references to pathologies like paranoia and conspiracy thinking. Similarly, Richard Hofstadter, author of the influential article 'The Paranoid Style in American Politics' (1964a), argued that the radical right 'stands psychologically outside the frame of normal democratic politics' (1964b: 102). The most influential study in this tradition is undoubtedly Seymour Martin Lipset's *Political Man*, which had, among other things, this to say on the topic:

To sum up, the lower-class individual is likely to have been exposed to punishment, lack of love, and a general atmosphere of tension and aggression since early childhood – all experiences which tend to produce deep-rooted hostilities expressed by ethnic prejudice, political authoritarianism, and chiliastic transvaluational religion....

In 'normal' periods, apathy is most frequent among such individuals, but they can be activated by crisis, especially if it is accompanied by strong millennial appeals.

(Lipset 1960: 120, 122)

Many studies of the contemporary radical right in Europe have followed in this tradition. References to paranoia and other psychological disorders abound in the politically inspired studies, which unfortunately still occupy a prominent position in the field (particularly in Germany and France). But even serious scholarship regularly espouses such references. For example, Sabrina Ramet (1999: 4, 16) defines the radical right in terms of 'cultural "irrationalism"' and considers 'an obsession with conspiracies' as one of its essential elements. And Rosanvallon's account of 'the populist temptation' seems almost an exact copy of Hofstadter's position of more than three decades ago:

One way to make the term less ambiguous is to think of populism as a democratic *pathology* in two senses: as a *pathology*, first, of electoral-representative democracy and, second, of counter-democracy. Populism is not just an ideology. It is a *perverse* inversion of the ideals and procedures of democracy.

(Rosanvallon 2008: 265; emphasis added)

With regard to the literature on the contemporary populist radical right this position is most clearly and explicitly expressed in the 'normal pathology thesis' (Scheuch and Klingemann 1967). Scheuch and Klingemann's 'Theory of Right-wing Radicalism in Western Industrial Societies' remains, in fact, one of the most ambitious and comprehensive attempts at explaining the political success of radical right parties in post-war Europe, notably Germany. The following description of the 'normal pathology thesis' is therefore not to be seen as a summary of their theory, but rather as a simplified summary of one aspect of it, which has unfortunately been much more influential than the rest of the fascinating theoretical framework (see also Arzheimer and Falter 2002).

In brief, the normal pathology thesis holds that populist radical right values are alien to western democratic values, but that a small potential exists for them in all western societies (ca.10–15 per cent).¹ Hence, the authors speak of a 'normal pathology'. Within this paradigm, the support of populist radical right parties is based on 'structurally determined pathologies'

(Scheuch and Klingemann 1967: 18). Populist radical right attitudes will only become politically relevant under ‘extreme conditions’ (*Extrembedingungen*) (Scheuch *et al.* 1967: 86). Klingemann (1968: 6) later described the mechanisms of the thesis as follows:

In industrial societies, which are subject to rapid social change, we must expect to find typical tensions. Values from the field of primary relationships and those from secondary institutions arising from the fundamental requirements of changing industrial societies, tend to contradict each other....

The rapid change of environmental conditions exercises a constant pressure which forces the individual either to re-adapt continuously to his environment, or to participate in actively changing this environment.

...as they fail to fulfill their functions of coping with everyday life, the individual with a rigid value and orientation system reacts to changes in the environmental conditions with increasing worry (anxiety, aggressiveness, etc.).

Some of the most prominent authors whose work can be located within the normal pathology paradigm are Hans-Georg Betz, Frank Decker, and Michael Minkenberg.² Betz (1998: 8), for example, argues that ‘[t]he success of the radical populist right thus reflects to a large extent the psychological strain associated with uncertainties produced by large-scale socioeconomic and sociocultural changes’. Explicit support for Scheuch and Klingemann’s normal pathology thesis is particularly strong in the German (language) literature (see, among many more, Grumke 2004; Jaschke 2001; Neugebauer 2001). However, many authors, who might never have read the original article, work within its key parameters. Helmuth Gaus (2004), for instance, explains the success of the radical right by ‘underlying insecurities and fears’ that come out in cyclical crisis situations. And Lee McGowan (2002: 210) concludes that ‘[i]n retrospect, it would be naïve to assume that organized right-wing extremism would have withered away completely [in post-war German, CM]. Pockets of support endure across the country. The people for the most part live in the past’.

In conclusion, the key foundations of the normal pathology thesis have dominated the academic study of the post-war populist radical right in (Western) Europe. They include at least the following aspects: (1) populist radical right values are alien to western democracies; (2) a small potential continues to exist in all societies; and (3) support for populist radical right parties is explained by ‘structurally determined pathologies’, which are triggered by ‘extreme conditions’ (i.e. crises).

The normal pathology thesis and academic research

The paradigm of the normal pathology thesis has profound effects on the academic study of the populist radical right. In its most extreme form, scholars study the phenomenon unrelated to mainstream democratic politics; that is, they do not use mainstream concepts and theories, as the populist radical right is a pathology, and can thus only be explained outside of the ‘normal’. In most cases, this decision is at least as much political as it is scientific. Authors

believe that by using mainstream concepts and theories, the scientist legitimises the populist radical right.

This extreme interpretation was particularly prevalent in the study of ‘neo-fascism’ in France, Germany, and the Netherlands in the 1970s and 1980s. Many authors would focus almost exclusively on the historical links of the populist radical right, i.e. the link to pre-war fascism and Nazism (e.g. Schulz 1990; Van Donselaar 1991). The assumption was that the post-war populist radical right had to be understood as a remnant of a distant past, not as a consequence of contemporary developments.

The more moderate interpretation of the thesis has dominated studies of the electoral success of the populist radical right at least until the late 1990s. It became more broadly popular through the works of scholars integrating insights of the study of political parties (most notably the Greens) into the field (notably Betz 1994; Ignazi 1992; Kitschelt and McGann 1995). In this moderate form, mainstream concepts and theories are employed, but the populist radical right is still perceived as an anomaly of contemporary western democracies. Hence, the key puzzle in the normal pathology paradigm is that of demand: why does a popular demand for populist radical right politics exist?

The two general answers that are offered, protest and support, are based upon a similar assumption: under ‘normal’ circumstances only a tiny part of the population in western democracies evinces a demand for populist radical right politics. Hence it is necessary to search for those ‘abnormal’ circumstances in which ‘populist radical right attitudes’ spread more widely. Most scholars find the answer in modern interpretations of the classic modernisation thesis (see Mudde 2007: 203–5).

Almost all major theories of populist radical right support within the normal pathology thesis refer to some form of crisis linked to some type of modernisation process and its consequences: e.g. globalisation, risk society, post-Fordist economy, post-industrial society (e.g. Beck 1992; Holmes 2000; Loch and Heitmeyer 2001; Swank and Betz 2003). The idea is always the same: society is transforming fundamentally and rapidly, this leads to a division between (self-perceived) ‘winners’ and ‘losers’, and the latter will vote for the populist radical right out of protest (anger and frustration) or support (intellectual rigidity). In short, under conditions of massive societal change, the ‘losers of modernisation’ will vote for populist radical right parties (e.g. Bell 1964; Berezin 2009; Betz 1994; Decker 2004; Lipset 1955; Minkenberg 1998).

Importantly, within this approach populist radical right parties, and actually political actors in general, hardly play any role. The only internal factor that is at times recognised is a charismatic leader (Mudde 2007: 260–63). This is not only in line with Max Weber’s interpretation of charismatic leadership (1987[1919]), although few authors refer explicitly to his theory, it is also in full accordance with the normal pathology thesis. As in ‘normal’ politics voting should be rational, based on ideology or at least identity (cleavage), not on an irrational bond with an individual.

In short, within the normal pathology thesis the populist radical right tends to be studied from the perspective of either fascism (extreme) or crisis (moderate). The prime focus is on explaining demand, which should be low under ‘normal’ conditions. The supply-side of politics is almost completely ignored, as is the role of the populist radical right itself. As far as internal supply does enter the equation, it is in the form of charismatic leadership, again a perceived pathological remnant of a dark past.

The normal pathology thesis assessed

As so often with popular viewpoints, few people have ever tested the validity of the normal pathology thesis. Scheuch and Klingemann themselves laid out the theoretical framework in 1967, but never provided empirical evidence for the fundamental arguments. While they were the first to apply survey material to the study of the radical right, their empirical tests aimed mainly at providing an insight into ‘the’ NPD voter (e.g. Klingemann 1968; Klingemann and Pappi 1968). Later scholars working within the paradigm, many of whom may never have read this rather obscure publication, seemed to treat the thesis as proven, or as received wisdom that no longer requires empirical proof.³

In this section I assess the claim that the populist radical right is a normal pathology at two levels, the ideological and the attitudinal. First, I analyse whether the ideological core of the populist radical right – defined as a combination of nativism, authoritarianism, and populism (Mudde 2007) – is indeed at odds with the basic values of western societies. Second, I examine whether populist radical right values are really shared by only a small minority of the European population.

The ideological

The key feature of the populist radical right ideology is *nativism*, i.e. an ideology which holds that states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group (‘the nation’) and that non-native elements (persons and ideas) are fundamentally threatening to the homogenous nation-state (Mudde 2007: 19). Nativist thinking has a long history in western societies, notably in the US, with movements like the ‘Know Nothings’ dating back to the early nineteenth century (e.g. Bennett 1990; Higham 1955).

Historically and ideologically, nativism is closely linked to the idea of the nation-state, a nationalist construction that has become a cornerstone of European and global politics.⁴ The idea of the nation-state holds that each nation should have its own state and, although this is

often left implicit, each state should have only one nation. This idea is so prevalent that some authors even speak of a ‘methodological nationalism’ underlying the dominant contemporary view on society. According to Daniel Chernilo (2006: 129), ‘[m]ethodological nationalism presupposes that the nation-state is the necessary and natural form of society in modernity and that the nation-state becomes the *organised principle* around which the whole project of modernity coheres’.

Various European constitutions explicitly state that their country is linked to one nation; for example, the Slovak preamble starts with ‘We, the Slovak nation’, while article 4.1 of the Romanian constitution states that ‘[t]he foundation of the state is based on the unity of the Romanian people’ (in Mudde 2005). The idea of national self-determination is even enshrined in [chapter 1](#), article 1 of the United Nations Charter, which explicitly calls for respect for the ‘self-determination of peoples’.

This is not to claim that all references to national self-determination are necessarily expressions of nativism. For example, article 1 of the amended Constitution of Ireland states

The Irish nation hereby affirms its inalienable, indefeasible, and sovereign right to choose its own form of Government, to determine its relations with other nations, and to develop its life, political, economic and cultural, in accordance with its own genius and traditions.

However, further articles express a fairly open attitude to non-natives, including ‘the firm will of the Irish Nation, in harmony and friendship, to unite all the people who share the territory of the island of Ireland, in all the diversity of their identities and traditions’ (article 3).

But even where European states are not nativist, they will use ‘banal nationalism’. With this term, Michael Billig (1995: 6) refers to everyday life ‘ideological habits which enable the established nations of the West to be reproduced’. Simply stated, citizens in western countries are daily reminded of their ‘national identity’ through a plethora of more or less subtle hints, ranging from the celebration of Independence Day, through the name of their media outlets (e.g. *Irish Times*, *British Broadcasting Corporation*, *Hrvatska Radio Televizija*), to history education in schools. Although banal reminders, they are based on the constituting idea of the nation-state.⁵

Authoritarianism, the belief in a strictly ordered society in which infringements of authority are to be punished severely (Mudde 2007: 23), is a feature not even exclusive to the ideological core of the populist radical right. Most notably, ‘the importance of order and authority’ is a core staple of conservatism (Layton-Henry 1982: 1; Pilbaum 2003). The conservative political theorist Roger Scruton (1980: 19), for instance, argues that ‘[i]t is through the ideal of authority that the conservative experiences the political world’, while fellow conservative Robert Nisbet (1986: 34) states that ‘[a]uthority is, along with property, one of the two central concepts in conservative philosophy’. According to Roger Eatwell (1992: 22), within conservatism ‘man is seen as aggressive and in need of authority’.

Moreover, authoritarianism is a key aspect of both secular and religious thinking, ranging from (proto-)liberals like Thomas Hobbes to socialists like Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, and from Roman Catholicism to Orthodox Christianity. According to Lenin (1961: 412), for example, ‘Absolute centralization and the strictest discipline of the proletariat constitute one of the fundamental conditions for victory over the bourgeoisie’. With regard to religion, Bob Altemeyer (1988: 202) concludes in his influential book on authoritarianism: ‘Generally speaking, Christian religions (among others) teach the child to obey a supernatural authority and, more to the point, an earthly authority system that acts in Its name’.

The third and final ideological feature is *populism*, here defined as a thin-centred ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite’, and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale*, i.e. the general will of the people (Mudde 2007: 23). While the populist ideology has much deeper roots in the US than in (Western) Europe (e.g. Goodwyn 1976; Kazin 1995), key elements are clearly linked to fundamental values of western societies in general.

As Margaret Canovan has so eloquently argued, democracy has a redemptive and a pragmatic side; the former emphasises the ideal of *vox populi vox dei* (or ‘government of the people, by the people, for the people’), the latter the importance of institutions. ‘Inherent in modern democracy, in tension with its pragmatic face, is faith in secular redemption: the promise of a better world through action by the sovereign people’ (Canovan 1999: 11). Populism builds upon this ‘democratic promise’ (e.g. Goodwyn 1976; Mény and Surel 2002). Interpreting ‘the people’ as a homogenous moral entity, populists argue that *the common sense of the people* should always take precedence and cannot be curtailed by ‘undemocratic’ institutional constraints such as constitutional protections of minorities.

Populism’s anti-establishment sentiments are also closely connected to broadly shared beliefs in western societies. These range from Lord Acton’s famous adagio ‘power corrupts’ to the negative image of humanity so essential to Christianity and conservatism (e.g. in the Original Sin).⁶ Indeed, the fact that evangelical Christianity plays a much greater role in the culture and politics of the US than in Europe, might be part of the explanation of the broader and deeper anti-establishment sentiments in that country. Moreover, whereas much of Western Europe had a more elite-driven process of democratisation and state formation, based upon a strong central authority and an elitist distrust of the people, in the US the same processes were driven by ‘We, the People of the United States’ and by a distrust in central government shared by both the masses and the elites, including the Founding Fathers.

The attitudinal

The previous section has established that the constituent features of the populist radical right ideology are to a large extent in line with key tenets of mainstream ideologies. Here, we will look into the overlap with mass attitudes. We mainly use the various *Eurobarometer* surveys, which is not only the only regular EU-wide socio-political survey, but it has also shown a particular interest in issues and values of relevance to this study.

Although *nativism* is not the same as racism, whatever that may actually mean to respondents, studies like the Eurobarometer provide ample evidence of extreme nativist attitudes within Europe. For example, *Special Barometer 113* ('Racism and Xenophobia: Human Rights and Immigration in the European Union'), of December 1997, found that '[o]nly one in three of those interviewed said they felt they were "not at all racist." One in three declared themselves "a little racist", and a surprising one third openly expressed "quite or very racist feelings"' (2).

More concretely, 65 per cent of EU-15⁷ citizens agree with the statement 'our country has reached its limits; if there were to be more people belonging to these minority groups we would have problems' (7). Almost two-thirds believe that all illegal immigrants should be sent back, while 80 per cent believe illegal immigrants 'convicted of serious offences' should be repatriated (7). Even more radical than (most) populist radical right parties, some 20 per cent support 'wholesale repatriation', i.e. they agree with the statement that 'all immigrants, whether legal or illegal, from outside the European Union and their children, even those born here, should be sent back to their country of origin' (7).

Similar figures are reported in the European Social Survey (ESS) of 2003, which collected survey data for 18 Western European countries and regions (see Ivarsflaten 2005: 27). Most strikingly, a staggering 80 per cent of the respondents believe that 'immigrants committing serious crime should leave'; note that this does not refer to 'illegal' immigrants, like the Eurobarometer question above. Moreover, large minorities agree that 'immigrants committing any crime should leave' (46 per cent), 'government should not treat refugee applications generously' (45 per cent), and that 'immigrants that are long-term unemployed should leave' (43 per cent). Even the extreme statement that 'immigrants should not have same rights as everyone else' finds support among 19 per cent of the respondents.

As far as positive attitudes towards the ingroup are concerned, many studies take the 'proud' question as an indicator. A staggering 85 per cent of EU-25 respondents are very or fairly proud to be Dutch/Swedish/etc. (*Eurobarometer 66*, September 2007). This ranges from near unanimity in Cyprus (98 per cent) to 71 per cent in Germany. It has to be noted that the 'proud' question is a very soft indication of nationalism, let alone nativism, which does not correlate very strongly with other (more negative) indicators. Moreover, no less than 59 per cent of the EU-25 respondents are also very or fairly proud to be European.

Regarding *authoritarianism*, surveys show an even stronger overlap between mass attitudes and populist radical right positions. According to *Special Barometer 181* ('Public

Safety, Exposure to Drug-Related Problems and Crime'), of May 2003, 78 per cent of EU-15 citizens believe that young people would commit less crime if they were taught better discipline by their parents or at school (9); ranging from 65 per cent in Austria to 90 per cent in France (51). Similarly, 62 per cent of EU-15 people believe that young people would commit less crime if jail sentences were tougher; however, varying between 37 per cent in Sweden to 75 per cent in Ireland (10). Although 55 per cent of EU citizens think their local police 'are doing a good job' in fighting crime, 74 per cent believe that 'better policing' would reduce crime in their area (47). Finally, a staggering 85 per cent of the EU-25 populations agree with the statement: 'Nowadays there is too much tolerance. Criminals should be punished more severely.' This ranges from 70 per cent in Denmark to 97 per cent to Cyprus (*Eurobarometer* 66).

The ideological feature of *populism* can only be studied through its anti-elite or anti-establishment side. As the booming literature on *Politikverdrossenheit* has argued, and partly proven, growing groups of EU citizens hold negative attitudes towards the main institutions of their national democratic system, though not to the democratic system as such (cf. Dahl 2000). In fact, in 1999, 40 per cent of the EU-15 people were 'not very satisfied' or 'not at all satisfied' with their national democracy; ranging from 70 per cent in Italy to 22 per cent in the Netherlands (*Eurobarometer* 52, April 2000). Even though average satisfaction with democracy fluctuates over time, and there is no clear Europe-wide downward trend in satisfaction (e.g. Wagner *et al.* 2009), surveys do show consistently that significant minorities of Europeans are not very/at all satisfied with their national democracy.

Similarly, trust levels of key democratic institutions are quite low. According to the *Eurobarometer* 66 (August 2006), the army is the most trusted institution (69 per cent), followed by the police (66 per cent). The three least trusted institutions are the national parliament (33 per cent), the national government (30 per cent), and political parties (17 per cent). While there also some people with no opinion, the vast majority of EU citizens do not trust the main political institutions of their country. Notably, 58 per cent and 62 per cent 'tend not to trust' their national parliament and government, respectively (*Eurobarometer* 69, June 2008). And a staggering 75 per cent tend not to trust their political parties (*Eurobarometer* 59, April 2003).

Regarding the issue of corruption, a prominent staple of populist radical right propaganda, the *Special Eurobarometer* 291 ('The Attitudes of Europeans towards Corruption'), of April 2008, reported that 75 per cent of EU-27 citizens totally agree or tend to agree that corruption is a major problem in their country. In countries like Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary and Romania some 75 per cent even 'totally agree' with the statement. To be fair, there is a north-south divide here, as in Northern Europe only a minority believe that corruption is a major problem in their country: around a quarter in Denmark and Finland and just under half in Sweden and the Netherlands.

According to the *Special Eurobarometer 245* ('Opinions on Organized, Cross-National Border Crime and Corruption'), 59 per cent of the EU-25 believe that giving or receiving bribes is not successfully prosecuted. Of the categories of people that are believed to be corrupt, 'politicians at national level' top the list, with 60 per cent of the EU-25 respondents thinking they are corrupt; ranging from a low of 29 per cent in Denmark to a high of 69 per cent in Slovenia. Politicians at the regional level (47 per cent) and at the local level (45 per cent) are ranked fourth and fifth. Although the *Special Eurobarometer 291* reports lower figures, they are still significant minorities of 46 per cent (national politicians) and 37 per cent (regional and local politicians).

Finally, a specific target of populist radical right propaganda is the European Union, which is described as a thoroughly corrupt bureaucratic Moloch. Surveys show that this view is shared by a substantial majority of Europeans. The *Special Eurobarometer 291* reports that no less than 66 per cent of citizens of the EU-27 believe that corruption exists within EU institutions; which is actually down from 71 per cent in 2005. Interestingly, the countries with the highest scores, Germany (81 per cent) and Sweden (80 per cent), score among the lowest with regard to corruption in their own country (though this is not a general relationship).

From normal pathology to pathological normalcy

The preceding analysis has shown that the normal pathology thesis does not hold up to empirical scrutiny. Populist radical right ideas are not alien to the mainstream ideologies of western democracy and populist radical right attitudes are not just shared by a tiny minority of the European population. In fact, the populist radical right is better perceived as a *pathological normalcy*, to stay within the terminology of Scheuch and Klingemann – well connected to mainstream ideas and much in tune with broadly shared mass attitudes and policy positions.

The pathological normalcy thesis does not entail that the populist radical right is part of the mainstream of contemporary democratic societies. Rather, it holds that, ideologically and attitudinally, the populist radical right constitutes a radicalisation of mainstream views (Betz 2003; Minkenberg 2001). The empirical argument is that key aspects of the populist radical right ideology are shared by the mainstream, both at the elite and mass level, albeit often in a more moderate form. Not surprisingly, this paradigmatic shift has a profound influence on (1) the relationship between the populist radical right and western democracy, and, consequently, (2) the study of the populist radical right.

With regard to the relationship between the populist radical right and western democracy, the key difference is not to be defined in kind, i.e. by fundamental opposition (i.e. antithesis),

but in degree, i.e. by moderate versus radical versions of roughly the same views. Moreover, populist radical right attitudes and ideas are not marginal under normal conditions; they are fairly widespread, if often in a more moderate form than expressed by the populist radical right parties. How broadly shared the populist radical right core ideology is cannot (yet) be established on the basis of the available datasets. This would require a complex measurement model, encompassing a collection of multiple indicators for all three (multifaceted) ideological features,⁸ rather than simplistic indicators like left-right self-placement (e.g. Winkler and Schumann 1988) or support for racist movements.⁹

Pathological normalcy and academic research

The paradigmatic shift from normal pathology to pathological normalcy has profound consequences for the academic study of the populist radical right. First and foremost, it means that the populist radical right should be studied on the basis of concepts and theories of mainstream political science.¹⁰ Second, the prime focus of the research should not be on explaining demand, as this is generated ‘naturally’ by the complex multiethnic western democracies, but on explaining supply. This is not to say that demand-side explanations are irrelevant, but rather that they are best left to explain the existence of populist radical right attitudes at the mass level, not the electoral success of populist radical right parties.

For populist radical right parties, the political struggle is not so much about attitudes, but about issues. After all, with regard to the issues that matter, i.e. the populist radical right trinity of corruption–immigration–security, a significant part of the population already shares their positions to a large extent.¹¹ The key point is that, traditionally, ‘their’ issues have not dominated the political struggle in most western democracies. Populist radical right parties do not focus primarily on socio-economic issues, as most traditional parties do, but on socio-cultural issues, like the other new party family, the Greens.

Within the pathological normalcy paradigm, the success and failure of populist radical right parties is, first and foremost, explained by the struggle over issue saliency and positions. As Paul Lucardie (2000: 175) puts it, populist radical right parties are purifiers, referring to ‘an ideology that has been betrayed or diluted by established parties’, rather than prophets, ‘which articulate a new ideology’. They do not have to sway voters to a new issue position, they have to shift them to a new issue: away from the socio-economic issues, like (un)employment, and towards the socio-cultural issues, like immigration. Therefore, the main struggle of the populist radical right party family is to increase the saliency of ‘their’ issues, i.e. corruption, immigration, and security.

The increased opportunities for electoral success for all populist radical right parties, at least

since the mid 1980s, is to a large extent explained by the broader shift away from classic materialist politics towards some form of post-materialist politics (Inglehart 1977), or at least a combination of the two. Within this process, the populist radical right itself played only a marginal role. Rather, it was to a large extent an unintended reaction to the success of the new left in the late 1960s and 1970s, which led to a neoconservative backlash in the late 1970s and 1980s (Ignazi 1992). This development not only created electoral space for the populist radical right, it also opened up a relatively new and ‘level’ playing field, i.e. competition over socio-cultural issues like corruption, immigration, and security.

The fact that some populist radical right parties have been able to use these opportunities, and others have not, must be explained by the concept of ‘issue ownership’ (e.g. Budge and Farlie 1983; Petrocik 1996); or, more accurately for non-valence issues, issue position ownership.¹² While the new playing field was level in all countries, the struggle for issue position ownership varied. In some countries, new or reformed (right-wing) parties could capture issue position ownership on corruption, immigration, and security even before a populist radical right party was able to establish itself. In most unsuccessful cases, however, it was the populist radical right party itself that kept it from achieving issue position ownership. Because of a lack of organisation and personnel, these parties were haunted by internal strife and public scandal, making them an unattractive political actor despite their favourable issue position.

Where the populist radical right was able to establish issue position ownership on one or more of their golden issues – corruption, immigration, security – the key explanation for their success was internal. While it was mostly the established parties (forced by the public and the media) that created the conditions for their electoral breakthrough, it was the populist radical right parties themselves that ensured their electoral persistence. Broadly stated, they did this through a combination of leadership, organisation, and propaganda.

Two good examples of populist radical right that successfully combined these three factors are the French Front National (FN) and the Belgian Vlaams Blok/Belang (VB). During its heyday, the FN had a powerful combination of charismatic leadership by Jean-Marie Le Pen, who attracted voters from across the political spectrum, and managerial leadership by Bruno Mégret, who organised the party into a powerful machine. The party’s propaganda was famed inside and outside of the country; in fact, many other populist radical right parties adopted FN propaganda (e.g. Rydgren 2005). One of these parties was the VB, copying not just posters but even whole programmes,¹³ and which had in Filip Dewinter both a charismatic and managerial leader.

While both examples seem fairly straightforward, much more empirical study is needed to get a clearer view on what exactly distinguishes successful from unsuccessful party organisation, leadership, and propaganda. Moreover, the histories of both parties show that these factors are no guarantee for everlasting electoral success. The FN got involved in a fierce

internal power struggle between Le Pen and Mégret in the late 1990s, leading to a split in the party and a consequent loss of support (albeit much less than expected). And although the VB has not yet experienced a serious split, the party has recently lost its first elections and internal divisions have emerged that could threaten its future success.

Conclusion

In recent years more and more studies of the populist radical right have pointed to the limitations of demand-side explanations. Instead, they emphasise the need to include supply-side factors in the analyses as well (e.g. Carter 2005; Givens 2005; Norris 2005). However, while previous authors have made these claims purely on the basis of empirical arguments, this article provides the first (meta)theoretical argumentation for the importance of supply-side explanations.

The study of the populist radical right has been dominated by the normal pathology thesis, i.e. the belief that the populist radical right is a pathology of contemporary western democracies, which has only limited support under ‘normal’ circumstances. Within this paradigm, mass demand for populist radical right parties constitutes the main puzzle, and can only be explained by some form of modernisation theory-related crisis.

As has been shown, the normal pathology thesis does not hold up under empirical scrutiny. The key features of the populist radical right ideology – nativism, authoritarianism, and populism – are not unrelated to mainstream ideologies and mass attitudes. In fact, they are best seen as a radicalisation of mainstream values. Hence, the populist radical right should be considered a pathological normalcy, not a normal pathology.

This paradigmatic shift has profound consequences for the study of the populist radical right. Widespread demand is a given, rather than the main puzzle, in contemporary western democracies. Provocatively stated, the real research question should be: why have so few parties been successful given the generally fertile breeding ground? The answer is to be found in the supply-side of issue politics, most notably in the struggles over the saliency of issues (particularly for the phase of electoral breakthrough) and over issue position ownership (especially for the phase of electoral persistence). This can only be truly understood if the populist radical right party itself is brought (back) into the analysis and explanation.

Acknowledgements

Earlier versions of this article have been presented at various locations, including the

University of Illinois, the University of Oslo, Vanderbilt University and the Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin. I want to thank all participants for their valuable feedback. In particular, I thank Elisabeth Ivarsflaten, Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser and Hans-Dieter Klingemann for their careful reading and insightful comments on the article. Finally, I want to thank the reviewers of *West European Politics* for their constructive criticisms.

Notes

¹ The original article does not specify the size of the population with radical right attitudes, but in another article Scheuch (1967: 10) speaks of ‘a residuum of ca. 10% up to 15%’.

² Other work that implicitly or explicitly builds upon Scheuch and Klingemann’s normal pathology thesis include Nagle (1970), Armingeon (1995) and Winkler and Schumann (1998).

³ A notable exception is the chapter by Arzheimer and Falter (2002) in the *Festschrift* for Hans-Dieter Klingemann. Not only do they put the normal pathology thesis to the test, they actually try to test the thesis in all its complexity.

⁴ Andreas Wimmer (2002: 2), for example, argues that ‘[d]emocracy, citizenship and national self-determination became the indivisible trinity of the world order of nation-states’.

⁵ Even in clearly multinational states or federations one can find such banal nationalism. The state of Belgium, for example, entails two large cultural-linguistically different groups (Dutch speakers and French speakers; as well as a tiny group of German speakers), which do not even share one (monolingual) public space. At the same time, the Belgian Constitution explicitly states that ‘[a]ll power emanates from *the Nation*’ (article 33; emphasis added).

⁶ The influential American conservative thinker Peter Viereck (1949: 30) has argued that conservatism should be ‘the political secularization of the doctrine of original sin’.

⁷ EU-12 refers to the EU between 1980 and 1995, when it included the following 12 member states: Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and the United Kingdom. In 1995, Austria, Finland and Sweden joined, transforming it into the EU-15. In 2004, 10 new, mainly East European countries joined (Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, and Slovenia), making it the EU-25. With the addition of Bulgaria and Romania, in 2007, the European Union is currently known as the EU-27.

⁸ Few attempts at constructing such multidimensional measurement models have been undertaken so far. The few existing models are heavily influenced by the models, not the theory, of Adorno and his collaborators. Unfortunately, they have been developed for different, if related, concepts (notably the ‘extreme right’ and ‘far right’), and have been applied and tested in only limited local or regional contexts (e.g. De Witte *et al.* 1994; Meijerink *et al.* 1995, 1998).

⁹ For example, *Special Eurobarometer 41* on ‘Racism and Xenophobia’ (November 1989) asked respondents whether they approved with ‘movements in favour of racism’. Obviously, ‘only’ 4 per cent of EU-12 citizens approved ‘completely’, and 6 per cent ‘to some extent’ (16).

[10](#) A recent example, using mainstream coalition theories to explain the government participation of radical right parties, is De Lange (2008).

[11](#) Hence, the finding that xenophobic attitudes are a rather poor explanator of populist radical right voting behaviour (e.g. Rydgren 2008).

[12](#) In short, party A *owns* position X (on issue Y) when a large part of the electorate that (1) cares about issue Y and (2) holds position X, trusts party A to be the most competent party to shift policies (directly or indirectly) towards issue position X.

[13](#) The VB copied most of its infamous anti-immigrant 70-Point Program from the FN's 50-Point Program (see Mudde 2000).

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Part V

Consequences

The vast majority of people are particularly interested in, or concerned about, the populist radical right because of its alleged threat to democracy. For decades activists and commentators have stressed the consequences for European democracy of the rise of populist radical right parties. This section includes articles and chapters that look at the alleged ‘right turn’ (*Rechtsrück*) of western democracies. How do populist radical right parties perform in government? Has their success pushed other political parties to the right? And what has been the impact of extreme right groups and violence?

In almost prophetic terms **Michael Minkenberg** assessed the impact of populist radical right parties in public office years before this would become a more common occurrence. He offered an analytical framework that has informed many later studies. **Martin Schain** extended the scope of analysis by focusing on the direct and indirect impact of populist radical right parties outside of government, creating an even broader analytical framework with an even bigger potential.

Joost van Spanje takes up the popular ‘contagion hypothesis,’ which argues that mainstream parties have changed their positions (on immigration) as a consequence of electoral competition from populist radical right parties. **Tjitske Akkerman** analyzes the actual effect on immigration and integration policies of populist radical right parties in government in Western Europe, while **Danielle Albertazzi** and **Sean Mueller** look at the broader effects on liberal democracy in both Eastern and Western Europe. **Cas Mudde**, finally, offers a meta-analysis of the impact of populist radical right parties on the polities, policies, parties, and publics of West European democracies.

Revision questions

Minkenberg

- Which four types of interaction does Minkenberg distinguish?
- What are the two main types of interaction effects? How are they mediated?

- What are the main differences between the political impact of the populist radical right in Germany versus France and Italy? What explains these differences?

Schain

- What are the main differences between impact before and after electoral breakthrough of a populist radical right party?
- What have been the main internal and systematic impacts of the Front National?
- What is ‘institutionalized power’ and how does it relate to impact of the Front National (and populist radical right parties more generally)?

Van Spanje

- Why would other parties be influenced by the immigration positions of populist radical right parties? Should it affect every party in the same way?
- What is an ‘anti-immigration party’?
- How do party ideology and government-opposition status affect the impact of populist radical right parties on the immigration stances of other parties?

Akkerman

- What constitutes the Nationalist Immigration and Integration Policy (NIIP) Index?
- Do populist radical right parties in government have a large impact on immigration politics?
- What explains the different impact of populist radical right parties in government?

Albertazzi and Mueller

- What is the relationship between populism and democracy?
- In what ways do populist radical right parties in government challenge the liberal democratic system?
- What are the main limitations to the populist challenge to liberal democracy?

Mudde

- Has the electoral success of populist radical right parties led to a *verrechtsing* (right turn) of the European people?
- What has been the main impact of populist radical right parties?
- What explains their limited impact?
- Why could populist radical right parties become more influential in the future?

Discussion points

1. Is the populist radical right more effective in agenda-setting or in policy-making? Are there important national differences within Europe?
2. In his article Minkenberg notes ‘growing counter-mobilization and polarization’ in Austria at the end of the 1990s. How is the situation with regard to these processes in Europe today?
3. Are populist radical right parties still mainly constraining immigration policy today or are they shaping it (too)?
4. What is the ‘systemic impact’ of populist radical right parties today?
5. Is the concept of ‘anti-immigration party’ still able to distinguish between populist radical right and mainstream (right) parties today?
6. Is the populist radical right ‘contagious’? If so, in which ways?
7. What are the main positions on immigration and integration of populist radical right parties?
8. Are populist radical right or mainstream right parties the main forces behind the tightening of immigration policies within Europe?
9. Are populist radical right parties anti-democratic, anti-liberal, or both?
10. Is the populist radical right still the most successful new party family of postwar Europe?
11. Have they become more or less influential since 2010?
12. Are populist radical right parties destined to succeed in opposition and fail in government?

Further reading

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The radical right in public office

Agenda-setting and policy effects

Michael Minkenberg

To many, the forming of a coalition government between the conservative Austrian People's Party (Österreichische Volkspartei, ÖVP) and the radical right-wing populist Freedom Party of Austria (Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs, FPÖ) in February 2000 meant the crossing of a border-line. Among the many domestic protest activities in Austria, the so-called 'Thursday marches' became a regular focal point of public mobilisation. The EU *sans* Austria took an unprecedented step in condemning unanimously the Vienna coalition government and imposing sanctions on a democratically elected government of a member country, lifted later in September 2000 after a report on the political situation in Austria was submitted to the EU by the 'three sages'. However, the FPÖ is not the first far right party to enter a national government of an EU member state. In 1994, the Italian neo-fascist National Alliance (Alleanza Nazionale, AN) – a redesigned Social Italian Movement (Movimento Sociale Italiano, MSI) under the leadership of Gianfranco Fini – joined Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia (roughly: Go for It, Italy!) and Umberto Bossi's Northern League (Lega Nord) in a coalition government in Rome: the first new – and short-lived – government after the breakdown of the *partitocrazia*. After the recent parliamentary elections in Italy in April 2001, this coalition has returned to power for a second attempt. Moreover, in the late 1990s, there were four mayors in medium-sized cities in southern France who belonged either to Jean-Marie Le Pen's National Front (Front National, FN), or to the splinter of the Méretist wing, the National Republican Movement (Mouvement National Républicain, MNR), only one of whom (in Toulon) was forced out of office in the French municipal elections in March 2001.

But despite these cases of far right parties in the executive of Western democracies, and many more in parliaments, there is hardly any research on their performance and impact. International comparisons of contemporary radical right-wing parties rather tend to focus on the nature of such parties and the reasons for their rise. In contrast, this article attempts to analyse the role of the radical right in the political process, in particular its function and impact at the legislative and executive levels as well as the effects emanating from the interaction

between the radical right and the established actors. The research is driven by the hypothesis that under the conditions of stable democracy, holding office produces a net result in a ‘taming effect’ on radical right-wing actors rather than an overall sharp ‘right turn’ in the country.

In order to put the Austrian case in perspective, the article analyses various recent country cases where the radical right has conquered public office in the legislative and executive branches of government at national, supranational and sub-national levels. The selection of the country cases is guided by the idea that in order to analyse the interaction of these parties and other political actors and to study the effects thereof, it is useful to contrast differences in the structure of party competition and electoral system on the one hand, and political culture and the role of the country’s past on the other.¹ The four cases chosen here are Austria, Italy, France and Germany. The German case deviates from the other three in that the parties of the far right do not hold any executive office, but both the Republicans (Republikaner, REP) and the German People’s Union (Deutsche Volksunion, DVU) hold, or until recently have held, seats in various state parliaments and in the European parliament. While this is a rather marginal case of parliamentary representation compared with countries like Belgium or Norway, it is useful for a variety of reasons. First, Germany, along with Italy, represents a case where the fascist past has clearly stigmatised for a long time anything that smacks of right-wing radicalism in the public discourse as well as the party system and thus shaped party competition and interaction. On the other hand, Germany and Austria belong to the category of states where party competition has long been concentrated in the ‘centre’, with a limited number of actors, while the French and Italian party systems are characterised by higher degrees of fragmentation and polarisation. Finally, the inclusion of Germany as a case of a somewhat successful marginalisation of radical right-wing parties at the national level offers some insights into the possible costs, or indirect effects, of such marginalisation strategies as compared with the other three countries.

A process model of the radical right

The new radical right is conceptualised here as a radical reaction to fundamental social and cultural changes in post-war Western societies.² The key definitional criterion is an ideological core of ultra-nationalism derived from an anti-universal, anti-democratic myth of the national community, in combination with an authoritarian understanding of politics and a pronounced populist style. In light of the notion that right-wing radicalism can be understood as a ‘normal’ pathological condition in most industrialised societies which is mobilised in times of accelerated social and cultural change³ the underlying assumption of this article is that the new radical right has been the result of a general modernisation shift which occurred in most

Western democracies in the wake of ‘1968’, and of specific mobilisation shifts in the context of each country’s opportunity structures. That is, the transformation of Western capitalism into a phase of advanced industrial capitalism, or ‘post-industrialism’, the exhaustion of the welfare state, and a cultural shift which challenged established social values, life-styles and institutions resulted in a new dynamism in Western politics that opened opportunities for new parties on the left and right and contributed to the emergence of a new, value-based conflict axis, that is, a New Politics dimension.⁴ Ideologically and sociologically, the new radical right represents the right-wing pole of a new cleavage which cuts across the established lines of partisan conflict and societal cleavages. Politically, it performs a bridging function between a moderate (neo)conservatism and an explicitly anti-democratic, latently or openly violent right-wing extremism.⁵ Its newness lies in its ideological and strategic adjustments to the context of stable democracies and to the new cleavage and opportunity structures of ‘post-industrial society’, in particular the absence of an open hostility to liberal democracy and a softening of racist and authoritarian messages in terms of ‘ethnopluralist’ and ‘ethnocratic’ concepts of politics and society.⁶

In Western Europe, numerous radical right-wing parties were established in the 1970s and after. [Table 1](#) summarises the results of most of these parties in the last two decades in Western European national elections and demonstrates a significant electoral upswing of the radical right in the 1990s in nearly all countries. With the exception of Germany, the three cases selected for this study are those which gained the highest average results in the entire decade of the 1990s. Both the Austrian FPÖ and the Italian MSI are not new *per se*, but the FPÖ was completely overhauled by its new leader Jörg Haider after 1986, and transformed from a liberal into a right-wing party while the explicitly neo-fascist MSI was turned into a softened version under the banner of the AN in early 1994 without a clear break with its neo-fascist past.

[Table 1](#) Electoral results of radical right-wing parties (%) in national parliamentary elections in Western Europe, 1980–99
(average)

	1980–84	1985–89	1990–94	1995–99
Austria	5.0	9.7	19.6	24.4
Belgium	1.1	1.7	6.6	10.9
Denmark	6.4	6.9	6.4	9.8
France	0.4	9.9	12.7	14.9
Germany (Federal Rep.)	0.2	0.6	2.3	3.3
Great Britain	0.0	0.6	0.9	0.0
Italy	6.8	5.9	9.5	15.7

The Netherlands	0.8	0.8	3.0	0.0
Norway	4.5	8.4	6.0	15.3
Sweden	0.0	0.0	4.0	0.0
Switzerland	3.8	6.3	10.9	9.3

Note: The following parties are included:

Austria: Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPÖ); Belgium: Vlaams Blok (VB), Front National (FN); Denmark: Fremskridspartiet (FP), Dansk Folkepartiet (DF); France: Front National (FN); Germany: Republikaner (REP), Deutsche Volksunion (DVU), Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands (NPD); Great Britain: British National Party (BNP), National Front (NF); Italy: Movimento Sociale Italiano/Alleanza Nazionale (MSI/AN); Netherlands: Centrumpartij (CP), Centrumdemocraten (CD); Norway: Fremskridspartiet (FP); Sweden: Ny Demokrati (ND); Switzerland: Auto Partei (AP), Schweizer Demokraten (SD), Lega dei Ticinesi (LT).

Sources: Author's calculation based on election returns; see H.-G. Betz and S. Immerfall (eds.), *The New Politics of the Right* (New York: St Martin's Press 1999); M. Minkenberg, 'Rechtsradikalismus/Rechtsextremismus', in D. Nohlen (ed.), *Kleines Lexikon der Politik* (München: Beck 2001), p.420.

A model which helps to explain the particular role and effect of new radical right parties in the political process must take into account both structural and dynamic aspects of mobilisation and involvement. As early as 1988 Klaus von Beyme suggested that 'future studies of right-wing extremism will have to pay more attention to the whole political context of this political movement instead of being preoccupied with traditional party and electoral studies'.⁷ As a summary of the mobilisation context, social movement research offers the concept of 'opportunity structures', defined as persistent incentives for collective action which shape people's expectations for success or failure.⁸ Since expectations concerning the costs and benefits of political behaviour are shaped as much by culture as by economic considerations, a country's political culture, including national traditions and the role of the country's past in the political discourse of the present, is an important part of these opportunity structures. For the radical right, this means the appropriation of the dominant concept of nation and nationhood, and the attempt to present this appropriation in opposition to the established elite's understanding of nation. Because of the radical right's claim to represent ordinary people against an allegedly corrupt political class, their nationalistic counter-discourse cannot be too far from traditional concepts of nationhood that are available as cultural symbols to large segments of the public. As a result, the radical right dramatises the vulnerability of the nation in times of a real or presumed crisis. Frequently, this 'framing' results in a radicalisation of the racist or ethnocentrist discourse which tends to cross the boundaries of legitimate political discourse and action defined by the dominant concepts of nationhood.

In addition to these structural and cultural aspects of right-wing radical mobilisation, a

process model must consider the interaction of the radical right with the environment in a more dynamic perspective. A promising starting point is Doug McAdam's study on the relationship between organisational strength of a social movement, level of mobilisation of support and social control by its environment.⁹ It is particularly useful to look at the reciprocity of the relationship between the radical right and its environment, that is the perception of the new collective actor as a threat or a new opportunity (for example, as an ally against political adversaries).

The new radical right analysed here represents a shift in focal points, thereby changing the discourse on nationhood and related issues towards the right along the New Politics cleavage. This impact, configured as 'interaction effects', does not occur in a linear fashion but can be observed on various levels, to varying degrees and in various types.¹⁰ Among the types are demarcation and confrontation on the one hand, and co-optation and incorporation on the other. The levels of interaction can be distinguished as agenda-setting levels (such as public response and other parties' reactions to the new radical right) and policy-making levels (such as parliaments and legislation as well as the particular governmental responses or participation in government itself). In the following, agenda-setting effects, as far as they affect policy-making, will be analysed at the level of the new radical right's interaction with the other parties, and direct policy-making effects at the level of the parliamentary and executive activities.

The new radical right's interaction with established parties

Real and substantive policy effects do not only result from parties' participation in the executive but also from the other parties' or the government's reactions in the policy-making process. These effects are largely mediated by the nation-specific opportunity structures for new political movements and parties, such as the more centralised political system in France and Italy, and the German state's vigilance for anti-democratic forces as reflected in the Office for the Protection of the Constitution and the German political culture's sensitivity to radical right-wing groups.

In contrast to other countries such as France and Austria (see below), the German pattern of strategic interaction between the established parties in government (especially the right) and the new radical right was characterised by elite action and radical right reaction along the New Politics dimension, rather than the other way round. This pattern was driven in particular by the efforts of the Christian Democratic parties (CDU/CSU) both to fight the left and to prevent the rise of any far right party by selectively pre-empting such parties' platforms and by threatening legal action against these parties. Already in the early 1980s, neo-conservative

cultural and political elites emphasised traditional elements of German national identity, that is, the idea of a German *Kulturnation*, including elements of a *völkisch*, or exclusively ethnic understanding of the German nation, in opposition to calls from the left for a post-national identity and a ‘constitutional patriotism’. Both in terms of content (the ethnocultural idea of nationhood and the ‘normalisation’ of the past) and strategy (the attempt to establish ‘cultural hegemony’ and define the terms of debate), these efforts were similar to those among the intellectual *Neue Rechte* and some right-wing radical circles.

These efforts were accompanied by a political debate on immigration, asylum and foreigners in Germany in which leading politicians of the governing CDU/CSU raised fears among Germans of being ‘swamped’ by aliens and their cultures. In the context of the election campaign of 1986/87, members of the government parties spread statistics on crime, on the rising numbers of illegal aliens, and on the exploding costs of immigration and asylum which suggested, for example, that a dramatic increase of crime and violence was the result of foreigners in the country. This fuelled public excitement long before either the rise of the REP, or the reunification of Germany and a new wave of east–west migration. In fact, this debate produced the terms of a political discourse which later served the REP and the DVU as a platform for political mobilisation and further radicalisation to the right. Moreover, it shaped the public’s interpretation of post-unification immigration.

This strategy continued after the rise of the new radical right. By coopting rather than opposing part of the new radical right’s agenda, the CDU/CSU and the SPD moved the political spectrum towards the right along the New Politics dimension. The handling of the asylum debate by the major parties in 1992/93 demonstrates this shift most tellingly. Both the ‘abuse’ of asylum and the alleged crime rate of foreigners as well as right-wing extremist excesses in 1992/93 served to restrict the right to asylum by a constitutional amendment and to reinforce law and order policies by the Bonn government with the support of the SPD. This approach was sharpened after the CDU/CSU found itself in the opposition in the wake of the federal elections of 1998. Attempts by the Schröder government to introduce a new citizenship code and to embrace the need and reality of immigration to Germany were countered by leading CDU politicians such as Roland Koch’s signature campaign against the new nationality code in Hesse and Jürgen Rütger’s campaign against the Green Card for computer experts from India (‘Kinder statt Inder’) in North Rhine-Westphalia. In this way, the new radical right ‘co-governed’ in Germany despite its limited support in the public.¹¹ More recently, six parliamentary deputies of the REP in the Stuttgart Landtag declared they had voted for incumbent CDU minister president Erwin Teufel in 1996 in order to ensure his election in the face of a rather slim CDU majority of seats after the 1996 state elections and to avoid a dissolution of the parliament and new elections in case Teufel failed to get elected. There are also accounts of collaboration between the REP and both CDU and SPD on selected issues such as health insurance and the compatibility of mayoral office and parliamentary seats.¹²

In the French case, a longtime consensus on immigration was undermined by the very different manner in which the established parties handled the FN at the electoral level. The dynamic of alliance formation and the reciprocal relationship between the FN and its political environment – evident in the shifting control response of the established parties from seeing the FN first as irrelevant, then as representing an opportunity – contributed to the FN's breakthrough and the subsequent readjustments of the other parties' positions. In the FN's consolidation phase between 1984 and 1988, the following pattern of strategic interaction emerged. National leaders of the Gaullist Rally for the Republic (Rassemblement pour la République, RPR) and the moderate right Union for French Democracy (Union pour la démocratie française, UDF) vehemently opposed alliances with the FN but avoided stigmatising the party and its voters. At the local and regional level, this allowed tolerance of further alliances in the elections of 1986 and 1988.¹³ After 1988, the party leadership of the RPR decided on a strict demarcation from the FN and a strategy of containment; only after 1992, however, the decision was fully implemented. In general, the established right's response to the FN since 1988 reflects a reversal of previous strategies which combined an ideological demarcation with an organisational co-optation.¹⁴

In the French policy-making process, this meant a selective adoption of the FN's programme and rhetoric, especially by the established right. In the two periods of cohabitation under Mitterrand, from 1986 to 1988 and from 1993 to 1995, the governing right responded to growing concerns over immigration and the electoral entrenchment of the FN with several measures aimed at tightening naturalisation and restricting immigration (the legislation named *lois Pasqua*).¹⁵ But in 1986 and 1993, the State Council and the Constitutional Council, respectively, declared some of these measures unconstitutional and reaffirmed the universalist-republican foundation of French nationhood and citizenship. As for the left, the Socialists before 1993 (but also after 1997, in the third period of cohabitation) tried to counter the FN's advance by some policy initiatives such as a strengthening of border controls or detaining foreigners with invalid documents; in general, however, they faced stronger inner-party criticism and did not give up on their policy of integration of immigrants begun in the first years of Mitterrand's regime.

A new phase of inter-party interaction arrived in the late 1990s after the FN had acquired political power by conquering the mayor's offices in Toulon, Marignane, Orange (all 1995) and, later, in Vitrolles (1997). Immediately after taking over, the FN co-ordinated their agenda and put an emphasis on law and order, in particular an increase of the local police force even while budgets were cut, and social and cultural activities such as the cleansing of libraries and the application of the *préférence nationale* to the allocation of social benefits. The fiscal policies were intended to underline the respectability of FN government: while public funding of social, economic and cultural services came to a halt, taxes were increased – contrary to the FN's campaign promises. But, most importantly, the cultural life in the cities governed by the

FN underwent a severe transformation. Many cultural projects (theatre groups, music festivals, cinemas, clubs, coffee shops and so on) had to abandon their activities for lack of funding or withdrawal of their licence, bi-national marriages were blocked, and anti-FN activities were suppressed at the expense of civil liberties.¹⁶

The FN's success in the mayoral elections and their policies provoked new quarrels among the classical right over the proper strategy, and some local and regional elites resumed their selective co-operation with the FN. In the March 1998 regional elections, four candidates of the RPR/UDF were elected as regional presidents with the support of the FN. But the classical right's grass-roots turned against this kind of co-operation: about two-thirds of RPR/UDF supporters voiced their disapproval of the four presidents' acceptance of FN support and wanted the right-wing alliance to maximise its distance from the radical right.¹⁷ As a result of these developments, the classical right – while undergoing an organisational reshuffle through leadership changes and party splintering – returned to a more combative strategy. After the regional elections of 1998, the new RPR leader Philippe Séguin renewed the Gaullists' pledge for a strict demarcation *vis-à-vis* the Front National whereas the UDF even joined forces with the socialists in a regional election in 1999. But the UDF leadership's strict rejection of any collaboration with the FN provoked the centre-right group Liberal Democracy (Démocratie libérale, DL) to leave the UDF in mid-1998. In the Toulon mayoral elections in March 2001, the DL candidate Hubert Falco led the RPR/UDF/DL alliance and took over the mayor's office after serving the incumbent right-wing radical Jean-Marie Le Chevallier (ex-FN) a crushing defeat and staying ahead of his main competitor, a candidate of the almost equally right-wing Pasqua list. Nonetheless, the other three right-wing radical mayors in Marignane, Orange and Vitrolles secured their re-election, two of them in the first round. These results along with the prominent role of other right-wing radical candidates in the municipal elections of 2001 indicate that the centre of gravity in many southern towns in France has moved to the right over the years and pose continuous problems for the established right in its search of a proper strategy.

The Italian MSI's interaction with the other parties before the breakdown of the old order was for most of the time defined rather clearly by the established parties' anti-fascist consensus and the MSI's embrace of fascism. Despite the temptations of instrumentalising the MSI in a multi-party environment, the other parties settled for a strategy of isolation and thus reduced the interaction to a minimum. However, the Italian parties and governments did not follow the German example of the 1950s, to ban the party altogether. The MSI's 'exit from the ghetto'¹⁸ preceded the fall of the wall because of the major parties' strategic manoeuvres in the 1980s, but the real breakthrough occurred with the end of *partitocrazia* in the early 1990s. Already in the early 1980s, the Socialist leader Bettino Craxi made some discreet overtures to the MSI in order to get the MSI to steal votes from the Christian Democrats and, thus, enhance the status of the Socialists *vis-à-vis* its major competitor and coalition partner. It

seems, however, that the image of the MSI was transformed more substantially when President Francesco Cossiga, at the end of his seven-year turn in the early 1990s, began to criticise the major parties' – including his own, the DCI's – political failures in the system of *partitocrazia*, especially conduct in office and corruption. By emulating the anti-party rhetoric of the MSI and giving voice to popular frustrations and resentments against the party system, he legitimised the MSI's own anti-system critique. The unfolding of the *partitocrazia*'s collapse in fact left the MSI as one of the very few actors not tainted by the old order; its status was further elevated when, after its reorganisation as the AN, Berlusconi invited the AN to join his alliance, as a counterweight to the Lega Nord and a reassurance to the voters that a Berlusconi government would not enter secessionist adventures.¹⁹

The Austrian case somewhat resembles the Italian one but diverges sharply from the French and German cases, both because of the size and omnipresence of the FPÖ and the major parties' initial consensus of *Ausgrenzung* (isolation). Over the last ten years, however, this consensus has given way to a selective integration of the FPÖ's platform until the official end of the isolation policy by the ÖVP.²⁰ The first sign of a breakdown of this policy since Haider transformed the FPÖ in 1986 was the co-operation of the ÖVP with the FPÖ in the province of Carinthia where the FPÖ, after the 1989 elections, replaced the SPÖ as the largest party in the parliament of Klagenfurt. This breakdown was driven in part by regional laws enforcing cross-partisan co-operation in the election of officials, but also by the Carinthian ÖVP's loathing of the SPÖ, and resulted in the election of Jörg Haider as *Landeshauptmann* in Carinthia with the help of the ÖVP votes in parliament. However, Haider's praise for the employment policy of Nazi Germany in 1991 led to the collapse of this 'coalition' and the ÖVP's return to the strategy of *Ausgrenzung*. The limits of this strategy are illustrated by the fact that, since 1989, voices within the ÖVP argued that the FPÖ, which continued to rise electorally, should be brought into government and take over responsibility rather than be left free to feed and monopolise popular resentments. The legislative successes of the FPÖ in the Nationalrat in the twentieth legislative period (see next section) document these limits as well as numerous cases of collaboration of the FPÖ with the ÖVP, or even the SPÖ (for example, in Bregenz), at the local level.²¹

The new radical right's parliamentary action

In this dimension of analysis, direct effects by the parties of the new radical right are not difficult to determine. Due to the nature of these parties and their status as opposition parties, one could expect that in the parliaments in which they hold or held seats, new right-wing radical parties produce minor results mostly at the symbolic level. However, the limits of

legislative effects depend on their role as pariah parties as defined by the other parties in parliament.

A study of the German far right parties' parliamentary activities in the state parliaments of Baden-Württemberg and Bremen and in municipal councils in North Rhine-Westphalia demonstrates a consistent and effective isolation strategy by the other parties in parliament. The radical right unsuccessfully launched several attempts to challenge the respective state or local governments. Moreover, they developed little expertise and were mostly preoccupied with preventing the break-up of their parliamentary groups as a result of intense in-fighting. Most of their parliamentary initiatives concentrated on foreigners and asylum seekers, often in connection with law and order issues. For example, in the Stuttgart diet between 1992 and 1996, two-thirds of the 78 REP initiatives directed at the Ministry of Interior dealt exclusively with foreigners. The most notable parliamentary success of the new radical right was the DVU's suggestion in Bremen to improve security in German trains.²²

After re-election of the REP into the Baden-Württemberg parliament with a surprising 9.5 per cent of the vote in March 1996, the party concentrated its activities on numerous parliamentary questions and petitions, mainly dealing with issues of law and order, foreigners, education and traffic. Between 1997 and 2000, only two legislative bills were introduced by the REP, one concerning the law on the status of cabinet ministers (September 1997), the other an amendment to the Baden-Württemberg constitution aimed at specifying that the constitutional protection of the family applied only to the traditional family of 'father, mother and children' (January 2000). The DVU in the eastern state parliaments of Saxony-Anhalt (1998–present) and Brandenburg (1999–present) developed similar activities with only very few legislative projects. In Brandenburg, only two bills were introduced by the DVU aimed at the status and salary of high-level civil servants and cabinet ministers ('Trennung von Amt und Mandat'); none was initiated by the DVU in the Magdeburg diet. In the European parliament, when the REP was present between 1989 and 1994 with at first six seats, reduced after several break-ups to two and a member of the Technical Caucus of the European Right, they demonstrated limited parliamentary activities with only 56 initiatives (two inquiries and 54 calls for resolution), that is, significantly below the level of the French partner in the caucus.²³

During the two years of parliamentary existence in the Assemblée Nationale from 1986 until 1988, the National Front's legislative initiatives were also successfully blocked by the other parties. Efforts to challenge the Chirac government during question-time mixed with Le Pen's desire for respect. Thus, the FN group adjusted quickly to the parliamentary routine and tried to acquire an image of a serious and hard-working force. For example, the group showed an extraordinary presence in the parliamentary sessions and chose to offer its co-operation on numerous legislative projects. Their legislative effort was aptly characterised as 'a voluminous but sterile production': with six per cent of the deputies they produced a total of 9,152 or 13.4

per cent of the legislative amendments.²⁴

In their legislative activities, the FN deputies introduced bills which largely mirrored their party platform; they asked for the revocation of the citizenship laws, the reintroduction of the death penalty (which had only recently been abolished by the socialist government after Mitterrand's and Mauroy's takeover in 1981), the introduction of a 'real popular capitalism' (including the suppression of the trade union's monopoly in representing the workers' interests in collective bargaining), and the submission of all laws to a referendum.²⁵ However, in the entire two-year span of the FN's presence in the National Assembly, only one legislative bill which emanated from them was debated and adopted, and it concerned a rather marginal issue, the official recognition of the French-speaking group in the International Association of Parliamentarians. In the European parliament, the FN belonged to the most active groups in the radical right-wing caucus (Caucus of the European Right 1984–89, Technical Caucus of the European Right 1989–94). Between 1984 and 1989, they produced 114 initiatives (18 parliamentary inquiries and 96 calls for resolution), and in the following session 109 initiatives (17 and 92, respectively).²⁶ But, similar to the situation in the National Assembly, the isolation strategy of the other transnational caucuses prevented any identifiable legislative output.

In the case of the Italian MSI/AN, scholarly attention to the parliamentary record is very sparse, despite its continuous presence in national parliament since 1946.²⁷ The MSI, due to its hostility to the institutions and values of Italian democracy, was the most isolated of the far right parties under consideration here. This secured its niche in the Italian electorate but condemned it to the status of a pariah which could only hope for the downfall of the system. Consequently, the MSI focused its strategy on contrasting the instability of the Italian government and the related chaos with its own authoritarianism and glorification of Italian fascism. Occasionally, however, the party moderated its stance to appear more respectable to the Christian Democrats; for example, in the late 1950s the MSI supported some Christian Democrat-led governments in Rome. Only with the end of the Cold War and the reorganisation and renaming of the party as Alleanza Nazionale under Fini's leadership did the political legitimacy of the party increase. But this was more a result of the other parties' behaviour than a true democratisation of the party from within.²⁸ Still, in May 1994, shortly after having formed the coalition government with Berlusconi, the AN introduced – as in every year since 1978 – a proposal to the Italian parliament to revoke the constitutional ban on the revival of the Fascist party.²⁹

The participation of the AN in the Italian national government after the March 1994 elections proved rather short-lived because the Lega Nord brought down the coalition at the end of the year. Clearly, the presence of five AN ministers in Berlusconi's government signalled the end of anti-fascism as a prerequisite of governmental legitimacy. The AN left a mark more in international than in national affairs, following its irredentist ideology and its emphasis on foreign affairs which made up one-quarter of the party's political programme for

the March 1994 elections.³⁰ As Europe was celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the defeat of fascism, Fini commented on the occasion that with the Normandy landings Europe reconquered its liberty but lost its independence and its spirit.³¹ And a little while later, AN deputy Mirko Tremaglia, who was about to become the chair of the parliamentary committee of foreign affairs, asked for Rome's renunciation of the 1975 Treaty of Osimo which defined the border between Italy's north-east and Yugoslavia, thus making the case for the return of the Istrian peninsula and Dalmatia to Italy. This was followed by the Berlusconi government's veto on Slovenia's attempt to be considered as a candidate for EU membership. Besides these foreign policy advances, Fini used the government participation mainly to increase the respectability of the AN, which was improved by the low-key behaviour of its cabinet members who belonged to the pragmatic wing of the party.³² At the end of the seven-month experiment of the three-party coalition of the right, Fini was more popular than Berlusconi but the constitutional reform which the three parties, in particular the AN, had announced had not happened.

In Austria, the FPÖ has a long track record of parliamentary activities and initiatives at the national and state level but surprisingly this has been largely ignored by the academic literature. The size and experience of the party's parliamentary caucus (see electoral results in [Table 1](#)) almost 'naturally' produced a high level of parliamentary input, though until recently with only limited direct effects due to the isolation of the FPÖ by the other two large parties and their policy of *Ausgrenzung*. However, in the twentieth legislative session (1995–99) the FPÖ delegates in the Nationalrat introduced 100 bills on virtually all issues of Austrian political life, with those nine introduced by Jörg Haider himself concerning more fundamental political issues (election of the federal president, media and party laws, constitutional issues).³³ The general thrust of these initiatives was the parliamentary translation of the FPÖ's relentless populist attacks on the large parties ÖVP and SPÖ – with some success. The FPÖ's legislative proposals to curtail the parties' public financing (1996), to enhance the constitutional status of the traditional family (1997), to lower the limit on the number of legally employed foreigners in Austria from eight to six per cent (1997), to revise the citizenship law and include the passage '*Österreich ist kein Einwanderungsland*' ('Austria is not an immigration country') (1997), to tighten the asylum law (1998), and to revise the regulation of the funds for the victims of National Socialism (1999) were all passed as laws by the Nationalrat. That is, even when still in the opposition, the FPÖ managed to shape part of Austrian policy-making in typical right-wing issues, an indication of the breakdown of the isolation policy followed by the other parties. These legislative successes were accompanied by various extra-parliamentary activities such as the national initiatives of 1987, an anti-privilege initiative which received 251,461 signatures, and in 1993 an anti-foreigner initiative which received 417,278 signatures. The latter, under the title of '*Österreich zuerst*' ('Austria first'), contained 12 propositions, most of them discriminatory against foreigners in Austria (such as the call for a

30 per cent cap on foreign children in public school classes), but fell short of the one million signatures expected by Haider.³⁴ Nonetheless, it mobilised and polarised the public and resulted in an increased pressure on the established parties; some of its elements were passed into law later in the twentieth legislative period.

The new radical right's executive action

The following survey of the new radical right's activities in government focuses on the Austrian case alone because of both the persistence of the FPÖ's government participation, which has lasted longer than that of any other such party in post-war Europe, and the intensity of reactions to its participation. The analysis provides some answers to the question whether the governmental impact of the radical right is more than just symbolic, to what extent it reflects the more controversial parts of its platform, and whether the 'taming effect' outweighs the 'right turn'.

After the Nationalrat elections in October 1999, a drawn-out period of negotiations between the ÖVP and the Social Democrats set in and ended with the conservatives finally turning to the Haider party as a partner and forming a coalition government with the FPÖ in February 2000. The immediate impact was international rather than national: the EU's decision to freeze most of its relations with Austria followed promptly after the conclusion of the negotiations. Nonetheless, the new Austrian coalition government set to work right away. Under the title of '*Österreich neu regieren. Das Reformprogramm der FPÖ-ÖVP-Regierung 2000–2003*' ('Governing Austria Anew. The Reform Programme of the FPÖ-ÖVP Government 2000–2003') the coalition's government programme stressed the continuity of Austria's course in the EU, the international security arrangements and defence, the consolidation of the economy, the fight against organised crime and other 'classical' policy areas. But in a variety of goals and measures, some new and largely FPÖ-inspired proposals were included which signal a break with the past policies of the Grand Coalition. Among these, the most striking are the rejection of the old consociational democracy ('*Im Interesse der Bürger – vom Verwaltungsstaat zum Leistungsstaat*', 'In the Interest of the Citizens – from the Bureaucratic State to the Efficient State') which includes measures such as the introduction of more direct democracy, the curtailing of the power of trade unions in collective bargaining and workers' representation; the reduction of immigration to a zero-level (Haider: '*de-facto-Nullzuwanderung*') and a preference of nationals for employment opportunities. These propositions are embedded in a cultural policy ('*Kulturland Österreich*') which emphasises the concept of *Heimat* and includes measures such as the creation of an Austrian National Foundation for the protection of Austria's culture, specific subsidies to the Austrian film

industry, and the establishment of a ‘Home of the History of the Republic of Austria’ which is supposed to co-ordinate various cultural concepts. Considering the fact that a variety of FPÖ positions have already been passed by the Vienna parliament when the party was still in the opposition, this government programme – with the notable exception of the proposal to halt immigration – does not provide a radical break with the policy output of the last few years, albeit it draws a clear line between the philosophy of the new coalition and that of its predecessors. This philosophy aims, in Haider’s words, at a ‘true democracy’ and a ‘constitutional reform’, summarised as the ‘Third Republic’. The political implications and applications of this concept can be measured at three levels: the policy output at the national level after more than a year of government participation, the policy output at the regional level of Carinthia where Haider himself is at the helm of the state’s executive as *Landeshauptmann*, and Haider’s ambiguous role as unofficial leader of the FPÖ and commentator of Austrian politics after he had resigned as party chairman in the wake of the government formation of ÖVP and FPÖ.

After more than a year in office, the Vienna coalition government’s record reads like a comprehensive reform programme which, however, is far from the implementation of right-wing radical ideology. Most government activities and legislation concern major socioeconomic and administrative policies as well as conventional foreign and European policies, such as the balancing of the budget in 2001 and 2002, the family-oriented reform of old age pension funds, the privatisation of the energy sector and parts of the mass media, the introduction of tuition for university students and increasing autonomy of universities, an administrative reform with streamlining measures and a massive reduction of jobs, and a low-key approach in foreign and especially EU policy with the primary aim to rehabilitate Austria within the EU. There is little in this policy output which reflects radical right-wing issues, and those policy decisions which made headlines either concern economic measures such as the drastic cuts in the budget or point to the opposite direction, for example compensation for forced labour during World War II and the planned restitution of property which was lost due to ‘Aryanisation’ drives under the Nazi rule. At this level, the FPÖ does indeed appear ‘tamed’ by its coalition partner and the constraints of the priorities of this reform programme which, in the context of Austrian politics, must seem radical nonetheless. Consequently, the FPÖ in government has been described by some observers as the Austrian version of Tony Blair’s New Labour because of the heavy emphasis on deregulation and neo-liberal policies, a comparison invoked by Jörg Haider himself.³⁵ Moreover, with regard to the fears that the FPÖ in government might contribute to a violation of democratic values or minority rights, the EU report by the ‘three sages’ (adopted in Paris on 8 September 2000) concludes that ‘it is our considered view that the Austrian Government is committed to the common European values. The Austrian Government’s respect in particular for the rights of minorities, refugees and immigrants is not inferior to that of the other European Union Member States’.³⁶

However, whereas some critics unduly determine the nature of Haider and the FPÖ by his outrageous remarks only, it is an equally misleading reduction to measure the FPÖ's nature and political effects only in terms of national legislation and neo-liberal philosophies. At other levels of national politics, the FPÖ's 'right-wing' impact can be felt more directly. For example, the government's immigration policy – while not yet manifested in specific legislation – aims at a significant reduction of immigration despite demographic developments which suggest the need for increased labour migration. While this has long been one of the FPÖ's positions, it is a change in that the ÖVP, previously more sympathetic towards labour migration, now endorses the FPÖ's approach and has agreed to lower the rate of family reunion of migrants in Austria. In the field of cultural policy, the FPÖ has insisted on including in the coalition agreement support for a new field of university research called *Volkskultur* and launched several attempts to push for the revitalisation of the concept of *Heimat*. This is part of a larger assault by Haider on modern culture and his efforts to save Austria's 'real' art and culture from subversive counter-culture and 'left-wing cultural fascism' by eliminating cultural autonomy from the political realm. In this vein, the FPÖ-led ministry of science in Vienna intervened at the University of Vienna because a professor taught a course about opposition and resistance which included an analysis of the Thursday marches. Finally, the scandal surrounding the FPÖ gathering data about its political opponents with the help of classified police records ('*Spitzelaffäre*') sheds a particular light on the FPÖ's understanding of the privacy rights of the Austrian citizens.³⁷

While the coalition government in Vienna tries hard to convey an image of 'business as usual', Haider's policies in Carinthia are more telling. After the provincial elections in April 1999, when the FPÖ achieved 42 per cent of the vote, Haider was again elected as *Landeshauptmann* by the parliament, but unlike his first term in 1989–91, he is at the same time *Kulturreferent*, the person responsible for administering cultural affairs in Carinthia. One of his most controversial measures was to stop financing the internationally known annual Ingeborg Bachmann Literature Contest which received public funding from 1985. Haider's *Kulturmampf* Carinthia is embedded in a larger government programme combining populist economic measures (lowering of rents on public housing and of the price of electricity in Carinthia, supporting small business and tourism in the province, the introduction of a 'children's cheque', a monthly allowance to mothers with small children) with a strategy of '*Entpolitisierung*' and '*Objektivierung*', paraphrases for cleansing the public sector of members of the other political parties, and the transformation of Carinthia into a direct democracy (for example, direct election of the *Landeshauptmann*, plebiscitarian measures).

Finally, Jörg Haider continues to provoke the Austrian public and to play with resentments in a way that can hardly be called opportunistic, as some observers believe. While he may have realised that some of his statements about the Nazi past could be a liability, he, like other FPÖ leaders, continues to use xenophobic and anti-Semitic remarks and allusions.³⁸ Thus,

while the EU's 'three sages' confirmed that Austrian politics conforms with EU values, their evaluation of the political nature of the FPÖ was much less benign. They criticised the continuous use of ambiguous language by FPÖ leaders which can be interpreted as xenophobic and anti-Semitic and characterised the FPÖ as a 'right-wing populist party with extremist expressions' which they still hold applicable after the party joined the coalition government.³⁹ The (strategic or ideological) use of extremist expressions in conjunction with a cultural policy at the national and regional level which aims at 'liberating' Austria from the political left and from 'foreignisation' by reasserting the ethnocultural roots of the country belongs as much to the FPÖ's vision of the 'Third Republic' as does the neo-liberal platform in socioeconomic issues. This ethnocratic ideology behind the concept of the 'Third Republic' with its anti-enlightenment thrust and its *völkisch* elements of a homogenous community of Austrians, has been widely covered.⁴⁰ It has not been put to rest as a response to the responsibilities of government or 'tamed' by the coalition partner but accompanies the reform efforts of the Vienna coalition and shapes the political climate, enhanced by the FPÖ's status and authority as a government party. Thus, while it may be true that Haider is the 'personified antithesis to political correctness' (R. Burger) with a special aggressiveness in violating taboos, including the use of Nazi expressions, it is nonetheless questionable to characterise his political cadres, for example his adviser Andreas Mölzer, as 'ideological zeros' and to reduce his activities to 'stupid remarks'.⁴¹

Conclusions

The political impact by right-wing radical parties in public office cannot simply be measured in terms of their direct participation in the government. The analysis has shown that agenda-setting and policy effects are mediated at several levels through interaction with established political parties, parliamentary presence and executive action. The structures of party competition or systemic variables shape these effects only in conjunction with political-cultural variables. In Germany, the absolute impact may be marginal, but in relative terms, when considering the political weight of the new radical right, it is clearly disproportionate. Here, the shadows of the past and the major parties' and especially the CDU/CSU's strategy to preempt right-wing radicalism by co-opting part of their agenda and directly playing to the fears of nationalist and xenophobic voters come into play. Moreover, in both Germany and Austria, the federal structure of government provides far right parties with additional opportunity structures which are absent in centrist France and Italy.

The parliamentary presence of right-wing radical parties alone does not result in any impact as long as other parties preserve the radical right's pariah status. But the cases of Italy and

Austria demonstrate a weakening of the other parties' resolve in the face of an enduring presence of the radical right and a crisis of the party system. At the level of executive action, there are real direct effects in the Austrian case. Political priorities were set on socioeconomic and political reforms – a ‘taming effect’ related to political expediency rather than the coalition partner’s efforts – while the party’s ethnocratic neo-liberalism continues to inform the FPÖ’s cultural policies. However, in policy terms, the real breakthrough in Austria was not the forming of the coalition government in early 2000 but the break-up of the consensus of *Ausgrenzung* in the Vienna parliament during the twentieth legislative session and the selective co-operation of the ÖVP with the FPÖ on various issues. Moreover, all three cases where the new radical right assumed executive office at various levels demonstrate that the most substantive impact was a change in cultural issues, a new *Kulturkampf* against the left, its allies and against foreigners. In overall terms, the French and Italian cases reveal the least impact on a national level, despite the national repercussions of the FN and MNR mayors in southern France and the (brief) government participation of the AN in Rome in 1994 whereas the Austrian case shows the largest impact of the new radical right.

Contrary to many fears and unlike the takeover of governmental power by the fascist parties in Italy and Germany in the inter-war years, the new radical right in power continues to play the democratic game. However, some of the rules are in the process of being redefined. The ‘government of the people, by the people, for the people’ is not at stake, but the concept of the ‘people’ is. As the handling of civil rights, the ultra-nationalist rhetoric, the various efforts of a *Kulturkampf*, and the policy towards migrants already indicate, the meaning of ‘people’ slowly shifts from *demos* to *ethnos* where the radical right-wing parties exercise executive power. Whether, as a consequence, democracy transforms into ethnocracy, depends on the larger society and the political class in general. In Austria, signs of growing counter-mobilisation and polarisation, along with the results in recent elections in some regions and in Vienna, suggest a slowing down rather than an acceleration of this process. In Italy, on the other hand, the party may just have begun.

Notes

A previous version of this article was presented at the 24th Annual Conference of the German Studies Association, Houston, TX, 5–8 Oct. 2000. The author wishes to thank the panel participants at the conference and Iris Gundermann at the European University Viadrina in Frankfurt (Oder) for helpful comments.

¹ For the role of these factors in shaping the success or failure of far right parties see H. Kitschelt with A. McGann, *The Radical Right in Western Europe* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press 1995); M. Minkenberg, *Die neue radikale*

Rechte im Vergleich: USA, Frankreich, Deutschland (Opladen/Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag 1998).

2 M. Minkenberg, *The New Right in Comparative Perspective: The USA and Germany*, Western Societies Occasional Paper No. 32 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press 1993); H.- G. Betz, *Radical Right-wing Populism in Western Europe* (New York: St. Martin's Press 1994).

3 E. Scheuch and H.-D. Klingemann, 'Theorie des Rechtsradikalismus in westlichen Industriegesellschaften', *Hamburger Jahrbuch für Wirtschafts- und Gesellschaftspolitik* 12 (1967), pp.11–29.

4 R. Inglehart, *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 1990); R. Dalton, *Citizen Politics* (Chatham, NJ: Chatham House Publishers 2nd edn. 1996).

5 Right-wing extremism is distinguished from right-wing radicalism by its explicit questioning of the constitutional democratic order, or the threat or use of violence.

6 See R. Griffin, 'Home Truths: The Contemporary Struggle between Democracy and Ethnocracy in Europe', article presented at the International Conference on Racism, Ideology and Political Organization (Stockholm, 1997).

7 K. von Beyme, 'Right-wing Extremism in Post-war Europe', *West European Politics* 11/2 (April 1988), pp. 1–18.

8 S. Tarrow, *Power in Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1994), p.85.

9 D. McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press 1982).

10 See Minkenberg, *Die neue radikale Rechte im Vergleich*, pp.58–67, and M. Minkenberg, 'Context and Consequence: The Impact of the New Radical Right on the Political Process in France and Germany', *German Politics and Society* 16/3 (Fall 1998), pp.1–23. For a similar configuration of response strategies to radical right-wing parties, see W.M. Downs, 'Pariahs in their Midst. Belgian and Norwegian Parties React to Extremist Threats', *West European Politics* 24/3 (July 2001).

11 E. Kolinsky, 'A Future for Right Extremism in Germany?', P. Hainsworth (ed.), *The Extreme Right in Europe and the USA* (London: Pinter 1992), pp.89–90; Kitschelt, *The Radical Right in Western Europe*, pp.235–8.

12 See *Berliner Zeitung*, 2 Nov. 2000.

13 Perrineau, 'Le Front national', M. Winock (ed.), *Histoire de l'extrême droite en France* (Paris: Seuil 1993), pp.275–7; J. Marcus, *The National Front and French Politics: The Resistible Rise of Jean-Marie Le Pen* (London: Macmillan 1995), pp.136–43. The French electoral system provides strong incentives for the same pattern of behaviour, with candidates of the right collaborating and overriding ideological concerns in the context of electoral uncertainty, which has been shown for other countries as well; see Downs, 'Pariahs in their Midst'.

14 See Minkenberg, *Die neue radikale Rechte im Vergleich*, pp.347–50.

15 H. Letigre, *La réaction du R.P.R. à la percée du F. N.* (Paris: la pensée universelle 1988), pp. 123–66.

16 See, for example, the dossier 'Le Front national, c'est ça', *Le Monde*, 21 March 1998, and www.mrap.asso.fr.fiche5.htm (10 Aug. 2000).

17 S. Bastow, 'Le Mouvement National Républicain: Moderate Right-wing Party or Party of the Extreme Right?', *Patterns of*

Prejudice 34/2 (April 2000), p.15f. In the early 1990s, nearly half of the RPR and UDF supporters were in favour of such alliances with the FN, see Minkenberg, *Die neue radikale Rechte im Vergleich*, p.349.

[18](#) T. Gallagher, 'Exit from the Ghetto: The Italian Far Right in the 1990s', in P. Hainsworth (ed.), *The Politics of the Extreme Right: From the Margins to the Mainstream* (London: Pinter 2000), pp.64–86.

[19](#) Gallagher, 'Exit from the ghetto', p.71; W. Merkel, 'Rechtsextremismus in Italien: Von der neofaschistischen Systemopposition zur postfaschistischen Regierungspartei: Der Aufstieg der Alleanza Nazionale', in J. Falter, H.-G. Jaschke and J. Winkler (eds.), *Rechtsextremismus. PVS special issue 27/1996* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag 1996), p.415.

[20](#) A. Pelinka, 'Die Großparteien und der Rechtsextremismus', in Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes (ed.), *Handbuch des österreichischen Rechtsextremismus* (Vienna: Deuticke 1993), pp.464–73.

[21](#) D. Morrow, 'Jörg Haider and the New FPÖ: Beyond the Democratic Pale?', in P. Hainsworth (ed.), *The Politics of the Extreme Right* (London: Pinter 2000), pp.50–54; Pelinka, 'Die Großparteien und der Rechtsextremismus', p.471.

[22](#) C. Butterwegge et al., *Rechtsextremisten in Parlamenten* (Opladen: Leske+Budrich 1997), pp.102, 220.

[23](#) A. Osterhoff, *Die Euro-Rechte. Zur Bedeutung des Europaparlaments bei der Vernetzung der extremen Rechten* (Münster: Unrast 1997), p.269.

[24](#) C. Maisonneuve, 'Le Front nationale à l'Assemblée Nationale: Histoire d'un groupe parlementaire' (unpublished dissertation, Paris: IEP 1991), pp.37–8 (my translation, MM).

[25](#) See G. Birenbaum, *Le Front national en politique* (Paris: Balland 1992), p.91.

[26](#) Maisonneuve, *Le Front nationale à l'Assemblée Nationale*, p.39; Osterhoff, *Die Euro-Rechte*, pp.264–9.

[27](#) The leading expert on the MSI/AN, Piero Ignazi, wrote two influential books on the subject but did not cover any of the legislative initiatives of the MSI or AN: P. Ignazi, *Il polo escluso. Profilo del Movimento Sociale Italiano* (Bologna: il Mulino 1989); P. Ignazi, *Postfascisti? Dal Movimento sociale Italiano ad Alleanza nazionale* (Bologna: il Mulino 1994).

[28](#) Merkel, 'Rechtsextremismus in Italien', pp.412–15.

[29](#) Gallagher, 'Exit from the Ghetto', p.75.

[30](#) M. Sznajder, 'Italy's Right-Wing Government: Legitimacy and Criticism', *International Affairs* 72/1 (1995), pp.91, 101.

[31](#) Ignazi, *Postfascisti?*, p. 110.

[32](#) Gallagher, 'Exit from the Ghetto', pp.76–7.

[33](#) See www.parliament.gv.at/pd/pm/XX/A_F_gm.html (9 Aug. 2000).

[34](#) B. Obzerninks, *Nachbarn am rechten Rand: Republikaner und Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs im Vergleich* (Münster: Agenda Verlag 1999), pp. 113–15.

[35](#) J. Haider, 'Blair and Me Versus the Forces of Conservatism', *Daily Telegraph*, 22 Feb. 2000; see H.G. Betz, 'Haider's Revolution, or The Future Has Only Just Begun', *Contemporary Austrian Studies* (forthcoming 2002). For the policy output, see FPÖ, 'Regierungsarbeit 2000 – eine Bilanz', www.fpoe.at (4 June 2001).

[36](#) M. Ahtisaari, J. Frowein and M. Oreja, ‘Report’ (Paris, 2000), p.32.

[37](#) See E. Linsinger and M. Völker, ‘Der “Rucksack” der Ausländer’, *Der Standard*, 7 June 2001; H. Korn, ‘FPÖ mischt sich in Uni-Lehre ein’, *Der Standard*, 28/29 April 2001; W. Perger, ‘Affäre Datenklau’, *Die Zeit*, 26 Oct. 2000.

[38](#) See H. Schiedel, ‘Die FPÖ und der Antisemitismus’, www.doew.at (31 May 2001).

[39](#) Ahtisaari *et al.*, ‘Report’, p.27.

[40](#) Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstands (ed.), *Handbuch des österreichischen Rechtsextremismus* (Wien: Deuticke 1993); T. Assheuer, ‘Volksgemeinschaft: Jörg Haider sucht die “Dritte Republik”’, *Die Zeit*, 10 Feb. 2000; C. Schlüter, ‘Teutonischer Yuppie. Es ist ausgestanden: Jörg Haiders Heimholung und die Vision eines völkischen Neoliberalismus’, *Die Zeit*, 5 Oct. 2000.

[41](#) R. Burger, ‘Romantisches Österreich’, *Leviathan* 28/1 (March 2000), pp.3–13.

The extreme-right and immigration policy-making

Measuring direct and indirect effects

Martin A. Schain

Policy impact and its context

The question of who makes immigration policy focuses on the relationship between policy actors and outcomes, but is directly related to the constraints within which policy-makers shape policy. While the radical right in Europe has been generally isolated from making policy, with the exception, of course, of Austria since 1999, it has, I would argue, been a major force in constraining and shaping the way immigration policy was developed in many countries in the 1990s. A decade ago, Martin Baldwin-Edwards and I outlined an approach to the politics of immigration in which we stressed: 'how immigration has emerged as a political issue, how the politics of immigration have been constructed, and what have been the consequences of this construction for politics in Western Europe' (Baldwin-Edwards and Schain 1994: 1). That volume did not contain a single chapter on the relationship between the radical right and immigration policy, but its influence is noted in passing in all of the chapters that deal with specific countries (France, Britain, Austria, Germany and Italy). Thus, although ten years ago the impact of the radical right on immigration policy was noted throughout, we never integrated these references into our analytical framework.

This contribution is an attempt to deal with that oversight. It appears that the least examined aspect of the emergence of the radical right during the past 20 years is its impact on politics and policy. I will first develop an approach to understand impact, and then analyse it in some detail in the context of party developments, where the impact of parties of the radical right are crucial. I will look first at the impact of electoral breakthrough, then the impact of organisational development and on party success on its own evolution, then policy-making and policy. Although each of these aspects has been examined and analysed in somewhat

different ways, my objective here is to find a way to understand impact in relation to the constraints within which policy-makers shape policy. I will examine both indirect impact on immigration policy, through the impact on the party system itself, as well as more direct impact, when the radical right actually has policy-making capacities. Most of this article is devoted to an analysis of the French National Front (FN), but I will return to implications for comparative analysis in the conclusion.

Typically, political parties first gain attention not at the moment they are formed, but at the moment when they achieve an electoral breakthrough that is sufficient to have an impact on the variation of support within the party system. This development can be achieved in two ways: through conversion of voters who had previously voted for other political parties, or through mobilisation of either new voters or voters who had previously been abstainers. If this breakthrough endures, it can result in an electoral realignment within the party system, in the context of a critical election or series of elections (Burnham 1970; Sundquist 1973; Andersen 1979; Martin 1998: 153–160). Of course, as the French experience amply demonstrates, parties that achieve short-term success only infrequently have long-term electoral impact. Nevertheless, even short-term breakthrough can have a significant impact on public policy if established parties readjust their agendas in reaction to this success. This is the core analysis that was generally applied to the impact of radical right parties in our volume ten years ago.

Thus, in the initial phase, as voters transfer their support from other parties, the impact on the party system is felt most intensely by those parties from which the transfers take place. For them, the problem is how to recapture the votes they have lost, and how to prevent further erosion. Discussions tend to focus on the new issues that attracted the initial surge of voters to the upstart parties. This was particularly true of radical right party emergence, perhaps because of the shock-effect of the way they developed the immigration issue. At this stage, the transfer of votes is frequently seen by journalists and scholars alike as a passing ‘protest vote’ – as it was by Dominique Schnapper in 1994, with regard to the FN – by a part of the electorate against established parties that have ignored their interests and concerns.¹

In some cases established parties can recapture these voters by co-opting and reworking the issues that defined the initial protest. In other cases established parties have attempted to isolate and more or less ignore the challengers. Co-optation of radical-right issues has operated quite successfully in the British case (in the 1970s), somewhat less so in the German case (in the 1980s), and not at all in the French case (in the 1990s). Isolation has also been attempted at various points in the German, Belgian and French cases, but without notable success. Where co-optation has been successful, it is likely to have not only an impact on those parties from which voters had been transferring their support, but also (more) on public policy.

By altering the issue agenda, co-optation also alters the terms of conflict among political parties, and, potentially, the electoral cleavages and divisions. Thus, as Anthony Messina (1998) argues with regard to immigration policy in the UK, even if the upstart party does not endure,

its impact can be important both in terms of the policy agenda and the organisation of the political system (also see: Eatwell 1992; Kitschelt 1995: Ch. 7). However, the question of why and how co-optation ‘works’ in some cases and not in others remains to be analysed.

A second aspect of party development involves organisational construction. Electoral breakthrough generally enables a party to organise a network of elected officials and party activists on the basis of success and patronage. Organisation, in turn, stabilises electoral success through a growing capacity to mobilise voters around issues and personalities. The impact of the development of organisational networks is related to the structure of the political and electoral systems. Thus, in the French case, in which local impact is important, electoral effectiveness appears to demand widespread party networks.

Where the radical-right party endures, the explanation may lie less with the power of the issues raised by the party and more with declining mobilisation capacities of other party actors in the party system. If this were not the case, issue co-optation should be more effective. As the new party builds its organisation, penetrates the political system with elected officials, and gains greater media exposure, the potential of its partisan and legislative impact should increase. The construction of party organisation is related to electoral success, since elected officials are often capable of attracting the resources necessary for the development of party organisations. In addition, electoral success frequently proves attractive for ‘conversions’ from established parties, both of candidates and of party workers.

This continuing process of party construction is likely to have an impact not only on other parties within the party system, but also on the ability of the party to participate directly and indirectly in the policy-making process. Depending on the degree of policy-making decentralisation, the spatial variation of policy-making effectiveness can be considerable within countries. Participation in and influence over policy-making is most direct when the party controls or is a coalition partner in national government. However, it can also be important when the party controls local governments. Policy-making effectiveness may also be related to local coalition formation, even where the party is a minority force.

Party impact on policy can also be felt indirectly, as government and other parties within the system attempt to reduce the influence of the upstart by adjusting their own strategies and issue agendas. Thus, once the party is organisationally and electorally established, it is in a position where it can more easily influence its own future through its impact on the structure and support of other political parties, as well as the priorities of the political agenda of both parties and government.

Party breakthrough is important for policy, also because it alters the structure of participation in the policy-making process, as well as the assumptions behind the development of policy. The first struggle in the policy making process concerns the portrayal of policy issues. E. E. Schattschneider examined the struggle over what he called ‘the scope of conflict’ and the portrayal of issues by looking at the arguments and strategies of political party

leaders. In other words, how issues are defined in policy debates is driven by strategic calculations among conflicting party actors about the mobilisation of what Schattschneider calls ‘the audience’ at which they are aiming (Schattschneider 1960: Ch. II) From this point of view, political leaders skilled in formulating issues to their own advantage strongly influence how (and who in) ‘the audience’ – voters and militants – becomes involved. The motor-force behind policy portrayal is issue-driven conflict among political elites, and different formulations of issues can mobilise different coalitions of supporters, each of which has its policy bias. Schattschneider focuses on scope, but the structure of voter coalitions may be equally important. The electoral breakthrough of a new party, based on issues defined by the party, essentially alters the structure of actors, as well as the ways that parties interact within the arena of the party system. The ‘audience’ is also different in the sense that it is mobilised in different ways. In this way, issues of immigration are integrated into the political agenda through evolving party competition.

Once the party becomes established, its growing role in policy formation can have an impact on the party itself. In the Michels tradition, participation in the policy process can have a moderating impact on the radicalism of the party, rather than a radicalising effect on other parties engaged in the process (Michels 1962). In fact, some elements of the parties of the established right in France – RPR (Rassemblement Pour la République) and UPF (Union Pour la Démocratie Françoise) – believed that drawing the FN into governing coalitions would indeed undermine the policy radicalism of the party or reduce its strength (as in Austria). However, growing moderation or radicalisation may also depend on specific organisational dynamics within the FN.

I will now first analyse the electoral impact, then focus on the organisational impact, both internally and within the party system. Finally, I will look at the FN’s impact on policy and agenda formation.

Electoral breakthrough and partisan realignment: implications for policy

The electoral breakthrough of the National Front occurred roughly in the period from 1983 to 1988. Its influence on the political agenda derived from its ability first to attract and then to hold voters, and second from its ability to influence the priorities of voters who support other political parties. As the FN attracted and held voters, it posed a strategic problem primarily for other political parties of the Right, but increasingly for parties of the Left as well for somewhat different reasons.

The electoral emergence of the National Front in 1983–84 has been well documented and

analysed: from the sudden breakthrough in the European Elections in 1984 with over 11% of the vote (2.2 million) to the 14.4% of the vote that Jean-Marie Le Pen attracted in the first round of the presidential elections in 1988 (4.4 million votes), to the record 15.1% (4.6 million votes) vote for Le Pen in the first round of the presidential elections in 1995, to the more than 15% of the vote that went to FN candidates in the first round of the legislative elections of 1997, and finally the second place finish of Le Pen in the first round of the presidential elections of 2002, with 17% of the vote.

The structure of the vote has changed somewhat over the years. However, from the point of view of its influence on agenda formation, what is most important is that the overwhelming majority of National Front voters in 1984 ‘converted’ from the established parties of the Right; and then, after that, the growth of the FN electorate can be attributed to its ability to attract a large percentage of new voters (and former abstainers). Second, while holding on to its old voters better than any other party in France, the proportion of FN voters who identified with the party ('feel close') also increased. In 1997, almost two-thirds of these voters claimed to identify with the party, a percentage higher than that of any other party, with the exception of the Communist Party (PCF) (Schain 1999: 2–3). By 1997, the National Front had become the second party of the Right (nationally), and there is considerable evidence that, in a series of critical elections, beginning in 1986 and culminating in 1997, it had achieved partial realignment of the party system.

The relative standing of the National Front at the national level involves a realignment of voting at the level of electoral circumscriptions. In V. O. Key's 1955 article on partisan realignment in the US, he traced the relative support of the major parties in a sample of towns, noting that in the presidential elections of 1928 there was a sharp realignment towards the Democratic Party in towns in New England that had traditionally voted Republican, even though the Democratic candidate (Al Smith) lost the election (Key 1955). What is striking about Key's analysis is that he uses local spatial realignments to understand patterns of national change. For scholars who followed Key's insight – Walter Dean Burnham (1970) and James Sundquist (1973) in particular – the question was not just to analyse electoral realignments, but also to understand the social and economic forces behind them.

In the French case, there is clear evidence of partisan realignment, first in the positioning of political parties across a wide range of National Assembly electoral constituencies, second in the realignment of key social groups (especially working class voters), and finally in the impact of FN issues on the broader electorate. The emergence of FN as a serious force within the political system became evident in 1993, when the party demonstrated its ability to win significant electoral support in most parts of the country. In 1993, FN gained votes in every French *département* except the Bouches du Rhone (the Marseilles region), where it was already very strong, and the Haute Corse. In 1997, it gained in every *département* except Paris, Mayenne (Brittany) and the Alpes Maritime (the Nice region), where the National Front

nevertheless remained the primary opposition to the established Right. In both of these recent legislative elections the party significantly increased the number of constituencies in which it was the ‘first’ party of the Right, and increased the number in which it was the ‘second’ as well, thus altering the balance of party forces within the borders of each electoral district.

In well over three-quarters of the electoral districts in metropolitan France, in terms of votes, FN had become the second party of the Right by 1993, and in 2% (11) it was the first (see [Table 1](#)). In 1997 the relative position of the party within the Right improved considerably. National Front scored better than other parties of the Right in 8% of the (44) electoral districts, and came in second in 82%. Thus, by 1997 there were almost no areas of the country in which the FN was not a significant political challenge – especially for the Right.

The electoral success of FN had a profound impact on electoral strategies of the established Right by the 1990s. In 1997, the narrowing room for manoeuvre of RPR and UDF at the constituency level meant that these normally competitive parties could no longer afford the luxury of using the first round of legislative elections as primaries. Only by presenting joint candidates in 418 of the 456 constituencies where FN was the second party of the Right could the established Right prevent the party from becoming the first party of the Right in more than 44 constituencies.²

Thus, the significance of the emergence of the National Front at this level is systemic, and has an electoral impact on other parties within the system in different ways. Unlike the realignment that took place in the US after 1930, which Kristi Andersen (1979) demonstrates was essentially related to a new electorate of big-city immigrants voting for the first time, the initial breakthrough of the FN, as I have noted above, was due primarily to conversion – at the expense of the established Right. As the loyalty rate of the FN grew to over 90% in 1997, the party stabilised its vote by holding on to previous voters, but also by attracting new voters, many of whom may have voted for RPR/UDF, but also a large percentage of whom were working class, and thus potential voters for the Left.

In the process of stabilising its vote, the FN also had an impact on the political identity of working class voters who would normally be expected to identify with the Left, as well as their voting patterns. According to Nonna Mayer, in 1997, among workers living in working class communities, married to working class partners, a majority identified with the Right, and voted for the Right (or did not vote) in elections prior to 1997. Among young working class voters of this type – those under 40–47% gave their votes to FN (Mayer 1999: 255).

[Table 1](#) National assembly constituencies in which the National Front came in first or second among the parties of the right (first round) (number of constituencies: 1993 and 1997)

	Year	First	Second	Total

France	1993	11	430	555
	1997	44	456	555
Ile de France (except Paris)	1993	2	68	78
	1997	10	61	78
Provence-Alpes-Côte-D'Azur	1993	5	29	40
	1997	12	27	40
Nord-Pas-de-Calais	1993	1	30	38
	1997	8	27	38
Rhône-Alpes	1993	1	37	49
	1997	3	44	49

In the US, the emerging voting patterns of immigrants were the key to the realignment of the party system. In France, the realignment appears closely linked to the presence of immigrants. Pierre Martin has demonstrated that the electoral impact of the emergence of FN has generally varied with the presence of immigrants. Between 1984 and 1995 support for the National Front has been consistently highest in the 32 *départements* with the highest percentage of Maghrébin and Turkish immigrants. However, it would appear that immigrant concentration is not the only motivating factor, since support for FN has *grown* faster in the two-thirds of *départements* with smaller immigrant concentrations. Nevertheless, where immigrant concentration is the highest, the cumulative vote of all parties of the Right has grown the most, and FN has made the greatest contribution to this growth (Martin 1996: 19–22). Thus, the spatial variation of the immigrant population has had an important impact on the distribution of voting for the Right, with the margin of benefit going to FN. However, there has also been an impact on the spatial distribution of voting for the Left, whose vote declined far more in the 32 *départements* in which there is the highest concentration of immigrants than in the 32 *départements* in which there is the smallest concentration. The turning point – what Martin terms the critical election – is the European elections of 1984, the first *percée* of the National Front (Martin 1998: 154). In retrospect, immigrant presence worked to the benefit of the National Front. Immigration provides a key to the realignment of the party system because FN was able first to mobilise the anti-immigrant vote in specific spatial areas, and then stabilise it through time.

Over time, through the party dynamics in election after election, the key priorities of the National Front – immigration and *sécurité* – became more important priorities for voters of other political parties as well. In 1984, what most clearly differentiated FN voters from those of the more established Right (as well as other parties) was the priority that they gave to the issue of immigration (see [Table 2](#)). What is more striking, however, is how the issue priorities of the FN and its voters appear to have influenced the priorities of those voting for other

political parties. In 1984, relatively few voters aside from those that supported the National Front considered either immigration or law and order to be a strong priority. By 1988, however, the importance of these issues ranked with such issues as social inequality, and far higher than concerns about the environment, corruption and the construction of Europe. Only concerns over unemployment ranked higher (Perrineau 1993: 155). The issue priorities of voters changed after the breakthrough of the National Front, rather than before, and the change was very rapid. After 1988, the difference on these issues between FN voters and others remained large, but this difference declined over time. Therefore, in one sense the issues of immigration and *sécurité* became less important as a way of differentiating FN voters from supporters of other political parties, but only because the impact of these FN issues had been so important and so widespread.

Table 2 The motivations of voters: 1984–97* (Percentage of party voters voting for these reasons)

%	Law and order				Immigrants				Unemployment				Social inequality			
	84	88	93	97	84	88	93	97	84	88	93	97	84	88	93	97
PC	9	19	29	28	2	12	16	15	37	59	77	85	33	50	52	46
PS	8	21	24	29	3	13	19	15	27	43	71	83	24	43	40	47
Rt	17	38	37	43	3	19	33	22	20	41	67	72	7	18	23	21
FN	30	55	57	66	26	59	72	72	17	41	64	75	10	18	26	25
TT	15	31	34	35	6	22	31	22	24	45	68	75	16	31	32	35

* Since several responses were possible, the total across may be more than 100%. For 1988, the results are for supporters of presidential candidates nominated by the parties indicated.

Sources: Exit Poll, SOFRES/TF1, 17 June 1984, *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 22 June 1984; and SOFRES (1987: 111); Perrineau (1988: 62); Perrineau (1993: 155); CSA (1997: 5).

By 1997, what Pascal Perrineau has termed ‘the ideological penetration’ of the National Front had begun to diminish somewhat, and appeared to have reached its limit (Perrineau 1997: 193–199). Nevertheless, the electoral and policy impact of the FN over more than a decade was profound. The party succeeded in altering the spatial distribution of voting that touched almost every electoral district in the country, and far more in areas of high immigrant concentrations. It did this by gaining the loyalty of voters who had previously voted for the established Right, but also by changing the political identification of those voters whose sociological characteristics would indicate that should have been among those most loyal to the Left.³ It also succeeded in pushing its issues high on the list of priorities for voters of every party. In these ways, over a 15-year period, the FN succeeded in realigning voting and issue patterns, as well as the relationship among parties in France.

The organisational network and issue commitment

The impact of the National Front on immigration policy has been predicated on the ability of the party both to sustain its own commitment to its core issues, and to maintain a systemic impact by the expansion of its party network. However, it is by no means self-evident that, as the party expanded its electorate, it would be able to maintain its commitment.

Internal impact

The seminal work of Robert Michels (1962) has provided us with a model for understanding ‘deradicalisation’, the process through which political parties change their issue commitments. As modern parties grow and expand their electoral base, Michels argued that they compromise their ideals in order to attract a broader electorate – what May has called ‘the iron law of democracy’. This analysis has generally been applied to parties of the Left. (May 1965; Tucker 1969: 172–214) However, it should be as applicable to radical-right parties, such as the National Front. We might expect that, as the party electorate expanded, the party would either moderate its more radical positions, or there would be a growing gap between party loyalists – those who voted FN in the previous two legislative and the previous presidential election – and the growing electorate. What is most striking about FN, however, is that over time the party was able to avoid compromising on its core positions, while bringing its electorate closer to them.

If we look at the data in [Table 3](#), we can see that there are some important differences between those new voters who voted for the party for the first time in 1997, and party *loyalists*. All FN voters are far more prone to see the world in racist terms than are supporters of other political parties, but the new voters are considerably less oriented in that direction, and are somewhat more optimistic about bridging the gap between native citizens and immigrants of North African origin. The survey also indicates that they tend to be more optimistic than the loyalists about the way that democracy is functioning in France (30% of the new voters compared with 23% of the loyalist felt it was functioning well), and less prone to see the ‘gang of four’ major parties as essentially the same (40% vs. 33% thought that the difference between the established Left and Right was important). Finally, far more of the new recruits can imagine voting for another political party or submitting spoiled ballots as a sign of protest (43% compared with 32% of the loyalists). From these figures, we can conclude that the proportion of new FN voters who identify with the party is less than a third that of the loyalists (25% compared with 81.5%).⁴

These differences appear to indicate that significant percentages of new voters supported the party even though their issue orientations were different from those of the core FN

electorate. Nevertheless, on the issue of immigration, the two groups are relatively close, and far from the mean of the electorate: 59% of the national sample feels that ‘there are too many immigrants in France’; and 45% feel less at home than before; but 62% are positive about immigrant integration.

[Table 3](#) Comparing FN loyalists with new FN voters in 1997

<i>Questions dealing with race and immigration</i>		<i>New voters vs. loyalist</i>	<i>Agree %</i>	<i>Do not agree %</i>
‘Some races are better endowed than others’	Loyalist	40.7	57.4	
	New	30	66.7	
‘There are too many immigrants in France’	Loyalist	98.2	1.9	
	New	91.7	8.3	
‘North Africans who live in France will one day be French like everyone else’	Loyalist	31.5	66.7	
	New	35	61.6	
‘Now, we no longer feel as much at home as before’	Loyalist	79.7	18.5	
	New	75	25	

Source: CEVIPOF/Sofres survey of voters, 26 May 1997.

Given the gap between the new recruits and the loyalists, the question then is how successful the party is in socialising the new recruits into the core values. Nonna Mayer and Pascal Perrineau wrote in 1990 – a time when national support for the party had appeared to stabilise at about 10% of the electorate – that FN had developed a core of loyal supporters that was reasonably stable, as well as a larger group of occasional voters. The socio-demographic characteristics of the core (*loyalist*) voters of a decade ago were somewhat different from our group, but the issue orientation on core issues was about the same or more pronounced (see [Table 4](#)). The core electorate in 1997 had become far less concentrated in the largest cities and towns, less masculine and even less Catholic than it had been before. Clearly in the last decade the *loyalist* electorate (in both cases about 27% of the total FN electorate, and therefore larger in absolute numbers in 1997 than in 1988) of the National Front has changed in important ways, but mostly in terms of its broader distribution around the country. It is striking that a larger and more broadly entrenched core group appears to have become more ethnocentric, with stronger identification with the FN and greater interest in politics.

During the period when the level of support for the party was generally stable, Mayer and Perrineau found a considerable difference between loyalist and new voters on the party’s

central issues. Moreover they found evidence that new voters were somewhat marginal for the growth of the party (Mayer and Perrineau 1990).

But the core has grown and its structure has changed. The party has presumably integrated and socialised many of the ‘ephemeral’ voters of 1988 as loyalty rates grew. Nevertheless, the issue orientations have not become more diluted, and the orientations of the *new* loyalists were even more solidly supportive of the core issues of the FN in 1997 than they were a decade ago. Therefore, in the process of integration, new voters seem to incorporate the core anti-immigrant, racist and authoritarian values of the party rather than to dilute these values. The party itself appears to be an effective mechanism not only for mobilising a growing electorate, but also for *encadrement*.

Systemic impact

The impact of the National Front appears to be related to its presence on several levels, a presence that expanded during the 15 years between 1983 and 1998, as the party achieved a range of electoral victories at the subnational level. In the French system, electoral gains ultimately translate into state subsidies and the construction of a network of militants. For example, the stakes in the factional conflict over the name and logo of the FN, after its split in 1999, was an annual subsidy of 41 million francs, contributed by the state to the party.⁵ In addition, elected officials at every level gain salaries, benefits and often patronage that form the basis of party networks.

[Table 4](#) Loyal voters in 1997 compared with 1988 (percentage of ‘loyal’ voters in each category)

	1988	1997
Social/demographic		
Men	67	59.3
Age 45+	55	53.7
Cities 200th+	54	37.0
Practicing Catholic	18	5.6
Attitudes and values		
Authoritarian [*]	82	79.6
Ethnocentrism [*]	61	89
Political attitudes		
Interest in Politics [*]	41	63

* The indices used for 1997 are somewhat different from those used by Mayer and Perrineau in 1988, since the questions used were not the same in the two surveys.

Sources: CEVIPOF/Sofres survey of voters, 26 May 1997; and Mayer and Perrineau (1990: 177).

In the local elections of 1995, the National Front presented a record 25,000 candidates, and about 2,000 municipal councillors were elected (1,100 in larger towns with a population of 20,000 or more). Its capacity to present this vast army of candidates was a good indication of the political distance that FN had travelled in the previous decade, and the success at the municipal level provided a building block for future candidacies. The 275 regional councillors elected in 1998 (concentrated in Ile de France, Provence-Alpes-Côtes-D'Azur and the Rhône-Alpes) were a 15% increase over the number elected in 1992, but vastly increased the political leverage of the party.

One aspect of this leverage was the increased effectiveness of FN representatives in attaining appointed patronage positions. In the regions in which the party became part of the regional coalition in 1998, it was able to place its militants in administrative posts controlled by the region. Even where it was not formally part of the governing coalition, there are indications that it was able to do this. Thus, adhering to an understood tradition of proportional division of patronage, Valéry Giscard-d'Estaing, former president of the Republic and president of the Auvergne region, named 37 FN regional councillors to posts that included members of school boards in the region (*Le Monde*, 8 April and 24–25 May 1998). Of course, the representation of the party was also significant in those regions in which alliances were negotiated with the established Right.⁶

In the early months of 1996 the National Front sought to capitalise on widespread worker disaffection (as well as the weakness of established trade union organisations) by establishing its own police unions, a union of Paris transport workers, a union of transport workers in the Lyon region, a teachers' union, a student organisation and its own association of small and medium enterprises (*Le Monde*, 13 February, 24–25 March, 3 April 1996). These initiatives provoked successful court challenges by the CFDT and the CGT (*Le Monde*, 9–10 June 1996, 5–6 April 1998). They also accentuated the growing (though not always successful) organisational capacities of the FN in unexpected and unanticipated arenas. In the French context, such social organisation provided the party with additional modes of mobilisation through a widespread network of social elections. The party also presented lists in other professional elections, as well as lists for public housing offices, with limited success.⁷

The extension of the FN party network through its efforts in social elections, broadened its support among French workers, even among those who supported traditional trade union confederations. Almost a third of those who claimed to be close to the party also claimed to be

close to a union organisation, most of these with the CGT (Confédération Générale du Travail), the CFDT (Confédération Françoise Démocratique du Travail), FO (Force Ouvrière), and the FNSEA (Federation Nationale des Syndicats d'exploitants Agricoles). Among union backers, FN voters represent a small but significant percentage of supporters, especially among those who supported the FO, for whom the FN was the right-wing party of choice. Given the important working class support among FN voters, this is not entirely surprising. What makes this striking is the indication of the inability of established trade unions – organisations that have most intensely opposed the ideas and political priorities of the National Front – to resist penetration and mobilisation by the party. These FN beachheads within the unions provided receptive arenas for party expansion, particularly since there is evidence that well over half of trade union supporters felt that immigrant workers were a burden on the French economy.⁸

Although the networks created by the National Front over a 15-year period at the sub-national level did not resemble a well-structured party organisation, they do give us some clue to the basis of voter mobilisation, and the ability of the party to solidify the support of its loyalists around the core values of the party. This organisational model is perhaps closer to that of a cadre party such as the Radicals than a mass party of the Left, but because the FN also developed a base in civil society, it contained elements of both.

Agenda formation

A direct measure of impact of the National Front on immigration policy, related to electoral success and organisational impact, was its influence over the political agenda of both governments and oppositions. Two aspects of agenda formation are particularly important: the way political parties define and develop issues; and alliance formation. The story of immigration politics after 1983 is less about the struggle over policy orientation itself, than about the struggle by established political parties on both the Right and the Left to undermine the ability of the FN to sustain the initiative in portraying and defining these issues. Both the RPR and the UDF have been deeply divided internally in their competition with FN for voters frightened by the problems of a multiethnic society. Some have advocated cooperating with FN and accepting their issues in more moderate terms, while others have been tempted to try to destroy their rival on the Right through isolation and rejection of their portrayal of these issues altogether.

Each time the Right felt it had succeeded in outmanoeuvring the National Front (e.g., during the legislative elections of 1988, the municipal elections of 1989, the immigration legislation of 1993, and finally the split of the FN in 1999) it was reminded that the challenge would not

disappear (e.g., the by-election victories of the FN in Marseilles and Dreux in December 1989, the legislative elections of 1993, the presidential and municipal elections of 1995, the legislative elections of 1997, the regional elections of 1998, and finally the presidential elections of 2002). More and more, the electorally weak parties of the Right needed the 10–15% of the electorate that voted FN nationally, and locally the challenge was even more severe.

As for the Socialists, through 1993 they struggled to defuse the rhetoric of the National Front with a variety of approaches: by policy initiatives (strengthening border controls, at the same time that they tried to develop a policy of integration) when they controlled the government; by agreeing with the established Right when they were electorally threatened by the opposition (as did Socialist Prime Minister Laurent Fabius while debating with Chirac in 1985 that ‘the National Front poses some real questions ...’); and, more generally, by alternating between the pluralist rhetoric of a ‘right to difference’ approach to immigrants and an individualistic ‘right to indifference’ approach (*Le Monde*, 11 February, 7 December 1989; Vichniac 1991).

Despite the confusion, the dynamics of party competition resulted in redefinition of the issue of immigration in national politics, from a labour market problem, to a problem of integration and national identity, to problems of education, housing, law and order, and citizenship. In a number of respects, the reactions of the Jospin government to the electoral success of the National Front in 1997 were an impressive result of the ability of FN to influence the priorities of the national political agenda. The government appointed a special commission, chaired by a scholar, with the charge to defuse the immigration issue. The commission issued its report, and recommended that the government try a bold new approach to the immigration issue: to accept with modifications the changes in immigration and naturalisation legislation that had been passed by the Right since 1993, and to develop an explicit centrist approach that would tend toward consensus and isolate the FN (Weil 1997: 47–48; *Le Monde*, 31 July 1997).

In the short run, this centrist approach was largely rejected by the opposition, and created emotional divisions within the Left as well. The medium-run impact on the growth of the FN may have been more important. Nevertheless, in the debate on the immigration and naturalisation proposals by the minister of the interior, considerations of how these bills would relate to the strength of the FN were frequently explicit, and never far below the surface (*Le Monde*, 30 November 1997). The results of the regional elections of 1998 indicated that in the short run these efforts were unsuccessful, although the split in the party a few months later seemed to ease some of the pressure on policy-makers.

The dynamics of alliance formation at the sub-national level also promoted the agenda of the National Front. The alliances at the regional level that sent a shock-wave through the party system in March 1998 (see below) were a manifestation of a continuing problem for the Right. Alliance formation in regions, departments, and communes takes place at two levels: at

the electoral level, and at the governing level. In general, established political parties preferred not to engage with the FN in the formation of alliances either explicitly or implicitly. Nevertheless, from the very earliest days of the electoral breakthrough, this became a position that was almost impossible to maintain. In the municipal elections of March 1983, local RPR and UDF politicians in Dreux decided to form a joint list with the FN, a decision that was approved by the national leadership of both parties. That decision was reversed when irregularities forced a second election in September, and then reversed again. Unable to secure an absolute majority in the first round of the election, the RPR-UDF would have been forced to pay an unacceptable price if they continued to ignore FN in the second round. In the end, they decided to form a joint list with the FN, which was victorious. As a result, three National Front councillors were named *maires-ajoints* (assistant mayors) in the new local government.⁹

After that, the ability of the party to win seats at the sub-national level, where there is some measure of proportionality, increased with its ability to field candidates; and its ability to field candidates increased with success in political and social elections. In 1986, FN lists were presented in each of the 22 regions in France. With almost 10% of the vote, the party elected 137 (out of 1,682) regional councillors; not a lot, but enough to exert some strategic influence over coalition formation in 12 of the 22 regions. In six regions their votes were needed to elect a council president from the established Right. In Languedoc-Roussillon the Gaullist president reached a formal accord on a ‘Programme of Action’ with FN; in five other regions FN was able to negotiate positions in the regional government, and in five additional regions it gained some lesser positions (Birenbaum 1992). Six years later, the FN increased its regional representation to 239, with representation in every region. In 14 of the 22 regions the Right depended for its majority on the councillors of the FN, who carefully demonstrated their ability to arbitrate in the election of regional presidents and the selection of regional executives (Patrait 1992).

In the regional elections in March 1998, the party gained a little more than 1% of the vote over its score in 1992 with 15.3% of the vote. The real success, however, was that it had now become a major player in coalition formation at the regional level. FN now had more regional councillors (275) than the UDF (262), and almost as many as the RPR (285). Under the guidance of Bruno Mégret, the party offered to support RPR or UDF candidates for the regional presidency who accepted a minimal programme of the National Front which would *not* include *priorité nationale* (*Liberation*, 20 March 1998). In five of the 22 regions, FN was successful in negotiating a governing coalition through which it gained not only influence over the political agenda, but considerable patronage as well.¹⁰ This was accomplished in the face of a direct prohibition by the national leadership of both the RPR and the UDF, and in the face of two major speeches by the President of the Republic opposing such alliances (*Le Monde*, 21 and 25 March 1998). It was clear that both established right-wing parties were under severe pressure from their local units, for whom the stakes in terms of position and patronage were

significant (*Le Monde*, 19 and 24 March 1998). Thus, the political compromises at the regional level became a direct challenge to the stability of the established Right. One indication of this challenge was the statement in June 1998 of Edouard Balladur, the former RPR prime minister, who broke with his party by openly supporting a national debate on *préférence nationale* for social services – a key FN policy position – and refusing to exclude the FN as an opposition partner (*Le Monde*, 17 June 1998).

At the municipal level, thousands of new councillors elected in 1995 became important for building networks to reach success at higher levels. They also seemed to have influence over the evolving policy agenda at the local level. By November 1995, mayors from the parties of the conservative majority were reporting that they were cutting back on programmes that aided immigrants who had been excluded from housing and employment in favour of programmes that focused on cultural integration. Voter distrust of such programmes, they argued, ‘explains the rise of the National Front’ (*Le Monde*, 12–13 November 1995).

Conclusion: cross-national comparisons

By looking at the impact of the French National Front on immigration policy, we can begin to develop an understanding of impact that can be applied to other extreme-right parties. Impact can be analysed on several key levels of politics. As a result of its electoral breakthrough, FN had political and policy impact on several levels that can be applied to other political systems. The impact was first felt at the level of the party system and on the dynamic interaction among political parties in their competition for votes and support. The electoral impact was manifested in a realignment of parties within the system that was important across a large range of constituencies, as well as on the issue-priorities of voters across the political spectrum. As FN gained in sub-national electoral victories, as well as more limited success in social elections, it was able to construct a party network, which in turn was able to develop a strong core of support around its key issues. Finally, the party gained increasing influence over the policy agenda, as parties of both the Right and the Left attempted to co-opt and gain control of the issues of immigration and *sécurité*.

The case of the National Front also demonstrates that impact is interactive. Electoral breakthrough is related to dynamics that affect the party system: voter realignment, and particularly the restructuring of political agendas in ways that alter the linkages between party elites and mass publics. The impact of the FN in all of these ways increased as the party developed from the stage of electoral breakthrough to electoral stability to organisational development to structural stability within the party system.

By December 1998, FN had every prospect of continuing to play a major role, perhaps a

growing role, in the French political system. But the party leadership split in January 1999 indicates an additional problem of electoral and political success for extreme-right parties – the perils of systemic involvement. As the fruits of success accumulate (offices, income and influence), so too do the stakes, as well as the ideological challenges of inevitable policy compromise, for party leadership. The FN split resulted in part from a conflict of personalities, but also from these tensions of success. In general, the organisational benefits of success went disproportionately to the followers of Mégret – who were dominant in the sub-national organisations and among office-holders – while the more ideologically-committed Le Pen group paid the price of compromise. The split reconfirms the importance of uncompromising radicalism present in all of these parties (Perrineau 1999: 18). Nevertheless, although the split was organisationally devastating, it did not put an end to the impact of the party. As the elections of 2002 clearly demonstrate, the historic impact on the electorate, the party system and the political agenda could not be easily undone.

Thus this analysis of the experience of the FN also raises important questions about our understanding of the impact of radical-right parties in other countries on immigration policy. The experience in Western Europe indicates that even a modest electoral breakthrough triggers a political dynamic that influences immigration policy. The difference is how institutionalised this influence becomes.

In virtually every case where there has been an electoral breakthrough of the extreme-right, established parties have reacted by co-opting some aspects of their programme in an attempt to undermine their support. If the French case demonstrates the essential futility of these efforts, the British and German cases would appear to demonstrate just the opposite. Herbert Kitschelt argues that the sharp shift to the racist-right by Thatcher leadership was a key factor that stopped the British National Front in its tracks by the late 1970s (Kitschelt 1995). Michael Minkenberg makes a similar case for Germany – that major parties co-opted the immigration issue – although he argues that ‘At the sub-national level, these parties have demonstrated greater staying power than analysts were willing to concede after their decline in the wake of the major parties’ asylum compromise of 1993’ (Minkenberg 1998: 4).

In fact, both cases seem to demonstrate the agenda-setting impact of the extreme-right. In each case, the challenge produced similar policy results in different ways (Messina 1998). Thus, even where the electoral law has limited the ability of the extreme-right to gain strategic advantage in elections – in national elections in Britain and France – the policy impact can be sustained by local electoral success and by pressure on the leadership of established parties.

Nevertheless, the electoral success of the extreme-right is only one factor behind immigration restriction. Jeanette Money makes a convincing case that the move towards restriction in Britain and France long pre-dated the emergence of the extreme-right, and was linked to electoral dynamics – an attempt by the political Right to win votes in constituencies of the Left with a high proportions of immigrants (Money 1999). From the French case, we can

infer however, that in such cases the electoral success of the extreme-right tends to sustain such efforts, and undermines attempts by established parties of the Right and the Left to defuse the immigration issue by developing a consensus position on immigration (as the Conservatives and Labour attempted to do just before Thatcher came to power, and the French Left and Right attempted in the late 1980s).

Finally, the French case demonstrates the importance of institutionalised power for sustained influence, even institutionalised power at the sub-national level. The French system appears to be highly centralised. However, decentralised structures – regions and municipalities – are reinforced by strong local party units and local notables to give these structures important policy-making roles. These structures, then, can be used as leverage to magnify the influence of the extreme-right in national politics. This is particularly true in a multiparty system where the balance among the established parties is close one, and where a de facto relationship of dependence develops between the extreme-right and a coalition of established parties.

This pattern presumes the existence of a hegemonic party of the extreme-right that has achieved electoral breakthrough, which is a relatively rare occurrence. Thus, sub-national thrusts by the Republikaner Party and the DVU had a periodic impact on immigration policy in Germany in the 1990s, but the impact of the these parties has been limited by their fragmentation and by their lack of sustained breakthrough (Minkenberg 1998: 2–3). The British National Front posed a problem for the Tories that was partially resolved by issue co-optation, but the Tories had been moving in that direction since the early 1960s. More generally, throughout Western Europe the parties of the extreme-right have been far more successful in indirectly influencing the political agenda than in gaining direct participation in policy-making.

Notes

¹ Georges Lavau explains the breakthrough of the PCF largely in terms of its ability to mobilise and represent the interests of working class voters between the world wars: ‘... dans cette période décisive, le PC a conquis en milieu ouvrier une place qui était assez largement *vacante*’. See: Lavau (1981: 72; 34–44) and also Schnapper (1994: 133).

² The RPR/UDF presented joint candidates in the first round in 35 of the 44 constituencies where the FN came in first on the Right.

³ Opposition to the European Union has been important for attracting votes for FN, but less important than the core issues of immigration and security. New FN voters have been generally more favourable to the EU than ‘loyalists’, but attitudes of these new voters (towards the EU) are far closer to those of voters for the Communist Party and the extreme-left, than those of the mainstream right. See Schain (1998: 10–14).

[4](#) It is interesting to note that there appears to be no systematic variation in either sample by age.

[5](#) Le Pen's party ultimately won that litigation. See *Le Monde*, 31 March 1999.

[6](#) It was willingly signed by the FN deputies. See *Le Monde*, 23 May 1998.

[7](#) See *Le Monde*, 29 May 1996. Also see CRIDA (1996: 65–67). This is one of three reports issued by CRIDA.

[8](#) In fact the percentages are highest for CGT and FO (54% and 53%), and lowest for CFDT (42%). See CSA Survey 9662093, crosstabs of Q4 and RS 10. These figures appear to have declined since 1994 for the CGT and the CFDT (from 63% and 49%).

[9](#) I have explored the Dreux election in Schain (1987).

[10](#) After the smoke cleared, these were: Bourgogne, Bretagne, Languedoc-Roussillon, Picardie, and Rhône-Alpes. To this list we should probably add Franche-Comté, where a UDF president was elected on 3 April 1998, with the National Front and the Left abstaining. However, after the Conseil d'État invalidated the election of Charles Millon in the Rhône-Alpes in December, 1998, he was ousted by Right–Left majority in a new election in January. See *Le Monde*, 8 January 1999.

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Contagious parties

Anti-immigration parties and their impact on other parties' immigration stances in contemporary Western Europe

Joost van Spanje

Introduction

Anti-immigration parties have emerged in most Western democracies and in some countries have enjoyed considerable electoral success. Many scholars have studied the factors underlying the electoral performance of these parties because it is these parties that affect real-life policy outcomes in their countries (e.g. Golder, 2003; Ivarsflaten, 2008; Van der Brug et al., 2005). Electoral success does not automatically translate into policy influence, however, so the question concerns the extent to which the policy influence of anti-immigration parties is related to their electoral fortunes.

Needless to say, the electoral performance of anti-immigration parties has an impact on the direct policy influence they can exercise in parliament and, if they gain access to power, in office (see Heinisch, 2003). Anti-immigration parties' electoral success might also exert indirect effects, i.e. by influencing other parties' policy positions (see also Williams, 2006: 51). To what extent is this the case? Do electoral pressures from anti-immigration parties exert 'contagion effects'¹ on the positions of other parties on the issues that they try to mobilize on, most notably, immigration? This is the main question guiding my article.

This question is seldom addressed, which is perhaps surprising as the answers are interesting from a scientific perspective. The extent to which anti-immigration parties affect party competition is a relevant question in several research fields. Moreover, its importance goes beyond scientific interest. If such contagion effects exist, then the presence of anti-immigration parties would affect policy-making throughout Western Europe, which would raise all kinds of questions about the desirability of this situation.

Here, I focus on a key issue of anti-immigration parties, namely immigration policy. I assess whether the electoral success of anti-immigration parties has any effect on the positions of the other parties in contemporary Western European countries regarding immigration, and, if so, what it is. I focus on one type of impact, defined in terms of Downsian spatial competition. An effect is considered ‘contagion’ if other parties shift to more restrictive immigration policy positions after electoral success of the anti-immigration party in their country. I measure contagion effects in various ways, not only concerning right-wing parties – compare with the ‘contagion of the right thesis’ (e.g. Norris, 2005) – but also contagion affecting the party system as a whole.

Previous work

It is a widely held belief that the electoral victories of anti-immigration parties cause other parties to copy these parties’ rhetoric. The existing literature suggests ‘contagion effects’ of two kinds. First, established parties are said to have shifted to the right (Harmel and Svasand, 1997; Norris, 2005). Second, many researchers share the view that the mainstream parties have co-opted restrictive immigration policies (Downs, 2002; Minkenberg, 2002; Pettigrew, 1998; Schain, 1987, 2002).² As the core issue of anti-immigration parties is immigration (e.g. Betz, 2002; Van der Brug and Fennema, 2003), and these parties’ positions on the left-right axis³ vary considerably (e.g. Lubbers, 2001; Norris, 2005), the expectations concerning the immigration dimension are much more straightforward than those regarding left and right. This article therefore focuses on contagion effects regarding immigration.

The first reports regarding co-optation by the establishment of anti-immigration policies and rhetoric date back 20 years. In the late 1980s, Schain wrote that established French parties had partly adopted the anti-immigration rhetoric of the National Front (1987). In particular, the mainstream right had co-opted anti-immigration views, according to Schain (1987: 242). In his more recent work (2002), Schain gives examples of mainstream politicians from both the left (Fabius in 1985) and the right (Balladur in 1998) who tried to open up the debate on the policy positions taken by the National Front (2002: 238, 240).⁴ Similarly, Minkenberg (2002) reports an ‘agenda-setting effect’ in France, leading the other parties to co-opt the agenda of the National Front. In his view, the situation in Germany is similar to that in France, with the ‘major parties’ embrace of the right-wing definition of the “asylum problem” in 1992’ (2002: 267).

In the same vein as Schain and Minkenberg, Pettigrew (1998) states that ‘while far-right efforts have gained only minimal power directly, they have shifted the entire political spectrum to the right on immigration’ (p. 95). He maintains that this thesis holds not only for

Europe, but also for the United States and Australia.

In a similar vein, William Downs emphasizes that the strategy of co-optation of policies by other parties is widespread across Western Europe (2001). Downs gives examples concerning various parties, among them the Social Democratic Party in Denmark, arguing that the co-opting of strategies can be witnessed on both the left and right of the political spectrum (2001, 2002).

A notable exception to the consensus on the contagion regarding the immigration issue is a study by Perlmutter, who concludes that the influence of anti-immigration parties in Germany and Italy regarding immigration was small (2002). It is very likely, Perlmutter argues, that the mainstream parties in these countries would also have become more restrictive on immigration without the emergence of the Republicans (REP) in Germany and the Northern League (LN) in Italy in the early 1990s.⁵

This brief overview⁶ makes clear that the academic debate on contagion effects revolves around two questions, which both follow from the application of Downsian spatial analysis. Do anti-immigration parties exert contagion effects on the immigration issue? And, if so, is only the right affected by this contagion, or the left as well? These are two of the questions that I aim to answer in this article. Another question addressed is the extent to which the responses in terms of policy positioning can be explained by Downsian spatial competition for votes.

Approach

In the relevant literature, the notion of contagion builds on the landmark theory of electoral competition developed by Anthony Downs (1957). This theory takes into account the relevant actors at elections: voters on the one hand and parties on the other. The electoral process is described in this theory as an electoral market with parties on the ‘supply side’ and voters on the ‘demand side’. In this view, the co-optation of an anti-immigration party’s policies by a rival party can be understood as an inter-party electoral strategy.

Let us initially assume, in accordance with Downs’ theory, that parties are rational actors involved in competition for votes along a (one-dimensional) spatial continuum, and that voter preferences are distributed along this dimension as well. Parties will, in that case, strategically adapt their positions in attempts to attract more voters. If a particular competitor performs well in particular elections, it is reasonable for the other parties to expect many voters to be close to their competitor’s position on the continuum. These parties will therefore expect to attract more voters by moving closer to their competitor’s position.

If we assume, furthermore, that the immigration issue has some degree of salience in

contemporary Western Europe, parties are expected to adjust their policy positions on immigration to substantial changes in the political context in which they are operating. Thus, they will adjust their immigration policy position according to the electoral performance of an anti-immigration party. After all, previous research suggests that voters do not prefer such a party over the mainstream right on the basis of just *any* issue, but because of their positions on *specific issues*, most notably immigration (e.g. Ivarsflaten, 2005b; Van der Brug and Fennema, 2003; Van der Brug et al., 2000). Of course, these parties campaign on other platforms as well, such as law and order, corruption and populism. However, they usually link these themes to immigration. Moreover, immigration issues are widely considered to be their main concern (e.g. Betz, 2002; Ivarsflaten, 2008).

When focusing on immigration policy positions only, however, following Downs runs the risk of an oversimplified picture being presented. Ever since Downs' major publication more than 50 years ago, spatial theory has been developed and improved upon (e.g. Enelow and Hinich, 1990; Merrill and Grofman, 1999; Shepsle, 1991). Major modifications were guided by the insight that parties compete not just by taking a position on a specific issue, but also by emphasizing particular issues more than others (e.g. Budge et al., 1987). In addition, parties can try to prevent specific issues from gaining salience by, for example, ignoring the entire issue. In Schattschneider's words, a 'conclusive way of checking the rise of conflict is simply to provide no arena for it' (1975 [1960]: 65).

In a recent article, Meguid (2005) presents a 'modified spatial theory' that improves upon the standard spatial models, among other things, by adding the insight that parties may influence the salience of particular issues. This means that, first of all, when an anti-immigration party enters the political scene the other parties may react by copying the anti-immigration stance (what Meguid calls an 'accommodative' strategy), by taking up a radically different position ('adversarial'), or by not taking any stance at all ('dismissive'). Second, this means that not only the mainstream right, but also 'non-proximal' parties, can affect the salience of the immigration issue. As Meguid empirically demonstrates, the three types of strategy waged by both proximal and non-proximal parties affect the electoral fortunes of green and anti-immigration parties.

In this article, the causal chain examined by Meguid is reversed. Instead of examining the impact of other parties' policy positions on anti-immigration parties' success, I study the effects of anti-immigration parties' electoral success on other parties' policy positions. In Meguid's terms, this article revolves around 'accommodative' versus 'adversarial' strategies. Note that immigration policy outcomes are more likely to be affected by these two strategies than by 'dismissive' strategies.

Hypotheses

In view of the theoretical considerations mentioned above, it can be expected that if parties that are fierce advocates of immigration restriction become successful in the electoral arena, the other parties will – all other things being equal – adjust their positions⁷ more to the restrictive end of an immigration restriction scale. Thus, the following hypothesis can be stated (Hypothesis 1):

Hypothesis 1: The more electoral success an anti-immigration party has, the more the other parties in the political system become restrictive on immigration.

Another parameter that is mentioned in the existing literature as relevant to contagion effects is party positioning in terms of left and right. In theory, mainstream right-wing parties have an extra incentive to adjust their stances on immigration, compared to left-wing parties, after anti-immigration party victories (see also Norris, 2005). After all, the logic of Downsian spatial competition in the context of contemporary Western Europe predicts that rightist parties are threatened to a larger extent by anti-immigration party success than leftist parties are. In accordance with this view, the results of earlier research suggest that it is mainly the established right that competes for votes with anti-immigration parties in Western Europe (e.g. Carter, 2005: 206; Van der Brug et al., 2005: 560). In addition, it may be relatively easy for right-wing parties to adopt a hard line on immigration, as they typically ‘own’ the issues of cultural unity and national pride. As Bale notes, a tough stance on immigration ‘can often be reconciled with a tradition of defending the nation and its culture from external threats’ (2008: 463). For these reasons, parties of the right are expected to yield more to electoral pressures from anti-immigration parties than parties of the left (Hypothesis 2):

Hypothesis 2: The more right-wing it is, the more susceptible a party is to contagion effects on the immigration issue.

The first two hypotheses build on theories of party competition in the Downsian sense. However, parties are not always expected to behave in a straightforward way as predicted by Downsian spatial analysis. It is argued in the existing literature that parties do not always compete in similar ways, or to the same extent, with each other (e.g. Adams et al., 2006). In addition, based on the ‘modified spatial theory’ (Meguid, 2005), not only right-wing parties are expected to compete with anti-immigration parties for votes, but also left-wing parties. Meguid illustrates this with the example of French communist voters who switched to Le Pen in 1986 (Meguid, 2005: 348). As a result, the left may also have repositioned on the immigration issue, as research on Austria, Denmark, Norway and The Netherlands suggests (Bale et al., 2008). If this holds true, then the second hypothesis should be disconfirmed. After all, the modified spatial theory provides no a priori reason for expecting right-wing parties to adjust their policy positions to a greater extent than left-wing parties.

In addition, this leads us to more specific expectations about contagion effects. Two hypotheses will be added to Hypotheses 1 and 2, specifying two categories of parties that face possible constraints in the possibilities they have to adjust their policy positions to a changed political environment. A first relevant subsample is that of parties in government. Parties are hypothesized to be less prone to repositioning on the immigration issue when in office than when in opposition, because government status is associated with constraints. From both legal and practical perspectives, it is difficult for parties to make any sudden changes to their policies when in government: not just because they may have their own track record on the issue, but also because their policies are not independent of those of their predecessors. Moreover, their governing status makes it riskier for parties to make bold statements on any policy issue, because such statements would raise expectations among voters that the parties are unlikely to meet. Problems linked to immigration have proved to be both relatively complex and largely beyond the control of national governments. Parties in coalition governments face additional constraints, as they also have to deal with their coalition partners in general, and to comply with an – often detailed – governing contract with these partners in particular.

An additional reason for expecting that government parties are less prone to give in to electoral pressures to shift on new issues such as the immigration issue is related to governing as a party goal. To the extent that parties are office-seeking, parties in opposition are expected to be more willing to try different strategies and to adopt new stances than governing parties. After all, parties in opposition are expected to be anxious to gain or regain access to power. Parties in government, by contrast, have weaker incentives to revise policy positions that have proved successful in past elections. I therefore formulate a third hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: Parties in government are less susceptible to contagion effects on the immigration issue than parties in opposition.

A similar logic applies to another group of parties. It is argued that niche parties are ‘fundamentally different’ in the way they compete in the electoral arena (Adams et al., 2006). More specifically, it has been empirically shown that these parties lose votes if they change their own ideological positions, at least in terms of left and right – the reason why these parties were described as ‘prisoners of their own ideologies’, having ‘no real choice other than to cling to the policy ground they have staked out for themselves’ (Adams et al., 2006: 526). If this is the case, then the ‘niche parties’ investigated in this study – (former) communist and green parties – are expected to differ from the other parties⁸ in the sense that they do not shift on the immigration issue according to the electoral performance of anti-immigration parties (Hypothesis 4):⁹

Hypothesis 4: Green and (ex-)communist parties are less susceptible to contagion effects on the immigration issue than other parties.¹⁰

Anti-immigration parties

In order to measure the contagion effects of anti-immigration parties, these parties should first be distinguished from the others. Following Fennema, anti-immigration parties are defined as parties that employ the immigration issue as their main political concern in electoral campaigns, or are viewed by elites of other parties as doing so (Fennema, 1997). So, these parties are thought not only to be strongly in favour of immigration restriction, but also to attach much importance to the immigration issue.

The operationalization of the concept of anti-immigration party is based on these two criteria, as follows.¹¹ First, all the parties that have a fierce anti-immigration *stance* are selected. In accordance with the literature (Lubbers, 2001; Norris, 2005), positions towards the immigration issue are used for case selection in this article. As in the studies mentioned, these positions are derived from expert surveys. Parties placed at the extreme of an ‘immigration restriction’ scale by country experts are provisionally labelled anti-immigration parties (criterion one).¹² Such parties all scored higher than any party founded before the start of mass immigration to Western Europe¹³ ever scored, which is over 8.5 on this 0–10 scale.

In a next step, the parties that do not attach more importance (criterion two) to the immigration issue than any established party ever did are erased from the provisional list of ‘anti-immigration parties’ and put into the category of ‘other parties’. Hence, parties scoring less than 18.0 on a 1–20 immigration importance scale by Benoit and Laver (2006) are not selected.

As a result of this two-step selection procedure, the parties viewed as anti-immigration in this study are highly comparable across time and countries.

Data

In order to address the research question, I select a time span during which there was a wide variety in electoral performance of anti-immigration parties, and take into account several countries that are comparable in many other respects. I therefore study 13 political systems in 12 Western European countries,¹⁴ from 1990 onwards. Since 1990, several anti-immigration parties, such as the Flemish Bloc, have obtained more than 10 percent of the vote in elections to the national parliament, and others, such as the Northern League in Italy, have joined government coalitions. Many other parties, by contrast, such as the Center Democrats in The Netherlands, remained without any electoral success. Four main datasets are employed in this article, data derived from an expert survey conducted by Lubbers (2001), a similar one by Van Spanje et al. (2006), the European Election Study (EES) 1999 and data on electoral system traits

collected by Carter (2005).

Expert survey results reported by Lubbers (2001) and by Van Spanje et al. (2006) are used for party positions on the issue of immigration. The use of expert surveys has its advantages and disadvantages compared to other ways of measuring the relevant party characteristics, including judgements on the basis of party origins, secondary reading, mass surveys, elite studies and the analysis of party manifestos (Mair, 2001: 12–17). In this case, no viable alternatives are available, because these two expert survey datasets are the only ones that allow for cross-time and cross-country comparisons of immigration party positions. Lubbers asked experts to provide a 0–10 ‘immigration restriction’ score for the parties in the countries of their expertise. His questionnaire was sent by regular mail to 288 political scientists in 17 countries in 2000. The overall return rate after two reminders was 52 percent (Lubbers, 2001). The resulting immigration restriction scores in 2000 of the parties included in the analysis range from 0.9 (RC in Italy) to 9.1 (MS-FT in Italy), with a mean of 4.6 and a standard deviation of 2.2.

The immigration position question was replicated in an expert survey concerning the situation in 2004 (Van Spanje et al., 2006). A group of 557 political scientists in the same countries as in Lubbers’ study were invited by email to answer exactly the same question in their country of expertise concerning the situation in 2004. The experts were carefully selected on the basis of the websites of universities and academic institutions worldwide. The overall response rate of 39 percent after one reminder (Van Spanje et al., 2006) was comparable to similar expert surveys conducted before this; Huber and Inglehart, for example, report a response rate of 41 percent (1995). For 2004, the relevant immigration party positions have a mean of 4.8 and a standard deviation of 2.0. The scores vary between 0.8 for the RC in Italy and 9.3 for the MPF in France. The change in immigration policy positions between 2000 and 2004 provides the values of the dependent variable at the second time-point.¹⁵

On the basis of the case selection procedure outlined in the previous section, 26 parties in Western Europe are labelled as anti-immigration. The group of parties considered as anti-immigration is very similar to that of comparable studies (e.g. Gibson, 2002; Golder, 2003; Van der Brug and Fennema, 2003; Van der Brug et al., 2000). See [Table 1](#) for the list of the 26 parties in Western Europe that are identified as ‘anti-immigration’.

These parties’ electoral scores constitute the main independent variable of the analyses presented in this article. The electoral scores before the start of the measurement of the dependent variable are added to the analysis, that is, between 1990 and 2000. The main independent variable pertaining to Hypothesis 1 (anti-immigration party success) is the change¹⁶ in the average national-level electoral performance of all the anti-immigration parties taken together in a political system in the decade before the first measurement point concerning the dependent variable.¹⁷ This variable has a mean of +1.86, a standard deviation of 3.44, a minimum of −5.5 percent (in Sweden) and a maximum of +7.1 percent (in Flanders).

The average of the national-level electoral performance of all anti-immigration parties per country is also added in order to control for the fact that some countries have more successful anti-immigration parties than others. The average anti-immigration party success by country in the 1990s varies from 0.0 in Britain to 22.5 percent of the national vote in Austria (mean = 8.3, SD = 7.2).

[Table 1](#) Twenty-six anti-immigration parties in Western Europe (1990–2004)

Country	Party	Abbreviation
Austria	Freedom Party of Austria	FPÖ
Belgium – Flanders	Flemish Bloc	VB
Belgium – Wallonia	To Act	Agir
Belgium – Wallonia	National Front	FN
Belgium – Wallonia	New Front of Belgium	FNB
Belgium – Wallonia	Party of the New Forces	PFN
Britain	British National Party	BNP
Britain	National Front	NF
Denmark	Danish People's Party	DF
Denmark	Progress Party	FrP
France	National Front	FN
France	National Republican Movement	MNR
Germany	German People's Union	DVU
Germany	National Democratic Party of Germany	NPD
Germany	The Republicans	REP
Italy	Northern League	LN
The Netherlands	Centre Democrats	CD
The Netherlands	Centre Party '86	CP'86
Norway	Fatherland Party	FLP
Norway	Progress Party	FrP
Sweden	The New Party	DNP
Sweden	New Democrats	NyD
Sweden	Sweden Democrats	SD
Switzerland	Car Party/Freedom Party of Switzerland	AP/FPS
Switzerland	National Action/Swiss Democrats	NA/SD
Switzerland	Swiss People's Party	SVP

The starting point of the period under study is 1990, the date of the first measurement point of immigration restriction scores that define the case selection. Only the national level is taken into account in this research, as electoral performance at this level is bound to have the largest contagion impact. National-level elections are seen as the most important, ‘first-order’ elections (Reif and Schmitt, 1980). It is important to note that there is a wide variation in the electoral performance of anti-immigration parties included in the study. For example, the lack of success of the British National Party (BNP) contrasts with the meteoric rise of Haider’s Freedom Party in Austria (FPÖ). Needless to say, the latter party is expected to have a larger impact on party competition than the former.

From the EES 1999, left-right party positions have been derived in order to test Hypothesis 2. The EES 1999 is a stand-alone survey conducted immediately after the European Parliamentary election that year, using random samples of voters in each of the member states of the European Union. The number of interviews carried out varies between the countries from 500 to over 3,000. The study is extensively documented on the European Elections Studies (EES) website (<http://www.europeanelectionstudies.net>). The EES datasets are very well suited for comparative research, as has been shown in many studies (e.g. Van der Brug et al., 2000; Van der Eijk and Franklin, 1996). Voters’ perceptions of party positions in terms of left and right have proved similar to left-right estimations based on manifesto contents, roll-call voting behaviour and the perceptions of parliamentarians (Van der Brug, 1998, 1999; Van der Brug and Van der Eijk, 1999). Moreover, the perceptions of voters are cross-checked with those of experts, and turn out to be almost identical (Benoit and Laver, 2006; Lubbers, 2001; Marks and Steenbergen, 1999).¹⁸ Measurement of the left-right positions of all the parties in the dataset results in a mean of 5.0, ranging from 1.0 (the Unity List in Denmark) to 9.7 (MS-FT in Italy), with a standard deviation of 1.9.

Carter (2005) collected data on an institutional variable concerning the electoral system that the relevant literature (e.g. Norris, 2005) suggests controlling for. This is the effective electoral threshold in a country, nationwide (Carter, 2005). The threshold a party has to pass in order to be represented in the national parliament ranges from 0.5 in Finland to the estimated figure of 37.5 in France and the United Kingdom (Carter, 2005: 149–151, 154).¹⁹ The mean value of this variable is 8.52; the standard deviation is 12.30.

Each party for which all the adequate data are available from these four sources is included in the analysis.²⁰ Data concerning the relevant time periods (from 1990 to 1999 regarding the independent variables and between 2000 and 2004 for the dependent variable) are available for 75 parties in the 13 political systems under study.

Of the 75 parties, 36 (48 percent) have served in government between the two measurement points of January 2000 (Lubbers, 2001) and June 2004 (Van Spanje et al., 2006). A dummy variable was included to distinguish these parties from opposition parties.

A dichotomous variable separates niche parties from other parties. Niche parties are

classified following the relevant literature (Adams et al., 2006; Meguid, 2005). Of the 75 parties, 19 are identified as niche parties (25 percent).

Finally, a control variable was added that identifies parties that formed coalition governments including an anti-immigration party. It could be expected that such parties would have been particularly affected by contagion on the immigration issue, perhaps accounting for any overall effect that might otherwise be found. A dummy variable identifying parties that governed together with anti-immigration parties is therefore included in the analysis to control for this possible effect. Out of 75 parties, 14 have been in government together with an anti-immigration party, or with an anti-immigration party supporting the government. This is 19 percent of the total of 75 parties.

For descriptive analyses of the dependent and independent variables, see [Table 2](#).

[Table 2](#) Descriptive analyses of the dependent and independent variables

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
<i>Dependent variable</i>					
Change in immigration position 2000–4	75	0.05	0.83	-2.3	2.8
<i>Level 2 variables</i>					
Effective threshold	13	8.52	12.30	0.5	37.5
Average anti-immigration party success 1990–2000	13	8.29	7.23	0.0	22.5
Change in anti-immigration party success 1990–2000	13	1.86	3.44	-5.5	7.1
<i>Level 1 variables</i>					
Niche party	75	0.25	0.44	0	1
L–R position	75	4.98	1.85	1.03	9.66
Governing party	75	0.48	0.50	0	1
Government cooperation with anti-immigration party	75	0.19	0.39	0	1

Source: Carter (2005); Lubbers (2001); Van Spanje et al. (2006).

Method

Contagion effects are measured by way of cross-sectional multivariate analyses on immigration policy positions with party (other than anti-immigration party) as the unit of analysis. The way of modelling, hierarchical linear modelling, takes into account that the 75 observations are clustered by polity (Hox, 2002: 1). Hierarchical linear regression models are estimated by way of restricted maximum likelihood estimation with the change in positions between 2000 and 2004 taken up by the parties that were not anti-immigration as the

dependent variable. The significance of the effects is assessed on the basis of robust standard errors.

The main independent variable pertaining to Hypothesis 1 (anti-immigration party success) is the change in the average national-level electoral performance of all the anti-immigration parties taken together in a political system in the decade before the first measurement point concerning the dependent variable. A positive effect of the Hypothesis 1 variable would indicate that anti-immigration party success is associated with subsequent immigration policy shifts by other parties, which would be consistent with the first hypothesis.

For Hypothesis 2 (vulnerability of parties that are more to the right), the left-right party positions of each of the parties under study are added, as well as the interaction of these positions with the main independent variable. If the interaction variable yields a significant positive effect, the second hypothesis is confirmed. After all, parties that score higher on a 1–10 left-right scale are expected to shift more to the upper end of the 0–10 immigration restriction scale if the anti-immigration party vote gains are higher.

Testing the third hypothesis (governing parties are less susceptible to contagion) also requires two additional variables. A dummy variable is included in the model, distinguishing parties in government from parties that were in opposition during (part of) the period between 2000 and 2004. Unless its interaction with the Hypothesis 1 variable yields a substantial negative effect, the third hypothesis is to be rejected. If it yields a negative effect, roughly equal to the size of the (positive) effect of the Hypothesis 1 variable, this would mean that contagion effects only pertain to opposition parties.

In order to test Hypothesis 4 (niche parties are less susceptible to contagion), a dummy variable distinguishing niche parties ($N = 19$) from the other parties is added to the analysis. Classification is based on the description of niche parties in the relevant literature (Adams et al., 2006; Meguid, 2005). In order to satisfy expectations from the extant literature, the interaction of this dummy with the Hypothesis 1 variable should be significantly negative, demonstrating that niche parties shift significantly less on the immigration issue than other parties after anti-immigration party victories.

Results

Let us now turn to anti-immigration party success and the ideological positions of the other parties. Does the electoral performance of the anti-immigration parties matter for the immigration positions of established parties (Hypothesis 1)? See Model 1 in [Table 3](#) for the results of the first analysis.

Model 1 fits the data reasonably well (Deviance = 183.59, d.f. = 2). The results in [Table 3](#)

indicate that $0.12/(0.12 + 0.58) = 17$ percent of the variance in change in party positioning on the immigration issue in 2004 is at the country level (Model 1), which is significantly different from zero. This also means that the expected correlation of the values of the dependent variable of two randomly drawn parties in the same country is 0.17. Clearly, the assumption of independent observations is violated. Hierarchical modelling is required to account for this violation (Hox, 2002: 1).

When I add the party-level and country-level variables (Model 2), only one of them yields a significant effect in the predicted direction. The variable pertaining to Hypothesis 1, the anti-immigration party success change, has a positive impact that reaches statistical significance at the $p = 0.05$ level (one-tailed). Based on Model 2, one would predict that a 1 percent increase in electoral performance of anti-immigration parties in the country in the 1990s leads to an average shift of 0.11 points on a 0–10 immigration restriction scale by (all) other parties in the country.

Unexpectedly, the niche party dummy has a strong positive effect. This suggests that niche parties actually shift more on the immigration issue than other parties do, at least when the change in anti-immigration party success is at its mean. Interestingly, the positive impact of the niche party dummy, the size of which is more than four times its standard error, indicates that niche parties are not immobile at all. Indeed, Model 2 indicates that, on average, these parties shifted substantially more to the restrictive end of the immigration restriction scale than other parties between 2000 and 2004. Note that this holds even after controlling for the fact that almost all of the niche parties are in opposition (15 out of 19 niche parties in my dataset). Examples of niche parties that repositioned on the immigration issue are the French communists (+1.7 on the 0–10 scale), Greek communists (+1.8) and the Greens in Denmark and Italy (both +1.6). Furthermore, Model 2 suggests that the more left-wing a party, the more restrictive on immigration it became. Both effects would be significant if a two-tailed test ($p < 0.05$) was applied. None of the other variables have a significant impact.

In order to test Hypotheses 2–4, I examine whether the slopes of the left-right party placement (Hypothesis 2), the government party dichotomous variable (Hypothesis 3) and the niche party identifier (Hypothesis 4) vary across countries. As it turns out (not shown), the slope of the government status dummy varies significantly whereas that of the ideological party placement and the niche party dummy do not. This indicates that the effects of left-right and niche party status do not significantly vary across countries, and thus do not vary according to (country-specific) anti-immigration party success. In other words, left-wing and niche parties are no less affected by anti-immigration contagion than other parties. The second and fourth hypotheses are therefore to be rejected.

[Table 3](#) Models explaining change in immigration policy position of 75 Western European parties, 2000–4

	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4</i>
	<i>b</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>b</i>
	(RSE)	(RSE)	(RSE)	(RSE)
Constant	0.07 (0.13)	-0.04 (0.16)	-0.04 (0.16)	-0.10 (0.18)
Party-level variables				
Niche party	0.61 (0.13)	0.67 (0.14)	0.87 (0.14)	
L-R position	-0.07 (0.04)	-0.06 (0.04)		
Governing party	0.00 (0.22)	-0.01 (0.15)	0.03 (0.17)	
Government cooperation with anti-immigration party	-0.14 (0.15)	-0.00 (0.14)		
Country-level variables				
Effective threshold	0.00 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)		
Average anti-immigration party success 1990–2000	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.02 (0.02)		
Change in anti-immigration party success 1990–2000 (Hypothesis 1)	0.11 (0.05) [*]	0.16 (0.07) [*]	0.13 (0.06) [*]	
Cross-level interaction variable				
Governing party × Change in anti-immigration party success 1990–2000 (Hypothesis 3)		-0.15 (0.05) ^{**}	-0.16 (0.05) ^{***}	
N party level	75	75	75	75
Variance component party level	0.58 (0.76)	0.42 (0.65)	—	—
N country level	13	13	13	13
Variance component country level	0.12 (0.35) ^{**}	0.14 (0.38) ^{**}	—	—
Deviance	183.59 (d.f. = 2)	180.02 (d.f. = 2)	177.05 (d.f. = 4)	161.56 (d.f. = 4)

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$ (one-tailed). Robust standard errors (RSE), computed using the software HLM, are presented in parentheses. All the continuous variables in the models are centred around their grand means.

As the effect of the government party dummy significantly varies by country, I attempt to explain this variation by including a cross-level interaction of this dummy with anti-immigration party success (Model 3). As it turns out, in doing so I explain virtually all of the cross-country variation of the government status variable, as the slope variance of the government dummy falls from 0.27 to 0.07, which is not significantly different from zero (at the $p = 0.05$ level) anymore, not shown. The cross-level interaction effect has the predicted negative effect ($b = -0.15$), which is significant at the $p = 0.01$ level. The Hypothesis 1 variable retains its effect ($b = 0.16$) and its significance ($p < 0.05$) when I add the interaction effect. According to Model 3, a 1 percent higher success rate of anti-immigration parties in a country is associated with an average shift of 0.16 points to more restrictive policies on a 0–10 scale for opposition parties and a $0.16 - 0.15 = 0.01$ point shift by governing parties. Thus, the change in immigration stances between 2000 and 2004 is affected by the electoral performance of anti-immigration parties in the country in the decade before (Hypothesis 1). However, governing parties are significantly less susceptible to this contagion effect (Hypothesis 3).

As a final model (Model 4), I estimate all the variables that yield a significant impact (either in the predicted or the ‘wrong’ direction) in Model 3.²¹ When doing so, the Hypothesis 1 ($b = 0.13$, significant at the $p = 0.05$ level) and Hypothesis 3 ($b = -0.16$, significant at the $p = 0.001$ level) variables yield effects similar to those in Model 3. [Figure 1](#) captures the effect of government status on the interplay of anti-immigration party success and policy shifts, with the 1990–99 anti-immigration party performance change on the x-axis, and the other parties’ immigration policy shifts in the following five years on the y-axis.

As one can tell from [Figure 1](#), the immigration policy positions of governing parties (represented by the dotted line with the gentle slope) hardly shift at all. Parties in opposition, by contrast, shift to more restrictive immigration positions when anti-immigration parties have increased their vote-shares, and take up more liberal positions when these parties lose votes (indicated by the solid, steep line). The opposition parties’ average shift is estimated at -0.04 points when the country’s anti-immigration party performance change is 1 SD (3.44) below its mean (1.86) at $1.86 - 3.44 = -1.58$. Opposition parties are predicted to shift $+0.85$ points on a 0–10 scale when anti-immigration party success is 1 SD above its mean (at $1.86 + 3.44 = 5.30$, not shown).

In sum, I conclude that there is a ‘contagion impact’ (Hypothesis 1) that affects opposition parties more than parties in government (Hypothesis 3). Indeed, contagion appears to have an effect on opposition parties only (see [Figure 1](#)). This contagion effect occurs regardless of a party’s ideological position (Hypothesis 2). Niche parties are no less susceptible to it than are other parties (Hypothesis 4).

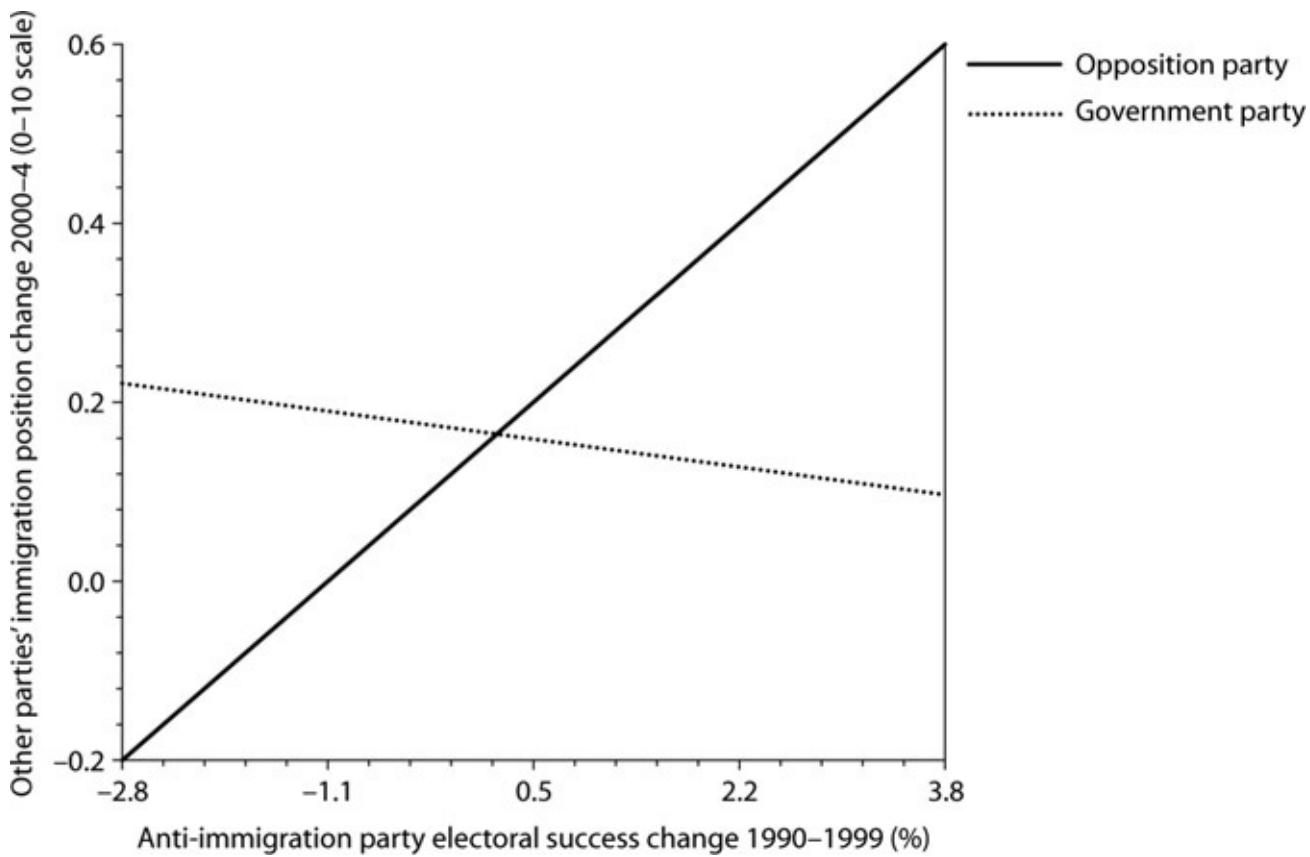


Figure 1 Change in immigration party positions as anti-immigration party success changes, 2000–4.

Source: Expert survey data (Lubbers, 2001; Van Spanje et al., 2006); N = 75.

Finally, one of the control variables tests the argument that in countries where centre-right parties relied on the anti-immigration parties to forge government coalitions, the former parties adopted the policy stances of the latter, notably on immigration. Models 2 and 3 give no support to this argument. In fact, the effect yielded by the cooperation dummy variable is not in the predicted direction and not statistically significant. This means that, on average, having controlled for all the other relevant variables, the parties that cooperated with the anti-immigration parties were no more affected by their partners than other parties. This finding calls for more research on contagion effects related to cooperation with anti-immigration parties.

Conclusions

The study aimed to assess the effects of the electoral performance of anti-immigration parties on the immigration policy positions of other parties. On the basis of comparative-empirical analyses of 75 parties in 11 West European countries between 1990 and 2004, it is found that the electoral success or failure of anti-immigration parties has a contagion effect on the

immigration stances of other parties (Hypothesis 1). When in government, however, parties are not affected by this mechanism (Hypothesis 3). Two hypotheses derived from the extant literature are thrown into question by my findings. Parties that mobilize on niches other than immigration turn out not to be immune to contagion impacts (Hypothesis 4). More generally, rightist parties are not more likely to co-opt the policies of the anti-immigration parties than leftist parties are (Hypothesis 2). This means that the ‘contagion of the right thesis’ (e.g. Norris, 2005) is not substantiated by the evidence. Some of the established right-wing parties cooperate directly with anti-immigration parties in government. However, even this does not seem to lead these parties to emulate the policy stances that brought the anti-immigration parties their success in these countries.

The findings add up to an interesting pattern. On the one hand, green and (former) communist parties ‘discover’ the immigration issue and reposition on it. On the other, the main right-wing parties are not substantially more affected than other parties – not even if they cooperate closely with successful anti-immigration parties. This could be related to the distribution of voter preferences on the issue on which this specific kind of niche party mobilizes, i.e. immigration. Survey results suggest that in virtually all the contemporary West European countries, a majority of voters is opposed to the idea of the multicultural society (see, e.g., Ivarsflaten, 2005a; Van der Brug and Van Spanje, 2009). This means that if an anti-immigration party has success and the issue becomes salient, all other parties have incentives to take up a restrictive policy position – not just the niche party’s immediate competitors. A left-wing party may attempt to reduce its losses to anti-immigration challengers by withdrawing its support for the ideal of the multicultural society.

However, findings in the relevant literature suggest that it is mainly the right-wing parties that compete with anti-immigration parties (e.g. Carter, 2005; Van der Brug et al., 2005), and not the left. In the light of these findings, my results suggest that the intensity to which parties compete with the anti-immigration party does not play an important role among the predictors of contagion effects. The extent to which the other parties compete with anti-immigration parties does not appear to structure the contagion mechanisms in the way that would be expected on the basis of Downsian spatial analysis. That is, instead of only influencing individual parties that adapt to immediately-felt electoral pressures, the contagion seems to affect entire party systems (cf. Downs, 2002; Pettigrew, 1998). Based on standard spatial theory of party competition, one could draw the conclusion that co-opting the policy positions of successful rivals is not a knee-jerk response by a party to the competitive environment in which it is embedded.

On the basis of Meguid’s (2005) modified spatial theory of party competition, it could be argued that my findings show that the left engages in strategic repositioning on the immigration policy dimension, just as the right does. On this view, a left-wing party may, for example, try to fuel the anti-immigration parties’ successes by explicitly addressing the issue

in the expectation that anti-immigration parties eat more into the mainstream right's electoral base than into its own. The available data do not allow me to perform further empirical tests on this point, however.

More generally, the findings of this study seem to highlight the fact that a party's ability to employ vote-maximizing strategies has considerable constraints. When in government, the party leader's hands are tied, which may lead to different outcomes than commonly used theories predict. Other factors, such as the alignments within the party and personal preferences of the party leaders, can also play an important role in the response of an established party to the emergence of an anti-immigration party in its polity. In other words, contagion effects are contingent upon the wider context of inter-party and intra-party competition. Future research should focus on the question of how the context matters, and to what extent.

Acknowledgement

The author would like to thank Sarah de Lange, Mark Franklin, André Krouwel, Peter Mair, Wouter van der Brug, Cees van der Eijk, and three anonymous reviewers for *Party Politics* for their useful comments. Any remaining errors or omissions are the author's sole responsibility.

Notes

¹ This should not be confused with the classic controversy over 'contagion from the left' versus 'contagion from the right' (Duverger, 1954; Epstein, 1967).

² These two types are often confused. A more restrictive immigration policy is widely considered as 'rightist', whereas the ideal of the multicultural society is usually regarded as an idea of the left. As shown empirically in this article, this relation is not as straightforward as it *prima facie* seems. Recently, many parties of the left have shifted to more restrictive immigration policies, while several parties with a right-wing profile have become less strong advocates of the ideal of cultural unity.

³ 'Left' and 'right' not only refer to a traditional economic axis here, but also to a broader dimension that encompasses clusters of issue positions, as, for example, Kitschelt and McGann (1995) note. The 'issues that divide the Left and the Right are linked in ways contingent upon time and space' (Kitschelt and McGann, 1995: 44).

⁴ However, the National Front (FN) was electorally unsuccessful in the early 1980s. This calls into question whether the first-mentioned effect can be considered as 'contagion' in the sense of this article. In the context of French politics, the actions of Social Democrats like Fabius may be interpreted as attempts to hurt the centre-right by legitimizing the

National Front rather than as contagion effects. Such actions dovetail with those of the Social Democratic president Mitterrand in the 1980s. Not only did Mitterrand urge the leaders of the national broadcasting corporations to devote more attention to FN party leader Le Pen in 1982, he also changed the electoral rules to a system of proportional representation before the national elections four years later. This led to the entrance of 34 representatives of the FN in the *Assemblée Nationale* (Mayer, 1998: 21).

- ⁵ Perlmutter also takes another Italian party into account, the National Alliance (AN). Whether this party can be seen as anti-immigration at the relevant time-points is questionable, however. It did not have an anti-immigration stance by 2000 (Lubbers, 2001) or by 2004 (Van Spanje et al., 2006). Nor did the party attach much importance to the issue (Benoit and Laver, 2006; Carter, 2005: 33–4). Therefore, the party was not included among the cases selected for this study.
- ⁶ Recently, Williams has contributed to the debate with a comprehensive cross-national study on the impact of anti-immigration parties, including contagion effects on the issue of immigration in 17 Western European countries (2006). She did not address the question of how the party positions of mainstream parties are affected by the electoral performance of anti-immigration parties, however. Instead, she examined the position shifts of mainstream parties on this issue as a response to the shifts of the radical right parties. Not much empirical evidence was found on this point, and Williams concludes that ‘the other parties do not adapt their positions on immigration directly because of the position shifts on the issue by radical right-wing parties’ (p. 70).
- ⁷ This presupposes that the mainstream parties actually have a position on the immigration policy dimension. As Meguid rightly points out, this is not a given when there is no relevant anti-immigration party in the system (2005: 349). However, I selected countries in which significant anti-immigration parties exist only. Moreover, in each of the political contexts that I deal with in this article, contemporary Western European countries, the immigration issue enjoys high degrees of salience (see, e.g., Benoit and Laver, 2006). It can therefore be assumed that parties in these contexts have a position on the immigration issue.
- ⁸ If an effect were found in accordance with Hypothesis 4, an alternative explanation would be that a hard line on immigration sits uneasily with the ideologies of far left and green parties. Most notably, the notion of the universal brotherhood might be incompatible with very restrictive immigration policies.
- ⁹ The left-right dimension includes more issues than immigration, of course. In addition, party positions in terms of left and right are not only determined by a party’s immigration position, but also by the salience of the immigration issue. However, it is consistent with the line of reasoning of Adams et al. (2006) to expect that the other niche parties stick to their key issues. Moreover, having very left-wing profiles, they are not expected to co-opt policy positions on an issue that is predominantly owned by parties of the right in the countries of study. After all, this would be the same as moderating their ideological positions in terms of left and right, of which Adams et al. (2006) have shown that it presents considerable electoral costs to these parties.
- ¹⁰ Hypothesis 4 may seem difficult to separate from Hypothesis 2. After all, (ex-) communist and green parties are all left-wing. However, the theoretical basis on which Hypothesis 2 is based differs from that of Hypothesis 4. Note that Hypothesis 2 is not about right-wing parties only, but states that the more right-wing its ideologies, the more vulnerable a party is to contagion effect, and green parties are not necessarily far-left parties. The green parties in the sample were

all coded as having moderate positions, between 3.46 and 4.24 on average on a 1–10 left–right scale. They can therefore be expected (on the basis of Hypothesis 2) to be vulnerable, and more so than the (ex-)communist parties, that were all placed to the left of the greens. Thus, assessing Hypothesis 2 does not render the assessment of Hypothesis 4 superfluous.

[11](#) Note that this conceptualization is a major departure from the usual classification of parties in the existing literature. Instead of classifying a party according to its origins in society or its ideological background (see Mair and Mudde, 1998), this article introduces a different basis of categorizing parties, which will not be discussed at length, however, as this does not have a large impact on case selection or results. As mentioned in the text, the group of selected parties is similar to other studies on anti-immigration parties.

[12](#) For a few small parties that were not included in either of these two expert surveys, the author relied on descriptions of party ideology regarding immigration given by Carter (2005).

[13](#) Established parties are defined as parties that already existed before the emergence of the anti-immigration parties in Western Europe at the end of the 1970s. Admittedly, the FPÖ was founded as early as 1955. However, before Haider's take over in 1986, the FPÖ can be considered as a completely different party from the FPÖ afterwards (e.g. Luther, 2000).

[14](#) Belgium is considered to contain two separate political systems, Flanders and Wallonia. Thus, this adds up to 13 political systems in 12 countries.

[15](#) Even if the question asked in 2004 is identical to the one asked four years earlier, it is questionable whether the immigration restriction scale of 2004 is comparable to that of 2000. If the entire perception of immigration restriction changed in the minds of the experts in these four years, a 4.0 score in 2004 does not mean the same as a 4.0 score in 2000. To the extent that this influences the results, it will have a dampening effect conducive to type-II errors. If empirical evidence is found in support of the hypotheses, it is therefore likely that the impact is even larger than predicted. Because hypotheses 1 and 3 are confirmed on the basis of the available data (see below), this strengthens the findings of the article, however.

[16](#) The reason underlying the choice for change as the major independent variable, rather than the absolute levels of anti-immigration party success, is that the other parties are expected to adjust their positions mainly as a result of 'electoral shocks', and not as a result of the mere presence (and possible growth stagnation or vote decrease) of the anti-immigration parties. This methodological choice did not matter much for the findings of this article, as both the change and the average anti-immigration party success by country have significant positive impacts significant at the $p = 0.05$ level.

[17](#) National-level election results are used for this variable. If no national-level elections were held in one or either of these years, then the result was estimated, assuming a linear relation from one election to the next. For example, the combined electoral performance of the anti-immigration parties in Germany in 2000 was estimated by averaging these parties' results in the national elections of 1998 and 2002. The combined result of the German People's Union (DVU), National Democratic Party of Germany (NPD) and Republicans (REP) was 3.3 percent in the 1998 national elections and 1.0 percent in 2002, which produces a result of $(3.3 + 1.0)/2 = 2.2$ for the year 2000. Because these parties obtained 2.4 percent of the vote in the 1990 national elections together, the change between 1990 and 2000 is estimated at $2.2 - 2.4 = -0.2$. See Table 1 for descriptive analyses of the variable computed in this way.

[18](#) Estimations by experts derived from three surveys conducted at different points in time by Marks and Steenbergen (1999),

Lubbers (2001) and Benoit and Laver (2006) are all correlated for more than $r = 0.90$ with the voter perceptions in terms of ‘left’ and ‘right’ derived from the EES at the corresponding time-points (significant at $p = 0.01$, one-tailed).

¹⁹ Carter also measured a similar institutional variable, the proportionality of each national election, but this is almost identical to the effective threshold variable ($r = 0.95$).

²⁰ Data are available for virtually every significant party that is not labelled as ‘anti-immigration’. The average vote-share obtained by the parties included in the analyses together is 95 percent, varying from 68 percent in Italy in 2004 to 98 percent in Sweden (also in 2004).

²¹ The government status dummy is also included in Model 4, because it is a lower-order effect without which the cross-level interaction would be difficult to interpret (see Brambor et al., 2006).

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Comparing radical right parties in government

Immigration and integration policies in nine countries (1996–2010)

Tjitske Akkerman

Several radical right parties have entered national governments as coalition partners in Western Europe since the beginning of this century. This recent development has raised new questions about the impact of these parties on policy formation in general, and on immigration and integration policies in particular. Immigration and integration are not only the key issues of radical right parties, but these issues are also central to the concern of voters for these parties (Fennema 1997; Ivarsflaten 2008; Mudde 2007). Negative attitudes toward asylum seekers, legal and illegal immigration and multi-culturalism prevail among radical right voters and are the main reason why voters support these parties (Carter 2005; Van der Brug *et al.* 2000). This article therefore focuses on this key policy field.

The results of previous studies assessing the impact of the entrance of radical right parties into national governments are far from univocal. Most studies have highlighted the (direct or indirect) influence of these newcomers (Howard 2010; Marthaler 2008; Schain 2006; Williams 2006). However, the presumed significance of radical right parties has also been questioned (Duncan 2010; Money 1999; Mudde 2007; Van Kersbergen and Krouwel 2008). The most elementary question scholars disagree about is whether policy results would have been much different if radical right parties had remained in opposition. In other words, has the entrance of radical right parties into government pushed immigration and integration policies further in a restrictive direction? A systematic and comparative assessment of the policy output of cabinets with and without radical right parties is still lacking. To fill this gap, an index will be presented that enables the systematic measurement of legislative changes over time and across national contexts. Drawing on studies of immigration and integration policies, a broad approach to the policy fields has been chosen, including subfields such as citizenship and denizenship, asylum, family reunion, illegality and several aspects of integration policies. In all these fields, legislative changes made by 27 cabinets of varying political composition in the period between

1996 and 2010 will be measured and compared.

A central argument of this article is that changes in immigration and integration policies cannot be explained without taking account of the interaction between radical right parties and centre-right parties in (and outside) government. Radical right parties have in all cases entered government as coalition partners of centre-right parties. In some respects, the bargaining position of radical right parties in coalition negotiations and in cabinet meetings with centre-right parties has been relatively weak. They have mostly been junior partners.¹ Moreover, radical right parties are situated on the far right pole of the left-right continuum, which gives them few coalition alternatives (Smith 1991). In these respects they have been at a disadvantage. On the other hand, they sometimes have the advantage of dominating the political agenda with an issue they own, and where there is no party consensus (Green-Pedersen and Krogstrup 2008, 612–13). In order to provide more insight into the respective roles of centre-right and radical right parties in coalition governments, a case by case analysis will be presented in the last part of the article.

To begin with, however, the concept of influence needs to be clarified. The assessment of influence in office is complicated by the fact that radical right parties have so far only entered government as coalition partners. Even if significant policy changes occur as a result of their entry into government, it cannot be concluded that these changes are a result of the direct influence of radical right parties.

The influence of radical right parties in office

Even before radical right parties enter office, they are deemed highly influential. A distinction is generally made between the indirect and the direct influence of radical right parties. As Schain (2006) has argued, radical right parties may have considerable indirect influence once they break through electorally. The electoral success of radical right parties varies nationally, but overall it has been increasing over recent decades and there is no sign that this trend is reversing. On average, support in national elections has grown to 10 per cent in the most recent national elections, with peaks of almost 30 per cent in Austria and Switzerland. This indicates that there is a growing pressure on other parties to reconsider their policy agendas with respect to the key issues that radical right parties have successfully politicised. If other parties decide to compete by also taking a tougher line on immigration and integration issues, the indirect effect may be that policy agendas and eventually policy output will shift towards the more restrictive and assimilationist line favoured by radical right parties (Bale *et al.* 2009).

The pressure of this increasingly important element in electoral competition is weighing most on centre-right parties, because the appeal of radical right parties is most tempting for

voters on the right side of the political spectrum. Many scholars, therefore, have regarded the increasingly hard line on immigration and integration issues that centre-right parties have adopted during the past 15 years as a reaction to the electoral success of radical right parties (Marthaler 2008; Schain 2006; Williams 2006). Others have questioned the idea that radical right parties have been so influential in this respect, arguing that centre-right parties have changed course before and independently of the electoral rise of radical right parties (Bale 2008; Boswell and Hough, 2008: 339; Money 1999; Van Kersbergen and Krouwel 2008).

Social democratic parties are also assumed to have been pressed by the electoral success of radical right parties to follow a tougher line on immigration and integration issues. Some scholars conclude, however, that most social democratic parties end up mixing and matching rather than adopting the position of the new competitor (Bale *et al.* 2009: 423). Others have asserted that there is still a clear distinction between left- and right-wing policy agendas, even though the left has become stricter on some aspects of immigration policy (Duncan and Van Hecke 2008: 434; Lahav 2004).

Radical right parties have potentially *direct* influence over policy output when they gain office. Whether these parties have indeed profited from their opportunities in office to influence policy output directly is a matter of dispute. The significance of radical right parties entering government for policy agendas has been assessed mainly in case studies and findings vary substantially. Some studies indicate that gaining office made little or no difference for policy output. The policy results of (some) coalitions including radical right parties do not deviate much from previous or subsequent governments, according to these findings (Duncan 2010; Geden 2005; Tarchi 2008). Some scholars have emphasised that radical right parties tend to perform weakly in office due to difficulties they have organisationally in making the step from opposition to government (Heinisch 2003; Mudde 2007: 266, 281). In contrast, other findings indicate that radical right parties in government had a substantial (direct or indirect) impact on policy output (Lucardie 2008; Minkenberg 2001: 16; Zaslove 2004).

Part of this disagreement may be a result of conceptual differences rather than empirical findings. The central concept of influence is being used in different ways in these studies, some focusing more on direct and others on indirect influence. This article will focus in a case by case analysis on the most direct forms of influence that can be exerted by radical right parties in office. Whether these parties will manage to deliver the promised goods once they are in office depends on gaining the crucial ministerial posts and on the performance of their ministers. Direct influence is conceived here as having two dimensions. It is direct in relation to its object, that is policy output in its final and decisive stage. It is also direct in relation to the actor, in the sense that this influence is not enacted through an intermediate actor or a chain of actors. Effective input in negotiations about coalition agreements, for instance, may be conceived as direct with regard to the actor, but this influence is indirect in the sense that these agreements are intermediate steps in the process of policymaking. Purely indirect forms

of influence – that is influence through other actors and on policy agendas rather than policy output – are prevalent when radical right parties operate outside the executive arena. Indirect forms of influence may remain important mechanisms once radical right parties have entered office. As Minkenberg concluded, the interaction between centre-right and radical right parties is not only a crucial issue outside government, but also in office (Bale 2008; Minkenberg 2002).

Cases

Since the beginning of this century radical right parties have participated in national governments in five Western European countries. In Austria, the *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs* (FPÖ) assumed office in 2000, succeeded by the *Bündnis Zukunft Österreich* (BZÖ) in 2003. In Italy, *Lega Nord* (LN) joined the second Berlusconi government in 2001. A year later the Dutch *Lijst Pim Fortuyn* (LPF) was invited to participate in a government coalition led by the Christian democrats after the radical right party had won a landslide victory in the 2002 elections. The *Schweizerische Volkspartei* (SVP) had been represented in the Swiss Federal Council for many years, but in 2003 the radical wing of the party got the upper hand in the council when its leader Christoph Blocher was appointed to this executive body. Finally, the case of the *Dansk Folkeparti* (DF) has been included, even though the party did not formally enter government. It became a support party to a minority government led by the Danish liberals in 2001, and de facto the party became a coalition member.² Although the Danish cabinets supported by the DF are categorised as coalition cabinets with radical right parties, these cabinets will be evaluated as special cases.

Thus, by now six radical right parties have participated in national governments, either as full-blown coalition partners or as recognised supporters of a minority government (see [Appendix I](#)).³ As one of these parties has managed a second term, the number of coalition governments including radical right parties (RR coalitions) totals seven.

Nine cabinets directly preceding or succeeding the seven cases of RR coalitions have been added. The preceding governments were all incumbent at the end of the 1990s or around the turn of the century. In this period, the issue of immigration was already high on the political agenda in the five countries (Björklund and Andersen 2002: 110; Hofhansel 2008; Perlmutter 2002: 290–94; Van Oers 2008: 43; Williams 2006). Moreover, in all the countries but one, radical right parties were electorally successful in the late 1990s. The exceptional case in this respect was the Netherlands. The radical right party *Centrum-Democraten* only got 0.5 per cent of the votes in the national election of 1998 and withered away after that. The new radical right party led by Pim Fortuyn (LPF) entered government in 2003 only five months after it had been established. Governments that succeeded coalitions including radical right parties have

also been selected for comparison. Such cabinets came into being in Austria (2006), Italy (2006) and the Netherlands (2003, 2007).

To avoid selective bias regarding the electoral strength and office opportunities of radical right parties, four countries have been added in which radical right parties have not participated in any coalition government so far. The electoral performance of radical right parties in these four countries varies substantially. In Germany and Sweden the electoral performance of radical right parties has been relatively weak; in France and Belgium radical right parties have been on average strong electoral competitors. In these four countries all the cabinets in the selected period from 1996 to 2010, – a decade in which immigration policies were high on the public and political agenda in Western European countries – have been included. In total, the policy output of 27 cabinets of varying composition in nine countries in the period between 1996 and 2010 will be compared.

Measuring immigration and integration legislation

In order to assess the influence of the radical right parties on immigration and integration policy, an index has been developed that measures to what extent new legislation has a programmatically (radical) right-wing character. Comparing policy change across national contexts and across time requires abstraction from the specific policy goals that each radical right party presented in its election programme. Therefore, the index has been derived from the ideological characteristics this party family has in common. The elementary assumption upon which the index is built is that the ideological core of these parties is nativism. Radical right parties are anti-immigrant because they regard newcomers as a threat to a homogenous national culture (Betz 2003; Mudde 2007: 18–20). Radical right parties are also characteristically authoritarian; their ‘law and order’ preferences are closely linked to their anti-immigration position. Immigration is associated with crime or terrorism, and radical right parties underline that national security concerns prevail over concerns for the rights of immigrants.

As manifesto research makes clear, Christian Democratic and Conservative parties are also authoritarian and nationalist. These centre-right parties are preoccupied with restricting immigration, because their ideological *raison d'être* is to defend national security and national communitarian values.⁴ Policy differences regarding immigration and integration between the mainstream and radical right can be perceived as a matter of degree rather than as outcomes of diverging ideological perspectives (Bouillaud 2007). The index, therefore, represents a continuum that runs from the policy goals of the mainstream right to those of the radical right.

Right-wing and left-wing immigration policies, on the other hand, differ more substantially.

The left has not been immune to the politicisation of the issue: research shows that mainstream parties of the left have become important contributors to the increase of legislative initiatives concerning immigration in the course of the 1990s (Williams 2006: 183–6). Yet there remain clear differences between the programmes of the mainstream left, on the one hand, and those of the mainstream and radical right, on the other (Duncan and Van Hecke 2008; Givens and Luedtke 2005; Lahav 2004).

Based on these considerations, the Nationalist Immigration and Integration Policy (NIIP) index measures qualitatively to what extent the legislative output on immigration and integration of the eight coalition governments has a (radical) right-wing signature. The index includes only the most straightforward indicators, excluding policy outcomes and involving only legal aspects. As Helbling (2010) has argued, simple indicators are quite adequate to measure immigration policies. Moreover, it is important to separate policy output and policy outcomes. In line with these principles, two fields have been distinguished in which radical right parties seek to affect policies: 1) immigration policy and 2) integration policy.

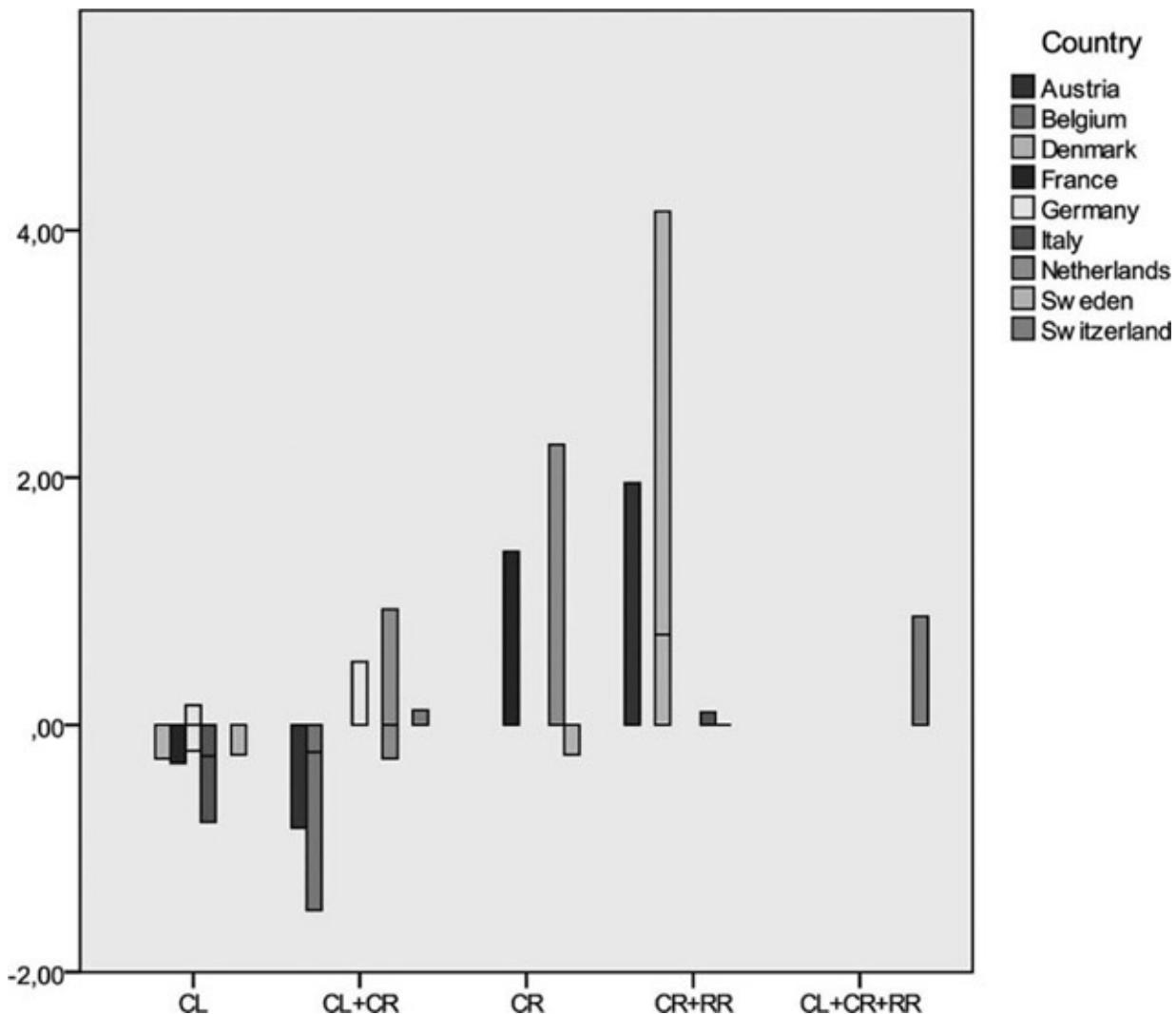
The first field is that of immigration policies in a broad sense. Citizenship/denizenship legislation is central, because this is the subfield that has been subject to fundamental changes during recent decades, while it also fundamentally divides left- and right-wing parties. The nationalist outlook of radical and centre-right parties implies a preference for citizenship based on cultural and ethnic affinity. Such an affinity can be acquired naturally by birth or through the process of cultural assimilation. Right-wing parties will hence be in favour of a ‘thick’ cultural notion of citizenship. Empirical research affirms this thesis (Howard 2010: 747). The liberal policy of the left is principally opposed to the nationalist and authoritarian values of the right. The left tends to conceive of citizenship as primarily being based on *jus soli* – i.e. children of foreigners born in a country’s territory can acquire citizenship – while the (radical) right privileges *jus sanguinis* to guarantee cultural and ethnic affinity. Moreover, whereas the left tends toward tolerance of dual nationality, the right tends to regard dual nationality as a threat to national homogeneity and loyalty.⁵ Finally, the right tends to promote many and high barriers to residence and naturalisation for non-EU immigrants, again with the exception of those belonging to the cultural or ethnic ‘family’. The right-wing concern for security is, for instance, apparent in demands for a strictly clean criminal record as a condition for a residence permit or naturalisation. In sum, in the subfield of citizenship/denizenship policies, positive scores will be given to policies that strengthen *jus sanguinis*, heighten barriers to naturalisation and residence, and restrict dual nationalities (Bauböck *et al.* 2006; Groenendijk 2006; Howard 2010; Odalmal 2007; Vink 2010).

A major part of legislative output can be subsumed under this heading, but in order to be comprehensive three other subfields have been added to the NIIP index: asylum policies, family reunification and illegality. With respect to asylum legislation, radical right parties endorse highly restrictive asylum procedures, with less right of appeal. Family reunification

legislation is mainly being used as an instrument to reduce immigration by raising the barriers to family reunification. Legislation that deals with illegal immigrants will be strongly motivated by security concerns and deterrence. Making illegal immigration a criminal offence, opposing regularisation and minimising access to basic goods are goals promoted by the radical right with regard to irregular immigrants.

A second field that should be distinguished is integration policies, a term used here in the strict sense of policies that support and regulate civic and cultural integration. In this respect, right-wing parties not only tend to be more restrictive than left-wing parties, but they also value cultural assimilation and loyalty to the nation. Civic integration policies can be regarded on the one hand as instrumental for the civic and cultural integration of immigrants, but they can also be regarded as potentially negative sanctions affecting one's legal status (Goodman 2010; Joppke and Morawska 2003). Language tests as a condition for entry, for instance, can be used to restrict immigration from poor countries. As various researchers have noted, civic integration courses have been used to raise the barriers to entry, residency or naturalisation (Bauböck and Joppke 2010). For the NIIP index it is therefore relevant to focus on what Goodman has identified as a prohibitive strategy that combines high hurdles for eligibility with increased emphasis on assimilation through integration tests (Goodman 2010: 765). Such policies set relatively high standards for knowledge of language, extend integration requirements to civic orientation, history and culture, and tend to demand loyalty oaths and commitment to political or cultural values. This exacting and assimilationist notion of integration will turn into a prohibitive strategy when the passing of integration tests becomes conditional for entry, residency or naturalisation (Jacobs and Rea 2007). (For an overview of the indicators and an explanation of how policy change has been measured, see [Appendix II](#).) In order to assess optimally the range and substance of changes implied in new legislation, varying sources have been used. Apart from scrutinising primary legislative sources, expert reports, articles and books have been consulted for contextual information.⁶

Policy output compared



[Figure 1](#) Policy output* of cabinets of varied composition**.

* The mean of the total scores of output of each cabinet in proportion to the number of months each cabinet held office (including caretaker periods).

** CL = Centre-Left; CR = Centre-Right; RR = Radical Right.

[Figure 1](#) shows that there is a significant difference between right-wing and left-wing cabinets (see also [Appendix I](#)).⁷ Centre-left parties in office mainly scored negatively on the NIIP index, which means that they passed immigration and integration legislation that was liberal rather than restrictive and assimilationist. In other words, the policies of left-wing cabinets deviated ideologically from those of centre-right and radical right parties in government. The only exception to this is the Schröder II cabinet (2002–2005) with a positive result, albeit a small one. The main immigration law of this cabinet, the *Zuwanderungsgesetz* (1 January 2005), was the final result of long negotiations with the opposition party CDU.

The output of centre cabinets, including centre-left and centre-right parties, varies from slightly negative to slightly positive scores. The Dutch ‘purple’ cabinet Kok II (1998–2002) stands out with a distinctively positive score. In contrast, the Belgium ‘purple’ cabinet

Verhofstadt I (1999–2003) was clearly liberal; this cabinet passed, among others, a nationality law that has been called the '*Snel Belgwet*' (a fast lane to Belgian citizenship).

Centre-right cabinets score on average much higher on the index than centre cabinets. The main exception is the Swedish minority cabinet Reinfeldt I (2006–2010) that managed with the help of opposition party the Greens to pass a liberal migration law in 2008. In contrast, the French centre-right cabinet Raffarin (2002–2007) introduced various restrictive and assimilationist measures when two so-called Sarkozy Laws were passed. The Dutch Balkenende II/III cabinet (2003–2007) also scored high on the plus side of the index with two laws on integration – one with a language/integration test taken abroad to be passed as a condition for a visa for family reunion with a spouse in the Netherlands – and an Aliens Act that raised age barriers for family reunion.

Finally, cabinets including radical right parties scored on average as high as centre-right cabinets. Within this group the results varied substantially. The Danish minority cabinet Rasmussen I (2001–2005), supported by the DF, stands out as the coalition government that succeeded best in shifting immigration and integration legislation to the right. The Danish coalition was highly productive in this first period, producing various amendments to the Nationality Law. Family reunion was drastically restricted by a '24 years rule', that made settlement in Denmark after marriage with a non-EU partner or a Nordic foreign national only possible if both partners are 24 years or older. The reduced welfare benefits for immigrant workers were also remarkable. Generally, terms of access to citizenship were tightened. The second Rasmussen cabinet (2005–2007) achieved far fewer changes in this policy field.

Next to Denmark, immigration and integration policies have changed most substantially in Austria. The Schüssel II cabinet (2003–2006), which initially included the FPÖ and later the BZÖ, also produced several laws with a radical right profile. The Austrian parliament, for instance, accepted a new Asylum Law in October 2003 that, among other things, restricted the appeals process of asylum applicants. This law was eventually declared unconstitutional by the Austrian Constitutional Court. Moreover, naturalisation requirements and civic integration demands were raised in the Settlement and Residence Act 2005. The policy output of the first Schüssel cabinet, however, was moderate.

The SVP, with leader Blocher as Minister of Justice in the Swiss Federal Council (2003–2007), was only marginally successful in putting its stamp on the immigration and integration policy of the Swiss government. The Asylum Law, initiated by Blocher and accepted by referendum in 2006, was clearly restricting the rights of asylum applicants and increasing coercive measures. The Immigration Law accepted in 2006 was relatively moderate, however. The party also lost two referendums it had sponsored in 2004. The SVP opposed, among other things, the right to appeal against negative outcomes of naturalisation requests, but lost the referendum that was required to change the constitution. On the other hand, the party

campaigned successfully for a referendum to reject legislation that relieved the requirements for naturalisation of second and third generations of immigrants.

Lega Nord in the Berlusconi II cabinet (2001–2006) had even more difficulties in bringing about policy change in the preferred direction. Policy change – mainly based on the Bossi–Fini Law – could only partly be marked as radical right. The Bossi–Fini Law put a heavier penalty of imprisonment on breaching orders to leave the country and restricted the renewability of residence permits, but the law also brought the largest amnesty in Europe ever for immigrant workers '*sans papiers*'.

Finally, the Dutch cabinet with the LPF was the least successful, with a nil score. This cabinet lasted only three months and therefore no new legislation was passed.

In sum, notwithstanding the remarkable results of some cabinets including radical right parties, the immigration and integration laws introduced by these cabinets have not been more restrictive and assimilationist than those of centre-right cabinets. The mean score of the three exclusively centre-right cabinets (+1.14) almost equals that of the seven coalition cabinets in which radical right parties have participated (+1.18). Note that the Danish cabinets have been counted as coalitions including radical right parties. If they had been regarded as centre-right cabinets, the latter would on average have scored even higher than the remaining coalitions including radical right parties. The conclusion should be that right-wing cabinets generally have clearly endorsed a more restrictive and assimilationist policy line since the late 1990s, but there is no evidence that radical right parties in office are directly responsible for that change of course.

Varied patterns of impact

Why have radical right parties not managed to make a difference in office? Looking at the cases more closely, a distinction should be made between coalitions that achieved remarkable policy gains in a radical right direction (with a score higher than 1.00 on the NIIP index), and others with moderate or minimum results (scores of 0.5–1.00 or 0.00–0.5). The first group consists of the Danish Rasmussen I cabinet (2001–2005) and the Austrian Schüssel II cabinet (2003–2006). The Swiss cabinet of 2003–2007 and the Rasmussen II cabinet (2005–2007) belong to the middle category. Finally, the cabinets with minimum or no results are the Italian Berlusconi II/III cabinet (2001–2006), the Austrian Schüssel I cabinet (2000–2003) and the Dutch Balkenende I cabinet (2002–2003).

Beginning with the last group, it is clear that the LPF, the FPÖ and Lega Nord failed to use their opportunities for direct influence in office. The LPF did not make a bad bargain at the start of the Balkenende I cabinet. The coalition agreement on immigration issues emphasised

the need for a more restrictive immigration policy and for a resolute fight against illegal immigration; it also made successful integration a condition for a permanent residence permit and full allowances, while raising the costs of integration courses for immigrants (Werken aan vertrouwen 2002) However, the influence of the LPF on this agreement should not be overrated. The coalition partner *Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie* (VVD) had already adopted a more restrictive position before the LPF was launched (Pellikaan *et al.* 2003: 40). Notwithstanding this promising start, the LPF was out of office after three months and no results had been achieved. The fall of the short-lived Balkenende I cabinet had been due to the organisational weakness of the LPF. Internal conflicts and two openly quarrelling LPF ministers made the centre-right partners *Christen-Democratisch Appèl* (CDA) and VVD decide to end the coalition. It is remarkable though that in the two years following the elections of 2002 both the centre-right coalition parties, VVD and CDA, shifted their policy programmes further to the right, even though the LPF was no longer a serious competitor after the national elections in 2003 (Lucardie and Ghillebaert 2008; Van Kersbergen and Krouwel 2008). The LPF was severely punished by the voters and was reduced to an opposition party with no teeth. The centre-right parties independently followed a more restrictive and assimilationist course after the defeat of the LPF, demonstrating their commitment to the policy line of the formerly made agreement with the LPF.

Like the Dutch cabinet with the LPF, the Schüssel I cabinet did not sit out the regular term to the end. When the FPÖ had entered government it was plagued by problems due to a lack of cadre and lack of party discipline of ministers (Heinisch 2003). Moreover, the internal relations between the party on the ground, the central organisation and the party in office were weak, with Haider as governor in Carinthia openly opposing the FPÖ ministers. After three years, the majority of the FPÖ ministers resigned, and the party was severely punished by the voters for its apparent inability to function successfully in office.

In Italy, Lega Nord was also not very successful in shifting immigration and integration policy to the right. While the LPF and FPÖ failed due to organisational weakness, this was not the main reason why the Lega Nord achieved so little. Although the party also had to replace several ministers in the Berlusconi II cabinet, these replacements were not due to weak recruiting procedures of the party. Lega Nord was not new in the executive arena. The step from opposition to government had already been made in 1994. In the second Berlusconi government (2001–2005) the coalition partners were committed to making a success of their renewed alliance. *Lega Nord* leader Bossi had used the time in opposition to develop a strategy that combined radical rhetoric with strategic flexibility in order to manage the tensions in the party between grassroots activists and high-ranking party officials (Albertazzi 2009; Tarchi 2008). Bossi managed in cooperation with *Alleanza Nazionale* leader Fini to transpose part of its immigration stances into legislation. However, Bossi had to reckon with the moderating stances of the Christian Democratic coalition partner UDC and the increasing

distance of the positions taken by AN leader Fini (Fella and Ruzza 2007).

When we turn to the group of cabinets with moderate to high policy change, the direct impact of radical right parties does not appear to be evident. In Denmark, the policy change made by the Rasmussen I cabinet was most impressive; immigration and integration policy shifted more to the right than in any of the other countries. The centre-right bloc of Liberals and Conservatives had already changed their focus to immigration issues in 1998. When the smaller social-liberal party defected from the right-wing bloc, its moderating influence no longer restrained the centre-right parties. The Liberals in particular made a sharp turn under a new leader (Green-Pedersen and Odmalm 2008: 373). This paved the way for a coalition with the radical right.

Of course, the DF did not have access to ministerial posts and could only indirectly affect policy through coalition agreements. The cases of the LPF and FPÖ show how difficult it can be organisationally to make the step from opposition to office, and especially how difficult it can be to recruit candidates for office who are sufficiently competent. The Danish People's Party has not so far had to pass this test, and it is still an open question whether the party would have been able to obtain results if it had formally entered office.

The substantial policy change of the Austrian Schüssel II cabinet cannot be credited to the FPÖ/BZÖ. A comparison with the Dutch case is interesting. In contrast to the Dutch case, where the organisational weakness of the LPF had also brought down the cabinet, the ÖVP gave the FPÖ a second chance after FPÖ ministers had resigned and early elections had to be held in 2003. However, the FPÖ remained a weakened coalition partner and the party split in 2005. Its centre-right coalition partner ÖVP took the lead in policy change. Similar to the Dutch case, the centre-right coalition partner used the opportunity of the weakened position of the radical right party to take over the initiative on immigration policy (Bale 2003; Geden 2005). The high scores on the NIIP index of Balkenende II/III and Schüssel II are results that can be claimed by centre-right parties rather than by radical right parties.

In Switzerland, the SVP succeeded best in holding on to its restrictive immigration and integration policy in government, notwithstanding the fact that it had to reckon with coalition partners of varying political colours. The party was not a newcomer in government, but it did have some adaptation problems after it obtained its second seat in the Federal Council in 2003. The problems were due to the existence of two factions within the party. The radicalisation of the party in the 1990s led by the Zürich-based leader Christoph Blocher implied a considerable reorganisation, but the party was well prepared for government (Mazzoleni and Skenderovic 2007). Tensions within the party remained under control until the elections of 2007. Moreover, the other government parties, the centre-left SPS included, made no serious attempts to marginalise the SVP. Newcomer Blocher succeeded as Minister of Justice in presenting a more restrictive Immigrant and Asylum Law after just a few months in office. The SVP could follow a relatively independent course, because coalition governments in Switzerland are not bound

by preceding policy agreements (Geden 2005: 79). Moreover, the SVP exploited the opportunities of direct democracy, mobilising popular opposition to legislative proposals it did not agree with (Frölich-Steffen and Rensman 2007: 129).

In sum, radical right parties do not gain much credit for delivering when in office. The main reason for their failure to use the opportunities of executive power is their organisational weakness. The SVP is the main and only exception. In all the other cases, the direct influence of radical right parties on policy change was rather marginal. That is not to say that these parties have not indirectly contributed to sometimes substantial shifts to the right. The case of the DF, for instance, indicates that indirect influence in office should not be underrated.

Conclusions

Right-wing cabinets generally have realised a change of course towards more restrictive and assimilationist immigration and integration policies since the late 1990s. Left-wing parties have not followed this trend: they still appear to be committed to a distinctly liberal immigration and integration policy. The comparison of policy output as measured by the NIIP index makes clear that parties matter. The idea that the direct impact of radical right parties in office has been an important factor in policy change should be discarded, however. The one and only exception in this respect is the SVP. Gaining not only an extra seat in the Federal Council in 2003, but also the important Ministry of Justice, the party managed to make a difference, albeit a moderate one.

Centre-right parties, however, are primarily responsible for the change of course in immigration and integration policies. Ideologically, the distance between centre-right parties and radical right parties had already been diminished with respect to immigration and integration issues at the end of the 1990s. Centre-right parties can rightfully claim the main credit for delivering when in office. Their impact came most clearly to the fore in the substantial policy change realised by exclusively centre-right cabinets, but it was also manifest in coalition cabinets with radical right parties. The latter parties tended to miss the opportunities for directly influencing immigration and integration policies. The disappointing achievements of radical right parties in office can be best explained by their organisational weakness.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Anouk Kootstra for her research assistance, and I am grateful for the

valuable comments of two anonymous reviewers.

Notes

- ¹ In the 1999 elections the FPÖ beat the ÖVP by a small margin. However, the two parties gained an equal number of parliamentary seats and the ÖVP took the lead in the coalition negotiations. The FPÖ was forced to acknowledge the strong bargaining position of the Christian democratic party and had to grant it the chancellorship. The Swiss situation is even more complicated, since Switzerland is not a parliamentary democracy. The country is not ruled by a government coalition, but by the Swiss Federal Council in which no distinction is made between senior and junior coalition members. Thus, even though the SVP emerged as the largest party after the Swiss election of 19 October 2003, it only appoints two of the seven members of the Swiss Federal Council.
- ² Radical right parties that support minority governments are de facto coalition members, because they are part of ‘a more or less permanent coalition that ensures acceptance of all or almost all government proposals’ (De Swaan 1973: 85; Strøm 1990: 60–61).
- ³ From 2001 to 2005 the Norwegian *Fremskrittspartiet* (FRP) also supported a minority government, but its position was less formalised than that of its Danish counterpart. This case is therefore not included in this article.
- ⁴ That is not to imply that the mainstream right could easily take an equally clear hard-line stance. Shifting to the far right side may interfere with other core values. Christian Democrats, for instance, often also value charity and hospitality as part of a social-conservative tradition, even though this may be more manifest at the grassroots level than at the level of the party leadership (Bale 2008; Van Kersbergen and Krouwel 2008).
- ⁵ That is with the exception of dual nationality for residents belonging to the nation, but living abroad. They should not be required to discard their original citizenship status.
- ⁶ The primary and secondary sources that have been consulted for the NIIP index are too numerous to be included here as references. Please mail the author for an overview: t.akkerman@uva.nl
- ⁷ The conducted ANOVA test reached significance for the difference in mean scores for right-wing cabinets ($M = 1.24$, $SD = 1.33$) and left-wing cabinets ($M = -0.24$, $SD = 0.27$) on policy output, $F(9.564)$, $DF(1.16)$ at 0.05 level.

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Appendix I The policy output of 27 cabinets, 1996–2010

Case	Country	Year	Cabinet	Composition	Classification	Months	Policy output	Output/months
1	Italy	1996–2001	Prodi I, D'Alema I, D'Alema II, Amato I	L'Ulivo, DS	CL	61	-4.00	-0.79
2	Italy	11/6/2001–2006	Berlusconi II, III	FI, AN, LN, UDC, NPSI, (PRI)	CR+RR	59	+0.50	+0.10
3	Italy	2006–2008	Prodi II	L'Unione	CL	24	-0.50	-0.25
4	Austria	1996–2000	Vranitzky V, Klima I	SPÖ, ÖVP	CL+CR	46	-2.50	-0.83
5	Austria	2000–2003	Schüssel I	ÖVP, FPÖ	CR+RR	37	+1.50	+0.49
6	Austria	2003–2006	Schüssel II	ÖVP, BZÖ	CR+RR	46	+7.50	+1.96
7	Austria	2006–2008	Gusenbauer I	SPÖ, ÖVP	CL+CR	23	0.00	0.00
8	Netherlands	1998–2002	Kok II	PvdA, VVD, D'66	CL+CR	45	+3.50	+0.93
9	Netherlands	2002–2003	Balkenende I	CDA, VVD, LPF	CR+RR	10	0.00	0.00
10	Netherlands	2003–2007	Balkenende II, III	CDA, VVD, (D'66)	CR	45	+8.50	+2.27
11	Netherlands	2007–2010	Balkenende IV	CDA, PvdA, CU	CR+CL	44	-1.00	-0.27
12	Switzerland	1999–2003		FDP, CVP, SP, SVP	CR + CL	50	+0.50	+0.12
13	Switzerland	2003–2007		FDP, CVP, SP, SVP	CR+CL+RR	48	+3.50	+0.88
14	Denmark	1998–2001	P.N. Rasmussen IV	SD, DRV	CL	44	-1.00	-0.27
15	Denmark	2001–2005	A.F. Rasmussen I	V, KF, (DF)	CR+RR	39	+13.50	+4.15
16	Denmark	2005–2007	A.F. Rasmussen II	V, KF, (DF)	CR+RR	33	+2.00	+0.73
17	Germany	1998–2002	Schröder I	SPD, Grüne	CL	48	-1.00	-0.21
18	Germany	2002–2005	Schröder II	SPD, Grüne	CL	37	+0.50	+0.16
19	Germany	2005–2009	Merkel I	CDU/CSU, SPD	CR+CL	47	+2.00	+0.51
20	France	1997–2002	Jospin	PS, LV, PCF, MRC, PRG	CL	59	-1.50	-0.31
21	France	2002–2007	Raffarin	RPR, UDF/UMP, (NC)	CR	60	+7.00	+1.40
22	Belgium	1999–2003	Verhofstadt I	VLD, PS, PRLS/FDF, SP, AG., EC.	CR+CL	48	-5.50	-1.50
23	Belgium	2003–2007	Verhofstadt II, III	VLD, PS, MR, SPA/Spirit	CR+CL	56	-1.00	-0.21
24	Belgium	2008–2010	Leterme I, Rompuy,	CD&V/N-VA, MR, PS, VLD, CDH	CR+CL	27	-0.50	-0.22
			Leterme II					
25	Sweden	1998–2002	Persson II	SAP	CL	51	-1.00	-0.24
26	Sweden	2002–2006	Person III	SAP	CL	44	0.00	0.00
27	Sweden	2006–2010	Reinfeldt I	MSP, CP, FP, Kd	CR	51	-1.00	-0.24

Note: CL = centre-left; CR = centre-right; RR = radical right.

Appendix II Codebook nativist immigration and integration policy index

Field	Immigration policy				Integration policy
Subfield	Citizenship legislation	Asylum legislation	Illegality legislation	Family reunification legislation	
Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Residence requirements first generation *Application procedures *Rights to appeal *Length of detention *Children's rights *Clean criminal record requirements *Financial means requirements *Grounds for expulsion *Barriers for spouses (years of marriage) *Fees *Dual nationality renunciation requirement *Exceptions *<i>Jus soli</i> for second or third generation at birth or after birth *Parental residency requirements *Ethnic/cultural affinity as ground for access, residence or naturalisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Criminal offence *Regularisation, partial or general *Access to basic goods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Age, income or other requirements for spouses *Age children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Language/integration requirements at entry *Language/integration requirements for residence permit or naturalisation *Level language test *Fees *Fines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Additional requirements: civic orientation, loyalty oath or ceremony, history and culture

- 'Citizenship policies'. An increase of residence requirements will result in +0.5 (1–2 years) or +1 (> 2 years). A stricter clean criminal record will vary from +0.5 to +1 depending on the sentence (two years or more=0.5) and the sanction (temporary or permanent exclusion from naturalisation). Reductions of requirements, easier procedures etc. will result in a deduction of 0.5 to 1 point. The introduction of *jus soli* will result in principle in – 1, but when this legislative change has marginal impact only 0.5 will be deducted.
- 'Asylum legislation': 0.5 will be added with the introduction of more restrictive procedures, reduction of protection status, reduction of social assistance or more coercive measures such as detentions.
- 'Illegality legislation': Regularisation or amnesty will result in a deduction of 0.5 to 1 point depending on the scale. Granting or withholding public health services, public education services, shelter etc. will result in adding or deducting 0.5, when children are involved an extra 0.5 may be added.
- 'Family reunion legislation': the introduction of a minimal age requirement will result in +0.5 (e.g. 21 years), or +1 when the age requirement has been raised substantially (e.g. 24 years).
- 'Civic integration legislation': the introduction of a language competency requirement at an elementary level will result in +0.5. When the required language level is high at introduction 1 point will be added, or when raised from elementary to high 0.5. For the introduction of a loyalty oath, a cultural knowledge test etc., 0.5 point for each will be added. However, when these tests are introduced at entry level an extra 0.5 point will be added, because immigrants-to-be will have more difficulty in passing these tests (Goodman 2010).

Populism and liberal democracy

Populists in government in Austria, Italy, Poland and Switzerland

Daniele Albertazzi and Sean Mueller

The growth and durability of populism in Europe

Since the publication in 1969 of Ghiță Ionescu and Ernest Gellner's seminal edited collection on populism, both the success of populist parties on the old continent and the literature focusing on them (recent additions being Albertazzi and McDonnell 2008 and Mudde 2007) have grown considerably. To understand the differences between the end of the 1960s and today, we need only to remind ourselves of the following:

- The populists' sustained electoral success across the continent from east to west, and the many differences between European political and electoral systems notwithstanding, has dispelled the myth that populism is, by nature, not durable (as Taggart 2000 and Mény and Surel 2002 have argued). Indeed, populist parties have sometimes been able to position themselves among the largest parties in their respective countries, when they have not become *the* largest parties of all (as in Italy and Switzerland), and in successive elections. Moreover, as the 18 per cent vote share achieved by the National Front (Front National, FN) in the first round of the French presidential elections of 2012 shows, some populists have achieved their best results in recent years.
- Where support for these parties has fluctuated, also because they failed to be seen as effective at governing after being given the opportunity to do so (see the case of the Austrian Freedom Party (Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs, FPÖ) discussed below), the setbacks have not necessarily caused the demise of populists (indeed, the Freedom Party would have received 21 per cent, had a vote been held in September 2012, according to recent surveys; *Profil* 2012). The case of the Netherlands – where,

following the decline of the List Pim Fortuyn (Lijst Pim Fortuyn, LPF) from 2003 onwards, the Party for Freedom (Partij voor de Vrijheid, PVV) has also successfully campaigned on themes such as Islam and immigration – also shows that opportunity structures favourable to populism can be successfully exploited by different challengers (Lucardie 2008). Despite the setback suffered by the Party for Freedom in the Dutch parliamentary elections of September 2012, it still retained the support of 10 per cent of the electorate (compared to 15 per cent in the previous election).

- Importantly, populism is continuing to spread to countries that, for one reason or another, seemed ‘immune’ from its ‘virus’. A recent example, fuelled by the post-2008 international financial crisis and the European Union’s (EU) inability to deal with it effectively, is the extraordinary success achieved by the True Finns (Perussuomalaiset) in the 2011 Finnish general elections on an anti-bail-out platform (plus 15 per cent – thus reaching 19.1 per cent of the vote, only 1.3 per cent behind the largest party).

The electoral strength of populists, coupled with the corresponding erosion in support for mainstream parties, has meant that they (together with other former ‘outsider’ parties, such as the Greens; McDonnell and Newell 2011) are increasingly accepted as coalition partners by mainstream parties, or are at least being asked to provide external support to governments (as in the cases of Denmark and the Netherlands).

Within the literature on populism, numerous studies (for example, Arditì 2007; Canovan 1981, 1999; Mény and Surel 2000, 2002; Mudde 2004, 2007; Panizza 2005) have stressed the need to analyse the uneasy relationship between populism and democracy (especially *liberal* democracy). Interestingly, in Europe populists have invariably presented themselves as the saviours – not the challengers – of democracy against political and economic elites at the national and supranational levels, which have been accused of having ‘stolen’ from the people what rightly belonged to them (in Eastern Europe these normally include the former communist *nomenklatura*, see the Polish case below). Krastev (2008: 4) has argued that, ‘in the current epoch, European elites secretly dream of a system that will deprive irresponsible voters of the power to undermine rational politics, and . . . they are more than ready to use the European Union to realize this dream’. Such European elites appear to have found their match in those populist parties that have reclaimed the ‘sceptre’ of full sovereignty on behalf of ‘the people’.¹ As Margaret Canovan (1999) explained, populists have never limited themselves to suggesting practical solutions to people’s problems – including in those countries in which they have been able to serve in government. On the contrary, they have offered nothing less than a ‘politics of redemption’, in contrast to the establishment’s ‘politics of pragmatism’, which includes the promise to return power to where it belongs: the people. However, as one considers the initiatives championed by populists in recent years (and especially what populists in power have done in actual fact), doubts inevitably arise on whether populism and *liberal*

democracy are fully compatible.

This article aims to further this discussion by moving from the theoretical level (at which it has generally been conducted) to the empirical one. Our main thesis is that if populism's inherent incompatibility with liberal democratic principles does not become apparent when populists are given a chance to implement their policies as members of an executive, then the case must have been overstated. We therefore consider policy proposals and legislative acts championed by populists in government in four countries: Austria, Italy, Poland and Switzerland (on case selection, see below). Here populists either 'cohabited' in government (the cases of Italy and Poland) or took part in governing alliances as junior partners (Austria) or were members of a consensual collegium (Switzerland). We will show that, despite these differences and numerous other constraints (such as EU membership, international law and domestic checks and balances), populists in all cases kept putting forward proposals and championing initiatives that repeatedly, consistently and purposely clashed with the fundamental tenets of liberal democracy. We are, however, not interested in why some populist parties were more successful than others, or why some policy areas were more successfully focused upon by them than others. What we aim to contribute to is rather the debate on the ideological inconsistency of populism with liberal democracy and how this translates into governmental action.

The next section identifies the key principles of liberal democracy and populist ideology. We then proceed by assessing the policy record in all four European countries in which populist parties have been part of national executives.

Populism and liberal democracy: key principles

Democracy and populism are complex and contested concepts, and this is not the place to rehearse debates about their respective definitions. Of the six conceptions of democracy identified by Coppedge et al. (2011: 253–5), we focus on the liberal type, which 'stresses the intrinsic importance of transparency, civil liberty, rule of law, horizontal accountability (effective checks on rulers), and minority rights' (Coppedge et al. 2011: 253). In order to identify the key principles of liberal democracy in the context of the present discussion, we rely on Giovanni Sartori (1987) and Larry Diamond (1999), drawing on the work of Albertazzi and McDonnell (2008) for a definition of populism.

Besides being an electoral democracy (that is, one in which regular, free and fair elections, the outcome of which is uncertain, are held, and in which citizens enjoy full voting rights), a liberal democracy must also guarantee some fundamental civil and political rights. These are individual and group liberties, such as the freedom to pursue one's legitimate interests, to hold

political, social and cultural beliefs, and to be able to express them without interference from the state. It is because of the inviolability of these liberties that minorities, no matter how ‘unpopular’ they might be, must be respected, their rights usually being enshrined in a constitution or otherwise protected by law. As for political rights, these include the opportunity for citizens to participate fully in the political life of their country, by associating, lobbying, protesting, and so on. The citizens’ enjoyment of full political rights nurtures (and is in turn strengthened by) political and civic pluralism, freedom of speech and pluralism of information. All these necessary ‘ingredients’ of liberal democracy are underpinned by what is arguably the most fundamental principle of all, perfectly embodied in the US Constitution: the notion that power can never be absolute, no matter how large a majority may be at a certain moment in time. While in a sense sacred, as the democratic principle requires, the rule of the majority thus needs to be limited and restrained, too (Sartori 1987: 32), so that it can never translate into tyranny over others (Dahl 1956: 6). The primacy given to constitutions in liberal democratic regimes, the territorial and functional separation of powers, the need for office holders to be accountable to one another and to the electorate and the subjection of citizens and institutions (including the government) to the law are means through which the power of the majority is constrained. Crucially for us here, as Sartori (1987: 32; original emphasis) explains: ‘if the majority *criterion* is turned (erroneously) into an absolute majority *rule*, the real-world implication of this switch is that a part of the people (often a very large one) becomes *a non-people*, an excluded part’. The important point to be stressed is that this would actually mean a dramatic loss of freedom for *every* citizen, including those who presently happen to agree with the political majority of the day on most issues, since they would be prevented from ever changing their minds, under penalty of losing their status as ‘one of the people’.² This is precisely what puts liberal democracy on a collision course with populism, to which we now turn.

As Peter Wiles (1969: 166) wrote in Ionescu and Gellner’s volume: ‘To each his own definition of populism, according to the academic axe he grinds’. Even today, ‘the term is often employed in loose, inconsistent and undefined ways to denote appeals to “the people”, “demagoggy” and “catch-all” politics’ (Albertazzi and McDonnell 2008: 2), while its usages in the media have hardly been less varied and imprecise (Bale et al. 2011). Like Donald MacRae (1969), another contributor to Ionescu and Gellner’s 1969 book, we see populism as an ‘ideology’, however ‘thin’ it might be (Freeden 1998), and we follow Albertazzi and McDonnell (2008: 3) in claiming that its core is the pitting of ‘a virtuous and homogeneous people against a set of elites and dangerous “others” who are together depicted as depriving (or attempting to deprive) the sovereign people of their rights, values, prosperity, identity and voice’. As this definition suggests, while the elites are neither virtuous (they never can be, in fact) nor necessarily homogeneous, the ‘people’ of populist discourse – an ‘imagined community, much like the nation of the nationalists’ (Mudde 2004: 546) – are, by necessity,

both. Foreigners, those perceived to be on the margins of society (such as homosexuals) and those who are not ‘common people’ are seen as ‘other’ since they do not belong to the community on either ethnic or cultural grounds, or due to their status as members of the elite. Only those who belong to the people can contribute to the definition of what Jean-Jacques Rousseau called the *volonté générale* and exercise sovereignty over the affairs of the community. Every deviation from what is posited to be the will of *this* people, populists argue, is *ipso facto* a betrayal of the democratic principle.

Liberal democracy, however, assumes that the ‘people’ and the ‘majority’ do not in fact coincide, since the people are not seen as a homogeneous entity characterized by the same single, identifiable will of populist discourse.³ In liberal democracies the majority is seen as transient, and also as constrained in two important senses. Firstly, its power is *mediated*, that is, exercised by a variety of institutions whose respective responsibilities have been assigned to them in advance and are normally vested in the people’s representatives. Scholars have often highlighted populism’s uneasiness with ‘representative politics’ (Taggart 2000; see also Mény and Surel 2002); in our view, while this may have been true of American populists, as far as contemporary European populists are concerned the case has been overstated. Supporters of populist parties are happy to be represented by leaders whom they perceive to be ‘like them’. It is the distance between the elites *here and now* and ‘the people’ that constitutes a problem, not the idea of representation per se (Mudde 2004: 558).

What cannot be squared easily with populism is rather the second, fundamental liberal democratic principle: that the power of the majority is always *limited* – hence the insistence on checks and balances – and that it can never be exercised at the expense of individual liberties, no matter how numerically overwhelming the majority is, or how strongly its members feel about an issue. This is what is so irreconcilable with the most strongly held belief of populist ideology, according to which, once identified, the will of ‘the people’ must be realized immediately and fully. It is now time to consider populists in government to see whether and how this belief translates into specific policy actions.

Assessing the challenge to liberal democracy: the empirical evidence

In the remainder of the article, we discuss populist governmental actions in three areas: individual rights, freedom of speech and the separation of powers. These correspond to the areas where we expect populist ideology to clash most strongly with liberal democracy. The sanctity of individual rights means, by definition, that there is no ‘hierarchy of rights’ – that is, the rights of the many cannot have primacy over those of the few. Moreover, freedom of

speech dispels the myth of the people's unity, by providing a constant reminder that 'the people' are far from being homogeneous and are, in fact, constituted by a myriad of different constituencies voicing different interests. Finally, the separation of powers places constraints on how executives are allowed to implement the 'will of the people' who have voted them into office.

We shall analyse policies championed by seven populist parties in four countries: the Austrian Freedom Party; the Italian Northern League (Lega Nord, LN) and Forza Italia (FI), renamed People of Freedom (Popolo della Libertà, PDL) after its merger with the post-Fascist National Alliance (Alleanza Nazionale, AN); the Polish Law and Justice (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, PiS), Self-Defence (Samoobrona, SO) and the League of Polish Families (Liga Polskich Rodzin, LPR); and finally the Swiss People's Party (Schweizerische Volkspartei, SVP). Our selection of parties covers the entire universe of formal populist government participation in Western Europe, given that both the Danish People's Party (Dansk Folkeparti, DF) and the Party for Freedom only ever provided external executive support (Akkerman and de Lange 2012: 574–5). The Polish case is representative of Eastern Europe in this analysis, without claiming to cover the entire spectrum of cases there. We are also aware that, by covering only populist parties, our research design might seem overly deterministic. However, we do not claim that populist parties are alone in pursuing policies that clash with liberal democracy – indeed, populist success has made many of their proposals politically acceptable (see the Austrian case below). Our purpose is rather to show that where populists have accessed government, a subsequent erosion of liberal democratic principles has not been a mere accident but was constant, unrelenting and, most importantly, fully consistent with these parties' ideology. Only a qualitative discussion of a small number of cases can uncover the threat inherent in government participation by populists. We now discuss the four countries in alphabetical order to substantiate this claim.

Austria

The new millennium was marked by the appointment of three 'Wise Men' by the EU to deliberate on whether the Austrian Freedom Party, which had become a member of the Austrian government in 2000 with the Austrian People's Party (Österreichische Volkspartei, ÖVP) (Müller 2004: 346), posed a threat to key democratic principles (see Ahtisaari et al. 2000). After a first spell in government, in the early elections of November 2002 the Austrian Freedom Party's support collapsed (from 26.9 per cent to 10 per cent of the vote), while the Austrian People's Party registered the largest gain of any Austrian party ever and reached 42.3 per cent of the vote (Luther 2003: 145). The People's Party retained the important position of chancellor and continued its coalition with the Freedom Party, but to the latter's governmental

inexperience and tensions between ministerial pragmatism and grassroots radicalism under the first chancellorship of Wolfgang Schüssel (2000–2) was now added a significant numerical inferiority. This turned the second Schüssel government (2003–6) into a de facto single-party government (Luther 2011: 465–6). Moreover, in April 2005 most MPs and all ministers plus the Carinthian branch of the Austrian Freedom Party joined the Alliance for the Future of Austria (Bündnis Zukunft Österreich, BZÖ), a new party founded by Jörg Haider to avoid relinquishing government participation (as many grassroots activists wanted), thus further weakening the Austrian Freedom Party's policy effectiveness (Heinisch 2008: 51). Nevertheless, and despite these setbacks, in the years following its entrance into government the Austrian Freedom Party, defined by Mudde (2007: 42) as a ‘populist radical right party’, remained faithful to its ideology and identity.

In fact, ever since Haider had assumed the party leadership in 1986, immigration and asylum seekers had topped the party's agenda and the populists had not refrained from openly dismissing the rule of law as being contrary to their understanding of democracy. At the regional level, the saga of bilingual road signs shows this very clearly. As governor of Carinthia (1999–2008), Haider refused to implement a ruling issued in 2001 by the Constitutional Court (and reiterated several times in the years to follow) which demanded that more signs in Slovenian be installed in the region, due to the presence of a Slovenian minority there. Haider called the ruling ‘unduly political’ and ‘a mistake’ (Preglau 2012: 38), ordered local authorities not to implement it and proceeded to move (on television) some of the signs written in German by a few metres, thereby mocking the court's demand that they be replaced by bilingual signs. The party's illiberal approach to human rights and its lack of respect for the principle of the separation of power were justified by claiming that ‘in a democracy, it is the will of the people that matters’, not that of the courts (Preglau 2012: 171; see also Fallend 2012: 133).

At the national level, the Austrian Freedom Party steered an equally confrontational course with independent sources of criticism, both institutional and those arising from civil society. For example, Haider suggested that MPs who had allegedly refused to ‘defend their country abroad’ should be held criminally liable, referring to those who had not spoken out against the sanctions imposed on Austria in 2000, following his party's accession into government (Fallend 2012: 126). But the best-known example of the Austrian Freedom Party's disregard for freedom of speech is the lawsuit brought against the political scientist Anton Pelinka, who was eventually fined for accusing Haider of being ‘close to national-socialism’ without, so the court ruled, citing adequate examples, nor rendering a quote by Haider in full (Noll 2000: 381). Pelinka appealed against his sentence and won (*Der Standard* 2001), but it is worth noting the concern expressed by the ‘Wise Men’ about the Freedom Party’s ‘systematic use of libel procedures to suppress criticism’ (Ahtisaari et al. 2000: para. 103) in cases such as this one. Another high-profile example is the libel case brought against Wolfgang Neugebauer, then

director of the Austrian Documentation Centre on Resistance, who had suggested that the Austrian Freedom Party's rhetoric had contributed to the rise of anti-Semitism in the country (Schiedel 2012).

As for policy-making, even though the Austrian populists' effectiveness was hampered by internal fragmentation and lack of experience (Luther 2011: 465–6), the Austrian Freedom Party managed to put significant pressure on its coalition partner, notably on immigration and asylum law (Fallend 2012: 127). The differences between the Austrian Freedom Party and the Austrian People's Party on these topics were not great anyway (rather a matter of degree, as a comparison of party manifestos reveals; Duncan 2010: 343), although the rhetoric certainly did not coincide. In fact, it was a directive issued by the Interior Minister Ernst Strasser of the Austrian People's Party that in October 2002 provided for the automatic withdrawal of state support for asylum seekers coming from any country other than Afghanistan and Iraq – regardless of the outcome of their applications, and thereby unduly anticipating a negative decision (Preglau 2012: 36). This was eventually found to be in breach of fundamental human rights by the Austrian High Court, as it discriminated against applicants on the basis of their nationality (*Der Standard* 2003). In response to this ruling, parliament approved a new measure determining the withdrawal of state support from all asylum seekers that had accepted help from non-governmental organizations (Preglau 2012: 144). However, this was thrown out, too, this time by the Constitutional Court (Preglau 2012: 148).

Following the accession of the Austrian Freedom Party to government, all Austrian parties – bar the Greens – adopted a harder stance on asylum to avoid being perceived as being too soft on the matter (Duncan 2010: 364). For example, a measure approved under the second Schüssel chancellorship, extending the period during which asylum seekers could be deported and introducing measures to deal with hunger strikes, was backed even by the Socialists (Fallend 2012: 131). However, the Austrian Freedom Party asked for more: one of its representatives even proposed that the state rent an island on the Adriatic Sea where asylum seekers could have been ‘assembled’ (Preglau 2012: 146). The two coalition partners also agreed to ‘favour integration over immigration’ (ÖVP-FPÖ 2000: 57). This principle was embedded in an ‘integration contract’ (*Integrationsvertrag*) that foreigners had to sign, which included the agreement that they would be fined, and even deported, if they were unable to achieve fluency in German (Heinisch 2003: 106; Preglau 2012: 35). Again, Austrian Freedom Party representatives suggested even more radical measures, such as the immediate expulsion of foreign criminals (Heinisch 2003: 131) or that the fingerprints of all foreigners should be taken (Preglau 2012: 30). That these ideas were never translated into proper policy initiatives demonstrates the lack of policy efficacy of the Austrian Freedom Party. However, the Austrian Freedom Party's accession to power did lead to a general radicalization of the rhetoric on immigration and asylum and several tough measures on these issues: for instance, in 2004, asylum seekers were barred from presenting new evidence when appealing against the

rejection of their applications – a measure that was once more struck down by the Constitutional Court (Fallend 2012: 131) – and by 2005 even non-EU nationals born in Austria could be deported (Duncan 2010: 346).

Italy

Italian populist parties were in government for eight years in the period between 2001 and 2011. The Northern League was the minor partner in this alliance, as its share of the vote fluctuated between 3.9 per cent in 2001 and 8.3 in 2008, while its partner Forza Italia gained 29.4 per cent in 2001, and the People of Freedom 37.4 in 2008 (Albertazzi and McDonnell, 2010: 1320). However, the Northern League was essential to the survival of the government between 2008 and 2011, which put it in a strong position and enabled it to drive the agenda on issues it cared about (Albertazzi et al. 2011). We define the Northern League as a ‘regionalist populist’ party (McDonnell, 2006: 126) and Forza Italia/People of Freedom as populist and personal parties – ‘personal’ in the literal sense that they either belonged (Forza Italia) or still belong (People of Freedom) to their founder, Silvio Berlusconi (Albertazzi and McDonnell, forthcoming).

Of the two themes that the Northern League has been seen to ‘own’ in recent years (federalism and immigration), the second is what concerns us here. Besides launching headline-grabbing campaigns such as those against the construction (or mere existence) of mosques (among the many examples, see *La Repubblica* 2008a, 2008b, 2008c), in its electoral manifesto of 2008 (the ‘Resolutions’ of the ‘Parliament of the North’), the Northern League put forward measures such as the following:

- making it compulsory for Muslims to celebrate rites in Italian, an obligation that was not extended to the followers of any other religion;
- granting permits for the construction (or enlargement) of mosques only following local referendums, which would have made the practising of Islam dependent on what a majority of local citizens thought of it;
- banning the construction of Romany traveller camps, even when these were not on illegal sites, thus discriminating against individuals on the basis of their ethnicity; and
- granting mayors the power to deport illegal immigrants, turning deportation into a politically motivated act and thus bypassing proper judicial process.⁴

The illiberal approach that was evident in these proposals concerning not only foreigners, but also Italians belonging to Islamic and Roma communities, is reflected by the most high-profile law on migration and law and order sponsored by the Northern League and passed by the populist coalition after the 2008 election: the ‘security package’ approved in July 2009.

Alongside measures such as the authorization to organize citizen patrols in urban centres, the most important provision of this law in the context of the present discussion was the introduction of the ‘crime of illegal immigration’. This measure, thrown out by the European Court of Justice in April 2011 for breaching EU legislation safeguarding the rights of people facing deportation (*La Repubblica* 2011), meant that those without valid residence permits had to serve time in prison. As the party in charge of the Interior Ministry between 2008 and 2011, the Northern League also launched a barrage of initiatives on immigration that have been judged to pose a threat to fundamental human rights by several European institutions. High-profile examples are: the *respingimenti* (‘rejections’) of boatloads of mainly African migrants, which in February 2012 were judged to be in violation of Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights by the European Court of Human Rights (*La Repubblica* 2012); and the census and fingerprinting of members of the Romany community (including children), which was severely criticized by the general secretary of the Council of Europe in June 2008, by the commissioner of the same institution in July and by a motion passed by the European Parliament, also in July (see de Stefano 2008).

If foreigners have been the focus of the Northern League’s initiatives, challenges to freedom of expression have instead come mainly from the Northern League’s larger partner in government, Berlusconi’s Forza Italia/People of Freedom. As a prime minister owning three major television channels, Berlusconi’s influence has been especially obvious on terrestrial television (Cepernich 2009). Like every Italian prime minister before him (Hibberd 2008), Berlusconi made sure that public television and radio (Radio-televisione Italiana, RAI) were run by a politically sympathetic administrative council. However, uniquely, he constantly intervened to influence the daily running of public service broadcasting and radio and to secure positive coverage for his party (Mauro 2007; Randacio and Galbiati 2007). In some cases, the prime minister brought about the removal of high-profile journalists and actors who had been critical of him (Boria 2009; Rothenberg 2009), as well as bringing libel suits against newspapers. As a consequence, the Berlusconi governments have attracted fierce criticism from organizations monitoring media freedom, such as Freedom House (which downgraded Italy to ‘partly free’ in its 2009 report).

Like the ‘fourth estate’, the judicial system was also targeted by the executive, especially through legislation aimed at curbing the power of judges. This was, of course, due to Berlusconi’s unique position as a prime minister who was subjected to a very extensive series of investigations (by both Italian and foreign judges) and one who had to stand trial on numerous occasions; however, what is important for us here is that these initiatives (which received the unwavering support of the Northern League) were always justified with reference to fundamental populist principles. Among these, the most consistently cited in the party’s communication has been the alleged ‘right’ of the elected leader to govern on behalf of his people without interference from unelected, and allegedly unrepresentative, bodies. For

instance, Forza Italia's 'Charter of Values' (2004: 9) lists judges (defined as 'self-referential' and 'unaccountable') among the elites threatening the power of the people. Berlusconi himself often reiterated his conviction that the winner of an election should be regarded as 'anointed by the Lord' (Benedetti 2004: 57), while also insisting on the need for radical constitutional reforms aimed at strengthening the executive. In addition to this, the People of Freedom leader has criticized parliament (calling it unproductive) and prosecuting magistrates (branded as subversive, including the Constitutional Court), and has clashed with the president of the republic (often accusing him of getting in the way of the acts of government – by refusing to countersign them, for instance).

Following this logic, successive Forza Italia/People of Freedom-dominated governments have passed legislation directly challenging the power of the judiciary and helping Berlusconi and his associates in some of their trials. This has led to the erosion of two principles: that all citizens are equal before the law; and that institutional powers should not be employed to pursue personal advantage.

A selection of some of the most significant laws would include the following; however, the full list is much longer:

- In June 2003 the approval of the 'Lodo Schifani' halted all trials involving the highest offices of the state – including the prime minister – until it was thrown out by the Constitutional Court in 2004. The proposal was defended by its proponents on the basis of the alleged need to guarantee that the beneficiaries of this legislation be allowed to perform their duties without undue interference.
- In December 2005 the 'ex-Cirielli' law modified the statute of limitation (leading in 2012 to the collapse of the trial in which Berlusconi stood accused of having bribed the British lawyer David Mills) and introduced a norm stating that people over the age of 70 would no longer be required to serve their sentences in jail (unless they posed a threat to society). The latter norm led to Berlusconi's very close associate Cesare Previti (a former minister of defence) not having to serve time in prison. Previti had been found guilty of bribing judges to influence two takeover battles, one of which had favoured Berlusconi's own company, Fininvest.
- In July 2008 the 'Alfano' law again granted immunity to the four highest offices of the state, but was again struck down by the Constitutional Court in 2009.
- In response to this, in November 2009 a proposal was deposited in the Senate for the introduction of the 'short trial', a norm setting a time limit of six and a half years to legal proceedings, allegedly to make it possible for Italian citizens to reap the benefits of 'faster justice' in a country in which endless legal delays (in both the penal and civil courts) are estimated to cost up to one percentage point in Italian GDP growth (*The Economist* 2012). The gravity of this problem is not to be doubted – so much so that

the Monti government, which took over from Berlusconi's fourth government in November 2011, also passed legislation aimed at addressing it (*The Economist* 2012).⁵ However, simply setting a time limit of six and a half years to legal proceedings without radically reforming the justice system would have merely led to the collapse of many trials, including three of Berlusconi's own. In the end the president of the republic refused to countersign the law.

In short, the challenges posed by the populist alliance to liberal democratic principles in Italy are well documented; moreover, they have had implications for all areas considered in this study. Firstly, they have concerned human rights, mainly through the legislation and government initiatives sponsored by the Northern League, which targeted ethnic and religious minorities; secondly, freedom of speech, mainly due to the prime minister curbing freedom of expression and freedom of information; finally, the separation or independence of powers within the state, as well as the principle that all citizens are equally subjected to the law – because of the People of Freedom's only partially successful attempts at introducing legislation that would favour its leader. The important point to stress here is that, while perhaps an emblematic case, Italy has not been an exception in contemporary Europe, as our next example also shows.

Poland

As in Italy, in Poland we are also dealing with a coalition of several populist parties: Law and Justice, Self-Defence and the League of Polish Families. Following Pankowski (2010), we define Law and Justice as traditionalist, Self-Defence as agrarian (since it had roots in a social movement set up to defend indebted farmers; Wysocka 2010: 6) and the League of Polish Families as ethno-nationalist. We additionally regard all three as populist (Pankowski 2010; Wysocka 2010). At the general elections of September 2005, Law and Justice secured 27 per cent of the vote, Self-Defence 11 per cent and the League of Polish Families 8 per cent. Moreover, Lech Kaczynski, the leader of Law and Justice, won the presidential race a month later (*Warsaw Voice* 2005). Initially, Kaczynski's party led a minority government with tacit support from the League of Polish Families and Self-Defence; this led to the signing of a formal 'stabilization pact' between these parties and eventually the creation of a coalition in May 2006 (*Warsaw Voice* 2006a, 2006b). The new Law and Justice leader, Jaroslaw Kaczynski – the twin brother of the president – became prime minister in July 2006, and the coalition survived until the following summer, when it collapsed due to infighting between the allies. This led to elections in October 2007 in which the League of Polish Families and Self-Defence disappeared from the parliamentary scene, partially swallowed by Law and Justice, which

increased its vote share to 32 per cent (Stanley 2011: 267).

As they entered government, the democratic credentials of the League of Polish Families and Self-Defence were still very much in doubt. The League of Polish Families had fuelled anti-Semitism ever since its inception, and its youth wing (All Polish Youth – Młodzież Wszechpolska, MW) was staffed by large numbers of skinheads, quite open about their Nazi sympathies and responsible for attacks against gay and feminist groups, members of ethnic minorities and others (Pankowski 2010: 114). As for Self-Defence, in the early 1990s it had been set up as a militia aimed at defending farmers from debt collectors and it had not been a stranger to violence in the past (Pankowski 2010: 132). Perhaps not surprisingly, the governing alliance became known for the radical, discriminatory and illiberal policies that it put forward during those years, of which there are many examples.

One issue on which the League of Polish Families extensively focused was homosexuality, which Roman Giertych, the minister of education, described as ‘deviation’ and ‘perversion’ (cited in Sadurski 2007: 24). While other non-populist parties may harbour similar views, what distinguished the League of Polish Families was the way it justified its position on this issue, portraying homosexuals as posing a threat ‘to Poland’s cultural identity’ (cited in Jasiewicz 2008: 7). This is a by-product of the party’s ‘homogenizing and exclusivist’ (Jasiewicz 2008: 7) conception of the (Polish) people. Consequently, in May 2006 access from schools to websites covering homosexuality, including those run by associations campaigning in favour of gay rights, was barred (Pankowski 2010: 182). One month later, Giertych fired the staff member who had introduced educational material from the Council of Europe into Polish schools, and replaced parts of it with a chapter written by himself which ‘links homosexuality to ... a lack of a proper idea of love and a hedonistic attitude, as well as prostitution’ (Council of Europe 2007: paras 53–4). The minister’s behaviour was consistent with the repeated verbal attacks against homosexuality launched by other party members (*Warsaw Voice* 2006c) and the president himself (Human Rights Watch 2007) – attacks that contradicted the Polish constitution and its rejection of all forms of discrimination (Sadurski 2007: 24). Indeed, the European Court of Human Rights found Poland to be in violation of the right to freedom of assembly in relation to the banning of marches by pro-gay activists (European Court of Human Rights 2007: para. 27). Finally, the government’s outright disregard for the principles of equal treatment and equal opportunities was reflected in the abolition of the post of ‘government plenipotentiary for the equal status of men and women’ (Sadurski 2007: 24).

One reason why the government went along with the League’s approach to matters related to homosexuality was the social conservatism of the three allies; another was that the conservative media conglomerate, Radio Maryja – the support of which had been crucial to Law and Justice’s success in the double victory of 2005 (Pankowski 2010: 156) – had expressed similar views. To mark its distance from the ‘liberal’ media, notably the Warsaw-based newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza*, and to signal the government’s appreciation for Radio Maryja,

the executive ‘introduced legislation providing tax exemptions for “social broadcasters”, Radio Maryja being the sole benefactor of this formal status’ (Pankowski 2010: 175). If this measure can be regarded as unduly advantaging one organization at the expense of pluralism, two other government initiatives concerning the media posed even more obvious challenges to freedom of information. First, the law on the National Broadcasting Council (NBC) was modified on 29 December 2005 to bring this body overseeing the public media under tighter government control. Two consequences of these changes were that loyal League of Polish Families supporters and former skinhead fanzine editors were given jobs as journalists and board members (Pankowski 2010: 178), and that the National Broadcasting Council was now officially tasked to ‘safeguard the principles of journalistic ethics’ – a measure eventually thrown out by the Constitutional Tribunal (2006: 5) because it would have granted powers of censorship to a politicized body. The second initiative was a ‘lustration law’, passed by parliament in October 2006 (*Warsaw Voice* 2006d) – the term *lustracja* meaning ‘systematic vetting of public officials for links with the communist-era security services’ (Szczerbiak 2002: 553). Since the new law defined journalists as ‘public figures’, it subjected them to a vetting process alongside some 700,000 people in other professions (Kochanowicz 2007: 5). In May 2007, the Constitutional Tribunal ruled against this extensive definition of ‘public figures’; as far as journalists were concerned, the norm was judged to infringe ‘the principle of freedom to express opinions as well as to acquire and disseminate information’ (Constitutional Tribunal 2007: 22).

These decisions by the Constitutional Tribunal are emblematic of a climate of tension between this institution and the government during the period under discussion. As constitutional judges were standing in the way of the executive, members of the government attempted to exert pressure on them and influence their decisions, and refused to implement the tribunal’s verdicts (Sadurski 2007: 25–8). In addition to this, Law and Justice blamed the criminal courts for what it saw as a high level of criminality in the country, and used this argument to pass legislation curtailing the independence of the judiciary (Bodnar 2010: 36). Justice Minister Ziobro (Law and Justice) in particular intended to ‘revolutionize’ the justice system (Bodnar and Zilkowski 2007: 49). Thus, an Act passed in March 2007 increased the influence of the prosecutor general (the same minister of justice) on prosecutors (Bodnar and Zilkowski 2007: 49–50), and another passed in June 2007 gave him the power to suspend and/or to move judges between courts, thereby opening the door to politically motivated removals of judges (International Bar Association 2007: 26).

This was not entirely surprising since it was, again, consistent with the ideas put forward by these parties before the election – for instance, Law and Justice’s pledge to fight ‘legal impossibilism’, meaning the constraints placed on the executive by ‘liberal’ laws (including the constitution) and by the ‘corporations of lawyers and judges’ (cited in Kucharczyk 2007: 11). Unhappy with the 1997 constitution, Law and Justice had advocated the creation of a ‘Fourth

Republic' based on Catholic and 'social' values (Pankowski 2010: 153), a reform predicated on the need for systemic change and moral and political renewal, after the years in which corrupt, self-serving and unpatriotic elites had allegedly ruled the country (Stanley 2011: 266). The proposed changes would have posed a further threat to liberal values, since it was envisaged that the president would have enjoyed the power to legislate even against the wishes of parliament (Sadurski 2007: 16–17), not to mention that all references to the rights of ethnic and religious minorities in the current constitution would have been removed (Pankowski 2010: 154). If, in the end, the populist alliance lacked the necessary support to change the constitution, the kind of 'Fourth Republic' that was advocated during those years provides further proof of its illiberal stance. Therefore, Poland arguably provides (with Italy) the textbook example of the threats posed by populism to liberal democratic values.

Switzerland

Switzerland defies the majoritarian logic of government vs. opposition because of its consensual political system. Nevertheless, comparisons with the other cases of populists in power are possible if we accept that: (1) the Swiss People's Party is a 'right-wing populist' party (Albertazzi 2008: 106), the growth of which has been spurred by the Zurich wing since the early 1990s; and that (2) this 'new Swiss People's Party' effectively only entered government with the election to the federal executive in 2003 of the Zurich wing president, Christoph Blocher (Mazzoleni and Skenderovic 2007: 96), due to the party's electoral success (from 12 per cent in 1991 to 26.7 in 2003). In 2003 the Swiss People's Party thus gained a second seat in the seven-member collegium for the first time in its history. When Blocher failed to be re-elected four years later, his party withdrew into 'opposition' for about a year (Vatter and Church 2009), until the election of another of its leaders, Ueli Maurer, into government in late 2008.

In what follows we do not just look at the Swiss People's Party's actions in government, however, but also extend our discussion of the party's challenge to liberal democracy to its referendums and initiatives, given that direct democracy gives all political parties in the country the chance to introduce or repeal legislation against the will of both the executive and parliament.

The consensual constraints typical of the Swiss political system are such that it is always problematic to identify government initiatives with one member of the executive. However, one major reform that is uncontroversially attributed to Blocher as the minister of justice and the police is that of the system for asylum seekers (EJPD 2006; Mazzoleni and Skenderovic 2007: 100). This included the following measures: (1) an obligation placed on asylum seekers to prove their identity exclusively by producing a passport or identity card; (2) the restriction of

the definition of ‘refugee’; and (3) the reduction of the period during which to appeal against unfavourable decisions on asylum applications (from 30 to four days) (EJPD 2004). According to legal advice requested by the United Nations Refugee Agency, measures of this kind were in breach of Switzerland’s international obligations, notably the Refugee Convention on minimal procedural standards (Kälin 2004: 10). This is because refugees rarely carry official means of identification and because the observance of the ‘*non-refoulement* principle’ could not have been guaranteed.⁶ However, the reform was passed, and a referendum launched by left-wing parties and human rights non-governmental organizations to repeal it was defeated by a large margin in September 2006 (BK 2012), which further boosted the Swiss People’s Party’s claim to have acted in the name of the people. During Blocher’s time in government, the Swiss People’s Party even proposed expelling the foreign parents of minors convicted of crimes – a clear breach of the principle whereby nobody should be punished, and so severely, for someone else’s deeds. This proposal was later rejected by the parliamentary majority (National Council of Switzerland 2008).

However, it is not government participation, but rather direct democracy that has provided the Swiss People’s Party with the most efficient means to further its agenda (Skenderovic 2007: 172), as the party has launched numerous initiatives (which can propose constitutional changes) and referendums (which veto federal laws) on the theme of ‘foreigners’ (*Ausländer*) and ‘non-Swiss’ identities and cultures. For instance, in November 2009 a constitutional ban on the construction of minarets launched by the Swiss People’s Party was approved by voters, despite the Swiss executive having argued that the provision breached Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights (BR 2008: 7638), and despite numerous other organizations agreeing with this view (for example, the United Nations special rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, Asma Jahangir; see United Nations 2009). A second initiative launched by the Swiss People’s Party, and approved exactly a year later, is also relevant to our discussion. This time, voters accepted a proposal on ‘the deportation of criminal migrants’, stating that, if convicted of some very serious and also less serious offences (examples of the latter being social insurance fraud), foreign nationals would have to be immediately deported. Since all the other major parties and the federal authorities had recommended a ‘no’ vote, this victory again strengthened the Swiss People’s Party’s claim to be the only party that spoke on behalf of ‘the people’. Furthermore, as the government started a public consultation on how to implement this new constitutional provision, the Swiss People’s Party put forward a proposal again stipulating that expulsions should be automatic in all cases, including for those who had committed minor crimes (BR 2012: 33–4). While both this proposal and an alternative, ‘softer’ one sponsored by the government would have breached the bilateral treaties on the free movement of people that Switzerland had signed with the EU (as these did not allow states automatically to expel EU nationals in *any* case), the Swiss People’s Party’s draft was also in breach of the principle of proportionality, ‘a fundamental principle of the rule of law’ (BR

2012: 10–11). However, the Swiss People’s Party argued that the will of the people should prevail over international law, and in July 2012 launched an ‘implementation initiative’ (*Durchsetzungsinitiative*), anticipating that parliament would endorse the ‘softer’ approach.⁷

Like the parties already discussed in this article, the Swiss People’s Party has also had a conflicting relationship with the domestic judiciary. Since in Switzerland the sovereignty of the people (and the cantons) is exercised directly, the Federal Tribunal does not have the power to rule on the constitutionality of federal laws. But when in 2003 the tribunal concluded that naturalizations could not be decided by local citizens’ assemblies since they did not provide for the constitutionally guaranteed administrative appeals procedure (Helbling 2009: 105), the Swiss People’s Party launched a popular initiative (which failed in June 2008; BK 2012) to overrule this decision. On this occasion, Blocher’s party openly criticized the ruling of the Federal Tribunal as an expression of the ‘republic of jurists’ and as a direct attack against Switzerland’s century-old direct-democratic tradition (D’Amato and Skenderovic 2009: 86; also Zuppiger 2003). Thus, despite the first decrease in the party’s vote share for 20 years in the federal elections of 2011 (Mueller and Dardanelli 2013), the Swiss People’s Party keeps showing great skill in pushing the issues it cares about (Europe, law and order and immigration) to the top of the political agenda, especially by making heavy use of direct democratic means.

The question to be addressed, therefore, is where all this evidence leaves us when thinking about the health of liberal democracy in Europe today.

Conclusion

Populists across Europe are challenging the idea that the liberal version of democracy should be regarded as the ‘final’ form of human government (Fukuyama 1989: 4), exactly as it goes through a crisis, manifested in steadily falling turnouts across Western Europe, declining party memberships and ever-greater numbers of citizens citing a lack of interest and distrust in politics and politicians (Webb 2007). The challenge posed by populists to liberal democracy has become most apparent in the anti-judiciary and anti-minorities policies approved in Italy, as well as the threats to freedom of expression that have been waged in that country by the populist alliance. Polish initiatives against homosexuality, the independence of the judiciary and freedom of speech have also gone in the same direction. In Switzerland, the most anti-liberal policies (automatic expulsion of criminal foreigners and an outright ban on minarets) came about via referendums (through which the collegial government and parliament could be circumvented), while in Austria populist rule, at least at the provincial level, was marked by a willingness to openly challenge the rule of law. None of these policies in any of the four

countries discussed was initiated or implemented in undemocratic ways. Therefore, it must be acknowledged that, although very dangerous to the *liberal* element of contemporary European democracies, populism is also well embedded in the rules and procedures of electoral democracy. Populist parties take part in elections (often quite successfully, as we have seen) and make use of perfectly democratic procedures (such as referendums, or legislation passed by the people's representatives) in order to pass and implement their preferred policies. At the same time, however, in their determination to champion 'the will of the people', they end up stifling criticism, challenging the rights of 'undesirable' individuals and rejecting the slow and complicated procedures and division of roles through which liberal democracies must operate. Therefore, in all the cases covered above, it has largely been left to the courts to safeguard the rule of law, freedom of information and fundamental human rights. Whether reminding the government of essential constitutional guarantees (such as non-discrimination in Austria or appeal rights in Switzerland), removing anti-constitutional legislation (Italy and Austria) or protecting journalists from undergoing a vetting procedure (Poland), a positive conclusion to our analysis would thus crown the third branch of government as the real winner in this contest with populists. Europe-wide laws, conventions and institutions (from the European Convention on Human Rights, to the Council of Europe, the European Parliament and the European Court of Justice) have equally been essential to foster liberal values. However, where a constitutional tribunal keeping 'the sovereign' in check does not exist, as in Switzerland, referendums can indeed turn the majority criterion into a 'majority rule' and challenge the rights of minorities, to recall Sartori's observation (1987: 32). This being the case, we would argue that democracy in its most radical form (direct democracy) offers a formidable opportunity structure through which populists can sometimes implement their favourite policies (Albertazzi 2008: 107–11).

The evidence provided fits into a larger picture: populists thrive on the current dissatisfaction with the euro and the alleged lack of democratic legitimacy of the European project driven by the institutions of the EU. Speaking of a 'democratic federation of nation states', Commission president José Manuel Barroso (2012) recently tried to reclaim the 'national' from populist discourse. The examples he could have been referring to are numerous: from the Hungarian prime minister Victor Orban accusing the EU of 'colonialism' (Taylor 2012) to the Dutchman Geert Wilders placing anti-EU slogans at the heart of some of his electoral campaigns, not to mention the True Finns, who have defined the EU as a 'heart of darkness' (*Der Spiegel* 2011). However, all across the continent, the most dangerous threat emanating from populist discourse – and, more importantly, also from populist policies, which are fully consistent with the former – is not so much what is said about the relationship of nation states with the institutions of the EU, but rather the unrelenting erosion of the liberal consensus that has provided one of the foundations of the European project from its very start. Populists both thrive on this erosion and further contribute to it, as this article has shown. It is

therefore not the ‘national’ that Barroso and the EU should reclaim but rather the ‘democratic’ in its liberal interpretation.

Acknowledgement

We are grateful to the other contributors to this special issue, as well as the editors, for their useful feedback on a previous draft of this article. We also wish to thank the following scholars, who have provided suggestions or references on specific countries to us: Anna Christmann, Clive Church, Franz Fallend, Reinhard Heinisch, Umut Korkut, Hanspeter Kriesi, Sarah de Lange, Wolf Linder, Paul Lucardie, Kurth Richard Luther, Duncan McDonnell, Ben Stanley, Adrian Vatter, Koen Vossen and Andrej Zaslove. We are, of course, solely responsible for any mistakes to be found in the text.

Notes

¹ Opposition to the EU has been growing in recent years, also due to the campaigns launched by populists. When voters have been asked to approve either the (now abandoned) European Constitution, or the subsequent Lisbon Treaty, in 50 per cent of cases they have declined to do so, and Eurobarometer surveys show that support for EU membership has declined steadily across the continent since the beginning of the financial crisis (see http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/index_en.htm).

² An added problem, of course, is that in real life majorities are variable.

³ This is why in mature liberal democracies the newly elected holders of executive positions feel the need to reassure voters immediately that they will exercise power in the interest of all, and not just those who supported them (for example, George W. Bush’s and Barack Obama’s acceptance speeches of, respectively, 2004 and 2008).

⁴ Measures severely limiting individual rights have been implemented at the local level by several Italian councils. These include the prohibition to marry for those who do not speak Italian, the prohibition to use languages other than Italian during public events, the closure of mosques, and others (Ambrosini 2012: 75–82).

⁵ As Pulella (2012) writes: ‘In 2010 the European Court of Human Rights ruled against Italy 53 times for violating the European Convention’s article protecting the right to a fair trial, and 44 of those condemnations were for the excessive length of proceedings’.

⁶ According to the principle of ‘non-refoulement’, refugees should not be sent back to countries where their lives or rights could come under threat.

⁷ See ‘Sammelstart der Durchsetzungsinitiative’, official press release, at www.durchsetzungsinitiative.ch.

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The 2012 Stein Rokkan Lecture

Three decades of populist radical right parties in Western Europe: So what?

Cas Mudde

Introduction

It is forty-five years since Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan published their famous ‘freezing hypothesis’ of West European party systems (Lipset & Rokkan 1967).¹ While the thesis has been contested after nearly every electoral victory of a new party, or major defeat of an old party, Peter Mair (1997: 3) still concluded in the mid-1990s that ‘the freezing hypothesis remains largely valid, at least up till now’. A lot has changed since Mair wrote those words. Of particular importance to this lecture, populist radical right parties (PRRPs) have not only further increased their electoral support and parliamentary presence across Western Europe, they have also finally entered national governments.

Since the humble beginnings of the so-called ‘third wave’ of the radical right three decades ago (Von Beyme 1988), commentators have been warning of its dangers to European democracy. Asked by the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* about the greatest risks for Europe, EU President Herman Van Rompuy said, referring explicitly to the *Vlaams Belang* in his native country, ‘the big danger is populism’ (Stabenow 2010). He said this in 2010, at the height of the biggest economic crisis in the postwar era!

The sense of a growing danger and influence of the populist radical right is not limited to political competitors, however. The media are full of articles about Europe’s populist radical right being ‘on the rise’ (*The Guardian*, 6 November 2011) or, more dramatically, ‘on the march’ (*The Economist*, 17 March 2010), leading to ‘Europe’s drift to the right’ (*Los Angeles Times*, 23 April 2002) and ‘Europe’s far right problem’ (CNN, 26 July 2011).

The perceived importance of PRRPs can also be seen in the disproportionate academic attention devoted to them. While one is hard-pressed to find many non-German studies on the

populist radical right before 1990, today more than a hundred scholars from across the globe work on the topic, and produce many more articles and books on this particular party family than on all other party families combined!

Most academics suggest, or claim outright, that the populist radical right is an important factor in contemporary European politics. They point to a broad range of developments that have caused PRRPs to move ‘from the margins to the mainstream’ of European politics, and which are allegedly caused by that move – from increased dissatisfaction with politics and racist violence at the mass level to the dominance of right-wing discourse and politics at the elite level. In most cases the evidence is illustrative at best, and correlation is taken for causation. To be fair, many effects are theoretically very difficult to prove, given that they relate to indirect effects or are dependent upon non-existent data.

Politicians and the media see the influence of PRRPs in the alleged ‘*verrechtsing*’ or ‘right turn’ in European politics. They argue that PRRPs have pushed European politics to the right by directly or indirectly influencing the positions and salience of the issues on the political agenda. For example, Martin Schulz, leader of the Socialist Faction in the European Parliament, recently wrote that what worries him most about the recent rise of the populist radical right is not so much the extreme right violence, but ‘the persistent, permanent breach of taboos that makes extreme right-wing ideology respectable by clothing it in the garb of democratic legitimacy’ (Schulz 2011: 30).

The presence of PRRPs

PRRPs share a core ideology that includes the combination of (at least) nativism, authoritarianism and populism (see Mudde 2007). While virtually everyone agrees on the inclusion of some parties in this family – most notably the prototypical *Front National* (FN) in France – there is considerable debate on various others. In some cases this debate involves the point from which a party is (no longer) considered to be populist radical right.

[Table 1](#) provides an overview of electoral results of the main PRRPs in Western Europe, listing both the highest and the most recent results in national parliamentary elections in the period 1980–2011. Despite some striking high and recent results, the alleged populist radical right ‘wave’ is clearly not lapping (equally) at the shores of all West European countries. In fact, PRRPs are represented in the national parliaments of just half of the 17 West European countries.

[Table 1](#) Highest and latest electoral results of main PRRPs in Western Europe, 1980–2011

Country	Party
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Austria	Alliance for the Future of Austria (BZÖ)	10.7	10.7	
	Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ)	26.9	17.5	
Belgium	Flemish Interest (VB)	12.0	7.8	
	National Front (FNb)	2.3	—	
Denmark	Danish People's Party (DFP)	13.8	12.3	
Finland	None	—	—	
France	National Front (FN)	15.3	4.3	
Germany	The Republicans (REP)	2.1	0.4	
Greece	Popular Orthodox Rally (LAOS)	5.6	5.6	
Ireland	None	—	—	
Italy	Northern League (LN)	10.1	8.3	
Luxembourg	National Movement (NB)	2.6	—	
Netherlands	Party for Freedom (PVV)	15.5	15.5	
Norway	None	—	—	
Portugal	National Renovator Party (PNR)	0.3	0.3	
Spain	National Front (FNe)	0.5	0.0	
Sweden	Sweden Democrats (SD)	5.7	5.7	
Switzerland	Swiss People's Party	28.9	26.6	
United Kingdom	British National Party (BNP)	1.9	1.9	

Source: Election Resources on the Internet: Western Europe, Manuel Álvarez-Rivera,
<http://electionresources.org/western.europe.html>

Particularly insightful is a comparison with the Green party family, often considered the PRRP's mirror image. As [Table 2](#) shows, the average score in national parliamentary elections of PRRPs is not much higher than that of the Greens. More surprising, perhaps, is that while they are slightly more successful in elections, they are slightly less successful in entering government, although this is changing. Since 1980 the Greens have taken part in ten governments, while PRRPs partook in only eight. However, while the 1990s were the highlight of Green governmental participation, the twenty-first century seems more favourable towards the populist radical right. In addition, PRRPs have been support parties of several minority governments.

[Table 2](#) Average electoral results and official government participation of Greens and PRRPs in Western Europe (by decade)

	1980–1989	1990–1999	2000–2009
Average electoral result			
Populist radical right parties	1.7	4.8	5.9
Green parties	1.9	3.2	4.7
Government participation			
Populist radical right parties	0	1	7
Green parties	0	7	3

Source: Results of Green parties are taken from the official website of the European Greens: <http://europeangreens.eu/menu/elections/election-results>

Table 3 Populist radical right parties in West European national governments since 1980

Country	Party	Period	Coalition partner
Austria	FPÖ	2000–2002	ÖVP
	BZÖ	2002–2005	ÖVP
		2005–2007	ÖVP
Denmark*	DFP	2001–2005	V, KF
		2005–2007	V, KF
		2007–2011	V, KF
Greece	LAOS	2011–2012	ND, PASOK
Italy	LN	1994–1996	FI, CCD-UDC, AN
		2001–2006	FI, AN
		2008–2011	PdL
Netherlands*	PVV	2010–2012	CDA, VVD
Switzerland**	SVP	2000–	CVP, FDP, SP

Notes: *Minority governments in which the populist radical right functions as the official support party. **Swiss governments are longstanding, voluntary governments based on a ‘magic formula’ rather than the outcome of the parliamentary elections. The SVP was excluded from government for a couple of months in 2008 because of internal divisions and a consequent split.

All in all, populist radical right government participation remains a rarity in Western Europe. Indeed, of the more than 200 national governments that have been formed in Western Europe since 1980, a mere eight included a PRRP. In all cases it was a junior partner (see *Table 3*). While only three West European countries have had a majority government with official

populist radical right participation (Austria, Italy and Switzerland),² and two had minority governments with their support (Denmark and the Netherlands), the trend is clearly up. In the 1980s there was no such government, in the 1990s only one (Berlusconi I), yet in the first decade of the twenty-first century there have been seven majority governments and three minority governments. Still, today, only one majority government includes a PRRP – the Swiss – while such a party officially supports the minority government in just one other country – the Netherlands.

All this does not mean that PRRPs are irrelevant in West European politics. The sheer fact that at least in electoral terms it is the most successful new European party family since the end of the Second World War warns against such a simplistic conclusion. At the same time, it should create some initial scepticism about the often alarmist claims of populist radical right influence in contemporary West European politics.

Assessing the impact of PRRPs

Commentators and scholars mostly assert the influence of the populist radical right. There is relatively little scholarly work that actually investigates this assertion empirically and systematically. Moreover, many studies focus on only one small aspect of the asserted effect – that is, immigration policies – and work with a limited, and often implicit, theoretical framework in which governmental parties are assumed to be if not the only, than at least the all-powerful actors in policy making. Finally, all scholars are faced with important case and data problems: there are few cases of large populist radical right parties, let alone governments with populist radical right participation, and we lack reliable comparative cross-national and cross-temporal data on many crucial aspects (most notably, public attitudes). Hence, most studies either feature only a limited number of countries and policy fields or use problematic data. This article, unfortunately, faces many of these same problems and can therefore only be considered a first stab at a comprehensive assessment.

I will assess the impact of the populist radical right on four aspects of West European politics: people, parties, policies and polities. The analysis is presented in that (democratic) order, assuming that the mostly oppositional populist radical right first influenced the people, leading to a response from the mainstream parties (worried about electoral competition), which introduced new policies (either in coalition with the populist radical right or not) and thereby possibly changing the whole political system.

People

According to the *verrechtsing* thesis, the rise of PRRPs has affected the European people by changing their issue positions and priorities. Charles Westin (2003: 123), for example, claims that: ‘When protest parties such as the VB and FN receive a considerable share of the vote, the gravitational centre of public opinion is shifted significantly to the right.’ In short, the parties, through their agenda-setting power (Minkenberg 2001), have increased the people’s positions on and salience of ‘populist radical right issues’, such as immigration, crime, corruption and European integration.

It is clear that PRRPs profit from the increased salience of sociocultural issues, but this so-called ‘silent revolution’ (Inglehart 1977) largely predates the rise of the populist radical right. With regard to the more specific issues, there has been a clear increase of the salience of most of these – most notably immigration – in the past thirty years. However, the increase of salience is very volatile and seems hardly related to either the electoral strength or the government participation of PRRPs.

In some cases the changes in salience of the immigration issue seem to follow Christopher Wlezien’s (1995) famous ‘thermostatic model’ – that is, growing public salience about immigration leads to electoral success of PRRPs, and to an increase in policy activity on immigration. This could be seen in Denmark, for example, where the salience of immigration rose sharply between 1990 and 2001 when the DFP achieved its electoral breakthrough, yet fell again in 2005 after the first period of DFP support for the minority government and a tightening of immigration laws (Meret 2011: 248).

In general, there is considerable debate about the effect of PRRPs on people’s attitudes and issue positions, and scholarly studies only add to the confusion. Several studies claim a significant effect of PRRPs on attitudes towards immigration and integration at the mass level (e.g., Sprague-Jones 2011; Semyonov et al. 2006), but others find a more limited effect, for example only by ‘cultural racist parties’ (Wilkes et al. 2007) or ‘entrepreneurial radical right-wing parties’ (Williams 2006), or no significant effect at all (e.g., Dunn & Singh 2011). While part of the confusion is undoubtedly based on the different aspects of the immigration issue on which the studies focus, as well as on the different data and time periods, it does not seem to indicate that electorally successful PRRPs cause fundamental changes in public attitudes on immigration and integration.

As PRRPs are often the most outspoken eurosceptic actor in their country, various commentators have linked the rise in public euroscepticism to the success of these parties (e.g., Krouwel & Abts 2007). While I am unaware of research that empirically proves the correlation, let alone the causation, there is ample empirical research on euroscepticism that points in a different direction. If one looks at public support for European integration across countries and times, as measured by the Eurobarometer, support fluctuates erratically and is seemingly unrelated to any electoral results. Moreover, at least since the Maastricht Treaty, there is a clear convergence in the decline in support for European integration across Europe

(Eichenberg & Dalton 2007).

Cross-national data on attitudes related to crime are hard to find, and often have only limited data points. The Eurobarometer measured feelings of insecurity related to crime at three different times (1996, 2000 and 2002). The data point to a possible slight correlation with the electoral success of PRRPs, but not with their government participation. Other data are even more inconclusive, generally showing either quite stable positions or fairly erratic changes unrelated to electoral strength or government participation of the populist radical right (e.g., Van Dijk et al. 2006; Kesteren 2009).

Finally, one of the key points in the propaganda of PRRPs is that corrupt elites have hijacked the political system and silenced the voice of the people by making backroom deals and enforcing a conspiracy of silence. At first sight, it seems that they have been able to convince a growing part of the population. Western Europe has seen decreasing trust in political institutions and public satisfaction with national democracy. But much of the growth of popular dissatisfaction predates the rise of PRRPs, and probably caused it rather than being caused by it. Moreover, a quick look at Eurobarometer data shows that public satisfaction with national democracy is volatile and unrelated to the electoral success or governmental participation of PRRPs.

In conclusion, while PRRPs might have effected the position and salience of certain issues for some parts of the population, they seem to have rarely changed their more long-term attitudes. As I have argued elsewhere (Mudde 2010), they also didn't really need to, as the public attitudes of many Europeans were already in line with the basic tenets of the populist radical right ideology (even if in a more moderate form).

Parties

Regarding the party level, the argument of the *verrechting* thesis is twofold: mainstream parties have become more nativist, authoritarian and populist; and this is *because of* electoral competition from PRRPs. Most authors argue that populist radical right parties have only influenced mainstream right-wing parties. A good example is Jean-Yves Camus (2011: 83; see also Schain 2006), who argues that 'the FN's ideas ... have had an influence on the political agenda of the right on issues such as immigration, law and order, multiculturalism and the definition of national identity'. Some politicised accounts go much further, claiming that the populist radical right influence can be seen across the political spectrum, at least from mainstream right to mainstream left.

At first glance, it seems the latter argument is most accurate, at least with regard to immigration policies (e.g., Van Spanje 2010). A recent comparative analysis of election manifestos showed that between 1975 and 2005 both the mainstream right and the

mainstream left increased the salience of immigration and became stricter on the issue; the effect was most pronounced in the period 1995–2005 (Alonso & Claro da Fonseca 2012). However, while increased salience of the immigration issue is related to the presence of a relevant populist radical right party, the change to a stricter immigration policy is *not*. Or, more precisely, it is not for mainstream right-wing parties! In other words, in countries without a successful PRRP the mainstream left will stay away from immigration, but the mainstream right will adopt a strict(er) immigration policy anyway, seeing it as a promising electoral issue (see also Mudde 2007; Bale 2008). Interestingly, mainstream right-wing parties seem unaffected by coalition participation with the populist radical right too (Van Spanje 2010), meaning that their anti-immigration position precedes these coalitions, and actually enables them (see De Lange 2012).

It is important to remember that what is still generally referred to as the ‘immigration issue’ is actually a multifaceted complex of related but separate issues, including both immigration (including political asylum) and integration. Most research conflates the two, assuming that parties hold similar open or restrictive views on both issues, but this is not true. Looking at the platforms of the European party factions, Fraser Duncan and Steven Van Hecke conclude:

While Christian Democrat and Conservative parties do not differ significantly from their Socialist equivalents on control issues, Liberal parties are less restrictionist. On integration, both Christian Democrats/Conservatives and Liberals are less multicultural than Socialist and Green parties.

(Duncan & Van Hecke 2008: 432)

In other words, in those cases in which the populist radical right has been able to influence other parties on the broader immigration issue, it has been *across* the political spectrum on *immigration control* (mostly political asylum), yet only on the *right* side of the spectrum on *integration*.

Less research is available on other issues. The increased talk of law and order policies first by mainstream right-wing, and later also by mainstream left-wing parties, is often credited to competition with PRRPs. However, as authoritarianism is a broadly shared ideological feature, it probably was more the product of the conservative surge that started in the 1980s than of the rise of the populist radical right in the 1990s (see Ignazi 1992). More recently, the various terrorist attacks of the early twenty-first century and the consequent ‘War on Terror’ have been the most important factor in the securitisation of most aspects of politics (e.g., Haubrich 2003).

Finally, in line with my own argument concerning the emergence of a populist *Zeitgeist* (Mudde 2004), Gianpietro Mazzoleni (2008: 57) speaks of ‘the ‘populist contamination’ of mainstream political discourse’. The argument is not that all political parties in Western Europe have become essentially populist parties, but that most parties use populist themes in their political discourse. The adoption of this ‘soft populism’ is not limited to mainstream

parties in party systems with strong PRRPs. First, some other important populist parties in Europe operate in this respect as functional equivalents – most notably neoliberal populist parties like the Italian FI and the Norwegian FRP – but even in countries without any significant populist party, mainstream parties have adopted populist rhetoric. An oft-mentioned example is New Labour in Britain, particularly under Tony Blair (e.g., Mazzoleni 2008).

Policies

While comparative research is not available on all policy terrains, it seems clear that European politics has overall shifted to a more authoritarian direction, particularly in matters relating to immigration and integration as well as law and order and ‘national security’, since the 1980s. Policies shifted even further to the right after 9/11, which has led to the securitisation of various other policy fields, not least immigration. Hence, while some authors have demonstrated that governments with PRRPs have successfully pushed through their preferred policies on issues like immigration, integration and law and order, albeit with much more variation than is generally acknowledged (e.g., Akkerman & De Lange 2012), others have shown similar developments in countries without such parties in government, and sometimes even in parliament, indicating an EU-wide convergence of stricter immigration policies (e.g., Givens & Luedtke 2004; Schain 2009). Even if it is true that countries with large PRRPs have introduced more ‘populist radical right’ legislation, these policy effects are at best *indirect* – that is, a reflection of shifts in the policy preferences of mainstream parties because of perceived electoral pressure from PRRPs (see above).

Most research on PRRPs in government focuses exclusively on immigration and integration policies, following Michael Minkenberg’s (2001: 1) early conclusion that: ‘When the radical right holds executive office, a “right turn” occurs primarily in cultural policies.’ Andrej Zaslove, for example, argues that ‘the Freedom Party and the Lega Nord have been *instrumental* in passing more restrictive immigration policy, limiting the flow of immigrants and the ability of non-EU-labour to live, work and settle permanently in either Austria or Italy’ (Zaslove 2004: 99; emphasis added). PRRPs supporting minority governments seem to also have had their main successes in influencing immigration legislation (e.g., Meret 2011).

Many authors have cautioned against overly strong conclusions, arguing that against these successes on immigration stand many failures as well. They have noted only limited influence of PRRPs within their respective governments (e.g., Albertazzi 2008; Heinisch 2008; Luther 2011; Tarchi 2008). Reflecting on the policies of the Berlusconi governments in Italy, for example, Marco Tarchi (2008: 97) concludes that ‘some of the issues which were held dear by the populist electorate were tackled, but in much more moderate terms than suggested by the

parties' manifestos, especially that of the *Lega Nord*'. In short, the government record of the populist radical right does not look very impressive, even on their key issue of immigration (Akkerman 2012).

Polity

After the previous assessments, it should come as no surprise that PRRPs have not affected the type of polity in Western Europe. None of the European countries has become autocratic – not even those that have had PRRPs in government. This might seem self-evident today, but much of the academic and public interest in this party family has been sparked by the assumption that the populist radical right is a threat to the existing political system because of its alleged anti-democratic character.

Upon closer scrutiny, it is not that surprising that PRRPs have not changed the democratic nature of the system as they support both popular sovereignty and majority rule. Their relationship with liberal democracy is less supportive, however; they are essentially monist, highly sceptical about minority rights and the politics of compromise (Mudde 2007). And, in fact, in several cases they have tried to undermine the independence of counterbalancing political institutions – most notably the courts and media – as well as to limit minority rights. However, the legal challenges were largely unsuccessful and the main onslaught was rhetorical.

Undoubtedly the most comprehensive challenge to liberal democracy in Western Europe has come from the various Berlusconi governments in Italy, albeit mostly at the initiative of the neoliberal populist FI rather than the populist radical right LN. Backed by his private media empire, Berlusconi has engaged in decades of populist rhetoric at the expense of the other parties, the courts and whoever opposed him. However, when his governments proposed controversial reforms of the political system which would give the prime minister in particular much greater powers, it failed or hardly changed the institutions (and practices) of the system as such (e.g., Ruzza & Fella 2009).

In short, while PRRPs have never challenged the bare essence of their democratic systems, this cannot be said of the fundamentals of *liberal* democracy. The fact that no country was turned into an 'illiberal democracy' (Zakaria 1997), not even when PRRPs were in government, is to be credited to the resilience of coalition parties, civil society and the courts. It is here that European democracies of the late twentieth century differ most strongly from those of the early twentieth century.

A turn to the right . . . but which right?

Minkenberg's apt summary of the essential impact of PRRPs on European democracies, based on a very limited set of cases and made over ten years ago, still holds good: "The "government of the people, by the people, for the people" is not at stake, but the concept of the "people" is" (Minkenberg 2001: 21). As far as there has been influence of PRRPs on European democracies, it has been on redefining the people; or, more accurately, re-redefining the people in the manner that they had always been implicitly defined in the pre-multicultural society – namely as ethnically homogeneous. This influence has been mostly indirect and in line with the democratic process in the sense that PRRPs politicised mostly existing anti-immigrant sentiments in the population, which encouraged mainstream parties (if encouragement was needed) to adopt their issues and issue position, albeit in a more moderate form, and change policies accordingly (cf. Schain 2006).

However, although some PRRPs may be seen as *catalysts* in this process, they are neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition. Their success was enabled by the pre-existence of a fertile breeding ground of popular resentment around immigration, crime and party politics across Western Europe (e.g., Betz 1994; Mudde 2010). This explains why countries without successful PRRPs went through a roughly similar process. For example, surveys show a substantial rise in anti-immigrant sentiment in all European countries between 1988 and 2000 (Semyonov et al. 2006: 426), but the rise was steepest in the early period (1988–1994), which is just before the most pronounced shift towards a more anti-immigration position occurred among mainstream political parties across the continent (Alonso & Claro da Fonseca 2012).

In other words, mainstream right-wing parties are more responsible for the recent anti-immigration turn than PRRPs (Bale 2008). While all have moved to a more strict immigration and integration position, some have chosen to use this particular issue to gain governmental power by co-opting either the populist radical right parties (e.g., Austria, Denmark, Netherlands) or their voters (e.g., France). In most of these cases, the mainstream right adopted not just a more radical immigration position, but also implemented more strict immigration policies than in other countries. Finally, while electoral pressure from the populist radical right does have an effect on the position on immigration of mainstream left-wing parties, this is at least strongly mediated by the responses of mainstream right-wing parties (Bale et al. 2010). In short, the mere presence of a strong PRRP neither automatically leads to a more anti-immigrant position in a country nor does its absence guarantee liberal cosmopolitanism: politics matters – in particular the politics of mainstream right-wing parties (Bale 2008).

European integration, like immigration, was for long a taboo issue in European politics, often consciously excluded from the political agenda by the political elites. However, unlike immigration, European integration could for decades rely on a permissive consensus at the mass level. Since the early 1990s, however, popular support for European integration has decreased, sharply in some countries, even if outright rejection of the idea has increased more

modestly. Mainstream parties have also become more cautious of European integration, increasingly expressing ‘soft euroscepticism’ within national politics (e.g., Szczerbiak & Taggart 2008), even if the permissive consensus remains largely intact at the elite level.

It is unlikely that PRRPs played an important role in the recent move towards more critical support of European integration. First, much of the critique is related to new developments within the EU, starting with the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, which partly challenge the preferred visions of European integration of mainstream parties and their supporters. In other words, as the EU has become more defined, more people and parties see particular things wrong with it. Second, most of the more outspoken eurosceptic parties today developed their position independent of, and often well before, the relevance of the populist radical right (Szczerbiak & Taggart 2008). And third, strong opposition to aspects of European integration comes at least as much from other political actors – most notably radical left parties and trade unions (as was the case in the Dutch and French referendums on the ‘European Constitution’).

PRRPs have been even less relevant for the authoritarian turn in Western Europe. Like with immigration, there has always been a significant gap between the more progressive elites and the more conservative masses on law and order issues. The policy turn started in most countries in the 1980s as a consequence of neoconservative influence within the mainstream right (and sometimes left), well before the populist radical right started to gain significant electoral support. And while PRRPs have been strong supporters of strict anti-terrorism legislation, the post-9/11 securitisation of politics was broadly supported within the political mainstream and needed neither the initiative nor the support of them.

Related to their anti-establishment discourse, many PRRPs call for the introduction of plebiscitarian measures to ‘democratise’ the political systems and break the power of ‘the corrupt political establishment’ (Mudde 2007). They do not seem to have been very successful, or forceful, on this issue, however. While the number of national referenda in Western Europe has certainly increased, most were related to European integration and were either constitutionally required or the consequence of pressure from other political actors.

In short, while the *verrechting* thesis seems correct in terms of a move to more right-wing positions on the sociocultural dimension at the mass and elite level, it is wrong on the main cause of this process. Rather than the populist radical right, it has been the mainstream right-wing that has pushed West European politics to the right, in part in response to media and popular responses to relatively recent developments (such as multiethnic societies, the Maastricht Treaty and 9/11). In many cases, the mainstream left has proven either incompetent to halt the turn (e.g., integration) or remarkably collaborative in supporting it (e.g., immigration control, securitisation).

Explaining the limited impact of PRRPs

One of the main reasons for the limited impact of PRRPs is that they are mostly ‘purifiers’ rather than ‘prophets’ (Lucardie 2000). They push for policy changes on existing issues, not for new ones (like the Greens did with the environment). As argued above, on many issues the mainstream parties had already done much of the groundwork before PRRPs were strong enough to challenge them. A good example is the alleged new issue of immigration control. The space for manoeuvre in this particular field was already significantly restricted before the third wave of the radical right even started. Most West European countries had already by and large banned economic immigration in 1973–1974, as a response to the oil crisis, well before immigration control became politicised (in the late 1980s). These policies had largely been considered technical measures and were silently approved by political actors across the political spectrum (e.g., Rydgren 2008).

The most obvious reason, however, is the relatively modest electoral support that these parties generate in parliamentary elections. With an average support of less than 10 per cent of the electorate, few PRRPs are major players in their national political system. Moreover, even fewer make it into government, majority or minority, and most are shunned by the other parties in parliament. Hence, direct policy influence is already quite rare. And even when PRRPs make it into power, they are dogs that bark loud, but hardly ever bite.

There are at least five reasons for the governmental impotence of PRRPs. First, PRRPs focus on only a few issues, significantly reducing the scope of their impact, even if successful. Most importantly, socioeconomic issues are secondary to them, and are often log-rolled for sociocultural ones in negotiations with their coalition partners (De Lange 2012). Second, political parties are just one of many actors in creating policies; bureaucracies and nongovernmental actors severely limit the room to manoeuvre for parties (see Duncan 2010). This is even more the case for new governmental parties, in particular of the populist radical right, which have few supporters in the major policy networks. Third, PRRPs are always junior parties in coalition, much less experienced than both their coalition partners and the other actors within the policy networks. Hence, they often have only nominal control of policy fields, even when they officially control the ministry (e.g., Heinisch 2008; Luther 2011). Fourth, coalition governments are the outcomes of processes of policy convergence between mainstream and populist radical right parties that predate the governmental cooperation (see De Lange 2012). Consequently, many governmental policies on even populist radical right issues like immigration reflect at least as much the programme of the mainstream right-wing party as that of the populist radical right one (e.g., Duncan 2010; Tarchi 2008). Fifth, and finally, PRRPs prefer to keep ‘one foot in and one foot out’ of government (Albertazzi et al. 2011: 479). Hence, they prefer to keep their oppositional image, by using radical rhetoric and

pushing for excessively radical policies, rather than run the risk of being perceived as a ‘normal’ governmental party and part of ‘the corrupt elite’ (e.g., Luther 2011).

All is well on the Western front?

This all is not to say that PRRPs will always remain a relatively minor nuisance in West European democracies, although it is important to remember that in the past three decades the main threats to liberal democracy have come from the political mainstream rather than the political extremes – that is, Silvio Berlusconi in Italy, the Kaczynski brothers in Poland and currently Victor Orbán in Hungary, as well as from the anti-terror legislation after 9/11. This notwithstanding, it still is important to remain vigilant towards PRRPs. There are at least three reasons why they could become more influential in the (near) future.

First, partly because of their rise, but mostly because of the transformation of the mass media, we have seen a tabloidisation of political discourse in the past decades. Tabloids and PRRPs share many similar attitudes and issues, which have come to dominate the political discourse in Europe in the past decades (e.g., Mazzoleni 2008). While this does not necessarily translate into changing public attitudes and policy changes, it provides at the very least a more favourable ‘discursive opportunity structure’ (Koopmans & Statham 1999: 228) for PRRPs and their policies.

Second, the electoral trend of PRRPs is clearly up. Not only are there more successful parties today than thirty years ago, several have established themselves in their national political systems. And while the economic crisis has slowed down their electoral growth, by returning the political debate to socioeconomic rather than sociocultural issues, there are good reasons to believe that the post-crisis era could see a resurgence of PRRPs. Most notably, the EU’s response to the economic crisis has elevated anxieties about the inter-connectedness of the continent as well as further exposed the fundamental differences between most elites and most people on the desirability of further European and global integration. In many countries PRRPs have already responded by calling for varying degrees of disintegration, which might become more popular when people again feel more secure about the economy.

Third, and finally, some of the successful PRRPs have grown up. They have learned from mistakes during their first brushes with power and have often gained more experience at the sub-national level. Many observers have generalised on the basis of just two cases – the Austrian FPÖ and the Dutch LPF – which both imploded when in office. However, this is by no means the general rule. The Italian LN survived three governments largely unscratched, while the Danish DFP and (probably) the Dutch PVV seem also unaffected by their support for minority governments (Akkerman & De Lange 2012).

I disagree, then, with the dominant strain in the populism literature that argues that populist parties are destined for success in opposition and failure in government (e.g., Heinisch 2003; Mény & Surel 2002). Like social democratic parties before the Second World War, and Green parties in the 1990s, PRRPs can make the transformation from successful opposition party to effective governing party (see Luther 2011; McDonnell & Newell 2011). Moreover, with mainstream parties increasingly converging with the populist radical right on sociocultural policies, and the latter continuing to compromise on socioeconomic issues, populist radical right parties may well remain the more attractive (i.e., ‘cheaper’) coalition partners for the mainstream right.

But even in the unlikely event that PRRPs become major players in West European politics, it is unlikely that this will lead to a fundamental transformation of the political system. After all, the populist radical right is not a normal pathology of European democracy, unrelated to its basic values, but rather a pathological normalcy, which strives for the radicalisation of mainstream values.

Notes

¹ The Stein Rokkan Lecture was presented at the ECPR Joint Sessions of Workshops in Antwerp, Belgium, on 11 April 2012.

I want to thank Kris Deschouwer for delivering the lecture in my absence and Cristóbal Rovira Kaltwasser, Markus Crepaz, Maryann Gallagher, Petr Kopecký, Sarah De Lange and Tim Bale for their valuable feedback on earlier versions.

² LAOS was part of the Greek government for only two months. As soon as the first major decision had to be made by the new government – that is, approving a European bailout – the LAOS ministers defected from the party line and were kicked out of the party.

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Part VI

Responses

This last section contains articles and chapters that discuss the ways in which various democratic actors have responded to the populist radical right challenge and how populist radical right parties have adapted to the democratic context. They focus on the responses of state institutions (including party bans), political parties, civil society groups, and the media.

Jaap van Donselaar presents an overview of the ‘patterns of response’ to the populist radical right by several West European states. To date it remains one of few such studies. **Alexandre Dézé** focuses on the different ways in which populist radical right parties have tried to function within liberal democratic systems. **David Art** compares two similar cases, Austria and Germany, to learn more about the effects of state and civil responses to populist radical right parties. And, finally, **Sarah de Lange** looks at coalition formation processes with and without populist radical right parties to see whether they follow a different logic than the usual coalitions without them.

Revision questions

Van Donselaar

- What are the three primary strategies of state response to the populist radical right?
- What is the ‘dilemma of repression’ that all states face?
- What is the ‘dilemma of adaptation’ that populist radical right organizations face? How does it relate to the ‘front-stage’ and ‘back-stage’ behaviors of populist radical right organizations?

Dézé

- What is the difference between an ‘alternative *within* the system’ and an ‘alternative *to* the system’?

- What is the ‘triple strategic dimension’ that the relationship between populist radical right parties and democratic systems is based on?
- What is a ‘double discourse’ and how do ‘strategic euphemisms’ relate to it?

Art

- Why is timing critical in combating populist radical right parties?
- What are the main features of the ‘policy of non-cooperation’?
- How do the media influence the success of the populist radical right?
- What are the main lessons we can draw from the comparison of responses to the populist radical right in Austria and Germany?

De Lange

- What are the main theories of coalition formation?
- What is a ‘minority government’?
- Why is Italy (not) an anomaly?
- Do coalition governments with populist radical right parties defy traditional coalition theories?

Discussion points

1. Which European countries have the most ‘liberal’ and ‘repressive’ climates?
2. How do successful populist radical right parties deal with the ‘dilemma of adaptation’?
3. How can you distinguish objectively between the ‘front-stage’ and ‘back-stage’ of populist radical right organizations?
4. Do successful populist radical right parties offer an ‘alternative *within* the system’ and unsuccessful parties an ‘alternative *to* the system’?
5. Which part of the ‘triple strategic dimension’ is the most successful strategy for populist radical right parties?
6. Are the media friend or foe of the populist radical right?
7. Can the main lessons from Austria and Germany be applied more broadly within Europe?
8. Mainstream parties consider populist radical right parties as both (potential) allies and

(potential) competitors. Explain.

9. Why do populist radical right parties choose to support minority governments?

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Patterns of response to the extreme right in Western Europe

Jaap van Donselaar

Introduction

Over the last two decades the extreme right in Western Europe has taken on renewed importance. This is evident not only in election results but also in public demonstrations and racist and political violence. Further, extreme right groups exert influence on established political movements, and established political movements have reacted in definable ways to that influence. Governments have devised a number of responses to confront problems of racism and right extremism, and amongst these, three primary strategies can be observed¹:

(1) *Efforts to influence public opinion.* Governments seek to combat racism and right extremism by educating and informing citizens on inter-ethnic relations, World War II, the Holocaust and related subjects. These actions encourage people to avoid racism/right extremism in the first place or to turn away from them.

(2) *Remedying causes of attraction to racism/right extremism.* Governments act to combat unemployment and increase confidence in the existing political order, and devise policies towards minorities and urban workers that have the same effect. Those who adopt this strategy claim the value of removing a breeding ground in which racism and right-wing extremism can flourish. Like the effort to influence public opinion, the effort to remedy causes is an indirect approach to controlling racism and the extreme right.

(3) *Influencing racist and/or right extremist expression.* This strategy involves repressive measures such as bans on extreme right demonstrations and criminal prosecution for distribution of racist propaganda. In addition to undertaking repressive measures, governments may construct barriers to right-wing expression within political systems. How seats are distributed in elections – whether via a Dutch system of proportional representation

or a French/British majority system – makes a big difference in the management of extremist expression.

This chapter will focus on the last strategy: barriers to the extreme right within political systems and the repressive response of governments to the extreme right in five Western European countries: the Federal Republic of Germany, Belgium, Britain, France and the Netherlands.² We consider in detail the following forms of expression: distribution of (racist) propaganda, public meetings and demonstrations, participation in elections and involvement in political and racist violence.

Racist propaganda

All five countries are parties to the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (1966).³ The Convention has been an important source of statutory measures against racist propaganda in the Netherlands (1971), France (1972) and Germany (1973). The Netherlands ratified the UN Convention without reservation.⁴ In Germany specific legislation was already in place to prevent the revival of national socialism ('the distribution of propaganda material by unconstitutional organizations', and 'the use of symbols by unconstitutional organizations').⁵ In Britain the UN Convention played a more minor role in suppressing propaganda than in other countries, since longstanding statutory provisions were already in place against racist propaganda when the UN Convention was enacted (the Public Order Act of 1936 and the Race Relations Act of 1965). In Belgium, the UN Convention resulted in an anti-racism act, but not until 1981. This act was weak in comparison with provisions enacted in the other four countries.

Amendments to statutory schemes have been made in all five countries over the years, removing loopholes in statutory schemes, broadening scope, toughening sanctions, enacting technical improvements and so on.⁶ The most dramatic modifications took place in France, where the French instruments were changed in 1990 to provide for the possibility of removing the passive voting right as an additional punishment for racism. The tightening of statutory provisions in France has generally been seen as a response to the ascendancy of the FN.

Revisionism, in particular Holocaust denial, was classified as an offence in French criminal law in 1972 (and improved in 1990). A similar criminal law dates from 1996 in Belgium; while in Germany, legislation against denial of the Holocaust, enacted as a part of the postwar constitution, was improved in the 1990s.

Neither Britain nor the Netherlands have specific statutory provisions on Holocaust denial; both governments assume that the existing legal framework is sufficient. In Belgium and France, certain anti-racist organizations can appear as plaintiffs in criminal law disputes. This

procedural arrangement means that such organizations can institute prosecutions, so relieving governments of the responsibility.

Judging by their armoury of legal measures, the Netherlands, Germany, Britain and France are, in principle, well placed to stop the spread of racist propaganda.⁷ Belgium is less well equipped, but recent developments may change this. Belgium's Anti-Racism Act (1981) has to date not been an appreciable obstacle to the spread of racist propaganda by the VB, nor has it had a significant moderating influence on the propaganda itself. Belgium stands in contrast, therefore, to the capacity for deterrence evident in the other four countries.⁸

We turn now to application of statutory instruments available in the five countries and obstacles to their application. Racist propaganda is often packaged in such a way that, at least from a criminal law point of view, prosecutors cannot always act. Extreme right leaders are adept at *impressing management*, finding a balance between recognizability for supporters and protection from judicial or legal intervention.

Successful application of instruments designed to control right-wing extremist expression depends on prosecution policy. Here too, Belgium is an exception. Shortly after Belgium's anti-racism act became effective, it was found that the Belgian judiciary did not consider it desirable to prevent the dissemination of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. In the 1990s an attempt was made to intensify Belgium's prosecution policy, at the same time tightening the anti-racism act mentioned above.

In France, Germany and the Netherlands, particularly in recent years, attempts to implement a more intensive prosecution policy have appeared. In Germany and the Netherlands those efforts seem to have been more successful than in France. In Britain, extreme right activists have been convicted on many occasions. Nevertheless, the number of convictions for racism is generally regarded as low in all five countries under discussion.

Prosecution policy regarding racist propaganda is not an independent matter in any of the five countries, but rather forms part of broader prosecution policy. Depending on time and place, it may be aimed at expressions of racism, right extremism or both. In all five countries prosecution policy seems to be 'vote-sensitive', influenced by shock effects, particularly as far as violence and elections are concerned. Below we offer many examples of trigger events found to have a catalytic effect on the application of available prosecution instruments.⁹ Any decline in the power of the extreme right – Britain in the early 1980s and the late 1980s in the Netherlands – seems to temper prosecutions. Another important curb on prosecutions, it seems, is a clear preference for an alternative approach. Alternatives may include disregard of racist or extreme acts, for example. Not infrequently societies seem to fear that criminal prosecution will make an extreme right leader an attractive underdog or martyr, or, even worse, cause that leader to profit from unsuccessful legal proceedings. In short, fear of reverse effects may inhibit efforts to prosecute. This fear may apply not only to the control of propaganda but in principle to any other repressive measure a government may choose to

undertake/impose.

Demonstrations

All five countries under discussion can use repressive instruments to take action against public demonstrations by the extreme right: public demonstrations may be banned as a precautionary measure if serious riots are anticipated. In the Netherlands, Belgium, Britain and France the reason for the ban has a *neutral value*: the content of the demonstrations has nothing to do with the government's choice to act. Nor may threat of a disturbance of the peace by third parties play a part in the decision to ban public demonstrations. In such instances the police must protect the demonstrations. Only if there is a question of a situation being beyond the administration's control can a precautionary ban be issued in any of these four countries. Germany permits additional grounds for imposing restrictions on public demonstrations, including anticipation that certain offences will be committed. This broadening implies that governments can identify justifiable grounds for a ban on extreme right demonstrations. Hence, Germany's reasons for imposition of bans are *non-neutral*.¹⁰

Statutory frameworks for dealing with riots do not differ greatly in the Netherlands, Britain, France, Belgium and Germany, but practical application of those statutory frameworks does differ.¹¹ However, practice in the Netherlands, Britain, France and Belgium differs significantly from practice in Germany with respect to the question of how strictly potential risks to public order are weighed. The first four countries strictly judge the danger of extreme right demonstrations to public order. Powerful arguments are necessary if the freedom to demonstrate and assemble is to be overridden in order to protect public order, even where counter-demonstrations have been announced. (Occurrence of counter-demonstrations are more the rule than the exception.) All four countries place emphasis on the question of how public order can be maintained *in spite of* demonstrations and counter-demonstrations. As a consequence, a number of extreme right demonstrations have taken place in Britain, Germany, France and Belgium, protected by heavily equipped police forces. Often such demonstrations have been accompanied by violent confrontations among the parties involved: extreme right demonstrators, opponents of the extreme right and the police. Attempts by the police to keep extreme right demonstrators and their opponents apart have often resulted in serious confrontations between the police and anti-fascist demonstrators.

In Belgium, precautionary bans on demonstrations are rare. So far as France is concerned, two periods can be mentioned during which precautionary bans occurred frequently: (1) in 1990 after the shocking desecration of the Carpentras Jewish cemetery and (2) during the election period of 1992. Although in France banning is usually resorted to in the event of fear

of disturbance of the peace, political considerations have also played a part in the decision to impose a ban. It seems that reluctance to ban demonstration both in Belgium and France is linked with the fear of possible reverse effects.

In Germany, the precautionary ban on extreme right demonstrations was rarely used until the 1990s. Because violence has increased, especially the shock of violent attacks in Möln (1992) and Solingen (1993), the climate of opinion and governmental decision-making has changed. Since 1993 the imposition of precautionary bans on public demonstrations has become the rule rather than the exception. If right-wing extremists demonstrate on the streets now, they do so without prior announcement and thus by definition without consent.

The authorities in Britain often make public gatherings dependent on the maintenance of public order. Election meetings and other public gatherings cannot be banned as a precaution. Only the threat of a serious disturbance of the peace is grounds for a ban. In other words, the law concerning precautionary bans is politically neutral (a situation which is often discussed).

In France in the 1970s the rising FN habitually demonstrated on the streets on a large scale. Application of the precautionary ban in France was fairly rare until about 1980. Then serious riots became the rule, characterized by mass confrontations between the police and opponents of the extreme right, and resulting in death and serious injuries. Deteriorating relations between ethnic minority groups and the police were often involved, deterioration precipitated by extreme right provocations. The fact that police were protecting extreme right marches but were not in a position to curb explosive growth in racist violence created bad blood between the police and minority communities. More recently the precautionary ban on extreme right demonstrations has been applied, but infrequently.

In the Netherlands since the end of the 1970s virtually any attempt by the extreme right to call a demonstration has been regarded as an unacceptable public order risk. The precautionary ban is therefore the rule in the Netherlands, with only a few exceptions. Decisions by certain mayors to ban extreme right demonstrations have been upheld by administrative judges. In the first ten years of its existence (1984–94) the extreme right Centrumpartij (CP) has never succeeded in calling a public meeting. The calling of closed meetings has also often proved to be a problem for the extreme right. Current practice (frequent imposition of the precautionary ban) and the government's clear intention to continue on the present course is at loggerheads with the law and jurisprudence, which are by nature neutral. The fact that the law and jurisprudence are neutral has occasionally led to pleas that automatic bans on extreme right demonstrations no longer take place in the Netherlands.

Clearly then, regulations allowing bans on public demonstrations differ with respect to their 'neutrality'. In the Netherlands, Belgium, Britain and France those regulations are *neutral*.¹² In Germany those regulations are *non-neutral*. '*Neutral systems*' contradict deeply rooted social resistance to right-wing extremism, especially in Britain and France.¹³

Even in the Netherlands, disputes about the neutral character of regulations concerning bans

have become at times intense; in practice a neutral application of a neutral law does not always take place.

In addition we note differences in the application of repressive legal means. Belgium and the Netherlands form the extremes in this regard. Perhaps the steady successes of the VB in Belgium and the FN in France in the 1980s and 1990s can partly be explained by the liberal climates in Belgium and France with regard to demonstrations. Given this liberal climate, both the VB and the FN have been able to build up longstanding traditions of demonstrations large and small. Such traditions have developed to a much lesser degree in Britain and Germany, and have been almost altogether excluded in the Netherlands.

Involve ment in violence

In 1962 leaders of the extreme right British group called Spearhead were prosecuted for planning violent action. Members of the group were convicted and Spearhead was banned as a ‘paramilitary organization’. (Spearhead’s intended violent action was not carried out, only prepared.) When the phenomenon of ‘racist violence’ in Britain greatly increased towards the end of the 1970s, many people held that extreme right organizations were responsible for this.¹⁴ By contrast, the British government thought these organizations played no primary role in racist violence, and did not prosecute groups as they had done in the case of Spearhead. The government was, strictly speaking, correct, but its position did not alter the fact that far-right extremists had on a large scale been guilty of violent racist crimes. Given the government’s ‘no primary role’ attitude, policy regarding control of racist violence was therefore not aimed at the extreme right, even though extreme right demonstrations were drastically limited by government intervention.¹⁵

Things were quite different in Germany. When racist violence increased dramatically at the beginning of the 1990s, the government responded with a broad package of measures aimed at the extreme right: bans on gatherings, restriction of demonstrations, tightening up and extension of legislation, intensification of attention paid to the extreme right by police, the judiciary and the information services, and threat of the application of the ‘Radicals’ resolution (*Radikalenerlass*, 1972).¹⁶ Germany thus greatly limited the scope of extreme right activity. The REP were depicted as ‘psychological arsonists’ and stigmatized. By officially labelling the REP as ‘unconstitutional’, Germany took a major step towards banning the organization altogether.

In France, supposed involvement in racist and anti-Semitic violence brought the FN into a perilous position on several occasions, particularly in 1990 at the time of the Carpentras incident.¹⁷ France limited the scope of extreme right activity, though not to the same extent as

Germany had done. In France, as in Britain, limitations primarily involved restrictions on demonstrations.

‘Supposed involvement’ and ‘psychological wrongdoing’ also became accepted terminology in the Dutch case, though during a period preceding the 1990s. In 1976 a neo-Nazi party was suspected of being responsible for a race riot, and in the early 1980s the racist CP implicated itself in circumstances not dissimilar to those of the desecration at Carpentras and the 1994 attack on a Turkish family in Möln, Germany. In the Netherlands, too, there was restriction of the freedom of movement of the extreme right, in particular by threat of a party ban.¹⁸ In Belgium, the supposed involvement of the extreme right in violent acts led to the establishment of a parliamentary commission.¹⁹

We turn now to problems of perception and actuality. How far is the extreme right involved in political and racist violence? What precisely constitutes ‘involvement’? How must governments respond and when? These questions have caused governments considerable thought, and have elicited various responses, including criminal prosecution of individual perpetrators, restrictions upon the movement of right extremists (through bans on demonstrations and meetings) and even bans on organizations themselves.²⁰ If a society associates violence with the extreme right, then some form of action is generally taken against the extreme right. This is so in all five countries under discussion. The association does not in itself have to be factually based or even proven before punitive action takes place. Sometimes powerful action is taken in response to ‘supposed’ or ‘psychological’ involvement by the extreme right in violence. In other cases, actual participation in violence leads to little or no response. In other words, in serious cases a mild response has sometimes taken place, whereas in non-serious cases there have been instances of harsh responses. We might ask how well proven must the link be between the extreme right and violence which takes place. Countries differ greatly in this matter and Britain and Germany seem to represent two extremes of the spectrum.

In my opinion, remarkable differences in the behaviour of these two countries cannot be explained by differences in the extent of racist violence in them; behavioural differences can only partly be explained by the size of the extreme right in each country. In short, ‘involvement’ of the extreme right in racist violence cannot always be objectively defined, nor is it objectively judged. We can suggest certain reasons for this state of affairs. (1) The leaders of extreme right parties often cannot afford to propagate political violence openly, since this would lead to confrontation with the government and leaders might lose part of their electorate. (2) On the other hand, maintaining too rigorous a distance from militant activism also poses risks. Radical supporters may be alienated or repelled by silence or the denial of ideological principles and membership in right extreme groups may suffer as a result. Extreme right organizations often exert a power of attraction on persons who are more radical or more militant than the image the organization wishes to give itself *front-stage*. The behaviour of a

radical fringe can discredit the organization as a whole when publicly acknowledged.

But *back-stage* affiliation is different. Often organizations respect ‘radicals’ for their services and their nerve. Back-stage radicals translate the ideas shared by many into action, ideas few dare publicly admit for fear of confrontation with the judiciary or other authorities.

Because many racist incidents are not described in detail, one can often only speculate about the role of extreme right organizations in them. Even where there seems to be a measure of clarity, a link can often only be *inferred* between racist offences and the extreme right. What is demonstrable is usually an indirect link: the offence cannot be attributed to a particular organization, but rather to persons who in some way form part of that organization. In short, the involvement of extreme right organizations in the phenomenon of ‘racist violence’ is complex, and this applies in each of the cases of the five countries under discussion.²¹

An alternative analytical strategy is less difficult to pursue: starting not from racist violence and trying to determine the extreme right’s involvement in it, but starting rather from extreme right formations and trying to determine the degree to which each exhibits violent behaviour. In each of the five countries links can be seen between violent incidents and extreme right organizations. In Belgium, links between violent incidents and extreme right organizations are open, hence noticeable. Members of the VB often participate in militant action or even political violence. By contrast, in Germany, the Netherlands and France, extreme right activists see their positions in the REP, the CP or the FN as endangered, if not made impossible, by open association with militant actions. In Belgium, the extreme right is faced to a much lesser degree with a repressive climate than is the extreme right in either Germany or the Netherlands.

Banning extreme right organizations

Belgium and Britain differ from the three other countries, both in the means they employ against right-wing extremism and in the application of those means. Both countries enacted legislation between the two world wars regarding the identification of an organization as a ‘militia’: in Belgium a ‘private militia’ (1934) and in Britain a ‘paramilitary organization’ (1936). In both countries competence to define a defendant’s status lies with the judge and involves the criminal prosecution of individual ‘militia’ members. In Britain since World War II the 1936 measure has been applied only once against the extreme right, namely against Spearhead in 1962. Since then no further extreme right paramilitary organization has been banned, not even any extreme right groups with an explicitly violent record, such as Combat 18. The reticence which the British government has shown in dealing with racist organizations contrasts, in the eyes of some, with the energy of its repression of military and political groups

in Northern Ireland. This energetic repression of Irish groups can also be regarded as a demonstration of potential power. Because Britain does not have a written constitution, far-reaching measures can be taken very rapidly. There have been no discussions about bans in Britain, as there have been in the Netherlands and Germany, at least not on the issue of whether racist and extreme right organizations should exist. When discussion of bans takes place, it asks whether extreme right demonstrations pose a threat to public order.

In Belgium it is not possible to ban a political party.²² Only if a political party can be regarded as a private militia is it possible to bring a criminal prosecution against its members. Organizations as such cannot be disbanded, at least not officially. The basic right of association is quite firmly anchored in the Belgian Constitution. Thus a Belgian criminal judge cannot accomplish anything against associations which overstep the mark. One must also consider the reservations of the Belgian government when it implemented the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination. The reservations related, among other things, to a country's obligation to deal with racist organizations. (Britain also had the same reservations.) The 1934 Act on Private Militias was applied in Belgium during 1980 against members of the Flemish Militant Order (VMO) and the Front de la jeunesse, which had been guilty of violence on a big scale. The absence of a ban system in Belgium only became a subject of political discussion in 1981, at the time of the Wijninckx Commission. Otherwise the ban on parties has not been a matter of political consequence, and this issue is not really relevant to the VB.

France too maintains a militia act enacted during the prewar years: the Act of 10 January 1936 on Armed Groups and Private Militias.²³ This Act provides for the disbandment of military and/or violent organizations. It places competence to decide not with the judge but with the Council of Ministers. The Armed Group and Private Militias Act is, as regards its origin and development, strongly tailored to right extremist organizations. Over the years the Act has been extended and revised to include racism, discrimination and terrorism as grounds for a ban.²⁴ However, if we look at application of the Act, then we see that in practice only a hybrid of explicit violence and Nazism has caused the French Council of Ministers to pass a disbandment resolution. In two cases such a disbandment resolution involved the FN. In the early 1970s the threat of a ban was distinctly present for the FN, but Le Pen and his associates succeeded in manoeuvring the party out of the danger zone. In the mid 1980s the likelihood of a ban also diminished when the political influence of the FN in parliament largely disappeared. For the FN, threat of a ban is not a manifest but a latent danger. The organization's supposed involvement in racist and anti-Semitic violence has, however, brought it into a perilous position on a number of occasions, particularly in 1990 at the time of the incident at Carpentras. The circumstances self-evident at this time could potentially occur again should there be intermittent electoral growth. But for the time being even the shocking electoral scores of 1995 did not bring about a debate on a ban. Just as in Britain, discussions on

bans in France have been aimed primarily at the question of how far it is or is not desirable to ban demonstrations by the party. Discussions of this nature took place in 1992.

In the Netherlands, actual application of the party ban is a rare occurrence; nevertheless the threat of a ban has been important for the development of the extreme right.²⁵ The power to decide whether to impose a ban on an organization rests with the judge. In 1953 a small neo-Nazi party was banned; by contrast, an attempt to ban a neo-Nazi party, the Nederlandse Volksunie (NVU), failed. This failure resulted a change to the statutory framework in the Netherlands. Events felt to be shocking made the latent threat of a ban manifest. In 1953 news that former Dutch SS and Nazi party members had formed a new party and wanted to take part in elections precipitated a ban. There was no question of any discussion of a ban – the need for it was self-evident. In the 1970s participation in the elections by the racist and neo-Nazi NVU initiated discussion of a ban. Further concerns were raised by the NVU's involvement in violence and international criticism of the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination. In the 1980s and 1990s extreme right parties were often confronted with the threat of being banned. In 1998 the neo-Nazi Centreparty '86 was banned by the Amsterdam Court. The leaders of other parties are certainly aware of this possibility.

Of the five countries, Germany is the most likely to ban extreme right organizations. It has both the statutory means and the political will and competence to enforce them.²⁶ Unconstitutional parties – parties that are contrary to the existing free and democratic order – may thus be banned.²⁷ Taken together with Germany's ban on association and the government's ability to restrict basic political rights, the party ban forms the third measure with which German democracy can defend itself. The decision to enact a party ban rests in Germany with the Constitutional Court; the decision to impose a ban on association rests with the (Federal) Minister of the Interior. Unlike the association ban, the party ban is rarely imposed: in 1952 a neo-Nazi party, the Socialist Reich Party (SRP), was banned, and in 1956 a communist party, the KDP, was banned. As in the Netherlands, the threat of a party ban is a significant deterrent for extreme right groups. Threat of a ban can be stimulated by catalytic events. International public opinion seems to carry more weight in Germany than in other countries. In other words, an outcry abroad causes German authorities to take action. Because of the anti-Semitic 'Schmierwelle' in 1960, the fate of the German Rightist Party (DRP) hung by a thread and the threat of its entry in the Bundestag brought the NPD perilously close to a ban. Since 1992 application of the association ban has expanded enormously. From the point of view of the authorities, the existing instruments offer sufficient means of dealing effectively with extreme right groups.

In the early 1990s the REP also reluctantly came into the firing line and has remained there to this day. At this point it does not appear that the party will be banned, given its electoral decline; as with the NPD in 1969 a political solution thus presents itself. For the REP, pressure from outside has not been without consequences. The party has tried to find a balance

between proection from repressive measures and recognition for supporters. Under pressure the balance has been disturbed and as a result the REP has lost its position as a ‘bridge’ between the extreme right and established political parties. The fate of the REP in the 1990s is an appropriate illustration of the link that may exist between division in extreme right ranks and pressure exerted from the outside. Here there are also parallels between the Netherlands and Germany.

Another banned organization, the Free Workers’ Party (FAP), has, since the middle of the 1980s, also shown itself to be a violent organization. The FAP was, however, not banned until 1995. In 1999 and 2000 the German government and parliament sent an *Antrag* (proposal) to the Constitutional Court in Karlsruhe to have the party banned.

Barriers in political systems

The political influence of the extreme right is determined not only by the degree to which it is able to attract voters but also, and primarily, by the *method of seat allocation*. A vital distinction for the extreme right is evident when we contrast *majority systems* with systems of *proportionate representation*. The first is unfavourable and the second favourable to small political parties. Extreme right parties are as a rule relatively small. The bigger the group, the less disadvantageous a majority system, as the British and French cases show.

In France, specific disadvantages for the extreme right are linked with the election system, or at least elections where the ‘two-round’ majority system is used. The disadvantage lies in the political isolation of the extreme right, which is found to be an obstacle to the formation of coalitions in the second round. The French case shows how crucial has been the effect of a change in the system: 9.9 per cent of the votes in 1986 produced 35 parliamentary seats; 9.6 per cent of the votes in 1998 produced only one. In France the method of seat distribution depends on the type of election. Thus, in 1993 the FN received 12.5 per cent of the vote but did not get into the national parliament. One year later, 10.5 per cent of the vote obtained 11 seats in the European Parliament. This example illustrates the difference between the effects of a majority system as opposed to a system of proportionate representation.

In Britain only the (relative) majority system has been used, and this has proved fatal to the electoral prospects of the extreme right. Extreme right parties in Britain have, certainly in view of their relatively small electoral size, virtually no chance of breaking through the majority system. However, this situation could potentially change in two ways. The first would be a relative growth of the electorate devoted to extreme right parties, while the second would entail a change in the electoral system itself, with the introduction of proportionate representation. (The second seems a more likely prospect than the first.)

Use of the majority system in France and Britain means that, in relative terms, political power is less accessible in these two countries than in the other three countries under discussion. Political power is potentially most accessible in the Dutch and Belgian democracies. In the Netherlands and Belgium, elections are based on proportionate representation. Nevertheless, in Belgium the beneficial effects of proportional representation have been somewhat tempered for the VB by the federal structure of the parliamentary democracy where proportionate representation is '*indirect*' (because of differences between French- and Dutch-speaking electoral districts). Democracy in the Netherlands is, relatively speaking, the most accessible because of *direct* proportionate representation. The CD would, in view of their voting percentage, have not a glimmer of a chance in British or French parliamentary elections, but they achieve measurable results in the Netherlands.

In Germany, the Centre Democrats would also not have achieved admission to the national parliament. The German election threshold of 5 per cent is an obstacle which has never been beaten by an extreme right party, at least in Bundestag elections. But the REP did obtain over 7 per cent in the European elections of 1989. In terms of accessibility, the Federal Republic of Germany falls between Belgium and the Netherlands, on the one hand, and Britain and France on the other.²⁸

Extreme right parties must overcome certain hurdles if they are to participate in elections, hurdles both financial and personal. *Financial barriers* are real. Parties must deposit funds to participate in elections and must reach certain vote levels or thresholds if those funds are to be returned. The threshold for return of a deposit in the Netherlands is conspicuously low.²⁹ A party need only achieve 75 per cent of the quota to get the deposit back; for parliamentary elections in the Netherlands that amounts to a mere 0.5 per cent of the votes. Thresholds are higher in France and also in Britain, where the financial return rule seems to have an inhibiting effect on electoral participation of extreme right candidates.³⁰ In Germany, election participation offers more financial advantages than disadvantages (the '*Wahlkampfkostenvorauszahlung*'). But in Germany *personal* barriers are strong.³¹ The German signatures requirement is very high in comparison with requirements in Belgium and the Netherlands. Indeed, the Dutch election system is most accessible, and least characterized by the personal and financial barriers which prevail elsewhere.

In Britain the threshold for receiving *political broadcasting time* is derived from yet another criterion, namely, participation in a minimum of 50 electoral districts. (In France the threshold is 75 electoral districts.) Because of the financial risks associated with broad electoral participation, a high threshold for securing broadcast time exists in practice. The opposite applies for the Netherlands: because electoral participation is easily obtained, the threshold for receiving broadcast time is correspondingly low.

In the political system of the Federal Republic of Germany the notion of '*defensible democracy*' has a firm foundation not only in the electoral system but also in other ways. The

German Constitution determines that parties must have an ‘internal democratic order’ and must not conflict with the established free and democratic order of the state. The French Constitution also requires political parties ‘to respect the principles of national sovereignty and democracy’. But the French Constitution does not include a ban on parties as a constitutional provision, nor does France elaborate the position of parties in a special ‘parties act’.

In Germany, the ‘internal democratic order’ is indeed elaborated in the Parties Act of 1967, which provides that members of any party must demonstrably influence the decision-making process, and that members are free to enter and leave parties at will. Many extreme right organizations in Germany do not, or only partly, meet this requirement. In accord with the Parties Act, political parties must formulate a manifesto which does not conflict with the established free and democratic order of the German state. For extreme right parties this means balancing membership and ideology on the boundaries of what is permissible.³² The German political system includes many safeguards to prevent the problem of ‘hostility to the system’. Hostility to the system is explicitly mentioned in non-neutral terms, as the phrase ‘conflict with the established free and democratic order’ illustrates. In none of the other four countries are these safeguards explicit or present to the same degree, nor are they given the same value.

Degree of political isolation

The question of how far the extreme right is surrounded by a cordon sanitaire in the various countries is not easy to answer. The cordon sanitaire is a stubborn, morally charged issue which lends itself to both divergent and arbitrary approaches. Though we cannot analyse this complex topic in detail here, we can offer preliminary observations. We are concerned primarily with cordons sanitaires in political systems, not in social life. Based on the cases we have reviewed, an overall difference between ‘*physical*’ and ‘*ideological*’ cordons sanitaires becomes evident. The first term alludes to the political isolation of extreme right groups and their representatives; the second alludes to the political isolation of the conceptual world within which extreme right groups operate.

In none of the five countries does a *physical* cordon sanitaire exist.³³ But it is true that in all five countries interpretation of political messages coming from the extreme right by politicians in established movements almost always goes hand in hand with ‘physical’ separation from the extreme right origin of the messages.³⁴ In other words, established politicians almost never express support or approval for colleagues from the extreme right. Nevertheless, established politicians may speak in ways that resonate with extreme right sections of their audiences. The politician expressing such views is as a rule the last person to

link him or herself with racism or extreme right groups; expression of the kind described here is often unconscious on the speaker's part, though ideologically recognizable. Further, if confronted with the sympathies evident in utterance of this kind, the politician from an established group is likely to defend him or herself. Even where the cordon sanitaire we have associated with political expression begins to crumble (in Britain during the 1970s, more recently in the Netherlands), certain subjects are clearly taboo within established political orders – revisionism and anti-Semitism in particular.

Analysis of the cordon sanitaire by country is problematic because it is often difficult to compare events distant from one another in date and time.³⁵ Description is easier than comparison. Indeed, how can one compare the response to a coup by thousands of FN members today with responses by two councillors in Blackburn in 1976? But despite these obvious difficulties a few principles present themselves. The isolation of extreme right parties from others seems relatively strong in the Netherlands. This also seems true of Germany where, since 1992, the REP has become considerably more remote from other groups. By contrast, in Britain, particularly in the early 1980s, there was a good deal of overlap between extreme right groups and the Conservative Party. Indeed, many right extremists defected to the Conservatives and were tolerated to a certain degree. By contrast, in Belgium representatives of the VB have to date been kept out of municipal executives. In Belgium, the standard is that there may not be any political cooperation with the VB, but the cordon is less solid where informal contacts are concerned. Orientation toward Flemish nationalism seems to carry more weight in defining the cordon than political discrepancies otherwise defined.

In France, the cordon has a specific significance in relation to the majority system. Is a pact signed with the FN during the second round of election, or is it not? Agreements between the 'established right' in France and the FN have become increasingly rare, but they have also become less necessary, given the weakened position of socialism. Nevertheless, each established political movement in France has attempted now and then to use the FN as a political factor in seeking its own ends.

State responses: facilitating and inhibiting factors

How prepared are the various countries to cope with the problem of right-wing extremism? The Federal Republic of Germany scores highly in all areas, especially during the late 1990s. German democracy is the most heavily protected among the five countries under analysis. In the Netherlands an 'imbalance' between firmly repressive instruments and an extremely accessible political system is striking. Again, manifest repression dates, as it does in Germany, to the 1990s. By contrast, French preparedness to deal with extremism is defined primarily by

barriers within the political system. In Britain this is even more clearly the case: the political system includes many obstacles to the extreme right, but because a system of banning is absent, Britain scores relatively low in an analysis of latent repressive measures. Finally, Belgium is striking because it scores low in all areas. Belgium's system of latent instruments of repression is relatively weak, as is its application of that system. Belgium's democracy is, we believe, the most vulnerable of the five.

All governments face what we might call a *dilemma of repression*. On the one hand, all recognize the threat of right extremism. Recognition prompts governments to aim repressive measures at extreme right activists and their organizations. On the other hand, it is the task of governments to protect basic political rights such as freedom of expression, the right to meet and demonstrate, and the right of association. Governments must consider and decide on each occasion what should be given greater weight: control of extremist right-wing expression or protection of basic political freedom.

We have already discussed the factors, latent or manifest, which have stimulated repressive action by governments. We have also looked at those factors which appear to inhibit repressive governmental action. We now turn to the most important factors which appear to operate within both categories.

The most powerful stimulating factors include: (1) *trigger events*; (2) *international forces* (including international prestige); (3) *the protection of minorities and inter-ethnic relations*; (4) *social organizations and their lobbies*.³⁶

Trigger events have shock effects as a result of which governments are mobilized. Usually trigger events involve violence, riots or the recording of an electoral success by the extreme right. A television broadcast in which an extreme right leader makes statements regarded as shocking may also constitute a trigger event. (An example of this is Jean-Marie Le Pen's statement that the Holocaust was a mere detail in the history of World War II.) The link between the seriousness or actual power of a specific event and the shock created by it is not necessarily proportionate. Sometimes not much is needed to cause a considerable shock reaction and sometimes there is little reaction despite a powerful cause. There are significant differences between the various countries with respect to their reactions. For example, the Netherlands reacts with shock to events in Germany. Indeed, racist violence in Germany always gets far more of a reaction than, say, racist violence in Britain.

International forces and events can be stimulating factors.³⁷ *International prestige* can play a part, such as the reaction by governments to criticism from abroad or anticipation of international criticism. This is particularly apparent in the Federal Republic of Germany which is especially sensitive to criticism regarding the control of racism and right-wing extremism, and which is also more readily criticized than other countries. As Boris Becker once said, 'As a German you have to act twice as nice abroad.' Anti-Semitic incidents during the 1960s in Germany and elsewhere were one of the major reasons why the UN Convention on the

Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination was enacted.

Protection of minorities and inter-ethnic relations can also be termed a factor precipitating repressive governmental action.³⁸ In Britain the repressive measures against the NF in the early 1980s were largely the result of concerns about the deterioration of inter-ethnic relations and particularly relations between ethnic minorities and the authorities.

Often governments are unwilling to act but are induced to do so by other agencies. *Social organizations and their lobbies* (political parties, pressure groups, minority organizations, anti-racist and anti-fascist organizations and the media) play an important part in stimulating such action.³⁹ Such organizations act in three ways: as conscience, watchdog and adviser. In Germany, representatives of the Jewish community have a considerable influence on governmental response. In France, Britain and the Netherlands, authorities have invested in a variety of ways in the lobby infrastructure, while in Belgium this has taken place on a much more modest scale.

In the above discussion we have focused on factors which stimulate governmental repression of extremism. Some of those factors can, however, have a reverse effect; hence they act as *inhibiting factors*. Several factors can be mentioned which both influence governmental action and also have an inhibiting effect, such as enhanced protection of basic political rights. Instead of repression, governments may prefer to use *alternative strategies*. These may be either *passive* (ignoring a situation) or *active* (using alternative methods of control). Rather than repression, governments may choose to emphasize more general control of prejudice, information campaigns, enactment of policies to improve the position of minorities or even restrictive immigration policies. Above all, attempts to restrict immigration are preferred by governments as an alternative strategy against the extreme right. Also, governments may seek explanations for rising right extremism in economic conditions, in particular recession and unemployment. Endeavouring to improve these conditions also can serve as a strategy to control right-wing extremism.

Another curb on repression is the *fear of failure*: the fear that a confrontation in court will be lost, whether in cases concerning control of racist propaganda, bans on demonstrations or ban procedures themselves. Sometimes fear of loss weighs so heavily on governments that they do not even begin proceedings. The decision not to proceed rests on the assumption that a lost cause is harmful to the control of racism and right extremism. (However, research shows little empirical basis for this assumption.⁴⁰ In fact latent repression and even lost causes are as a rule detrimental to the stability of extreme right groups.)

Fear of failure often goes hand in hand with a governmental preference for alternative strategies and *fear of reverse effects*. The assumption that repressive measures may have counterproductive effects is an argument often raised against government action. The argument appears in all five countries; usually it includes the presumption that repressive action will encourage underground violent acts. Prosecuting extreme right leaders, it is feared,

may cast those leaders in the role of *underdog*, as a result of which their popularity will increase. *The fear of reverse effects* – and lost causes – cannot be refuted on a rigorous empirical basis, but events in the five countries under discussion put the question in perspective. Violence as a rule is the *cause* of repressive governmental action, not the *consequence*.⁴¹ The same is true for arguments about organizations ‘going underground’.

As for the question of *underdogs*, it seems that in both Germany and the Netherlands the electoral tide turned before the extreme right could advance any further. The pursuit of extreme right leaders did not in fact turn them into attractive underdogs. Instead repressive governmental action turned them into panicky shepherds with no power to keep their routed flocks together.

The leaders of extreme right groups are compelled to keep their organizations in the firing line. They have to face two existential dangers: the danger of criminalization – which can lead to repression – and the loss of the right to exist if they maintain too vague a political profile. The second largely determines the distinction between ‘established’ political movements and non-established political movements. Reacting against established political movements is one of the pillars of extreme right behaviour. Extreme right leaders draw boundaries, but so do politicians of established parties. Here the cordon sanitaire is significant. The shift of established politicians to the extreme right means meddling with the political profile of the extreme right. In itself this does not have to cause problems for extreme right politicians. Indeed, the shift can be beneficial to them should the taboo on extreme right approaches to immigration crumble. Still, in order to participate successfully in elections, extreme right leaders may need to restore the balance disturbed by a shift to the right by established politicians. They may need to restore their political exclusivity in some way. They do this by opposing the ‘ordinary’ politicians fiercely, mainly by cursing and blaming them.

An alternative situation occurs when established politicians jump to the right where ideas about ethnic minorities are concerned. Le Pen did this subtly with his well-known statement ‘the voters prefer the original to the copy’. Perhaps Le Pen was right, but we still need to ask if his statement is generally valid. It may be that voters prefer the copy when, in their eyes, the original is crumpled, torn or otherwise damaged. Under governmental repression the ‘original’ racist message of a Le Pen, by definition, is also under attack and a ‘jump to the right’ by moderate politicians and voters involved great risks.

In short, the ideological interaction between extreme right politicians and ‘established’ politicians is influenced by more or less repressive conditions. And the response of the extreme right to a crumbling cordon sanitaire is considerably limited by threat of repression. The German and Dutch cases illustrate this well. On the other hand, the extreme right has more freedom of choice where there is less chance of repressive government action. This is the case in Belgium.

The dilemma of adaptation thus involves interaction between the extreme right and more

or less repressive governments.⁴² The five countries under discussion can be divided into three categories in this regard: Germany and the Netherlands initiate fairly strong repressive responses. Belgium stands at the opposite extreme. France and Britain form the middle ground. The need for the extreme right to adapt in Germany and the Netherlands is far more apparent than the need to adapt in Belgium. Hence the Belgian VB needs to worry less about what is or is not permissible than the German Centre Democrat or the REP parties. Similarly, the VB needs to worry less about how to stand up to pressure from the outside than do the Centre Democrat or the REP parties. The pressure on right-wing extremist parties has a great effect on their internal cohesion, especially when it takes the form of the threat of governmental action. The leader who adapts too much to repressive conditions runs the risk of being regarded as ‘lax’ and ‘weak’, and hence runs the risk of endangering his own position. A leader who adapts too little and who holds on to too radical a profile can be just as controversial, just as endangered; for with him his fellow group members are criminalized. Leaders are also vulnerable who have an insufficient moderating effect on party members who have been discredited because of extreme ideas or behaviour.

The greater the pressure on an extreme right organization, the greater the need to adapt.⁴³ And with increased adaptation, the greater the difference between the ways in which such an organization manifests itself to the outside world (*front-stage behaviour*) and goings on behind the scene (*back-stage behaviour*). Leaders stringently undertake and control *impression management*. The organization becomes unstable. This scenario applies in particular to the extreme right in Germany and the Netherlands. By contrast, we may define the Belgian situation as follows: less pressure from the outside on the extreme right means a reduced need to adapt. In Belgium the difference between what happens front-stage and what happens back-stage is less obvious. As a result, the VB is more stable than other extreme right organizations operating under more repressive conditions. From all of the above it is apparent that repressive government action, threatened or actual, has a profound effect on the phenomenon of right extremism.⁴⁴

Notes

¹ See J. van Donselaar, *De staat paraat?: De bestrijding van extreem-rechts in West Europa* (Amsterdam: Babylon de Geus Bakker, 1995), pp. 14–16.

² This chapter is mainly based on a comparative analysis of state responses to the extreme right in Western Europe in the 1990s (see van Donselaar, *De staat paraat?*).

³ See N. Lerner, *The UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination* (Alphen a.R.: Sijthoff and

Noordhoff, 1980); and S. Coliver, K. Boyle and F. D'Souza (eds), *Striking A Balance: Hate Speech, Freedom of Expression and Non-Discrimination*, Article 19 (London/Colchester: International Centre against Censorship/Human Rights Centre, University of Essex, 1992).

[4](#) See van Donselaar, *De staat paraat?*, pp. 19 and 24.

[5](#) See H.-G. Jaschke, *Streitbare Demokratie und innere Sicherheit: Grundlagen, Praxis und Kritik* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1991); and H.H. Kalinowsky, *Kampfplatz Justiz: Politische Justiz und Rechtsextremismus in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1949–1990* (Pfaffenweiler: Centaurus, 1993).

[6](#) See the case studies in van Donselaar, *De staat paraat?*

[7](#) Ibid., pp. 267–94.

[8](#) Ibid.

[9](#) Ibid., pp. 269–72.

[10](#) See H.J. Schwagerl, *Verfassungsschutz in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Heidelberg: C.F. Müller Juristischer Verlag, 1985); and Schwagerl, *Rechsextremes Denken: Merkmale und Methoden* (Frankfurt-am-Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1993).

[11](#) See van Donselaar, *De staat paraat?*, pp. 269–72.

[12](#) Ibid.

[13](#) Ibid.

[14](#) See P. Gordon, *Racial Violence and Harassment* (London: Runnymede Trust, 1990); and Gordon, ‘The Police and Racist Violence in Britain’, in T. Björgo and R. Witte (eds), *Racist Violence in Europe* (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1993), pp. 167–78.

[15](#) Ibid.

[16](#) See van Donselaar, *De staat paraat?*, pp. 107–16.

[17](#) See C. Lloyd, ‘Racist Violence and Anti-Racist Reactions: A View of France’, in Björgo and Witte, *Racist Violence in Europe*, pp. 207–20.

[18](#) See van Donselaar, *De staat paraat?*, pp. 57–65.

[19](#) Ibid., pp. 164–8.

[20](#) Ibid., pp. 272–6.

[21](#) Ibid.

[22](#) See J. Valaers, ‘Verdraagzaamheid ook t.a.v. onverdraagzamen? Enkele beschouwingen over de beteugeling van racistische en xenoobe uitingen in een democratische samenleving’, in *Recht en verdraagzaamheid in de multiculturele samenleving* (Antwerpen: Maklu, 1993), pp. 303–47).

[23](#) See van Donselaar, *De staat paraat?*, pp. 254–62.

[24](#) Ibid., pp. 255–6.

[25](#) See J. van Donselaar, *Fout na de oorlog: fascistische en racistische organisaties in Nederland 1950–1990* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 1991).

[26](#) See van Donselaar, *De staat paraat?*, p. 279.

[27](#) See U. Backes and J. Eckhard, *Politischer Extremismus in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland: Band I: Literatur* (Cologne: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1989); and Backes and Eckhard, *Politischer Extremismus in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland: Band II: Analyse* (Cologne: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1989); Jaschke, *Streitbare Demokratie und innere Sicherheit*; and Schwargl, *Rechtsextremes Denken*.

[28](#) See van Donselaar, *De staat paraat?*, pp. 281–2.

[29](#) Ibid. pp. 45–57.

[30](#) Ibid., p. 282.

[31](#) Ibid., p. 283.

[32](#) See the portrait of the REP in H.-G. Jaschke, *Die 'Republikaner': Profile einer Rechtsaußenpartei* (Bonn: J.H.W Dietz Nachf, 1993).

[33](#) See van Donselaar, *De staat paraat?*, pp. 283–5.

[34](#) Ibid.

[35](#) Ibid.

[36](#) Ibid., p. 287.

[37](#) Ibid., p. 288.

[38](#) Ibid., p. 289.

[39](#) Ibid.

[40](#) Ibid., p. 290.

[41](#) Ibid., pp. 290–1.

[42](#) Ibid., p. 292.

[43](#) Ibid., p. 293.

[44](#) Ibid., p. 294.

Between adaptation, differentiation and distinction

Extreme right-wing parties within democratic political systems

Alexandre Dézé

Introduction

On the whole, classical approaches to extreme right parties have analyzed the question of their relationship to European democratic political systems in four different ways: first, by considering extreme right movements as a danger for democracy (e.g. Taguieff and Tribalat 1998); second, by examining the responses of democratic regimes to extremist challenges (e.g. Capoccia and Pedahzur 2003); third, by evaluating the impact of extremist formations on political systems (e.g. Schain 2001); finally, by interpreting the phenomenon's emergence in Europe as the consequence of factors such as the transformation (Kitschelt and McGann 1995) or the crisis of West European party systems (e.g. Ivaldi 1999a). In this chapter, I would like to suggest another way of exploring the relationship between extremism and democracy, and more specifically its consequences for extreme right parties.

Some of these parties can now be considered as full members of the political arena. This is particularly true in Belgium, Austria, Italy, and France. However, it does not entail that the relationship between these parties and European democratic systems is less problematic. Although based on an ideology whose roots are in contradiction to essential liberal democratic principles, such parties have nonetheless tried to win power through proper constitutional means. How have these parties managed, and how do they still manage, to deal with this contradiction – institutional logic versus doctrinal orthodoxy? My hypothesis is that the manner in which these parties have managed this contradiction partly explains their present evolution. I will try to test this hypothesis through the comparative analysis of four organizations – the French National Front (FN), the Flemish Block (VB), the National Alliance-

Italian Social Movement (AN-MSI) and the Austrian Freedom Party (FPO). The comparative approach to the extreme right in Europe raises several taxonomic problems (Backes 2001; Mudde 1996). However, using Piero Ignazi's (1992, 1994a) definition, I will consider these as extreme right parties.¹

Adaptation, differentiation and distinction

According to the main teachings of the systemic and environmentalist approaches to political parties, parties are both dependent and independent from their global environment.² The dependency factor forces them to 'adapt themselves' to it. As emphasized by Jean and Monica Charlot, it is a 'matter of life and death' (Charlot and Charlot 1985, p. 431). Thus, parties are 'dependent variables' of the systems in which they operate. Nevertheless, they also 'always manage to maintain [...] sufficient autonomy so as to be independent variables as well' (Charlot and Charlot, p. 471). Parties are free to decide not to adapt to the environment; however, this choice partly excludes them from it. Whether parties abide by liberal democratic values depends on the ideological distance separating these values from those on which the identity of a given party is built.

In the particular instance of extreme right formations, this distance is important enough for the relationship with democratic political systems to be problematic. We can formulate, theoretically, that this interaction leaves extreme right parties with one alternative: either adapt themselves to the system, hence running the risk of losing a part of their original identities and of the support of their most orthodox members, or distinguish themselves from the system, thereby running the risk of being excluded from it, or of being marginalized.

It is necessary, at this point, to clarify notions and to specify how this theoretical schema works. First, I think that the strategic alternative between *adaptation* and *distinction* is an alternative between terms that are contradictory for extreme right parties. However, I do not think that for any party, there is any contradiction or 'paradox' (Villalba 1997) between *adaptation* and *differentiation*. Political systems in representative democracies create a competitive game: parties are therefore forced to use strategic differentiation (Parodi 1991; Ysmal 1985). Hence, adapting themselves to the system and differentiating themselves within the system are 'two essential rules of the political game' (Birenbaum 1992, p. 18).

However, a party wishing to participate in the electoral game must reconcile these two imperatives (adaptation and differentiation), which creates an intra-party tension centering around the relationship to ideology. The changing pattern of positions occupied within the system implies that, in some circumstances, parties are led to stress their differentiation strategy and propose some of the most controversial elements in their ideologies and

platforms. In other circumstances, particularly while allying themselves with other parties or while trying to broaden their electoral base, these singular aspects in their ideologies are marginalized (Bourdieu 1981; Michels 1962).

However, the tension at work in the relationship of these parties to their ideologies does not simply vary according to the position occupied within the system. It also, and more importantly, depends on the nature of the relationship with this system. For contemporary extreme right parties, who show ‘opposition of principle’ (Kirchheimer 1966, p. 237) to democratic systems, differentiating themselves can imply putting forward, in some circumstances and on some topics, an ideology and a platform that contradict the principles on which the system is based. In this case, extreme right parties not only stress their difference *within* the system but also *with* the system: they distinguish themselves *from* it.

An ‘alternative *within* the system’ and an ‘alternative *to* the system’: an irreducible dilemma?

It is now time to test the validity of this schema from an empirical point of view. Now that they have become full-time actors in the political game, how have extreme right parties managed to deal with this paradoxical relationship with the system? To answer this question, it is important to grant full attention to the contextual evolution of the global environment which, from the mid-1980s onward, has been rather favorable to the emergence and implantation of extreme right organizations in representative democracies (Kitschelt and McGann 1995; Ignazi 1994a).

Incidentally, political organizations are far from able to control the full process granting them access to, and survival within, a given political system. Their recognition, which is the key to access the decision-making process (Charlot and Charlot 1985), comes from a host of complex institutional, cultural, economic, social and political mechanisms that they can only partially control (Lagroye 1985). Still, these organizations use strategies and discourses, in the competitive game over power, which are clear testimonies of the type of political behaviors that they have adopted towards both the system and the other political actors. I will use the – inevitably summary and fragmentary – analysis of these strategies and discourses as a basis for empirical verification, while taking the environmental global context into consideration as a constraint on the elaboration and the implementation of these strategies and discourses.

The MSI: from the ‘excluded’ to the ‘integrated’ pole

Founded in 1946 by ex-dignitaries of the Italian Social Republic, the Italian Social Movement (MSI) positioned itself from the start at the fringe of the Italian democratic political system. As the movement ‘owed its *raison d'être* to its bond with fascism, accepting [...] the “anti-fascist” system was a painful operation as it was difficult to reconcile with its manifest ideology’ (Ignazi 1994b, pp. 1016–17). In a first phase, the party clearly refused to compromise with the system. It overtly used strategic distinction and violently criticized the institutional regime. Its platform was unambiguous – ‘to keep on calling on the spirit of fascism and the spirit of the Italian Social Republic’ (in Simon 1992, p. 73) – and its activities focused on activism and anti-communism.

In spite of this rejection, the political system still functioned as the MSI’s inescapable center of attraction. As early as 1947, the MSI endeavored to implement both a strategy of adaptation and of electoral participation. As underlined by Roberto Chiarini, ‘the very fact of entering Parliament [in 1948] and local councils [in 1947] forced the MSI to moderate its ideology’ (Chiarini 1995, p. 98), i.e. to reduce the distance between their own values and those of representative democracy. This strategic participation raised the sensitive question of the relationship with the political system. As such, it became the issue of a heated conflict between the two wings of the party – the intransigents hostile to any type of compromise, and the moderates in favor of an anti-communist alliance with the Christian Democrats and the monarchists.³

In 1950, Augusto de Marsanich, the leader of the moderate wing, acceded to the leadership of the party. From this year onward, the MSI planned to become a ‘credible’ political force, the ‘hub of a future government of national union’ (Milza 1991, p. 481). They concluded a ‘pact of alliance’ with the Monarchist Party, and supported successive moderate governments. This change had immediate positive electoral consequences. However, it gave rise to strong tensions with the intransigent, revolutionary and social wing. Remaining faithful to the tradition of the Social Republic, Giorgio Almirante, Principal Private Secretary at the Ministry of Popular Culture (Minculpop) under the Social Republic and an irreconcilable opponent to the regime, resigned from the national leadership of the party in April 1956. Pino Rauti, likewise, parted with the Almirantian group of the party to form the Evolian movement Ordine Nuovo (New Order).

In 1960, the strategic insertion of the MSI seemed complete (Ignazi 1996) when Tambroni’s Christian Democrat government obtained a vote of confidence thanks to the support of the neo-fascist party. But this event triggered a strong reaction from the Italian population, and violent confrontations between leftist militants and the police took place during the congress of the MSI, which was held in Genoa (the former capital of the Resistance). Twelve people died in the street battles and hundreds were injured, leading the government to resign.

From this date, the MSI entered a phase of political decline, during which the moderate leadership was increasingly contested. However, when Arturo Michelini (de Marsanich’s

successor) died in 1969, the MSI was once again faced with the ‘contradiction between theoretico-verbal maximalism and the daily practice of a somewhat receptive attitude towards the moderation of the Christian Democrats’ (Ignazi 1989, p. 133). Paradoxically, the election of Giorgio Almirante as Secretary General did not lead to radicalization of the movement’s strategy. Strengthened by increasing electoral support, Almirante asserted his intention to pursue and update the strategy of insertion by reconciling the extremes within a vast ‘autonomous’ union. The party was then redefined as the party of ‘the alternative to the system *and* of the alternative within the system’ (Almirante 1969).

The outcome of this strategy of conciliation was the creation of the Destra Nazionale (National Right, DN) with a view to contesting the legislative elections. The aim of the DN was clearly to broaden their electoral base as well as their political staff (Monarchists, Liberals, Christian Democrats, whose presence helped grant legitimacy to the party). This process contributed to changing the party label to MSI-DN, and to effacing a part of the original ideological grounding. Henceforward, in their speeches ‘any subversive or revolutionary attempts were rejected’ (Almirante 1970) while ‘democracy’ and ‘liberty’ were redefined as ‘priority values that cannot be renounced’ (Almirante 1972).

The party could not totally renounce its ideological grounding without estranging part of its electorate and its most orthodox militants. Nevertheless, MSI leaders were conscious that it was no longer possible to ‘present fascism in a grotesque [...], old-fashioned, anachronistic and stupidly nostalgic manner’ (Almirante cited in Cheles 1986, p. 29). The party therefore developed a latent ideology, expressed through the use of a ‘double’ discourse perfectly illustrated by the slogan found on a poster of the 1970 regional elections campaign – ‘*Nostalgia dell’avvenire*’ (Nostalgia for the future), a conceptual expression of this search for compromise between the past (fascism) and the future (the integration of the MSI). The results of the 1972 election initially seemed to confirm Almirante’s strategy. However, unable to complete this ideological revision because of strong criticism among the more militant, intransigent fringes of the party, he was faced with the failure of the DN project during the 1976 elections.

Jeopardized by a context of gruesome terrorism, abandoned by the advocates of ideological renovation (the faction led by Ernesto De Marzio having decided to leave the party in order to extend ‘the limits of the DN strategy into a right-wing conservative party’ (Ignazi 1996, p. 698) by founding National Democracy), the MSI relaunched its policy of an alternative *to* the system (one of their slogans was ‘Struggle against the regime’) and became increasingly isolated. More than 30 years after its creation, the issue of its relationship with the political system centered around contradictory ideas, as it failed to overcome the alternative between loyalty to fascism and adaptation to the system. As Almirante had underlined in 1956, ‘the ambiguity [...] is to be fascists within democracy’ (cited in Campi 1995, p. 121).

At the end of the 1980s, the death of the historical leaders (Almirante, Romualdi) did not

change anything. As the ‘Dauphin’ of Almirante, Gianfranco Fini, the young and new Secretary of the party whose nomination had been strongly debated, maintained the traditional line of opposition to the system and kept stressing the continuity of the party’s ideals with fascism. His strategy left things unchanged, and Fini was criticized and defeated by Pino Rauti at the 1990 Congress. Both leaders disagreed about strategic options: while Fini, inspired by the French FN, tried to put forward immigration issues as a means of electoral mobilization (Simon 1992), Rauti elaborated a program combining elements of both neo-rightist thought and early Fascist radicalism with the intention of attracting leftist voters. At the 1990 municipal and regional elections, the MSI obtained the worst results of its history (3.9 per cent of the vote). As the 1991 Sicily elections were no better, Rauti resigned and Fini was re-elected. The following year the MSI commemorated the 70th anniversary of the ‘March on Rome’.

At the dawn of the 1990s, everything seemed to indicate that the neo-fascist movement was doomed to remaining a marginal force in the Italian political system. However, its recent evolution, based on full integration into the system and, consequently, on the acceptance of the founding principles of representative democracy, proves different. How did the MSI succeed in overcoming the historic dilemma with which it had been faced during 50 years?

First, a series of exogenous factors contributed to the progressive rehabilitation of the MSI, as well as encouraging the constitution of the ‘List of Agreement of the Good Government’ linking it to the new Forza Italia, and the Northern League.⁴ Thus, a political pariah became one of the main actors of the ‘Pole of Liberty’. It is at this moment that the neo-fascist movement adopted the label National Alliance-Italian Social Movement (AN-MSI), thereby stressing its will to change and renew the party.

The ensuing 1994 legislative elections were a triumphant success. The AN-MSI got 13.5 per cent of the vote, 107 deputies and five ministers. Now a member of the Berlusconi government, the MSI went much further than simply changing labels: it also stopped referring to corporatism, and accepted the market economy as well as the fundamental principles of democracy. Finally, the party clearly distanced itself from fascism; for example, Fini (re)defined anti-fascism as ‘a moment which was historically essential to the return of democratic values in Italy’. The 1995 Fiuggi Congress made the party transformation official. In protest, Rauti left the party together with a militant radical group and subsequently created the Movimento Sociale Fiamma-Tricolore.

Returning to opposition after the fall of Berlusconi’s government, the AN-MSI did not return to the fringes. The party recognized the fundamental principles of democracy, and officially rejected the 1938 racial laws, together with anti-Semitism and racism (reasserted again at the 1998 Verona Congress). It developed a program in line with those of moderate European right-wing parties (which rejected the state-controlled, nationalist and centralist tradition of the neo-fascist project). In spite of disappointing results in the 1999 European

elections and the 2001 national election, the AN is now a strong institutionalized political force: it has four ministers in the post-2001 Berlusconi government in which Fini became Vice President of the Council of Ministries.

Hence, the recent evolution of the former neo-fascist movement confirms the validity of the theoretical hypotheses previously expressed. It was only by giving up its original identity, and helped by a particularly favorable context, that the AN succeeded in overcoming the constituent dilemma in the history of the MSI. However, even though the AN can now be considered as a ‘postfascist’ party (Ignazi 1994c), there still is a clearly ‘nostalgic’ culture within the movement. It is true that the profiles of the party’s intermediate leaders appear less and less radical, but ties with fascist culture are still strong (Bertolino and Chiapponi 1999; Baldini and Vignati 1996). This was again confirmed recently by the vigorous debates within the movement about the eventual erasing of MSI historical symbols from the AN logo (the three letters MSI and the tricolor flame). ‘It’s our patrimony’, Alessandra Mussolini, granddaughter of the Duce and an AN Deputy – ‘Leaving it behind is out of the question’ (*Le Monde*, 8 April 2002).

The FN: a ‘necessarily partial and unfinished institutional strategy’?⁵

At the beginning of the 1970s, the MSI represented a model for the French extreme right (Duprat 1972). Inspired by recent Italian experience, the leaders of the activist and nationalist-revolutionary group New Order (ON) decided to ‘widen the penetration of the movement’ and to increase their participation in the competition for power, by creating, in October 1972, a more ‘respectable’ political organization: the party of the ‘Droite nationale, sociale et populaire’ (The national, social and people’s right), i.e. the Front National.

Hence, the creation of the FN proceeded from strategic adaptation to the political system, which implied giving up all forms of activism on the one hand (which, in turn, led to the disappearance of ON within the Front), and adjusting to the access conditions of the electoral competition on the other hand (implying the adoption of moderate speech and images). The appointment of Jean-Marie Le Pen (who embodied, at that time, the more legalist face of the French extreme right) to head the new party was supposed to meet this second requirement, as well as the elaboration of a programme that was based on a compromise between revolutionary-nationalism and conservatism (Camus 1996).

However, poor early electoral results seemed to prove the failure of this strategy and led to a split between those who called for intensified activism and a return to a radical conception of doctrine, and the national Lepenist tendency. The latter began a long ‘crossing of the desert’ (in their own words); a period during which the party, under the influence of the revolutionary-nationalist wing of François Duprat, first expressed full ideological opposition to

the democratic system and parliamentary government, before changing strategy under the influence of the ‘solidarist’ wing of Jean-Pierre Stirbois.

Therefore, at the beginning of the 1980s, the Front National was only a very small organization on the French political scene. In 1981, Le Pen could not even gather the 500 signatures required to stand in the Presidential election, and in the parliamentary election that year the FN obtained just 0.18 per cent of the vote. An isolated and weakly implanted organization, the FN seemed doomed to remain a marginal party, incapable of presenting itself as either an alternative to the system or an alternative within the system.

However, three years later, the FN obtained 11.2 per cent in the European elections. Its sudden emergence corresponded with a very clearcut change in the image, the style and the speech of the party (Dézé 1995) and with the appearance of a double discourse: a traditional radical one for loyal militants, and a softer and respectable one for the electorate in general. This showed the constraints that emerged from the party’s more active participation in political competition (Birenbaum 1985) as well as the necessity for the FN to adapt to the system without giving up its political identity.

The problematic management of this double discourse was partly resolved by the use of strategic euphemisms, such as the notion of ‘national preference’ (the equivalent of the ‘French First!’ slogan). It is necessary to underline that the use of this notion in Frontist speech from 1985 onward not only showed the need to adapt racist ideology to the standards of political expression of the time, but also, by playing on the implicit, this notion contained the radical aspirations of the militants and turned an exclusive conception of racism into an ‘acceptable’ preferential one (Taguieff 1988, 1986).

The political history of the FN from that moment onwards can be read in the light of the alternation between and/or the concomitance of:

- strategic phases of *adaptation*: the creation of the label ‘Rassemblement National’ for the 1986 parliamentary election to attract some members of the moderate right; particularly active parliamentary participation between 1986 and 1988 (Maisonneuve 1991); the ‘Presidentialization’ of Le Pen’s image; the creation by Bruno Mégret of a set of ‘new [party] instruments’ in order to implement the strategy of ‘conquête du pouvoir’ (conquest of power); where possible, local coalitions with the moderate right; the emergence of new themes in FN platforms, such as ecology, agriculture or social questions;
- strategic phases of *differentiation*: recurring attacks on the political class and the ‘Gang of the Four’; a competitive quest for legitimacy by strategically attacking in turn the right and the left (Taguieff 1990); and
- strategic phases of *distinction*: statements about gas chambers as ‘a detail’ of the Second World War; the play on word ‘Durafourcrématoire’; comments on the

'inequality of races'; radicalization of the immigration theme, as well as the issues of insecurity and unemployment; the celebration of the twentieth anniversary of François Duprat's death (see Birenbaum 1992, 1985; Ysmal 1989).

As in the case of the MSI, these different strategies caused tensions between the two main wings of the party; on the one hand, the General Delegation of the movement ran by Mégret, a supporter of an electoral strategy based on alliance with fringe members of the moderate right (a project supported by Jean-Yves Le Gallou, Yvan Blot and Pierre Vial *inter alia*); on the other hand the Lepenist wing, gathered around the Secretary General Bruno Gollnish and grouping, among others, Jean-Claude Martinez, Dominique Chaboche, Samuel Maréchal, Marie-France Stirbois, Roger Holeindre. This aggravated conflict between these two wings explains the major split in the FN during 1998–99 (Ivaldi 1999b), an event that needs to be briefly discussed here.

After the 1989 municipal elections, in which the FN managed to form some 30 alliances with the moderate right, the leaders of latter agreed on a policy of ostracism towards the FN, condemning the Lepenist movement 'to marginality by considerably reducing their possibilities of tactical choices' (Ivaldi 1998, p. 11). The FN was left with no other option but to 'amplify their difference and their capacity to embody an alternative by means of great change' (*Le Monde*, 13 February 1996). It was by applying a strategy of differentiated adaptation ('*ni droite, ni gauche*') that the party aspired to establish itself within the political system. However, the penetration of its theses into both public opinion and mainstream politics (Pasqua laws on immigration, Sauvaigo report on clandestine immigration, Debré bill) forced the FN to reassert its monopoly on the political representation and treatment of the immigration, law and order, and unemployment themes.

Forced to accentuate their differentiation, the party abandoned the discursive register of differential neo-racism to make a vivid comeback in 'the field of ideological racism' (Ivaldi 1998, p. 13) – a phenomenon expressed through the elaboration of the 50 propositions of the FN on immigration or through Le Pen's comments on 'the inequality between races'. This strategy proved successful in the 1995 Presidential election.

This phase also corresponded with the growing power within the movement of the advocates of ideological orthodoxy: fights between the two different wings intensified. Le Pen sought to fire a warning shot by sarcastically commenting on 'those that dream about a union of the rights' (*Le Monde*, 22 February 1997), implicitly referring to the Mégret wing.

1997 was a real turning point. The Megretist conquest of the municipality of Vitrolles enabled the Delegate General to strengthen his position within the leadership of the party. In addition, the defeat of the moderate right at the 1997 parliamentary elections, together with the isolation of the FN in Parliament (14.9 per cent of the votes but only one Deputy, Jean-Marie Le Chevallier) lent credibility to the electoral project of the Delegate General. The

explicit policy of seeking an opening to disillusioned mainstream right-wing electors was a sign of this new strategic reversal. This reversal was finally confirmed during the national convention of the party in January 1998.

The results of the March 1998 elections, as well as local alliances with the right on the basis of a ‘minimum common program’ (*Le Monde*, 18 March 1998), confirmed the Megretist strategy. In spite of profound contextual differences between the two countries, the hypothesis of an ‘Italian-style’ evolution emerged, helped by the apparition, at the right of the political scene, of a political space favoring the bringing together of a fringe of the classic right and the FN. The creation of La Droite (The Right), the party of Charles Millon that was meant to be a rallying point of ‘all temperaments and of all wings of the right, from nationals to Europeans, from Girondins to Jacobins, from traditionalists to reformists’ (*Libération*, 20 April 1998), first seemed to satisfy Mégret’s expectations. In an interview with *Le Monde* (20 April 1998), he asserted that ‘there is space for a right-wing party, different from the FN, but ready to make alliances with him. This coalition can quite quickly come to power’.

However, aggravated internal tensions between the two wings of the movement, mirrored by the confrontation between Le Pen and Mégret, made this perspective unlikely and led the FN to a split which undoubtedly came from the clash of ambitions, as well as the ‘merciless confrontation of two strategies [...]. On the one side: Le Pen and his own people, obsessed by the conservation of the ideological “purity” of the movement and rejecting the slightest compromise with the parties of “*the establishment*”; on the other side: Mégret and his clan, concerned with “*the conquest of responsibilities*”, and convinced that they will need to make alliances in order to succeed’ (*Libération*, 7 December 1998).

Thus, as far as the French case is concerned, the split of the FN into two different organizations – Mégret created the National Movement in January 1999, which was renamed the National Republican Movement (MNR) in October – confirms the validity of the theoretical schema previously described, i.e. the incapacity of an extreme right party to overcome the political struggle between ‘tradition vs. modernity, historic legitimacy vs. program *aggiornamento*’ (Osmond 1999, p. 118).

Following the split of the FN, the French extreme right found itself considerably weakened, from an organizational point of view. Its cadres and elected members were divided,⁶ it faced declining membership, and suffered electoral setbacks in the European and 2001 local elections (despite high scores for the FN and the MNR in some cities). Most importantly, the relationship of the two parties with the political system has reversed. Hesitating over their strategic and programmatic choices, and eventually unable to seduce the right-wing electorate as well as the working-class electorate of the FN, the MNR quickly renounced their alliance politics, and reverted to an orthodox National Frontist doctrine, thus becoming a ‘gathering place’ for the most radical members of the ‘national camp’ (Camus 2001: 210).

Compared to Mégret, Le Pen came to appear a moderate candidate. The FN president tried

to appear responsible and worthy, without exploiting an already favorable societal context (Chombeau 2002). Coupled with classic populist discourse, this strategy largely explains his success in the presidential election, which for the first time saw an extreme right candidate winning through to the second ballot.

The MNR has subsequently appeared close to collapse, unsure as to its political strategy. In stark contrast, strengthened by its Presidential results, the FN seems determined to maintain the orientation of moderate integration. During the 2002 parliamentary campaign, Secretary General Carl Lang clearly came down in favor of a strategy of '*main-tendue*' (i.e. helping hand) towards right-wing representatives, as well a strategy of electoral agreements (Ivaldi 2002). In spite of disappointing results, Le Pen seems committed to continue the strategy of presenting the FN as a party of government. Nevertheless, before the 2004 elections, the FN President will have to deal with rising internal tensions concerning both various programmatic points and the central issue of the leader's succession (which has led to a 'youth' camp gathered around daughter Marine Le Pen and her association 'Generations Le Pen', and old party leaders such as Bernard Anthony and Bruno Gollnisch, the current Delegate General).

The FPÖ: the long conquest of the power

The FPÖ was founded in 1956 with the intention of restructuring the German liberal-national 'Lager' and of creating a political alternative to the two dominant parties, the Austrian Socialist Party (SPÖ) and the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP). From its creation to the early 1960s, the FPÖ experienced a 'ghetto period' (Luther 2001, p. 2), i.e. it was treated as a Nazi party and utterly isolated within the Parliament. Yet, from 1958, the new leader Friedrich Peter set about establishing a new profile for the party. Although a former *Waffen-SS* officer, Peter turned out to be a pragmatic, moderate conservative who sought to transform the FPÖ into a respectable party of opposition or cooperation. But this strategy, which implied breaking with the German-national tradition – a tradition 'invalidated by its association with Nazism according to the FPÖ's president' (Riedlsperger 1992) – was rejected by the radical *Grossdeutsche* wing.

Despite a rapprochement with the SPÖ in the mid-1960s (notably during the debate over the return of Otto von Habsburg to Austria), the FPÖ was still perceived as an extremist party and failed in its attempt to enter the Austrian government. Notwithstanding this failure, Peter maintained his strategy of integration and 'planned to move the FPÖ toward the liberal center' (Riedlsperger 1998, p. 29). This aroused tensions within the party; in 1966, several radicals left the FPÖ to form the National Democratic Party, a neo-Nazi formation banned in 1988.

Early in the 1970s, the right extremists, made up of the rank and file, and the liberal leaning

partisan elite, who considered German nationalism to be out of date, began their ‘struggle for power’ (Neugebauer 2000, p. 66). Under Friedhelm Frischenschlager’s leadership, this partisan elite met within the ‘Atterseer Circle’ and elaborated the *Freiheitliches Manifest*, which was eventually adopted in 1973 and became the program for liberalizing the FPÖ until the middle of the 1980s (Riedlsperger 1987).

On the eve of the 1975 national elections, Federal Chancellor and SPÖ-president Bruno Kreisky considered forming a coalition with the liberalizing party. At the same time, Simon Wiesenthal, the famous Nazi hunter, revealed the FPÖ president’s past as an ex-SS officer. An internal crisis within the SPÖ ensued, and the coalition project was abandoned while the FPÖ experienced a new electoral failure. Nonetheless, the liberalization of the party continued. In 1978, the liberals, who included the rapidly-rising Jörg Haider, forced Peter, whose past was considered too embarrassing, to leave the party. The next year the FPÖ joined the Liberal International (LI) and obtained its best electoral score since 1962 (6.1 per cent of the vote).

Norbert Steger’s election as chairman against the rightist candidate Harald Ofner in 1980 marked a new stage in the liberals’ rise to power. The same year Steger also became Vice President of the LI. Finally, in 1983, the integration of the FPÖ and its transformation into a modern liberal party seemed complete when, for the first time in the FPÖ’s history, it came to power in a ‘small coalition’ together with the SPÖ. Steger was made Vice Chancellor and the FPÖ obtained the Justice and Defense Ministries.

Far from being the beginning of some sort of political normalization, the FPÖ’s participation in government created a new series of internal tensions. The lack of electoral backing for the liberalization of the party, the loss of the FPÖ’s protest vote, together with the fact that Steger’s attitude within the coalition was viewed as arrogant by the party’s elite, were all factors that contributed to creating a favorable breeding ground for the internal revolt led by Haider. Since his contribution to the party’s liberal renovation in the 1970s, Haider had become a convinced pan-German through his contact with the (German-nationalist leaning) Carinthian federation. From the early 1980s, Haider gradually began to climb the party ladder, making sure of gaining the national-German wing’s support in the successful ‘putsch’ at the 1986 Innsbruck Congress (Camus 2000; Moreau 1999; Riedlsperger 1987) – a victory which was greeted by bursts of ‘Sieg Heil’. Reacting to this sudden radicalization, Chancellor Vranitzky broke up the governmental coalition and called for new elections, putting a temporary end to the FPÖ’s integration efforts.

If we rely on theoretical logics, the November 1986 national elections should have condemned the FPÖ, which was now in the hands of nationalists, back to the political fringes. However, contrary to this reasoning, Haider’s party achieved the first in a long series of electoral successes. So how did the FPÖ manage to escape this fate?

First, despite the takeover of the party by the radical wing, the FPÖ was not transformed into a neo-Nazi organization. From 1986 to 1990, Haider’s FPÖ looked a lot like the initial

FPÖ: a populist protest party that denounced the practice of the ‘*Proporz*’ system, with German nationalist demands as secondary to their agenda. Second, because it was excluded from the SPÖ-ÖVP national government, the FPÖ maintained its anti-system credentials during the 1990s. However, the aim of the party remained the conquest of power. Faced with the impossibility of forming an alliance with one of the two major formations, Haider implemented a strategy of vote maximization (Luther 2001), showing amazing political opportunism.

Beginning in the early 1990s, the FPÖ entered a phase of political radicalization, adopting a program and a rhetoric similar to the other European extreme right parties (making law and order and immigration its principal issues), and through the voice of their leader made repeated provocative statements that borrowed explicitly from Nazism (see Riedlsperger 1998). This change in the political line aroused deep tensions among the liberals in the party. In 1992, the parliamentary fraction chairman Norbert Gugerbauer resigned, one of the last true liberals within the party’s leadership. In 1993, five liberal representatives, including Heide Schmidt and Friedhelm Frischenschlager, left the FPÖ in order to protest against the anti-immigrant ‘Austria First’ petition, and subsequently founded the *Liberales Forum*. Meanwhile, the FPÖ withdrew from the LI before being excluded from it.

The FPÖ’s strategy of radicalization worked. In a context of economic crisis, social fragmentation and increasing flow of Eastern immigration, Haider’s authoritarian and xenophobic discourses seduced a large portion of the Austrian electorate. Nevertheless, in the middle of the 1990s, the FPÖ changed its strategy again. The “national potential” of the extreme right [was] exhausted’ (Neugebauer 2000, p. 71). Haider, who aimed at conquering the Chancellery in 1999, modified the party’s position towards the political system in order to present the FPÖ as a respectable formation.

Beginning in 1995, Haider showed his intention of putting an end to German-nationalist chauvinism, calling for Austrian patriotism instead. Formerly referred to as an ‘ideological miscarriage’, the Austrian nation was now celebrated for its values and traditions (Riedlsperger 1998). In the 1997 program, the term ‘*Volksgemeinschaft*’, which had been historically defined as a key Nazi concept, was abandoned. Now, the German people, together with the ‘Croatian, Roma, Slovakian, Slovenian, Czech and Hungarian peoples’, were considered as ‘historically domiciled’ groups in Austria. The same program marked another major change for the party: the abandonment of their anticlerical positions, the recognition of Christianity as a foundation for Europe, and the will to become a ‘partner of the Christian Churches’. Seeking to gain a wider electorate (most notably the Catholic electorate of the ÖVP), these new pragmatic measures impacted the pan-German, anti-clerical and radical wing of the party. At the beginning of 1998, internal criticism increased to such an extent that Haider threatened to take disciplinary measures against party members and to resign.

There is no denying that, until the 1999 elections, the FPÖ’s Chairman showed great talent

in dealing with internal tensions – including expulsions of opponents of his politics (Moreau 1998) – as well as in changing strategic orientation. On the other hand, Haider seems to have been less successful after 2000. In this respect, the FPÖ's participation in the government has seriously challenged the party, emphasizing the contradictions that underlie the institutional integration of a protest and anti-system formation faced with ministerial functions and unable to overcome its own internal conflicts.

It is obvious that Haider himself is largely responsible for the turbulent FPÖ governmental experience, and even more so for the fall of the ÖVP-FPÖ in September 2002. His position can, nevertheless, be explained by his will to maintain, from a distance, the protest and anti-system vocation of the party. On this point, it seems that Haider was right to want to draw lessons from the first FPÖ governmental experience during the 1980s: in 1998, the FPÖ's leader confided to Richard K. Luther that they 'must resist the temptation of entering government' until the party 'has achieved such a share of the vote that the inevitable electoral losses' entailed by such a move would not plunge it into 'the kind of existential crisis it had experienced under Steger's leadership' (Luther 2001, p. 10).

The loss of electoral support after entering coalition in 2000 undoubtedly played a role in the final crisis that led Susanne Riess-Passer to resign from her post as the government's Vice Chancellor and as President of the FPÖ. This crisis was also a clear testimony to the increasing struggle which began in 2000 between the pragmatic and moderate wing of the party, led by Susanne Riess-Passer, which was seeking to transform the FPÖ into a party of government, and the radical wing, which called for the implementation of the original program. The fall of the government produced an important wave of criticism of Haider (including from his close colleagues) who finally gave up the leadership of the party. The particularly weak results obtained in the November 2002 elections (a loss of 16 points), inevitably relaunched the ongoing debate within the FPÖ since its inception: to protest or to govern.

The VB: an impossible final integration?

The VB was officially created as a common list of the moderate nationalist Flemish People's Party of Lode Claes and the Flemish National Party of Karel Dillen. Regrouping extreme right nationalists, the VNP was a direct successor of the Flemish National Union, a collaborationist party created in 1933 and a Flemish version of German National Socialism. In the December 1978 elections, only Dillen was elected, in the district of Antwerp – one of the bastions of Flemish nationalism and of the Flemish extreme right. Claes failed and soon after left the VB, which then entirely adopted the ultranationalist Flemish program of the VNP.

The nature of the VB's creation is particularly helpful to understand the initially ambivalent position of the party towards the political system. On the one hand, the VB was clearly

opposed to this system. Claiming the independence of Flanders, they refused to compromise with the Belgian state, whose suppression they called for, and they turned down in advance any offer of a ministerial job (Delwit and De Waele 1996; Govaert 1992). On the other hand, from the very beginning the VB has participated in that system and was originally conceived as an electoral cartel created with ‘the hope of achieving a breakthrough at the 1978 general elections’ (Delwit and De Waele 1996, p. 18).

In this respect, it must be noted that the creation of this new party and its participation in elections aroused some distrust among the radical nationalist circles (and notably within youth movements not bound to political parties), which were profoundly marked by the VU’s ‘betrayal’ and by its participation in the Belgian government (Spruyt 1996). Thus, although supported by radical organizations such as *Were Di*, *Vlaamse Militanten Orde* or *Voorspost*, the VB was faced with important difficulties in recruitment until the mid-1980s. Until then, the party remained tiny (3700 members in 1985), with no real political representation (in 1985, the VB only had one representative and two provincial councilors), and with a program centered around the independence of Flanders, anti-communism, anti-immigration and amnesty for collaborationists. Sticking to their strong anti-system line, the ‘One against all’ party experienced a ‘crossing of the desert’ (in their own words) until the end of the 1980s.

At first glance, the VB’s evolution confirms the validity of the ‘schema’ of the alternative. It is only at the end of a ‘Rejuvenation Operation’ (Mudde 2000, p. 88) initiated by Filip Dewinter that the VB succeeded in breaking free from the political marginality to which it seemed more or less condemned at the beginning of the 1980s. As Marc Spruyt (1996, p. 206) underlines, ‘the program of the party is refreshed: political marketing is introduced; the vocabulary of the old right is replaced by modern right-wing language; young intellectuals are bringing a new style, and above all things respectability is sought’. Filip Dewinter, in his own way, confirmed this new trend, when he argued: ‘Without changing anything to our program, we have tried hard to modify the image of the party [...] It was necessary to prove wrong the people who wrongly accuse us of being racists, fascists and neo-Nazis’ (*Le Monde*, 8 October 2000).

This new political ‘modernity’, together with an effort to build party organization and distance itself from the various militant movements supporting the party, led the VB to experience electoral takeoff. As Marc Swyngedouw (2000, p. 135) observed, ‘the 1987 and 1988 elections marked the beginning of a “second phase” characterized by the geographical and political extension of the VB’s field of action’. Undoubtedly, this extension can be attributed (at least partially) to the modernized image of the party.

But it is necessary to keep in mind that the 1987–88 period corresponds to the moment when Filip Dewinter, among others, put the immigration theme forward. As in the case of the FN, the political ‘modernity’ of the VB is coupled with authoritarian positions but also with ‘culturally racist’ ones (*Eigen volk eerst!*), centering around the defense of ‘the principle of

fundamental and natural inequality between communities' which implies 'ethnic hierarchy' (Swyngedouw, 1998, p. 191).

However, this emphasis caused tensions between the 'Lepenist' wing (Dewinter), accused of giving up the Flemish issue and 'defending unacceptable theses on immigration' (*De Standaard*, 16–17 November 1991), and the Flemish nationalist wing. A few members of the latter (including General Secretary Jack Peeters and party council Chairman Geert Wouters) decided to leave the VB, after having tried to 'squeeze the VBJ-group around Dewinter out of the ranks of the party leadership' (Mudde 2000, p. 89), and they created a nationalist pressure group, the *Nationalistisch Verbond* (Nationalist Union).

These tensions did not slow down the progress of the VB in Antwerp or in Flanders. The real 'breakthrough' was achieved in the 1991 parliamentary election, while the results of the 1994 municipal election finally sealed the political implantation of the party (28 per cent in Antwerp, 10.3 per cent in Flanders) and raised the issue of its participation in the city's administration. However, the implementation of the second *cordon sanitaire*, made official by the 'Democratic Charter' and signed by all major parties in 1993, prevented it from participating in power.

Since then, the issue of the VB's relationship towards the system has become increasingly problematic. Experiencing uninterrupted electoral growth, the party has remained isolated in the Belgian political scene. This situation led the leaders to modify their strategy and positions, and to show that the VB was 'able to take its responsibility' (in Mudde 2000, p. 111). From 1996 onward, and despite the unbroken *cordon sanitaire*, the VB tried to become more respectable and to be considered as 'a normal political partner'.

Evidence of this are Gerolf Annemans's contributions to the activities of the Dutroux Inquiry Parliamentary Commission, the rallying of the VB to the parliamentary consensus on the first final report of the Commission, and its participation in the Flemish Parliament debates over a new political culture (Maddens and Fiers 1998), the evolution of party literature that appears more populist (Mudde 2000) and less focused on immigration issues (Breuning and Ishiyama 1998), or the recent dismissal of Roland Raes from its functions after he minimized the reality of the Holocaust during an interview on Dutch TV. Nevertheless, the fact remains that while transforming into a more acceptable party, the VB has dreaded being perceived as too respectable, which could have weakened its – electorally very advantageous – image of an anti-system party (Maddens and Fiers, 1998).

Torn between the possibility of coming to power and of maintaining its identity, the VB seems to have reached a sort of balance, thanks to the existence of the triumvirate currently leading the party. Franck Vanhecke, the successor of Karel Dillen, became president of the party in 1996. He represents a sort of neutral point between Filip Dewinter, the representative of the hard anti-immigrant and anti-system members of the VB, and Gerolf Annemans, the representative of the nationalist wing in favor of making the party more respectable. This has

allowed the Vlaams Blok to conduct differentiated strategies and to target different electoral clienteles – on the one hand, traditionalist Catholics, by laying the emphasis on the fight against abortion and against ‘the permissive society and sexual dissoluteness’ (a strategic pole run by Alexandra Colen); on the other hand, the labour movement, by putting forward a social program associating classic socialist claims (increasing pensions and fighting against unemployment) with Flemish ultranationalist and ethnocentric positions (De Witte and Scheepers 1998). At the moment, this balance appears to be stable, although the emphasis laid on some topics is not unanimously approved within the party and tension is emerging.

Conclusion

The ambition of this study was not to elaborate a predictive, normative model of the evolution of extreme right formations, but to try to understand better the specificity of the relationship that these formations have with the political system. In this perspective, I tried to demonstrate that this relationship is based on a triple strategic dimension – adaptation to the system, distinction from the system, differentiation within the system – and that, from a theoretical as well as an empirical point of view, the issue of this relationship implied making conflicting choices for the parties studied. Thus, the manner in which these parties have dealt with the tension induced by their relationship towards the system partly explains their present evolution.

All these parties have chosen to adapt to the system, and it is precisely this choice which forced them to play constantly with various strategic styles. Except for the MSI, whose evolution created a precedent in the contemporary history of extreme right parties, all the parties still face the necessity of integrating while dealing with both ideological and strategic internal conflicts between the different wings. The FN’s split and the current emergence of a new line of opposition between the young and the old leaders, as well as the recent collapse of the Austrian government, show how difficult dealing with this issue is, while the VB seems to have succeeded in establishing a sort of political balance.

It would be particularly interesting, in order to clarify even more the modalities of this specificity, to make a comparative analysis of the relationship of other formations with the system. In this respect, we could learn a great deal from a comparison with communist parties. The fact nonetheless remains that, in the case of extreme right formations, the conflict on which the question of the relationship with the system rests is not only ideological, it is also moral. Undoubtedly, this constitutes a unique specificity of extreme right parties.

Notes

- ¹ Though the AN in recent years is no longer ‘extreme’, adopting a more mainstream-conservative outlook on most issues.
- ² The systemic approach (Easton 1953) and the environmentalist approach to political organizations (Charlot and Charlot 1985; Panebianco 1982) emphasize the necessity of including the political system into a larger environment, an institutional, cultural, social, and economic one, with which the political system (defined as the ‘sum of the political interactions’), together with all the elements that compose it, interact.
- ³ These two wings embody the two historical fascist trends distinguished by Renzo de Felice (1975): the ‘fascist-movement’ (revolutionary, anti-bourgeois, socialist leaning, futuristic) and the ‘fascist-regime’ (conservative, clerical, capitalist, corporatist). See Ignazi (1994b, pp. 1015–16).
- ⁴ These exogenous factors included the de-radicalization of political conflict (namely the end of the terrorism and of political violence), the renewal of the historiography on fascism, the ‘Mani Pulite’ Operation and the ‘Tangentopoli’ trials, the legitimizing support of Silvio Berlusconi to Gianfranco Fini during the Rome 1993 municipal elections, and the adoption of a new mixed majority electoral system for the 1994 legislative elections.
- ⁵ This is a quote from Donegani and Sadoun (1992, p. 767).
- ⁶ 59 per cent of the district secretaries and 51 per cent of the regional councilors left the FN to join the MNR.

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Reacting to the radical right

Lessons from Germany and Austria

David Art

Introduction

The rise of right-wing populist parties over the past several decades is one of the most dramatic developments in recent West European politics. The ‘first wave’ of scholarship on the post-war far right sought to explain why such parties had arisen across advanced industrial societies (Betz, 1994; Ignazi, 1992; Von Beyme, 1988). More recently, scholars have tried to unravel the puzzle of why these parties have become strong in some states but fizzled, or failed to develop, in others. Some analysts have focused on immigration rates as a primary variable (Gibson, 2002; Golder, 2003a; Knigge, 1998), while others have challenged this explanation (Kitschelt, 1995; Norris, 2005). Differences in electoral rules have been deemed important by some (Golder, 2003b; Jackman and Volpert, 1996), while others have argued that the correlation between effective thresholds and vote share for the far right is not statistically significant (Carter, 2002). A third line of argument focuses on the programme of far-right parties, specifically their ability to create a cross-class coalition between middle class advocates of neoliberalism and working class resentment toward foreigners (Kitschelt, 1995).

Recently, a fourth group of scholars have focused on the interaction between right-wing populist challengers and existing political parties (Downs, 2001; Eatwell and Mudde, 2004; Meguid, 2002; Minkenberg, 2001). Such factors as the openness of coalition markets (Bale, 2003; Kestel and Godmer, 2004) and the legitimacy that other political parties extend to the far right (Bale, 2003) have been deemed critical to the electoral success of right-wing populism. This article seeks to further develop and provide empirical support for this argument. In addition to the reaction of political parties, I also contend that the reactions of the print media and civil society to the far right are important factors in determining the far right’s trajectory. By ‘combating’ right-wing populist parties soon after they appear, mainstream political elites, civic activists and the media undermine the far right’s electoral appeal, its ability to recruit

capable party members, and weaken its political organization. Conversely, when mainstream political forces either cooperate with or are agnostic toward the far right, right-wing populist parties gain electoral strength, legitimacy and political entrepreneurs that can transform them into permanent forces in the party system. It is important to stress up-front that timing is critical: once the organizations of far-right parties have become strong, their supporters loyal and their officials entrenched in local, state or national governments, efforts to ‘combat’ the far right may well prove ineffective or counterproductive. This describes the current situation in France and Belgium. The trajectory of far-right parties, similar to those of other political parties, can thus be viewed as path-dependent (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967; Panebianco, 1988).

This article applies this ‘interaction’ argument to Germany and Austria.¹ In the mid to late 1980s, right-wing populist parties emerged in each state: the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ) in Austria and the Republikaner party (hereafter REPs) in Germany. Yet while the FPÖ went on to become one of the most electorally successful far-right parties in Europe and entered a national coalition with the conservative Austrian People’s Party (ÖVP) in 2000, the REPs disintegrated over the course of the 1990s, never capturing more than 2.5 percent in national elections. The collapse of the REPs and the rise of the FPÖ were the direct results of the dramatically different strategies that other political parties, the media and civil groups in the two states adopted toward the far right: German actors combated the REPs, while their Austrian counterparts sought to ‘tame’ or cooperate with the FPÖ.

Case selection

Before turning to the cases, it is important to outline the defining features of right-wing populist parties. Although there is still considerable debate over precisely which parties belong in this category (Eatwell, 2000; Mudde, 1996), most scholars agree that they possess two basic characteristics. First, they are wedded to an ethnic conception of the nation and committed to defending it from external threats. Second, such parties are *populist* because they, at least initially, attack the political establishment and seek to tap into, as well as inflame, the resentments of the supposedly ordinary citizen (Taggart, 2000). Such parties often demonize the ‘Other’, whether it be the immigrant population, the current government or international institutions and actors.

Germany and Austria allow for a ‘structured, focused comparison’ of far-right parties (George and McKeown, 1985). The two countries use proportional representation, possess a relatively high proportion of foreigners and share much in terms of history and culture. As well-suited as these two cases are to applying Mill’s method of difference, one must acknowledge two factors that complicate the analysis. First, the REPs were founded in 1983

and thus represent a new party while the FPÖ dates from 1956 and its fore-runner, the VdU, from 1949. The FPÖ was thus already an established party and one that the Social Democratic Party under Bruno Kreisky had brought into government in 1983.

Yet the party that Haider took over in 1986 changed markedly thereafter. During the 1960s and 1970s, the FPÖ's leadership had steered the party toward liberalism. Haider embraced both nationalism and populism, and Chancellor Franz Vranitzky (SPÖ) immediately ended the SPÖ–FPÖ coalition after Haider became the junior party's leader. There followed an exodus of liberals from the FPÖ (Bailer-Galanda and Neugebauer, 1997). Friedrich Peter, the former chairman and architect of the liberal turn, left the party less than a week after Haider's victory. Norbert Steger, the liberal party chairman who Haider replaced in 1986, announced that 'if Haider does not distance himself from the Nazis, then I will leave the party'.² Although Steger officially left the party several years later, he was no longer active in it after Haider's purge. Some liberals, such as Heide Schmidt and Friedhelm Frischenschlager, remained in the party for several years but, with the party lurching toward right-wing extremism, left the FPÖ in January 1993 and founded their own political party, the Liberal Forum (LiF). The creation of the LiF marked the final collapse of the liberalism within the FPÖ.

As liberals left the party, right-wing extremists and members of the neo-Nazi scene flocked to it. Haider played a central role in this transformation, personally anointing the right-wing extremist Andreas Mölzer as the editor-in-chief of the *Kärtner Nachrichten*, the FPÖ's official newspaper. Mölzer had previously edited right-wing extremist journals that printed articles questioning the existence of gas chambers at Auschwitz. On the local and state levels, the FPÖ allowed individuals with links to right-wing extremist organizations, such as the German NPD, to appear on party lists and hold political office. Haider would only shift the party further rightward over the course of the 1990s, primarily by exploiting fears over immigration. Thus, while the FPÖ was not a new party like the German REPs, it is safe to say that the 'Haider FPÖ' bore little resemblance to its predecessor.

A second factor complicating the comparison is Austrian consociationalism. Some scholars have argued that convergence between the main left and right parties, coupled with a clientelist political economy, is a good environment for the emergence of right-wing populist parties (Kitschelt, 1995). This explanation certainly sheds light on the Austrian case, where the cozy *proporz* arrangements between the socialists and conservatives produced an anti-system sentiment that Haider fanned and exploited.

Yet while Austria's consociational system did undoubtedly provide opportunities for Haider's renationalized FPÖ, this common explanation for the FPÖ's success needs to be qualified. Indeed, one can argue that party convergence (the SPÖ and ÖVP ruled in a Grand Coalition from 1986 to 1999) cannot really explain the FPÖ's rise and consolidation in the 1980s, even if it helps account for its steady rise in the 1990s. This is because the SPÖ actually won absolute majorities and ruled alone in national government from 1971 to 1983. In other

words, the conservative opposition, even while retaining its influence through *proporz*, was out of power for over a decade. Moreover, between 1983 and 1986, the FPÖ was the junior partner in an SPÖ–FPÖ government. Haider thus began his rise after a period of one-party dominance, not during one of party convergence, and immediately after his own party had been in government.

Reacting to the radical right

The German and Austrian cases suggest an alternative explanation for the success and failure of right-wing populist parties. Although post-industrialization (Betz, 1994; Kitschelt, 1995) and immigration have created pressures that benefit right-wing parties, these pressures themselves do not create success. My central argument is that one must concentrate on the dynamic interaction between right-wing populist challengers and existing political and social actors. The reactions of other political parties, the media and groups in civil society to the far right shape its development through the causal pathways outlined below.

Imagine that existing political parties face the choice of either refusing to cooperate with right-wing populist parties or keeping their options open. When every political party announces and enforces a policy of non-cooperation with the far right, this undercuts right-wing populist parties in the following three ways. First, non-cooperation results in a form of strategic voting that weakens small parties in proportional representation (PR) systems. If small parties are to become anything more than evanescent protest parties, they must convince their voters that they can have some tangible effect on the political process, either by entering coalitions with larger parties or by passing their own policies, whether on the communal, regional or national level. When every political party announces a policy of non-cooperation with the far right, voters will consider a vote for it as ‘wasted’ and cast their ballots for more viable parties (Cox, 1997). This effect should occur even if a core group of far-right supporters votes ‘sincerely’ or ‘expressively’, meaning that their votes are not influenced by calculations of electoral success. It is sufficient to assume that at least some potential far-right voters vote instrumentally.

Second, policies of non-cooperation send signals to potential voters that the far right is politically illegitimate. There is a large literature demonstrating the effects of elite cues on mass opinions (Zaller, 1992), and it is reasonable to assume that a coherent elite discourse that represents the far right as beyond the political pale should reduce popular support for right-wing populist parties. To be sure, some contumacious, or anti-system, voters might be attracted to the far right precisely because it is demonized by the political class. Yet I hypothesize that the net effect of elite de-legitimation – provided that it comes from both left and right mainstream political parties – is to weaken support for the far right.

Third, non-cooperation adversely affects right-wing populist parties' ability to recruit capable party members. Ambitious politicians who share the goals and ideology of the far right are often unwilling to work for parties that have no hope of winning political office. When political parties, or at least one major political party in a state, do not stigmatize the far right, each of these three mechanisms operate in reverse: votes are not perceived as 'wasted', the party is perceived as legitimate (Bale, 2003), and political entrepreneurs will join it. In addition, when far-right parties are able to hold governing positions in local or state parliaments, they become political incumbents and consolidate power by delivering resources to local constituencies.

The reaction of the national media to right-wing populist parties is also important. Three specific forms of media influence have received particular attention. First, scholars have used experiments to demonstrate the *agenda-setting* effect of the media, whereby 'those problems that receive prominent attention on the national news become the problems the viewing public regards as the nation's most important' (Iyengar and Kinder, 1987: 16). Second, scholars have found that by elevating some issues over others the media *prime* citizens by influencing their evaluative standards for judging political actors (Iyengar and Kinder, 1987). Third, the media package news in a *frame*, which is often defined as 'a central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events, weaving a connection among them' (Gamson and Modigliani, 1987: 143). The central point is that the media influence political attitudes and, as a result, vote choice.

When looking for media effects, analysts often consider the role of television news programmes or newspapers that strive for objectivity (Iyengar and Kinder, 1987). The role of highly partisan media actors, such as conservative talk-radio hosts in the United States, has begun to receive some attention (Barker, 1999). In Europe, the role of tabloid newspapers in shaping political opinions has been understudied, and the influence of tabloid newspapers on the far right has not, to my knowledge, been explored. Yet I propose that tabloid newspapers are an important factor in shaping attitudes toward the far right, for three reasons.

First, tabloid newspapers in European states often have circulation rates that dwarf those of quality newspapers. In Germany, for example, the tabloid *Bild Zeitung* had a circulation of nearly 4.5 million during the mid-1990s, over seven times that of the second leading national newspaper, the *West-deutscher Zeitung*, and nearly 10 times that of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ). This gives *Bild*, and the Springer Press that owns it and other newspapers and television stations, a great deal of political influence. German chancellors, for example, are known to keep in close contact with *Bild*'s editor-in-chief.

The political might of the largest tabloid newspaper in Austria is even greater than its counterpart in Germany. Over 40 percent of Austrians read the *Kronen Zeitung* (KZ) daily, giving it the highest circulation rate per capita in Western Europe.³ In the words of one former Austrian Chancellor, 'it is impossible to govern without the support of the *Krone*'.⁴

Second, there is a large overlap between a tabloid newspaper's readership and the potential constituency of the far right. One of the most consistent empirical findings about far-right voters is that they are, on average, less educated than voters who support other political parties (Falter and Klein, 1994; Kitschelt, 1995; Lubbers et al., 2002). The readers of tabloid newspapers are also, on average, less educated than those of 'quality' newspapers. The position of tabloid newspapers toward far-right parties is thus an important variable in shaping the attitudes of those who are most likely to vote for them.

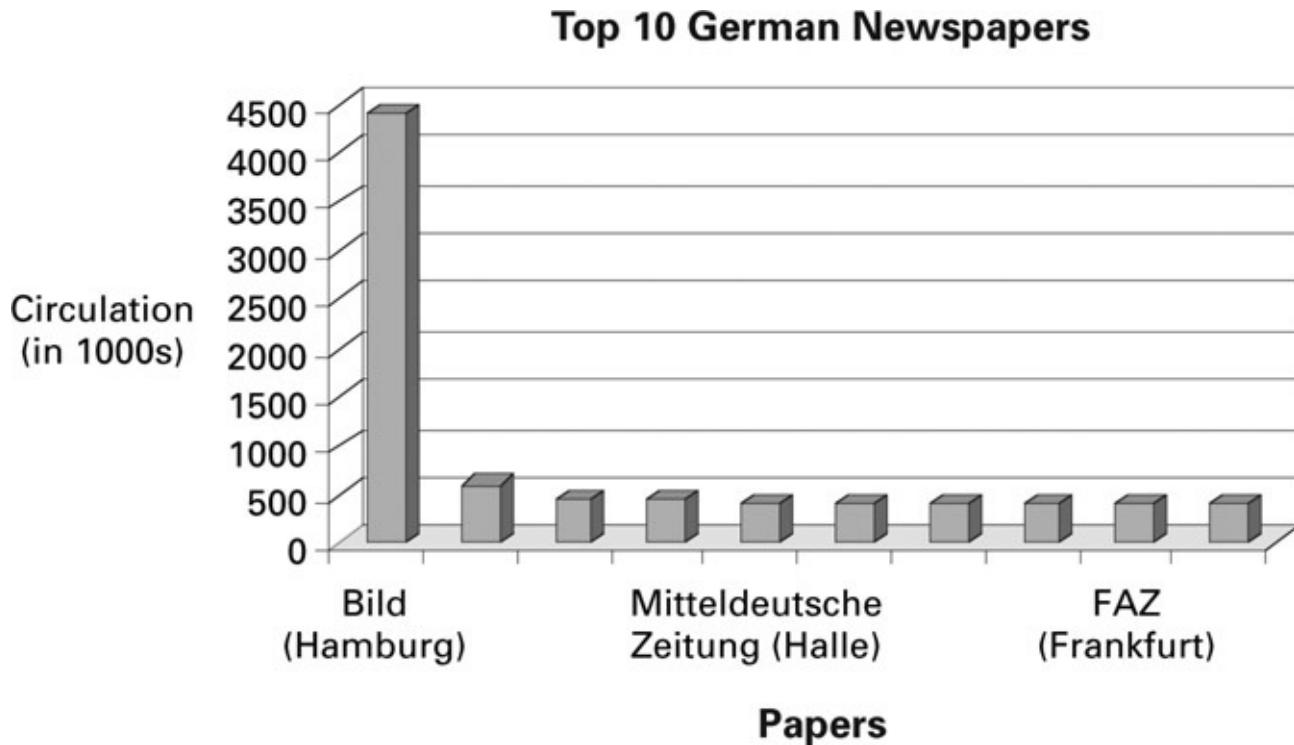


Figure 1 Circulation of major German newspapers, 1997.

Note: Newspapers from left to right: Bild (Hamburg), Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung, Freie Presse (Chemnitz), Hanoverische Allgemeine Zeitung (Hanover), Mitteldeutsche Zeitung (Halle), Südwest Presse (Ulm), Süddeutsche Zeitung (Munich), Rheinische Post (Düsseldorf), Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (Frankfurt), Sächsische Zeitung (Dresden).

Top 5 Austrian Papers

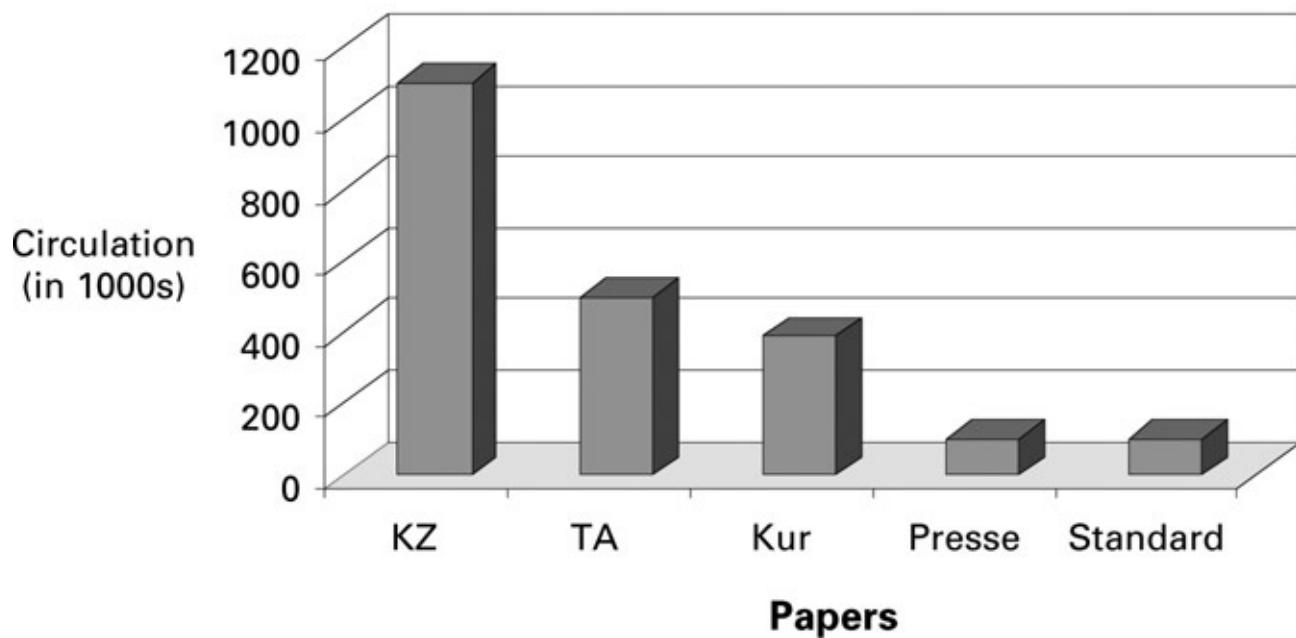


Figure 2 Circulation of major Austrian newspapers, 1996.

Third, media effects are likely to be most pronounced when messages are unambiguous and repetitive (Bennet, 1980). These characteristics are hallmarks of tabloid newspapers, and certainly obtain in the German and Austrian cases. Both *Bild* and *Krone* bombard their readers with clear and consistent messages through their news stories, editorials and readers' letters.

The reactions of civil society, in addition to those of political parties and the tabloid press, to the appearance of right-wing populism are also important. Large and frequent protests about right-wing populist parties not only demonstrate that a significant proportion of the population considers them politically illegitimate, but sustained protest can also create significant organizational and recruitment problems. The mundane tasks of political organization, such as finding places to meet, running information stands and disseminating election materials, become quite difficult when protestors disrupt such activities. Protest also adversely affects political recruitment, because individuals are often unwilling to work publicly for a party that is socially stigmatized. When members of right-wing populist parties are not sanctioned, political recruitment and political organization are much more effective.

What determines the reactions of political parties, the media and civil society to the breakthrough of right-wing populist parties? Although a full answer lies outside the range of this article, elite reactions in Germany and Austria were shaped by ideas about the legitimacy of far-right ideas and movements in democratic politics. These ideas were in turn the products of the dramatically different ways in which German and Austrian elites confronted the Nazi past (Art, 2006). In Germany, a critical examination of the Nazi past produced a 'culture of contrition' among all elite political actors, and sensitivity to any political party that bore any resemblance to the Nazis or sought to downplay the significance of the Nazi past. In Austria,

however, decades of amnesia about the Nazi period and a defensive, nationalist reaction to its re-emergence in the 1980s produced a ‘culture of victimization’. Many elite actors denied that Austria bore any responsibility for the Nazi past, and that this past prevented the far right from becoming a legitimate actor in Austrian politics.

Combating the radical right in Germany

In Germany, political parties, the media and civil society adopted a clear policy of marginalization, de-legitimation and stigmatization of the REPs following the party’s electoral breakthrough in the Berlin state elections of 1989. On the very night following the elections, politicians from the SPD and the Greens gathered in spontaneous demonstrations against the REPs’ entry into the Berlin state parliament. They declared that members of their party would actively fight the REPs at every opportunity, and they did so throughout the course of the next several years, participating in countless demonstrations across Germany. The question of cooperating with or secretly encouraging the REPs was never raised. Yet there certainly existed a strategic reason for doing just that. By strengthening the REPs, or at least not committing scarce resources to combat them, the SPD could have damaged the CDU/CSU. Since the REPs drew more voters from the CDU/CSU than the SPD, a strong showing in national elections would redound to the SPD’s advantage (Winkler and Schuman, 1998). This strategy has been pursued by other leftist parties in Europe, particularly in France and Austria.

The West Berlin elections produced a dilemma for Germany’s most important conservative party, the Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU). Some conservatives initially saw tactical interest in cooperating with the far right. This option, however, was quickly jettisoned in Berlin, and the CDU/CSU’s national leadership ruled out any form of cooperation with the REPs several months later. In several cases, this policy forced the CDU either to give up political power or form unwelcome coalitions. For example, in both 1992 and 1996, the CDU in Baden-Württemberg chose to enter into a highly unpopular Grand Coalition with the SPD rather than form a minority government reliant on the toleration of the REPs. There were, in other words, significant political costs in refusing to work with the far right.

After the CDU announced its position, every party in Germany followed a policy of marginalization, or *ausgrenzung* in German. *Ausgrenzung* prohibited personal contact with REP politicians, reliance on REP votes to pass legislation and support for any REP candidate or proposal. This occurred at every political level. Party members in communal parliaments were instructed to vote against even the most mundane proposals of the REPs, such as the installation of traffic lights, on principle.⁵ Members of the CDU and FDP (the German liberal party) who violated the policy of *ausgrenzung* were immediately banished from their parties.⁶

The German media reacted quickly and decisively to the appearance of the REPs. Of crucial

importance was the position of the largest tabloid newspaper. *Bild* is full of racy leads, exclamation points and contains a daily photograph of a topless woman. It also has a clear political slant: conservative with a dash of populism. At times, it has stirred xenophobic sentiment against immigrants and portrayed asylum-seekers as economic refugees who drain the welfare state.⁷ But *Bild* possesses another central ideological strain that shapes its position on the Nazi past and on far-right parties. The second pillar of the Springer Press is a commitment to reconciliation with the Jewish people.⁸ Any editor who works for the Springer Press must sign a contract committing him or herself to this goal.⁹ During his lifetime, Axel Springer (1912–85) donated large sums to Israel and worked tirelessly for German–Jewish reconciliation. Shimon Peres once stated that ‘after Adenauer, Axel Springer has contributed more than anyone else to the unique, clear, and significant relationship between Germany and Israel’.¹⁰

Following the REP breakthrough in West Berlin, *Bild* began a relentless campaign against the party, drawing comparisons between it and the Nazis and constantly reminding its readers of Schönhuber’s glorification of the Waffen-SS. The newspaper regularly referred to Schönhuber as the *Führer* (an allusion to *The Führer*, Adolf Hitler) of the REPs instead of using the more neutral term *Chef*, or chief. The editorial that appeared the day after the Berlin election is typical:

Franz-Schönhuber – The Führer of the ‘Republikaner’

... he considers himself the avenger ... volunteered for the Waffen-SS. He was a corporal in the SS-*Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler* [Hitler’s elite bodyguard division] ... in October 1981 he published a book: ‘I Was There,’ a personal avowal of his time with the Waffen-SS. The right-wing extremist ‘Deutsche National-Zeitung’ voted it book of the year.

Then something happened to the ‘Nazi of the Bavarian Radio’, something that he had never imagined: The CSU, the Munich community, the Bavarian Radio, they all dropped him. Therein lies the motive for his revenge.¹¹

Bild explained the Berlin election as a protest vote and a horrible mistake. The newspaper published interviews with well-meaning citizens who had voted for the REPs. As one taxi-driver explained, ‘we really wanted to send those in charge a message ... but we never thought it would come to this. We didn’t want this at all’.¹² Several days later, *Bild* placed a story about the reaction in Turkey, where Schönhuber owned a holiday home, in the middle of its politics section:

In the past week the citizens of Bodrum (20,000) marched to Schönhuber’s villa and draped his nameplate with a black towel ... ‘We symbolically gave him a black face. We took him without knowing who he is. We took him in our arms like a friend. It was a shock as we realized that we had a poisonous snake among us.’¹³

Finally, German citizens played an active role in combating the REPs. Only hours after the results of the 1989 Berlin election were announced, over 10,000 Berliners joined in spontaneous protests holding signs that read ‘we don’t need any Nazis’ and yelling ‘Nazis out!’ When REP politicians entered the Berlin parliament for the first time in March 1989, they were

forced to use a back door under police protection to avoid the hundreds of protestors blocking the front entrance. Similar protests occurred whenever the REPs held party meetings or election events, forcing the party to meet in remote locations with police protection. A typical REP party caucus, for example, took place in a tent surrounded by police in the middle of an open field.

The combined reaction of German political parties, the media and civil society led directly to the collapse of the REPs shortly after their initial appearance. Political *ausgrenzung* meant that the party stood no chance of passing legislation, nor forming the coalitions necessary to do so. REP politicians appeared ineffective and harassed, and the party quickly gained a reputation for incompetence. The media campaign against the REPs contributed to the party's negative image. Schönhuber complained that *Bild* in particular had turned him into the 'national bogey-man', and other REP politicians claimed that the tabloid newspaper's hostility was an important factor in the party's demise. The leader of the REPs in Bavaria, for example, called the media campaign against the party 'our chief problem'.¹⁴ Although the exact effects of *Bild*'s coverage have not been measured, it is difficult to imagine that the open hostility of Germany's largest newspaper did not adversely affect the REPs' political fortunes.

The constant protests by civil society created a host of everyday organizational problems for the REPs. The party was unable to rent public rooms for meetings since other political parties controlled access to them. The REPs also had trouble finding private venues, either because restaurant and hotel owners were hostile to the REPs or because they feared the reputational, and often material, damage from the protests that would inevitably accompany REP meetings. During election campaigns, the REPs had to hang their signs from high trees to stop them from being immediately torn down. They had problems finding members who were willing to run information booths during election campaigns because the booths were quickly surrounded by protestors.¹⁵

REP politicians also claimed that they faced a host of social pressures in their daily lives. The leader of the REPs in one German state lamented that he lost at least a third of his friends after he joined the party. Three of his cars were set alight in front of his house. When he went to a political function at the town hall, several dozen police were on hand to protect him. Given these pressures, it is perhaps not surprising that he questioned 'whether he did the right thing by putting all his efforts into politics'.¹⁶

REP members also faced pressure in their professions. Many of those who sympathized with the REPs did not join the party for fear of losing their chances for promotion. The leader of the REPs in one state actually claimed that he advised professional people to leave the REPs for the sake of their careers. REP members who were 'out', meaning that their party affiliation was public knowledge, also stood little chance of holding leadership positions in the voluntary associations and clubs (*Vereinen*) that play an especially important role in German society.

Such social pressures made political recruitment almost impossible. On several occasions,

highly educated and upstanding members of the community agreed to head the REP party list in elections, only to withdraw their names after becoming aware of the consequences to their reputation. After their initial success in 1989, the REPs lost 40 percent of their membership within a single year (25,000 to 15,000). By the end of the 1990s, the party consisted mainly of unskilled workers, pensioners and others who, as one leading REP politician put it, ‘had nothing else to lose’.¹⁷ Unable to recruit or hold onto capable, educated personnel, the REPs quickly evolved into a party of the uneducated, unskilled and unmotivated. These were hardly the types of party members necessary to build and maintain a fledgling political organization. Nor were they the type of people able to make financial donations. It is little wonder that the REPs were always in financial turmoil. In sum, German elites ‘combated’ the REPs and prevented the party, despite high unemployment, massive immigration and pressures associated with European integration and globalization, from consolidating itself in the party system. As one REP politician lamented in 2001, ‘our significance is now so minimal that we ask ourselves if we should even continue at all’.¹⁸

‘Taming’ the radical right in Austria?

In September 1986, Jörg Haider completed his takeover of the FPÖ in being elected party leader at the convention in Innsbruck. Haider received 59.5 percent of the vote, while the liberal Norbert Steger mustered only 40.5 percent. The newly elected head of the FPÖ played to the euphoria of the party’s nationalist base. During the convention, several FPÖ delegates wore Nazi regalia and shouted that Steger deserved to be ‘gassed’. The normally FPÖ-friendly columnist Viktor Reimann wrote of ‘a drunken atmosphere’ marked by ‘heckling and verbal attacks that reminded one of the Nazi period’.¹⁹ The Liberal International (an umbrella group of liberal parties of which the FPÖ was then a member) was concerned about the conduct of the Innsbruck convention. The Vice-President of the Liberal International, Urs Schöttli, stated that ‘the tones that appeared at Innsbruck were shocking’, and decided to send observers to monitor the FPÖ during the upcoming national parliamentary elections.²⁰ The group stated that the atmosphere at Innsbruck was grounds for ejecting the FPÖ from the Liberal International.²¹ Within Austria’s mainstream press, however, only the leftist weekly *Profil* covered the Innsbruck party convention in any depth, arguing that it represented a caesura in the history of the FPÖ.

Yet Haider’s takeover had immediate political consequences. Chancellor Franz Vranitzky (SPÖ) declared the end of the national coalition between his party and the hitherto liberal FPÖ. New elections were scheduled for 23 November, and Vranitzky made it clear that his party would not enter a national alliance with a renationalized FPÖ. On the one hand, then, the SPÖ decided on a strategy of marginalization (or *ausgrenzung*) from the moment Haider

took control of the FPÖ. The national party held to this strategy throughout the late 1980s and 1990s, and continues to practise it today.

Yet the SPÖ's form of *ausgrenzung* was never as complete as that of its German counterpart. Austrian Social Democrats in communal and state parliaments continued to cooperate with their FPÖ colleagues to pass legislation. The combination of *ausgrenzung* at the national level and cooperation at the local and state levels contributed directly to the FPÖ's success. As Haider railed against a political system that was excluding him from office, angry voters cast their ballots for the FPÖ's communal and state parliamentary lists. A vote for the FPÖ was hardly a 'wasted' one, as a vote for the REPs was in Germany, since FPÖ politicians played an active role in devising and passing legislation. Moreover, as the FPÖ did well in state elections and crossed the 20 percent mark in national elections, leading politicians within the SPÖ publicly questioned the *ausgrenzung* strategy. In 1996, the head of the Styrian SPÖ, Peter Schachner, called for a 'radical change of course' in SPÖ–FPÖ relations. Similarly, the Governor of the Burgenland, Karl Stix (SPÖ), argued that his party should include the FPÖ in political dialogue. After a strong showing by the FPÖ in Vienna, the major Michael Häupl (SPÖ) invited the FPÖ to official discussions about Vienna's future (Bailer-Galanda and Neugebauer, 1997: 136–7). Such open rejections of the *ausgrenzung* policy further signalled to voters that the SPÖ was willing to work with the FPÖ, and that it was only a matter of time before the marginalization strategy was abandoned entirely. Although the SPÖ renewed its *ausgrenzung* strategy after the 1999 elections, leading SPÖ politicians, such as Kurt Schläggel, have continued to recommend cooperation with the FPÖ.

If the SPÖ's *ausgrenzung* was far from complete, the ÖVP never adopted this strategy. From the 1986 elections to the formation of the ÖVP–FPÖ coalition in February 2000, the Austrian People's Party never ruled out a national coalition with the FPÖ. Indeed, ÖVP leaders often played the 'Haider card' – the threat to leave the coalition and form a coalition with the FPÖ – in order to extract concessions from the SPÖ. It was also the ÖVP that helped Haider to become the Governor of the state of Carinthia in 1989, after the FPÖ gained 35 percent to the ÖVP's 21 percent (the SPÖ led with 46 percent). By handing Haider governmental responsibility, the ÖVP both legitimated the FPÖ and helped Haider consolidate his power in Carinthia. In the state elections of 1999, the FPÖ captured over 42 percent of the vote, making it the largest party in the state and giving Haider a strong popular mandate.

The FPÖ was supported by Austria's largest newspaper – *Kronen Zeitung* – which is similar to *Bild* in style and content but even more powerful. During the national parliamentary election campaigns in the fall of 1986, *Krone* gave Haider, the head of a party that had polled less than 3 percent in public opinion polls that summer, twice as much coverage as any other Austrian newspaper (Plasser, 1987). From 1986 until February 2000, *Krone* stuck to a pro-Haider line. *Krone*'s most widely read columnist, Richard Nimmerichter, whose column appeared an amazing six days a week for over two decades, referred to Haider

as ‘an unfaltering representative of the truth and indispensable ally of the average man’.²²

Apart from giving Haider favourable coverage and lauding him in editorials, *Krone* proved to be a critical ally when the FPÖ suffered political setbacks. During a debate in the Carinthian parliament on 13 June 1991, Haider castigated the national government’s employment policies and lauded those of the Third Reich. This statement provoked an outcry from the SPÖ’s parliamentary fraction, who convinced an ÖVP that was already looking to get rid of Haider to vote for a motion of no-confidence in the Governor. Haider was dismissed several weeks later, and many considered his political career over.

But *Krone* came to Haider’s defence. The editorial staff defended Haider’s statement, argued that the Nazis had indeed created jobs and printed a barrage of editorial and readers’ letters portraying the young politician as the victim of the machinations of the two major parties.²³ Star columnist Nimmerichter (pen-name ‘Staberl’) wrote five columns in succession about the Haider affair, which he described as a ‘manhunt’. Nimmerichter noted that Haider’s statement had a ‘certain justification in the facts’, since Hitler had virtually eliminated unemployment in Austria within six months after the *Anschluss*. While Haider would have been wise to qualify his statement, Nimmerichter continued that Haider’s statement became ‘a state affair’ when the SPÖ, ÖVP and the Greens ‘saw their chance to finally get rid of their annoying competitor Haider’.²⁴ During the summer of 1991, *Krone* published no fewer than 50 readers’ letters about the ‘Haider affair’, as the newspaper termed it, 44 of which either lauded Nimmerichter’s commentary about Haider or defended the FPÖ politician.

Thus, at a time when Haider was considered politically dead by many observers, *Krone* did all it could to resuscitate him. Although it is difficult to measure the precise effect of *Krone*’s campaign, the results of the September 1991 state elections in Vienna suggest that it succeeded. The FPÖ won 22.5 percent of the vote, more than doubling its total from 1987 and robbing the SPÖ of the absolute majority it had enjoyed since 1954. Throughout the rest of the decade, *Krone* would continue to support Haider and passionately defend him against charges of right-wing extremism and Nazi apologia.

Austrian civil society did not react to the FPÖ with the same vigour as German civil society did to the ‘Republikaner’. Recall that when the REPs gained 7.5 percent in the Berlin state elections, tens of thousands of protestors took to the streets in spontaneous anti-REP demonstrations after the results were announced. When the FPÖ captured nearly 10 percent in *national* elections, there were no protests in Austria. Haider faced little protest from Austrian civil society until he was winning over 20 percent of the vote in national elections, and even then these protests were sporadic and largely confined to Vienna.

In contrast to Germany, then, the Austrian far right benefited from the actions of elite political actors. The FPÖ of Jörg Haider was not precluded from holding power, and indeed ruled in local and state coalitions before joining the national government in 2000. Austria’s largest newspaper gave the FPÖ something akin to free advertising. The prospects of winning

political office and advancing quickly within a dynamic party, a party that was not socially stigmatized, led many of Austria's most intelligent and capable young politicians to join the FPÖ. The party also attracted the type of people able to make substantial donations. By the early 1990s, the FPÖ was a highly organized and wealthy political party, and one that was viewed as politically legitimate by the majority of Austrians.

Recent developments

If the Austrian far right enjoyed two decades of growth and success, while the German far right suffered two decades of stagnation and failure, recent developments appear to put the far right in each state on different trajectories. In 2002, the FPÖ suffered its worst electoral performance since 1986, capturing only 10 percent of the vote in national elections. Many observers concluded that the FPÖ's participation in the national government had weakened it, and that the ÖVP's 'taming' strategy had been a success. Yet while it is no doubt true that the FPÖ lost some of its support as a governing party (Luther, 2003a, b), and right-wing populist parties in general may lose support through participation in government (Heinisch, 2003), public opinion polls several months before the election showed the party running at about 20 percent. Finance Minister Karl-Heinz Grasser (FPÖ) was widely considered to be Austria's most popular politician, and Vice-Chancellor Susanne Riess-Passer (FPÖ) was also running high in the numerous 'like-ability' polls published by Austrian weeklies. It was in fact Jörg Haider's mercurial behaviour that contributed to the 2002 disaster (Luther, 2003a). Between 2001 and 2002, Haider made several surprise trips to Iraq to visit Saddam Hussein, which did not play well with the Austrian electorate. In September 2002, Haider engineered a revolt from the FPÖ's base against the national leadership, which brought down the government and forced new elections. Grasser and Riess-Passer resigned and left the party. Haider, claiming that he feared assassination, refused to lead the FPÖ's party list, a duty that fell to the uncharismatic former veterinarian Herbert Haupt. With the party bitterly divided and the Austrian electorate weary of Haider's ploys, the FPÖ's vote-share plummeted. Several years of intra-party wrangling followed. In April 2005, Haider left the FPÖ and founded a new party, the Alliance for the Future of Austria (BZÖ), with several other former FPÖ politicians. The BZÖ remains the junior partner in Schüssel's coalition government, although its future as a viable party of the right is at this point unclear.

So did 'taming' work in the final analysis? As scholars have noted, the FPÖ's transition from an opposition party to a party of government was bound to be difficult and result in some loss of electoral strength (Luther, 2003b). But the magnitude of the FPÖ's collapse cannot be explained by this factor alone. It was Haider's exclusion from the government and the FPÖ leadership that ultimately led him to attack a party that was no longer under his sole control.

It was primarily the reaction of the European Union 14 to the formation of the ÖVP–FPÖ coalition that forced Haider into the role of a ‘simple party member’, and this was the most profound effect of the international protest against Austria.²⁵ Through their rhetoric and symbolic sanctions, the EU 14 resorted to an international version of the combat strategy. The vehemence of the international reaction to the ÖVP–FPÖ coalition precluded Haider from holding a cabinet position, and he formally resigned the chairmanship of the FPÖ in May in favour of Riess-Passer in large part to end the sanctions. Although both domestic and international observers argued at the time that the sanctions were ill-conceived and would produce a nationalist backlash, their longer term effect was to de-link Haider from the party he had created. In this sense, the combat strategy employed by the EU 14 was ultimately effective.

It remains to be seen whether the FPÖ will recover from its 2002 debacle, and whether Haider will continue to play a leading role in the party. Observers of Austrian politics are notably cautious in declaring Haider’s demise, for they have been proven wrong several times before. Most recently, in the Carinthian state elections of 2004, Haider stunned everyone by improving upon his 1999 electoral victory, capturing 43 percent of the vote, and remaining governor. Even if Jörg Haider does not mount yet another comeback on the national level, ‘Haiderism’ survives as a loose political ideology that has permanently changed the face of Austrian politics. The package of fears and resentments that Haider drew on and fostered, and that *Kronen Zeitung* continues to spread, can potentially be used by politicians from both the FPÖ and other parties.

If the far right suffered setbacks in Austria, the recent success of both the DVU and the NPD in the 2004 state elections in Brandenburg and Saxony suggest that right-wing extremism is becoming a political force in Germany. The transformation of the NPD into a political party capable of winning representation is especially significant, since the party is highly organized and has set deep roots in certain subcultures (in contrast to the DVU). Yet it is important to note that the recent success of the far right is primarily an *eastern* phenomenon. Although political parties have all enforced policies of non-cooperation with the far right, the NPD in particular has been able to attain a measure of legitimacy in certain cities and towns in the east, which helps explain its recent electoral success (Art, 2004). The contrast between the continued resistance of the west to far-right parties and their rising fortunes in the east is yet another piece of evidence that ‘inner unity’ remains elusive.

Notes

This article draws from a larger study (Art, 2006: material reprinted here with permission)

based on 175 semi-structured and open-ended interviews.

[1](#) This article draws from a larger study based on 175 semi-structured and open-ended interviews with political elites.

Unless the interviewees agreed to be quoted, only their titles and party affiliations appear in subsequent endnotes.

[2](#) *Profil*, 22 September 1986.

[3](#) The other four largest newspapers in Austria, as of 1997, were *Täglich Alles* (TA), *Kurier* (Kur), *Die Presse* and *Der Standard*. *Täglich Alles* was driven out of the traditional market by *Krone* in 2000, although it continued to publish online.

[4](#) Interview by author with Armin Thurnherr, Editor-in-Chief of the weekly *Falter*, Vienna, 5 February 2001. Thurnherr was referring to former Austrian Chancellor Franz Vranitzky (SPO).

[5](#) Interview with a member of the Berlin State Parliament (SPD), Berlin, 7 February 2002.

[6](#) Politicians from the CDU, CSU and FDP, who preferred to remain anonymous, stated that there were several cases of party banishment. Most party members, however, followed the policy of *ausgrenzung*.

[7](#) See, for example, Christoph Butterwegge, ‘Ethnisierungsprozesse, Mediendiskurse und politische Rechtstendenzen’, in Christoph Butterwegge (ed.) *NS-Vergangenheit, Antisemitismus und Nationalismus in Deutschland*, pp. 172–217 (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 1997).

[8](#) The five pillars of the Springer Press are as follows: 1. To uphold liberty and law in Germany, a country belonging to the Western family of nations, and to further the unification of Europe. 2. To promote reconciliation of Jews and Germans and support the vital rights of the State of Israel. 3. To support the Transatlantic Alliance, and solidarity with the United States of America in the common values of free nations. 4. To reject all forms of political extremism. 5. To uphold the principles of a free social market economy. Taken from the Axel Springer Company, www.asv.de/englisch/unterneh/frame.htm

[9](#) Interview with Oliver Michalsky, journalist for the *Berliner Morgenpost* (owned by the Springer Press), Berlin, 21 November 2001.

[10](#) *Bild*, 31 January 1985.

[11](#) *Bild*, 31 January 1989 (boldface in original).

[12](#) *Bild*, 2 February 1989.

[13](#) *Bild*, 7 February 1989.

[14](#) Interview with Johann Gärtner, Head of the ‘Republikaner’ Party in Bavaria, Kissing, 22 April 2002.

[15](#) REP politicians I interviewed stressed these points.

[16](#) Interview with leader of the REPs in a German state.

[17](#) Interview with Gärtner.

[18](#) Interview by author with Günther Reich, Berlin, 8 April 2002.

[19](#) *Kurier*, 15 September 1986.

[20](#) *Profil*, 22 September 1986; *Profil*, 6 October 1986.

[21](#) *Salzburger Nachrichten*, 22 September 1986; the FPÖ was thrown out of the Liberal International in 1993.

[22](#) *Kronen Zeitung*, 9 February 1992.

[23](#) *Kronen Zeitung*, 22 June 1991.

[24](#) *Kronen Zeitung*, 20 June 1991.

[25](#) For more on the sanctions against Austria, see Marc Howard, ‘Can Populism Be Suppressed in a Democracy? Austria, Germany, and the European Union’, *East European Politics and Society* 14: 18–32.

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New alliances

Why mainstream parties govern with radical right-wing populist parties

Sarah L. de Lange

Since the late 1980s a considerable number of radical right-wing populist parties (RRWPs) have achieved electoral breakthrough in Western Europe.¹ Parties like the *Alleanza Nazionale* (AN), the *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs* (FPÖ), the *Front National* (FN), the *Lega Nord* (LN) and the *Vlaams Belang* (VB) have succeeded in gaining and maintaining parliamentary representation for several decades now. Yet despite their success at the polls, RRWPs have long been kept out of public office. It was only during the late 1990s that mainstream right parties started to cooperate with RRWPs in national governments. This was the case for example in Italy in 1994, when Silvio Berlusconi invited the AN and LN to govern with *Forza Italia* (FI) after the three parties had successfully contested the elections in two electoral alliances. In 2001 Berlusconi formed a second government coalition with the AN and the LN, which remained in power until 2006. Although defeated in the 2006 elections, the coalition returned to office in 2008 and still governs at the time of writing. Austria was the second country to have a government in which an RRWP participated. In 2000 the *Österreichische Volkspartei* (ÖVP) formed a government with Jörg Haider's FPÖ after lengthy coalition negotiations with the *Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs* (SPÖ) had broken down. Three years later ÖVP leader Wolfgang Schüssel decided to re-form his coalition with the FPÖ, despite the poor electoral showing of the latter party in the 2002 elections. In the twenty-first century the government participation of RRWPs has spread to Denmark, Norway and the Netherlands. In 2001 centre-right minority governments that survived by the grace of the support of RRWPs assumed office in Denmark and Norway.² Thanks to support of the *Dansk Folkeparti* (DF) the Danish minority government of *Venstre* (V) and *Det Konservative Folkeparti* (KF) continued in office after the 2005 and 2007 elections. Between 2001 and 2005 the *Fremskrittspartiet* (FrP) fulfilled the same role in Norway. Moreover, in 2002 the *Lijst Pim Fortuyn* (LPF) entered the Dutch parliament with an impressive 17 per cent of the popular

vote and was immediately invited into a government alliance by Jan Peter Balkenende, leader of the *Christen Democratisch Appèl* (CDA) (see [Table 1](#)).

This article investigates why these ten government coalitions have been formed. Designed as a comparative study of the new alliances between mainstream right parties and RRWPs in West European democracies, it explains why these alliances have been forged in Austria, Denmark, Italy, the Netherlands and Norway and why they have only been created recently. To investigate their formation the article uses coalition formation theories, which permit the analysis of the properties of government coalitions in which mainstream right parties and RRWPs have cooperated. On the basis of the predictions of these theories inferences are made about the motives mainstream right parties might have had for changing allegiance from social democratic and left-leaning centre parties to RRWPs. The results of the analysis show that the vast majority of the ten right-wing governments under investigation are predicted by the coalition formation theories, suggesting that their formation has been inspired by a combination of office and policy considerations on the part of mainstream right parties. These findings are explored in more detail by analysing Austrian, Danish, Dutch, Italian and Norwegian seat distributions and party positions and by studying the coalition formation processes that resulted in the rise to power of these government coalitions. These analyses demonstrate that office, policy *and* votes made mainstream right parties turn to RRWPs as new coalition partners and that two important changes in West European party systems have enabled the formation of the new alliances, the first being an electoral shift to the right and the second the convergence of party positions of mainstream right parties and RRWPs. This study thus confirms the preliminary findings of Tim Bale (2003, p. 68), who has argued that ‘the apparent swing of western Europe’s political pendulum away from social democracy and back towards the centre-right’ has brought RRWPs to power.

[Table 1](#) Radical right-wing populist parties in government

Country*	Period	Cabinet	Composition
Austria	1999–2002	Schüssel I	ÖVP–FPÖ
	2003–5	Schüssel II	ÖVP–FPÖ [†]
Denmark	2001–5	Rasmussen I	V–KF–(DF)
	2005–7	Rasmussen II	V–KF–(DF)
	2007–	Rasmussen III	V–KF–(DF)
Italy	1994–5	Berlusconi I	FI–AN–LN–CCD/UDC
	2001–6	Berlusconi II	FI–AN–LN
	2008–	Berlusconi III	PdL–LN–MpA
Netherlands	2002–3	Balkenende I	CDA–VVD–LPF

Notes: *Although the SVP has been in government in the period under study, the party is not included in this study. Strictly speaking, Switzerland cannot be qualified as a parliamentary democracy and coalition formation in this country does not occur along the same lines as in other West European countries. †In 2005 Jörg Haider left the FPÖ and founded the BZÖ, which replaced the FPÖ in the Austrian government coalition. Since there is substantial continuity between the FPÖ and BZÖ, most notably in terms of party leadership, and the composition of the government coalition and allocation of portfolios did not change in 2005, the government coalition is not analysed separately in this article.

Although the findings of this study might appear self-evident to students of coalition politics, they run counter to many ideas promoted in the literature on RRWPs. In this body of literature normative schemes of interpretation are the rule rather than the exception and a functionalist approach is not often applied.³ Scholars in this field talk of strategies of ‘engagement’ and ‘disengagement’ (Downs, 2001), and use notions like the ‘exclusionary oligopoly’, ‘maximum integration’ (Kestel and Godmer, 2004), ‘defending democracy’ (Pedhazur, 2004) or ‘marginalisation’ and ‘accommodation’ (Widfeldt, 2004). These types of concept or typology have an *ad hoc* character and cannot easily be applied to parties other than those that belong to the RRWP family, because they rely heavily on the specific properties of these parties, such as their alleged anti-democratic character and their alleged racist or xenophobic programmes. As a result they are of little added value to comparative researchers.

Coalition formation theories, on the contrary, assume that ‘there are no *a priori* constraints which circumscribe or inhibit the negotiation and coalition between any two parties’ (Dodd, 1976, p. 40). Less formally put, each party considers every other party as a potential coalition partner until the parameters that shape parties’ coalition preferences (e.g. election results and party positions) are known. Clearly, the assumption that parties have general coalitionability conflicts to some degree with the behaviour of parties in coalition formation processes. Sometimes parties are excluded from government coalitions on *a priori* grounds or even treated as political pariahs. When and why this happens is, however, an empirical question and it is therefore important to maintain the assumption of general coalitionability (Laver and Schofield, 1990, p. 201).

Theories of coalition formation

To explain the government participation of RRWPs I use coalition formation theories, which are based on the intuition that ‘deep and significant patterns run through the making and breaking of governments in a range of different institutional settings’ (Laver, 1998, p. 4). They

are particularly well suited for the purpose of this study, because their deductive character is fundamentally different from the inductive approach normally taken by scholars working on RRWPs. In coalition formation theories it is assumed that political parties are utility maximisers and that they seek to maximise either office or policy. On the basis of these assumptions two types of theory can be distinguished: office-oriented coalition formation theories which assume that parties seek to maximise their share of the spoils of government (mostly Cabinet portfolios) and policy-oriented coalition formation theories which assume that parties seek to maximise their influence over policy making.⁴

Office-oriented theories

Office-oriented coalition formation theories have their origin in the seminal work of John Von Neumann and Oskar Morgenstern (1944). These authors conceive of the coalition formation process as a game in which parties have to divide a prize. Their minimal winning theory postulates that parties will try to win this game by forming a minimal winning coalition, that is, a coalition without ‘unnecessary actors’ that do not contribute to the winning status of the coalition. However, under normal circumstances the number of coalitions predicted by the minimal winning theory is substantial, if not very large. Consequently, it only gives an *indication* of which coalition might form. The minimal winning theory of Von Neumann and Morgenstern has not been designed to model a specific type of coalition game; rather, it can be applied to a wide range of political and social situations. The parliamentary coalition game has, however, the specific feature that it is a weighted game, that is, that actors (in this case parties) have resources (seats) that determine their weight in the coalition game. To accommodate this specific feature two office-oriented theories have been developed that limit the predictions of the minimal winning theory: the minimum size theory (Gamson, 1961; Riker, 1962) and the bargaining proposition theory (Leiserson, 1970).

The minimum size theory predicts the formation of the minimal winning coalition with the smallest weight. It rests on the assumption that ‘any participant will expect others to demand from a coalition a share of the payoff proportional to the amount of resources which they contribute to the coalition’ (Gamson, 1961, p. 376). Thus, actors maximise their pay-off through the maximisation of their weight in the coalition, which is in turn achieved through a minimisation of the coalition’s total weight. The predictions of the minimum size theory are more precise than those of the minimal winning theory and sensitive to minor changes in the weight of actors. The bargaining proposition theory predicts that the minimal winning coalition with the smallest number of actors will form. It does not only rest on the assumption that actors seek to maximise their pay-offs, but also takes into account the ease with which a coalition can be constructed and maintained. According to Michael Leiserson (1970, p. 90), ‘the

members of the smaller coalition will prefer to form it, since negotiations and bargaining are easier to complete and a coalition is easier to hold together, other things being equal, with fewer parties'.

Policy-oriented theories

Policy-oriented coalition formation theories assume that actors seek to realise their most preferred policies through their participation in government coalitions.⁵ Policy-oriented theories are characterised on the basis of actors' weights and expressions of actors' location on the left-right dimension. Two policy-oriented theories have received most attention: the minimal connected winning theory (Axelrod, 1970) and the minimal range theory (Leiserson, 1966).

The minimal connected winning theory predicts the formation of coalitions that are connected or closed, that is, of which the members are adjacent on a policy scale. These minimal connected winning coalitions contain necessary actors situated on the extremes of the coalition, but can also include unnecessary actors located in between these extreme actors. Hence, the minimal connected winning theory does not always predict a sub-set of those coalitions predicted by the minimal winning theory. Dependent on the distribution of weights over the actors, minimal connected winning coalitions may contain members that make the predicted coalitions oversized, but are necessary to keep it connected. The reason for the connectedness of the coalition lies in the minimisation of 'conflict of interest'.

The minimal range theory, formalised by Abraham De Swaan (1973), predicts the formation of the coalition with the least 'ideological diversity'. The ideological diversity in the coalition, also known as the coalition's policy range, is understood as the distance between the two members of the coalition that are furthest apart on a policy scale. The minimal range theory comes in two variations: a closed and an open version. In the closed version the minimal range theory is a specification of the minimal connected winning theory, in that it predicts the minimal connected winning coalition with the smallest policy range. The open version, however, does not stipulate that the coalition has to be connected. It simply predicts the formation of the minimal winning coalition of which the most extreme parties are located in closest proximity to each other. Thus, where the closed version is a specification of the minimal connected winning theory in which policy considerations have priority over office consideration, the open version is a specification of the minimal winning theory in which office considerations override policy concerns.

Method and data

The purpose of this article is not to test coalition formation theories. Rather, I use these theories as ‘heuristic tools’ and juxtapose theory and reality in an attempt to understand better the conditions under which RRWPs have assumed office (compare Laver and Schofield, 1990, p. 90). The objective is to make inferences about the reasons for the formation of the government coalitions in which RRWPs have participated on the basis of the extent to which these government coalitions are predicted by the various office- and policy-oriented coalition formation theories. My focus is thus on the outcome of the coalition formation process, in fact on a specific type of outcome, rather than on the formal coalition formation theories as such. The latter are merely a means to gain insight in a structured way about the circumstances that led to the formation of these specific government coalitions.⁶ I thus analyse whether the government coalitions in which RRWPs have participated are predicted by the five coalition formation theories presented above. The objective of this analysis is to uncover the rationale behind the executive collaboration between mainstream parties and RRWPs and establish to what extent these parties’ office-and policy-seeking behaviour motivated this cooperation.

The predictions of office-oriented coalition formation theories are calculated on the basis of parliamentary seat distributions. Information on seat distributions has been collected from the *Political Data Yearbooks* published by the *European Journal of Political Research*. Information about the exact composition of the ten government coalitions under study has also been taken from this source. The predictions of policy-oriented coalition formation theories are calculated on the basis of parties’ left-right positions. Various practices to measure party positions exist (for overviews see Benoit and Laver, 2006; Laver 2001; Klingemann *et al.*, 2006), the most commonly used being expert surveys and the analysis of manifesto data. Expert surveys come with ‘a certain weight and legitimacy’, give a timely account of a party’s position, are ‘quick, easy, and comprehensive’ and generate ‘highly comparable and standardized data’ (Mair, 2001, p. 24, emphasis in original). The most important cross-national expert surveys have been administered by Castles and Mair (1984), Laver and Hunt (1992), Huber and Inglehart (1995), Lubbers (2001) and Benoit and Laver (2006). The use of expert surveys has several advantages over the analysis of manifesto data, especially when measuring the positions of RRWPs (Kitschelt, 2007). First, policy-oriented coalition formation theories implicitly assume that policy positions reflect the perceptions parties have of each other’s positions. Expert surveys approximate this character. Second, the assumptions made about the nature of the policy space in policy-oriented coalition formation theories (e.g. a unidimensional left-right scale on which parties are positioned) fit the design of this approach.⁷

Explanations for the rise to power of RRWPs

On the basis of the data described above I evaluate whether the ten government coalitions under investigation are predicted by the five coalition formation theories. [Table 2](#) shows that most government coalitions are predicted by a unique combination of theories, but several patterns nevertheless stand out. The Austrian governments are predicted by four and the Danish and Dutch governments by three coalition formation theories. The Berlusconi II government and the Bondevik II government are each predicted by two theories: the minimal connected winning and the minimal range theory. Both government coalitions are oversized, but need the extra parties that are included in the government coalition (the LN in the Italian case and V in the Norwegian case) to make the coalitions connected. The Berlusconi I and III governments are predicted by none of the office- or policy-oriented coalition formation theories. The government coalitions were clearly oversized and hence defeat the logic of the office-seeking theories. The unnecessary coalition members (the Centro Cristiano Democratico [CCD] in 1994 and the Movimento per l'Autonomia [MpA] in 2008) do not contribute to the formation of a connected coalition either and the inclusion of these parties thus also defeats the logic of the policy-oriented theories. In this sense, Italy can be considered an outlier.

What do these predictions tell us about the reasons behind the formation of these ten Cabinets? The minimal winning, the minimal connected winning and the minimal range theories clearly outperform the minimum size and bargaining proposition theories. The former theories each correctly predict more than half the government coalitions, while the latter only correctly predict 10 and 30 per cent, respectively. Of course, the minimal connected winning and the minimal range theories are refinements of the minimal winning theory and on these grounds should offer more detailed explanations for the rise to power of RRWPs. The minimal range theory seems particularly well placed to distinguish clearly between situations in which RRWPs join government coalitions and situations in which they are not able to realise their office aspirations, because it hardly ever predicts the inclusion of RRWPs in government coalitions when this has not occurred.⁸ The theory suggests that mainstream parties and RRWPs seek to minimise ideological diversity when they form government coalitions, suggesting that the policy distance between these parties is a crucial variable when one wants to explain the government participation of RRWPs.

[Table 2](#) Predictions of coalition formation theories

	<i>Minimal winning</i>	<i>Minimum size</i>	<i>Bargaining proposition</i>	<i>Minimal connected winning</i>	<i>Minimal range</i>
Schüssel I	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Schüssel II	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Rasmussen I	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Rasmussen II	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Rasmussen III	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Berlusconi I	No	No	No	No	No
Berlusconi II	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Berlusconi III	No	No	No	No	No
Balkenende I	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Bondevik II	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
% correctly predicted coalitions	60%	10%	30%	70%	70%

[Table 3a](#) Austria

		<i>Percentage of seats (change since last elections)</i>	<i>Left-right position (change since last elections)</i>	
1999	Die Grünen	7.4	+3.8	25
	Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs	33.2	-3.3	43
	Österreichische Volkspartei	26.9	0.0	63
2002	Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs	26.9	+6.2	85
	Die Grünen	10.0	+2.0	23
	Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs	36.5	+3.4	41
	Österreichische Volkspartei	42.3	+15.4	70
	Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs	9.5	-16.9	86

The paramount question of course is why policy distance is such an important factor and whether this is related to parties' desire to realise their office and policy goals, something the predictions of coalition formation theories cannot unveil. To identify parties' motives I assess the conditions under which the ten cabinets have been formed and analyse the coalition formation processes in which leaders of mainstream parties and RRWPs have bargained over coalition agreements and Cabinet portfolios. I focus especially on failed bargain attempts to determine why alternative coalitions did not form. Moreover, I look in more detail at seat distributions and party positions and the information these provide about coalition alternatives and potential costs and benefits parties might have perceived during the coalition formation process (see [Table 3a](#) to [3d](#)). First, I focus on those government coalitions that are predicted by the coalition formation theories and examine why these theories accurately

[Table 3b](#) Denmark

		<i>Percentage of seats (change since last elections)</i>	<i>Left-right position (change since last elections)</i>
2001	Enhedslisten – De Rød-Grønne	2.4	-0.3
	Socialistisk Folkeparti	6.4	-1.2
	Socialdemokratiet	29.1	-6.8
	Radikale Venstre	5.2	+1.3
	Kristeligt Folkeparti	2.3	-0.2
	Venstre – Danmarks Liberale Parti	31.3	+7.2
	Konservative Folkeparti	9.1	+0.2
	Dansk Folkeparti	12.0	+4.6
			74
			-5
2005	Enhedslisten – De Rød-Grønne	2.4	+1.0
	Socialistisk Folkeparti	9.2	-0.4
	Socialdemokratiet	25.8	-3.3
	Radikale Venstre	9.2	+4.0
	Venstre – Danmarks Liberale Parti	29.0	-2.2
	Konservative Folkeparti	10.3	+1.2
	Dansk Folkeparti	13.3	+1.3
			74
			0
			75
2007	Enhedslisten – De Rød-Grønne	2.3	-1.2
	Socialistisk Folkeparti	13.1	+7.0
	Socialdemokratiet	25.7	-0.3
	Radikale Venstre	5.1	-4.1
	Ny Alliance	2.8	+2.8
	Venstre – Danmarks Liberale Parti	26.3	-2.8
	Konservative Folkeparti	10.3	+0.1
	Dansk Folkeparti	14.3	+0.6
			74
			0
			75
			0

predict their formation. A more in-depth analysis of the formation of the Austrian, Danish, Dutch and Norwegian governments that are predicted by the minimal range theory confirms that policy distances between parties are a crucial factor in explaining the formation of the new alliances. It demonstrates that in each of these countries two reinforcing trends have made the formation of minimal range coalitions possible. On the one hand, an electoral shift from the left to the right has changed the balance of power in parliament in favour of the

Table 3c Netherlands

		<i>Percentage of seats (change since last elections)</i>	<i>Left-right position (change since last elections)</i>
2002	Socialistische Partij	5.9	+2.4
	GroenLinks	7.0	-0.3
	Partij van de Arbeid	15.1	-13.9
	Democraten66	5.1	-3.9
	Leefbaar Nederland	1.6	+1.6
	ChristenUnie	2.5	-0.6
	Christen Democratisch Appèl	27.9	+9.5
	Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie	15.4	-9.3
	Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij	1.7	-0.1
	Lijst Pim Fortuyn	17.0	+17.0
			87

latter, making the formation of right-wing coalitions, that is, coalitions without (too many) centre parties, mathematically possible and politically viable. On the other hand, positional shifts of mainstream parties to the right and RRWPs to the centre have brought the two groups of parties closer together and have enabled the formation of ideologically compact coalitions. Second, I study the government coalitions that are not predicted by the coalition formation theories, which have all been formed in Italy, to find out why policy distances matter less in this case. Detailed analysis of the Italian case reveals that the Italian electoral system provides parties with certain incentives which ensure that they value votes more than policy. I subsequently demonstrate that vote-seeking behaviour also plays an important role in Austria and the Netherlands, although in a slightly different way than in Italy.

Table 3d Norway

		<i>Percentage of seats (change since last elections)</i>	<i>Left-right position (change since last elections)</i>
2001	Sosialistisk Venstreparti	12.5	+6.5
	Senterpartiet	5.6	-2.4
	Det Norske Arbeiderparti	24.4	-10.7
	Kristelig Folkeparti	12.4	-1.3
	Venstre	3.9	-0.5
	Fremskrittspartiet	14.6	-0.7
	Høyre	21.2	+6.9
			82
			+4

The electoral shift to the right

Although the electoral success of RRWPs has been studied extensively, little attention has been paid to the systemic effects the growth of these parties has had on West European party

systems. In most West European countries RRWPs have made inroads into the electorates of both mainstream left and mainstream right parties. In some countries mainstream left parties have lost most to RRWPs, while in other countries it has been the mainstream right that has suffered most from the emergence of RRWPs. In the former countries the rise of RRPWs has directly benefited the right as a whole, as this bloc has progressively become stronger at the expense of the left-wing bloc. In the latter countries this process has taken more time, since volatility primarily occurred within the right-wing bloc. However, even the latter group of countries' RRWPs have started to gain support among voters who traditionally cast their ballot for the left, thus making the pendulum swing to the right in these countries as well. With the right as a whole gaining more seats, either because mainstream right parties, RRWPs or both types of party fare well at the polls, right-wing coalitions become an attractive option for mainstream right parties. First, these coalitions become mathematically possible and politically viable, because they control a sufficiently large majority in parliament. Second, they become ideologically compact, because fewer parties are required to build and sustain these coalitions. Centre parties no longer need to be included in these coalitions in order to secure a parliamentary majority, which reduces their ideological heterogeneity.

The swing of the pendulum to the right is clearly observable in each of the cases under study. From 1986 to 1999 the FPÖ grew at the expense of the Austrian mainstream left (the SPÖ) and mainstream right (the ÖVP). Already in 1993 a right-wing parliamentary majority had emerged, but prior to 1999 the basis for an ÖVP–FPÖ government was very small. Between 1983 and 1996 the combined number of seats of the ÖVP and the FPÖ fluctuated between 93 and 95, which made the 'cushion' against defections and other problems that coalition governments have to face between one and three seats. This type of majority is largely insufficient to secure the survival of a government coalition, especially when the stability and internal coherence of one of the coalition partners is not assured (Müller and Jenny, 2000, p. 151). The results of the elections to the Austrian *Nationalrat* in 1999 shifted the balance of power in parliament to the right, since the FPÖ won a considerable number of seats at the expense of the ÖVP and SPÖ (see [Table 3a](#)). The gains of the FPÖ fundamentally changed the Austrian coalition game, because they made the formation of a *Kleine Koalition* not only mathematically possible, but also politically viable. After the 2002 elections the balance of power in the *Nationalrat* did not change, despite the severe losses of the FPÖ and the large gains of the ÖVP. The right-wing bloc remained significantly larger than the left-wing bloc, making continuation of the *Kleine Koalition* possible.

In Denmark the formation of the Rasmussen governments became possible after the 2001 elections produced the first right-wing majority in the *Folketinget* since the Second World War. In the elections support for the mainstream right (V) and the radical right (DF) increased, while the centre parties (CD, KrF and RV) lost ground (see [Table 3b](#)). Consequently, the balance of power in the *Folketinget* shifted to the right and the centre parties lost their pivotal

role in Danish politics (Qvortrup, 2002). Together with the other mainstream right party (KF) V was able to form a minority coalition, which relied on the parliamentary support of the DF. In 2005 continuation of the new government was a central theme in the election campaign. Prime Minister Rasmussen explicitly asked voters to ‘renew and extend the mandate of his Liberal–Conservative coalition government’ (Pedersen, 2005, p. 1101). Satisfied with the government’s performance the voters granted the government coalition this mandate; the DF and KF each won two seats, while V lost four seats. The right-wing bloc thus remained the largest in the *Folketinget*, the government coalition maintained its majority and continued in office (Bille, 2006). In 2007 a largely similar situation occurred, with continuation of the Rasmussen II Cabinet at stake at the elections. This time, however, the government coalition barely managed to hold on to its parliamentary majority. The emergence of a new party, *Ny Alliance* (NA), which won five seats in the *Folketinget* at the expense of V, weakened the basis of the government coalition. However, in the absence of a viable alternative coalition, the government coalition continued in office despite commanding only 94 of the 179 parliamentary seats. At the time of writing the Rasmussen Cabinet still governs with the support of the DF.

In the Dutch and Norwegian cases the pendulum has swung to the right as well, but in contrast to the Austrian and Danish cases the main centre parties have managed to hold on to their pivotal positions. In the Netherlands the 2002 election created a landslide victory for the newly founded LPF, making a centre-right government of CDA, LPF and VVD the ‘only realistic option’ (Lucardie, 2003, p. 1034). The success of the LPF – the party won 17.0 per cent of the vote and became the second largest party in parliament – changed the balance of power in the Dutch parliament to the right (see [Table 3c](#)) and traditional government coalitions were no longer mathematically possible.⁹ According to Paul Lucardie and Gerrit Voerman (2007, pp. 252–3), several new coalitions could have been formed, but only one was considered viable given the clear message voters had sent by supporting the LPF:

Even the dramatic 2002 election results allowed several options: a ‘Scandinavian option’ of a minority government led by the largest party – the CDA – and supported by VVD, LPF and/or the small Protestant parties; a centre-left coalition of CDA, PvdA and Green Left; or a ‘Flemish option’ of a grand coalition of CDA, PvdA, and VVD imposing a cordon sanitaire on the LPF. However, these options were incompatible with the consociational political culture of the Netherlands. Consociationalism required reconciliation of the emerging conflict between populist opposition and elitist government, in other words: involving the LPF in a coalition, in order to pacify the unrest and discontent mobilized by Fortuyn and exacerbated by his violent death.

In Norway the centre parties did lose a considerable number of seats in the 2001 elections and the parliamentary basis of their Centre alliance shrank from 42 to 34 seats, but the gains made by the mainstream right (H) and radical right (FrP) were insufficient to form a right-wing government without KrF and V (see [Table 3d](#)). Formation of a centre-right coalition that included these four parties was no straightforward matter, though. Although KrF had a strong

bargaining position as pivotal party, H was the largest party on the right and thus tried to obtain the prime ministership. As a consequence of the complex bargaining situation the coalition negotiations between KrF, V, H and FrP were protracted and broke down several times. A first round of coalition negotiations was led by H but shortly after the start of these negotiations it became clear that it would be very difficult to reach an agreement about the distribution of Cabinet portfolios. The appointment of the prime minister proved especially to be a problem, as both the leaders of H and KrF aspired to this position, and several weeks after the 2001 elections the parties left the negotiating table without agreement. After the breakdown of the negotiations H investigated the viability of a one-party minority government, but FrP leader Hagen refused to support a government with a small parliamentary basis. Consequently, H was forced to reopen negotiations with KrF, V and FrP and give the prime ministership to KrF. These instances of bargaining failure demonstrate that the office-seeking behaviour of H and KrF caused problems during the negotiations, and forced parties to return to the negotiation table and conclude a coalition agreement.

The parties' positional shift to the right

From the 1980s onwards many mainstream parties have felt the electoral pressure of the rise of RRWPs. To counter these pressures and win back voters who had defected to RRWPs, many mainstream parties have started to pay attention to the issues on which RRWPs campaign and have also moved their position on these issues closer to those of RRWPs. Pippa Norris (2005, p. 266) notes in this regard that 'after a national election where a radical right party registers a sharp gain in their share of votes and/or seats, then in subsequent elections other mainstream parties in the same country who may feel threatened will respond (particularly parties on the centre-right) by moving their own position further right-wards'. As a result of this process, which some scholars have described as the 'contagion of the right', disagreements between mainstream parties and RRWPs over the general contours of immigration and integration policy have diminished significantly in recent years and a convergence of the positions of mainstream parties and RRWPs is visible in several West European countries, most notably those included in this study (Bale, 2003; Carter, 2005; Heinisch, 2003; Meguid, 2005; Minkenberg, 1998; Van Spanje, 2010).¹⁰

A detailed analysis of the positions of mainstream parties and RRWPs in Austria, Denmark, the Netherlands and Norway highlights how this process has facilitated the formation of right-wing government coalitions. In Austria the ÖVP could choose in 1999 and 2002 between a *Grosse Koalition* with the SPÖ and a *Kleine Koalition* with the FPÖ. The policy ranges of these two coalitions were roughly equal, as a result of a rightward move of the ÖVP during the late 1990s and a move to the centre of the FPÖ during the same period (see [Table 3a](#)).

According to Kurt Luther (2006, p. 379), the programmatic reorientation of the FPÖ was explicitly designed to create ‘better conditions for negotiations with … the ÖVP’. After the convergence of the ÖVP and the FPÖ, the two parties shared a similar outlook on most economic issues, socio-cultural issues and religious issues, while the ÖVP and SPÖ shared such an outlook only on issues related to European integration and political reform (Müller and Jenny, 2000).

Similar observations can be made about the cooperation between the Danish mainstream right and the DF. The Rasmussen I, II and III Cabinets came about because policy distances between the parties involved (V, KF and DF) were minimal (see [Table 3b](#)). After coalition negotiations that have been characterised as brief and ‘rather uncomplicated’ (Bille, 2002, p. 946), V and KF presented a comprehensive government programme in which immigration was an important theme. It included, among others, the creation of a special Ministry for Refugees, Immigrants and Integration, something desired by the DF (Bille, 2002; Bjorklund and Andersen, 2002).¹¹ The cooperation between these parties came as no surprise, as V and KF had significantly altered their policy stances in the years prior to these elections. The two mainstream right parties took up the immigration issue after their defeat in the 1993 elections and gradually moved towards a more restrictive stance on this issue in subsequent years (Green-Pedersen and Krogstrup, 2008; Green-Pedersen and Odalm, 2008). Not only did this strategic decision refuel the electoral success of V and KF, it also facilitated the formation of the Rasmussen I and II Cabinets, as policy differences between these parties and the DF decreased over time. Policy considerations also explain why newcomer NY was not invited to join the coalition of V, KF and DF in 2007, even though the parliamentary basis of this coalition had been eroded in the elections that were held that year. Given the policy difference between NY, on the one hand, and DF, on the other, most notably in the area of immigration policy, inclusion of the former party in the coalition was not an option (Bille, 2008, p. 960).

In the Netherlands a rightward shift of the mainstream parties facilitated the formation of a right-wing Cabinet as well. The rise of the LPF caused a realignment of Dutch parties along the socio-cultural dimension (Pellikaan *et al.*, 2003; 2007), with mainstream parties emphasising cultural issues in their party programmes and adopting tougher stances on immigration and integration issues (Van Kersbergen and Krouwel, 2008). However, the shift to the right of the mainstream right (including the CDA) was more significant than that of the mainstream left, creating divergence between the parties that usually governed together (Van der Brug *et al.*, 2009). On immigration and integration issues, as well as on other issues that were prominent in the campaign in the run-up to the 2002 elections (e.g. health care, education and security), the CDA and LPF promoted stances that were largely similar, which explains these parties’ desire to govern together. Their stances were also not very different to those of the VVD, which is why the latter party was invited to complement the government coalition, even though it had lost a significant number of seats in the 2002 elections (see [Table](#)

[3c](#)). At the outset of the coalition negotiations the LPF underlined the policy rationale for a centre-right Cabinet when it declared that:

Especially the CDA and VVD have priorities similar to ours. According to us, the differences can be overcome, also in the domain of migration policy. Even though our party declares without hesitation that the Netherlands is not an immigration country, our stance is not fundamentally different from that of the CDA or VVD.¹²

Moreover, the quick passing of the coalition negotiations indicates that the CDA, LPF and VVD found it easy to reach a coalition agreement. They managed to conclude a strategic agreement after a mere 68 days at the negotiating table, which is very fast by Dutch standards.

In Norway the situation after the 2001 elections was slightly different, as the KrF had not lost its pivotal role to one of the mainstream right parties. Since the latter parties had to rely on the centre party to create a viable government coalition, their coalition would naturally be more ideologically diverse than in the Austrian, Danish or Dutch cases (see [Table 3d](#)). The ideological heterogeneity of the prospective government coalition created tensions during the coalition negotiations. These broke down several times, but the lack of an alternative, that is, the existence of an ideologically more compact coalition that could count on the support of a parliamentary majority, forced the parties back to the negotiating table. Eventually they concluded a coalition agreement, but it lacked ideological coherence and included proposals simultaneously to reform environmental policies (desired by V), family policies (desired by KrF) and tax policies (desired by H).¹³ On crucially more important issues, such as EU membership, the coalition partners did not manage to reach an agreement and it has been suggested that the Bondevik II Cabinet would have disintegrated if these issues had been put on the agenda (Aalberg, 2003).

An Italian anomaly?

Two of the three Italian governments that include RRWPs are not predicted by any of the coalition formation theories. To a large extent this is a consequence of the strategic incentives provided by the Italian electoral system, which make it attractive for parties to form pre-electoral government coalitions. In the early 1990s the Italian political system collapsed under the pressure of a number of corruption scandals (most notably the *Tagentopoli* action), in which many of the established parties played a prominent role. One of the main reactions to the crisis of the Italian political system consisted of a series of electoral reforms, which were approved by referenda in April and August 1993. Like the old electoral system, the new one consisted of two components, one proportional in nature, the other majoritarian in orientation. In the new system the share of seats attributed by a proportional formula was reduced from three-quarters to one-quarter. Conversely, the share of seats allocated by means of a plurality vote increased from 25 per cent to 75 per cent. So the balance in the electoral system clearly

shifted from proportionality to majoritarianism (Katz, 1996; 2001). According to Mark Donovan (2002, p. 107), this type of electoral system provides at least two incentives for alliance formation: ‘at the SMC level, parties not belonging to a major alliance are likely to find their candidates systematically defeated unless they are the largest of the competing parties and/or their vote is geographically concentrated; at the parliamentary level, the alliance that obtains a majority of seats forms the government’. Arguably, there is also a third incentive in the form of an electoral threshold that motivates small parties to coalesce in order to gain parliamentary representation.¹⁴

As has been demonstrated by Sona Nadenichek Golder (2006), electoral coalitions are essentially proto-government coalitions. They are established to signal coalition preferences and offer the public a clear choice of government alternatives. Consequently, successful electoral coalitions are normally transformed into government coalitions. When these government coalitions are oversized, the unnecessary member(s) are retained. This is exactly what happened in Italy in 1994, 2001 and 2008. In the 1994 elections the left-wing parties were represented by the *Progressisti* whereas the right-wing parties were represented by two coalitions, the *Polo delle Libertà* (in which the LN participated) in the north and the *Polo del Buon Governo* (of which the AN was a part) in the south. The right-wing coalitions won a clear majority in the Italian parliament (364 out of 630 seats) and thus were entitled to form the government coalition. The CCD and UDC (Unione di Centro) were not needed for the formation of a minimal winning coalition, but the parties were nevertheless rewarded for their participation in the pre-electoral coalitions with Cabinet positions. Similar situations occurred in 2001 and 2008, when it was the LN and the MpA that were unnecessary for the formation of a government coalition, but that were nevertheless rewarded for their contribution to a right-wing victory.

The Italian example demonstrates that political parties are not only office and policy seekers, but that they also seek to maximise their share of votes, usually for instrumental reasons. After all, in order to obtain Cabinet portfolios or influence policy making, parties first have to be successful at the polls. The Italian electoral system connects parties’ vote-seeking and office-seeking behaviour in a straightforward manner. Parties cooperate in the electoral and executive arena in order to maximise their votes and thus their chance of getting into office. Although Austria and the Netherlands use proportional electoral systems, a relationship between mainstream parties’ office- and vote-seeking strategies can be found in these countries as well.¹⁵

In Austria the ÖVP became increasingly aware of the public’s dissatisfaction with the *Grosse Koalition* during the 1990s and realised that continuation of this government formula would further erode its electoral position. The polls published during the coalition negotiations, which took place in November and December 1999 and January 2000, also confirmed disapproval of the ÖVP’s initial decision to continue the *Grosse Koalition*, as well as discontent with the slow

pace of the coalition negotiations (Kopeinig and Kotanko, 2000; Plasser and Ulram, 2000, p. 192). Hence, the ÖVP estimated that ending the negotiations with the SPÖ and forming *Schwarz-Blau* could stop its electoral losses. Given the widespread dissatisfaction with the *Grosse Koalition*, the ÖVP leadership even thought that voters might return to the party when a change in coalition practices had been established. More importantly, expectations existed that the FPÖ would suffer electorally from the responsibilities that come with being in office. The party's long absence from government and its populist character made it especially vulnerable to negative incumbency effects. There is substantial evidence that the ÖVP anticipated that the FPÖ would have to face the electoral consequences of its government participation. On the basis of interviews conducted with ÖVP politicians, Volker Ahlemeyer (2006, p. 119) observes that 'the parties' politicians voluntarily admit that their objective of integrating the FPÖ into government was also to undermine the "opposition reflex", i.e. the FPÖ's capacity to attract voters who cast their vote rather "against" the government than in favour of the opposition'. According to Richard Heinisch (2002, p. 229), Wolfgang Schüssel concluded that 'trying to marginalize the FPÖ had not worked and that the only way to contain Haider was to bring the FPÖ in a position where they had to exercise governmental responsibility' (see also Müller, 2006, p. 295). By governing with the FPÖ the ÖVP thus sought to obtain office and maximise votes at the same time. The large shifts in votes that were registered at the 2003 elections showed the ÖVP that its strategy worked and formed an impetus to continue the coalition with the FPÖ.¹⁶

In the Netherlands support for the existence of strong interactions between parties' office- and vote-seeking strategies can be found as well. The severe electoral losses of the incumbent parties in the 2002 earthquake elections were generally seen as evidence of voter dissatisfaction with the 'purple' government coalition in which liberals and social democrats had worked together for eight years in spite of their ideological differences. At the start of the coalition formation process most leading politicians interpreted the election results as a clear demand for political change (Kamerstukken 61855). CDA leader Jan Peter Balkenende stated that 'the results of the elections held on Wednesday 15 May 2002 show that the Dutch population has a clear desire for change', while his *GroenLinks* colleague Paul Rosenmöller concluded that 'the large gains of the CDA and LPF and the fact that these parties together with the VVD have become the three largest parties of the country point in one direction. The voter wants the pendulum to swing to the right'. Minutes of the parliamentary debates that took place during the 2002 coalition negotiations demonstrate that most mainstream parties believed the election results reflected a clear preference on the part of the electorate for a government coalition of CDA, LPF and VVD (Handelingen 7434A02; Kamerstukken 61855). Although there is little to suggest that the CDA and VVD actively sought to neutralise the electoral success of the LPF by giving the party governmental responsibility, they clearly took electoral dynamics into consideration when they invited the party to join their government.

Concluding remarks

This article has investigated the recent government participation of RRWPs in Austria, Denmark, Italy, the Netherlands and Norway. It examined the rationale behind the executive cooperation between mainstream right parties, on the one hand, and RRWPs, on the other, using office- and policy-oriented coalition formation theories. The article demonstrates that the recent inclusion of RRWPs in West European Cabinets, and the reliance of mainstream parties on RRWPs as support parties, are a consequence of the office- and policy-seeking behaviour of mainstream right parties. The vast majority of government coalitions in which RRWPs have participated are predicted by the minimal winning, the minimal connected winning and the minimal range theories, indicating that mainstream right parties believe cooperation with RRWPs to be strategically advantageous. More specifically, the high predictive power of the minimal range theory suggests that, by governing with RRWPs, mainstream right parties seek to maximise their control over Cabinet portfolios and policy making.

Analysis of the circumstances under which the Austrian, Danish, Dutch, Italian and Norwegian government coalitions that include RRWPs have been formed shows that office and policy indeed play an important role when mainstream right parties decide to invite RRWPs to join their coalitions. Mainstream right parties start to consider RRWPs as coalition partners once the electoral pendulum swings to the right and right-wing government coalitions become mathematically possible and politically viable. In many West European countries the electoral success of RRWPs contributes significantly to the size of the right-wing bloc and it can therefore be claimed that these parties have engineered their rise to power. Additionally, the electoral success of RRWPs has provided mainstream right parties with incentives to move to the right on cultural issues, such as immigration, integration and security, which facilitates coalition formation between these parties. Thus, the growth of RRWPs has driven a wedge between the mainstream left and right and has forced centre parties to take sides with either the social democrats or the conservatives and liberals. In other words, a process of bipolarisation has been set in motion, which creates a clear policy rationale for cooperation between mainstream right parties and RRWPs. This process has been reinforced by the new alliances that have been formed between these parties in a number of West European countries, as many social democratic and left-leaning centre parties are vehemently opposed to the government participation of RRWPs.

This study also shows that mainstream parties consider RRWPs not only as (potential) allies, but also as competitors. Consequently, office and policy are not the only reasons why mainstream parties integrate RRWPs in government coalitions. Votes are equally important and the inclusion of RRWPs in government alliances is often part of a broader strategy to

neutralise the electoral success of these parties. Unfortunately, the coalition formation theories used in this article are unable to capture these dynamics, but it has been noted elsewhere that parties' long-term vote-seeking strategies might coincide or conflict with their short-term office-seeking strategies (Lupia and Strøm, 2008). By cooperating with RRWPs mainstream right parties have the possibility to maximise control over office, policy *and* votes, something that is not possible when they govern with centre or mainstream left parties. The recent government participation of RRWPs is thus the logical consequence of the electoral growth of these parties and the effects this has on the strategic behaviour of mainstream parties in West European democracies. If RRWPs continue to be successful at the polls, it is likely that West European party systems will become even more polarised and that more alliances between mainstream right parties and RRWPs will be formed.

[Table 4](#) Dutch Election Results 2010

Percentage of seats (change since last elections)		
Socialistische Partij	10.0	-6.7
GroenLinks	6.7	+2.0
Partij voor de Dieren	1.3	0.0
Partij van de Arbeid	20.0	-2.0
Democraten66	6.7	+4.7
ChristenUnie	3.3	-0.7
Christen Democratisch Appèl	14.0	-13.3
Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie	20.7	+6.0
Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij	1.3	0.0
Partij voor de Vrijheid	16.0	+10.0

Post scriptum

After this article was first submitted to *Political Studies*, Geert Wilders' *Partij voor de Vrijheid* (PVV) gained 15.4 per cent of the vote in the general elections held in the Netherlands on 9 June 2010. The party became a crucial player in the coalition formation process, because it could make or break a right-wing majority (see [Table 4](#)). Although the PVV was not invited to join the Rutte I Cabinet, it did conclude a *gedoogakkoord* (support agreement) with the liberal-conservative *Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie* (VVD) and the Christian democratic *Christen Democratisch Appèl* (CDA). The support agreement contains detailed

information about the Cabinet proposals the PVV will support, including budget cuts and reforms in the areas of elderly care, immigration and integration, and law and order, and also stipulates that the party will not vote in favour of any motion of no confidence submitted by other opposition parties.

Notes

The author would like to thank the anonymous referees of *Political Studies* as well as Cas Mudde, Kris Deschouwer and Stefaan Walgrave for their constructive feedback on earlier versions of this article.

¹ The ‘war of words’ about the appropriate terminology to describe these parties is still ongoing (Mudde, 1996; 2007). This article employs the term RRWP because of its distinctive capacities and because the term strikes the right balance between exclusiveness on the one hand and inclusiveness on the other (Zaslove, 2007, p. 66). To define the ideology of RRWPs this article follows Betz (1994, p. 4), who argues that these parties are *right wing* in their ‘rejection of individual and social equality’, *radical* in their ‘rejection of the established socio-cultural and social-political system’ and *populist* in their ‘unscrupulous use and instrumentalization of diffuse public sentiments of anxiety and disenchantment’ and ‘appeal to the common man and his allegedly superior common sense’. In line with existing classifications (Carter, 2005; Norris, 2005) this article identifies fifteen West European RRWPs that have (had) parliamentary representation, of which seven have been in office: the *Alleanza Nazionale* (AN), *Bündnis Zukunft Österreich* (BZÖ), *Dansk Folkeparti* (DF), *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs* (FPÖ), *Fremskrittspartiet* (FrP), *Lega Nord* (LN), *Lijst Pim Fortuyn* (LPF) and *Schweizerische Volkspartei* (SVP).

² RRWPs that have supported minority governments are de facto coalition members, because they are part of ‘a more or less permanent coalition that ensures acceptance of all or almost all government proposals’ (De Swaan, 1973, p. 85; see also Bale and Bergman, 2006, p. 422; Strøm, 1990, pp. 60–1).

³ To study RRWPs by means of ‘party-neutral’ theories is more accepted when it comes to the study of the electoral success of these parties. Some of the more significant conclusions about the emergence of RRWPs have been reached on the basis of a ‘party-neutral’ theoretical framework (e.g. Carter, 2005; Kitschelt, 1995; Meguid, 2005; Norris, 2005).

⁴ Traditionally, political parties are seen as office, policy and vote seekers (Müller and Strøm, 1999). Few coalition formation theories address the fact that, in addition to office and policy, parties also try to maximise votes (but see Lupia and Strøm, 2008; Narud, 1996).

⁵ Contrary to what the name might suggest, policy-oriented theories ‘maintain as a fundamental assumption the notion that politicians are motivated above all else by a desire to get into office’ (Laver and Schofield, 1990, p. 91).

⁶ This approach also helps to avoid the many pitfalls associated with the empirical testing of coalition formation theories (Morton, 1999). Moreover, it circumvents the constraints imposed on any statistical analysis by the data set. With a small number of cases and a limited number of RRWPs in office it would have been extremely difficult to test the five

different (but related) theories, since any statistical model would likely have been overdetermined.

- [7](#) To create comparable left-right estimates on the basis of the five expert surveys I follow Carter (2005, pp. 113–4).
- [8](#) Between 1981 and 2008 there are only three cases in which the minimal range theory predicts coalitions that include RRWPs when these have not been formed (in Austria in 1986 and 1990 and in Norway in 1989).
- [9](#) The Netherlands has traditionally been governed by centre-left or centre-right Cabinets, even though the so-called Purple Cabinet (PvdA, D66 and VVD) assumed office between 1994 and 2002.
- [10](#) Arguably, mainstream right parties could also be motivated by ideological considerations and societal inputs to change their positions on immigration and integration issues (Bale, 2008).
- [11](#) In addition to policy concessions the DF also received the chairmanship of three parliamentary committees. In return for the concessions and chairmanships the DF supported the minority coalition by voting in favour of its budgets and legislative proposals (Bille, 2002).
- [12](#) Handelingen 7434A02.
- [13](#) The pivotal position of KrF and the ideological differences between this party and the FrP also explain why the position of the latter party within the coalition has always been weaker than that of its Danish counterpart. The support status of the FrP has never been formalised in ways similar to that of the DF and the Norwegian party has received fewer spoils than the Danish party. In return for its support the FrP received the chairmanship of two parliamentary committees, as well as limited policy concessions.
- [14](#) In 2005 a second series of reforms of the electoral system took place. The single-member districts were replaced by multi-member districts and the allocation of seats to coalitions and parties occurs on the basis of proportionality. However, the new electoral system still includes strong incentives to form pre-electoral coalitions, since the largest coalitions receive a majority bonus and parties participating in a coalition benefit from a lower electoral threshold (Massetti, 2006).
- [15](#) Because minority governments are common in Denmark and Norway, vote-seeking strategies of mainstream parties are less relevant when explaining the cooperation between these parties and RRWPs.
- [16](#) There is some evidence that the FPÖ anticipated that it would lose votes when in office, but the party clearly underestimated the magnitude of the losses (Luther, 2008).

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Conclusion

Studying populist radical right parties *and* politics in the twenty-first century

Cas Mudde

With (some) populist radical right parties reaching new heights, and even becoming the biggest party in their country, the ‘insatiable demand’ for information will increase only further. An ever-growing group of scholars will be happy to accommodate, as many have been doing for over two decades now. But it is important that future scholarship keeps up with the many important developments within populist radical right parties *and* politics as well as the growing gap between them.

In the twentieth century populist radical right *politics* was the almost exclusive domain of populist radical right *parties*. Few other parties would problematize immigrants and immigration, linking them to social problems such as crime, terrorism, and unemployment. This made it relatively easy to argue that ‘the extreme right is easily recognizable’ (e.g. Anastasakis 2000: 4) and forgo the more challenging task of clearly conceptualizing and categorizing individual parties. Almost every new party that said anything negative about immigration was an ‘extreme right’ or ‘anti-immigrant’ party (e.g. Fennema 1997). For instance, in the early 1980s the Dutch Center Party (CP) was labeled ‘extreme right,’ and even ‘fascist,’ on the basis of just one point in its ten-point program: ‘The Netherlands is not an immigration country, thus stop the stream of foreigners’ (see Van Holsteyn & Mudde 1988). The fact that the first part actually expressed the official position of the Dutch state, which hasn’t changed since, did not matter.

But where we used to see too much in the past, we see too little today. Neither our conceptualizations nor our categorizations have been updated to the fundamentally different political context of the twenty-first century. In many ways they still reflect a Europe in which immigration and multiculturalism were either ignored or promoted by the political mainstream. Compare that to today, where, even before the refugee crisis, most of the key leaders of the political mainstream have problematized immigration and multiculturalism (e.g. David Cameron, Angela Merkel, Nicolas Sarkozy). In fact, the new political correctness states that ‘multiculturalism’ has failed and that mass immigration is a logistic problem at best and

an existential threat at worst. In this brave new world old concepts and categorizations are increasingly at odds; for instance, many mainstream parties, such as the Bavarian Christian Social Union (CSU), the Dutch People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) and the Slovak Direction-Social Democracy (Smer-SD), would qualify as 'anti-immigrant' on the basis of some earlier definitions and classifications.

But not only has the broader political context changed, so has the populist radical right. Street politics have become a more integral part of the broader movement, in part a consequence of a less repressive climate. And within the populist radical right party family diversity has increased even further. Contemporary populist radical right parties differ fundamentally in terms of: (1) historical origins, with some originating in the political mainstream (like PVV and SVP) and others in the extreme right margins (such as the SD); (2) electoral support, ranging from 0 to 30 percent in national elections; (3) political relevance, spanning parties that have never entered parliament (e.g. PNR) to those with multiple governmental experience (e.g. LN, SNS); (4) organizational structure, from the one-party PVV to the mass party FN; and (5) longevity, ranging from newly founded parties like Dawn of Direct Democracy (now Dawn-National Coalition) to those founded forty or more years ago (e.g. FN, FPÖ, SVP).

In the rest of this final chapter I will highlight the most important transformations in the first three decades of the populist radical right and speculate about the possible transformative consequences of the multiple crises that are shaking the foundations of European politics today. I will also outline some of the new research questions that future scholarship should address to keep up with the transformation of the populist radical right. In the final section of the chapter I will argue that future scholarship should be more aware of the growing separation between populist radical right *parties* and *politics* and suggest ways in which future studies can address this.

Ideology and issues

While the core ideology of the populist radical right remains the same, by definition, there have been important changes in the expression of nativism, authoritarianism, and populism as well as in the political issues to which these features are connected by populist radical right groups. Undoubtedly the most important transformation has taken place with regard to nativism in both the East and West. In Western Europe nativism was originally focused on the issue of immigration, targeting mostly actual immigrants (i.e. foreign-born, first-generation immigrants), defining them in ethnic-national terms. While this had already started to change in the 1990s, the terrorist attacks of 9/11 led to a fundamental transformation of nativism.

Today, the populist radical right focuses more on integration than immigration – in part because immigration is almost completely reduced to family reunion – which is linked to constructed ‘immigrants,’ i.e. second- or even third-generation which has been born in Europe, who are defined, first and foremost, in ethno-religious terms.

Whereas the ‘Turkish immigrant’ was mostly rejected as an ‘alien’ bringing different customs to the nation, the ‘Muslim immigrant’ is increasingly opposed as a threat to the nation and the state (see also *Zúquete*). Most (successful) populist radical right parties have now grudgingly accepted that home-born ‘immigrants’ cannot be repatriated, as they had proposed for their (grand)parents. Instead, they want them to assimilate, which, in many cases, means denouncing their religion as, in the view of people like PVV leader Geert Wilders Dutch/Europeans are fundamentally democratic and Islam is fundamentally anti-democratic and ‘therefore’ one cannot be both Muslim and Dutch/European (e.g. Vossen 2011).

The shift from an exclusively ethno-national to an increasingly ethno-religious discourse has also provided new possibilities for the populist radical right to link nativism to authoritarianism and exploit broader fears and prejudices. Linking Muslims to concerns about egalitarianism (e.g. gay rights and gender equality) and security (e.g. terrorism) the populist radical right can claim to defend mainstream liberal democratic values rather than (only) more marginal ethnic nationalist ideals. Not surprisingly, the change in the definition of ‘them’ has also led to a redefinition of ‘us,’ although the latter is mostly defined in much more general and vague terms. Concretely, the new fight against ‘global Islam’ has led to a new emphasis, and in some cases even new appreciation, of Christianity (e.g. in the cases of the FPÖ and PVV), though the exact details and importance of this change require more study (see Marzouki et al. 2016).

In the East, the recent influx of immigrants has expanded the traditional group of ‘enemies,’ which initially were almost exclusively indigenous minorities (such as Jews, Roma, and Hungarian or Russian speakers). The refugee crisis will make this transformation more complete and comprehensive, making the East Central European populist radical right even more similar to their brethren in the West. As could already be observed in 2015, Islamophobia is at least as widely spread in East Central Europe as in Western Europe and established populist radical right parties like the Movement for Better Hungary (Jobbik) and the Slovak National Party (SNS) have quickly updated their discourse.¹ While there has been a recent boom in comparative studies of populist radical right parties in East Central Europe, they were unfortunately written before the refugee crisis and might date even faster than usual (e.g. Minkenberg 2015; Pirro 2015; Pytlas 2016; Stojarová 2013).

Another major issue, related to all three ideological features, that has undergone significant change in the past years is European integration. As *Sofia Vasilopoulou* shows in this volume, populist radical right opposition to the process of European integration is complex and multifaceted (see also Mudde 2007). While most parties are still officially Eurosceptic, the

reforms that some propose are so fundamental that the difference with a Euroreject (i.e. anti-EU) position is almost completely rhetorical. That said, few systematic studies of European positions of the populist radical right party family exist, as most depend on fairly rudimentary cross-national datasets like the Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP) and the Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES), and even fewer have analyzed the trends and possible contagion within the family.

Finally, one of the few consensual ideas in the field has been rocked by recent developments, namely that extreme right parties cannot be successful in the ‘post-fascist era’ (see **Carter** and **Griffin**). Both Golden Dawn (XA) in Greece and People’s Party Our Slovakia (L’SNS) in Slovakia have neo-Nazi roots and have done little to hide these. And yet, they have won between 5 and 10 percent of the vote, making them more successful than many populist radical right parties in other (and their own) countries. This is not to say that the illiberal democratic ideology of the populist radical right (see **Betz** and **Johnson**) is being replaced by the anti-democratic ideology of the extreme right. So far L’SNS and XA are exceptions to the rule, but they are exceptions nevertheless, which require a critical assessment of previous beliefs to be adequately explained.

Parties, organizations and subcultures

Probably the least studied part of the populist radical right is the organizational structure of the various parts (see **Taggart**). While this is in part related to some real problems, such as the secretive nature and potential for violence, there have been changes here too. First of all, some more successful populist radical right parties have become more open to researchers, granting access to their leaders and supporters (e.g. see Albertazzi & McDonnell 2015; Art 2011; Klandermans & Mayer 2005). Second, the Internet and social media have provided much more insight into the organizations. Third, many groups organize more or less public events, ranging from party congresses to street protests, which can be observed through participant observation.

Clearly there is a huge diversity in terms of organizational structure and maturity within the broader populist radical right party family. On the one extreme is the Party for Freedom (PVV), which is literally a one-man operation, as Geert Wilders does not accept any other members, not even those that represent *his* party in national or supranational parliaments (see de Lange & Art 2011). On the other extreme we have a modern mass party like the FN, which has more than 80,000 members, a youth organization with an additional 25,000 members, and an organization that spans the full territory of France and its overseas territories (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser 2017). Obviously, the level of organizational elaboration and

institutionalization has an effect on the electoral and political relevance of a party, particularly after the breakthrough phase (see Mudde 2007). A better integration of the broader study of political parties could significantly improve the understanding of the role that organization plays in populist radical right party politics.

Another underdeveloped field of study is diffusion, or ‘contagion’ (Rydgren 2005; Van Hauweart 2014), within the populist radical right party family. We know that many parties have copied the discourse and propaganda of the FN, but so far accounts of more institutional assistance and collaboration remain mostly anecdotal and speculative. Of particular interest is the possible effect on individual parties of the renewed collaboration between a core group of populist radical right parties at the level of the European Parliament, first in the unsuccessful European Alliance for Freedom (EAF) and now in the Europe of Nations and Freedoms (ENF), as well as the lower-key Young European Alliance for Hope (YEAH), which unites the youth branches of much the same parties (see Mudde 2016). In fact, the youth branches of populist radical right parties remain almost completely unstudied, even though many of the party cadres, and a growing number of party leaders have come through their ranks, including Heinz-Christian Strache (FPÖ) and Tom van Grieken (VB).

The recent rise of populist radical right street politics should increase the interest in non-party organizations. Up to now only a few scholars have studied this level; mostly non-political scientists who focus exclusively on extreme right *groupuscules*. Studies of the English Defence League (EDL) could provide a blueprint for future research on new anti-refugees and Islamophobic groups (e.g. Busher 2016; Meleagrou-Hitchens & Brun 2013), such as the Czech Bloc Against Islam and the (mostly) German Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the West (PEGIDA). Of particular interest would be studies that look at the empirical and theoretical interconnections between party and street politics, including the overlap between activists and leaders but also whether they strengthen or weaken each other in terms of mobilization power and political impact.

The rise of the new Identitarian Movement might revive a largely disappeared interest in the ‘metapolitics’ of the populist radical right (e.g. Bar-On 2007). The Identitarians are an interesting mixture of intellectual and street politics, i.e. selling the older *nouvelle droite* (new right) ideology to youths through edgy and modern methods (Virchow 2015). More politically relevant is the so-called ‘Counter-Jihad’ movement, a loose network of Islamophobes that truly bridges the political mainstream and the extreme right (often with several degrees of separation, however). The ‘Counter-Jihad’ movement was thrown in the spotlight because of Anders Breivik’s horrific terrorist attack in Norway in 2011, but has so far been studied only sparsely. Most studies focus almost exclusively on the ideology of one or more authors and groups, largely ignoring the institutional structure of the broader movement and the organizational and personal connections between the various sections (e.g. Berntzen & Sandberg 2014; Goodwin 2013; Jackson 2014). Of particular importance here is Geert Wilders,

who truly is the spider in the global Islamophobic web. For instance, he has spoken at the founding of a new populist radical right party in Australia, at a PEGIDA demonstration in Germany, and before Republican Congressmen in the United States.

Leaders, members, and voters

Few accounts of populist radical right politics fail to emphasize the role of the leader and yet we know very little about them. Most leaders of successful populist radical right movements and parties are described as ‘charismatic’ without a clear definition of the term ‘charisma’ or of the mechanism of ‘charismatic leadership.’ As **Roger Eatwell** has shown, there are different types of charismatic leadership, linked to external and internal charisma. Both require more theoretical and empirical research before we can seriously talk about the importance of charismatic leadership to populist radical right politics.

At the same time, we should not be blind to other forms of leadership, including more bureaucratic and managerial styles, which may be less sexy but are at least as important for the day-to-day stewardship of complex organizations like political parties. While charismatic leadership is important to attract supporters and motivate activists, bureaucratic leadership is essential to expand and institutionalize the organization itself, so that it can not only break through but also persist (see Mudde 2007). Think of the former leader of the Danish People’s Party (DF), Pia Kjærsgaard, who made her small splinter group into one of the most successful populist radical right parties in Europe, or Bruno Mégret, who was essential to the institutionalization of the National Front (FN), before founding the (unsuccessful) National Republican Movement (MNR).

Unlike leaders, who are relatively easy to study, members of populist radical right organizations are much less accessible. Like most political organizations, the populist radical right is very protective of its membership, knowing that many are distrustful of researchers and worried about being publicly associated with the populist radical right. That said, some scholars have studied the membership of specific organizations and parties through interviews, participant observation, and surveys (e.g. Albertazzi & McDonnell 2015; Art 2011; Klandermans & Mayer 2005; Esser & Van Holsteyn 1998). These studies, while still limited to only a few parties and periods, have confirmed some and questioned other received wisdom about populist radical right activists. For example, while many party activists mirror the socio-demographic characteristics of the voters, some are more similar to activists in mainstream parties. Similarly, while populist radical right activists might confirm John D. May’s ‘Special Law of Curvilinear Disparity,’ which posits that the rank and file members of a political party tend to be more ideological than both the leadership of that party and its voters (May 1973),

its party members are far from extremist or irrational (e.g. Albertazzi & McDonnell 2015).

By far the best-studied group of populist radical right individuals is the electorate of populist radical right parties, even though even with regard to this group there are data limitations. As **Kai Arzheimer** has shown, the ‘typical’ voter of a populist radical right party is ‘male, young(ish), of moderate educational achievement and concerned about immigrants and immigration.’ That said, this ‘typical’ voter constitutes only a minority within the populist radical right electorate, particularly of more successful parties, and has many additional features in different party and country contexts. Unfortunately, most comparative studies throw all voters together, i.e. ‘pooling’ data from different elections in different countries, which obscures specific country, party, and period effects.

Given the profound diversity of populist radical right organizations, and their political contexts, it would make sense that the socio-demographics of its leaders, members and voters differ between organizations that are, for example, relatively new or well-established, electorally successful and unsuccessful, or operating in a more or less repressive political context. Successful and well-established populist radical right parties like the FN and Northern League (LN) will probably have a more heterogeneous support base (at all levels) than new and less successful parties like Dawn in the Czech Republic or National Democracy in Spain. At the same time, parties that operate in a more accepting political context, like DF in Denmark, will probably attract more people ‘with something to lose in society’ than those operating in strongly repressive societies, like Flemish Interest (VB) in Belgium and Sweden Democrats (SD) in Sweden, which could have an important effect at the cadre and leadership level (see Art 2011; Mudde & Van Holsteyn 2000).

While pretty much all political phenomena have a gender dimension, the populist radical right is a particularly gendered phenomenon. As many scholars have noted, populist radical right parties have the largest gender gap in their electorate, roughly two male voters for each female voter (see **Givens**). While this gender gap has been observed across countries and periods, there are variations, including some parties with no gender gap (e.g. Mudde 2007: chapter 4). Similarly, while women are clearly underrepresented among the leaders and members of populist radical right organizations, they are neither absent nor marginal (see **Blee**). In fact, today the populist radical right is the only party family in Europe that is dominated by a woman, Marine Le Pen, whose FN is the hegemon of the European populist radical right.

The last few years have finally seen a rise in scholarship on gendered aspects of populist radical right politics (e.g. Spierings et al. 2015). While many studies still center exclusively on the gender gap in electoral support of populist radical right parties (e.g. Harteveld et al. 2015; Immerzeel et al. 2015), some have focused on female party leadership (e.g. Meret 2015; Shields 2013), on party positions on gender (Akkerman 2015; Amesberger & Halbmayer 2002; De Lange & Mügge 2015), and on the effect of populist radical right organizations on ‘anti-gender

mobilization' (Kováts & Pőim 2015). There is much more to be studied and future studies should further integrate insights from feminist scholarship, as well as more positivist gender studies, with that of political parties in general and populist radical right parties in particular.

Causes

Explanations of populist radical right success have not changed much in the past two decades. The 1990s were the Golden Age of theorizing on populist radical right success, with the seminal works by **Piero Ignazi**, **Hans-Georg Betz** and **Herbert Kitschelt**, ironically all scholars who integrated theories of Green parties into the study of the populist radical right. Since then, hypotheses have largely replaced theories. Today most studies test small parts of larger theories, finding their own correlations, and disputing correlations of others. This has led to a lot of publications but precious little insight.

By now we know, roughly, that voters of populist radical right parties are generally concerned about corruption, crime, and immigration/immigrants, are disappointed by European integration and mainstream parties, and, not unimportantly, are still willing to participate in the electoral process. But even if a majority of voters of populist radical right parties share these (mostly populist radical right) concerns, they constitute only a minority of populist radical right voters, i.e. voters with populist radical right attitudes. In most countries a majority of the electorate shares these attitudes and concerns, but only a minority of them vote for populist radical right parties. Why this is the case is rarely asked.

This relates directly to the continuing dominance of the normal pathology thesis, which sees the populist radical right as a 'normal pathology' of western democracies (Scheuch & Klingemann 1967). However, as I have demonstrated for Western Europe (see **Mudde**), the populist radical right is better described as a 'pathological normalcy,' i.e. a radicalization of mainstream attitudes and concerns. They stand out in quantitative rather than qualitative terms: they are *more* concerned about the same issues as the rest, rather than concerned about different issues. Hence, in the vast majority of European countries the real question is: why do so *few* people with populist radical right attitudes and concerns vote for populist radical right parties? The answer to that question is to be found in the supply-side rather than the demand-side of populist radical right politics.

Unfortunately, the research designs of most studies of the causes of populist radical right success are not well-suited to answer this question. Quantitative cross-national studies depend on relatively simplistic data that are either available, or can be easily created, for a large number of countries and elections. Most of these studies lump all elections and parties together and thus miss the large diversity within the broader party family as well as the

specific complexities of the different political contexts. Third, and related, these studies do not distinguish between the phases of electoral breakthrough and electoral persistence (Mudde 2007), which logically have different explanations. Most importantly, while the populist radical right party is not a necessary factor in its electoral breakthrough, which often happens at a time when relatively little is known about the party, it is a crucial factor in explaining its persistence, and particularly lack thereof.

Future studies should be more conscious of the huge variety within the populist radical right party family as well as of the complexity of party politics. There is a need for theoretically and empirically more fine-grained analyses, which clearly outline the micro-foundations of the theoretical framework and, preferably as part of a nested analysis, analyze one or a few case studies in detail, using original data and process-tracing (e.g. Bennett 2010; Lieberman 2005). Moreover, these studies should include cases of both success and failure, as the latter are negative cases of success and can provide us with additional information.

Finally, it is important to critically assess some of the earlier insights, which might have held up in the 1990s, as well as some deviant cases. For example, it was generally believed that extreme right parties could not be electorally successful, given the stigma of fascism in postwar Europe, but the twenty-first century has seen the electoral breakthrough of extreme right parties, of which Golden Dawn in Greece has even achieved persistence, despite large state repression – another believed mitigating factor of success (see below). Similarly, most scholarship on political parties believes only parties with a strong organization can persist and yet the PVV, with only one member (Geert Wilders), has been a major player in Dutch politics for more than ten years now.

Consequences

Although the disproportionate interest in populist radical right parties has always been driven by concern over their impact on democracy, the consequences of the success of populist radical right parties have become a key topic of study only recently. Again, unfortunately, theoretical development is rapidly falling behind empirical progress. While initial studies focused on the processes of populist radical right impact (see Schain and Minkenberg), recent studies primarily try to ascertain consequences empirically, assuming influence rather than studying it (though see Carvalho 2014). Consequently, some of the correlations might be spurious, i.e. caused by a common underlying factor. For example, it makes sense that the increased concerns about immigration and integration have driven both the rise of populist radical right parties and the tightening of immigration legislation (see Mudde). Moreover, many studies hardly take into account other actors, such as center-right parties, which might also have an

electoral and ideological interest in a ‘right turn’ in European politics (e.g. Bale 2008).

So far, studies have mostly researched the impact of populist radical right parties on immigration and integration policies of governments and parties, although conclusions differ (see **Akkerman and Van Spanje**). Much more research is needed on other topics, which are at the core of many concerns, such as European integration and liberal democracy (see **Albertazzi and Mueller**). And it is particularly important to focus not only on successful cases, given that there are other political and social forces at work that push for a ‘right turn’ on issues like crime, European integration, immigration and integration, and terrorism.

Finally, it is interesting to focus on issues that are considered secondary to populist radical right parties, like socio-economic policies and foreign policy. All parties ‘log roll’ issues in coalition formation processes, i.e. compromising on secondary issues to further primary issues. For the populist radical right this often means compromising on socio-economic issues, as well as foreign policy, to get concessions from their (right-wing) coalition partner on socio-cultural issues, most notably immigration and integration (see De Lange 2008; **De Lange**). This raises the question: what kind of socio-economic policies do governments with populist radical right parties implement and how do they reflect their party program?

Responses

Of all the questions that I have been asked about the populist radical right in the past roughly 25 years, one has been the most frequent and persistent: how should we respond to them? It is a question of major concern to citizens and policy makers alike. And yet, the answer remains necessarily vague. Leaving aside the normative aspect, i.e. what the objective of the response should be, we simply know very little about the impact of (more or less) democratic responses to populist radical right parties. Do they ‘work’? Most of the time we simply don’t know. This is in part because answering the question is very difficult, as it involves so many interconnected factors, but also because there is still very little systematic research into it. Few scholars have studied responses to the populist radical right and those that did, understandably, focused only on a subset of actors. **Van Donselaar’s** study, which is based on research of the early 1990s, still constitutes one of the few comparative studies on the topic (see also Downs 2012; Eatwell & Mudde 2004).

Research on responses should be aware of the complexity of the field and theorize the different sub-fields and questions. First of all, there are a multitude of *actors* that can, and do, respond: governments, parties, media, anti-racist groups, et cetera. Second, there are very different *types* of responses, such as legal and political. Third, there are differences in *scope* of the responses, from specific, i.e. targeting only the populist radical right, to general, i.e.

applying to all political parties. Fourth, there are different *targets* of the response, most notably the democratic systems and the populist radical right parties. In all cases there are different processes at play, but they are always multifaceted and complex.

Most research focuses on the impact of repressive state responses on populist radical right parties, including soft and general measures like electoral thresholds as well as strong and specific measures like party bans (e.g. Bale 2007). There is also some research on the impact of *cordons sanitaires*, i.e. exclusion agreements by other political parties, mostly on the electoral support (e.g. Van Spanje & Van der Brug 2009) or political recruiting (e.g. Art 2011) of populist radical right parties. The role of the media remains understudied (e.g. Ellinas 2010; Yilmaz 2012), but the recent interest in populist radical right parties within political communication will probably change this. Of particular interest is the role of tabloids, i.e. the media most used by potential supporters of populist radical right parties, and it remains to be seen whether the Austrian case of the *Kronenzeitung*, i.e. a major tabloid explicitly supporting a populist radical right party (see Art; Art 2005), is unique or has more generalizable value. A somewhat similar case could be the *Daily Express* in the UK, which started to openly support UKIP in 2014 – although, unlike many colleagues, I do not consider UKIP to be a populist radical right party.

Finally, studies should not be blind to the costs involved in state responses. If these responses are aimed at strengthening liberal democracy, the question should not only be whether the populist radical right party is weakened. First and foremost, the key question is: has liberal democracy been strengthened? While a weakened populist radical right party can be perceived as a benefit, there could be costs, particularly with general measures. For example, a new electoral threshold could exclude a populist radical right party from parliament, but it might do the same for a party of ethnic minorities, marginalizing that group, perhaps more so than a few populist radical right parliamentarians could ever do.

The growing gap between populist radical right parties and politics

Which brings us to the last issue, which is rapidly becoming the most important in the study of the populist radical right, namely the growing gap between populist radical right *parties* and *politics*. In the 1980s the mere mention of the issue of immigration would land a party on the ‘extreme right’ list. In the 1990s casting even the slightest doubt about the desirability of European integration or multiculturalism would mean a party was at least part of a broadly defined group of ‘right-wing populist’ parties. But today, as a consequence of the multiple crises in Europe (notably the Eurozone and refugees), almost every party is at least soft Eurosceptic or Islamophobic, which means that old definitions and classifications no longer

hold. If the Norwegian Progress Party (FrP) in Norway is included in the populist radical right party family then why not Fidesz in Hungary, Social-Democracy-Direction (Smer) in Slovakia, or even the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) in the Netherlands?

To deal with the new political reality students of the populist radical right should not so much change their definitions but rather re-classify *all possible* populist radical right parties, rather than just focus on the usual suspects. Moreover, rather than concept (or term) stretching – either defining the term populist radical right so broadly that it no longer covers the original meaning or including several parties that do not really fit the definition (see Sartori 1970) – scholars should acknowledge the existence of a diverse group of parties that share (part of) a similar ideological discourse – including some version of nativism and populism – and political agenda – including opposition to integration and support for authoritarian solutions to social problems. Hence, they shouldn't consider parties like the populist radical right FN and the neoliberal populist UKIP as ideological equivalents, but rather as *functional* equivalents.

Just like Christian democratic and conservative parties, and sometimes social democratic and social populist parties (e.g. in Greece), extreme right and radical right as well as populist radical right and neoliberal populist parties perform partly similar functions within different party systems. This means that these parties can be treated as similar in studies of the causes and consequences of their success, particularly if related to shared concerns and policies, but much less so in research on responses – as the difference between ‘extreme’ and ‘radical’ has significant legal consequences in many countries (e.g. Germany), while the distinction between neoliberal populist and populist radical right is often implicitly also between inside and outside of the political mainstream (see, for example, FrP and, at least initially, UKIP).

In short, while populist radical right parties are the most studied party family in Europe, much remains to be done. It is crucial that future studies acknowledge the changing nature of populist radical right politics and move beyond the findings and paradigms of the 1990s. More than ever, theoretical reflection on the complex heterogeneity of populist radical right politics is required. If we want to protect liberal democracy, from populist radical right parties and policies, we have to understand its challengers. This can only be done if we approach the topic with academic rigor and draw upon all possible relevant scholarship, even if it does not explicitly reference the populist radical right.

Note

¹ Bulgaria has an indigenous Muslim minority of Turkish speakers, which was already targeted in xenophobic campaigns by the communist regime. Consequently, Bulgarian populist radical right parties like the National Union Attack (Attack)

were already Islamophobic before the recent influx of Muslim refugees.

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Index

9/11 terrorist attacks [74](#), [103](#), [106](#), [116](#), [196](#), [232](#), [417](#), [532](#), [534–6](#), [609](#)

Abortion [51](#), [107](#), [200–2](#), [204](#), [230](#), [269](#), [272](#), [304](#), [347](#), [366](#); anti-abortion [202–3](#), [258](#), [260](#), [272](#), [290](#), [368](#), [569](#)

Activism [106](#), [121](#) (fn89), [177](#), [205](#), [208](#), [238–41](#), [254–56](#), [547](#), [559](#), [562](#); activists [1](#), [7–8](#), [17](#), [19–21](#), [121](#) (fn89), [152](#), [162](#), [176](#), [179–81](#), [194](#), [201](#), [203–5](#), [207–10](#), [219–20](#), [224](#), [232](#), [238–74](#), [353](#), [369](#), [373–6](#), [410](#), [413](#), [439](#), [459](#), [500](#), [511](#), [516](#), [543](#), [547](#), [553](#), [561](#), [574](#), [611–2](#)

Adenauer, Konrad [150](#), [416](#), [580](#)

Adorno, Theodore W. [144](#), [260](#), [279](#), [355](#), [360](#), [387](#), [425](#), [435](#) (fn8)

Afghanistan [226](#), [512](#)

Africa [18](#), [172](#), [371](#)

African Americans (see [blacks](#))

Agenda-setting [414](#), [440](#), [443](#), [446](#), [455](#), [470](#), [475](#), [529](#), 5771

Agir (To Act) [41](#), [43](#), [46](#), [48](#), [50](#), [52](#), [58](#), [62](#), [64](#), [480](#)

Agrarian elites [379](#); movements [160](#), [516](#); parties [325](#), [516](#)

A Heart for the Indigenous (*Ein Herz für Inländer*, EHI) [317–8](#), [322](#), [324](#), [329](#), [331](#) (fn11)

Ahlemeyer, Volker [601](#)

Akkerman, Tjitske [439–40](#)

Albertazzi, Daniele [439–40](#), [509](#)

Algeria [229](#), [243](#), [250](#)

Alignment [173](#), [313–4](#), [338](#), [487](#); de-alignment [280](#); re-alignment [104](#), [207](#), [280](#), [458](#), [460–3](#), [470](#), [599](#)

Alliance for the Future of Austria (Bündnis Zukunft Österreich, BZÖ) [8](#), [494](#), [498](#), [500](#), [505](#), [511](#), [527–8](#), [584](#), [590](#), [604](#) (fn1)

All Polish Youth (*Młodzież Wszechpolska*, MW) [516](#)

Almirante, Giorgio [145](#), [559–60](#)

Altemeyer, Bob [279](#), [429](#)

Alternative for Germany (*Alternative für Deutschland*, AfD) [5–6](#), [9](#) (fn1)

America (see [United States](#))

Andersen, Jorgen Goul [60](#), [165](#)

Andersen, Kristi [462](#)

Anders Lange's Party for a Strong Reduction in Taxes, Duties and Public Intervention (Anders Lange Party) [164](#), [181](#)

Annemans, Gerolf [569](#)

Anomie [224](#), [279](#), [285](#), [408](#)

Anthony, Bernard [565](#)

Anti-Americanism [152–3](#), [417](#)
Anti-Defamation League (ADL) [189](#)
Anti-Fascist Action (AFA) [194](#)
Anti-Nazi Group (*Grupa Anty-Nazistowska*) [194](#)
Anti-partyism [31](#), [59](#), [162](#), [449](#)
Anti-politics [35](#), [159](#), [406](#)
Anti-system [32](#), [34–5](#), [49](#), [68](#), [160–2](#), [165](#), [169](#), [240](#), [390–1](#), [399](#), [401](#) (fn20), [449](#), [566–70](#), [577](#); anti-systemness [35–6](#), [49](#), [59–60](#)
Anti-Semitism [4](#), [6](#), [18–9](#), [45–7](#), [49](#), [67](#) (fn8), [70](#), [103](#), [108–9](#), [118](#), [146–7](#), [161](#), [181–2](#), [190](#), [193](#), [195–6](#), [199](#) (fn34), [200](#), [203](#), [206](#),
[249](#), [258–9](#), [264](#), [273](#) (fn4), [321](#), [374](#), [390–6](#), [401](#) (fn21), [454](#), [516](#), [546](#), [548–9](#), [552–3](#), [561](#)
Antony, Bernard [199](#) (fn30)
Anxiety [42](#), [201](#), [279](#), [328](#), [338](#), [341–2](#), [426](#), [604](#) (fn1)
Arabs [108](#), [396](#), [411](#), [416](#)
Arrow Cross [17](#)
Arzheimer, Kai [219–20](#), [612](#)
Asia [73–4](#), [341](#); Asian Americans [260](#); Asians [74](#), [341](#), [396](#), [414](#)
Assimilation [45](#), [75](#), [112](#), [114](#), [116](#), [354](#), [494](#), [496](#), [497](#); assimilationism [74](#)
Association for the Republic – Republican Party of Czechoslovakia (*Sdružení pro republiku–Republikánská strana Československa*, SPR-RSC) [393–5](#), [399](#)
Asylum [70](#), [341](#), [366](#), [446–7](#), [452](#), [470](#), [475](#), [492](#), [496](#), [498](#), [501](#), [506](#), [512–3](#), [531](#)
Asylum-seekers [22](#), [42–3](#), [48](#), [77](#), [181](#), [192](#), [286](#), [371](#), [412–3](#), [450](#), [492](#), [498](#), [511–3](#), [518](#), [580](#)
Attersee Circle [321](#), [565](#)
Ausgrenzung (isolation strategy) [449–52](#), [455](#), [459](#), [467](#), [550–2](#), [563](#), [580–4](#), [586](#) (fn6)
Australia [73–4](#), [294](#), [475](#), [611](#); Australians [70](#), [74](#)
Austria [7–8](#), [42](#), [44](#), [48](#), [54](#), [76](#), [97](#), [104](#), [107](#), [111](#), [113–4](#), [131–2](#), [147](#), [149](#), [151](#), [166](#), [181](#), [186–7](#), [196](#), [211](#), [278–80](#), [283](#), [290–1](#),
[296–300](#), [302](#), [304–7](#) (fn3), [317](#), [323](#), [326](#), [331](#) (fn11), [332](#) (fn23), [339](#), [341](#), [346](#), [352](#), [380](#), [382–3](#), [397](#), [400](#), [404–9](#), [411–12](#),
[418](#), [431](#), [435](#) (fn7), [440](#), [443–6](#), [449](#), [451–5](#), [458](#), [460](#), [477](#), [480](#), [493–5](#), [498](#), [507–8](#), [510–3](#), [520](#), [527–8](#), [532](#), [534](#), [540–1](#), [557](#),
[565–7](#), [574–9](#), [582–5](#), [589–90](#), [596–8](#), [600–2](#), [616](#); Constitutional Court [498](#), [511–3](#); Gusenbauer I cabinet (2007–2008) [505](#);
Klima I cabinet (1997–2000) [505](#); Schüssel I cabinet (2000–2003) [498–500](#), [505](#), [511](#), [575–6](#), [570](#), [590](#), [594](#); Schüssel II cabinet (2003–2006) [498–500](#), [505](#), [511–2](#), [584](#), [587](#), [589–90](#), [594](#); Vranitzky V cabinet (1996–1997) [505](#)
Austrian Freedom Party (*Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs*, FPÖ) [3](#), [6–8](#), [23](#), [27](#) (fn42), [35–6](#), [38](#), [40–2](#), [46](#), [48](#), [50](#), [54](#), [56](#), [60](#), [62](#),
[68](#), [79–80](#) (fn27), [90](#), [107](#), [111](#), [113](#), [131–2](#), [134](#), [159](#), [164](#), [166](#), [175](#), [181](#), [188](#), [211](#), [278–9](#), [283–4](#), [288](#) (fn56), [291–2](#),
[296–7](#), [317](#), [321](#), [323](#), [339](#), [342–3](#), [346–8](#), [352](#), [404–5](#), [407–8](#), [410–2](#), [414](#), [416](#), [418](#), [443–4](#), [449](#), [451–5](#), [480–1](#), [488](#) (fn13),
[495](#), [498–500](#), [502](#) (fn1), [505](#), [507](#), [510–3](#), [527–8](#), [536](#), [532](#), [557](#), [565–8](#), [574–6](#), [582–6](#) (fn21), [589–90](#), [596–9](#), [601](#), [604](#) (fn1),
[605](#) (fn16), [609–11](#)
Austrian People's Party (*Österreichische Volkspartei*, ÖVP) [8](#), [404](#), [443](#), [449](#), [452–5](#), [500](#), [502](#) (fn1), [505](#), [511](#), [528](#), [565](#), [567](#),
[575–6](#), [583–5](#), [589–90](#), [596–9](#), [601](#)
Austrian Social Democratic Party (*Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs*, SPÖ) [449](#), [452](#), [505](#), [512](#), [565](#), [575–6](#), [582–4](#), [576](#),
[589](#), [596–9](#), [601](#)

Authentic Spanish Falange (*Falange Española Auténtica*, FEA) [41](#), [44](#), [50](#), [58](#), [67](#) (fn7), [278](#), [323](#)

Authoritarianism [4–5](#), [23](#), [33](#), [83–90](#), [92–8](#), [100](#) (fn6), [112](#), [130](#), [143–4](#), [151](#), [154–5](#), [167–8](#), [173](#), [229](#), [257](#) (fn5), [260](#), [278–80](#), [292](#), [318](#), [321](#), [329](#), [331](#) (fn17), [347](#), [352–79](#), [381](#), [383–7](#), [390–3](#), [398–9](#), [401](#) (fn20), [406](#), [409](#), [416](#), [418](#), [420](#), [428–9](#), [431](#), [434](#), [444](#), [451](#), [465–6](#), [495–6](#), [530–2](#), [534](#), [566](#), [568](#), [609](#), [616](#); authoritarian personality [260](#), [279](#), [425](#)

Autonomous Piedmont League [166](#)

Automobile Party (*Autopartei*, AP) [38](#), [55](#), [166](#), [339](#), [342](#), [445](#), [480](#)

Baader-Meinhof Group (*Baader-Meinhof Gruppe*) [153](#)

Backes, Uwe [29](#), [34–5](#), [47](#), [182](#)

Back-stage [6](#), [9](#) (fn2), [540–1](#), [547](#), [555](#)

Badinter, Elisabeth [113](#)

Baldwin-Edwards, Martin [458](#)

Bale, Tim [477](#), [590](#)

Balkenende, Jan Peter [589](#), [601](#)

Balladur, Edouard [469](#), [475](#)

Baltic states [192–3](#), [195](#)

Barbu, Eugen [393](#)

Bardèche, Maurice [17](#), [146](#)

Barrès, Maurice [143](#)

Barroso, José Manuel [520–1](#)

Bartolini, Stefano [314](#)

Bashevkin, Sylvia [294](#)

Bastow, Steve [96](#)

Battle of Lepanto [106](#), [111](#)

Bauman, Zygmunt [24](#)

Becker, Boris [553](#)

Beckham, David [224](#)

Belgium [5](#), [7](#), [41](#), [74](#), [83](#), [91](#), [96](#), [104](#), [108](#), [111](#), [131](#), [147](#), [155](#), [159](#), [163](#), [166](#), [175](#), [188](#), [198](#) (fn14), [238–9](#), [248](#), [278](#), [296–7](#), [317](#), [323](#), [325–6](#), [328](#), [331–2](#) (fn23), [339](#), [380](#), [382](#), [397](#), [400](#), [404](#), [408–9](#), [411](#), [435](#) (fn5,7), [444–5](#), [480](#), [488](#) (fn14), [495](#), [498](#), [505](#), [527](#), [542–8](#), [550–3](#), [555](#), [557](#), [575](#), [613](#); Constitution [435](#) (fn5), [548](#); Flanders [41](#), [43](#), [48](#), [50–2](#), [58](#), [91–4](#), [98–9](#), [238–42](#), [248–9](#), [255](#), [288](#) (fn56), [344](#), [352](#), [404](#), [411](#), [480](#), [488](#) (fn14), [568](#), [569](#); Leterme I cabinet (2008) [505](#); Leterme II cabinet (2009–2010) [505](#); Verhofstadt I cabinet (1999–2003) [498](#), [505](#); Van Rompuy cabinet (2008–2009) [505](#); Verhofstadt II cabinet (2003–2007) [505](#); Verhofstadt III cabinet (2007–2008) [498](#); Wallonia [41](#), [43](#), [46](#), [48](#), [50–2](#), [58](#), [62](#), [64](#), [344](#), [352](#), [411](#), [480](#), [488](#) (fn14)

Bell, Daniel [202](#), [324](#), [424](#), [425](#)

Belloc, Hilaire [19](#)

Bendix, Reinhard [154](#)

Bergmann, Werner [401](#) (fn21)

Berman, Sheri [177](#)
Berlusconi, Silvio [159](#), [404](#), [412](#), [414](#), [443](#), [449](#), [451](#), [505](#), [513–6](#), [533](#), [536](#), [570](#) (fn4), [589–90](#), [593–4](#)
Betz, Hans-Georg [1](#), [11–2](#), [32](#), [34–5](#), [37–8](#), [160](#), [174](#), [223](#), [284](#), [292](#), [297](#), [309–10](#), [426](#), [614](#)
Bignasca, Giulano [164](#)
Bild Zeitung [577–8](#), [580–1](#), [583](#)
Bille, Lars [321](#)
Billig, Michael [21](#), [31](#), [270](#), [429](#)
Bjørklund, Tor [60](#)
Black Age (*Kali Yuga*) [21–2](#)
Blacks [18](#), [45](#), [147](#), [203](#), [207](#), [259–60](#), [265](#), [267–8](#), [271](#), [396](#), [411](#)
Blair, Tony [453](#), [532](#)
Blee, Kathleen [139–40](#), [219–20](#), [247](#)
Bleu, Blanc, Rouge [231](#)
Bloc Against Islam (*Blok proti islámu*, BPI) [611](#)
Blocher, Christoph [70](#), [76](#), [181](#), [278](#), [494](#), [498](#), [501](#), [518–9](#)
Blood & Honour (B&H) [181–2](#), [189](#)
Blot, Yvan [563](#)
Blue-collar workers (see [working class](#))
Blunkett, David [115](#)
Bolshevism (see [Communism](#))
Booth, John A. [177–8](#)
Borghezio, Mario [106](#)
Bossi-Fini Law [499](#)
Bossi, Umberto [44](#), [49](#), [73–4](#), [76](#), [78](#), [106](#), [162](#), [164](#), [223–4](#), [339](#), [342–3](#), [347](#), [418](#), [443](#), [500](#)
Bourgeoisie [144](#), [146](#), [317](#), [322](#), [374](#), [376–7](#), [379](#), [397](#), [429](#); anti-bourgeois [331](#) (fn14); [570](#); lumpen [154](#); parties [145](#), [155](#), [315](#), [376](#); petit/petty [145–6](#), [279](#), [283](#), [318](#), [358–9](#), [365](#), [367](#)
Bowen, John [105](#)
Boyer, Dominic [109](#)
Brazil [189](#)
Breivik, Anders [611](#)
Brezhnev, Leonid [228](#)
British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) [429](#)
British National Party (BNP) [6](#), [22](#), [41](#), [45–6](#), [50](#), [58](#), [106–8](#), [110](#), [113–4](#), [116](#), [131](#), [133–4](#), [163](#), [166](#), [278](#), [283](#), [316–8](#), [322](#), [329](#), [404](#), [410](#), [412](#), [414–6](#), [419](#), [445](#), [480–1](#), [528](#)
Brookman, Henry [247](#)
Brubaker, Rogers [75](#)
Bulgaria [7–8](#), [111](#), [131](#), [133](#), [186–93](#), [195–7](#), [382](#), [391](#), [398](#), [431](#), [435](#) (fn7), [617](#) (fn1)
Bulgarian Socialist Party (*Bulgarska sotsialisticheska partiya*, BSP) [8](#)

Bunzl, Matti [109](#)

Burleigh, Michael [224](#)

Burnham, Walter Dean [461](#)

Calderoli, Roberto [111](#)

Calvo Sotelo, José [145](#)

Cameron, David [608](#)

Camre, Mogens [111–2](#)

Canada [11](#), [259](#)

Canovan, Margaret [430](#), [508](#)

Capitalism [17–9](#), [21–2](#), [24](#), [26](#) (fn11), [38](#), [84–90](#), [93–8](#), [150](#), [201](#), [343](#), [352](#), [355](#), [357–9](#), [363](#), [365](#), [367–70](#), [372](#), [374–5](#), [378–80](#), [384](#), [386](#), [388](#), [397](#), [416–7](#), [420](#), [444](#), [450](#); anti-capitalism [51](#), [181](#), [318](#), [331](#) (fn14), [372](#), [374–5](#), [384](#)

Carinthian Homeland Service (*Kärtner Heimatdienst*) [189](#)

Carlistas [145](#)

Carter, Elisabeth [11–3](#), [280](#), [285–6](#), [479](#), [481](#), [489](#) (fn19)

Casanova, José [111](#)

Catch-all party [163](#), [313](#), [509](#)

Caucus of the European Right [450](#)

Ceaușescu, Nicolae [393](#), [396](#)

Center Democrats (*Centrumdemocraten*, CD) [41](#), [43](#), [46](#), [48](#), [50](#), [54](#), [58](#), [62](#), [64](#), [166](#), [239](#), [247–8](#), [253–4](#), [317](#), [322–4](#), [329](#), [445](#), [480](#), [495](#), [550](#)

Center for Democratic Renewal [273](#) (fn3)

Centre Party (*Centerpartiet*, C) (Sweden) [505](#)

Center Party (*Centrumpartij*, CP) (Netherlands) [23](#), [41](#), [43](#), [46](#), [48](#), [50](#), [54](#), [58](#), [62](#), [64](#), [545–7](#), [608](#)

Centre Party (*Senterpartiet*, Sp) (Norway) [596](#)

Center Party '86 (*Centrumpartij* '86, CP '86) [41](#), [46](#), [50–2](#), [58](#), [64](#), [163](#), [166](#), [247](#), [253–4](#), [317](#), [323](#), [445](#), [480](#)

Césari, Jocelyne [104](#)

Chabosse, Dominique [563](#)

Chapel Hill Expert Survey (CHES) [124](#), [133–4](#), [610](#)

Charismatic leadership [17](#), [19](#), [159](#), [163–5](#), [174](#), [219–20](#), [223–5](#), [229](#), [233–5](#), [315](#), [339–40](#), [375–6](#), [417–8](#), [420](#), [428](#), [434](#), [584](#), [612](#)

Charlot, Jean [557](#)

Charlot, Monica [557](#)

Chernilo, Daniel [428](#)

Chiarini, Roberto [559](#)

Chirac, Jacques [155](#), [231–2](#), [412](#), [450](#), [468](#)

Choen, Jeff [180](#)

Christian Democracy (*Democrazia Cristiana*, DC) [146](#), [203](#), [412](#), [449](#), [451](#), [559–60](#),

Christian Democratic and Flemish (*Christen-Democratisch en Vlaams*, CD&V) [92–4](#), [98–9](#), [505](#)

Christian Democratic and Social-Popular Party (*Centro Democrático e Social–Partido Popular*, CDS-PP) (see [Democratic Social Center Party](#))

Christian Democratic Appeal (*Christen Democratisch Appèl*, CDA) [8](#), [92](#), [98–9](#), [150](#), [494](#), [499](#), [505](#), [528](#), [589–90](#), [597](#), [599](#), [601–3](#)

Christian Democratic Centre (*Centro Cristiano Democrático*, CCD) [528](#), [590](#), [593](#), [601](#)

Christian Democratic Party (*Partido do Democracia Cristã*, PDC) [41](#), [44](#), [46](#), [49–51](#), [58](#), [62](#), [64](#), [162](#), [166](#), [278](#), [317–8](#), [321–4](#), [329](#)

Christian Democratic parties [495](#), [616](#); Christian Democrats [1](#), [502](#) (fn4), [531](#)

Christian Democratic People's Party of Switzerland (*Christlichdemokratische Volkspartei der Schweiz*, CVP) [8](#), [505](#), [528](#)

Christian Democratic Union (CDU) [150](#), [155](#), [245–6](#), [412](#), [446–7](#), [498](#), [579–80](#), [586](#) (fn6); Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU) [151–2](#), [239](#), [407–8](#), [446–7](#), [455](#), [505](#), [579](#); Christian Social Union (CSU) [151](#), [155](#), [446](#), [580](#), [586](#) (fn6), [608](#)

Christian Democrats (*Kristdemokraterna*, KD) [505](#)

Christian Identity [26](#) (fn23), [180](#), [206](#), [259](#), [263](#), [271](#)

Christianity [4](#), [18](#), [21](#), [26](#) (fn23), [105–8](#), [110–1](#), [113](#), [117–8](#), [127](#), [129](#), [429–30](#), [567](#), [609](#); anti-Christian [180](#), [204–6](#); Judeo-Christian [121](#) (fn89)

Christian National Union (*Zjednoczenie Chrześcijańsko Narodowe*, ZChN) [393–5](#)

Christian People's Party (*Kristelig Folkeparti*, KRF) (Norway) [596](#), [598](#), [600](#)

Christian People's Party (*Kristeligt Folkeparti*, KF) (Denmark) [595](#), [599](#), [604](#) (fn13)

Christian Right (US) [204](#), [211](#)

Christian Union (*ChristenUnie*, CU) [92](#), [95](#), [98–9](#), [595](#), [603](#)

Churchill, Winston [53](#), [223](#)

Circles of Hungarian Way [188](#)

Citizen's Alliance [205](#)

Citizen and Republican Movement (*Mouvement Républicain et Citoyen*, MRC) [505](#)

Citizens' Freedom Party (*Parti de la Liberté du Citoyen*, PLC) [330](#) (fn9)

Citizenship [24](#), [41–2](#), [68–9](#), [75–7](#), [88](#), [90](#), [114–6](#), [261](#), [354–6](#), [358](#), [366](#), [384](#), [398](#), [415](#), [447–8](#), [450](#), [468](#), [492](#), [496](#), [498](#), [502](#) (fn5), [506](#); denizenship [492](#), [496](#)

Civil Revolution (*Rivoluzione Civile*, RC) [479](#)

Civil society [23](#), [51](#), [176–8](#), [180](#), [193–4](#), [211](#), [467](#), [512](#), [533](#), [540](#), [574](#), [576](#), [579](#), [581](#), [584](#); uncivil society [51](#), [176–8](#), [180](#), [195](#), [211](#)

Claes, Lode [567](#)

Class (see also [middle class](#) and [working class](#)) [51](#), [104](#), [165](#), [207](#), [234](#), [260](#), [279](#), [284](#), [301](#), [303](#), [305–6](#), [317–8](#), [345](#), [352](#), [355–6](#), [358](#), [366](#), [368](#), [370](#), [376](#), [383](#), [397](#), [399](#), [408–9](#), [418–20](#); conflict/struggle [52](#); gap [220](#)

Cleavage [69](#), [72](#), [135](#), [174](#), [176](#), [285](#), [314](#), [322](#), [330](#) (fn4,5), [353](#), [388](#), [397](#), [399](#), [411](#), [425](#), [428](#), [444](#), [446](#), [459](#)

Clientelism [56](#), [91](#), [96](#), [98](#), [343](#), [367–8](#), [380](#), [407](#), [409](#), [411](#)

Coalition formation [460](#), [469](#), [541–2](#), [590](#), [595](#), [601–3](#), [615](#); theories [589–95](#), [597](#), [600](#), [602–4](#) (fn4,6)

Coalition of the Radical Left (*Synaspismós Rizospastikís Aristerás*, Syriza) [2](#)

Cohen, Albert [249](#)

Cohen, Jean [177–8](#)

Cold War [72](#), [161](#), [362](#), [450](#)

Coleman, James Samuel [281](#)

Colen, Alexandra [569](#)

Combat [18](#) [548](#)

Committee for Open Debate on the Holocaust [185](#) (fn49)

Common List Against Immigration (*Faelleslisten mod Indvandringen*) [182](#)

Common Man's Front (*Fronte dell'Uomo Qualunque*, UQ) [149](#)

Common sense [71](#), [77](#), [80](#) (fn22), [338](#), [429](#), [604](#) (fn1)

Communism [17–8](#), [24](#), [112](#), [161](#), [174](#), [177](#), [202](#), [225](#), [228](#), [230](#), [242](#), [318](#), [330](#) (fn4), [346](#), [364](#); anti-Communism [35](#), [155](#), [243](#), [559](#), [568](#); Eurocommunism [148](#)

Communist Party of the Russian Federation (*Kommunisticheskaya Partiya Rossiyskoy Federatsii*, KPRF) [227–8](#), [392](#)

Communist Party of the Soviet Union (*Kommunisticheskaya partiya Sovetskogo Soyuza*, CPSU) [225–6](#)

Communitarianism [23](#), [72](#), [331](#) (fn15), [373–5](#), [378–9](#), [384](#), [495](#)

Comparative Manifesto Project (CMP) [610](#)

Concerned Women for America (CWA) [205](#)

Confederation for an Independent Poland (*Konfederacja Polski Niepodległej*, KPN) [393–5](#)

Confessional parties [316](#), [325](#)

Conformism [284](#), [359](#); nonconformism [375](#)

Conservatism [115](#), [117](#), [146](#), [154](#), [201–2](#), [204–5](#), [245–6](#), [284](#), [290](#), [293](#), [315–7](#), [320–1](#), [323–6](#), [328](#), [357](#), [374](#), [384](#), [406](#), [410](#), [429](#), [433](#), [503](#) (fn4), [534](#); conservatives [33](#), [139](#), [159–60](#), [201–5](#), [209](#), [261](#), [353](#), [359–65](#), [446](#)

Conservative parties [87](#), [155](#), [193](#), [285](#), [290](#), [293](#), [314–7](#), [320](#), [322–6](#), [328](#), [353](#), [357](#), [359](#), [367](#), [495](#), [531](#), [602](#), [616](#); movements [35](#), [140](#), [151](#), [200–2](#), [210–1](#), [260](#), [324](#), [327](#)

Conservative Party (Tories) [471](#), [552](#)

Conservative Party (*Høyre*, H) [596](#), [598](#), [600](#)

Conservative People's Party (*Det Konservative Folkeparti*, KF) [8](#), [505](#), [528](#), [589–90](#), [595](#), [597](#), [599](#)

Conservative People's Party of Estonia (*Eesti Konservatiivne Rahvaerakond*, EKRE) [7](#)

Conservative Revolution [20](#), [37](#), [143](#), [152](#)

Consociationalism [352](#), [409](#), [452](#), [576](#), [598](#)

Conspiracy theories [108–9](#), [384](#), [395](#), [425–6](#), [530](#)

Contagion effect [439](#), [474–88](#), [598](#), [610–1](#)

Conti, Nicolò [132–3](#)

Coppedge, Michael [509](#)

Cordon sanitaire [91](#), [105](#), [240](#), [551–2](#), [554–5](#), [569](#), [598](#), [615](#)

Corporatism [38](#), [50–2](#), [146](#), [161–2](#), [318](#), [331](#) (fn14), [345](#), [352](#), [372](#), [374](#), [379](#), [384](#), [395](#), [561](#), [570](#) (fn3)

Corruption [186](#), [226](#), [271](#), [343](#), [409](#), [412](#), [414](#), [431–3](#), [449](#), [463](#), [476](#), [529](#), [600](#), [613](#)

Cosmopolitanism [33](#), [47](#), [109](#), [354–7](#), [366](#), [371](#), [395](#), [534](#)

Cossiga, Francesco [412](#), [449](#)

Council of Europe [190](#), [514](#), [516](#), [520](#)
Counter-Jihad movement [611](#); Counterjihad Europe [121](#) (fn89)
Craxi, Bettino [449](#)

Creseap, Kimberly [139–40](#)
Crime [4–5](#), [42–3](#), [146](#), [191](#), [203–4](#), [207](#), [232](#), [251](#), [267](#), [413](#), [431](#), [447](#), [452](#), [495–6](#), [518–9](#), [529](#), [530](#), [533](#), [608](#), [613](#), [615](#)
Croatia [8](#), [24](#), [386](#)
Croatian Democratic Union (*Hrvatska demokratska zajednica*, HDZ) [8](#)
Csurka, István [187](#)
Cyprus [435](#) (fn7)

Czechoslovakia [382–3](#), [392](#), [395–6](#), [398](#), [401](#) (fn21)
Czech Republic [7–8](#), [186–96](#), [198](#) (fn23), [391–6](#), [398](#), [400](#), [435](#) (fn7), [613](#)

Daily Express [616](#)
Dalton, Russell [327](#)
Danish National Socialist Movement (*Danmarks Nationalsocialistiske Bevægelse*, DNSB) [181](#)
Danish People's Party (Dansk Folkeparti, DF) [7–8](#), [33](#), [38](#), [41–2](#), [46](#), [48](#), [50](#), [55](#), [58](#), [60](#), [111–4](#), [131–2](#), [134](#), [181](#), [278](#), [283](#), [445](#), [480](#), [494](#), [500–2](#) (fn7), [505](#), [511](#), [527–8](#), [530](#), [536](#), [589–90](#), [595](#), [597](#), [599](#), [604](#) (fn1,11,13), [612–3](#)
Danish Social Liberal Party (*Radikal Venstre*, RV) [505](#), [595](#)
Daudet, Léon [243](#)
Davis, David [115](#)
Dawn-National Coalition (*Úsvit-Národní koalice*, Dawn) [7](#), [609](#), [613](#)
Day, Christine [290](#), [294](#)
De Benoist, Alain [152](#), [331](#) (fn19)
De Bonald, Louis [331](#) (fn13)
Decker, Frank [426](#)
De Felice, Renzo [331](#) (fn12)
De Gaulle, Charles [149](#), [225](#), [243](#)
De Lange, Sarah [11–2](#), [540–1](#)
De Maistre, Joseph [331](#) (fn13)
De Marzio, Ernesto [560](#)
De Masanich, Augusto [559](#)
Demand-side [3](#), [310](#), [405](#), [416](#), [424](#), [433–4](#), [614](#),
Democracy [12](#), [20](#), [30](#), [33](#), [39–40](#), [49–59](#), [71–2](#), [74](#), [76](#), [113](#), [126](#), [129](#), [150](#), [174](#), [177–9](#), [196](#), [211](#), [228](#), [231](#), [327–9](#), [339](#), [342–3](#), [375](#), [379–83](#), [388](#), [400](#), [415](#), [420](#), [424–5](#), [430–2](#), [439–40](#), [443](#), [451](#), [453](#), [455](#), [464](#), [509–10](#), [512](#), [520](#), [550–3](#), [557](#), [560–1](#), [614](#); anti-democracy [36](#), [39–40](#), [51](#), [54](#), [57](#), [172](#), [178](#), [182–3](#), [393](#), [425](#); attitudes to [291](#), [299–306](#), [391](#); democratic constitutional order [32–3](#), [36](#), [452](#); direct [53–5](#), [71](#), [76](#), [92](#), [160](#), [452](#), [454](#), [501](#), [518](#), [520](#), [530](#); liberal [5](#), [13](#), [15–6](#), [22](#), [24](#), [26](#) (fn11), [30–2](#), [51](#), [54](#), [59](#), [65](#), [69](#), [168](#), [183](#), [278](#), [319](#), [377–9](#), [387](#), [397](#), [398](#), [420](#), [425](#), [439–40](#), [444](#), [508–11](#), [518–20](#), [533](#), [536](#), [615–7](#); militant [144](#), [150](#), [182](#), [549](#), [590](#); parliamentary [5](#), [15](#), [33](#), [51](#), [53–4](#), [151](#), [379](#), [384](#), [502](#) (fn1), [550](#); participatory [59](#), [92](#), [100](#) (fn10),

[590](#); party [417](#); representative [71](#), [78](#), [426](#), [559](#), [561](#)

Democratic Front of Francophones (*Front Démocratique des Francophones*, FDF) [505](#)

Democratic Party (US) [461](#)

Democratic Social Center Party (*Partido do Centro Democrático Social*, CDS) [278](#), [317](#), [320–2](#), [331](#) (fn21)

Democratic Union for the Respect of Labor (*Union Démocratique pour le Respect du Travail*, UDRT) [330](#) (fn9)

Democrats [66](#) (*Democraten* [66](#), D66) [92](#), [95](#), [98–9](#), [595](#), [603–4](#) (fn9)

Democrats of the Left (*Democratici di Sinistra*, DS) [505](#)

Demonization [105](#), [109](#); de-demonization [109](#)

Demonstrations [7](#), [109](#), [179–80](#), [183](#), [188](#), [193–4](#), [208](#), [252](#), [255](#), [271](#), [327](#), [366](#), [542](#), [544–9](#), [554](#), [579](#), [584](#), [611](#)

Demos [24](#), [387](#), [455](#)

Denmark [5](#), [7–8](#), [41](#), [46](#), [48](#), [50](#), [58](#), [104](#), [112](#), [115](#), [131–2](#), [147](#), [151](#), [162](#), [166](#), [175](#), [181](#), [188](#), [178](#), [290](#), [293–4](#), [299](#), [302–6](#), [317](#), [323](#), [325–6](#), [328](#), [331–2](#), [340](#), [352](#), [382](#), [431–2](#), [435](#) (fn7), [475](#), [477](#), [480–1](#), [483](#), [498](#), [500](#), [505](#), [508](#), [527–9](#), [535](#), [589](#), [590](#), [595](#), [597–8](#), [602](#), [605](#) (fn15), [613](#); Bondevik II cabinet (2001–2005) [590](#), [593–4](#), [600](#); Rasmussen I cabinet (2001–2005) [498–500](#), [505](#), [590](#), [594](#), [597](#), [599](#); Rasmussen II g cabinet (2005–2007) [498–9](#), [505](#), [594](#), [597](#), [599](#); Rasmussen III cabinet (2007–2009) [505](#), [594](#), [597](#), [599](#); Rasmussen IV cabinet (1998–2001) [505](#)

Denmark's Liberal Party (*Venstre*, V) [8](#), [494](#), [500](#), [505](#), [528](#), [590](#), [597](#), [599](#)

De Swaan, Abraham [592](#)

Deutsche National-Zeitung [580](#)

De Vaus, David [290](#), [293](#)

Devolution (see [regionalism](#))

Dewinter, Filip [72](#), [74–5](#), [107–8](#), [110](#), [434](#), [568–9](#)

Dhimmitude [12](#), [110](#)

Diamond, Larry [509](#)

Dillen, Karel [567](#), [569](#)

Dimitras, Panayote Elias [167](#)

Direction-Social Democracy (*Smer-Sociálna Demokracia*, Smer-SD) [8](#), [608](#), [616](#)

Disappointment (see [disillusionment](#))

Disenchantment (see [disillusionment](#))

Disillusionment [151](#), [175](#), [228](#), [243](#), [252](#), [315](#), [324](#), [338](#), [343](#), [346–7](#), [406](#), [501](#), [561](#), [563–4](#), [604](#) (fn1), [613](#)

Dmowski, Roman [394–5](#)

Doctrinal Circle José Antonio (*Círculos Doctrinales José Antonio*) [67](#) (fn8)

Documentation Centre of Austrian Resistance (*Dokumentationsarchiv des Österreichischen Widerstandes*, DöW) [512](#)

Donovan, Mark [600](#)

Doriot, Jacques [145](#)

Downs, Anthony [475](#)

Downs, William [475–6](#)

Dreux [230](#), [404](#), [416](#), [467–8](#), [472](#) (fn9)

Drumont, Édouard [243](#)

Duncan, Fraser [531](#)
Dupond, Henri [243](#)
Duprat, François [562](#)
Dutch People's Union (*Nederlandse Volksunie*, NVU) [41](#), [44–6](#), [50–1](#), [58](#), [64](#), [549](#)

Easton, David [126](#)
East-West Institute [196](#)
Eatwell, Roger [1](#), [51](#), [174–5](#), [178](#), [219](#), [309–11](#), [385](#), [429](#), [612](#)
Ecolo [505](#)
Ecological parties (see [Green parties](#))
Ecology [19](#), [21](#), [24–5](#), [152](#), [224](#), [327](#), [331](#) (fn17), [420](#), [563](#)
Economic crisis [9](#), [242](#), [343](#), [352](#), [353](#), [378](#), [380–3](#), [526](#), [536](#), [566](#); Great Depression [380–1](#); Great Recession [1](#), [13](#), [507](#)
Education [18](#), [99–100](#) (fn5), [165](#), [190](#), [195](#), [256](#), [260](#), [264](#), [269](#), [279](#), [283–4](#), [294–5](#), [299–306](#), [341](#), [345](#), [347](#), [356–61](#), [365–6](#), [368](#), [371](#), [388](#), [429](#), [450](#), [468](#), [516](#), [599](#), [612](#)
Edwards, Bob [177](#)
Efficacy [162](#), [329](#), [405](#), [408](#), [418–20](#), [513](#)
Electoral volatility [173](#), [187](#), [313–4](#), [338](#), [380](#), [596](#)
Éléments [20](#)
Eliade, Mircea [23](#), [27](#) (fn35)
Eliot, T.S. [25](#)
Elitism [70](#), [82](#) (fn77), [430](#), [598](#); anti-elitism [206](#), [327](#), [371](#)
Ellwood, Sheelagh M. [49](#), [51](#)
English Defence League (EDL) [8](#), [611](#)
Environmental movements [177](#), [368](#); anti-environmentalist movements [202](#)
Ersson, Svante [315](#), [330](#) (fn5)
Estonia [7–8](#), [186–91](#), [193](#), [195–6](#), [435](#) (fn7)
Estonian National Independence Party (*Eesti Rahvusliku Sõltumatuse Partei*, ERSP) [8](#)
Ethnically Loyal Extra-Parliamentary Opposition (*Volkstreue Außerparlamentarische Opposition*, VAPO) [181](#)
Ethnic Nationalists Netherlands (*Volksnationalisten Nederland*, VNN) [253](#)
Ethnocentrism [24–5](#), [31–2](#), [143](#), [155](#), [172](#), [174](#), [318](#), [355](#), [359–60](#), [368](#), [371](#), [387](#), [445](#), [465–6](#), [569](#)
Ethnocracy [12–3](#), [26](#) (fn11), [69](#), [75–6](#), [396](#), [444](#), [454–5](#); ethnocratic liberalism [11](#), [22–4](#), [78](#)
Ethnopluralism [19](#), [23](#), [444](#); differentialism [21](#), [23–4](#), [72](#), [114](#), [568](#); right to difference [72](#), [114](#), [468](#)
Ethnos [387](#), [455](#)
Eubank, William L. [177](#)
Eurabia [12](#), [109–10](#), [116](#), [121](#) (fn65)
Eurasianism [20](#)
Eurobarometer [176](#), [282](#), [430–2](#), [521](#) (fn1), [530](#)
Europa Nazionale [17](#)

European Alliance for Freedom (EAF) [611](#)
European Commission [76](#), [105](#), [125](#)
European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) [190](#)
European Community (EC) [51](#), [155](#), [283](#), [340–1](#)
European Constitution [130](#), [132](#), [521](#) (fn1), [534](#)
European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) [190](#), [514](#), [519–20](#)
European Court of Human Rights [514](#), [516](#), [521](#) (fn5)
European Court of Justice (ECJ) [514](#), [520](#)
European Democratic Union (EDU) [318](#)
European elections [6–7](#), [9](#) (fn 1), [136](#) (fn40), [166](#), [229–30](#), [232](#), [318](#), [339–41](#), [403](#), [461](#), [463](#), [481](#), [550](#), [561–2](#)
European integration [11–3](#), [70](#), [76](#), [124–31](#), [133–6](#) (fn40), [151](#), [529–30](#), [534](#), [582](#), [599](#), [610](#), [613](#), [615–6](#)
European Monitoring Center on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) [103](#)
European National Fascists (Faisceaux Nationalistes Européens, FNE) [17](#)
European Parliament (EP) [6](#), [107](#), [118](#), [146](#), [444](#), [450](#), [514](#), [520](#), [527](#), [550](#), 661; member of (MEP) [109](#), [111–2](#), [132](#), [229](#)
European People's Party (EPP) [318](#), [321](#)
European Social Movement [17](#)
European Social Survey (EES) [282](#), [480](#), [489](#) (fn18)
European Union (EU) [6–7](#), [11–2](#), [19](#), [54](#), [68](#), [103–4](#), [109–10](#), [121](#) (fn87), [124](#), [127](#), [132–6](#) (fn35), [186](#), [188](#), [197](#), [231](#), [283](#), [299](#), [392](#), [395](#), [405–6](#), [412](#), [430–2](#), [435](#) (fn7), [443](#), [452–3](#), [471](#) (fn3), [481](#), [507](#), [511](#), [534](#), [585](#); *aquis communitaire* [128](#); enlargement [131–2](#), [186](#); legislation [514](#); membership [76](#), [111](#), [125](#), [131](#), [190](#), [192](#), [451](#), [508](#), [519](#), [521](#) (fn1), [600](#); President [526](#)
European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) [103](#)
Europe First Movement [117](#)
Europe of Nations and Freedoms (*Europe des Nations et des Libertés*, ENF) [611](#)
Euroscepticism [6](#), [107](#), [124–30](#), [132](#), [134–5](#), [197](#), [285](#), [416](#), [530](#), [534](#), [610](#), [616](#); anti-European Union policies/position/sentiments/slogans [13](#), [134](#), [197](#), [231](#), [411](#), [520](#), [610](#)
Evola, Julius [17](#), [20](#), [331](#) (fn17)
Exclusion [72–5](#), [78](#), [109](#), [114](#), [118](#), [161–3](#), [174](#), [249](#), [252](#), [254](#), [320](#), [384](#), [387](#), [411](#), [415–6](#), [506](#); exclusionism [29](#), [32](#), [114](#), [162](#), [203](#), [366](#), [373](#), [387](#)
Expert surveys (see also *Chapel Hill Expert Survey*) [124](#), [130](#), [134](#), [478–9](#), [593](#), [604](#) (fn7), [610](#)
Extra-parliamentary politics [7](#), [19](#), [67](#) (fn8), [167](#), [169](#), [173](#), [176](#), [178](#), [182](#), [396](#), [452](#)

Fabius, Laurent [468](#), [475](#), [487](#) (fn4)
Fagan, Collette [295](#)
Fakten [181](#)
Falange (*Falangistas*) [19](#), [37](#), [145](#), [249](#), [323](#), [324](#)
Falco, Hubert [448](#)
Fallaci, Oriana [110–1](#), [121](#) (fn80)
Falwell, Jerry [204](#)

Family of Radio Maria (*Rodzina Radia Maryja*, RRM) [188](#)

Family values [107](#), [203–4](#)

Farmers' Party (*Boerenpartij*, BP) [151](#)

Fascism xi, [1](#), [3](#), [12](#), [15–7](#), [18–9](#), [22–4](#), [31](#), [33](#), [40](#), [66](#) (fn1), [68](#), [143–5](#), [149–51](#), [153–4](#), [162](#), [168](#), [174](#), [176–7](#), [224](#), [238](#), [244](#), [316–20](#), [322](#), [328](#), [330–1](#), [354](#), [360](#), [368](#), [373–6](#), [378–81](#), [383–6](#), [388](#), [415](#), [425](#), [427–8](#), [449](#), [451](#), [559–61](#), [571](#) (fn4), [615](#); anti-fascism [15](#), [145](#), [238](#), [252–3](#), [388](#), [415](#), [451](#), [561](#); cyberfascism [19](#); *defascistisation* [149](#); Eurofascism [17–8](#); German fascism [21](#); Hindu fascism [258](#); historical fascism [11](#), [31](#), [309](#), [400](#); international fascism [18](#); interwar fascism [16](#), [223](#), [386](#); Italian fascism [149](#), [238](#), [248](#); left-wing cultural fascism [454](#); neo-fascism [3](#), [18](#), [31](#), [33](#), [38](#), [40](#), [139](#), [143–5](#), [149–51](#), [160](#), [162–3](#), [165](#), [167–8](#), [322](#), [330](#), [427](#); parliamentary fascism [145](#); *préfascisme* [144](#), social fascism [38](#)

Fatherland Party (*Fedrelandspartiet*, FLP) [41–2](#), [46](#), [48](#), [50](#), [55](#), [58](#), [60](#), [480](#)

Faye, Guillaume [109](#)

Federal Bureau for the Protection of the Constitution (*Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz*, BfV) [11](#), [35](#), [52](#), [180](#), [413](#), [445](#)

Federal Constitutional Court (Bundesverfassungsgericht, BVG) [30](#), [35](#), [45](#), [549–50](#)

Feminism [112–3](#), [201](#), [204](#), [224](#), [260–1](#), [265](#), [368](#), [372](#), [374](#), [388](#), [409](#), [516](#), [613](#); antifeminism [203](#), [205](#), [260](#), [290](#), [292](#), [374](#)

Fennema, Meindert [478](#)

Ferguson, Niall [117](#)

Fernández de la Mora, Gonzalo [146](#)

Fianna Fáil (Soldiers of Destiny, FF) [317](#), [320](#), [322](#)

Fidesz-Hungarian Civic Alliance (*Fidesz-Magyar Polgári Szövetség*, Fidesz) [5–6](#), [9](#) (fn9), [187](#), [194](#), [197](#), [199](#) (fn42), [616](#)

Fine Gael (Family) [320](#)

Fini, Gianfranco [15](#), [44](#), [49](#), [51](#), [62](#), [136](#) (fn39), [278](#), [415](#), [443](#), [451](#), [500](#), [560–1](#), [570](#) (fn4)

Fininvest [515](#)

Finland [5](#), [9](#) (fn3), [147](#), [166](#), [196](#), [278](#), [317](#), [320](#), [326](#), [331](#) (fn23), [381–2](#), [431](#), [435](#) (fn7), [480](#), [527](#)

Finns Party (*Perussuomalaiset*, PS) [5–6](#), [9](#) (fn3); True Finns [278](#), [507](#), [520](#)

Finnish Rural Party (*Suomen maaseudun puolue*, SMP) [164](#), [166–7](#)

First World War [145](#), [150](#), [257](#) (fn3), [379](#), [398](#), [548](#), [553](#), [563](#)

Flanagan, Scott [173](#), [330](#) (fn2)

Flash parties [68](#), [100](#) (fn8), [231](#), [407](#)

Flemish Bloc (*Vlaams Blok*, VB) (see [Flemish Interest](#))

Flemish Interest (*Vlaams Belang*, VB) [1](#), [22–3](#), [38](#), [41](#), [43](#), [46–7](#), [50](#), [54](#), [58](#), [70–1](#), [75](#), [77](#), [90–7](#), [98–100](#) (fn7), [107–10](#), [131–2](#), [134](#), [159](#), [163](#), [166](#), [175](#), [240–2](#), [248–9](#), [278](#), [297](#), [317](#), [322–3](#), [339](#), [342](#), [346](#), [352](#), [404](#), [407](#), [410–1](#), [434–4](#) (fn13), [434](#), [445–6](#), [479–80](#), [526–7](#), [529](#), [543](#), [545](#), [547–8](#), [550](#), [552](#), [555](#), [557](#), [567–570](#), [589](#), [611](#), [613](#)

Flemish Liberals & Democrats (*Vlaamse Liberalen en Democraten*, VLD) [92](#), [98–9](#), [505](#)

Flemish Militant Order (*Vlaamse Militanten Orde*, VMO) [548](#), [568](#)

Flemish National League (*Vlaams Nationaal Verbond*, VNV) [242](#), [249](#), [257](#) (fn5)

Flemish National Party (*Vlaams Nationale Partij*, VNP) [567](#)

Flemish National Song Festival (*Vlaams Nationaal Zangfeest*, VNZ) [257](#) (fn4)

Flemish People's Party (*Vlaamse Volkspartij*, VVP) [567](#)

Focus on the Family [204](#)

Foley, Michael [177](#)

Foreigners [42–3](#), [47–8](#), [66](#) (fn3), [71](#), [115](#), [179](#), [181](#), [296](#), [326](#), [340–1](#), [346](#), [371](#), [390](#), [446–8](#), [450](#), [452](#), [455](#), [496](#), [510](#), [512–3](#), [515](#), [519–20](#), [575](#), [608](#); attacks on [368](#); attitudes towards [39–40](#), [296–8](#), [320](#), [342](#), [348](#), [574](#); foreign workers [146–7](#), [296–7](#), [341](#), [344](#)

For Fatherland and Freedom (*Tēvzemei un Brīvībai*, TB) [124](#), [131](#), [133–4](#)

Fortuyn, Pim [70](#), [74](#), [91](#), [223–4](#), [256](#) (fn2), [409](#), [495](#), [598](#)

Forza Italia (Go Italy, FI) [5–6](#), [8](#), [159](#), [166](#), [283](#), [404](#), [412](#), [443](#), [505](#), [510](#), [513–4](#), [528](#), [532–3](#), [561](#), [589–90](#), [600](#); Charter of Values [514](#)

Fraga, Manuel [144](#), [146](#), [319](#), [321](#)

Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities [190](#)

France [4](#), [7](#) [17](#), [27](#) (fn32), [35](#), [41](#), [44](#), [47](#), [53](#), [70](#), [73](#), [83](#), [91–3](#), [98–9](#), [104](#), [108–11](#), [113–6](#), [130–1](#), [143](#), [145–9](#), [151–4](#), [163](#), [166](#), [175](#), [175](#), [188](#), [195](#), [199](#) (fn14), [211](#), [225](#), [230](#), [232](#), [235](#), [238–41](#), [243](#), [248–9](#), [255](#), [278–9](#), [282](#), [290–4](#), [296–9](#), [301–6](#), [316](#), [323](#), [325–6](#), [331](#) (fn19), [332](#) (fn23), [340–1](#), [343](#), [352](#), [382](#), [392](#), [397](#), [400](#), [404–11](#), [415–7](#), [424](#), [426](#), [430](#), [435](#) (fn7), [438–9](#), [442–5](#), [447](#), [454](#), [457](#), [459–61](#), [463–6](#), [468–71](#), [474](#), [478–80](#), [495](#), [505](#), [527](#), [534](#), [542–53](#), [555](#), [557](#), [563](#), [574](#), [579](#), [611](#); Fifth Republic [115](#); Jospin cabinet (1997–2002) [468](#), [505](#); Raffarin cabinet (2002–2007) [498](#), [505](#); Vichy [145–6](#), [149–50](#), [229](#), [234](#), [406](#)

Franco, Francisco [15](#), [44](#), [51](#), [57](#), [67](#) (fn7), [144](#), [146](#), [149–50](#), [168](#), [319](#)

Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung [526](#), [577–8](#)

Freedom House [514](#)

Free Democratic Party (*Freie Demokratische Partei*, FDP) (Germany) [245](#), [580](#), [586](#) (fn6)

Free Democratic Party (*Freisinnig-Demokratische Partei*, FDP) (Switzerland) [8](#), [505](#), [528](#)

Freedom Party of Switzerland (*Freiheitspartei der Schweiz*, FPS) [41](#), [44](#), [46](#), [48](#), [50](#), [55](#), [58](#), [60](#), [62](#), [480](#)

Free German Workers' Party (*Freiheitliche Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*, FAP) [549](#)

French Action (*Action Française*) [146](#), [243](#)

French Algeria (*Algérie Française*) [146](#), [229](#), [409](#)

French Communist Party (*Parti Communiste Français*, PCF) [92–3](#), [98–100](#) (fn5), [230](#), [243](#), [461](#), [471](#) (fn1), [505](#)

French Democratic Confederation of Labor (*Confédération Françoise Démocratique du Travail*, CFDT) [467](#), [471](#) (fn8)

French Popular Party (*Parti Popular Français*, PPF) [145](#)

Frey, Gerhard [152–3](#), [226](#), [390](#)

Friedrich Ebert Foundation (*Friedrich Ebert Stiftung*, FES) [83](#)

Frischenschlager, Friedhelm [566](#), [575](#)

Front of National Rescue (FNR) (see [National Salvation Front](#))

Front-stage [6](#), [9](#) (fn2), [540–1](#), [547](#), [555](#)

Funar, Gheorghe [394](#)

Fundamentalism [24](#), [34](#), [114](#), [200–1](#); Catholic [229](#); Islamic [16](#), [204](#), [417](#); Protestant [202](#), [206](#); religious [387](#), [393](#)

Gaddafi, Muammar [18](#)
Gallagher, Tom [167](#)
Gandhi, Mahatma [223–4](#)
Gardberg, Annvi [32](#)
Gaullism [92](#), [151](#), [152](#), [230–1](#), [243](#), [346](#), [448](#), [469](#)
Gaus, Helmuth [426](#)
Gays [174](#), [196](#), [204–5](#), [510](#), [516](#); gay rights [516](#), [609](#); Same-sex marriage [107](#), [200](#), [204](#)
Gazeta Wyborcza [517](#)
Geirtych, Roman [517](#)
Geisser, Vincent [105](#)
Gellner, Ernest [507](#), [509](#)
Gender [71](#), [99](#) (fn2), [100](#) (fn6), [203–4](#), [209](#), [256](#), [258–9](#), [261–2](#), [264](#), [268–72](#), [283–4](#), [291](#), [357](#), [361](#), [366–7](#), [613](#); equality [113](#), [202](#), [258](#), [272](#), [366](#), [374](#), [609](#); gap [219–20](#), [284](#), [290–308](#), [613](#)
General Confederation of Labor (*Confédération Générale du Travail*, CGT) [467](#), [471](#) (fn8)
Gentile, Emilio [223](#)
Gentile, Pierre [43](#)
German Communist Party (*Deutsche Kommunistische Partei*, DKP) [144](#)
German National Democratic Party (*Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands*, NPD) [5–6](#), [22](#), [37–8](#), [41–2](#), [45–6](#), [50](#), [52](#), [58](#), [108](#), [145–6](#), [151–4](#), [162](#), [166](#), [181](#), [245](#), [278](#), [283](#), [315–6](#), [318](#), [322–3](#), [326](#), [329](#), [389–90](#), [415](#), [428](#), [445](#), [480](#), [489](#) (fn17), [549](#), [576](#), [585](#)
German Social Democratic Party (*Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*, SPD) [150](#), [245–6](#), [412](#), [447](#), [505](#), [579](#)
German People's Union (*Deutsche Volksunion*, DVU) [41](#), [46](#), [50](#), [58](#), [166–7](#), [174–6](#), [178–80](#), [189](#), [192](#), [322](#), [352](#), [389](#), [445](#), [480](#), Germany [5–6](#), [17](#), [20](#), [26](#) (fn11), [41–2](#), [46](#), [50](#), [58](#), [114](#), [121](#) (fn89), [143–55](#), [162–4](#), [166](#); [195–6](#), [198](#) (fn14), [199](#) (fn28), [210–1](#), [223–4](#), [233](#), [238–9](#), [241](#), [245](#), [248](#), [251–2](#), [255](#), [267](#), [278](#), [280](#), [284](#), [286](#), [291](#), [293](#), [295–8](#), [316](#), [323](#), [326](#), [331–2](#) (fn23), [338](#), [340–1](#), [343–4](#), [352](#), [380](#), [382–3](#), [391](#), [396–8](#), [400](#), [406–8](#), [410–2](#), [415–6](#), [425–7](#), [431–2](#), [435](#) (fn7), [439](#), [444–7](#), [455](#), [459](#), [470–1](#), [475](#), [480](#), [489](#) (fn17), [495](#), [505](#), [527](#), [540](#), [542–56](#), [574–5](#), [577](#), [579–82](#), [584–6](#) (fn8), [611](#), [617](#); East Germany/ German Democratic Republic (GDR) [154](#), [338](#), [388](#), [392](#); Nazi Germany (see [Third Reich](#)); Merkel I cabinet (2006–2010); Schröder I cabinet (1998–2002) [447](#), [498](#), [505](#); Schröder II cabinet (2002–2006) [505](#); Weimar Germany [21](#), [143](#), [145](#), [152](#), [177](#), [225](#), [235](#), [277](#), [282](#), [391](#); West Germany [325](#), [328](#), [390](#), [392](#), [398](#), [401](#) (fn19), [410](#)
Germino, Dante [144](#)
Gibbon, Edward [117](#)
Giddens, Anthony [24](#)
Gilmour, John [167](#)
Gijsberts, Meroe [286](#)
Gioannini, Guglielmo [149](#)
Giscard-d'Estaing, Valéry [466](#)
Glaesner, [399](#)
Glistrup, Mogens [59](#), [151](#), [164](#), [322](#); Glistrupism [145](#)

Globalization [22–3](#), [47](#), [76](#), [106](#), [111](#), [175](#), [211](#), [231](#), [279](#), [295](#), [297–8](#), [409](#), [411](#), [416](#), [420](#), [427](#), [582](#)

Globke, Hans [150](#)

Gmurczyk, Adam [396](#)

Goebbels, Josef [233](#)

Golden Dawn (*Chrysí Avgí*, XA) [5](#), [610](#), [614](#)

Golder, Sona Nadenichek [600](#)

Gollnisch, Bruno [70](#), [73](#), [107](#), [563](#), [565](#)

Goodhart, David [115](#)

Goodwyn, Lawrence [161](#)

Gorbachev, Michael [226](#), [228](#)

Gramscianism [21](#), [152](#), [414](#)

Gamson, William A. [269](#)

Grand Coalition (*Grosse Koalition*) [154](#), [296](#), [452](#), [576](#), [579](#), [597–8](#), [601](#)

Grasser, Karl-Heinz [584](#)

Grassroots politics [177–80](#), [183](#), [203–5](#), [448](#), [500](#), [507](#) (fn4), [511](#)

Great Britain (see [United Kingdom](#))

Greater Romania Party (*Partidul România Mare*, PRM) [6–8](#), [136](#) (fn37), [187–8](#), [197](#) (fn8), [393–4](#), [396](#)

Greece [2](#), [5](#), [7–8](#), [44](#), [110](#), [131](#), [133](#), [162](#), [166–8](#), [196](#), [278](#), [317](#), [323](#), [326](#), [331](#), [382](#), [392](#), [431](#), [435](#) (fn7), [527–8](#), [610](#), [614](#), [617](#)

Greenland [151](#)

Green Left (*GroenLinks*, GL) [70](#), [92](#), [595](#), [597](#), [602–3](#)

Green parties (Greens) [2–3](#), [86](#), [148](#), [161](#), [168](#), [173](#), [279](#), [413](#), [427](#), [433](#), [476](#), [478](#), [486](#), [488](#) (fn8,10), [498](#), [508](#), [527–8](#), [531](#), [535–6](#), [579](#), [613](#); Green movements [409](#); Green voters [297](#), [309](#), [315](#), [325](#), [407](#)

Griffin, Nick [44–5](#), [107](#), [110](#), [331](#) (fn17)

Griffin, Roger [11](#), [44](#), [51](#), [62](#), [68](#), [78](#), [610](#)

Group for the Study of European Civilization (*Groupement de Recherche et d'Études pour la Civilisation Européenne*, GRECE) [20](#), [152](#), [198](#) (fn14)

Gugerbauer, Norbert [566](#)

Gyarmati, István [196](#)

Haagsche Courant [247](#)

Hagen, Carl I. [164](#), [598](#)

Hagtvet, Bernt [380](#)

Haider, Jörg [27](#) (fn42), [40](#), [42](#), [70](#), [74](#), [164](#), [176](#), [211](#), [223](#), [296](#), [321](#), [339](#), [343](#), [347](#), [404](#), [406](#), [410–1](#), [413–4](#), [417–8](#), [445](#), [449](#), [452–5](#), [481](#), [488](#) (fn13), [500](#), [511–2](#), [565–7](#), [575–6](#), [582–6](#), [589–90](#), [601](#)

Hainsworth, Paul [29](#), [31–2](#), [112](#), [124](#)

Halo effect [406](#)

Hanson, Pauline [69](#), [71](#), [73–4](#)

Harmel, Robert [314](#)

Hart, Janet [264](#)
Hate crime [109](#), [182](#), [191](#), [546](#)
Hate speech [191](#), [208](#)
Hate Watch [180](#)
Häupl, Michael [583](#)
Haupt, Herbert [584](#)
Hedstrom, Øystein [181](#)
Heidar, Knut [322](#)
Heidegger, Martin [21](#)
Heimat (Homeland) [48](#), [453–4](#)
Heinisch, Reinhard [601](#)
Helbling, Marc [496](#)
Help Organization for National Prisoners and Their Families (*Hilfsorganisation für nationale politische Gefangene und deren Angehörige*, HNG) [179](#)
Himmelstein, Jerome [261](#)
Hinduism [21](#), [210](#), [258](#)
Hitler, Adolf [15](#), [17–8](#), [21](#), [146](#), [210](#), [223–5](#), [227](#), [233](#), [235](#), [247](#), [383](#), [417](#), [543](#), [580](#), [583](#)
Hlinka's Slovak People's Party (*Hlinkova slovenská ľudová strana*, HSL'S) [383](#)
Hobbes, Thomas [429](#)
Hoffmann, Heinrich [233](#)
Hofstadter, Richard [151](#), [260](#), [424–5](#)
Holeindre, Roger [563](#)
Holocaust [20](#), [45](#), [170](#), [180](#), [195](#), [418](#), [542](#); Auschwitz [575](#); denial [12](#), [20](#), [47](#), [146](#), [179–81](#), [191](#), [196](#), [231](#), [543](#), [553](#), [569](#)
Hooliganism [18](#), [189](#), [210](#)
Hottinger, Julian Thomas [165](#)
Howell, Susan [290](#), [294](#)
Hrvatska Radio Televizija [429](#)
Humanist Democratic Centre (*Centre démocrate humaniste*, cdH) [505](#)
Human rights [23](#), [30](#), [56](#), [74](#), [190](#), [192](#), [194](#), [512](#), [514–5](#), [520](#); NGOs [518](#)
Hungarian Democratic Forum (*Magyar Demokrata Fórum*, MDF) [187–8](#), [393](#)
Hungarian Forum (*Magyar Fórum*, MF) [188](#)
Hungarian Guard (*Magyar Gárda*) [6](#)
Hungarian Justice and Life Party (*Magyar Igazság és Élet Pártja*, MIÉP) [188](#), [199](#) (fn42), [393–5](#),
Hungary [5](#), [7](#), [9](#) (fn3), [186–90](#), [192–5](#), [197](#), [382](#), [391–6](#), [399–400](#), [401](#) (fn21), [431](#), [435](#) (fn7), [536](#), [610](#), [616](#); Hungarians [4](#), [195–6](#)
Huntington, Samuel P. [74](#)
Husbands Christopher T. [29](#), [37](#),
Hussein, Saddam [18](#), [226](#), [584](#)

Iceland [6](#), [33](#)

Identitarian Movement [611](#)

Identity [107](#)

Identity, Tradition and Sovereignty (ITS) [107](#)

Ideology [4–5](#), [9](#), [11](#), [16–8](#), [20](#), [22](#), [28–30](#), [33](#), [36–44](#), [47–50](#), [57](#), [59–60](#), [62–6](#), [68–9](#), [71–2](#), [74](#), [76–9](#), [92](#), [96](#), [104](#), [116](#), [118](#), [124–6](#), [130](#), [143](#), [147](#), [151](#), [153](#), [160](#), [162–3](#), [165](#), [174](#), [178–9](#), [183](#), [199](#) (fn42), [203](#), [244](#), [257](#) (fn5), [259](#), [261](#), [268](#), [315](#), [317–21](#), [327–8](#), [330](#) (fn9), [331](#) (fn13), [344](#), [352](#), [360](#), [373](#), [375](#), [387–8](#), [392–3](#), [396](#), [400](#), [406–7](#), [416–7](#), [425–6](#), [428–30](#), [432–4](#), [440](#), [451](#), [453–4](#), [508](#), [510–1](#), [551](#), [557–60](#), [562](#), [577](#), [585](#), [604](#) (fn1), [609–11](#); party ideology [6](#), [12–3](#), [28–9](#), [36–7](#), [39](#), [60](#), [67](#) (fn6), [135](#), [310](#), [316–7](#), [322](#), [488](#) (fn12), [511](#), [527](#), [530](#)

Ignazi, Piero [1](#), [33](#), [35](#), [37–40](#), [43–4](#), [59](#), [62](#), [66](#) (fn6), [68](#), [160](#), [162–3](#), [167](#), [172–4](#), [176–7](#), [192](#), [199](#) (fn27), [309](#), [457](#) (fn27), [557](#), [613](#)

Iliescu, Ion [393](#)

Illiberalism [23](#), [512–3](#), [516](#), [518](#), [533](#), [610](#)

Immigration [5](#), [8](#), [11](#), [21](#), [40–5](#), [48](#), [53](#), [55–9](#), [68](#), [73–5](#), [77](#), [79](#) (fn18), [90–1](#), [93–4](#), [97–8](#), [105–6](#), [111–7](#), [131](#), [147](#), [159](#), [161](#), [163](#), [168](#), [176](#), [197](#), [200](#), [203](#), [207](#), [224](#), [230–2](#), [279–82](#), [284–7](#), [290–1](#), [294–304](#), [306](#), [321–3](#), [328–9](#), [341–2](#), [347](#), [353–4](#), [366](#), [369](#), [391](#), [398](#), [405–8](#), [411–5](#), [430](#), [433](#), [439–41](#), [446–54](#), [458–60](#), [463–5](#), [467–71](#), [474–79](#), [481–9](#), [492–501](#), [506–7](#), [511–5](#), [520](#), [529–36](#), [554](#), [560](#), [563](#), [566](#), [568–9](#), [574](#), [576](#), [582](#), [598–9](#), [602–4](#) (fn10), [608–9](#), [612–6](#); anti-immigration [8](#), [38](#), [44](#), [49](#), [57](#), [73](#), [103](#), [159](#), [206](#), [278](#), [391](#), [474–89](#), [495](#), [531](#), [535](#)

Immigrants [4–5](#), [41–4](#), [47](#), [66](#), [73–5](#), [77](#), [91](#), [105](#), [113–8](#), [147](#), [159](#), [161](#), [202](#), [204](#), [207](#), [230](#), [247](#), [279](#), [282](#), [285](#), [287–8](#) (fn36), [296–8](#), [302](#), [306](#), [322](#), [328](#), [340–2](#), [344–7](#), [352–4](#), [366](#), [368](#), [371](#), [375](#), [388](#), [405–6](#), [411–6](#), [430–1](#), [448](#), [453–5](#), [462–5](#), [468–9](#), [471](#), [495–6](#), [498–9](#), [506](#), [513–4](#), [519](#), [532](#), [580](#), [599](#), [608–10](#), [612](#)

Imperial Fascist League [45](#)

Imperialism [21](#), [24](#), [110](#), [373](#), [384](#), [392](#)

Independent Greeks (*Anexartitoi Ellines*, ANEL) [5–6](#)

Independent Spanish Falange (*Falange Española Independiente*, FEI) [41](#), [46](#), [50](#), [58](#), [67](#) (fn8), [278](#), [323](#)

Independent Women's Forum (IWF) [205](#)

Indigenous population (see [natives](#))

Individualism [18](#), [21](#), [74](#), [261](#), [324](#), [347](#), [371](#), [374](#), [378](#), [387](#); anti-individualism [143](#)

Industrialization [378–9](#), [387](#); industrialism [386](#), [388](#), [397](#)

Inequality [5](#), [31–2](#), [72](#), [140](#), [272](#), [294](#), [348](#), [463](#), [563](#), [568](#)

Inglehart, Ronald [173](#), [314–5](#), [327](#), [330](#) (fn2), [398](#)

Institute for Historical Review (IHR) [185](#) (fn49)

Intellectualism [19](#), [21](#), [151–2](#), [160](#), [200](#), [326](#), [446](#), [611](#); anti-intellectualism [377](#); intellectuals [19–21](#), [26](#) (fn32), [69](#), [109](#), [151–2](#), [161](#), [178](#), [181](#), [324](#), [339](#), [376](#), [377–8](#), [392](#), [419](#); intellectual terrorism [73](#), [145](#)

Interest groups [51](#), [53](#), [57](#), [71–2](#), [162](#), [177–8](#)

Internationalism [152](#), [178–9](#), [399](#), [410](#); anti-internationalism [202](#)

International Monetary Fund (IMF) [54](#), [395](#)

Internet [21](#), [26](#) (fn23), [180](#), [183](#), [194](#), [204](#), [207–8](#), [210](#), [610](#); Internet Service Providers (ISPs) [194–5](#)

Intraparty politics [313](#), [369](#), [390](#), [487](#), [558](#), [584](#)
Ionescu, Ghiță [507](#), [509](#)
Iraq [18](#), [512](#), [584](#)
Ireland [6](#), [33](#), [147](#), [155](#), [166](#), [317](#), [320](#), [326](#), [382](#), [404](#), [431](#), [435](#) (fn7), [527](#); constitution of [429](#)
Irish Times [429](#)
Iron Guard (*Garda de Fier*) [19](#), [393](#), [396](#)
Irredentism [391](#), [451](#)
Islam [11–2](#), [47](#), [74–5](#), [78](#), [91](#), [103–13](#), [116–8](#), [507](#), [609](#); Sharia [107](#), [113](#)
Islamization [74](#), [103](#), [106–8](#), [110–1](#), [120](#) (fn49), [121](#) (fn89)
Islamophobia [4](#), [11](#), [13](#), [103–5](#), [109](#), [610–1](#), [616–7](#) (fn1); anti-Muslim sentiments [44](#), [116](#), [180](#)
Israel [18](#), [108–9](#), [120](#) (fn53), [227](#), [259](#), [580](#), [586](#) (fn8); anti-Israel [417](#); Israelis [196](#)
Issue agenda [459](#); co-potation [459](#), [471](#); position [433–5](#) (fn12), [533](#); salience [125](#), [327](#), [352](#), [361](#), [363](#), [366](#), [476](#), [488](#) (fn7,9), [527](#), [529–31](#)
Italian Communist Party (*Partito Comunista Italiano*, PCI) [144](#), [149](#)
Italian Movement of Women (*Movimento Italiano Femminile*) [244](#)
Italian Radio-Television (Radio-Televisione Italiana, RAI) [514](#)
Italian Republican Party (*Partito Repubblicano Italiano*, PRI) [144](#), [505](#)
Italian Social Movement (*Movimento Sociale Italiano*, MSI) [15](#), [22](#), [36–8](#), [41](#), [44](#), [46](#), [49–51](#), [58](#), [62](#), [64](#), [66](#), [90](#), [136](#) (fn39), [144–6](#), [148](#), [150](#), [153–4](#), [163](#), [166](#), [239](#), [244](#), [250–1](#), [315–9](#), [322–4](#), [329](#), [404](#), [411–2](#), [414](#), [443–5](#), [448–9](#), [451](#), [457](#) (fn27), [557](#), [559–62](#), [563](#), [570](#); National Right (*Destra Nazionale*, DN) [153](#), [560](#)
Italian Socialist Party (*Partito Socialista Italiano*, PSI) [146](#), [449](#)
Italy [5](#), [7–8](#), [27](#) (fn23), [35](#), [41](#), [97](#), [104](#), [106](#), [110](#), [114](#), [133](#), [139](#), [144–55](#), [159](#), [166](#), [174–5](#), [177](#), [188–9](#), [196](#), [238–41](#), [244](#), [248–50](#), [255](#), [278](#), [288](#) (fn56), [290](#), [293](#), [396](#), [316](#), [323](#), [326](#), [332](#) (fn23), [338–9](#), [341–4](#), [348](#), [352](#), [374](#), [382–3](#), [392](#), [397](#), [404](#), [406](#), [408](#), [411](#), [415](#), [431](#), [435](#) (fn7), [439](#), [443–6](#), [451](#), [455–6](#), [458](#), [475](#), [479–81](#), [483](#), [489](#) (fn20), [494–5](#), [500](#), [505](#), [507–8](#), [514–9](#), [520](#), [527–8](#), [532–3](#), [536](#), [541](#), [557](#), [561](#), [589–90](#), [593](#), [597](#), [600](#), [602](#); Amato I cabinet (2000–2001) [505](#); Berlusconi I cabinet (1994–1996) [404](#), [449](#), [451](#), [514](#), [528](#), [532–3](#), [561](#), [589–90](#), [593–4](#); Berlusconi II cabinet (2001–2005) [404](#), [494](#), [499–500](#), [505](#), [514](#), [528](#), [532–3](#), [561](#), [589–90](#); Berlusconi III cabinet (2005–2006) [499](#), [505](#), [514](#), [528](#), [532–3](#), [590](#), [593–4](#); Berlusconi IV cabinet (2008–2011) [514–5](#), [528](#); Constitutional Court [514](#), [516](#); d’Alema I cabinet (1998–1999) [505](#); d’Alema II cabinet (1999–2000) [505](#); Fascist Italy [57](#), [143–4](#); Prodi I cabinet (1996–1998) [505](#); Prodi II cabinet (2006–2008) [505](#); Salò Republic (*Repubblica di Salò*) [19](#), [145](#), [244](#), [438](#)

Ivaldi, Gilles [47](#)

Jackman, Robert W. [286](#), [297](#)

Jahangir, Asma [519](#)

Janmaat, Hans [247](#)

Japan [227](#), [314](#), [381](#),

Jay, Peter [117](#)

Jehova’s Witnesses [196](#)

Jews [18](#), [20](#), [108–10](#), [120](#) (fn68), [146](#), [196](#), [206](#), [228](#), [252](#), [259–60](#), [265](#), [268](#), [271](#), [374](#), [392](#), [396](#), [586](#) (fn8), [610](#); Jewish community [109](#), [553](#)

Johnson, Carol [11–2](#)

Jospin, Lionel [232](#)

Judaism [108](#), [194](#); anti-Judaism [109](#)

Jünger, Ernst [21](#)

Junod, Pascal [181](#)

Jus sanguinis [24](#), [496](#)

Jus soli [24](#), [496](#), [506](#)

Justice [76](#), [110](#), [514](#); injustice [69](#), [73](#), [249](#)

Kaczynski, Jaroslaw [516](#), [536](#)

Kaczynski, Lech [516](#), [536](#)

Kaplan, Robert [121](#) (fn87)

Karlsson, Bert [164](#), [170](#) (fn24)

Kärtner Nachrichten [575](#)

Katz, Richard [173](#)

Kaufmann, Eric [108](#)

Keane, Jon [177–8](#)

Kemp, Arthur [121](#) (fn75)

Kennedy, John F. [223–4](#)

Kershaw, Ian [223](#)

Key, V. O. [461](#)

Keynesianism [161](#), [324](#), [352](#), [362](#)

Kirchheimer, Otto [32](#), [319](#)

Kitschelt, Herbert [1](#), [11–2](#), [34–8](#), [49](#), [81](#) (fn71), [83–100](#), [223](#), [279](#), [309–10](#), [399](#), [470](#), [487](#) (fn3), [614](#)

Kjærsgaard, Pia [71](#), [612](#)

Klatch, Rebecca [261](#)

Klingemann, Hans-Dieter [387](#), [426](#), [431](#)

Know Nothings (also Native American Party or American Party) [4](#), [428](#)

Knüsel, René [165](#)

Koch, Koen [40](#)

Koch, Roland [447](#)

Koekoek, Hendrik [151](#)

Kohl, Helmut [155](#), [416](#)

Kolinsky, Eva [165](#), [292](#)

Kopecký, Petr [126–8](#)

Kornhauser, William [177](#)

- Krastev, Ivan [508](#)
- Kreisky, Bruno [565](#), [575](#)
- Kriesi, Hanspeter [43](#), [280](#)
- Krüger, Michael [181](#)
- Ku Klux Klan (KKK) [18](#), [177](#), [202](#), [206–7](#), [258–9](#), [262](#), [268–9](#), [271](#), [273](#) (fn2)
- Kulturmampf* (culture struggle) [454–5](#)
- Labor Party (*Det Norske Arbeiterparti*, A/Ap) [596](#)
- Labor Party (*Partij van de Arbeid*, PvdA) [70](#), [92](#), [98–9](#), [247](#), [505](#), [597](#), [601](#), [603](#), [605](#) (fn9)
- Labour Party (UK) [22](#), [453](#)
- Labour Party (New Zealand) [71](#)
- Lafferty, William [322](#)
- Laguiller, Arlette [232](#)
- La Haye, Beverley [205](#)
- La Haye, Tim [205](#)
- Lane, Jan-Erik [315](#), [330](#) (fn5)
- Lang, Carl [564](#)
- La Padania* [75](#)
- Laqueur, Walter [117](#)
- La Rochelle, Drieu [17](#)
- Latin America [331](#) (fn13), [380](#)
- Latvia [5](#), [9](#) (fn3), [131](#), [133](#), [186–91](#), [193](#), [196](#), [198](#) (fn23), [435](#) (fn7)
- Lavau, Georges [471](#) (fn1)
- Law and Justice (*Prawo i Sprawiedliwość*, PiS) [5–6](#), [8–9](#) (fn3), [510–1](#), [515–7](#)
- Law and order [4](#), [32](#), [42](#), [54](#), [68](#), [91](#), [97](#), [112](#), [155](#), [231–2](#), [307](#) (fn1), [321–2](#), [325](#), [328–9](#), [345](#), [384](#), [405](#), [447–8](#), [450](#), [463](#), [468](#), [476](#), [495](#), [513](#), [519](#), [531–2](#), [534](#), [563](#), [566](#), [603](#)
- Lawson, Kay [173](#)
- League for Pan-Nordic Friendship [18](#)
- League of Polish Families (*Liga Polskich Rodzin*, LPR) [8](#), [131](#), [133–4](#), [187–8](#), [393–5](#), [511](#), [515–6](#), [518](#)
- Lebanon [110](#)
- Le Chevallier, Jean-Marie [449](#), [563](#)
- Lederer, Gerda [279](#)
- Left-libertarian parties (see also [Green parties](#)) [84–6](#), [94](#), [279](#), [309](#), [338](#), [345](#), [348](#), [362–4](#), [367](#)
- Left-right continuum [3](#), [72](#), [160](#), [162](#), [165](#), [290](#), [293](#), [316](#), [319–21](#), [325](#), [328](#), [332](#) (fn23), [492](#), [595](#)
- Le Gallou, Jean-Yves [563](#)
- Leiserson, Michael [591](#)
- Lenin, Vladimir Ilyich [225](#), [429](#)
- Leoni, Giovanni [146](#)

Le Pen, Jean-Marie [12](#), [44](#), [47](#), [52–3](#), [70](#), [76–7](#), [91](#), [106](#), [111](#), [113](#), [115–6](#), [131](#), [145–8](#), [150–3](#), [164–5](#), [211](#), [219](#), [223](#), [225](#), [227](#), [229–35](#), [240](#), [292](#), [296](#), [323](#), [328](#), [339](#), [343](#), [346](#), [392](#), [405–6](#), [408](#), [415](#), [417–8](#), [434](#), [443](#), [450](#), [461](#), [470–1](#) (fn5), [477](#), [487](#) (fn4), [549](#), [553](#), [555](#), [563–5](#)

Le Pen, Marine [73](#), [109](#), [116](#), [566](#), [613](#)

Lepénisme [164](#); *gaucho-lepénisme* [231](#)

Lepper, Andrzej [187](#), [395](#)

Lepszy, Norbert [165](#)

Lewis, Bernard [117](#)

Lewis-Beck, Michael S. [297](#)

Liberal Democracy (*Démocratie Libérale*, DL) [448](#)

Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (*Liberal'no-Demokraticeskaya Partiya Rossii*, LDPR) [24](#), [26](#) (fn11), [225–8](#), [234–5](#), [392–5](#)

Liberal Forum (*Liberales Forum*, LiF) [566](#)

Liberal International (LI) [565–6](#)

Liberalism [16–7](#), [22–5](#), [51](#), [260](#), [342](#), [346](#), [398](#), [575](#); liberals [1](#), [18](#), [204](#), [324](#), [429](#), [531](#), [602](#); neoliberalism (free market liberalism) [55](#), [91](#), [96](#), [230–1](#), [322](#), [324](#), [338](#), [344](#), [352](#), [355](#), [358–9](#), [367](#), [369](#), [371](#), [374](#), [379](#), [384–5](#), [416](#), [455](#); free market liberals [202–3](#), [375](#), [399](#)

Liberal parties [2](#), [60](#), [87](#), [316](#), [325](#), [531](#), [582](#); conservative liberal parties [193](#)

Liberal Party (*Venstre*, V) [596](#), [598](#)

Liberal People's Party (*Folkpartiet liberalerna*, LF) [505](#)

Liberal Reformist Party (*Parti Réformateur Libéral*, PRL) [505](#)

Libertarianism [84–100](#) (fn6), [173](#), [202–3](#), [278](#), [352](#), [354–68](#), [371–2](#), [377](#), [379](#), [399](#)

Libya [18](#)

Linz, Juan [379](#)

Lipset, Seymour Martin [154](#), [317](#), [360](#), [387](#), [399](#), [425](#), [526](#)

Lisbon Treaty [130](#), [133](#), [521](#) (fn1)

List Dedecker (*Lijst Dedecker*, LDD) [5](#)

List NO to the Foreigners' Flood (*Liste NEIN zur Ausländerflut*) [181](#)

List Pim Fortuyn (*Lijst Pim Fortuyn*, LPF) [5–6](#), [90–2](#), [95–100](#) (fn8), [256](#) (fn2), [278](#), [288](#) (fn56), [494–5](#), [499–500](#), [505](#), [507](#), [536](#), [589–90](#), [595](#), [597–9](#), [602](#), [604](#) (fn1)

Lithuania [186–9](#), [191](#), [195–7](#), [391–2](#), [435](#) (fn7)

Liveable Netherlands (*Leefbaar Nederland*, LN) [92](#), [95](#), [98–9](#), [595](#), [603](#)

Living Differently (*Anders Gaan Leven*, Agalev) [92](#), [98–9](#)

Lombard League (*Lega Lombarda*, LL) [162–4](#), [166](#), [339](#)

Lord Acton [430](#)

Lovenduski, Joni [293](#)

Lower class (see [working class](#))

Lubbers, Marcel [286](#), [479](#)

Lucardie, Paul [33](#), [45](#), [54](#), [433](#)

Lucke, Bernd [6](#)

Luther, Richard K. [321](#), [567](#), [599](#)

Luxembourg [155](#), [166](#), [405](#), [435](#) (fn7), [527](#)

Maastricht Treaty (see [Treaty on European Union](#))

Mackie, Thomas [314](#)

MacRae, Donald [509](#)

Maghreb [340](#), [421](#) (fn3); Maghrebins [346](#), [462](#)

Mair, Peter [127](#), [173](#), [314](#), [329](#) (fn1), [526](#)

Malta [534](#) (fn7)

Manifesto Research Group (MRG) [88](#)

Manning, Preston [80](#) (fn22)

Marcus, Jonathan [42](#)

Maréchal, Samuel [563](#)

Marshal Antonescu League (*Liga Mareșal Antonescu*, LMA) [188](#)

Marshall, Susan E. [261](#)

Martel, Charles [110](#)

Martin, Pierre [297](#)

Martinez, Jean-Claude [563](#)

Marxism [364](#); neo-Marxism [155](#)

Maspoli, Flavio [164](#)

Mass party [164](#), [173–4](#), [313](#), [362](#), [373](#), [379–80](#), [467](#), [609](#), [611](#)

Materialism [18](#), [21](#), [120](#) (fn71), [173](#), [279](#), [314](#), [327](#), [345](#), [410](#), [433](#); anti-materialism [410](#); non-materialism [330](#) (fn2); post-materialism [173–5](#), [310](#), [314–5](#), [324](#), [327](#), [329](#), [345](#), [347](#), [410](#), [433](#)

Maurer, Ueli [518](#)

Mauroy, Pierre [450](#)

Maurras, Charles [143](#), [243](#)

Maussen, Marcel [105](#)

May, John D. [464](#), [612](#)

Mayer, Nonna [165](#), [292](#), [302](#), [347](#), [462](#), [465](#)

Mazzoleni, Gianpietro [531](#)

McAdam, Doug [446](#)

McAllister, Ian [290](#), [293](#)

McCarthyism [260](#)

McDonough, Kevin [75](#)

McGann, Anthony [11–2](#), [83](#)

McGowan, Lee [427](#)

McVeigh, Timothy [200](#)

Media [1](#), [3](#), [8](#), [22](#), [36](#), [53](#), [70–1](#), [78](#), [104](#), [108–9](#), [113](#), [154](#), [159](#), [180–1](#), [183](#), [186](#), [193–4](#), [204–5](#), [207–8](#), [226](#), [228–32](#), [234](#), [240](#), [249](#), [251–2](#), [254](#), [258](#), [263](#), [268](#), [281](#), [286–7](#), [297](#), [313](#), [342](#), [357](#), [397](#), [404–5](#), [412–4](#), [417–20](#), [429](#), [434](#), [452–3](#), [459](#), [509](#), [514](#), [517](#), [526–7](#), [533](#), [535–6](#), [541–2](#), [553](#), [574–82](#), [610](#), [615](#); tabloidization [536](#); tabloids [413](#), [536](#), [577–81](#), [615–6](#)

Mégret, Bruno [42](#), [47](#), [232](#), [434](#), [443](#), [469](#), [470](#), [562–4](#), [612](#)

Meguid, Bonnie [476–7](#), [487–8](#) (fn7)

Merkel, Angela [608](#)

Merkl, Peter [34](#), [180](#)

Messina, Antony [459](#)

Michelini, Arturo [559](#)

Michels, Roberto [460](#), [464](#)

Middle class [154](#), [175](#), [201–2](#), [262–3](#), [317](#), [346–8](#), [372](#), [376](#), [408](#), [411](#), [574](#); extremism [317](#)

Middle East [108](#), [111](#), [120](#) (fn53), [371](#), [383](#)

Migration (see [Immigration](#))

Migrants (see [Immigrants](#))

Militarism [23](#), [155](#), [375](#), [380](#)

Militias [177](#), [179](#), [183](#), [207](#), [516](#), [548](#)

Millon, Charles [472](#) (fn10), [564](#)

Mills, David [515](#)

Milošević, Slobodan [223](#)

Minorities [5](#), [73](#), [75](#), [113](#), [186](#), [190](#), [193](#), [195–6](#), [201](#), [338](#), [430](#), [453](#), [509](#), [520](#), [542](#), [553](#); cultural [90](#), [93–4](#); ethnic [54](#), [72](#), [194–5](#), [239](#), [279](#), [391](#), [515](#), [517](#), [519](#), [553](#), [555](#), [616](#); indigenous [4](#), [610](#); racial [72](#), [177](#), [206–7](#), [268](#); religious [114](#), [194–5](#), [515](#), [519](#); sexual [204](#)

Mitchell, Glenn E. [297](#)

Mitra, Subrata [165](#)

Mitterrand, François [229–31](#), [412](#), [447–8](#), [450](#), [487](#) (fn4)

Mnich, Peter [165](#)

Mobilization [17](#), [140](#), [187](#), [189–90](#), [202](#), [204](#), [206–8](#), [219](#), [239–40](#), [255](#), [260](#), [263](#), [277](#), [279–80](#), [310](#), [342](#), [344](#), [353](#), [367–8](#), [371](#), [374](#), [378](#), [380–4](#), [387–8](#), [390–2](#), [397–8](#), [440](#), [560](#), [611](#)

Moczulski, Leszek [394](#)

Moderate Party (*Moderata Samlingspartei*, MS) [317](#), [505](#)

Modernization [51](#), [344](#), [378](#), [381](#), [383](#), [386–8](#), [397](#), [399](#), [427](#); losers of [224](#), [279](#), [295](#), [310](#), [344–7](#), [358](#), [388](#), [396–7](#), [399](#), [427](#), [444](#); theory [378–9](#), [381](#), [387](#), [434](#); winners of [344](#), [346–7](#), [399](#), [427](#)

Mölzer, Andreas [132](#), [455](#), [575](#)

Monarchist Popular Party (*Partido Popular Monárquico*, PPM) [231](#) (fn21)

Money, Jeanette [471](#)

Monism [5](#), [52](#), [425](#), [533](#)

Montero, José [319](#)

Moore, Barrington [379](#), [381](#)

Morality [97](#), [201–2](#), [272](#), [345](#), [347](#), [361](#); immorality [271](#)

Moral Majority [204–5](#)

Morgenstern, Oskar [591](#)

Morris, William [19](#)

Morrow, Duncan [48](#)

Most-Híd [8](#)

Mosley, Oswald [17](#)

Mouffe, Chantal [105](#)

Movement for a Better Hungary (*Jobbik Magyarországért Mozgalom*, Jobbik) [6–7](#), [610](#)

Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (*Hnutie za demokratické Slovensko*, HZDS) [8](#), [197](#)

Movement for Autonomy (*Movimento per l'Autonomia*, MpA) [8](#), [590](#), [593](#), [601](#)

Movements for Citizens' Rights (*Bürger-Rechts-Bewegung*, BRB) [317–8](#), [322](#), [324](#), [329](#), [331](#) (fn11)

Movement for France (*Mouvement pour la France*, MpF) [479](#)

Movement for Rights and Freedoms (*Dvizhenie za Prava i Svobodi*, DPS) [8](#)

Movement for Romania (*Misarea pentru România*, MPR) [393](#), [396](#)

Mudde, Cas [29](#), [40](#), [43](#), [46](#), [83](#), [125–8](#), [130](#), [139](#), [180](#), [182](#), [277–8](#), [309–10](#), [439–40](#)

Mueller, Sean [439–40](#)

Muižnieks, Nils [197](#) (fn2)

Müller-Rommel, Ferdinand [314](#)

Multiculturalism [24](#), [43](#), [47–9](#), [55](#), [70](#), [72–5](#), [78](#), [114](#), [117](#), [162](#), [195](#), [197](#), [247](#), [367](#), [492](#), [531](#), [608](#), [616](#); multiculturalization [81](#) (fn71), [352](#), [375](#); multicultural society [21](#), [48](#), [70](#), [342](#), [345](#), [384](#), [415](#), [486–7](#) (fn2), [533](#)

Munoz, Federico Silva [146](#)

Muslims [11–2](#), [74–5](#), [103–4](#), [106–11](#), [116–7](#), [121](#), [195–6](#), [230](#), [232](#), [513](#), [609](#), [617](#) (fn1)

Mussolini, Alessandra [561](#)

Mussolini, Benito [15](#), [17](#), [223–4](#), [383](#), [415](#)

Myth [16–8](#), [21](#), [23–4](#), [73](#), [224](#), [318](#), [387](#), [398–9](#), [444](#), [507](#), [510](#); mythology [18](#), [75](#)

Napoleon [225](#)

Narodnichestvo [160](#)

Nation [4](#), [18–9](#), [31](#), [47](#), [51](#), [53](#), [66](#) (fn3), [70](#), [73](#), [76–7](#), [82](#) (fn77), [108](#), [116](#), [126–7](#), [133](#), [146](#), [149](#), [191](#), [233](#), [245](#), [272](#), [318](#), [331](#) (fn16), [342](#), [344](#), [387–8](#), [398–9](#), [428–9](#), [435](#) (fn5), [445–6](#), [477](#), [497](#), [502](#) (fn5), [510](#), [566](#), [575](#), [609](#); *Kulturnation* [398](#), [446](#); nation-building [387](#), [397–8](#), [402](#) (fn51); nationhood [398](#), [445–6](#), [448](#); nation-state [4](#), [19](#), [78](#), [108](#), [125](#), [127–9](#), [132–3](#), [398](#), [428–9](#), [435](#) (fn4), [520](#); *Volksnation* [398](#)

National Action against Excessive Foreign Influence on People and Homeland (*Nationale Aktion gegen die Überfremdung von Volk und Heimat*, NA) (see [Swiss Democrats](#))

National Action for People and Homeland (*Nationale Aktion für Volk und Heimat*, NA) (see [Swiss Democrats](#))

National Alliance (*Alleanza Nazionale*, AN) [5–6](#), [41](#), [46](#), [50](#), [58](#), [64](#), [131](#), [133–4](#), [136](#) (fn39), [159](#), [163](#), [166](#), [238](#), [248](#), [278](#), [283](#), [443](#), [445](#), [451](#), [487](#) (fn5), [501](#), [510–1](#), [557](#), [561](#), [589](#), [604](#) (fn1); Fiuggi Congress (1995) [15](#), [44](#), [49](#), [561](#); Verona Congress (1998) [62](#), [416](#), [561](#)

National Alliance (*Nacionālā apvienība*, NA) [5–6](#), [9](#) (fn1)

National Alliance (US) [26](#) (fn21)

National Coalition Party (*Kansallinen Kokoomus*, KK) [317](#), [320](#), [322](#)

National Democracy (*Democracia Nacional*, ND) (Spain) [613](#)

National Democracy (*Democrazia Nazionale*, DN) (Italy) [560](#)

National Democratic Party (*Nationaldemokratische Partei*, NDP) [331](#) (fn11), [565](#)

National Democrats (*Nationaldemokraterna*, ND) [278](#)

National Fascist Party (*Partito Nazionale Fascista*, PNF) [22](#), [330](#) (fn2)

National Federation of Agricultural Holders' Unions (*Fédération Nationale des Syndicats d'exploitants Agricoles*, FNSEA) [467](#)

National Flemish League (*Vlaams Nationaal Verbond*, VNV) [242](#), [249](#), [257](#) (fn5)

National Force (*Força Nacional*) [321](#), [331](#) (fn12)

National Force Party (*Partido Força Nacional*) [331](#) (fn12)

National Front (*Frente Nacional*, FNe) [39](#), [41](#), [46](#), [49–51](#), [58](#), [62](#), [64](#), [67](#) (fn7), [162](#), [166](#), [317](#), [319–20](#), [323](#), [324](#), [326](#), [330](#) (fn10), [527](#)

National Front (*Front National*, FN) [3–4](#), [6–7](#), [23–4](#), [36](#), [38](#), [41–4](#), [46–7](#), [50](#), [52–4](#), [58](#), [62](#), [79](#), [90–4](#), [96–9](#), [103](#), [106](#), [108–9](#), [111](#), [115](#), [124](#), [131](#), [133–4](#), [151–2](#), [159](#), [163–6](#), [175](#), [199](#) (fn30), [211](#), [225](#), [229–32](#), [234–5](#), [240](#), [243–4](#), [248–50](#), [278–9](#), [282–3](#), [288](#) (fn36), [291–2](#), [296](#), [298](#), [307](#) (fn1), [314](#), [316–7](#), [322](#), [324](#), [328–30](#) (fn9), [339](#), [341–2](#), [344](#), [346–7](#), [352](#), [404–13](#), [415–8](#), [434](#), [439–40](#), [443](#), [445](#), [447–8](#), [450](#), [455–6](#) (fn17), [458–71](#) (fn2,3,6), [472](#) (fn10), [475](#), [480](#), [487](#) (fn4), [507](#), [527](#), [529](#), [543](#), [545–51](#), [553](#), [557](#), [560–5](#), [568](#), [570](#) (fn6), [589](#), [609](#), [611–3](#), [616](#)

National Front (*Front National/Front voor de Natie*, FNb) [37–8](#), [41](#), [43](#), [46](#), [48](#), [50](#), [54](#), [58](#), [62](#), [278](#), [317](#), [322–4](#), [329](#), [480](#), [527](#)

National Front (*Ethniko Metopo*) [162](#)

National Front (NF) [32](#), [36–7](#), [39](#), [41](#), [44–6](#), [50–1](#), [58](#), [64](#), [163](#), [270](#), [278](#), [292](#), [316–7](#), [322](#), [324](#), [329–30](#) (fn7), [331](#) (fn17), [352](#), [410](#), [413](#), [415](#), [445](#), [480](#), [553](#)

National Front Party of the Fatherland (*Stronnictwo Narodowe 'Ojczyzna'*, SN) [394](#)

Nationalism [3–5](#), [17](#), [29–32](#), [45](#), [66](#) (fn2,3), [98](#), [107](#), [109–11](#), [115](#), [159](#), [174](#), [178](#), [190](#), [197](#), [200](#), [202](#), [206](#), [240](#), [242–3](#), [249](#), [257](#) (fn3), [261](#), [292](#), [318](#), [326](#), [375](#), [380](#), [391–2](#), [397–401](#) (fn20), [408](#), [410](#), [428](#), [431](#), [552](#), [562](#), [565](#), [567](#), [575](#); banal nationalism [310](#), [429](#), [435](#) (fn5); extreme or ultra-nationalism [16–7](#), [21](#), [24](#), [31](#), [143](#), [174](#), [387](#), [392](#), [400](#), [444](#); supra-nationalism [125](#), [128](#), [130](#)

Nationalist Action Party (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*, MHP) [6](#)

Nationalist Immigration and Integration Policy (NIIP) index [440](#), [496–7](#), [499–502](#) (fn6)

Nationalist Union (*Nationalistisch Verbond*) [568](#)

National Party (*Ethniko Komma*, EK) [8](#), [41](#), [44](#), [46](#), [49–50](#), [56](#), [58](#), [60](#)

National Party (*Partida Nationala*) [393](#)

National Party Denmark (*Nationalpartiet Danmark*) [182](#)

National Political Union (*Ethniki Politiki Enosis*, EPEN) [8](#), [41](#), [44](#), [46](#), [49–50](#), [56](#), [58](#), [60](#), [64](#), [162](#), [166](#), [317–8](#), [322–4](#), [329](#)

National Renovator Party (*Partido Nacional Renovador*, PNR) [393](#), [396](#), [527](#), [609](#)

National Republican Movement (*Mouvement National Républicain*, MNR) [41–2](#), [46–7](#), [50](#), [53](#), [58](#), [232](#), [244](#), [250](#), [278](#), [443](#), [455](#), [480](#), [564](#), [570](#) (fn6), [612](#)

National Salvation Front (*Frontul Salvării Naționale*, FSN) [392](#)

National Socialism (Nazism) [1](#), [18–20](#), [45](#), [47](#), [68](#), [112](#), [149–50](#), [153](#), [155](#), [201](#), [206](#), [227](#), [238–9](#), [354](#), [413](#), [415](#), [427](#), [452](#), [543](#), [548](#), [565–6](#), [568](#); neo-Nazism [19](#), [45](#), [180](#), [193](#)

National Socialist Bloc (*Národně sociální blok*, NSB) [198](#) (fn23)

National Socialist German Workers Party (*Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*, NSDAP) [22](#), [57](#), [145](#), [224](#), [235](#), [274](#) (fn20), [279](#), [282](#), [292](#), [377](#), [380](#)

National Social Union of Slovenia (*Nacional-socialna zveza Slovenije*, NSZS) [198](#) (fn23)

National Union (*Unión Nacional*) [149](#)

National Union Attack (*Natsionalen Sayuz “Ataka”*, Attack) [7–8](#), [131–4](#), [617](#) (fn1)

National Union of French Speakers (*Union Nationale des Francophones*) [330](#) (fn9)

Nation Europa [17](#)

Natives [4–5](#), [55](#), [106](#), [108–10](#), [115–7](#), [207](#), [278](#), [341](#), [348](#), [413](#), [428](#), [464](#), [610](#)

Nativism [4–6](#), [112](#), [130](#), [161](#), [278](#), [395](#), [428–31](#), [434](#), [495](#), [527](#), [530](#), [609](#), [616](#)

Naturalization [42](#), [77](#), [448](#), [468](#), [496–8](#), [506](#), [519](#)

Nazi Party (see [National Socialist German Workers Party](#))

Neo-Nazis [179–81](#), [194](#), [200](#), [206](#), [210](#), [258](#), [260](#), [263](#), [389](#), [395](#), [568](#)

Netherlands [5](#), [7](#), [43](#), [83](#), [91–2](#), [95–6](#), [98–9](#), [114–5](#), [130](#), [147](#), [151](#), [163](#), [166](#), [238–9](#), [241](#), [246–8](#), [252](#), [255](#), [278](#), [286](#), [317](#), [325–6](#), [328](#), [331](#) (fn23), [352](#), [380](#), [382](#), [408–10](#), [413](#), [427](#), [431–2](#), [435](#) (fn7), [445](#), [477](#), [479–80](#), [495](#), [498](#), [507–8](#), [527–9](#), [534](#), [543–55](#), [589–90](#), [595–9](#), [601–](#) (fn9), [608](#), [616](#); Balkenende I government (2002–2003) [100](#) (fn9), [499–500](#), [505](#), [590](#), [594](#); Balkenende II government (2003–2006) [498](#), [505](#); Balkenende III government (2006–2007) [498](#), [500](#), [505](#); Balkenende IV government (2007–2010) [505](#); Kok II government (1998–2002) [498](#), [505](#); Rutte I cabinet (2010–2012) [603](#)

Network (*Siet*) [8](#)

Neue Kronen Zeitung (*Krone*) [414](#), [577–8](#), [584–5](#), [616](#)

Neugebauer, Wolfgang [512](#)

New Alliance (*Ny Alliance*, NA) [595](#), [597–8](#)

New Center (*Nouveau Centre*, NC) [505](#)

New Deal [205](#), [261](#)

New Democracy (*Nea Demokratia*, ND) [8](#), [330](#) (fn8), [528](#)

New Democracy (*Ny Demokrati*, ND) [5–6](#), [43](#), [46](#), [48](#), [50](#), [55](#), [58](#), [60](#), [62](#), [159](#), [163–6](#), [278](#), [339](#), [342](#), [344](#), [445](#)

New European Order (*Nouvel Ordre Européen*) [17–8](#)

New Flemish Alliance (*Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie*, N-VA) [92–3](#), [505](#)

New Force (*Fuerza Nueva*, FN) [41](#), [44](#), [46](#), [49–51](#), [58](#), [62](#), [64](#), [145](#), [319](#), [330](#) (fn10)

New Forces Party (*Parti des Forces Nouvelles*, (PFN) (France) [316](#)

New Forces Party (*Parti des Forces Nouvelles*, PFNb) (Belgium) [41](#), [43](#), [46](#), [50](#), [58](#), [317](#), [322–4](#), [329–30](#) (fn9), [480](#)

New Front of Belgium (*Front Nouveau de Belgique*, FNB) [38](#), [41](#), [43](#), [46](#), [48](#), [50](#), [54](#), [58](#), [62](#), [480](#)

New Italian Socialist Party (*Nuovo Partito Socialista Italiano*, NPSI) [505](#)

New Left [148](#), [201](#), [310](#), [324](#), [327](#), [352](#), [433](#)

New Monarchy (*Nova Monarquia*) [331](#) (fn12)

New Order (*Ordine Nuovo*, ON) (Italy) [559](#)

New Order (*Ordre Nouveau*, ON) [562](#)

New Right (US) [13](#), [140](#), [202](#), [410](#)

New Statesman [117](#)

New World Order (NWO) [18](#), [110](#), [179](#)

New Zealand [71](#), [73–4](#), [82](#) (fn77)

New Zealand First (NZF) [70](#), [77](#)

Niche parties [3](#), [478](#), [481–6](#), [488](#) (fn9)

Niedermayer, Oskar [35](#)

Nimmerichter, Richard (Staberl) [584](#)

Nisbet, Robert [429](#)

Nixon, Richard [161](#)

Nolte, Ernst [144–5](#)

Normal pathology thesis [3](#), [309–10](#), [390](#), [424–8](#), [432–5](#) (fn2,3), [536](#), [613](#)

Norris, Pippa [293](#), [598](#)

Northern Ireland [548](#)

Northern League (*Lega Nord*, LN) [7–8](#), [17](#), [20](#), [23](#), [35](#), [41](#), [43–4](#), [46](#), [49–50](#), [56](#), [58](#), [60](#), [72–6](#), [106–8](#), [110–3](#), [131–2](#), [134](#), [139](#), [159](#), [166](#), [175](#), [188](#), [278](#), [288](#) (fn56), [339](#), [342–4](#), [346–8](#), [352](#), [404](#), [406](#), [408](#), [411](#), [414](#), [417–8](#), [443](#), [449](#), [451](#), [475](#), [479–80](#), [494–5](#), [499–500](#), [505](#), [510–1](#), [514–8](#), [527–8](#), [532–3](#), [536](#), [589–90](#), [593](#), [601–2](#), [604](#) (fn1), [609](#), [612–3](#)

Norway [5](#), [9](#) (fn3), [48](#), [147](#), [151](#), [163](#), [166](#), [175](#), [181](#), [278](#), [280](#), [317](#), [321](#), [323](#), [326–8](#), [331](#) (fn23), [339](#), [352](#), [382](#), [444–5](#), [477](#), [480](#), [527](#), [589–90](#), [596](#), [598](#), [600](#), [602](#), [604](#) (fn8), [605](#) (fn14), [611](#), [616](#)

Norwegian Association (*Norsk Forening*) [181](#)

Nostalgia [24](#), [51](#), [62](#), [78](#), [145](#), [155](#), [168](#), [239](#), [292](#), [318–20](#), [406](#), [560](#)

Nouvelle Droite (New Right) [20–1](#), [68](#), [78](#), [109](#), [146–7](#), [152–3](#), [178](#), [181](#), [198](#) (fn4), [230](#), [243](#), [260](#), [331](#) (fn19), [393](#), [611](#)

Nouvelle Ecole [20](#)

Nugent, Walter [161](#)

Odinism [206](#)

Office-seeking (office-maximizing) [84](#), [310](#), [364–5](#), [478](#), [591–3](#), [598](#), [601–3](#)

One Nation [74](#), [80](#) (fn25)

Operation Desert Storm [226](#)

Opportunity structure [353](#), [362](#), [520](#); discursive [415](#), [536](#); electoral [362](#); political [184](#) (fn11), [310](#), [370](#), [372](#), [412–3](#), [422](#) (fn34)

Orbán, Viktor [199](#) (fn42), [520](#), [536](#)

Organization of the Secret Army (*Organisation de l'Armée Secrète, OAS*) [145](#), [153](#)

Orwell, George [23](#)

Outsiders [71](#), [97](#), [210](#), [231](#), [262–3](#), [348](#), [374](#), [508](#)

Padania [73](#), [106](#), [408](#)

Paganism [18](#), [206](#)

't Pallieterke [242](#)

Pamyat (Remembrance) [393](#), [396](#)

Panhellenic Socialist Movement (*Panellinio Sosialistiko Kinima*, PASOK) [8](#), [330](#) (fn8), [528](#)

Pankowski, Rafał [515](#)

Paramilitary [6](#), [19](#), [22](#), [174](#), [177](#), [375](#), [384](#), [546](#), [548](#)

Parliamentarism [30](#), [40](#), [49–50](#), [52–7](#), [65](#), [322](#), [380](#); anti-parliamentarism [31–2](#)

Parsons, Talcott [279](#)

Partocracy (*partitocrazia*) [51](#), [443](#), [449](#)

Particularism [76](#), [88](#), [90](#), [354–60](#), [366](#), [373–4](#)

Party families [1–3](#), [84](#), [91–2](#), [126](#), [134–5](#), [182](#), [314–5](#), [527](#)

Party for Freedom (*Partij voor de Vrijheid*, PVV) [4–5](#), [7–8](#), [256](#), [278](#), [507](#), [511](#), [527–8](#), [536](#), [603](#), [609–10](#), [614](#)

Party for the Animals (*Partij voor de Dieren*, PVDD) [603](#)

Party identification [155](#), [313](#), [327](#)

Party of Critical Democrats (*Partei Kritische Demokraten*) [181](#)

Party of Democratic Socialism (*Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus*, PDS) [224](#), [407](#)

Party of National Rebirth (see [National Renovator Party](#))

Party of the National Right (*Partidul Dreapta Națională*, PDN) [393](#), [396](#)

Party of Romanian Social Democracy (*Partidul Democrației Sociale în România*, PDSR) [8](#), [393](#)

Pasqua, Charles [412](#), [448](#), [563](#)

Paternalism [87](#), [352](#), [366](#), [374](#), [395](#)

Patriot movement [201](#), [206–7](#)

Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the West (*Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes*, PEGIDA) [8](#), [611](#)

Patriotism [201–3](#), [325](#), [391–2](#), [446](#), [566](#); unpatriotic [76](#), [517](#)

Patronage [227](#), [367–8](#), [370–1](#), [373](#), [459](#), [466](#), [469](#)

Pax Europa [121](#) (fn89)

Pedahzur, Ami [139–40](#)

Pedersen, Mogens N. [314](#)

Peeters, Jaak [568](#)

Pelinka, Anton [512](#)

People against Racism (*L'udia proti rasizmu*) [194](#)

People in Need Foundation (*Nadace Člověk Tisni*) [194](#)
People of Freedom (*Popolo della Libertà*, PDL) (see [Forza Italia](#))
People's Monarchist Party (*Partito Monarchico Popolare*, PMP) [559](#)
People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (*Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie*, VVD) [8](#), [92](#), [98–100](#) (fn5), [407](#), [499](#), [505](#), [528](#), [590](#), [599](#), [602–4](#) (fn9), [608](#), [616](#)
People's Party Our Slovakia (*L'udová strana – Naše Slovensko*, L'SNS) [6](#), [610](#)
People's Movement for Latvia (*Tautas kustība Latvijai*, TKL) [197](#) (fn6)
People's Union (*Volksunie*, VU) [242](#), [257](#) (fn6)
Peres, Simon [580](#)
Perlmutter, Ted [475](#), [487](#) (fn5)
Permissive consensus [534](#)
Perrineau, Pascal [165](#), [292](#), [463](#), [465](#)
Pétain, Philippe [406](#)
Peters, Ralph [117](#)
Peters, Winston [71](#), [73–4](#)
Peter the Great [225](#)
Petry, Frauke [6](#)
Pettigrew, Thomas [475](#)
Piccoli, Flaminio [146](#)
Piñar, Blas [51](#), [330](#) (fn10)
Pinto, Nogueira [321](#)
Plebiscites (see [Referendums](#))
Pluralism [5](#), [30–1](#), [40](#), [49–55](#), [57–8](#), [65](#), [76](#), [114](#), [149](#), [154](#), [191](#), [366](#), [384](#), [398](#), [509](#), [517](#); anti-pluralism [32](#), [143](#), [155](#), [319](#)
Poland [5–6](#), [8–9](#) (fn3), [120](#) (fn68), [131](#), [186–96](#), [382](#), [391–6](#), [398](#), [400](#) (fn21), [435](#) (fn7), [507](#), [509](#), [515–6](#), [518](#), [520](#), [536](#); Constitutional Tribunal [517](#); 'Fourth Republic' [517](#); National Broadcasting Council (NBC) [517](#)
Polarization [95](#), [194](#), [323](#), [325–6](#), [328–9](#), [332](#), [356](#), [383](#), [440](#), [444](#), [455](#), [602](#); bipolarization [602](#)
Pole of Good Government (*Polo del Buon Governo*) (see [Forza Italia](#))
Pole of Liberty (*Polo delle Libertà*) (see [Forza Italia](#))
Police [4](#), [8](#), [54](#), [70](#), [181](#), [190](#), [192–3](#), [247](#), [252–3](#), [273](#) (fn2), [327](#), [365](#), [406](#), [414](#), [431](#), [448](#), [454](#), [466](#), [518](#), [544–6](#), [559](#), [581](#)
Policy-making [179](#), [440](#), [446–7](#), [452](#), [458–71](#), [474](#), [512](#), [529](#), [601–2](#)
Polish Nationalist Union (*Polska Wspólnota Narodowa-Polskie Stronnictwo Narodowe*, PWN-PSN) [393](#), [396](#)
Political class [4](#), [161](#), [174](#), [343](#), [364](#), [367](#), [398–9](#), [445](#), [455](#), [563](#), [577](#); new class [70](#)
Political correctness [5](#), [70](#), [79](#) (fn18), [455](#), [608](#)
Political establishment [49](#), [68](#), [71](#), [97](#), [140](#), [248](#), [343](#), [367](#), [372](#), [407](#), [508](#), [534](#), [564](#), [575](#); anti-establishment [224](#), [387](#), [430–1](#), [534](#)
Political families (see [party families](#))
Political participation [173](#), [338](#), [345](#), [356](#), [366–7](#), [372](#), [410](#)
Political Spring (*Politiki Anixi*) [278](#)
Politikverdrossenheit [407](#), [431](#)

Pope Benedict XVI [106–8](#), [120](#) (fn49)

Pope John Paul II [106](#)

Popular Alliance (*Alianza Popular*, AP) [144–5](#), [148](#), [317–24](#), [326](#), [331](#) (fn20)

Popular Orthodox Rally (*Laikós Orthóodoxos Synagermós*, LAOS) [7](#), [131–4](#), [278](#), [527–8](#), [537](#) (fn2)

Popular Party (*Partido Popular*, PP) [317](#), [321](#)

Populism [3–5](#), [36](#), [38](#), [69](#), [88](#), [98](#), [130](#), [139](#), [159–69](#), [278](#), [281](#), [315](#), [331](#) (fn13), [416](#), [426](#), [428–31](#), [434](#), [440](#), [476](#), [507–21](#), [526–7](#), [532](#), [536](#), [575](#), [579–80](#), [609](#), [616](#)

Portugal [6](#), [41](#), [44](#), [147](#), [151](#), [162](#), [166–8](#), [278](#), [293](#), [317](#), [323](#), [325](#), [326](#), [382](#), [404](#), [413](#), [435](#) (fn7), [527](#); Salazar period [15](#), [167](#)

Post-Fordist economy [362](#), [384](#), [427](#)

Post-industrial societies [84](#), [97](#), [203–4](#), [284](#), [344–5](#), [348](#), [352–3](#), [355](#), [357–8](#), [362–3](#), [367–8](#), [378](#), [380](#), [384–5](#), [397](#), [427](#), [444](#); post-industrialism [386](#), [388](#), [397](#)

Poujadism [145](#), [148](#), [150–1](#), [229](#), [231](#)

Pravda Zhirinovskogo [226](#)

Previti, Cesare [515](#)

Pridham, Geoffrey

Primo de Rivera, Antonio [146](#)

Private sector [100](#) (fn5), [342](#); workers [162](#), [165](#), [279](#), [347–8](#), [356](#), [359](#), [361](#)

Privatization [90](#), [100](#) (fn5), [227](#), [324](#), [342](#), [453](#)

Professionals [227](#), [285](#), [345](#), [347](#), [359](#), [361](#), [366–7](#), [372](#), [377–8](#)

Profil [582](#)

Progressive Democrats [320](#)

Progressive Party (*Komma Proodeftikon*, KP) [8](#), [41](#), [44](#), [46](#), [49–50](#), [56](#), [58](#), [60](#), [64](#), [323](#)

Progress Party (*Fremskridtspartiet*, FRPd) (Denmark) [23](#), [42–3](#), [45](#), [49](#), [55](#), [60](#), [90](#), [151](#), [159](#), [163–7](#), [278](#), [288](#) (fn56), [317](#), [320–4](#), [329](#), [342](#), [352](#), [480](#)

Progress Party (*Fremskrittspartiet*, FRPn) (Norway) [5–6](#), [23](#), [42–3](#), [45](#), [49](#), [55](#), [60](#), [90](#), [151](#), [159](#), [163](#), [165–6](#), [175](#), [181](#), [278](#), [283](#), [288](#) (fn56), [317](#), [320–4](#), [329](#), [339](#), [342](#), [346–7](#), [352](#), [480](#), [502](#) (fn3), [532](#), [589–90](#), [598](#), [604](#) (fn1), [605](#) (fn13), [616–7](#)

Propaganda [4](#), [18](#), [25](#), [43](#), [111](#), [180](#), [208](#), [210](#), [226](#), [252](#), [263](#), [269](#), [342](#), [415](#), [432](#), [434](#), [530](#), [542–3](#)

Pro Patria Union (*Isamaaliit*) [8](#)

Protectionism [96](#), [399](#)

Protest [8](#), [25](#), [27](#) (fn41), [35](#), [106](#), [113](#), [124](#), [136](#) (fn40), [159](#), [163–5](#), [168–9](#), [180](#), [204](#), [224](#), [227](#), [231](#), [234–5](#), [239](#), [285](#), [315](#), [321](#), [338](#), [340](#), [343–4](#), [369](#), [371–2](#), [398](#), [404](#), [406](#), [409](#), [416](#), [419](#), [427](#), [443](#), [459](#), [509](#), [567](#), [579–81](#), [584–5](#), [610](#); movements [145](#), [148](#), [151](#), [395](#); parties [159](#), [339](#), [406](#), [529](#), [566–7](#), [576](#); vote [459](#), [464](#), [566](#), [580](#)

Psychoanalytical approach [154](#), [283](#), [317](#), [360](#), [425](#)

Public opinion [32](#), [77](#), [122](#), [116](#), [120](#) (fn68), [195](#), [239](#), [335](#), [529](#), [542](#), [449](#), [563](#); polls [149](#), [195](#), [583–4](#)

Public order (see [security](#))

Public sector [55](#), [90](#), [324](#), [342](#), [361](#), [417](#), [454](#); workers [347](#), [348](#), [358–9](#), [365](#), [377](#), [411](#)

Putin, Vladimir [228–9](#)

Putnam, Robert [177–8](#)

Quaglia, Lucia [132](#)

Racism [6](#), [17–8](#), [29–32](#), [39–40](#), [44–9](#), [56–9](#), [62](#), [67](#) (fn8), [71–7](#), [103](#), [114](#), [116](#), [146](#), [159](#), [167–9](#), [172](#), [174](#), [176](#), [178](#), [180–2](#), [200–1](#), [203](#), [205–8](#), [210–1](#), [219–20](#), [230](#), [239](#), [258–74](#) (fn25), [279](#), [282](#), [318](#), [328](#), [338](#), [340–1](#), [352](#), [358–9](#), [364–6](#), [368–9](#), [371–5](#), [378](#), [384](#), [387–8](#), [390](#), [392](#), [396](#), [400–1](#) (fn20), [408](#), [413](#), [416](#), [419](#), [430](#), [444–5](#), [464–5](#), [470](#), [542–9](#), [552–5](#), [561–9](#), [590](#); anti-racism [8](#), [48](#), [70](#), [192](#), [194–5](#), [197](#), [207](#), [209–10](#), [543](#), [615](#)

Radical left parties [2–3](#), [407](#), [488](#) (fn8), [534](#)

Radikalenerlass [144](#), [546](#)

Radicalization [78](#), [323](#), [326](#), [328](#), [331](#) (fn18), [387–8](#), [380](#), [400](#), [432](#), [434](#), [447](#), [460](#), [513](#), [536](#), [560](#), [563](#), [566](#), [570](#) (fn4), [614](#); deradicalization [464](#)

Radical Party of the Left (*Parti Radical de Gauche*, PRG) [505](#)

Radio Maria (*Radio Marya*) [188](#), [195](#)

Raes, Roeland [569](#)

Rally for the Republic (*Rassemblement Pour la République*, RPR) [230](#), [447–8](#), [456](#) (fn17), [459–60](#), [462](#), [467–9](#), [471](#) (fn2), [505](#)

Ramet, Sabrina [426](#)

Rasmussen, Anders Fogh [597](#)

Rauti, Pino [22](#), [38](#), [49](#), [559–61](#)

Reactionary [78](#), [106](#), [143](#), [238](#), [258](#), [272](#), [345](#), [374](#), [378](#)

Real Labour Party [22](#)

Rechtsrück (see [right turn](#))

Reconstruction of Poland (*Ruch Odbudowy Polski*, ROP) [393–5](#)

Red Army Faction (*Rote Armee Fraktion*, RAF) [153](#)

Redistributive policies [89](#), [352](#), [355–9](#), [361–2](#), [368](#), [375](#), [399](#)

Referendums [53–5](#), [97](#), [100](#) (fn10), [111](#), [131](#), [146](#), [416](#), [450](#), [498](#), [513](#), [518–20](#), [534](#), [454](#)

Reformed Political Party (*Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij*, SGP) [92](#), [95](#), [98–9](#), [595](#), [603](#)

Reformist Movement (*Mouvement Réformateur*, MR) [505](#)

Reform Party of Canada [80](#) (fn22)

Refugees [4](#), [41](#), [43–4](#), [77](#), [149](#), [172](#), [179](#), [192](#), [196](#), [286](#), [340–1](#), [344–5](#), [453](#), [518](#), [521](#) (fn6), [581](#), [616](#), [617](#) (fn1); anti-refugees groups [611](#); refugee crisis [5](#), [8–9](#), [608](#), [610](#)

Regionalism [19](#), [51](#), [56](#), [159](#), [163](#), [288](#) (fn56); ethnoregionalism [408](#)

Regularization [496](#), [506](#)

Reich, Wilhelm [425](#)

Reimann, Viktor [582](#)

Repression [118](#), [144](#), [193](#), [195](#), [252–3](#), [381](#), [388](#), [409](#), [541–2](#), [544–5](#), [547–9](#), [552–5](#), [608](#), [612–5](#); dilemma of [540](#), [553](#)

Revisionism [6](#), [12](#), [20](#), [47](#), [146](#), [543](#), [552](#)

Richard, Patricia Bayer [177–8](#)

Riefenstahl, Leni [224](#)

Riess-Passer, Susanne [567](#), [584–5](#)

Right turn [439–40](#), [443](#), [452](#), [527](#), [529–30](#), [532](#), [535](#), [615](#)

Riots [110](#), [544–6](#), [553](#)

Risorgimento [144](#), [398](#)

Roberts, Geoffrey K. [28](#), [32–3](#), [35](#)

Roberts, Julia [224](#)

Robertson, John D. [314](#)

Rokkan, Stein [151](#), [315](#), [330](#) (fn4), [380](#), [399](#), [527](#)

Roma (“Gypsies”) [4](#), [190](#), [192–6](#), [391](#), [393](#), [396](#), [513–4](#), [566](#), [610](#)

Roman Catholicism [4](#), [18](#), [146](#), [188](#), [252](#), [299–301](#), [303](#), [305](#), [383](#), [395](#), [429](#), [465–6](#), [517](#), [569](#); anti-Catholicism [203](#); Catholic Church [106](#), [108](#), [195](#), [294](#), [385](#), [396](#); Catholic parties [376](#), [379–80](#); Catholics [203](#), [207](#), [229](#), [235](#), [376](#), [408](#), [567](#)

Romania [7](#), [186–98](#) (fn26), [391](#), [393–6](#), [398](#), [400](#), [432](#), [435](#) (fn7); constitution [429](#); Romania Intelligence Service (*Serviciul Român de Informații*, SRI) [193](#), [199](#) (fn29); Romanian Orthodox Church (*Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, BOR) [195](#)

Romanian Cradle (*Vatra Româneasca*) [393](#), [396](#)

Romanian National Unity Party (*Partidul Unitatii Romane*, PUNR) [8](#), [197](#) (fn8), [393–4](#), [396](#)

Romualdi, Pino [560](#)

Rosanvallon, Pierre [426](#)

Rose, Richard [314](#)

Rosenbaum, Helga [154](#)

Rosenmöller, Paul [602](#)

Rosenthal, Gabriele [272](#)

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques [23](#), [510](#)

Rubery, Jill [295](#)

Russia [18](#), [20](#), [26](#) (fn11), [160](#), [189](#), [195](#), [211](#), [225](#), [227–8](#), [233](#), [235](#), [242](#), [386](#), [391–4](#), [396](#); Russians [193](#), [195](#), [227](#), [229](#), [396](#)

Russian National Assembly (RNA) [392](#)

Russian National Unity (*Russkoe natsional’noe edinstvo*, RNE) [198](#) (fn23), [392–3](#), [396](#)

Rütger, Jürgen [447](#)

Rydzyk, Tadeusz [188](#)

Saalfeld, Thomas [30](#), [47](#)

Sailer, Gerhard [181](#)

Sani, Giacomo [319](#)

Sarkozy, Nicolas [115](#), [608](#); Sarkozy Laws [498](#)

Sartori, Giovanni [32](#), [114](#), [144](#), [319](#), [321](#), [325](#), [509](#), [520](#)

Scapegoating [43](#), [146](#), [273](#), [279](#), [384](#), [388](#)

Schachner, Peter [582](#)

Schain, Martin [439](#), [475](#), [493](#)

Schattschneider, E.E. [460](#), [476](#)

Scheepers, Peer
Scheuch, Erwin [387](#), [426](#), [431](#)
Schimanek, Rene [181](#)
Schlafly, Phyllis [203](#), [205](#)
Schlögl, Kurt [583](#)
Schmid, Michael [181](#)
Schmidt, Heide [566](#), [575](#)
Schnapper, Dominique [459](#)
Schneider, William [327](#)
Schönhuber, Franz [42](#), [164](#), [580–1](#)
Schöttli, Urs [582](#)
Schulz, Martin [527](#)
Schumann, Siegfried [52](#)
Schumpeter, Joseph [425](#)
Schüssel, Wolfgang [589](#), [601](#)
Scruton, Roger [429](#)
Second World War [17](#), [70](#), [108](#), [147](#), [153](#), [161](#), [172–4](#), [204–6](#), [242](#), [249–50](#), [257](#) (fn5), [258–9](#), [261](#), [272–3](#) (fn5), [324](#), [338](#), [352](#), [361](#),
[363](#), [381](#), [391](#), [397–8](#), [407](#), [453](#), [529](#), [536](#), [542](#), [548](#), [597](#)
Secularization [104](#), [204](#), [314](#), [435](#) (fn6)
Security [4](#), [55](#), [68](#), [91](#), [108](#), [115–6](#), [192](#), [252](#), [323](#), [327–8](#), [341–2](#), [433](#), [450](#), [452](#), [471](#) (fn3), [495–6](#), [513](#), [532](#), [544–5](#), [548](#), [599](#);
insecurity [292](#), [342](#), [347–8](#), [386](#), [408–9](#), [530](#), [563](#); securitization [531–2](#), [534–5](#)
Séguin, Philippe [448](#)
Seiler, Daniel [315](#)
Self-Defence (*Samoobrona*, SO) [8](#), [187](#), [395](#), [511](#), [515–6](#)
Serbia [189](#), [398](#)
Sexuality [205](#); heterosexuality [205](#); homosexuality [204](#), [230](#), [269](#), [272](#), [408](#), [516–7](#), [520](#); sex education [200](#), [202](#), [205](#); sexual
liberation [408–9](#)
Shabab, Goldie [319](#)
Siegerist, Joachim [197](#) (fn6)
Simmons, Harvey [292](#)
Single-issue [147](#), [224](#), [285](#), [321](#), [340](#), [352–3](#), [360](#), [371–2](#), [405–6](#), [421](#) (fn8)
Skinheads [5](#), [153](#), [179–81](#), [189–90](#), [192](#), [194](#), [197](#), [199](#) (fn28), [200](#), [206–11](#), [259](#), [262–3](#), [266](#), [271](#), [387](#), [389](#), [393](#), [396](#), [402](#) (fn39),
[516–7](#)
Sládek, Miroslav [395](#)
Slovakia [6–8](#), [186–97](#), [198](#) (fn10), [383](#), [391–2](#), [395](#), [435](#) (fn7), [616](#); preamble of constitution [429](#)
Slovak Motherland (*Matica Slovenská*, MS) [188](#), [197](#)
Slovak National Party (*Slovenská národná strana*, SNS) [7–8](#), [187–8](#), [197](#) (fn8), [609–10](#)
Slovenia [186–94](#), [196](#), [198](#) (fn23), [391](#), [432](#), [435](#) (fn7), [451](#), [511](#)

Slovenian National Party (*Slovenska nacionalna stranka*, SNS) [187](#)
Smith, Al [461](#)
Smith, Gordon [319](#)
Social capital [177–8](#)
Social Democratic parties [2](#), [84–7](#), [167](#), [362–5](#), [380](#), [493](#), [536](#), [589](#), [602](#), [616](#); Social Democratic Left [362](#); Social Democrats [87](#), [112](#), [338](#), [363–5](#), [602](#); Socialists [3](#), [325](#), [338](#), [429](#)
Social Democratic Party (*Partido Social Democrata*, PSD) [321](#)
Social Democratic Party of Switzerland (*Sozialdemokratische Partei der Schweiz*, SPS) [8](#), [505](#), [528](#)
Social Democrats (*Socialdemokraterne*, SD) (Denmark) [112](#), [505](#), [595](#)
Social Movement–Tricolor Flame (*Movimento Sociale-Fiamma Tricolore*, MS-FT) [22](#), [38](#), [41](#), [44](#), [46](#), [49–51](#), [58](#), [62](#), [139](#), [244](#), [260–1](#), [278](#), [479](#), [481](#), [561](#)
Socialism [15](#), [202](#), [346](#), [374](#), [388](#), [397](#), [400](#), [552](#)
Socialist Party (*Parti Socialiste*, PS) (Belgium) [505](#)
Socialist Party (*Parti Socialiste*, PS) (France) [4](#), [92](#), [98–9](#), [298](#), [413](#), [448](#), [463](#), [468](#), [487](#) (fn4), [505](#)
Socialist Party (*Socialistische Partij*, SP) (Belgium) [505](#)
Socialist Party (*Socialistische Partij*, SP) (Netherlands) [92](#), [95](#), [98–9](#), [595](#), [603](#)
Socialist Party of Labor (*Partidul Socialist al Muncii*, PSM) [8](#), [393–4](#), [396](#)
Socialist People's Party (*Socialistisk Folkeparti*, SF) [595](#)
Socialist Reich Party (*Sozialistische Reichspartei*, SRP) [150](#), [549](#)
Socialists & Democrats (S&D) [527](#)
Socialist Workers Party (*Partidul Socialist al Muncii*, PSM) [393](#)
Social Left Party (*Sosialistisk Venstreparti*, SV) [596](#)
Social movements [19](#), [140](#), [166](#), [177–9](#), [183](#), [200–1](#), [211](#), [263](#), [272](#), [366](#), [386–7](#), [393](#), [396](#), [445–6](#), [516](#); New Social Movements (NSMs) [166](#), [173](#), [279](#), [338](#)
Social Progressive Alternative (*Sociaal Progressief alternatief*, SP.a) [92](#), [98–9](#), [505](#)
Söder, Björn [120](#) (fn53)
Sokol Zhirinovskogo [226](#)
Solheim, Eirik ‘Mikro’ [181](#)
Solidarity (*Solidarność*) [160](#), [396](#)
Solidarity Electoral Action (*Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność*, AWS) [187](#), [396](#)
Solomon, Robert C. [69](#)
Somers, Margaret [264](#)
Sørensen, Catharina [126](#)
Soros, George [395](#)
SOS Racisme [113](#)
South Africa [3](#), [23](#), [26](#) (fn11), [146](#)
Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) [179](#), [273](#) (fn2)

Soviet Union (USSR) [202](#), [226](#), [396](#); former [210](#), [340](#)

Spain [2](#), [6](#), [41](#), [44](#), [49–51](#), [57](#), [67](#) (fn8), [120](#) (fn68), [144–50](#), [153](#), [155](#), [162](#), [166](#), [168](#), [317](#), [323](#), [325–6](#), [381–2](#), [392](#), [405](#), [413](#), [421](#) (fn3), [435](#) (fn7), [527](#), [613](#)

Spanish Circle of Friends of Europe (*Círculo Español de Amigos de Europa*, CEDADE) [18](#), [67](#) (fn8)

Spanish Confederation of Autonomous Right-Wing Groups (*Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas*, CEDA) [145](#)

Spanish Falange of the Unions of the National-Syndicalist Offensive (*Falange Española de las Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional-Sindicalista*, FE de las JONS) [41](#), [44](#), [50](#), [58](#), [67](#) (fn7), [278](#), [320](#), [323](#), [331](#) (fn10)

Spanish Falange of the Unions of the National-Syndicalist Offensive-Sector Diego Marquez (*Falange Española de las Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional-Sindicalista–sector Diego Marquez*, FE de las JONS sector DM) [41](#), [44](#), [50](#), [58](#), [67](#) (fn7), [278](#), [323](#)

Spatial theory [325](#), [476–7](#), [486–7](#)

Spearhead [546](#)

Spinolismo [168](#)

Spirit [92](#), [98–9](#), [505](#)

Springer, Alex [580](#)

Springer Press [577](#), [580](#), [586](#) (fn8)

Spruyt, Marc [568](#)

SS [247](#), [549](#), [580](#); *Waffen-SS* [565](#), [580](#)

Steger, Norbert [565–7](#), [575](#), [582](#)

Stereotypes [4](#), [31](#), [195](#), [220](#), [260](#), [413](#)

Sternhell, Zeev [243](#), [331](#) (fn15)

Stewart, Michael [117](#)

Steyn, Mark [117](#)

Stigmatization [40](#), [104–5](#), [109](#), [238](#), [241](#), [248–52](#), [255](#), [318](#), [579](#)

Stirbois, Jean-Pierre [41](#), [230](#), [562](#)

Stirbois, Marie-France [563](#)

Stix, Karl [582](#)

Stolcke, Verena [114](#)

Stöss, Richard [37](#)

Strache, Heinz-Christian [611](#)

Strasser, Ernst [512](#)

Strasser, Gregor [19](#), [51](#)

Strasser, Otto [19](#), [51](#)

Strassserism [51](#)

Strong state [29–32](#), [40](#), [52–4](#), [178](#), [326](#), [396](#)

Studlar, Donley [294](#), [299](#), [304](#), [307](#) (fn2)

Subcultures [9](#), [139–40](#), [172](#), [176](#), [179](#), [181](#), [188–9](#), [192](#), [196–8](#) (fn16), [210](#), [383](#), [409](#), [585](#), [610](#)

Sundquist, James [461](#)

Suñer, Serrano [146](#)

Supply-side [3](#), [310](#), [405](#), [424](#), [428](#), [434](#), [614](#)

Sweden [6–7](#), [147](#), [159](#), [163](#), [166](#), [179](#), [189](#), [169](#), [278](#), [280](#), [317](#), [320](#), [326](#), [338–9](#), [382](#), [397](#), [400](#), [413](#), [431–2](#), [435](#) (fn7), [445](#), [480](#), [489](#) (fn20), [495](#), [505](#), [527](#), [613](#); Persson I cabinet (1998–2002) [505](#); Persson II cabinet (2002–2006) [505](#); Reinfeldt I cabinet (2006–2010) [498](#), [505](#)

Sweden Democrats (*Sverigedemokraterna*, SD) [7](#), [41](#), [46](#), [50](#), [58](#), [120](#) (fn53), [278](#), [480](#), [527](#), [609](#), [613](#)

Swedish Social Democratic Party (*Sveriges socialdemokratiska arbetareparti*, SAP) [505](#)

Swiss Democrats (*Schweizer Demokraten*, SD) [41](#), [43](#), [46](#), [48](#), [50](#), [54](#), [58](#), [62](#), [166](#), [317](#), [323](#), [445](#), [480](#)

Swiss People's Party (*Schweizerische Volkspartei*, SVP) [7–8](#), [75–6](#), [87](#), [90](#), [197](#) (fn7), [181](#), [494](#), [498](#), [501–2](#) (fn2), [505](#), [511](#), [527–8](#), [590](#), [604](#) (fn1), [609](#)

Switzerland [7–8](#), [43](#), [70](#), [87](#), [147](#), [159](#), [164](#), [166](#), [181](#), [278](#), [317](#), [323](#), [326](#), [328](#), [331](#) (fn23), [338–41](#), [380](#), [382](#), [409](#), [445](#), [480](#), [493](#), [501–2](#) (fn1), [505](#), [507–8](#), [518–21](#), [527–8](#), [590](#); Federal Tribunal [519](#)

Swyngedouw, Marc [47](#), [568](#)

Symbols [75](#), [113](#), [144](#), [153](#), [189](#), [205](#), [208](#), [318](#), [366](#), [368](#), [445](#), [543](#), [561](#); symbolism [417](#)

Szczerbiak, Aleks [125](#), [127–9](#)

Taggart, Paul [35](#), [37–8](#), [125](#), [127–9](#), [139](#)

Taguieff, Pierre-André [72](#), [114](#)

Tambroni, Fernando [146](#), [559](#)

Tarchi, Marco [532](#)

Tarrow, Sidney [280](#)

Tauber, Kurt P. [3](#)

Technical Caucus of the European Right [450–1](#)

Tejkovski, Boreslav [396](#)

Terrorism [11](#), [21](#), [73](#), [106](#), [111](#), [114](#), [145](#), [151–3](#), [178–9](#), [200](#), [204](#), [211](#), [368](#), [417](#), [495](#), [531](#), [534](#), [548](#), [560](#), [570](#) (fn4), [608–9](#), [611](#), [615](#); terrorists [77](#), [152](#), [204](#)

Teugel, Erwin [447](#)

Thatcher, Margaret [125](#), [155](#), [470–1](#)

The Economist [295](#)

The English Alternative (formerly *The Crusader*) [19](#)

The European [17](#)

The Greens (*Die Grünen*) (Germany) [298](#)

The Greens (*Les Verts*, LV) (France) [92](#), [98–9](#), [505](#)

The Greens – The Green Alternative (*Die Grünen – Die Grüne Alternative*) (Austria) [298](#), [512](#), [583](#), [594](#)

The New Party (*Det Nya Partiet*, DNP) [46](#), [58](#), [480](#)

The Olive Tree (*L'Ulivo*) [505](#)

The Republicans (*Die Republikaner*, REP) [3](#), [23](#), [38](#), [41–4](#), [46–7](#), [50](#), [53–4](#), [58](#), [62](#), [90](#), [175](#), [159](#), [163–6](#), [171](#) (fn37), [175](#), [245–6](#), [239](#), [251–2](#), [278](#), [291](#), [296–8](#), [316](#), [322–4](#), [326](#), [329](#), [339–41](#), [343–4](#), [346](#), [389–90](#), [395](#), [352](#), [389](#), [406](#), [408](#), [411](#), [413](#), [444–5](#)

[447](#), [450](#), [471](#), [475](#), [480](#), [489](#) (fn17), [527](#), [546–7](#), [549–50](#), [575](#), [580](#), [584](#)

The Right (*La Droite*) [564](#)

The Silent Counter-Revolution [309–10](#), [313–37](#)

The Silent Revolution [173](#), [314](#), [327](#), [529](#)

The Union (*L'Unione*) [505](#)

Third Positionism [18–9](#), [26](#) (fn25)

Third Reich [15](#), [17–8](#), [24](#), [40](#), [70](#), [206](#), [247](#), [449](#), [583](#)

Third Way [18](#), [318](#), [417](#)

Thomas, Clarence [205](#)

Ticino League (*Lega dei Ticinesi*, LdT) [41](#), [44](#), [46](#), [49–50](#), [56](#), [58](#), [60](#), [159](#), [164–6](#), [445](#)

Tixier-Vignancour, Jean-Louis [243](#)

Togebey, Lise [294](#), [304–5](#)

Togliatti, Palmiro [149](#)

Tolerance [73](#), [100](#) (fn6), [103](#), [195](#), [260](#), [347](#), [366](#), [374–5](#), [398](#), [431](#), [447](#), [496](#); intolerance [174](#), [183](#), [191](#), [204](#), [384](#)

Trade off hypothesis [140](#), [172](#), [176](#), [180](#), [183](#)

Trade unions [50](#), [53](#), [450](#), [466–7](#), [452](#), [467](#), [534](#); membership [280](#), [285](#), [299–300](#), [302](#), [305](#), [408](#), [467](#)

Traditionalism [35](#), [144](#), [168](#), [202](#), [261](#), [326](#), [369](#), [410](#)

Treaty on European Union (TEU) [125–8](#), [131](#), [136](#) (fn26), [530](#), [534–5](#)

Tremaglia, Mirko [451](#)

Trilateral Commission [202](#)

Trust [177](#), [223](#), [226](#), [228](#), [364](#), [374](#), [391](#), [405](#), [419–20](#), [431](#), [530](#)

Tudjman, Franjo [24](#)

Tudor, Corneliu Vadim [393–4](#)

Turkey [6](#), [110–1](#), [121](#) (fn87), [127](#), [227](#), [580](#); Turks [114](#), [195](#), [298](#), [340](#), [346](#)

Tyndall, John [45](#), [51](#), [415](#)

Ukraine [392](#), [395](#)

Ulfkotte, Udo [121](#) (fn89)

Unemployment [42–4](#), [147](#), [151](#), [175](#), [225](#), [227](#), [230–1](#), [280–2](#), [286–7](#), [296–7](#), [328](#), [341](#), [344](#), [352](#), [359](#), [368–9](#), [405](#), [420](#), [463](#), [554](#), [563](#), [569](#), [582](#), [608](#)

Union for a Popular Movement (*Union pour un Mouvement Populaire*, UMP) [4](#), [92](#), [98–99](#), [505](#)

Union for French Democracy (*Union pour la Démocratie Française*, UDF) [92–3](#), [98–9](#), [230](#), [447–8](#), [459–60](#), [462](#), [467–9](#), [471](#) (fn2), [472](#) (fn10), [505](#)

Union of Christian and Centre Democrats (*Unione dei Democratici Cristiani e di Centro*, UDC) [500](#), [505](#), [528](#), [590](#), [601](#)

Union of the Democratic Center (*Unión de Centro Democrático*, UCD) [155](#)

Union of the Workers of Slovakia (*Združenie robotníkov Slovenska*, ZRS) [8](#)

United Kingdom (UK) [6](#), [18](#), [45](#), [104](#), [107](#), [113–5](#), [125](#), [131](#), [147–8](#), [152](#), [154](#), [166](#), [189](#), [198](#) (fn16), [282](#), [296](#), [316–7](#), [326](#), [328](#), [332](#) (fn23), [352](#), [382](#), [392](#), [406–7](#), [410–1](#), [413](#), [415](#), [435](#) (fn7), [445](#), [458–9](#), [470–1](#), [480–1](#), [527](#), [532](#), [542–53](#), [616](#)

United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) [6](#), [616–7](#)

Unity (*Yedinstvo*) [229](#)

United Nations (UN) [18](#), [54](#), [103](#), [205](#); Charter [429](#); Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination [190](#), [542–3](#), [548–9](#), [553](#); Refugee Agency [518](#)

United States (US) [4](#), [18](#), [35](#), [73](#), [104](#), [110](#), [114](#), [132](#), [139–40](#), [143](#), [145](#), [160](#), [177](#), [179](#), [189–90](#), [195–6](#), [200](#), [202–3](#), [205–7](#), [209–11](#), [219](#), [258–73](#), [278](#), [293–4](#), [331](#) (fn13), [386](#), [391](#), [397](#), [400](#), [430](#), [475](#), [577](#), [586](#) (fn8), [612](#); Constitution [509](#); Supreme Court [191](#), [205](#)

Unity List-The Red-Greens (*Enhedslisten-De Red-Grønne*) [481](#), [595](#)

Valen, Henry [322](#)

Van Donselaar, Jaap [9](#) (fn2), [540](#), [615](#)

Van Grieken, Tom [611](#)

Vanhecke, Frank [569](#)

Van Hecke, Steven [531](#)

Van Holsteyn, Joop [43](#)

Van Rompuy, Herman [526](#)

Van Spanje, Joost [439–40](#), [479](#)

Vasilev, Dimitry [396](#)

Vasilopoulou, Sofia [11–2](#), [610](#)

Vatican [106](#), [108](#), [151](#)

Veen, Hans-Joachim [165](#)

Venetian League (*Lega Veneta*) [166](#)

Vennamo, Veikko [164](#)

Verrechtsing (see [right turn](#))

Vial, Pierre [563](#)

Viereck, Peter [435](#) (fn6)

Vigilantes [322–4](#), [329](#)

Viking [181](#)

Vilhelmsen, Kaj [182](#)

Villalba, Bruno [78](#)

Violence [7](#), [26](#) (fn11), [30](#), [73](#), [105–6](#), [109](#), [112](#), [117](#), [140](#), [143](#), [149](#), [152](#), [159](#), [167–8](#), [172](#), [174](#), [176–83](#), [186](#), [189–92](#), [197](#), [200–3](#), [205–6](#), [208–11](#), [249](#), [253](#), [258–9](#), [270–1](#), [274](#) (fn17), [292](#), [316](#), [322](#), [368](#), [375](#), [387–90](#), [396–7](#), [412–3](#), [421](#) (fn4), [439](#), [444](#), [447](#), [456](#) (fn5), [516](#), [526–7](#), [542](#), [544–9](#), [553–4](#), [559](#), [570](#) (fn4), [598](#), [610](#)

Voerman, Gerrit [33](#), [45](#), [54](#)

Voigt, Udo [181](#)

Volksgemeinschaft [48](#), [566](#)

Vologda Popular Movement [226](#)

Volpert, Karin [286](#), [297](#)

Von Beyme, Klaus [2](#), [28](#), [33–4](#), [139](#), [315](#), [399](#), [445](#)
Von Habsburg, Otto [565](#)
Von Hindenburg, Paul [233](#)
Von Neumann, John [591](#)
Voorpost [249](#), [253–5](#), [568](#)
Vote-seeking strategy (vote-maximizing) [84](#), [310](#), [364–5](#), [369](#), [487](#), [596](#), [601](#), [603](#), [605](#) (fn15)
Vranitzky, Franz [566](#), [575](#), [582](#)
Vrij Nederland [247](#)

Wachtmeister, Ian [43](#), [55](#), [164](#), [170](#) (fn170)
Wallace, George [160](#)
Weber, Max [219](#), [223–5](#), [233–5](#), [355](#), [417](#), [428](#)
Webster, Martin [45](#), [331](#) (fn17)
We Can (Podemos) [2](#)
Weinberg, Leonard [139–40](#), [177](#)
Welfare chauvinism [4–5](#), [81](#) (fn69), [96](#), [368](#), [373](#), [391](#)
Welfare state [77–8](#), [151](#), [161](#), [174](#), [286](#), [321](#), [338](#), [345](#), [352](#), [357–9](#), [361–2](#), [365–6](#), [368](#); critique of [151](#), [347–8](#), [371](#); crisis of [161](#), [342](#), [380](#), [444](#)
Were Di [568](#)
Werewolves [393](#), [396](#)
Westdeutsche Zeitung [577](#)
Westin, Charles [529](#)
Westle, Bettina [35](#)
White Power music [18](#), [207–8](#), [210](#)
Widfeldt, Anders [48](#)
Wiedmaier, Ulrich [327](#)
Wiesenthal Center [180](#)
Wiesenthal, Simon [565](#)
Wilders, Geert [257](#) (fn2), [520](#), [603](#), [609–11](#), [614](#)
Wiles, Peter [509](#)
Williams, Michelle [488](#) (fn6)
Wilner, Ruth [233](#)
Wimmer, Andreas [76](#), [78](#), [82](#) (fn74), [435](#) (fn4)
Winkler, Jürgen R. [52](#), [280](#)
Wlezien, Christopher [529](#)
Wolfe, Tom [386](#)
Woods, Dwayne [164](#)
Workers' Force (*Force Ouvrière*, FO) [467](#), [471](#) (fn8)

Working class [18](#), [70](#), [79](#), [82](#) (fn77), [87](#), [164](#), [175](#), [228–9](#), [231](#), [235](#), [279](#), [284](#), [287](#), [290](#), [292](#), [294–6](#), [297–306](#), [345–8](#), [358–62](#), [365–9](#), [376–9](#), [383](#), [388](#), [390](#), [395–6](#), [408–9](#), [411](#), [425](#), [461–2](#), [467](#), [471](#) (fn1), [564](#), [574](#)

World Bank [202](#), [395](#)

World Union of National Socialists (WUNS) [18](#)

Wouters, Geert [568](#)

Xenophobia [4](#), [29–32](#), [39–44](#), [47](#), [49](#), [56–67](#) (fn6), [103](#), [105](#), [115–6](#), [146](#), [151](#), [155](#), [172](#), [174](#), [176](#), [178–9](#), [200](#), [205–6](#), [208](#), [211](#), [239](#), [285](#), [296](#), [317](#), [321](#), [324](#), [326](#), [328–9](#), [338](#), [340](#), [342](#), [344](#), [347](#), [352–3](#), [366](#), [369](#), [373](#), [383](#), [387](#), [387](#), [390–3](#), [396](#), [405–7](#), [410](#), [435](#) (fn11), [454–5](#), [566](#), [580](#), [617](#) (fn1)

Yeltsin, Boris [226–8](#), [233](#)

Ye'or, Bat [110](#)

Yishai, Yael [177–8](#)

Yockey, Francis [17](#)

Young Europe (*Jeune Europe*) [17](#)

Young European Alliance for Hope (YEAH) [611](#)

Young Freedom (*Junge Freiheit*, JF) [245](#)

Youth Front (*Fronte della Goventù*, FdG) [251](#)

Young National Democrats (*Junge Nationaldemokraten*, JN) [181](#)

Yugoslavia [381](#), [451](#)

Zaslove, Andrej [532](#)

Zhirinovsky, Vladimir [24](#), [26](#) (fn11), [219](#), [223](#), [225–9](#), [233–5](#)

Ziobro, Zbigniew [517](#)

Zionism [108](#); anti-Zionism [109](#)

Zionist Occupied Government (ZOG) [18](#), [206](#)

Zúquete, José [11–3](#)

Zyuganov, Gennady [228](#), [392](#)



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