

Ralf Melzer, Sebastian Serafin
(Eds.)

RIGHT-WING EXTREMISM IN EUROPE

Country Analyses, Counter-Strategies and
Labor-Market Oriented Exit Strategies

FES **Projekt**
GEGEN
RECHTS
EXTREMISMUS

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RIGHT-WING EXTREMISM IN EUROPE

Country Analyses, Counter-Strategies and
Labor-Market Oriented Exit Strategies

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The spelling, grammar, and other linguistic conventions in this volume reflect American English usage.

The judgments and opinions expressed in the articles collected for this book are those of the authors. They do not necessarily represent the views of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation or of the editors.

In order to preserve the uniqueness and individuality of the contributions to this anthology, the editors have decided to retain divergent citation styles.

This anthology was compiled as part of a project entitled "Confronting right-wing extremism by developing networks of exit-oriented assistance." That project, in turn, is integral to the XENOS special program known as "exit to enter" which has received grants from both the German Federal Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and the European Social Fund.

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Editors' Preface

Right-wing extremism is a problem with pan-European dimensions. In 2011, the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (Friedrich Ebert Foundation) released a study that compared group-focused enmities in eight European countries. The study revealed that approximately half of all respondents thought that their countries had too many immigrants. About a third believed in the existence of a natural hierarchy among differing ethnic groups. In the sample from Poland, statements conveying secondary anti-Semitism met with the almost 70 % approval.¹

How widespread and deeply-imbedded are far-right ideologies and organizations in Europe? How have right-wing extremist and populist parties and movements fared? What are their historical roots, and what is the basis of their continuing attraction?

Our volume of collected articles is intended to contribute to the ongoing review of this problem and to suggest the shape that an effective posture against the European radical right might take. It offers a follow-up to a 2011 book issued by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, entitled “Is Europe on the ‘Right’ Path? Right-wing extremism and right-wing populism in Europe.”² The new anthology, like its predecessor, is being published simultaneously in German and English. It is the concluding publication of the German XENOS special program known as “Exit to Enter.” Between

1 Andreas Zick, Beate Küpper, and Andreas Hövermann, “Intolerance, Prejudice, and Discrimination: A European report” (Berlin: FES, 2011).

2 Nora Langenbacher and Britta Schellenberg (eds.), “Is Europe on the ‘Right’ Path? Right-wing extremism and right-wing populism in Europe” (Berlin: FES, 2011).

2009 and 2013, the European Social Fund (ESF) and Germany's Federal Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (BMAS) provided grants to fund projects designed to help people not only to exit the far-right milieu, but also to enter the labor-market with some prospects for success. The insights gathered over the course of the Exit to Enter program will be discussed in this book.

While the volume includes studies of numerous countries, it focuses on two regions of special concern: namely, Central/Eastern and Southern Europe. In the latter region, the three countries chosen for analysis – Greece, Italy, and Portugal – all have been hard hit by the current financial and economic crisis along with its devastating social impacts, but the far-right camps in those countries differ strikingly from one another.

In addition to the country analyses, the volume contains an article offering an overview of trends and structures of the radical right in Europe, as well as several essays dealing with counter-strategies, historical experiences, and perspectives on the confrontation with right-wing extremism. We are especially pleased that Martin Schulz, President of the European Parliament since 2012, agreed to contribute an article. His passionate appeal: At a time when the right-wing-populist tide is rising on the continent, we need the European Union more than ever. Schulz argues that the EU represents a unique effort “to introduce democratic principles into transnational relations by means of a political union and thus to keep democracy going even in a globalized, interdependent world.”

Although the extreme right in Europe displays a set of common features, in many respects its component movements diverge markedly from one another. Considering the search for counter-strategies and the most precisely-tailored approaches, it seems especially necessary to analyze those differences with great care. In the former Soviet sphere of influence, nationalism and desires for ethnic homogeneity simmered for decades beneath the surface of the East bloc's official internationalist and anti-fascist posture. Indeed, to some extent they served as an unacknowledged

legitimation for the communist regimes there. Once the upheavals of 1989 and 1990 put an end to those regimes, nationalist and xenophobic sentiments began to reassert themselves even more forcefully. They were directed especially against the Sinti and Roma, but also against national minorities, Jews, and homosexuals. Nevertheless, Eastern and Central Europe hardly have a monopoly on right-wing extremism. In Western Europe most frequently, Muslim immigrants today encounter negative stereotyping, discrimination and rejection, a tendency that right-wing populist forces increasingly are trying to exploit.

Contemporary developments in Hungary are especially worrisome. Yet until just recently it was, of all places, Denmark – a Scandinavian country with a highly-developed liberal tradition – in which the radical right was able to influence government decision-making. This occurred because the *Danish People's Party* (DPP) acted to secure parliamentary majorities for a liberal-conservative minority government.³ From the viewpoint of the radical right, the Danish case provides one of the most successful examples of their operations in Western Europe.

In Germany, right-wing extremism or populism as a party phenomenon remains relatively weak; the far-right *National Democratic Party* (NPD) is currently represented in “only” two state parliaments. Yet right-wing attitudes are quite widespread throughout the general population, as the Friedrich Ebert Foundation’s “*Middle-studies*” have regularly attested.⁴ The fact that a right-wing terrorist organization like the so-called “National Socialist Underground” (NSU) could take root in Germany is a scandal that requires a far-ranging public debate. Members of the NSU committed racially-motivated murders over a period of years, apparently undisturbed

3 Cf. Susi Meret, “From the margins to the mainstream? The development of the radical right in Denmark”, in *ibid.*, pp. 257ff.

4 The most recent of these was Oliver Decker, Johannes Kies, Elmar Brähler, et. al., *Die Mitte im Umbruch. Rechtsextreme Einstellungen in Deutschland 2012*, edited by Ralf Melzer (Bonn: Dietz/FES, 2012).

by any authorities. Apart from court proceedings, there must also be consequences for the internal organization, procedures, and priorities of the state security organs themselves, considering their egregious failures in this case.

The topics of the present anthology are closely related to the focus of the FES project on “Combatting Right-Wing Extremism”. Initiated in 2005, the project is affiliated with the Forum Berlin section of the Department of Political Dialogue at the foundation’s headquarters in Berlin. The Friedrich Ebert Foundation intends to continue its emphasis on the struggle against right-wing extremism in years to come.

As editors we would like to express our gratitude not only to the authors, but to all those who contributed to the creation of this book through their work on translations, proofreading, and layout. And we owe a special thanks to our colleagues in the foreign bureaus of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, who supported us in the planning and development phases of this publication.

Berlin, April 2013

Dr. Ralf Melzer and Sebastian Serafin
Friedrich Ebert Foundation,
“Project on Combatting Right-Wing Extremism”

The European Radical Right and Xenophobia in West and East: Trends, Patterns and Challenges

Michael Minkenberg

Recent developments in a number of countries demonstrate the persistence, and even the expansion, of the radical right in Europe. In the French presidential and parliamentary elections in May and June of 2012, the *Front National*, cosmetically retouched and led by Marine Le Pen, received 18 % and 14 % of the vote in the respective first rounds, a considerable gain from the party's low point in 2007. In many other Western European countries, radical right parties regularly attract more than 10 % of the vote in national or European parliamentary elections. Newcomers such as the Sweden Democrats and the True Finns have recently joined these older parties. Meanwhile, East Central Europe continues to be the most dynamic breeding ground for right-wing extremism. While radical right parties were ousted from Parliament in the latest elections in Poland and Slovakia, the major far-right party in Hungary, *Jobbik*, achieved a striking success, winning almost 17 % of the vote in the 2010 elections. And Hungary's right-wing populist *Fidesz*, which has ruled the country ever since its landslide victory (53 %) that year, has begun to transform the erstwhile home of "Goulash communism."

But trying to assess the appeal of radical right parties on the basis of election results alone is misleading. As early as 25 years ago, German political scientist Klaus von Beyme was already urging that "[f]uture 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."¹ That point is still valid,

1 Klaus von Beyme, "Right-wing Extremism in Post-war Europe," *West European Politics* 11(2), 1988: 1–18 (here: page 16).

especially for comparative analyses. We must broaden our view by examining both general trends in right-wing and xenophobic attitudes and their non-partisan manifestations. While the first constitute the “echo chamber” of the radical right, with consequences for the mainstream parties as well, the latter demonstrate a particularly virulent expression of radical right and racist thinking. This fact has been underscored by Anders Breivik’s politically-motivated mass murders in Norway on July 22, 2011, as well as by the series of anti-immigrant murders committed in the early 2000s by the German terrorist group “National Socialist Underground” but uncovered only in November of 2011. Such racially-motivated hate crimes have also shown how helpless – some would say, amateurish – our forces of law and order are in the face of extremism outside the voting booth. In light of the interconnectedness between xenophobic attitudes and partisan politics, this paper attempts to provide a broad, multi-dimensional perspective, analyzing trends and patterns in both Eastern and Western Europe and assessing the challenge they pose to governments and societies.



Pedestrian zone in Hamburg, November 19, 2011: photos of people who have been victims of right-wing violence since 1990

Defining the Radical Right

My point of departure in what follows is modernization theory. Modernization can be understood as a process of social change characterized by increasing functional differentiation and personal autonomy. Accordingly, I define right-wing radicalism as the effort to undo or combat modernization by radicalizing inclusionary and exclusionary criteria of belonging.² It is the overemphasis on, or radicalization of, images of social homogeneity that characterizes extreme right-wing thinking, with the nation serving as the primary “we-group.” And this logic applies to a large extent to xenophobia, as well. In other words, right-wing extremism is a political ideology revolving around the myth of a homogenous nation – a romantic and populist ultra-nationalism hostile to liberal, pluralistic democracy, with its underlying principles of individualism and universalism.³

The criteria of exclusion in far-right discourse can be based on ethnicity, culture, religion, and/or gender (see Table 1 for elaboration).⁴ Analytically, of course, these criteria are distinct, and each has its own peculiar logic. In the real world, however, they are often intermingled, and it is the task of the researcher to disentangle them and reveal their respective rationales in right-wing thinking. One constant is that in all versions, we are dealing with a radical distinction between in-groups and out-groups.

2 See Michael Minkenberg, *Die neue radikale Rechte im Vergleich: USA, Frankreich, Deutschland* (Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1998): 29–47; Michael Minkenberg, *The Radical Right in Europe: An Overview* (Gütersloh: Verlag Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2008); and Cas Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

3 See also my contribution to Nora Langenbacher and Britta Schellenberg (eds.), *Is Europe on the “right path”? Right-wing extremism and right-wing populism in Europe* (Berlin: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2010): 37–55 (here: pp. 9, 39f.).

4 The table follows the logic of Wilhelm Heitmeyer at the University of Bielefeld, who developed the concept of “group-based misanthropy.” See Heitmeyer, *Deutsche Zustände*, Vol. 3 (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 2005); also Andreas Zick et al., *Die Abwertung der Anderen: Eine europäische Zustandsbeschreibung zu Intoleranz, Vorurteilen und Diskriminierung* (Berlin: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2011).

Criteria of Exclusion	Core Argument
Racism	Inferiority of the “other” on the grounds of biological difference (“natural” hierarchy)
Antisemitism	Special case of racism
Ethnocentrism	Superiority of own collectivity on the grounds of cultural and economic achievements (developmental differentiation)
Religiocentrism (Fundamentalist)	Superiority of own collectivity on the grounds of a particular faith and exclusionary access to “truth”
Xenophobia	Defensive reaction against ethnic and cultural “others” (fight for resources, fear of “cultural mixing”)
Nativism	Special case of xenophobia (in countries with a history of mass immigration, the rejection of foreign influences regardless of ethnicity)
Heterophobia	Intolerance of deviation from mainstream norms (unacceptability of those who are morally “other,” also within their own ethnicity)

Sources: Michael Minkenberg, *Die neue radikale Rechte im Vergleich. USA, Frankreich, Deutschland* (Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1998), p. 119; Wilhelm Heitmeyer, “Gruppenbezogene Menschenfeindlichkeit,” in: Wilhelm Heitmeyer (ed.), *Deutsche Zustände. Vol. 3* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp 2005): pp. 14–15.

The notion that the mobilization of the radical right or xenophobic movements often occurs in times of accelerated social and cultural change provides a fruitful starting point for explaining relevant trends both in Eastern Europe after 1989 and in Western Europe before and after that momentous year. In what follows, I will attempt to identify important distinctions within the radical right-wing family. The primary distinction has to do with whether today’s radical right embraces or distances itself from historical movements, ideologies, or regimes such as Nazism or fascism that were explicitly anti-democratic, and/or approves of, or even engages in, violence as a means to achieve political objectives.

Relying on this fundamental distinction plus the exclusionary criteria listed above, we arrive at four variants of radical right forces: (1) an auto-cratic-fascist right, usually involving racism or ethnocentrism and inspired by right-wing dictatorships of the interwar period; (2) a racist or ethno-centrist – but non-fascist – right, usually employing “ethnopluralist” arguments for the incompatibility of cultures and ethnicities while denying the existence of a “natural hierarchy” (see below); (3) a populist-authoritarian right, organized around a strong and charismatic leader,

with an authoritarian structure and a diffuse nationalist or xenophobic ideology; and (4) a religious-fundamentalist right, in which nationalism or xenophobia merge with religious rigidity, resulting in the defense of a religiously-framed conception of national “purity.” We should note that all four variants reject difference and pluralism in the name of national homogeneity through the primary “we-group,” and adopt anti-establishment (populist) political styles and strategies. This radical distinction between “us” and “them” is illustrated by campaign posters by the Swiss SVP and the German NDP (Figure 1).

Campaign Posters by the Swiss People's Party (SVP) and the National-democratic Party of Germany (NPD)

Figure 1



Another analytically useful way to distinguish among radical right groups is to ascertain the forms of organization that they tend to employ. Here we can identify three types of groups: (1) groups that try to win public office, organizing themselves through political parties and electoral campaigns; (2) groups that do not nominate candidates for public office, but rather try to mobilize support through larger social movements with which they identify and which offer interpretative frames for particular problems; (3) smaller groups and socio-cultural milieus, which operate relatively independently from parties and larger social movements, do not exhibit formal organizational structures, and may exhibit higher propensities toward violence.

Overall, and for both Western and Eastern Europe, we arrive at the following matrix of radical right groups and ideological varieties (Table 2).

Dominant Actors of the Radical Right in Selected European Countries (since the 1990s) Table 2

	Party/campaign organization	Social Movement Organization (SMO)	Sub-cultural milieu
Extremist right (fascist-autocratic right, often including racism or xenophobia)	NPD/DVU (D) NA/NNP/NVU (NL) MSI/AN (pre '95) (I) MSFT (I) BNP (GB) DSSS (CZ) Jobbik (H) SNS (SR) PRM (RO)	ANS/FAP, NPD (D) FANE (F) ANS/JSN (NL) NOP, ONR PWN-PSN (PL) Magyar Gárda (H) NSS (SR) SNJ (SR)	Neonazis (all) Skinheads (all) Blood and Honour (all) Kameradschaften (D) Stormfront Netherlands Dansk Front (DK) FNE (F)
Ethnocentrist right (racist or xenophobic right but excluding fascism)	Vlaams Blok/Belang (B) Centrumdemocraten (NL) Republikaner (D) Front National (F) DF (DK) Lega Nord (I) FPÖ (A) KPN-SN (PL) SPR-RSČ (CZ) MIÉP (H)	ANS/FAP (D) NPD/DVU (D-East) Arhus against the Mosque (DK) New Right (various) Radio Maryja (PL) MÖM (H) VR (RO) MS (SR)	Neo-Nazis (all) Skinheads (all) Kameradschaften (D) Stormfront Netherlands Dansk Front (DK) GUD (F)
Populist right (typically with strong and charismatic leader and diffuse program)	Liste Pim Fortuyn (NL) PdV (NL) BZÖ (A) MSI/AN (mid-90s) (I) [FI (I)] Samoobrona (PL) [PiS (PL)] [FIDESZ (H)] HZDS (SR)	CP'86 (NL) Zwiazek Samoobrona (PL)	
Religious-fundamentalist right (including xenophobia)	ZChN (PL) LPR (PL) KDNP (H)	CCS (F) New Era (DK) Radio Maryja (PL)	All-Polish Youth

Note:

Parties with sustained electoral relevance and/or government participation are in **boldface type**.

Populist parties that are not clearly on the radical right-wing are put in [brackets].

Country code:

Austria (A), Belgium (B), Czech Republic (CZ), France (F), Germany (D), Great Britain (GB), Hungary (H), Italy (I), the Netherlands (NL), Poland (PL), Romania (RO), Slovak Republic (SR).





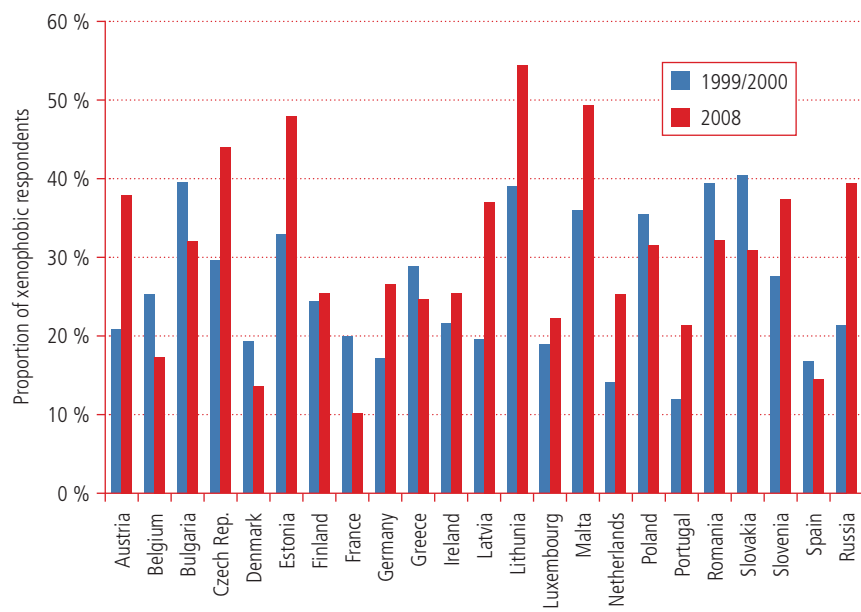
Abbreviations/Translations

AN:	Alleanza Nazionale (National Alliance)
ANS:	Aktionsfront Nationale Sozialisten (Action Front of National Socialists)
BNP:	British National Party
BZÖ	Bündnis Zukunft Österreichs (Alliance for the Future of Austria)
CCS:	Comités Chrétienité-Solidarité (Committees Christianity-Solidarity)
CP '86:	Centrumpartij '86 (Center Party '86)
DF:	Dansk Folkeparti (Danish People's Party)
DSSS:	Dělnická strana/Dělnická strana sociální spravedlnosti (Workers' Party/Workers' Party of Social Justice)
DVU:	Deutsche Volksunion (German People's Union)
FANE:	Fédération Action National-Européen (Federation of National-European Action)
FAP:	Freiheitliche Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (Free German Workers Party)
FIDESZ	(Hungarian Civic Union)
FNE:	Faisceaux nationalistes européens (European National Fascists)
FPÖ:	Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (Freedom Party of Austria)
GUD:	Groupe Union Defense (Union Defense Group)
HZDS:	Hnutie za demokratické Slovensko (Movement for a democratic Slovakia)
JSN	Jeugd Storm Nederland, Stormfront (Netherlands Youth Storm)
KPN-SN	Konfederacja Polski Niepodległej (Confederation for an Independent Poland)
KDNP	Kereszténydemokrata Néppárt (Christian Democratic Party)
LPR	Liga Polskich Rodzin (League of Polish Families)
MG	Magyar Gárda (Hungarian Guard)
MIÉP	Magyar Igazság és Élet Pártja (Hungarian Justice and Life Party)
MÖM	Magyar Önvédelmi Mozgalom (Hungarian Self-Defense Movement)
MS	Matica Slovenska (a cultural association for language and culture)
MSI:	Movimento Sociale Italiano (Italian Social Movement)
MS-FT:	Movimento Sociale Fiamma Tricolore (Social Movement – Tricolore Flame)
NA	Nationale Alliantie (National Alliance)
NNP	Nieuwe Nationale Partij (New National Party)
NPD:	Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschland (National Democratic Party of Germany)
NSS	Nové Slobodné Slovensko (New Free Slovakia)
NVU	Nederlandse Volksunie (Dutch People's Union)
ONR:	Obóz Narodowo-Radikalny (National-Radical Camp)
NOP:	Narodowe Odrodzenie Polski (Polish National Rebirth)
PIS	Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (Law and Justice)
PWN-PSN:	Polska Wspólnota Narodowa: Polskie Stronnictwo Narodowe (Polish National Union)
PdV	Partij voor de Vrijheid (Party of Freedom)
PRM:	Partidul Romania Mare (Party for Greater Romania)
SNJ:	Slovenská Národná Jednota (Slovak National Union)
SNS	Slovenská Národná Strana (Slovak National Party)
SPR-RSČ:	Sdružení pro republiku – Republikánska strana Československa, (Coalition for Republic – Republican Party of Czechoslovakia)
VR	Vatra Romaneasca (Romanian Cradle)
ZChN:	Zjednoczenie Chrześcijańsko Narodowe (Christian National Union)

Despite some difficulties of categorization, Table 2 suggests that fascist-oriented or extremist parties are more successful in East Central Europe than in the West, where their heyday ended in the 1960s. This pattern becomes clearer when looking at electoral trends in individual countries and their contexts, first in Western Europe with its long-established democracies and the increasing prominence of the immigration issue, and then in the new democracies of East Central Europe, with their distinct set of cultural and structural characteristics (to be discussed in the next section). But before turning to those data, it may be useful to underscore East-West differences by examining the prevalence of xenophobic attitudes in various countries (see Figure 1). A person is classified as “xenophobic” when he/she responds to the question, “Could you please sort out any that you would not like to have as neighbors?,” by mentioning at least one of the following categories: “Muslims,” “Immigrants,” and “People of a difference race.”

Xenophobia in Europe

Figure 2



Source: Data are drawn from the European Value Survey (EVS), 1999–2000 and 2008:
<http://zacat.gesis.org/webview/index.jsp?object> and
<http://zacat.gesis.org/obj/fCatalog/Catalog5> (accessed November 17, 2011).

The data show that (1) there is a relatively high baseline of xenophobia, in most countries around or clearly above 20% of the public, and that (2) the numbers are particularly high in countries that have joined the EU rather recently, most notably those located in East Central Europe. This finding is confirmed by more recent data from selected Eastern and Western European countries: while in Poland and Hungary more than 40 % of the population believe that there is “a natural hierarchy between black and white people” and more than 23 % believe that “blacks and whites should not marry,” residents of Western Europe were significantly less likely to affirm such sentiments.⁵

Renewal and Reorganization: Consolidation of the radical right in Western Europe

In the West, different phases of right-wing and xenophobic mobilization can be observed in the postwar era: (1) the immediate post-war period, which spawned the following major groups or movements: McCarthyism in the USA, Poujadism in France, SRP in the Federal Republic, the MSI in Italy; (2) the 1960s and early 1970s, which featured the Wallace movement in the USA, the NPD in West Germany, and Powellism and the National Front in the UK, as well as the still-extant MSI in Italy; and (3) the 1980s and onward, when radical right-wing parties distinct from their predecessors were established in most Western democracies.

The major actors in the first and second waves of mobilization were much more backward-looking, often celebrating practices, regimes, or ideas fundamentally opposed to liberal democracy, such as segregation in the American South, the dictatorial Third Reich in Germany, and biological racism. The third wave, however, represents a genuine renewal of the radical right and the politics of xenophobia. It can be understood as the product of a *general modernization shift* in the wake of the social upheavals

5 See Zick et al. (cited in footnote 4), pp. 68f. The other countries in the study are France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, the Netherlands, and Portugal.

associated with the events of 1968, as well as specific mobilization shifts within each country's opportunity structure.

The modernization shift includes a transition of Western industrial societies into a "post-industrial" phase and a new political dynamism. This shift opened opportunities for new movements and parties on the left and right along a new values- or culture-based cleavage (so-called "Old Politics" vs. "New Politics"). Extremist parties and movements were able to mobilize what might be termed "normal pathological" right-wing potential, which appears to be endemic to most rapidly changing, modernizing societies. The data in Figure 2 echo findings from other public opinion surveys in suggesting a sizable, and in some countries growing, segment of the population exhibiting xenophobic or ultra-nationalist views.⁶

At a complementary level of analysis, there are a number of studies that reveal xenophobia in mainstream actors and institutions.⁷ These studies show that xenophobia is not the exclusive prerogative of the far right, but can be found on either side of the spectrum. A case in point is Thilo Sarrazin, a former German politician of the Social Democratic Party who became a board member of the German Central Bank after retiring from public office. Sarrazin authored a controversial book about demographic change in Germany, which argued that integration has been failing in regard to people of other cultures and ethnicities, particularly Muslims. The book – a frontal attack on multiculturalism that bordered on biological racism – recycled a number of negative stereotypes about Islam, immigrants, and "others." Although it was almost unanimously condemned by the political class, it sold more than 1.5 million copies, more than any other non-fictional hardcover book in post-war Germany.

6 See, for example, Pew Research Center, *Unfavorable views of Jews and Muslims on the increase in Europe* (Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, 2008), available at: <http://www.pewglobal.org/2008/09/17/unfavorable-views-of-jews-and-muslims-on-the-increase-in-europe/> (accessed December 20, 2012).

7 For an early example, see Teun van Dijk, *Elite Discourse and Racism* (London: Sage, 1993).

The radical right has occupied a new position in the political landscape due to both its own renewal and to the changing environment. This new radical right – identified above as the “third wave” of right-wing radicalism in post-war Western democracies – is not simply the extension of conservatism towards the extreme end of the political spectrum; instead, it is the product of a restructuring of that spectrum and a regrouping of political actors and alliances. It is distinguished from the old right by its softening of anti-democratic rhetoric and willingness to play according to the rules of the game, as well as by its advocacy of ethnocentrism rather than classic biological racism.

When analyzing this third wave of extremism, it is important to recognize the role of the intellectual movement of the 1970s through 1990s known as the New Right, which was a force for right-wing ideological renewal. The New Right’s formulation of the concept of “ethnopluralism” demarcated its thinking from old-fashioned ideas of biological racism and white superiority. Directly appropriating the political left’s concept of the “right to be different,” the New Right emphasized the incompatibility of cultures and ethnicities and advocated the legitimacy of European resistance to cultural mixing.⁸ Ethnopluralism is a politically enforced segregation of cultures and ethnicities according to geographical criteria – essentially, a sort of global apartheid – and the New Right’s counter-model to multiculturalism, one that functions as a modernized strategy against immigration and integration. It precedes, and merges into, the xenophobic messages promulgated by mainstream politicians and authors. While the New Right is dead as a movement, its ideas have survived and entered the common political currency.⁹

At the level of political party discourse, ethnopluralism gives rise to defensive ultra-nationalism. None of the new right-wing parties advocates a return to pre-democratic, dictatorial political orders; all stress their

8 Pierre-André Taguieff, *La force du préjugé* (Paris, 1987).

9 See Michael Minkenberg, “Neue Rechte in Europa,” in Wolfgang Benz (ed.), *Handbuch Antisemitismus* vol. 5, Organisationen, Institutionen, Bewegungen (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012): 447–449.

support for republican principles and democratic constitutions (in marked contrast to interwar fascism in Italy and Germany). Also, the traditional radical right's search for a "third way" between Western capitalism and Eastern communism – i.e., its rejection of what has been termed "Vodka-Cola Imperialism" – has been replaced largely by a principled but not unrestrained support for the capitalist order.

To complement the preceding analysis, let us now take account of some trends over time, beginning with the electoral fortunes of the radical right in Western Europe, as summarized in Table 3. Examination of those data yields two important insights. First, voter support for right-wing

Radical Right Election Results (in %) in National Parliamentary Elections in Western Europe, from 1980 (average per 5 years, chamber of deputies)

Table 3

	1980– 1984	1985– 1989	1990– 1994	1995– 1999	2000– 2004	2005– 2009	2010– 2012
Austria (A)	5.0	9.7	19.6	24.4	10.0	28.3	x
Belgium (B)	1.1	1.7	6.6	10.9	13.8	14.0	7.8
Denmark (DK)	6.4	6.9	6.4	9.8	12.6	13.9	12.3
France (F)	0.4	9.9	12.7	14.9	12.4	4.7	13.6
Germany (Fed. Rep.) (D)	0.2	0.6	2.3	3.3	1.0	2.1	x
Great Britain (GB)	–	0.6	0.9	–	0.2	0.7	1.8
Italy (I)	6.8	5.9	18.0	25.8	4.3*	8.3*	x
Netherlands (NL)	0.8	0.7	2.9	0.6	11.4	5.9	12.7
Norway (N)	4.5	8.4	6.0	15.3	14.7	22.5	x
Sweden (S)	–	–	4.0	–	1.5	3.0	5.7
Switzerland (CH)	3.8	6.3	11.9	18.7	26.6	30.0	26.6

x = no election held in the period.

The following parties are included:

Austria: FPÖ; Belgium: *Vlaams Blok*, *Front National*; Denmark: *Fremskridtsparti*, *Dansk Folkeparti*; France: *Front National*, *Mouvement National Républicain*; Germany: *Republikaner*, *DVU*, *NPD*; Great Britain: *British National Party*, *National Front*, *Democratic Unionist Party*; Italy: *Movimento Sociale Italiano*, *Alleanza Nazionale*, *Movimento Sociale-Fiamma Tricolore*, *Lega Nord*; Netherlands: *Center Party*, *Centrum Democrats*, *List Pim Fortuyn*, *Party of Freedom*; Norway: *Fremskrittsparti*; Sweden: *Ny Demokrati*, *Sverigedemokraterna*, *Nationaldemokraterna*; Switzerland: *Schweizer Volkspartei-Union*, *Démocratique du Centre*, *Autopartei*, *Schweizer Demokraten*, *Lega dei Ticinesi*.

* Excluding AN, but including Lega Nord, Movimento Sociale Fiamma Tricolore, Mussolini, Rauti.

Source: Minkenberg, *The Radical Right in Europe* (cited in footnote 2), updated.

parties increased significantly between the 1980s and 1990s. Second, the countries studied fall into two main categories. In seven of them – Austria, Switzerland, Belgium, France, and Italy, plus Denmark and Norway – radical right-wing party support clearly can be considered strong by the late 1990s. In some of these countries, that strength dropped in the following decade due to changes in the nature of those parties (Italy), splits within those parties (Austria), or other parties' reactions to them (France). However, with the exception of France, these are the countries in which the radical right has moved ever-closer to the center of power, and joined or supported and influenced government. By way of contrast, in Germany, Great Britain, Sweden, and – until recently – the Netherlands, the radical right has remained more extreme or was hardly visible in party form (see also Table 2).

When looking at the cases with the most significant upswing of the radical right in terms of voter support, we notice that it is the new radical right – i.e., the newly formed or re-formed parties – that are ascendant. That is, they belong to the ethnocentrist or populist rather than to the extremist or fascist variant. As pointed out above, their rise is linked to an ideological and strategic renewal, along with changing cleavage patterns in party competition and the rise of the immigration issue. Together, these factors have opened the electoral gates for the new radical right.

Still, more is involved here. As already established, there is no overall trend in regard to xenophobia. Figure 2 suggested that in some countries, like Germany, Austria and Portugal, xenophobia is on the rise.¹⁰ In others – most interestingly, in those where the radical right has been quite successful electorally, such as Belgium, France, and Denmark – xenophobia seems to have decreased significantly during the first decade of the 21st century. Scholarly studies¹¹ have demonstrated that there is only a weak correlation between rates of immigration or the presence of

10 For recent data on Germany, see also Oliver Decker et al., *Die Mitte im Umbruch: Rechtsextreme Einstellungen in Deutschland 2012* (Berlin: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2012).

11 See for example Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe* (cited in footnote 2), pp. 210–216, and Decker et al., *Die Mitte im Umbruch* (cited in footnote 10), pp. 31–39.

foreign-born nationals in a given country and voter support for radical-right parties. It is not the actual number of non-natives in residence but rather the politicization of the non-native issue that contributes to the success of the radical right.

More important than the sheer size of non-native populations in accounting for the rise of the radical right and the diverging patterns across countries are certain cultural and structural factors, as I have shown in earlier comparative analyses.¹² Those analyses revealed (1) a group of countries with strong radical right-wing parties and a weak movement sector, including Austria, Belgium, France, and Italy, and (2) a group of countries with weak radical right-wing parties and a strong movement sector, including Germany, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. Four of the cases in which radical right-wing parties already had achieved electoral success in the 1990s are predominantly Catholic countries. Seen from a different angle, among the European democracies that have existed since the end of World War II – a group that excludes Spain and Portugal – there are no Catholic countries in which extreme right-wing parties enjoyed below-average results, attracting less than 5 % of the vote in at least two consecutive elections (although Italy was a partial exception to the rule in 2004, as shown in Table 3). It is noteworthy that by the end of the 1990s, the Protestant countries of Denmark and Norway had also joined that group. Moreover, in six of the countries showing above-average electoral results for radical right parties, Islam is either the second largest religion (as is the case in Belgium, France, Denmark, and Norway), or almost at a par with the Protestant majority (Austria and Italy).¹³

One could argue that the combination of two cultural factors in particular feeds the resonance and mobilization of the radical right: a traditional

12 See Minkenberg, *The Radical Right in Europe* (cited in footnote 2); also Minkenberg, "The West European Radical Right as a Collective Actor: Modeling the Impact of Cultural and Structural Variables on Party Formation and Movement Mobilization," in *Comparative European Politics* 1(2), 2003: 149–170.

13 See Michael Minkenberg, "Democracy and Religion: Theoretical and Empirical Observations on the Relationship between Christianity, Islam and Liberal Democracy," in *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 33(6), August 2007, pp. 887–909.

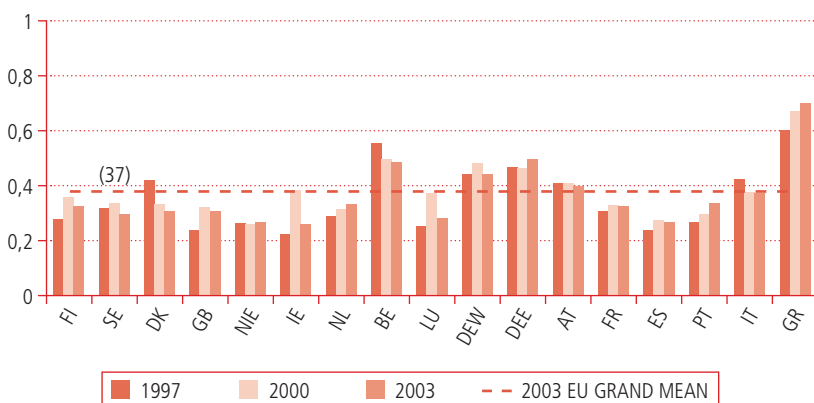
Catholic or Protestant homogeneity or even monopoly, on the one hand, and a particularly strong presence of Islam that challenges that homogeneity, on the other.

However, it is important to point out that this generalization does not apply to movement mobilization. Catholic countries exhibit relatively weak radical-right movements and, as far as comparable data are available, relatively little racially-motivated violence. Right-wing radicalism and racist violence appear to be highest in Protestant countries, Norway serving as a case in point. From this observation, we can infer that the current radical right is strong where it couples an ultranationalist or racist message with Islamophobia, especially in countries with long traditions of Christian mono-confessionalism.

The fact that large portions of the public in Western European countries display Islamophobic attitudes and reject multiculturalism provides an opening for the radical right, enabling it to appear more mainstream in comparison to blatantly extremist discourses like anti-Semitism and biological racism. An overview of levels of resistance to multiculturalism in Western Europe is presented in Figure 3.

**Resistance to Multicultural Society in the EU-15
(Longitudinal Changes per Country)**

Figure 3



Source: EUMC, *Majorities' attitudes towards minorities in European Union Member States*. (Vienna 2003): p. 42.

Among the structural variables that increase the prevalence of right-wing extremism, the role of other actors – especially the behavior of elites and of non-extremist political parties – appears to have special significance. This conclusion too is supported by a number of other studies.¹⁴ Co-opting the agenda of the radical right or inviting them into a government coalition does not lead to their marginalization. Rather, it only serves further to legitimize their xenophobic message.

Contrast or Convergence?

Particular patterns in East Central Europe

When looking East, we find similar patterns, but with rather divergent contents. Already, a quick glance at the map of the radical right in Central and Eastern Europe after 1990 shows some contrasts with Western countries (see Table 2, above). A greater number of the more successful parties in Central and Eastern Europe can be characterized as extremist, and we find more religious ultra-nationalism, in particular in Poland. Furthermore, there are significant extremist movement organizations such as Magyar Gárda (Hungarian Guard) or the Romanian Noua Dreapta (New Right) which, in their public appearances, employ symbols originally used by interwar fascist groups and regimes. Their adoption of such symbols is widely tolerated by both their respective societal environments and the forces of law and order. For example, even though the paramilitary Hungarian Guard, founded in 2007 by *Jobbik*, was banned in 2010, it quickly reappeared under different names while employing the same symbols, and it continued to organize street events and to terrorize members of minority groups, such as the Roma.

In Central and Eastern Europe, the radical right has aimed its fire against two orders: the new neo-liberal order and the state socialism that preceded it. Unlike their Western counterparts, right-wing extremist parties here are more clearly anti-establishment in their fundamental positions. How-

14 See e.g. Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe* (cited in footnote 2).

ever, this does not mean that they are necessarily more the pariah than the partner of other parties. And also unlike their Western counterparts, they have often captured impressive numbers of votes, yet their electoral strength has fluctuated more, in the context of party systems that are much more volatile than those in the West (see Table 5).¹⁵

Radical Right Election Results (in %) in National Parliamentary Elections in East Central Europe, from 1990 (average per 5 years, chambers of deputies)

Table 5

	1990–1994	1995–1999	2000–2004	2005–2009	2010–2012
Poland (PL)	14.1	8.0*	18.1	10.4	0.0
Romania (RO)	5.8	9.2	20.9	3.1	1.2
Slovak Republic (SR)	n.d.	n.d.	7.0	11.7	4.8
Slovenia (SV)	n.d.	n.d.	4.4	5.4	1.8
Czech Republic (CS)	6.8**	6.0	1.1	--	1.1
Hungary (H)	0.8	5.5	4.5	1.7	16.7

The following parties are included:

Poland: *KPN, ZChN, LPR, Samoobrona*; Romania: *PUNR, PRM*; Slovakia: *SNS*; Slovenia *SNS*; Czech Rep.: *SPR-RSČ, Workers Party*; Hungary: *MIÉP, Jobbik*.

* Estimated proportion of *ZChN* and *KPN*, which ran on a common ticket with electoral alliance *Solidarnosc AWS* in 1997 (vote share 33,8 %)

** Czech National Council

Sources: see Table 2, updated.

Overall, the radical right is less structured in these countries than in the West, as is true with most political parties in the region. The far right's electoral ups and downs, and its tendency to reinvent itself from one election to the next, make it disconcertingly fluid. This fact also contributes to the permeable border between radical right parties and radical right movements, and between the radical right and the mainstream right. In other words, the Central and Eastern European cleavage-structures differ markedly from those of Western democracies; there is no distinction here between Old Politics and New Politics. In Central and Eastern Europe, all

15 The last parliamentary election in Poland (held in October, 2011) is a vivid illustration of this political fluidity: it is the first time since the breakdown of state socialism that an incumbent government has been re-elected in that country.

cleavages are either new or revived versions of older ones. They must be seen in the context of the process of regime change, which creates new boundaries enclosing political space.

Even before the fall of the Berlin Wall, there were tendencies in all socialist states to strengthen political legitimacy by invoking national traditions. Whereas in today's Western Europe, immigrants can play the role of scapegoats, such scapegoats are not readily available in Central and Eastern Europe. Instead, national minorities and neighboring countries assume that unhappy role. The roots of this development can be found in the particular nation- and state-building processes that occurred in the region.

In contrast to many cases of nation-building in the West, most Eastern European nations did not emerge in conjunction with a bourgeois revolution, a strong liberal movement, or the establishment of liberal democracy. Almost all of Eastern Europe was subject to multinational empires, whether Habsburg, Russian, or Ottoman. Nation-building here was always of the *risorgimento* type, 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. As a result of this process, many post-socialist nations today can be characterized by a triadic configuration: the intersection of (1) continuing nation-building by the states, (2) the presence of national minorities within them, and (3) the existence of "external homelands."¹⁶

In the course of the region's previous nation-building processes, and for that matter even under current circumstances, "external homelands" and "lost territories" have been especially prominent themes for the radical right. An overview of the issue of borders and the geography of minority residence is provided by the following book cover (Figure 4), which illustrates the lack of congruence between the borders of the nation states and the areas of residence of national minorities.

16 See Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).



Source: Publication from 2008, Ch. Links Verlag.

These external homelands, and the national minorities residing in them, represent the specifically East European backdrop of xenophobia. Here, we are not dealing with a defensive ultra-nationalism directed at immigrants and multiculturalism, but an offensive one, targeted at neighboring countries and long-term resident minorities. These also include the large number of Roma in the region, although strictly speaking they cannot be said to live in an external homeland because they have no state to call their own.

It has been suggested that right-wing parties in the East are “catching up” to their counterparts in Western Europe.¹⁷ Yet in contrast to the latter, the leaders and platforms of the Eastern parties advocate more backward-looking ideologies, notably with regard to “lost territories” and overt anti-Semitism or racism (rather than Islamophobia, except in the case of Bulgaria). The ideology includes a strong dose of nostalgia for the old despotic regimes and the ethnic and territorial conception of national

17 See, e.g., Lenka Bustikova and Herbert Kitschelt, “The Radical Right in Post-communist Europe: Comparative Perspectives on Legacies and Party Competition,” in Michael Minkenberg (ed.), *Historical Legacies and the Radical Right in Post-Cold War Central and Eastern Europe* (Stuttgart: ibidem, 2010): 29–61; also Mudde, *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe* (cited in footnote 2).

“identity” that prevailed under them, following the nation-building struggles that occurred before and after World War I. For example, Czech *Republicans* (SPR-RSČ) demanded that the current borders of their country should be adjusted to match the borders of the former Czechoslovakia, within which only a “homogenous” population thereafter would have the right to reside. Similarly, in Romania, the *Greater Romania Party* (PRM) advocates the re-drawing of borders along the lines of the interwar period as a way of demanding the annexation of Moldova. But the desire for change is strongest in Hungary. The *Hungarian Justice and Life Party* (MIÉP) and the more recently established Movement for a Better Hungary (*Jobbik*) both favor revising the Treaty of Trianon and restoring Hungary’s Habsburg boundaries. Like the movements mentioned above, these parties adapt and employ the symbols of the fascist movements and regimes of the 1930s, such as Hungary’s arrow cross or Romania’s Iron Guard. Figure 5 shows a campaign poster for *Jobbik*, which illustrates the desire for a Greater Hungary in the borders during the times of the Dual Monarchy (1867–1918).

In Poland, resurgent nationalism has been influenced by religious fundamentalism. At the beginning of the 20th century, Roman Dmowski, the anti-liberal, anti-Western theorist of “national democracy,” was already

Campaign Poster of the Hungarian Party *Jobbik* (2009)

Figure 5



Source: <http://internetfigyelo.wordpress.com/2009/08/01/jobik-tuntetes-a-bankokracia-ellen-hetfor/> (accessed 1 April 2010).

claiming that only Catholics made good Poles. Dmowski's viewpoint is experiencing a strong comeback today in the party and movement spectrum. In the 1990s, the *Christian-National Union* (ZChN) insisted that Catholic dogma must be the foundation of Poland's national life, and that the state must defend the interests of "ethnic" Poles scattered throughout Eastern Europe. Since then the League of Polish Families (LPR) has taken up the banner, re-activating the networks of its defunct predecessors. Until recently, the LPR enjoyed the support of Radio Maryja, an ultra-Catholic station that regularly broadcasts traditionalist, xenophobic, and anti-Semitic speeches to millions of listeners.¹⁸ Lately, Radio Maryja has switched its support to the right-wing populist Law and Justice Party (PiS) led by Jaroslav Kaczynski, which contains both a radical and a more moderate wing and has attracted many former LPR voters.

Overall, if less extreme and more populist and nationalist parties of the right and mainstream-right are added to the mix, the picture changes dramatically. With a few exceptions, such as Estonia and Slovenia, the reservoir of support for such parties is about 20 % of the electorate. This statistic points toward a larger development that shapes the relationship between the radical and the mainstream right in Central and Eastern Europe. Within that region, anti-communist pressures created by the events of 1989 have forcefully rehabilitated the concept of the nation-state. That fact explains why nationalist and ethnocentric rhetoric is not marginal there, but is rather an axis that structures public life, especially in a post-communist context that grants civil society only a minor role in the political process. Once the repudiation of elites and popular disenchantment with politicians are factored in, it is hardly surprising that East Central European society increasingly leans toward the right, despite the meager electoral results enjoyed by some radical right parties (see figure 2). In that regard, the radical right in Central and Eastern Europe is more mainstream than marginal, while at the same time being more extreme than its counterparts in the West.

18 See also the contribution by Rafał Pankowski and Marcin Kornak to this volume.

Conclusion: The challenges posed by the radical right

With the emergence of new right-wing radical actors in West and East, European democracies are facing multiple challenges to their liberal and pluralist orders. In Western Europe, the major challenge involves significant shifts in public discourse and policies concerning immigration and integration and, more generally, the politics of multiculturalism. As I have shown elsewhere,¹⁹ established European political and state actors in a number of countries have reacted to the radical right's growing organizational strength by adopting and legitimizing some of its elements. This trend represents a major shift from earlier patterns in which established actors ostracized such positions. The organizational and electoral consolidation of the radical right has progressed substantially in France and Belgium. In both countries, the radical right remains isolated, yet parts of its agenda have entered mainstream politics, most notably during the presidency of Nicolas Sarkozy. Efforts by conservative parties in Denmark and Austria to co-opt the electoral rise and relative pragmatism of the radical right have given even greater legitimacy to these parties. While these tactics did indeed "tame" the parties in question, that development was accompanied by the hardening of anti-immigrant policies.

More generally, right-wing organizational strength, party and movement mobilization, and public openness to immigrants and immigration have begun to exhibit systematic variations across national boundaries. As far as Scandinavian countries are concerned, strong right-wing populist parties have become entrenched in Denmark and Norway, while immigrant-related violence has shaken public opinion, most dramatically in Norway, but also in Sweden as well. At the same time, the citizens of these countries are not as deeply or formally opposed to immigration and multiculturalism as is the case in other parts of Europe (see Figures 2 and 3).

19 See Michael Minkenberg, "Anti-Immigrant Politics in Europe: The Radical Right, Xenophobic Tendencies, and Their Political Environment," in Jennifer Hochschild and John Mollenkopf (eds.), *Bringing Outsiders In: Transatlantic Perspectives on Immigrant Political Incorporation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009), pp. 140–157.

On the other hand, the citizens of most Catholic countries display a marked antipathy to multiculturalism. In those countries, although the incidence of right-wing violence remains lower, radical right parties have enjoyed disproportionate success. As a result of the current financial crisis, that trend has intensified in some countries, such as Greece.²⁰ Both in Scandinavia and in Catholic Europe, however, political discourse and public policy have shifted rightward.

In contrast to Western Europe, the challenges in East Central Europe are more fundamental, as they concern not only the politics of minorities but also the political order itself. Hungary offers a case in point. Here, the formerly-mainstream party *Fidesz* – under constant pressure from the radical right – has undergone a rightward shift that, in turn, has begun to rearrange the country's entire political system. Other countries in which the radical right entered the government (Poland, Slovakia, and Romania) also experienced dramatic ruptures in their politics, albeit to a lesser degree than in Hungary. The region of East Central Europe is distinct from the West by virtue of the extremism of its radical right's agenda (anti-liberal, anti-democratic, anti-minority, and anti-EU), which is only marginally moderated by the major parties of the right. In the East, there was never a cordon sanitaire between the mainstream right and the radical right; hence the boundaries between them are more fluid. The rehabilitation of nationalism after the breakdown of the Soviet empire facilitated political protagonists and programs that tended to make a radical right largely superfluous.

20 See the contribution by Vassiliki Georgiadou to this volume.

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A view of the right-wing extremist pub, zum Henker (at the hangman's place) in Berlin on April 8, 2013, on Brückenstrasse 14, Berlin-Schöneeweide

Right-Wing Extremism and Terrorism in Germany: Developments and Enabling Structures

Britta Schellenberg

The phrase “right-wing extremism”¹ evokes disapproval from all relevant players in German society. But public disapproval of right-wing extremism goes hand-in-hand with controversial debates about the movement’s political importance. Although far-right parties to date have not been able to gain a foothold at the national level, the seemingly unanimous condemnation of right-wing extremism by no means has spelled the end of far-right activity. On the contrary, recent studies show that far-right “no-go” areas² have become established in some German municipalities and cities, and that far-right hegemony can become entrenched at a local level.³ Compared to the rest of Europe, Germany has a dramatically higher level of violence.⁴ The country’s „Nationalsozialistische Untergrund“ (NSU), or „National Socialist Underground“, murdered victims for decades without being discovered. Moreover, since 1990 there has been a consistently high rate of violent attacks on people branded as “un-German” by the far right. The proliferation of such assaults underlines the fact that violent right-wing extremism in Germany does not simply involve a few individuals acting on their own. Hardly a trivial matter, it is actually a complex internal security issue. In light of these observations, I will

1 According to Michael Minkenberg, right-wing extremism is merely an aspect of a larger phenomenon known as the “radical right.” See Minkenberg’s contribution to this volume.

2 Cf. Uta Döring, *Angstzonen: Rechtsdominierte Orte aus medialer und lokaler Perspektive* (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2008).

3 Cf. Britta Schellenberg, *Die Rechtsextremismus-Debatte: Charakteristika, Konflikte, und ihre Folgen* (Wiesbaden: Edition Rechtsextremismus/VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, forthcoming 2013).

4 Cf. Britta Schellenberg, “Country Report: Germany,” in Bertelsmann Stiftung (ed.), *Strategies for Combating Right-Wing Extremism in Europe* (Gütersloh: Verlag Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2009), pp. 179–248; here: p. 179 ff.

address the following questions: How has German right-wing extremism evolved and changed in recent years and decades? What does it look like today? What are its enabling structures?

1. The actors

1.1 Political parties

In the Federal Republic, the far right has always associated itself with National Socialism.⁵ Attempts to build a modern far-right party have so far been unsuccessful. Today the most influential far-right party is the *Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands* (NPD), or *National Democratic Party* of Germany. The so-called “Pro” parties and *Die Freiheit* (the *Freedom Party*) have also played a limited role in far-right electoral politics.

The NPD was founded in 1964. Twelve years after the banning of the successor party to the Nazis, the Sozialistische Reichspartei (Socialist Reich Party), the NPD managed to unite several far-right splinter groups in addition to the Deutsche Reichspartei (German Reich Party), which already had been banned in Rhineland-Palatinate. Many of the new party’s officials and members were one-time Nazis, and its initial manifesto contained a heterogeneous mix of National Socialist, anti-communist, and – in the early years – conservative Catholic elements. At that time, the party’s key demands were for the reunification of Germany and a revision of the Oder-Neiße boundary between East Germany and Poland. Between 1966 and 1968, the young party won enough votes to enter seven state parliaments. But surprisingly, its performance in the 1969 elections was anemic: it scored a measly 4.3% share of the vote, insuf-

5 Britta Schellenberg, “Strategien gegen Rechtsextremismus: Bezüge zum Nationalsozialismus“, in Günter Gehl (ed.), *Vor 60 Jahren Kriegsende – Befreiung oder Niederlage für die Deutschen? Gedanken über die Hintergründe des Rechtsextremismus in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Weimar: Bertuch Verlag, 2006), pp. 97–114; here: pp. 97–100

ficient to clear the 5% hurdle for entry into the national parliament, the Bundestag, and it was weakened by infighting.

More recently, however, during the chairmanship of Udo Voigt (1996 to 2011), the NPD managed to overcome the political marginalization that had been its lot since the 1970's. In the year that he was elected, the party drafted a new manifesto, the contents of which were revised slightly in 2010. Fundamentally National Socialist and nationalistic, the manifesto features anti-capitalist and national-revolutionary elements and advocates National Socialism. The NPD is openly anti-establishment, and propagates a biologically derived theory of race that culminates in race-based political demands, such as the expropriation and deportation of Germans with an immigrant background.⁶ The party's ideology therefore has become more radical than it was during its early years. Under Voigt, the NPD established new networks, particularly in "Mitteldeutschland," or Middle Germany, as it calls the five former East German states (implicitly referring to a "Greater Germany" that would include land to the east of the Oder-Neiße line), and also forged ties with the right-wing subculture that has burgeoned since the 1990s.

At its conference in 1998, the NPD passed a "three-pillar concept" designed to free it from its traditional role as a party that contests elections, but lacks a permanent presence in society. For the medium-term political struggle, the three strategic campaign pillars were defined as the "fight for the street," the "fight for minds," and the "fight for voters/parliaments."⁷ The first two pillars indicate a belief that the NPD can only gain political power if it first manages to mobilize its sympathizers "in the street" and then steps up its nationalist educational activities, trains party members, and creates intellectual networks. Having achieved those goals, the party sought to accomplish its third pillar of winning elections, first

6 Cf. the party manifesto of the NPD (2010), available at http://www.npd.de/inhalte/daten/dateiablage/br_parteiprogramm_a4.pdf (last accessed January 30, 2013).

7 Holger Apfel, *"Alles Große steht im Sturm": Tradition und Zukunft einer nationalen Partei* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Stimme Verlag, 1999), p. 469 ff. and 359 ff.

at a municipal level and later in regional and national balloting. At the end of 2004, a fourth pillar was added to the party's platform: It now aspires to unite the far right on the basis of its "struggle for organized will."

Behind that hope lies the conviction that electoral success requires cooperation with other far-right parties and with the Freien Kameradschaften, or Free Comradeships (to be discussed in section 1.2, below).⁸ After opening up to these neo-Nazi groups, the NPD became more radical. Formerly a party composed more or less exclusively of aging ex-Nazis, today the NPD actively courts young people, offering them (among other inducements) leisure activities and free music CDs. In the CD entitled *NPD-Schulhof* (*NPD-Schoolyard*), which has been issued in several versions since 2006, it promotes an extreme right-wing philosophy and refers to itself as a "movement." The changing content of the Schoolyard CDs, as well as the outlook and message of the bands involved in making them, indicates how much more radical the party has become. When right-wing songs are banned, as happens occasionally, the party capitalizes upon that censorship to promote itself.⁹ Today the musician Michael Regener (aka Lunikoff) has become a hero of the Schoolyard CDs, partly because he is considered a martyr within far-right circles after his imprisonment for forming a criminal organization. Exhibit 1 is a cover from one of those CDs.

8 The election agreement between the NPD and the far-right DVU in 2004 was based on this idea. Before the parliamentary elections in Brandenburg and Saxony in 2004, the two groups established the so-called Deutschlandpakt (Germany Pact), acting on the belief that non-competition between the far-right parties would make it easier to overcome the 5% electoral hurdle that must be cleared in order to send delegates to national and regional parliaments. Their pact did indeed bear fruit: The DVU gained representation in Brandenburg and the NPD did so in Saxony. However, the pact ended with the (not agreed-upon) participation of the NPD in the Brandenburg parliamentary elections in 2009. Following infighting and its eventual merger with the NPD, the DVU has now dissolved. For further information on the DVU, see Britta Schellenberg, "Die Radikale Rechte in Deutschland: Sie wird verboten und erfindet sich neu", in Nora Langenbacher and Britta Schellenberg (eds.), *Europa auf dem "rechten" Weg? Rechtsextremismus und Rechtspopulismus in Europa* (Berlin: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2011), pp. 59–83; here: p. 64 ff.

9 The 2010 Schulhof CD, "Freiheit statt BRD!" ("Freedom Instead of Federal Republic of Germany!"), was banned by the state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania. The NPD emphasized the censorship in an advertising campaign and removed banned songs from its download area.

Far-right musical performance: NPD Schulhof CD "Freiheit statt BRD!" (banned), Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, 2010

Exhibit 1



The strategic expansion of the NPD from a small political party into a movement that makes frequent forays into popular culture was motivated in part by the desire to attract young adherents. Subcultural activities also help the NPD to avoid the repressive instruments that the state usually deploys against neo-Nazi organizational structures and activities. Together with other far-right players, the NPD initiates quasi-dialectical “cat-and-mouse games” as a way of expanding the scope of right-wing extremism in Germany. In the subcultural realm, the organization can plead its inhumane cause ever more openly, thereby helping to create a “counter-world” intent on provocation. It is becoming increasingly apparent that the NPD rejects the German Constitution.¹⁰ In fact, the party has long been anti-constitutional. The German state certainly has legal means at its disposal to impose a ban upon the party, but the first attempt to do so, in 2001-2003, did not succeed, which has discouraged further efforts.¹¹ The primary reason for the failure of the attempted ban

¹⁰ Constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany

¹¹ This is indeed not a hurdle that is easy to surmount. Based on the ideological structure and objectives of the NPD, a ban should be legally possible. However, some observers (especially in the Green Party) have cast doubts on the legitimacy of a party ban on moral grounds. Others (especially in the CDU/CSU) reject a ban for reasons of partisan advantage.

was strategic: The German security service had managed to penetrate the NPD, and there were fears that if the party went underground in the aftermath of a ban, that penetration – with all of its obvious advantages – would be difficult to sustain.¹²

In addition to the multi-level tendencies toward radicalization already noted, there are signs that the NPD is trying to win greater acceptance in mainstream society. A significant discrepancy exists between its communications with voters (such as its electoral manifestos and pledges)¹³, in which it comes across as relatively moderate, and its more radical internal communications (such as its educational brochures for cadres).¹⁴ By invoking National Socialist romanticism and offering neighborhood assistance, The NPD is indeed succeeding in attracting broader sections of the electorate in depopulating and/or structurally weak districts and regions that see themselves as ignored and abandoned. By 2013, the party had developed a stable, highly active grassroots presence in some areas, especially parts of East Germany heavily affected by demographic change. The inroads made by the NPD in these regions are reflected in the number of seats it has won on city and municipal councils. It also has had electoral success at the state level, with representatives in the parliaments of Saxony (winning 9.2 % of the vote in the 2004 election, and 5.6 % in 2009) and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania (2006: 7.3 %; 2011: 6.0 %). In Thuringia (2009: 4.3 %) and Saxony-Anhalt (2011: 4.6 %) it just barely missed entering parliament. It should be noted that all of these states are located in the former East Germany. In 2009, the NPD was unable to repeat its relatively good showing in Saarland (2004: 4 %). But party leaders think it has a chance of entering the European Parliament in June of 2014, since for the first time there will be no 5 % hurdle required to win seats in that body.

12 Regarding the controversial debate about a ban on the NPD, see Britta Schellenberg, *Die Rechts-extremismus-Debatte: Charakteristika, Konflikte und ihre Folgen*, op. cit.

13 For example, in the Federal Agency for Civic Education's Wahlomat

14 Cf. the NPD educational brochure, available at <http://www.redok.de/images/stories/dokumente/npd-argumente.pdf> (last accessed January 30, 2013); cf. also Britta Schellenberg, "NPD-Publikationen", in Wolfgang Benz (ed.), *Handbuch des Antisemitismus: Judenfeindschaft in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Volume 6 (Berlin and Boston: de Gruyter/Saur, forthcoming).

The NPD has been regularly shaken by repressive measures brought to bear by the German state, infighting between its radical and more moderate factions, and scandals (among others, a child pornography scandal involving a Saxony MP). Moreover, it has been the focus of even greater (unfavorable) public attention in the wake of the explosive debate about right-wing extremism following the discovery of the “National Socialist Underground”. But despite all these body blows, the NPD remains the most successful far-right party in Germany as of this writing. In November of 2011, the former NPD chairman for Saxony, Holger Apfel, who is originally from the state of Lower Saxony, took over as the party’s national chairman. In December of 2012, Germany’s Upper House, the Bundesrat (Federal Council), decided to apply again to the Federal Constitutional Court to have the party banned. But in the meantime, the government announced that it would not participate in the move to outlaw the NPD.¹⁵

In addition to the NPD, some other parties, including *Die Republikaner* (REP), or the Republicans, and the *Deutsche Volksunion* (DVU), or *German People’s Union*, have at times achieved some measure of electoral success. Drawing its sustenance from national-conservative traditions, the DVU was founded as an association in 1971 and as a party in 1987. The party has always born the stamp of its founder, financier, and long-time chairman, the millionaire Gerhard Frey. In the 1990s it had managed to recruit a relatively large number of members (some 26,000 by 1992), but by 2011 its membership had dwindled to only around 1,000. Following its failed attempt to merge with the NPD, the DVU dissolved in 2012. In the 1990s and again at the start of the new millennium it achieved some significant – albeit mostly short-lived – electoral triumphs in Schleswig-Holstein (1992: 6.3 %), Saxony-Anhalt (1998: 12.9 %) and Brandenburg (1999: 5.3 %; 2004: 6.1 %). The party was also able to enter the assembly of the Hanseatic city of Bremen, due to the special electoral law there (5 % was enough in Bremerhaven) – (1991: 6.2 %; 1999: 3.0 %; 2003: 2.3 %; 2007: 2.7 %).

15 Editors’ note: Because of editorial deadlines this turn of events cannot be given extensive treatment in the present article.

Die Republikaner (REP) were also successful for a while, but today the party has dwindled into insignificance. Founded in 1983 by the renegade CSU MP and Bayerischer Rundfunk (Bavarian Broadcasting) television personality Franz Schönhuber, the party sought to bring about a shift towards right-wing conservatism and opposed the loans, running into billions of marks, being offered by West Germany to East Germany. Those loans, seen by *die Republikaner* as a one-sided concession, were initiated by the Bavarian Minister-President and CSU chairman, Franz Josef Strauß. *Die Republikaner* reached the zenith of their influence from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, when they were extremely right-wing. The party was able to achieve electoral success in the state of Baden-Württemberg (1992: 10.9 %; 1996: 9.1 %), the city-state of West Berlin (1989: 7.5 %), and in the European Parliament (1989: 7.1 %). Under the current party chairman Rolf Schlierer, who has been in office since 1994, the party has followed a more conservative, less radical line.¹⁶

The *Pro parties*, with the citizens' movement *Pro Köln (Pro Cologne)* leading the way, resemble other modern versions of right-wing extremism in Western Europe (e.g., the *Danish People's Party*) in both their campaign styles and the networks of transnational alliances that they forge. Although they have not yet achieved any major electoral victories, the *Pro parties* frequently draw public attention with their anti-Muslim campaigns. The parties, which regard themselves as "populist" and as "citizen movements,"¹⁷ place Islam ("Against the Islamization of Cologne") at the heart of their political agenda, initiating campaigns against Islamic activities such as the construction of mosques and engaging in provocations such as displaying caricatures of Mohammed in front of Muslim places of worship. Recently they gained publicity with a campaign against

16 For an in-depth discussion, see Britta Schellenberg, "Die Republikaner," in Wolfgang Benz (ed.), *Handbuch des Antisemitismus. Judenfeindschaft in Geschichte und Gegenwart, Volume 5: Organisationen, Institutionen, Bewegungen* (Berlin and Boston: de Gruyter/Saur, 2012), pp. 536–538.

17 Cf. Alexander Häusler (ed.), "Rechtspopulismus als 'Bürgerbewegung': Kampagnen gegen Islam und Moscheebau und kommunale Gegenstrategien" (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2008).

a radical Islamic group, the Salafists. But the Pro parties are not only hostile to Muslims; they also portray the Roma and immigrants generally in a stereotyped, demeaning manner. Indeed, the latter groups are usually stigmatized and portrayed as “criminals.” *Pro Cologne* was originally founded in 1996 as an association rather than as a party. However, it was gradually taken over by partisan, right-wing activists beginning in the new millennium. In 2004, the party won four seats on the Cologne city council, with 4.7% of the votes. In the municipal election in Cologne in August, 2009, *Pro Cologne* won 5.4% of the votes and five seats on the city council. *Pro NRW* is an offshoot of *Pro Cologne* that is expanding the party’s reach outward into the surrounding state of North Rhine-Westphalia. *Pro Cologne* is currently the most successful of a number of populist right-wing and far-right voting blocs.

Similarly, the agenda of the *Freedom Party*, which in its message and political alignment echoes the Dutch Wilders Party, focuses on campaigning against Islam and Muslims. Its chairman is the former CDU MP for Berlin, René Stadtkewitz, who co-founded the young party in 2010. In the 2011 election for the Berlin House of Representatives, the *Freedom Party* captured only 1% of the vote despite intensive campaigning. However, it has since formed several state associations. With provocative campaigns and right-wing populist gestures, its protagonists seek to connect with the media and the public. The party’s personnel depict themselves as “right-wing conservative,” “Islam-critical,” and “nationalist.” They are typically recruited from the milieu of the New Right, the most important voices of which at this point are the weekly journal *Junge Freiheit* and the far-right blog, “Politically Incorrect” (PI/PI-news).¹⁸ Bavaria’s *Bürgerinitiative Ausländerstopp* (“Keep the Foreigners Out” citizen initiative) also places “hostility towards Muslims” at the heart of its propaganda. This party, which is also described as a “cover organization” for the NPD, gained seats in the city councils of Nuremberg (2008: two seats) and Munich (2008: one seat).

18 Michael Stürzenberger, the prominent author of “Politically Incorrect,” is also the Bavarian state chairman of the Freedom Party.

Far-right parties in Germany, unlike many of their European counterparts, so far have not scored at the national level. However, they have recorded successes at the municipal and regional levels. Representatives of far-right parties sit on some district, city, and municipal councils. Favored by municipal electoral rules, which in many places do not have the customary 5 % hurdle and begin to award seats to parties that surpass just 2 or 3 % of the vote, far-right parties are continuing to establish grassroots bases in some areas. The NPD has recorded a high percentage of the vote in municipal elections in Saxony (2004: 26; 2009: 72 seats) and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania (2009: 60 seats), but it is also represented at the municipal level in other states as well, including Hesse, Thuringia, and Saxony-Anhalt. In the last parliamentary election in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, the NPD gained over 30 % of the votes in some municipalities, and in Saxony its vote tally nearly reached the 20 % level. To be sure, when viewed from a broader perspective, the far-right parties have enjoyed little success. Still, the far right has shown a knack for entrenching itself in some areas at the local and, to a lesser extent, the regional level.

1.2. Movements and subcultures

As is the case with extreme right-wing parties, there is a heterogeneous network of far-right groups and activities in Germany. The evolution of such movements and subcultures suggests that the German far right, especially the wing committed to action rather than speech, has been able to reinvent itself in recent years. We have seen already that the fragmentation and radicalization of right-wing extremism during the 1970s and 1980s gave rise to new parties such as the DVU and die *Republikaner*. But in addition, neo-Nazi¹⁹ Kampfgruppen (battle groups) formed and took part in paramilitary exercises in order to be prepared for a national-

19 The term “neo-Nazism” is an abbreviation for “new National Socialism” and describes one faction of present-day right-wing extremism that takes a positive stance toward historic National Socialism. This pro-Nazi attitude is evident in their adaptation of the ideology, the glorification of individual figures of National Socialism (such as Hitler and Hess), the use of corresponding symbols, and the imitation of old Nazi organizations (such as the SA and SS).

revolutionary overthrow of the Federal Republic of Germany and the (supposed) threat of communism from the left.²⁰ These neo-Nazi groups attempted to recruit the “German youth” — at first not very successfully. However, they exploited the power vacuum that emerged during the collapse of East Germany to build neo-Nazi structures in its territory. For example, at the start of the 1990s, prominent East German fascists, skin-heads, and hooligans, together with their “comrades” from the West, established National Alternative (NA) in East Berlin. In a house they occupied as squatters (122 Weitlingstraße), they set up a “National Communication Center,” which enabled them to reach a wider public. During this period numerous other neo-Nazi organizations were founded. Existing battle groups also shifted their activities to the states of the former East Germany.²¹

Following a wave of attacks on asylum seekers in Hoyerswerda and Rostock and on immigrants in Solingen and Mölln, a variety of far-right organizations were banned, starting in 1992, on the basis of extensive legislation against all forms of (neo-)Nazism.²² Movement leaders reacted to the wave of bans by restructuring organized neo-Nazism. Since that time such groups have gone without state certification (as legally recognized associations or the like) for their organizations. Instead of setting up organizations that might be prosecuted, they created a network of local *Kameradschaften*, or *neo-Nazi comradeships*, that apparently were able to

20 In 1971, the American Gary Rex Lauck gave neo-Nazism its first organizational voice: He founded the National Socialist Germany Workers Party/Overseas Organization (NSDAP/AO) in the United States. In Germany, Michael Kühnen founded the Aktionsfront Nationaler Sozialisten (ANS, later ANS/NA; banned in 1983) as the “legal arm” of the foreign organization; Friedhelm Busse founded the Volkssozialistische Bewegung Deutschlands (VSBD), or People’s Socialist Movement of Germany; Manfred Roeder founded the Deutsche Aktionsgruppe (DA), or German Action Group; and Karl-Heinz Hoffmann founded the Wehrsportgruppe Hoffmann, or Hoffmann Paramilitary Sports Group.

21 Cf. Richard Stöss, *Rechtsextremismus im Wandel* (Berlin: Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung, 2010), p. 102 ff.; cf. also Britta Schellenberg, “Neonazismus”, in Wolfgang Benz (ed.): *Handbuch des Antisemitismus: Judenfeindschaft in Geschichte und Gegenwart, Volume 5*, op. cit., pp. 445–447.

22 That said, racist and far right violence has been exploited politically by the German government to restrict the right of asylum. Cf. Heinz Lynen von Berg, *Politische Mitte und Rechtsextremismus: Diskurse zu fremdenfeindlicher Gewalt im 12. Deutschen Bundestag 1990–1994* (Opfaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2000).

operate autonomously.²³ The key figures in their leadership circles, Christian Worch, Thomas Wulff, and Thorsten Heise, were themselves affected by state repression. The Nationale Liste (National List), which Worch and Wulff led, and the Freiheitliche Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (Free German Workers Party), to which Heise belonged, were both banned.²⁴

However, the emergence of the comradeships is not merely a reaction to state repression. It also embodies a conscious strategy by which the neo-Nazis try to distinguish themselves from other far-right parties. The representatives of the Freie Kräfte, or Free Forces, as the comradeships usually call themselves, accused parties such as the NPD of being too parliamentary and legalistic. The Free Forces wanted to place themselves unreservedly in the ideological tradition of National Socialism and, accordingly, they look to Nazi organizations and right-wing terrorist groups such as the Hoffmann Military Sports Group as their militant role models. The neo-Nazi comradeships regard themselves as part of a “national resistance,” or “far-right united front.” Today they represent the most dynamic associations of German neo-Nazis, and their organizational model is being exported to countries in Eastern Europe.

Comradeship members include militant neo-Nazis, aggressive right-wing rockers, and right-wing youths. The groups are often responsible for violent attacks and establishing no-go zones. However, they usually attract public attention only when weapons are found on their members or if they carry out terrorist activities. For example, Kameradschaft Süd (Comradeship South) became known when its plot to carry out a bomb attack at the groundbreaking ceremony for the Jewish Cultural Center in Munich came to light. As a result that comradeship was classified as a terrorist organization.²⁵

23 Regarding the structure of a comradeship and its regional federation, the “Aktionsbündnis” (Action Coalition), see Britta Schellenberg, “Die Radikale Rechte in Deutschland,” op. cit., p. 70.

24 Cf. Andrea Röpke and Andreas Speit (eds.), *Braune Kameradschaften: Die militanten Neonazis im Schatten der NPD* (Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 2004).

25 Cf. Britta Schellenberg, “Neonazi-Kameradschaften,” in Wolfgang Benz (ed.), *Handbuch des Antisemitismus: Judenfeindschaft in Geschichte und Gegenwart, Volume 5*, op. cit., pp. 443–445.

Since around 2002, one organizational network has become a permanent feature – and export commodity – of the German far right: the Autonome Nationalisten, or *Autonomous Nationalists*. First emerging in Berlin and Dortmund, this network has spread throughout Germany. Members of these groups, who tend to be very young (age 14 and up), adopt the style of dress and in some cases even the habits of their left-wing counterparts, particularly those of the autonomous Schwarzer Block (Black Block). The Autonomous Nationalists focus on contemporary concerns, demanding such things as better economic prospects for German youth. The group reaches out to young people in precarious situations with offers of employment and shelter (for example, overnight accommodation for children brought up in institutions). In this sense, their criticisms of current social ills are based on real experience. However, the member turnover rate is very high. Many adherents leave the movement after just a few months, and in some areas the organizations have dissolved completely by this time.²⁶

Following the failure of the attempt to ban the NPD in 2003, the relationship between the comradeships and the NPD improved because the NPD emerged from its trial “more mature,” according to comradeship leaders Heise, Tegethoff, and Wulff. In their view, the NPD (which all three men joined) is now part of the “national resistance” and should receive support during elections.²⁷ Heise, who has received several jail sentences for (among other offenses) assault and battery and *Volksverhetzung* (incitement of the people) today represents the NPD in the District Council of Eichsfeld, in Thuringia (see Exhibit 2).

26 For an in-depth discussion, see Alexander Häusler and Jan Schedler, *Neonazismus in Bewegung: Verortung der “Autonomen Nationalisten”, in der sozialwissenschaftlichen Bewegungsforschung* (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2011).

27 Cf. Andrea Röpke, “Braune Kameradschaften” (Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung: Dossier Rechtsextremismus, September 13, 2006), available at <http://www.bpb.de/politik/extremismus/rechtsextremismus/41901/braune-kameradschaften> (last accessed January 30, 2013).



Left: Neo-Nazi memorial service in July 2008; funeral of Friedhelm Busse. Center: prominent neo-Nazis from the NPD and Kameradschaften scene and Wulff with swastika flag. On the right side of the photo is the Passau Police Commissioner, Alois Mannichl, who ordered Wulff's arrest. Right: Wulff and police officer.²⁸

Some comradeships, such as Comradeship South, Kameradschaft Oberhavel, and Skinheads Sächsische Schweiz (Skinheads of Saxon Switzerland), have been banned by the courts. In 2000, the Blood and Honor Division Deutschland and White Youth were outlawed on account of their anti-constitutional and “anti-international understanding” stance. Nine years later, Heimattreue Deutsche Jugend (German Youth Faithful to the Homeland) likewise was outlawed for its militant, aggressive opposition to the constitutional order. After the existence of the “National Socialist Underground” came to light, a wave of bans ensued in several states in 2012; for example, Nationale Widerstand Dortmund (National Resistance Dortmund) was banned in North Rhine-Westphalia.²⁹ If one

28 The Police Commissioner for the City of Passau, Alois Mannichl, ordered the arrest of Thomas Wulff for placing the German Reich swastika flag on the coffin. Later the flag was removed and entered into evidence. Neo-Nazis proceeded to target Mannichl for abuse. In December, 2008, Mannichl was the victim of a violent attack. In his testimony he reported that the attacker said, “You will never trample on the graves of our comrades.” To this day the case has not been solved. Contrary to the obvious conclusion that the crime could have had right-wing motives, Bavarian authorities quickly announced to the press their suspicion (which proved to be groundless) that the assault might have been committed by a member of Mannichl's family. Cf. “Theorie der Beziehungstat: Nach Attacke auf Mannichl” in *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, May 17, 2010, available at <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/bayern/nach-attacke-auf-mannichl-jetzt-auch-noch-spottfigur-nummer--1.410229-2> (last accessed January 30, 2013).

29 Hans-Peter Killguss, Hendrik Puls, Heiko Klare, and Michael Sturm, “Verbote von Neonazi-Kameradschaften: Jahresrückblick 2012 aus Nordrhein-Westfalen,” December 25, 2012. Cf. <http://www.netz-gegen-nazis.de/artikel/der-jahresrueckblick-2012-aus-nordrhein-westfalen-8356> (last accessed January 30, 2013).

examines the development of right-wing extremism in the Federal Republic, it becomes clear that the same people continue to operate under new but similar structures. Recently, the neo-Nazi Christian Worch founded Die Rechte (the Right), an organization that offers a political home to militant right-wing extremists. The newly formed organization has been designed as a political party and could eventually offer some competition to the NPD or even replace it, if that party should be banned.

1.3 The “National Socialist Underground” (NSU)

Right-wing terrorism is nothing new in the history of the Federal Republic of Germany. It has never been easy to arrest and convict the perpetrators of right-wing terrorist acts or even to offer an objective analysis of their enabling structures, as became clear in two incidents that occurred in Bavaria: the 1980 Levin-Poeschke murder in Erlangen and the attack on the Oktoberfest in Munich in the same year.³⁰

On November 4, 2011, the police were looking for thieves who had stolen 70,000 euros from a savings-and-loan bank branch in Eisenach, Thuringia. Acting on tips from the public, they traced the robbers to a rented mobile home, where the pair (allegedly) shot themselves before they could be taken into custody. The suspects, Uwe Mundlos and Uwe Böhnhardt, belonged to the previously unknown “National Socialist Underground”, evidence of which was provided by the weapons and by confession videos found in the dwelling.

The group, made up of neo-Nazis who were drawn together around the time of German reunification, had been active for about a decade, killing at least ten people, including nine individuals with immigrant backgrounds and one police woman. The apparent purpose of the executions

30 Cf. Fabian Virchow, “Levin-Poeschke-Mord (1980),” in Wolfgang Benz (ed.), *Handbuch des Antisemitismus: Judenfeindschaft in Geschichte und Gegenwart, Ereignisse, Dekrete, Kontroversen, Volume 4* (Berlin and Boston: de Gruyter / Saur, 2011), p. 232 ff.

was to spread fear and terror among the target populations. The NSU also committed assault and battery against many others, including passers-by in multicultural cities and at least one police officer;³¹ carried out bomb attacks (two or more in Cologne); and robbed a minimum of fifteen banks and one food discounter. The terrorists used the stolen money to finance a range of neo-Nazi activities. For example, they produced an anti-Semitic Monopoly game (“Pogromly”) and a film glorifying violence. The Federal Prosecutor General is currently conducting preliminary investigative proceedings against the NSU for the formation and financing of a terrorist organization (see Exhibit 3, below).

NSU-Film

Exhibit 3



Source: © YouTube

An accomplice of Mundlos and Böhnhardt, Beate Zschäpe, is in custody after attempting to destroy evidence by setting fire to the home they shared. She turned herself in to the police.³² Her trial, which began on April 17, 2013³³, is being held before the State Security Senate of the Munich Higher Regional Court as this book is going to press. According to the Code of Criminal Procedure, the trial venue must be in one of the federal states in which the NSU crimes were committed, and five of the ten murders occurred in Bavaria.

31 The first murder was committed in 2000, and the last in 2007.

32 For a list of other persons arrested in connection with these crimes, cf. <http://nsu-watch.apa-biz.de/zeitleiste/> (last accessed January 30, 2013).

33 Has been postponed

The trend in right-wing extremism since the 1990s has been toward greater radicalism and militancy. The evidence suggests that militant right-wing extremism involves not just a few individuals acting on their own, but a complex network. A case in point is furnished by an audio recording of a 2007 conversation in which two prominent neo-Nazis, Thorsten Heise (see section 1.2) and Tino Brandt, are evidently discussing the plight of Zschäpke, Mundlos, and Böhnhardt with a third person. Over the course of that conversation, the participants indicate that the men are living underground and that money intended to have been sent to the trio might have gone missing.³⁴ It is noteworthy that the acts committed by the NSU seemed to have been familiar within the extreme right-wing community generally, even beyond those small circles and prior to the ensuing public debate. One can confirm this observation by examining far-right publications and musical texts. For example, in the summer of 2010, the group called Gigi und die braunen Stadtmusikanten (Gigi and the Brown Town Musicians) issued a CD entitled *“Adolf Hitler lebt”* (*“Adolf Hitler Lives”*),³⁵ which contains the song *“Döner Killer”* (*“Kebab Killer”*). The song praises the crimes committed by the NSU, as the following lyrics demonstrate:

*Nine times he has done it now.
The SoKo Bosphorus³⁶ sounds the alarm.
The investigators are under pressure.
A bloody trail and no one stops
The phantom.*

34 See the analysis of the audio tapes stored at the Federal Criminal Office (BKA) since May of 2009. Their existence was not revealed by the BKA in the NSU debate, but rather was discovered by chance in December of 2012, when members of the investigation committee searched through the files. Cf. the report and request by Petra Pau in the NSU investigation committee of the German Bundestag on November 29, 2012 (reference: MAT_A_BKA_2-46, Bl. 113-117). Cf. also the decision by the investigation committee regarding this matter, available at <http://www.bundestag.de/bundestag/ausschuesse17/ua/2untersuchungsausschuss/beweisbeschluesse/20121213/GBA-012.pdf> (last accessed January 30, 2013).

35 This CD was banned.

36 This was the name of the special commission was called that carried out investigations following the murder of people with a foreign family history.

*They are going crazy because they can't find him.
He comes, he kills and he disappears.
More exciting than any thriller,
They are hunting the kebab killer.
Nine times he has brutally killed,
But his joy of killing is not yet satisfied.
Profilers await the next murder.
The question is only when and where.*

Similarly, another band associated with the Thüringer Heimatschutz (Thuringian Home Guard) sings sympathetically about the three wanted neo-Nazis going into hiding:

*You probably had no choice. [...]
You probably can't go back now. [...]
The Kameradschaft will carry on. [...]
The struggle continues, for our German fatherland!³⁷*

Among neo-Nazis, there were numerous references to and indications of approval for the terror network, not only during the period when the NSU trio was murdering and robbing people, but even after their crimes were discovered. Clothing bearing the words “Killerdöner nach Thüringer Art” (“Kebab killers/ the Thuringian way”) was popular, and the Pink Panther cartoon character and song, both of which were featured in the NSU DVD, were common reference points.³⁸ Approval for the NSU was also chanted at far-right concerts and demonstrations and expressed on the Internet.³⁹

37 The song, from the band called Eichenlaub, was entitled “5. Februar” (“5th of February”), referring to the date when the killers presumably went into hiding.

38 Even before the existence of the NSU was uncovered by the police, the cartoon character was a mascot for neo-Nazis; for example, a former member of the Saxony Parliament, Peter Klose, displayed the Pink Panther on his Facebook site. Following the public debate about the NSU, the Pink Panther song was played to promote solidarity at, among other events, a neo-Nazi demonstration in Munich. After legal action was taken, this practice declined, at least in public settings.

39 Cf. for example the “2011 Annual Report on the Protection of the Constitution,” p. 63.

Closely linked to militant neo-Nazi activity is a wide array of subcultural paraphernalia consisting of music, codes, clothing, and fashionable accessories designed to appeal to frustrated, protest-oriented, racist, and authoritarian-influenced youth. Neo-Nazi groups also sponsor a variety of far-right recreational events, such as concerts, which are especially attractive to young sympathizers and supporters. At these events, they often raise chants and shouts against people stigmatized as “foreign” as well as against “the system of the Federal Republic of Germany.” “Sieg Heil” chanting and the Hitler and Kühnen salutes⁴⁰ are the norm.⁴¹ The spread of far-right music is reflected in the growing number of right-wing concerts and bands (178 in 2011, as compared to 165 in 2010).⁴² The quality of this music has improved in recent years and also has become more sophisticated, ranging from rock to National Socialist hate-core, black metal, and sentimental ballads. Popular far-right bands include Die Lunikoff Verschwörung (The Lunikoff Conspiracy), Faustrecht (Fist Law), and Feuer & Flamme (Fire & Flame).⁴³

It is difficult to estimate the number of young people who participate in the far-right subculture or can be described as subculturally-influenced right-wing extremists. The assumption that they are “becoming less significant” simply because the traditional skinhead look is currently unpopular ignores the ability of subcultures to change.⁴⁴ The comparatively inconspicuous outfits favored today by right-wing extremists manage to

40 The Kühnen salute was introduced by the late neo-Nazi Michael Kühnen as an alternative to the banned Hitler salute; it consists of an outstretched right arm, with thumb, index finger, and middle finger spread apart, and other fingers bent, so as to form a “W” for “Widerstand,” or “resistance”. This salute is also banned today, and those who perform it face criminal prosecution.

41 A vivid insight is provided by the film “Blut muss fließen,” or “Blood Must Flow,” by Thomas Kuban (directed by Peter Ohlendorf) and the book of the same name.

42 “2011 Annual Report on the Protection of the Constitution,” p. 109

43 Cf. Britta Schellenberg, *Demokratie und Rechtsextremismus: Auseinandersetzung mit rechtsextremer Musik* (Schwalbach: Wochenschau Verlag, 2011).

44 Regarding this assessment and reasoning, see the “2011 Annual Report on the Protection of the Constitution,” p. 65 ff. The term “subculture” may have been used arbitrarily and in ways not common in social scientific research.

communicate their sympathies unambiguously to insiders, even while escaping the notice of others. Today's typical far-right garb includes dark T-shirts and hoodies, trainers, shirts bearing rather obscure far-right names, codes, and symbols, and certain clothing brands, such as Thor Steinar and Consdale. Far-right codes (such as the number 88, which indicates the letters "HH," standing for "Heil Hitler") can be found on road signs, subway stations, the walls of homes, and the belongings of young people who are otherwise not obviously adherents of the far right.

More recent forms of neo-Nazi action are demonstrations by the Unsterblichen (the Immortals), a modern version of the Ku Klux Klan, and SS parades. The Immortals – neo-Nazis wearing costumes with white masks and black clothing – march at night with torches through (empty) streets. These torchlight parades, which are recorded, create a powerful visual aesthetic. Through them, the neo-Nazis seek to demonstrate strength and touch the emotions of viewers on the Internet. This shows that the virtual world is gaining importance vis-à-vis activities in the real world. The message of these virtual appearances is short and, by directly addressing the individual sitting in front of a computer, ties in with user fantasies in the digital gaming world, "so that posterity does not forget that you were a German" (slogan used by the Immortals on their YouTube video). Relevant activities can be viewed on neo-Nazi blogs, and on YouTube, at any time and by anyone.

The Web is indeed becoming more and more central as a means of communication and information in the far-right milieu. In 2011 the German jugendschutz.net documented 1,671 far-right websites.⁴⁵ Neo-Nazi groups in North Rhine-Westphalia, Bavaria, and Lower Saxony were particularly active. Social media such as Facebook, YouTube, and the microblogging

45 Among far-right websites, 391 were associated with neo-Nazi comradeships, 63 were associated with groups of Autonomous Nationalists, and 52 served specifically to mobilize certain campaigns or right-wing events.

service Twitter were also highly frequented.⁴⁶ The German section of the far-right Internet portal *Altermedia*, after having been blocked temporarily, has since become an important source of information and communication for the neo-Nazis. The far right typically uses the Internet for simple political campaigns; for example, after the NSU murders were discovered, banners appeared on websites with the message, “We are not terrorists.” The ambivalence of the statement is typical of German neo-Nazism at the beginning of the 21st century. It emphasizes, according to one interpretation, that neo-Nazis do not see themselves as terrorists, but as defenders of German national identity against all threats to it, including the Federal Republic itself. The NSU murders were therefore not acts of terrorism, but of liberation. According to another interpretation of the statement, accusations of murder and terrorism are regarded by right-wing extremists as baseless attacks by enemies. This dismissal of evidence ties in with the classic *modus operandi* of neo-Nazis: denying guilt, adopting the role of victims, and spreading conspiracy theories. In this self-serving interpretation, evil forces falsely accuse the neo-Nazis of terrorism in order to deal a fatal blow to the “national German.” Thus, the ambivalence of the statement makes it possible to reinforce insiders’ support while making the far right seem innocuous to the wider public and proclaiming innocence under German Federal criminal law.

Finally, far-right websites often include a page in which the names and photos of “enemies” of neo-Nazis are published (see Exhibit 4, below). Hatred against Jews, in some cases personified and illustrated, is also a particular feature of neo-Nazi websites.⁴⁷

46 Jugendschutz.net (ed.), “Rechtsextremismus online: Beobachten und nachhaltig bekämpfen,” in *Bericht über Recherchen und Maßnahmen im Jahr 2011* (Mainz: 2012; Stefan Glaser responsible for content), available at <http://www.hass-im-netz.info/fileadmin/dateien/pk2012/bericht2011.pdf> (last accessed January 30, 2013). [Review of telemedia presentations by Jugendschutz.net on behalf of the Supreme State Youth Authorities]

47 Cf. Britta Schellenberg, “Neo-Nazi Blogs,” in Wolfgang Benz (ed.), *Handbuch des Antisemitismus: Judenfeindschaft in Geschichte und Gegenwart, Volume 6* (Berlin and Boston: de Gruyter/Saur, forthcoming).



Anti-Antifa video threatening Rainer Sauer, the secretary of the labor union ver.di, who founded a citizens' initiative against right-wing extremism.⁴⁸

2. Violence, criminal acts, and victims

Since the revolution in 1989, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the dissolution of the German Democratic Republic, the number of far-right criminal and violent acts has increased dramatically. The death toll caused by far-right violence has reached at least 149; meanwhile, there have been a much larger number of injuries both physical and psychological, many of them severe. These often-deadly attacks underline the capacity of the far right to inflict grievous harm disproportionate to the meager electoral support that it has garnered. In October, 2012 the Federal Minister of the Interior Hans-Peter Friedrich (of the CSU) declared to the press that, in addition to the three known NSU affiliates who had gone on the lam to avoid capture, there were open arrest warrants for 100 other right-wing extremists in hiding. Shortly afterwards this statement was corrected by a staff member, who said that there were “only” 18 right-wing extremists in hiding, which is of course still not a negligible number.⁴⁹

48 The video, which appeared on YouTube in 2008, since has been deleted. Cf. Heike Kleffner, “Neo-Nazi Threat Videos on YouTube,” May 18, 2008, available at <http://www.netz-gegen-nazis.de/artikel/neonazi-drohvideos-bei-youtube> (last accessed January 30, 2013).

49 “‘110 untergetauchte Rechtsextreme’: Minister Friedrich bauschte Nazi-Meldung auf,” in *Der Spiegel*, October 28, 2012, available at <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/untergetauchte-rechtsextreme-innenminister-friedrich-trug-dick-auf-a-863838.html> (last accessed January 30, 2013).

In 2011, 16,873 politically motivated right-wing crimes were counted. The vast majority of these (11,475) were propaganda crimes. These include activities like the use of anti-constitutional symbols, the banning of which is generally regarded as a unique characteristic of “militant” German democracy and which therefore was not considered prosecutable at the European level.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, compared to the rest of Western Europe, cases of coercion or threat (128) and damage to property (1,377) are also relatively numerous. In addition, there have been 1,065 cases of so-called *Volksverhetzung* (“incitement of the people”), including incitement to racial hatred, which is a disproportionately high figure.⁵¹ All told, a far-right crime is recorded almost once every hour in the Federal Republic.

According to the Annual Report on the Protection of the Constitution, an average of 2.7 politically motivated acts of right-wing violence were committed daily in 2011 (for a total of 828, of which 755 were attributed to people with extremist backgrounds). In that same year, approximately one person per day was injured due to “xenophobic motives” (338). Compared to 2010, both “xenophobic violence” and violence against “political enemies” who were not (alleged) “left-wing extremists” increased. These offenses primarily involved the commission of bodily harm. A murder attempt was registered almost every other month.⁵²

Human rights organizations and victim advice centers complain that there is a significant discrepancy between government data on “politically motivated far-right” violence and “crimes of prejudice” and data emanating from non-governmental organizations. These differences are particularly controversial when it comes to the number of deaths. The German government had registered 48 murders since 1990, which it corrected to 58 following the February, 2012 discovery of the NSU murders. But

50 Cf. Britta Schellenberg, “Strategien gegen Rechtsextremismus in Deutschland, Analyse der Gesetzgebung und Umsetzung des Rechts,” C-A-P Analyse, February, 2008, p. 10 ff., available at <http://www.cap-lmu.de/publikationen/2008/cap-analyse-2008-02.php> (last accessed January 30, 2013).

51 “2011 Annual Report on the Protection of the Constitution,” p. 35 ff.

52 “2011 Annual Report on the Protection of the Constitution,” p. 35 ff. Obviously, crimes that have been reported subsequently and those that have not been reported or recorded at all are not considered here.

journalists from the *Tagesspiegel*, *Frankfurter Rundschau*, and *ZEIT* newspapers and representatives of victim advice centers have recorded 149 fatalities of “far-right violence” since 1990,⁵³ and the Amadeu Antonio Foundation gives the even higher figure of 182 fatalities.⁵⁴ International institutions criticize Germany for its recording and handling of relevant victim figures. They point out that crimes of prejudice, and in particular racist acts, are often ignored by official bodies, usually because the perpetrators could not be assigned to a far-right group and therefore the relevant act was not recorded as racist.⁵⁵ However, even if – contrary to the advice of experts – the official figures are used, the number of fatalities and victims of violence remains alarmingly high (see Exhibit 5).⁵⁶

53 Frank Jansen, Johannes Radke, Heike Kleffner, and Toralf Straud, “149 Todesopfer rechter Gewalt,” *Tagesspiegel* (May 31, 2012), available at <http://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/todesopfer-rechter-gewalt/> (last accessed January 30, 2013)

54 Aslan Erkol and Nora Winter, “182 Todesopfer rechtsextremer und rassistischer Gewalt seit 1990,” *Mut Gegen Rechte Gewalt* (November 23, 2011), available at <https://www.mut-gegen-rechte-gewalt.de/news/chronik-der-gewalt/todesopfer-rechtsextremer-und-rassistischer-gewalt-seit-1990> (last accessed January 30, 2013)

55 International institutions and human rights organizations also chastise German authorities for their unwillingness to solve “politically motivated right-wing crimes,” and charge that the personnel assigned to such cases often lack a basic understanding of human rights. One can detect insensitivity to unequal treatment in police publications with discriminatory content (for example, against the Roma) and in situations involving the abuse of people in police custody. See “ECRI Report on Germany: Fourth Monitoring Cycle” (Strasbourg: ECRI, 2009), available at http://hudoc.ecri.coe.int/XML/ecri/ENGLISH/Cycle_04/04_CbC_eng/DEU-CbC-IV-2009-019-ENG.pdf (last accessed January 30, 2013), pp. 30, 44 ff; and “Täter Unbekannt: Mangelnde Aufklärung von mutmaßlichen Misshandlungen durch die Polizei in Deutschland” (Berlin: Amnesty International, 2010), available at <http://www.amnesty-polizei.de/d/wp-content/uploads/Polizeibericht-Deutschland-2010.pdf> (last accessed January 30, 2013).

56 Against this background, an objective observer can only be astonished by the current “extremism” debate in Germany. The threat-level posed by “right-wing extremism” is often described as being on a par with those associated with “left-wing extremism” and “foreigner extremism/fundamentalist Islamism.” In the “Reports on the Protection of the Constitution,” other forms of extremism, depending on the federal state, are given approximately the same amount of space as “right-wing extremism.” But there would be no point in searching for fatalities of left-wing extremists or fundamentalist Islamists in Germany in the same period, as there have not been any. Although the Red Army Fraction, a left-wing group, is still blamed for one murder in 1991, the culprit was never caught, so this matter remains controversial. How such problems of perception can arise is described in detail by Britta Schellenberg, “Strategien gegen Rechts-extremismus und Vorurteils kriminalität – für Pluralismus und liberale Demokratie in Deutschland. Was muss getan werden, um den Nationalsozialistischen Untergrund und seine Ideologie erfolgreich zu bekämpfen?” in Manuela Glaab and Karl-Rudolf Korte (eds.), *Angewandte Politikforschung* (Wiesbaden: Springer VS für Sozialwissenschaften, 2012), pp. 419–429.

3. Enabling structures

German right-wing extremism in recent decades appears to be innovative and flexible (except where its ideological framework is concerned). The extent of far-right violence in Germany and its consistency since 1990 are astonishing, particularly since German legislation on the subject has not kept up with the times, and because the general public usually ignores the whole matter.⁵⁷ Ever since the existence of the NSU became public knowledge, there have been repeated, vigorous, often renewed calls for a deeper investigation into the enabling structures of German right-wing extremism.

3.1 Social change and the attractiveness of the radical right

Social and demographic changes have provoked considerable anxiety among many people in the Federal Republic. The collapse of East Germany and with it the destruction of values and authorities accepted as legitimate, or at least adhered to for opportunistic reasons, also posed a particular challenge for the people in East Germany, above all for youths searching for an identity.

Many Germans, especially those who reside in the former Democratic Republic, are ambivalent about the social and economic changes that have taken place before and after the turn of the century. While some people have profited from the opportunities ushered in by the information age and globalization, others fear that they will be left behind. This fear is well founded, as almost a quarter of current school dropouts have poor verbal and quantitative skills and an equally poor grasp of the natural sciences, and therefore find it difficult to deal successfully with the realities of everyday life. They may also lack even the basic prerequisites for vocational training. Against the background of these figures, there is a hard core of so-called “unemployable people” who have

57 For an in-depth discussion, see Schellenberg, “Die Radikale Rechte in Deutschland,” op. cit.

practically no chance of ever finding a steady job.⁵⁸ An increasing number of citizens not only are feeling insecure about their personal future, but also are suffering significant economic losses and a concomitant loss of prestige.⁵⁹

An analysis of the last Bundestag election, in which the NPD obtained 1.5 % of the votes cast, reveals that the far right achieves its maximum success in areas having a low proportion of foreigners. Other analyses of the attitudes of NPD voters yield similar results. The party's supporters mostly have a "mittlere Reife" (intermediate level) school certificate and are often apprentices, industrial workers, or (less commonly) unemployed. A further characteristic is that it is primarily young men who vote for far-right parties.⁶⁰ In the last Bundestag election, almost 10 % of men in the 18–24 age group and 8 % of men aged 25–34 voted for the NPD. The key reasons they gave for supporting the party were concerns about "foreigners," about "internal security," and about "criminality." Hardly any of them mentioned the "job market," "social equality," or "foreign policy." The data show that the far-right rank-and-file were primarily people with comparatively difficult or uncertain living and working conditions.⁶¹

From a regional perspective, the far right is most successful in rural, structurally weak areas of eastern Germany, which are distinguished by a rapid depopulation and high unemployment. Strikingly, the NPD wins

58 For the results of comparative studies on education see Britta Schellenberg, "Integration ist Integration. Deutschlands Einwanderungspolitik: Bildung ist der erste Schritt," in *Internationale Politik*, Volume 61, Number 11 (November, 2006), pp. 90–96; here: p. 94.

59 Right-wing extremism does indeed correlate with certain structural data. But these data furnish little more than a starting point for explaining the phenomenon and of course do not reflect any essential characteristics. What is needed here is an interpretation of the data offering explanations from multiple viewpoints and featuring a multi-dimensional analysis.

60 In contrast, the older a person is, the more likely it is that he or she will hold far-right ideologies.

61 Cf. Stöss, "Rechtsextremismus im Wandel", op. cit., p. 90 ff.; cf. also Schellenberg, *Die Radikale Rechte in Deutschland*, op. cit.

relatively few, if any, votes in areas where the population is growing. Far-right attitudes are also more likely to thrive in sparsely populated areas than in major cities.⁶² Recent studies have investigated the spread of right-wing extremism at the local level in Germany. According to Dierk Borstel, “various regional analyses [...] provide clear indications of far-right structures being more firmly rooted in rural areas and small-towns” and confirm the growing acceptance of the citizens there for phenomena associated with the far-right parties and organizations.⁶³ In 2005, the journalist Toralf Staud wrote of an everyday cultural dominance of far-right ideology in parts of rural eastern Germany, referring to this phenomenon as the “fascistization of the East German province.”⁶⁴ In my doctoral dissertation I traced the development of far-right hegemony at the local level, and found that the crucial variable is the unique population structure of rural areas that have been greatly affected by demographic change. Such places tend to have relatively few immigrants, many older people, considerable out-migration, and an abundance of young men who have been left behind without any real prospects. But right-wing dominance is also solidified by certain decisions made by local politicians (e.g., downplaying the phenomenon) and investigative and security authorities (e.g., reversing the roles of perpetrator and victim) as well as agitation by the far right itself.⁶⁵ The far right opposes anything that supposedly comes from outside (including the federal government, West Germans,⁶⁶ the media, foreigners, immigrants, Jews, and leftists) and uses East-West sensitivities in its scapegoating

62 Stöss, *Rechtsextremismus im Wandel*, op. cit., p. 90 ff.

63 Dierk Borstel, “Der immergleiche braune Sumpf? Neuere Entwicklungen der rechtsextremen Szene,” in Jan Philip Albrecht, Member of the European Parliament (ed.), *Strategien gegen Rechtsextremismus* (Berlin: Die Grünen/Europäische Freie Allianz, 2010), pp. 9–20; here: p. 16. Cf. http://janalbrecht.eu/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/20100615_strategien_GE_final04-web.pdf (last accessed August 30, 2010)

64 Staud, *Moderne Nazis*, op. cit.

65 Cf. Schellenberg, *Die Rechtsextremismus-Debatte*, op. cit.

66 Interestingly, the agitation against West Germans, who are transformed into “Federal Republicans,” often takes place in areas of East Germany where right-wing extremism, spearheaded by West Germans, has become widespread.

efforts. In this discourse, “outsiders” are seen as aggressors and referred to as “un-German.”⁶⁷ Against this background, far-right no-go areas and hegemonies are burgeoning in some parts of Germany.⁶⁸

3.2 The wrong approach? Problem actors: investigative and security authorities

The spread of German right-wing extremism and the dire consequences it may entail point to something deeper than merely the strategic inventiveness of its advocates. The innovative restructuring of the scene towards a strongly subculture-oriented movement that, whenever possible, forgoes fixed and registered organizational structures is also a reaction to the repressive state instruments used against neo-Nazi groups and activities.⁶⁹ In essence, right-wing extremists were forced into having barebones organizations. Nevertheless, both the far right’s criminal offenses and the individuals who commit them have remained fairly constant over time. The failure of authorities consistently to prosecute the real criminals and to prevent the commission of criminal acts points not only to the fact that far-right groups are often unregistered; it also points to massive weaknesses in the German security apparatus as such.

67 Schellenberg, “Rechtsextremismus” und “Fremdenfeindlichkeit,” op. cit.

68 Electoral success is not the only indication of the racist character of far-right sentiment. One must also look at the well being of people who are potential victims of far-right violence. Victims’ initiative groups complain about a climate of far-right violence in some areas and the tacit approval of violent acts among members of the local population. In some cases, the victims of far-right violence are unable to enlist any support in their municipalities and feel inhibited about publicly discussing racism and extremism. Cf. Britta Grell, Timm Köhler, Rafał Pankowski, Natalia Sineva, and Marcin Starnowski (eds.), *Hate Crime Monitoring and Victim Assistance in Poland and Germany* (Warsaw and Berlin: Nidjy Wiedej and Opferperspektive, 2009). Regarding no-go areas, see also Döring, *Rechtsdominierte Orte aus medialer und lokaler Perspektive*, op. cit.

69 For an in-depth account, see Britta Schellenberg, “Strategien gegen Rechtsextremismus in Deutschland: Analyse der Gesetzgebung und Umsetzung des Rechts,” C-A-P Analyse, February, 2008; available at <http://www.cap.lmu.de/download/2008/CAP-Analyse-2008-02.pdf> (last accessed January 31, 2013).

For instance, the authorities did not search within far-right circles to locate the perpetrators of the NSU murders of people of foreign descent, or even the killer of the police officer who died in conjunction with those crimes; instead, they investigated the ethnic and family circles of the victims. That mistake came as a painful shock to much of German society. There was open talk of “kebab murders,” and the special commission set up to investigate the crimes was given the problematic name, “Bosporus.” Although there already have been studies on racism among German police officers, the research on right-wing extremism has only just begun to examine the investigative and security authorities as players in the right-wing scene and their potential roles in permitting the spread of far-right no-go zones and hegemonies. Apparently, racist prejudices and agenda-setting within the law enforcement community can prevent far-right acts of violence from being recognized, strengthen far-right interpretations of the world in public debates, and ultimately contribute to the spread of extremism at the local level.⁷⁰

It remains unclear why the authorities did not investigate right-wing circles for the perpetrators of the NSU murders and attacks; why concrete evidence of the far-right terror network was ignored; and why existing knowledge of far-right terrorism in Germany and abroad was not shared with politicians and the public.⁷¹

The parliamentary review of the failure of the security services revealed the existence of a complex set of links between those authorities and elements of the far right, as is evident in their continuing reluctance to release important information to either the parliamentary investigation

⁷⁰ Cf. Schellenberg, *Die Rechtsextremismus-Debatte*, op. cit.

⁷¹ They may have been in the possession of the German secret services, which played no part in their ultimate disclosure. But in any case one has the impression that the authorities do not wish the extent of the problem to become widely known. This is the only plausible explanation for the shredder affairs and the concealment of relevant material.

committees⁷² or the public at large. It also came to light that the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution and some of its counterparts at the state level had been shredding documents that contained relevant material on right-wing extremism before they could be read by members of the investigative committee or used by the Federal Prosecutor General.⁷³ This “shredder affair” certainly provides food for thought, since we find that German security authorities themselves have been complicit in destroying files, including those on people suspected of being affiliated with the NSU. Some of the files concern recruitment activities in the early 1990s, including suspected recruitment attempts or possible employment relationships of the NSU trio that went into hiding and other persons from the NSU scene (including files on confidential informers in Thuringia). Also shredded were various files, the content and subject of which, as well as their connection with the NSU, are now virtually impossible to reconstruct (including files on what is known as “Operation Rennsteig”⁷⁴). The fact that the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution paid right-wing extremists as informers is undisputed; the obvious suspicion that right-wing extremists associated with the NSU (e.g., the above mentioned Tino Brandt) worked as confidential informers and helped shape the fate of internal security in Germany has been confirmed. The suspicion that this did not just concern a few individuals, but that the links between the security authorities and the NSU network are multi-layered, is supported by information discovered

72 To date, these have been established in the Bundestag as well as in Berlin, Saxony, Bavaria, and Thuringia.

73 These incidents helped unearth the fact that the authorities had been destroying files connected to the NSU and right-wing extremism after the NSU investigation committees had been set up. A so-called “Vernichtungserlass” (decree to destroy the files) was apparently issued by the Federal Ministry of the Interior on November 14, 2011. Six G10 files were subsequently destroyed. These included file AO2023, consisting of records of extensive wiretapping measures against Thomas S. and other B&H members in Saxony. B&H is a neo-Nazi network in the far-right music scene that was banned in Germany in 2000.

74 “Operation Rennstein” was an attempt by the secret services to gather information on right-wing extremist activity in Thuringia and Bavaria. It also involved the use of confidential informers associated with the far-right Thüringer Heimatschutz (Thuringian Home Guard), to which the NSU trio in hiding had previously belonged.

by members of the parliamentary investigation committees in files that escaped the authorities' shredder.⁷⁵

One example drawn from the day-to-day work of the Bundestag committee investigating the NSU may reveal the deeper reasons why officials of the German security apparatus shredded documents and looked in the wrong places for murderers. Evidently, their prejudices affected the ways in which they perceived the evidence before them. During hearings on these matters, Dr. August Hanning, former President of the Federal Intelligence Service and responsible (from 2005 to 2009) as State Secretary for the area of "right-wing extremism" in the Federal Ministry of the Interior, lashed out at those whom he believed to be his critics. The attack came near the end of the hearing, after committee chairman Sebastian Edathy posed a hypothetical question to him: whether the investigations into the murders of nine citizens with foreign family histories would have proceeded in the same way if the victims had been nine business executives. Although Hanning did not catch Edathy's point, he interjected bitterly: "If nine police officers had been murdered [instead of nine foreigners or immigrants, B.S.], you would not have set up an investigation committee." He seemed to be insinuating that federal politicians did not care about (German?) police officers, but were concerned mainly about immigrants. The Bundestag members, who included deputies from all the major parties, including the FDP, CDU/CSU, SPD, Linke (the Left Party), and Bündnis 90/Die Grünen (Alliance 90/The Greens), were astonished by Hanning's emotional outburst.⁷⁶ And, indeed, his reply is quite telling. Could the world-views of the very leaders responsible for combating extremism and terror be responsible, at least in part, for the

75 The reference here is to the case of Tino Brandt, head of the neo-Nazi alliance Thuringian Home Guard and confidential informant of the Thuringia Office for the Protection of the Constitution. It has also now been proved that the Military Counterintelligence Service at least had tried to recruit Mundlos and kept a file on him. According to statements by Thuringian witnesses testifying in front of the Bundestag investigation committee, the Thuringia Office for the Protection of the Constitution wanted to recruit Zschäpe, but did not do so because she was a drug addict.

76 Public session of the Bundestag NSU investigation committee on November 29, 2012

fact that right-wing extremism is neither being effectively combated nor even being recognized for what it is?⁷⁷

The increasingly apparent disastrous state of affairs in the right-wing extremism section of the security services has led to the removal of key personnel from office. The grounds for dismissal are dereliction of duty in office both by those individuals themselves and by the authorities generally in connection with the NSU case and the subsequent review of its handling. The list of individuals who have resigned, been transferred, or forced into early retirement includes Heinz Fromm (President of the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution), Alexander Eisvogel (Vice President of the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution), Thomas Sippel (Thuringia Office for the Protection of the Constitution), Reinhard Boos (Saxony Office for the Protection of the Constitution), Volker Limberg (Saxony-Anhalt Office for the Protection of the Constitution), Claudia Schmid (Berlin Office for the Protection of the Constitution), Mathilde Koller (North Rhine-Westphalia Office for the Protection of the Constitution) and Karl-Heinz Brüsselbach (Military Counterintelligence Service).⁷⁸ But who will be next,⁷⁹ and what lessons can be learned from this debacle? Recent research,⁸⁰ supported by the findings of the NSU investigation committees themselves, suggests that one reason for the spread of militant right-wing extremism must be sought in the problematic attitude of the investigative and security authorities charged with its suppression. Within both the government and the general public, there

77 The fact that at least one police officer was a victim of the NSU is no coincidence; police officers who enforce law and order are also enemies of the far right.

78 For no apparent reason, the Chief of the Federal Police and his two deputies were removed from their posts. The Chief of the Federal Police has been replaced by a department head from the Ministry of the Interior, the Federal Ministry led by CSU Minister Friedrich. However, Jörg Zierck the head of the Bundeskriminalamt (Federal Criminal Police Office) – who, along with his organization has come in for criticism in the NSU debate – has remained in office beyond the normal retirement age. To date no successor has been found.

79 The author wonders who will follow these leading figures and how the held-over personnel can improve their performance, particularly when some seemingly determined and ambitious persons have failed to do any better.

80 See Schellenberg, *Die Rechtsextremismus-Debatte*, op. cit.

appears to be inadequate appreciation of the seriousness of the problem. On the whole, the debate over right-wing extremism has not contributed much toward elucidating the phenomenon, partly because it has induced people to see right-wing extremism in relative terms.⁸¹ For example, many citizens hold the mistaken impression that acts of extremism committed by left-wing extremists counterbalance those of right-wing extremists. Although this attribution of violence to leftist extremism is almost always unfounded, it means that the focus on specifically right-wing violence is lost because of baseless reports over-hastily issued by the security authorities.⁸² Despite widespread talk about left-wing extremists, no far-left murders or perpetrators have been identified. The authorities are even quick to attribute certain acts to global Islamic terrorism (which really does pose a threat), although here again there are often no facts to support those allegations.⁸³ This sort of fear mongering alarms the population and encourages misjudgments concerning current threats to internal security.

It should not be surprising that the review of NSU crimes and the investigation of its support network have proved to be difficult tasks. As already noted, the investigative and security authorities have done a poor job of confronting and remedying the menace of right-wing extremism. Their failure is obvious not only in the NSU fiasco, but also in the sobering tally of at least 149 deaths and thousands of injuries since 1990 that are attributable to right-wing violence. A recent statement by the Munich Re-

81 A more detailed account may be found in Britta Schellenberg, "Strategien gegen Rechtsextremismus und Vorurteils kriminalität: Was muss getan werden, um den Nationalsozialistischen Untergrund und seine Ideologie erfolgreich zu bekämpfen?" in Manuela Glaub and Karl-Rudolf Korte (eds.) *Angewandte Politikforschung: Festschrift für Werner Weidenfeld* (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2012), pp. 419–430.

82 For example, the burnings of cars and baby carriages in Berlin were quickly categorized as far-left acts, but the accusations proved to be groundless. Another example is furnished by the Bavarian Report on the Protection of the Constitution, which mentioned an initiative against right-wing extremism known as a.i.d.a. as a case of left-wing extremism. It took an absurd marathon of legal complaints to confirm once and for all that this attribution was untenable.

83 For example, in December of 2012, a bomb was placed in a purse at Bonn's Main Train Station, allegedly by Islamic terrorists. The Federal Minister of the Interior, Hans Peter Friedrich, commented that Germany is now "in the sights of Jihadi terrorism." However, if one keeps checking up on these cases as they drag on, it usually turns out that the accusations are untenable.

gional Higher Court shows how one-sided and unrealistic the world-views of the investigative and security authorities can be. In January of 2013, after the detention but before the trial of Beate Zschäpe, the woman who intended to destroy the NSU evidence in the home she shared with Mundlos and Böhnhardt, the security services claimed that the NSU no longer existed. In doing so, they arbitrarily ruled out the possibility that Zschäpe could be engaged in far-right terrorist activities.

4. The outlook

There is growing potential for social, religious, and ethnic conflict in Germany. On the one hand, the country harbors militant right-wing extremists who do not shy away from violence and murder. On the other hand, German society at large has become more cosmopolitan, diverse, and individualistic. Fewer and fewer people, particularly those who dwell in major metropolitan areas, do not have at least some foreign or immigrant ties in their families or circles of friends. In 2011, the steadily growing percentage of people with an immigrant background⁸⁴ stood at 19.5 %, or about one fifth of the population. However, there is a sharp contrast between the ethnically- diverse major cities and the rural areas, in which there are very few residents with an immigrant background. Equally important in this regard is the discrepancy between the former East German and West German federal states. The percentage of the population with an immigrant background in East Germany has fallen to 4.7 %. In addition, the statistical distribution of people with an immigrant background over different age-groups is especially eye-catching.⁸⁵ Enormous and far-reaching attitudinal differences exist, both between residents of cities and residents of rural areas and between young and old

84 The category “persons with immigrant backgrounds” includes people having least one parent who was an immigrant to, or born as a foreigner in, Germany; naturalized citizens; foreigners born in Germany; and foreign-born immigrants.

85 Although only around 6 % of the 85–95 age group have an immigrant background, the figure for the 35–39 cohort is approximately 22 %, and the figure for those under the age of 5 is 35 %. Cf. Federal Statistical Office, “Microcensus 2011” report (published September, 2012).

people, concerning respect for diversity (in a broader sense that includes, but is not exhausted by, ethnic diversity). For example, there tends to be less tolerance for independent choice of personal identities or preferences in rural areas.

In fact, at least with respect to the general population, the acceptance of plurality and individualism has increased noticeably during the past few decades.⁸⁶ Nevertheless, certain specific dimensions of misanthropic thinking, such as anti-Semitism, xenophobia, chauvinism, and Islamophobia, are quite widespread and have actually grown among some segments of the population recently.⁸⁷ Elitist far-right circles such as the weekly journal, *Junge Freiheit*, and the Internet portal, Politically Incorrect, express and attempt to disseminate racist, Islamophobic, and anti-Semitic views. Partly because of the far right's propaganda campaigns, which aim at interpretive control of certain issues or incidents, far-right leanings are becoming more prevalent in some parts of Germany. Troubling social developments, including the increasing disconnect between entire demographic groups and the benefits of the welfare state, provide favorable conditions for far-right appeals, since deprived and isolated individuals are increasingly willing to engage in simplistic scapegoating.

It also must be reiterated that the state's handling of right-wing extremism has revealed serious structural and personnel problems in its upper echelons. The top leadership in sections of the German civil service responsible for combating right-wing extremism seems woefully unaware of how grave a threat it actually is. The far right successfully exploits this confusion and ignorance, benefiting from the state's disarray to

86 Cf. Britta Schellenberg, "Die Radikale Rechte in Deutschland," op. cit. in Nora Langenbacher and Britta Schellenberg (eds.), *Europa auf dem "rechten" Weg*, op. cit., pp. 59–73, 78ff.

87 For a more in-depth account, see Schellenberg, "Die Radikale Rechte in Deutschland," op. cit., p. 70. The latest figures are found in Oliver Decker, Johannes Kiess, and Elmar Brähler, *Die Mitte im Umbruch: Rechtsextreme Einstellungen in Deutschland* (Bonn: Dietz Verlag, for the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2012).

disseminate its murderous ideology nationally and internationally and to apply it in the forms of violence and terror. Although few expect the far-right parties to achieve electoral success at the national level anytime soon, militant right-wing extremism and the accompanying violence against its enemies (foreigners, immigrants, the left, democratic politicians, democratically active citizens, journalists, police officers, internationally-operating entrepreneurs, etc.) have in no way been eliminated. Even more worrisome, the depth of the problems in the security and — to a lesser extent — the investigative authorities appear to stand in the way of overcoming right-wing extremism and terrorism in the foreseeable future.



File folders are lined up in front of the Saxony state parliament's investigating committee looking into the terror cell in Zwickau known as the NSU

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Members of the far-right Greek party, Chrysi Avgi (*Golden Dawn*) pass by the Parliament building in Athens on their motorcycles

Right-Wing Populism and Extremism: The Rapid Rise of “*Golden Dawn*” in Crisis-Ridden Greece

Vassiliki Georgiadou

Introduction: the “new normal” as persistent crisis

Greece, a parliamentary democracy since 1974 and a full member of the European Community since 1981, has long been regarded as an anchor of the status quo by the international community. This impression of Greek politics took root between 1996 and 2004, when the country’s leaders seemed committed to the “new social democracy” then in vogue elsewhere in Europe. During the new social democrats’ tenure in office under the leadership of Prime Minister Kostas Simitis (PASOK), the government embarked on a “third way” intended to modernize and Europeanize the country (Georgiadou 2002: 597–602). Greece became the twelfth member of the European Economic and Monetary Union despite the numerous obstacles that stood in its way. Its accession to the euro zone confirmed the European orientation of the Third Hellenic Republic, which was established after the collapse of the military dictatorship in 1974. It likewise signaled that Greece had undergone a “regime change” [in Greek: Μεταπολίτευση (Metapolitefsi)] characterized by the abolition of the monarchy and the reinstitution of democratic rule (Voulgaris 2001).

The Europeanization of Greece went hand in hand with the development of parliamentary democracy during the late phase of the Third Republic’s history that began when the country entered the euro zone. Starting in the 1990s, the hallmark of Greek politics was a tendency toward moderation and convergence. That tendency was evident on several fronts: the previous ideological polarization of the parties declined; the governing parties drifted towards the center of the political ideological

spectrum; and two major parties – the socialists (PASOK) and conservatives (New Democracy) – usually alternated in power. It was likewise characteristic of Greek parliamentary democracy in this period that there was no room in the political arena for far-right politics; indeed, there had not been in decades. It was the New Democracy Party (ND), rather than the far right, that managed to corral the votes of a significant number of ultranationalists, pro-monarchists, and supporters of the previous military junta (Georgiadou 2011).

In the 1980s and 1990s, when Europe's right-wing radicals and populists started to make electoral gains (Betz 1994: 3; Binder 2005), like-minded Greeks remained on the periphery of the party system. The situation in Greece started to change in 2007, just before the onset of the great financial crisis, and then shifted again more radically after that crisis struck Greece with full force between 2010 and 2012. Those years signaled the end of the era in which Greece approximated the norm of mainstream, middle-of-the-road European politics. The crisis revealed just how deeply rooted Greek right-wing extremism had become in the interim. Concealed behind the "Greek norm" was a country with high government spending and low productivity, an inefficient and non-transparent public sector, and rampant nepotism. The crisis brought latent right-wing extremist potential to the surface. Hidden under the cloak of anti-capitalist, anti-globalization rhetoric, euro-skepticism, and opposition to multiculturalism, far-right attitudes proved to have appeal across a large swath of the political spectrum. Confidence in the country's political institutions has declined so much that extreme right-wing ideology has even started to attract voters from the established parties.

In the following paper we attempt to outline the essential features of right-wing extremism in contemporary Greece. The focus of attention will be a party that belongs to the pro-Nazi, extreme right-wing camp, the People's Association – *Golden Dawn*, which until 2009 enjoyed only a marginal role in electoral politics. This party, which openly avows its support for National Socialism and has adopted symbols like the swastika and rituals like the Hitler salute, made a big leap from the margins onto center stage in the political arena of crisis-ridden Greece.

The paper is divided into three parts. Part one will summarize the important stages in the development of Greece's far right, from the 1974 regime change to the outbreak of the financial crisis in 2009. Part two will concentrate on *Golden Dawn*, examining its history, ideology, and militant political actions. Finally, part three will offer a portrait of right-wing extremist voters, including their socio-demographic profiles, political ideologies, and affiliations with far right parties.

To be sure, political parties to the right of the established conservative New Democracy are not a homogeneous family. Cas Mudde maintains that there are “fundamental differences” between right-wing extremists and radical right-wing populists. According to the definitions he proposes, right-wing radicals are democratic, although only nominally, while right-wing extremists are “in essence antidemocratic, opposing the fundamental principle of sovereignty of the people” (Mudde 2007: 31). Still, the distinction between right-wing radicals and right-wing extremists is sometimes blurry. Right-wing radicals also have a tendency to oppose “liberal democracy and its underlying values of equality and freedom as well as to fight against the categories of individualism and universalism” (Minkenberg 1998: 33). To put it differently, the radicals reject the political system, yet – paradoxically – they do not want to delegitimize the parliamentary form of government *per se* (cf. Ignazi 2010: 33). Of course, a skeptic could retort that they may be pursuing a dual strategy in an effort to blur the distinction between rejecting the system and delegitimizing it. This is a strategy that has been mastered by Italy's extreme-right *Movimento Sociale Italiano* (MSI), and the right-wing radicals of *Alleanza Nazionale* (Milza 2004: 158–160; Scharsach 2002: 120).¹ It has inspired many of their like-minded Greek counterparts, who freely cross the

1 Milza (2004: 148–180) explains the ambivalent strategy of MSI, a neo-fascist party during the post-war period that systematically used a dual strategy. On the one hand, MSI attempted to integrate itself into the political system of the First Italian Republic (“integration strategy”) and, on the other hand, to undermine this system by using political force (“intensity strategy”). *Alleanza Nazionale* behaved similarly: Under G. Fini, the party “condemned every form of totalitarianism and every racist, anti-Semitic and anti-foreigner stance,” but stood by the “fascist society model of the “national community” and championed the idea of an “organic state” (Scharsach 2002: 120–121).

boundaries between right-wing extremism and right-wing radicalism or populism. The often fuzzy image of radical right wing or extreme right wing parties in Greece's party system increases the pool of potential voters to whom rightist parties can appeal. Furthermore, it unites the members of this camp, who – despite internal antagonisms – sometimes join forces.

1. From the regime change to the onset of the crisis: the evolution of right-wing party politics in Greece

1.1 The old right-wing radicals and right-wing extremists

National Alignment [Εθνική Παράταξις (Ethniki Parataxis)] was the only anti-communist, pro-monarchist, and nationalistically-inclined organization that was able to gain a foothold in the Greek parliament alongside the conservative New Democracy Party following the collapse of the military dictatorship. But National Alignment did not develop immediately after the regime change and did not participate in the first free parliamentary elections in Greece held after 1964.² Instead, it arose a few years after the 1974 referendum³ (organized by Prime Minister Konstantinos Karamanlis, the head of New Democracy) that led to the abolition of the monarchy.⁴ In the wake of that referendum, the ultraconservative faction, which had cooperated with New Democracy since the end of the civil war in 1949, withdrew its support. National Alignment emerged from the defection of the ultraconservative movement from its erstwhile political home. It was essentially an “avenger party” that yearned to punish ND in the 1977 parliamentary elections because its chairman had taken a “neutral position” on the fate of the monarchy (Voulgaris 2001: 55).

2 For information on the party landscape in the period following the civil war in Greece up until the collapse of “cachectic” or atrophied democracy of the 1950s and 1960s, see Clogg 1987 (17 ff.) and Nikolakopoulos 2001.

3 For information on the rise of National Alignment in the summer of 1977, its founders, and its ideological profile, see Clogg 1987: (70–73)

4 Of all eligible voters, 75.5 % participated in the referendum. A total of 30.8 % voted in favor of the constitutional monarchy, a not-insignificant slice of the entire electorate.

Between 1974 and 1977, New Democracy lost over half a million voters, mainly as a result of the success of the socialist/populist Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) under Andreas Papandreou, but also, in part, due to the rise of National Alignment. The 350,000 votes captured by National Alignment in 1977 played a major role in the continued weakening of New Democracy. Although National Alignment had only five representatives in parliament, it had appealed not only to the traditional monarchists, but also to the supporters of the colonels. The royalist supporters of the junta [βασιλοχουντικοί (vasilohountikoi)]⁵ of National Alignment (Clogg 1987: 72), who were disappointed with Karamanlis, posed a new risk for the right-wing conservatives. The latter, of course, had already been under attack from PASOK on the left, but now they also faced a challenge from the right. Because ND had lost much of its electoral base of support to PASOK, it tried to improve its fortunes by drawing supporters and leading figures from the ranks of ultraconservatives back into its sphere of influence.

Hanspeter Kriesi distinguishes between two strategies adopted by the moderate right with regard to right-wing extremists: the “strategy of instrumentalization” and the “strategy of dissociation.” If “the established

Radical right-wing and extreme right-wing parties with parliamentary representation **Table 1**

Name of party	Party strength in parliamentary elections (P) and European elections (E) 1974 to 2009						
	1977 P	1981 E	1984 E	2004 E	2007 P	2009 P	2009 E
National Alignment	6.82 % (5)						
Progressive Party		1.96 % (1)					
EPEN			2.29 % (1)				
LAOS				4.1 % (1)	3.8 % (10)	5.36 % (15)	7.15% (2)

Source: Ministry of the Interior, <http://www.ypes.gr/en/Elections/>.
The number of MPs in each category is given in parentheses

5 The “vasilohountikoi” favored maintaining the monarchy in the dictatorship of the colonels.

right wing makes concessions in a few areas without engaging in explicit dialogue with right-wing extremists or even forming a coalition with them," it has chosen the "dissociation" strategy, which affords extremists "little freedom of action" to succeed in the game of party politics. If, however, the established right wing adopts the alternative strategy of "instrumentalization," the result is "not only to give more weight to extreme-right objectives but also to legitimize their leaders, organizations, and political approach and thereby strengthen their capacity to mobilize" (Kriesi 1995: 34–35). Prime Minister Konstantinos Karamanlis and his successor, Georgios Rallis, came up with a third strategy. Both of them aimed to incorporate the membership, though not the political agenda, of National Alignment into New Democracy. In doing so, they succeeded in gradually bringing about the dissolution of their ultraconservative rival. Their tactic was simple: In the 1981 parliamentary elections they placed the number two from National Alignment third on their national electoral list and put MPs and activists of National Alignment on the party lists.

The Progressive Party [Κόμμα των Προοδευτικών (Komma ton Proodeftikon)] ran candidates in both the parliamentary elections and the European elections in 1981, winning one seat in the European Parliament. It was a splinter party within the national conservative camp and its goal was to end Karamanlis' party strategy of "absorbing" the "nationally-minded" (Clogg 1987: 72). The Progressive Party did not achieve that goal, because the number of ultraconservatives who indicated they were independent (less than 2 % of the Greek electorate) was not great enough to enable the nationally minded⁶ to launch a solo party effort.

6 The Progressive Party was an old right-wing party which was founded in the 1950s as an offshoot of the right-wing conservative Greek Rally [Ελληνικός Συναγερμός (Ellinikos Synagermos)]. In 1973, its chairperson, Spyridon Markezinis, was the protagonist of the so-called "Markezinis experiment," a failed attempt at self-transformation by the military regime in a parliamentary system still controlled by the military itself. Markezinis had received instructions from the dictator Papadopoulos to call parliamentary elections that would allegedly facilitate the slow return to democracy (Georgiadou 2007: 143). But disagreements among the dictators frustrated these plans and discredited Markezinis politically.

The National Political Union [Εθνική Πολιτική Ένωση-ΕΠΕΝ (Ethniki Politiki Enosis-EPEN); hereafter referred to as EPEN] was another of the splinter groups that emerged after the disintegration of the National Alignment. The supporters and the political influence of EPEN were very minimal on the parliamentary level. However, despite winning only one seat in the European Parliament in the 1984 elections, EPEN was able to amass considerable political and ideological influence within the extreme right-wing camp. It heavily influenced the emergence of new parties on the radical right wing and extreme right wing end of the political spectrum.

EPEN emerged in 1984. As a nationalist organization nostalgic for the military regime, it demanded the release of the imprisoned colonels. The former dictator, Georgios Papadopoulos, was considered EPEN's "spiritual leader"; indeed, he announced the party's founding from prison. One of EPEN's constituent parts was a youth organization, the first head of which later became the secretary general of the right-wing extremist *Golden Dawn*.

In this section we examined three political parties: National Alignment, the Progressive Party, and the National Political Union. All played a role during the first phase of the regime change (Metapolitefsi), and according to Ignazi's typologies (1996 and 2010), all of them were political parties of the "old" or "traditional" extreme or radical right wing. Collectively, they belonged to an era that came to an end in the early to mid-1990s.

1.2 The new radical populists of the People's Orthodox Rally (LAOS)

Thirty years passed before a party to the right of New Democracy stepped into Greece's parliamentary arena again. The founding of the People's Orthodox Rally [Λαϊκός Ορθόδοξος Συναγερμός-ΛΑΟΣ (Laikos Orthodoxos Synagermos-LAOS)]⁷, an ethno-populist party of the "third wave" of

7 The abbreviation LAOS calls to mind the Greek word, λαός which means the "people." Karatzaferis always insisted that the acronym LAOS be pronounced with the emphasis on the last syllable, just like the word λαός.

right-wing extremism,⁸ came into being as a result of a change in strategy by New Democracy: namely, its decision to give up trying to “absorb” right-wing extremists. The People’s Orthodox Rally (hereafter referred to as “LAOS”) was founded in 2000 after Giorgos Karatzaferis, a right-wing conservative MP, was expelled from New Democracy by the party’s chairman, Kostas Karamanlis. Karatzaferis was accused of openly rejecting New Democracy’s centrist orientation.⁹

Starting in 2000, New Democracy set itself the goal of separating the center-right segment of the political spectrum from the right and the extreme-right fringe. The strategy of differentiation helped this economically liberal, socially conservative party to continue its move toward the ideological center, but at the price of vitiating the influence of the right. The result was to create a political vacuum that the extreme right wing and the right-wing populists sought to occupy. Although New Democracy responded to that by veering slightly rightward, its effort was half-hearted and unconvincing (Vasilopoulos and Vernardakis 2011: 4). ND was able to maintain some degree of influence on the right, but the more extreme and radical groupings managed to capture the far right segment of the political spectrum.

To summarize: in the 1970s and ‘80s, during the first wave of democratization, New Democracy pursued a strategy of absorption toward the extreme right’s political elite, whereas after 2000 it opted instead for a strategy of differentiation. As part of the former strategy, New Democracy refused to alter its political agenda to accommodate right-wing extremists.¹⁰ As part

8 For information on the three waves of right-wing extremism, see von Beyme (1988), Zimmermann and Saalfeld (1993), and Mudde (2000: 5).

9 Mavrogordatos (2005: 1027) explains what the orientation of New Democracy to the center means. He also shows that New Democracy now understands itself to be as “a party of the center,” a shift in self-classification that should free the party from the label of ultraconservatism, which PASOK gave it.

10 There were three main issues: legalizing the Communist Party, abolishing the monarchy, and imprisoning the colonels. These were controversial issues that were always a source of tension between New Democracy and the ultraconservatives.

of the latter strategy, New Democracy showed a new willingness to compromise – at least selectively – on some issues of interest to far right-wing groups, such as the controversy surrounding the name of the *Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia* (FYROM). In this case, the Prime Minister decided, just prior to the 2007 parliamentary elections, to make use of Greece's EU veto power to block its northern neighbor's entry into NATO should that country insist on using the name Macedonia alone. New Democracy thereby was able to outmaneuver the Greek ethno-populist right in the LAOS camp. But in the 2007 parliamentary elections, LAOS captured 3.8 % of the vote, sending ten MPs into the national parliament for the first time. Thereafter, the party kept increasing its share of the vote until, in the 2009 national elections, it received 5.6 % of the vote and was awarded 15 MPs. LAOS posted its best election result in the 2009 European elections, receiving 7.15 % (vs. 4.12 % in 2004) of the votes cast: the highest total that any extreme right-wing or radical right-wing party had achieved up to that point.

Ideologically, LAOS may be classified as an ethno-populist party. As noted, it made its debut in Greece's political arena a few months after the parliamentary elections in April 2000 (Ellinas 2010: 125 ff.). Founded by Giorgos Karatzaferis, the party has championed the radical right-wing principle of “national priority,”¹¹ and in line with that principle has called for the immediate deportation of all “illegal immigrants.” Furthermore, even though the party accepts free-market principles, it nonetheless has taken a stand opposing globalization, finance capital, and the power of big banks. In its first electoral manifesto, issued in 2004, LAOS proclaimed support for open militarism, irredentism, and an “expansive armaments policy” (Miliopoulos 2011: 155). Subsequently, in a 2007 manifesto, the party toned down its anti-foreigner rhetoric and deliberately softened its extreme positions on homosexuality and minority rights. It

11 For information on the radical right-wing principle of “national priority,” see, among others, Guibernau (2010: 10, 12).

also tried to disguise its anti-Semitic views and previous denial of the Holocaust.¹² Right from the outset, Karatzaferis emphasized the party's Orthodox Christian focus. Although his repeated attempts to show respect to the Greek Orthodox Church came across as grotesque, he was nevertheless able to build up a network of loyal priests and bishops while winning the trust of Archbishop Christodoulos of Athens, who headed the Orthodox Church of Greece at that time (see Miliopoulos 2011: 154).

Ambivalence and ambiguity have marked LAOS' political style. Although the party exhibits a protest mentality, it is hardly a typical protest party. Instead, it has functioned as a hub where several ideological currents of the non-establishment right wing cross paths. LAOS has harbored Neo-Nazis, right-wing extremists, and right-wing populists, as well as "*Salon-Rechte*," or socially acceptable members of the right-wing milieu (Droumpouki 2012: 367). The appearance of LAOS in the arena of party politics has created new political opportunities for the entire far right scene and filled a longstanding gap in the political spectrum. The following chart (Figure 1) presents a classification scheme for the far right-wing parties that predated the emergence of *Golden Dawn*.

Classification of Greek far right-wing parties

Figure 1



12 Earlier, on October 22, 2005, the party chairman had proclaimed a tactic of political camouflage in his private program on Teleasty (a TV station that belonged to his party): "Our political speech has to be a very processed speech.... On the one hand, denouncing and, on the other hand, simultaneously reaching out.... [We must employ both] aggressiveness and compatibility We should orchestrate some problems. In other words, we should talk about everything that concerns us" (Psarras 2010: 144).

2. Old and new right-wing extremism: *Golden Dawn* from 1980 to the present

2.1 Ideological struggles

Golden Dawn [Χρυσή Αυγή (*Chrysi Avgi*)] has existed since 1980. At first, it was the name of a journal published by a group of former members of an older, neo-fascist splinter party.¹³ The journal's founders maintained that "politics is a very dirty thing," and therefore that people should distance themselves from political activity.¹⁴ However, when a political organization known as the People's Association arose in 1983, all of the members of the journal's inner circle were involved. The party that went by the name People's Association – *Golden Dawn* was established in 1985, although it was not registered as such until 1994. That year it participated for the first time in elections.

During the party's initial phase, its goals and even its name borrowed heavily from the French group, GRECE (an acronym for "Groupement de recherche et d'études pour la civilisation Européenne," or "Research and study group on European civilization").¹⁵ Accordingly, in its 1987 statutes the Party's founding members first called their organization "*Chrysi Avgi* for the Research into and Promotion of European Civilization" (Psarras 2010: 53 f.). The similarity in wording was no accident, and it demonstrates that *Golden Dawn*'s inner circle was cognizant of contemporary

13 The older organization is the Party of August 4th, known by the abbreviation K4A, which self-declared National Socialist Kostas Plevris founded in 1965 (Psarras 2012: 35). The party glorified anti-democratic and ultranationalist ideas and dreamed of the return of the "Third Greek Civilization" of the proto-fascist dictator, Ioannis Metaxas (in power from 1936 to 1941). Its name refers to the regime of August 4, 1936, as that dictatorship is called. See Mavrogordatos (1996).

14 *Golden Dawn* 1 (1980).

15 GRECE was a circle of intellectuals under Alain de Benoist, who wanted to establish the European right as a response to the New Left and its overall societal influence in the post-war period. GRECE had imitators in Europe outside of France, and it contributed decisively to the strengthening of the extreme right-wing. See Milza (2004: 322–382) and Shields (2007: 147 ff.). For information on the New Right in various countries see Minkenberg (1998: 141–142).

developments within Europe's "New Right."¹⁶ Likewise, it is noteworthy that both GRECE and *Golden Dawn* aimed to defend European civilization from its supposed enemies (Marxism, liberalism, egalitarianism, and Christianity), a goal echoed by the editors responsible for the journal in the early years of the movement. A summary of the topics repeatedly dealt with in that periodical appears in an essay entitled "We" [Εμείς (Emeis)] from its fifth issue. Here it is openly acknowledged that the members of this circle cultivate a National Socialistic, heathen, opportunistic, fanatical, and extremist world-view.¹⁷ Updating National Socialist ideology offered an opportunity for the organization to redefine and elaborate the goals of its political practice along fascist lines. But it is still an open question whether or not *Golden Dawn* is genuinely new or merely old wine in new bottles. The answer is not a clear yes or no. The founders of *Golden Dawn* had been associated previously with the right-wing extremist camp. Nikos Michaloliakos and the other members of its inner circle were not only part of the older August 4th Party, which was dissolved in 1977, but also belonged to the National Political Union (EPEN). *Golden Dawn* cooperated from time to time with factions, parties, and individuals from across the entire right-wing extremist scene, from the Nazi, Kostas Plevris, to the right-wing populist, Giorgos Karatzaferis. This cooperation disguised the conflicts that existed between activists and organizations in that milieu, as well as the fierce power struggles that took place at all levels over ideology, activism, and political influence. It took 30 years for *Golden Dawn* to transform itself from a right-wing sect into an extremist political force.

16 In 1987, Alain de Benoist's book, *Orientations pour des années décisives*, appeared in Greek. It was published by Eleftheris Skepsis ("Free Thinking"), a press specializing in ultranationalist and extreme right-wing literature. One year later, the same press published Charles Maurras' book, *L'Avenir de l'intelligence*.

17 Chrysi Avgi 5 (1981), p. 3; available at http://xa-watch.blogspot.gr/2012/05/blog-post_03.html (last accessed on January 19, 2013)

2.2 Street Fighting

An essay written by Nikos Michaloliakos (1987), which opens with the words, “Hitler for a thousand years,” and ends with the jubilant cry of “Heil Hitler,”¹⁸ sets forth the ideological principles of the People’s Association – *Golden Dawn*. There the organization professes its unequivocal allegiance to the tenets of National Socialism (though it eschews the term “Nazism”)¹⁹ and advocates totalitarian practices. After the first party congress in 1990,²⁰ *Golden Dawn* began to organize militant direct actions. Solidarity with the regime of Slobodan Milosevic and the involvement of *Golden Dawn* volunteers in the massacre of Srebrenica were very high on the list, as a former party functionary, Charis Kousoumvrīs, recounts in his book (Kousoumvrīs 2004: 20–23).²¹ The party’s pro-Milosevic moves also included active participation in mass demonstrations in the early 1990s against the recognition of the FYROM (see Kousoumvrīs 2004: 17–19 and Psarras 2010: 63). According to Danforth (1995: 132), the role of *Golden Dawn* members in these events was intended to further the group’s declared plan to conquer that small state with force.

Thereafter, *Golden Dawn* gradually shifted the focus of its militant activity from foreign to domestic issues. Topics like immigration and crime (and the correlations between the two) soon became central within *Golden Dawn* circles. The concentration of immigrants in Athens and in the district of Attica (Georgiadou 2011: 38) heightened existing tensions between radical left-wing groups and the extreme right. The fights

18 Chrysi Avgi 13 (1987), pp. 3–5. The essay is dedicated to the death of Hitler.

19 Chrysi Avgi, 5 (1981). “We are Nazis if the language doesn’t bother you (it bothers us) ...”

20 For information on the first party congress, see Chrysi Avgi, 52 (1990). Nikos Michaloliakos, chairman of the organization since its inception, was elected to the post of secretary general in an open vote at the first party congress. He still heads the party today and is called the “chief” [Αρχηγός (Arhigos)] by *Golden Dawn* functionaries. In party documents from 1987 (see Psarras 2010: 59), the duties and powers of the chairman are detailed: The description is patterned after the National Socialist model, and indeed, in a few passages the leader is referred to as the “national socialist chief.”

21 Kousoumvrīs was third in the party hierarchy up until 2002. In his book there is photographic material to verify his claims (Kousoumvrīs 2004: 22–23).

between fascist and anti-fascist groups that had been going on since the early 1990s reached a peak in 1998. In that year, the deputy chairman of *Golden Dawn*, Antonios Androutsopoulos, criminally assaulted and severely injured a left-wing student. This was not the last in a long series of violent acts perpetrated by party members.²²

Although *Golden Dawn* opposes immigration and is hostile to the immigrants themselves, it is not a typical anti-immigrant party. Supporting the model of an ethno-culturally homogeneous state, the party defines nationality in terms of “race, blood and ancestry.”²³ In this view, immigrants endanger the racial homogeneity of the nation²⁴ and should be compelled to leave the country immediately. The party exploited the issue between 2008 and 2010, when Athens experienced a massive wave of non-registered immigrants that generated social conflict and stoked popular fears. But just two years later, when the political agenda in crisis-ridden Greece radically changed, immigration had only a secondary place on *Golden Dawn*’s political agenda. According to estimates provided by Noumta (2013), four weeks prior to the parliamentary elections on May 6, 2012, fewer than 1% of all topics on the party’s official website dealt with the issue of immigration. It was at this point that *Golden Dawn* started to establish a presence throughout Greece as a whole.

22 A complete list of the violent acts committed by Golden Dawn members can be found in Psarras 2010 (118-136). One perpetrator, Androutsopoulos, referred to as Periandros, hid for over eight years to avoid arrest, a fact that heightened suspicions about the alleged close ties between the police and Golden Dawn. In the court of original jurisdiction, Androutsopoulos had been sentenced to 21 years behind bars. On appeal, his sentence was reduced to twelve. Kousoumvris (2004: 30 ff.) also makes reference to militant acts of violence committed by Golden Dawn.

23 For the ideological positions of the organization, see <http://www.xryshaygh.com/index.php/kinima/neolaia> (last accessed January 20, 2013).

24 *The new ideological manifesto of the organization is Golden Dawn: An Ideological Movement* (Athens 2012: 12).



Several hundred people take part in an anti-fascist protest in the Ambelokipi district of Athens, Greece on February 9, 2013

In the run-up to the municipal elections of November of 2010, *Golden Dawn* – owing to its limited membership and relatively weak organization – decided to concentrate its political efforts in Athens rather than competing in races across the country. Its stronghold was located in the fourth and sixth districts of the downtown core, where large numbers of “illegal immigrants” also resided. *Golden Dawn*’s militant activities in downtown Athens helped the party to network with grassroots right-wing movements. Approximately 20 such organizations were already highly active there, and *Golden Dawn* managed to gain influence in half of them (Georgiadou and Rori, 2013). In doing so, it achieved what is known in the academic literature as forming political opportunity structures through internal offers (Mudde 2007: 256 ff.). According to Mudde (2007: 269), “recent developments seem to indicate that two aspects increase the chance of electoral persistence and even political survival [for populist radical-right parties, V. G.]: a grass-roots basis and local *Hochburgen* (strongholds).” In the case of *Golden Dawn*, both of these prerequisites were met.

3. Who voted for *Golden Dawn*, and why? Socio-demographic composition and motives of *Golden Dawn* voters

For decades, *Golden Dawn* languished on the fringes in all the campaigns in which it ran candidates. But after that long political drought, the party set a new record of success in the parliamentary elections held on May 6, 2012, one that was repeated just six weeks later, on June 17. Between the parliamentary elections of 2009 and 2012, *Golden Dawn* was able to increase its vote total from roughly 20,000 to 440,000: by any measure, a dramatic improvement. This evolution is shown in Table 2 and Figure 2.

Golden Dawn's triumph seems to be attributable to two factors: first, the massive voter shift towards parties well to the left or right of center, and second, the decline of the radical populists (LAOS), their chief competitors on the right. The parliamentary elections in May and June of 2012, a kind of “earthquake elections”, registered enormous losses for the two mainstream, centrist parties. PASOK socialists lost more than two-thirds of their voters between October, 2009 and May, 2012, while the conservatives of New Democracy lost almost half of their own. In the same time frame, the radical left bloc SYRIZA increased its election percentage by a factor of four, while the two parties to the right of New Democracy, the Independent Greeks (ANEL) and *Golden Dawn*, became respectively the fourth and sixth largest delegations in the Greek parliament.

The electoral fortunes of *Golden Dawn* since 1994

Table 2

Election year (Type of election •)	Election results		Seats won
	% of the vote	of votes	
1994 (E)	0.1	7,242	-
1996 (P)	0.07	4,487	-
1999 (E) ¹	0.75	48,532	-
2002 (K) ²	0.30	1,059	-
2004 (E) ³	0.17	10,618	-
2006 (K) ⁴	1.4	3,705	-
2009 (E)	0.46	23,609	-
2009 (P)	0.29	19,624	-
2010 (K) ⁵	5.29	10,222	1
2012/May (P)	6.97	441,018	21
2012/June (P)	6.92	425,990	18

Notes:

- The type of election is indicated in parentheses: European elections (E), parliamentary elections (P), or municipal elections (M).

1 Together with First Line (Πρώτη Γραμμή, or Proti Grammi), the party led by Konstantinos Plevris

2 Election results in the city of Athens. *Golden Dawn* supported the mayoral candidate Odysseas Tiligadas, chairman of the electoral combination, "Greek Orthodox Community – Greeks First." In the prefecture of Athens-Piraeus, *Golden Dawn* supported the candidacy of Giorgos Karatzaferis (LAOS) who, with the election merger "Clean Heart," received 13.6 % of all votes cast.

3 Together with Patriotic Alliance (Πατριωτική Συμμαχία – ΠΑΤΡΙ.Σ, or Patriotiki Symmachia – PATRI.S). PATRI.S, which means "fatherland" in Greek, was founded by functionaries of *Golden Dawn* with the leadership's approval and was its subsidiary organization until 2007.

4 Together with the Patriotic Alliance

5 Election results in the city of Athens. The mayoral candidate was N. Michaloliakos, and his electoral combination was called "Greek Dawn for Athens." Michaloliakos was elected to Athens' municipal council.


Source: Ministry of the Interior, <http://www.ypes.gr/en/Elections/>.

3.1 The prior affiliations of *Golden Dawn* voters

Golden Dawn's electoral support came primarily from citizens who previously had voted for New Democracy and PASOK – the formerly dominant centrist parties – as well as for minor parties on the right, such as LAOS. The party also received votes from newly enfranchised voters and people who had not voted in the past. Furthermore, between the May and June parliamentary elections of 2012, a small number of radical left voters realigned themselves with the right, voting for *Golden Dawn*.

The earlier political preferences of new *Golden Dawn* voters

Table 3

May, 2012 parliamentary elections			June, 2012 parliamentary elections	
New Democracy	33.9 %		5 %	New Democracy
PASOK	23.3 %		2 %	PASOK
new voters	20.9 %		6 %	new voters
LAOS	12.3 %		3 %	LAOS
other parties	9.6 %		6 %	other parties + non voters
			5 %	SYRIZA •
			7 %	ANEL ••
			64 %	Golden Dawn

Notes:

- Coalition of the radical left
- Independent Greeks, a populist-conservative offshoot of New Democracy

Source: Exit polls, Metron Analysis.

Although *Golden Dawn* attracted half of its new supporters from parties on the right of the spectrum, the other half of its newly assembled electoral base included people with different political orientations. It is remarkable that such a highly ideological party was able to draw votes from almost every position on the left-right axis. This surprising fact leads us to inquire into the motives of *Golden Dawn* voters.

3.2 The motives of *Golden Dawn* voters

The table reveals that two distinct motives pushed protest voters toward the far right: first, a backlash against governing and “establishment” political parties, and second, resentment against the memorandum in which Greek leaders agreed to impose harsh austerity measures in return for financial assistance from the “troika” (the IMF, EU Commission, and European Central Bank). In other words, protest voters who supported *Golden Dawn* did so either out of general dissatisfaction with party politics-as-usual or out of specific dissatisfaction with the memorandum itself. It is, of course, possible that the choices of some *Golden Dawn* voters were driven by both of those motives. One should also note that the spirit of protest that aided *Golden Dawn* was present not only in its electoral base, but throughout the entire electorate. That electorate, however, was split between one segment that was unalterably opposed to the memorandum and another segment approving it and favoring the formation of a strong one-party or coalition government to carry out its terms. By contrast, *Golden Dawn* voters were against both the memorandum and the formation of a government by establishment parties.

Motives of *Golden Dawn* voters and the entire electorate

Table 4

Motives	Golden Dawn voters	Entire electorate
Desire for a one-party government	8 %	39 %
Desire for a coalition government	14 %	35 %
Desire for a strong opposition	38 %	11 %
Desire to punish mainstream parties	40 %	14 %
Controversies involving the Memorandum	71 %	53 %
Controversies involving the €	47 %	29 %

Source: Exit poll, Metron Analysis.

3.3. The social and demographic profile of *Golden Dawn* voters

The data in Table 5 reveal some striking differences between *Golden Dawn* voters and the electorate at large.

They point first of all to the existence of major age and gender gaps. Over 75 % of *Golden Dawn*'s 2012 supporters were men, whereas men comprised a much smaller share of the total electorate (58 %). By contrast, women – accounting for 42 % of the total electorate – constituted just

Demographic characteristics of *Golden Dawn* voters

Table 5

Demographics	% of total <i>Golden Dawn</i> voters	% of entire sample
GENDER		
Men	76	58
Women	24	42
AGE GROUP		
18–24	15	8
25–34	25	16
35–44	24	19
45–54	18	21
55–64	11	16
65+	7	20
EDUCATION		
Lower	15	21
Intermediate	58	46
Higher	27	33
OCCUPATION		
Employer /Independent Contractor	18	14
Farmers	7	6
Public Servants	14	12
White-Collar Workers	22	21
Unemployed	16	11
Students	7	5
Pensioners	9	23
Housewives	4	7

Source: Exit poll, June 2012, Metron Analysis.

24 % of *Golden Dawn* voters, underscoring what is almost an “iron law” that more men than women are attracted to extremist parties (Falter 1994: 28). Apart from being a male-dominated group, *Golden Dawn* was also a “party of young voters” (Falter 1994: 34). The vast majority of voters aged 44 or younger cast their ballots either for *Golden Dawn* on the extreme right or for SYRIZA on the extreme left. SYRIZA was the highest vote getter in all age groups among people between 18 and 54; *Golden Dawn* came in second among all age groups in the range of 44 or younger, earning its strongest endorsement from voters between the ages of 35 to 44. For this reason, it is more appropriate to refer to a quasi-age gap.

In regard to voters’ educational profiles, exit polls revealed a similar phenomenon. Voters with only an elementary education voted at above-average rates for New Democracy and PASOK, but also for the Communist Party. Those with the highest levels of education cast their ballots predominantly for SYRIZA and the Democratic Left (DIMAR). The majority of *Golden Dawn* supporters (58%) had attained an intermediate level of education, completing high school or technical training. In fact, the party received more than 9 % of all votes cast by members of that cohort.

Turning to the matter of how different occupational groups voted, we see that housewives, farmers, students, and pensioners all kept their distance from *Golden Dawn*. White-collar workers, employers and independent contractors, the unemployed, and public servants were more likely to vote for right-wing extremists. Both the exit poll data presented above and the results of opinion surveys show that voters with precarious employment situations are more likely than the average voter to cast their ballots for parties that address their problems in a simplistic manner and systematically exploit their fears.

Conclusion: The outlook for the extreme right in Greece

In a 1992 article on Le Pen's National Front in France, Mayer and Perrineau distinguished among the party's "normal," "occasional," and "potential" voters. Those in the "normal" group voted for Le Pen's party in two consecutive elections, primarily on account of their political and ideological convictions. Those in the "occasional" group were inconsistent, voting sometimes for the party and sometimes not. The third group was made up of "potential voters" who would not categorically rule out choosing the National Front (Mayer and Perrineau 1992: 134, 137). Fieschi, Morris, and Caballero (n. d.) presented a similar typology in their study of radical right-wing voters in Europe. Differentiating among "committed," "reluctant," and "potential" radical voters (p. 32), they surmise that the last two groups comprise the majority of those who cast ballots for radical right-wing parties.



Athens – anti-fascist town" (January 2013)

Our election data are still not comprehensive enough to allow us to offer a definitive assessment of the motives that influenced voters to support *Golden Dawn*. However, initial indications show that *Golden Dawn* voters exhibit a certain degree of heterogeneity in regard to their previous partisan loyalties, socio-demographic backgrounds, and sympathy for right-wing extremism. Fewer than half of those voters report being “very close” to the party. In fact, more than a third of the extreme right-wing electorate in Greece express indifference towards the party, while one-sixth to one-fifth remain politically or ideologically remote from it, as Table 6 suggests.

It remains to be seen whether *Golden Dawn* finally has overcome its status as a “pariah” party and is in position to enter the political mainstream. The Greek party system is in the midst of a transition. For the first time since the referendum of 1974, the extreme right wing has generated a political party capable of electoral success. Whether or not *Golden Dawn* will achieve its goals depends both on the policies of the parties that adhere to the Constitution and on the preferences of the citizens themselves. That is why it is crucial to build a solid bulwark against the tide of right-wing extremism in Greece.

Committed and uncommitted *Golden Dawn* voters (in %)

Table 6

Ideological proximity to <i>Golden Dawn</i>	Parliamentary elections May 2012	Parliamentary elections, June 2012
Very close to	44	48
Neither close to nor far away from	37	37
Far away from	19	15

Source: Exit polls, May and June of 2012, Metron Analysis.

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Supporters of Forza Italia and the *Alleanza Nazionale* with banners

The Right, the Extreme Right and the Legacy of Fascism in Italy, 2008–2013

Roberto Chiarini

Italy is the only country in Western Europe in which it proves difficult to distinguish between the moderate right-wing, which is committed to liberal democracy's underlying principles, values, institutions, and procedures, and the extreme right-wing, which rejects them. It is difficult first and foremost for the general public, which on the whole considers drawing such distinctions to be merely a rhetorical exercise. Yet it also proves a laborious undertaking for political scientists and historians, so much so that most do not even attempt to define the substance and boundaries of the Italian right. The latter's own self-understanding is also at issue; it is characterized by a "state of confusion" in which all "conceptual clarity" has been lost.¹ Ultimately, the conundrum is due to the heritage of fascism, which of course was born in Italy and enjoyed a long life there. Italian fascists developed a model for the state, society, and economy that they audaciously sought to export, trumpeting fascism as the only alternative capable of heading off the challenge to Christian civilization posed by Soviet-style communism.²

For several reasons, the fascist heritage in Italy has managed to withstand history's harsh, tragic repetitions. First, it has weighed heavily upon the only political force on the right, the *Movimento sociale italiano* (MSI). (Here again, Italy is unique, for the MSI is the only European example of a neo-fascist party that has been constantly present in the country's central and peripheral institutions, often holding the reins of power in

1 Antonio Gnoli, "Il tramonto grottesco del pensiero della Destra," in *La Repubblica*, September 30, 2012.

2 Marco Cuzzi, *Antieuropa: Il fascismo universale di Mussolini* (Milan: M&B Publishing, 2007).

local jurisdictions.) Second, in the post-war era this heritage has exerted such a defining influence that it polluted the political sphere and the imaginary of the entire Italian right. Indeed, the fear that winning the approval of fascists would delegitimize their programs has made the right side of the political spectrum a no-go zone for other political forces, irrespective of whether these are conservative or moderate, secular or Catholic, liberal or Christian Democratic. This is not the end of the story. The position that nostalgic Italians see as the clarion call of identity politics has become an important reference point for democratic forces, particularly those on the left, which define themselves in opposition to such practices. The left has employed anti-fascism as a valuable political resource during various sensitive episodes in the republic's history, with its more extreme fringes elevating it to the status of a full-fledged ideology. The rift opened up by the issue has had a pronounced impact upon Italy's parties, demarcating the borderline between legitimate and illegitimate political activities and ultimately spreading to encompass the entire political system. The main beneficiaries of this development have been centrist parties like the *Democrazia Cristiana* (DC), and its minor secular counterparts, which – situated between the neo-fascist right and the Communist left – have constituted the only domain able to produce a governing coalition.

Even in the wake of the transition from the First to the Second Republic in 1994, and the introduction (via the new majority-based electoral law) of what was intended to be a bipolar democratic system allowing the left and right to compete with virtually equal legitimacy on a level playing-field, the tug of nostalgia in some quarters and the urge felt by other political forces to sound the anti-fascist alarm bell has continued to spill over into – and to poison – not only political debate but the entire dynamic of the democratic system. The enduring legacy of values, ideas, and even simple allusions, not to mention explicit admiration for Benito Mussolini's regime, has weighed like a millstone on the political culture of the *Alleanza Nazionale* (AN).³ This is the party that Gianfranco Fini

3 See Roberto Chiarini, "L'integrazione passiva," in R. Chiarini and M. Maraffi (eds.), *La destra allo specchio: La cultura politica di Alleanza nazionale* (Venice: Marsilio, 2001), pp. 13–42, and Alessandro Giuli, *Il passo delle oche: L'identità irrisolta dei postfascisti* (Turin: Einaudi, 2007).

rebuilt in 1995 from the ashes of the *Movimento sociale italiano – Destra nazionale* (MSI-DN), a political move that hindered any liberal-style restructuring of the old right. In an entirely symmetrical development, the incorporation of anti-fascism into the left's identity – first in the *Partito democratico di Sinistra* (PDS), in the period 1991 to 1998; subsequently in the *Democratici della sinistra* (DS), from 1998 to 2007; and most recently in the *Partito democratico* – has kept alive a persistent attitude of “democratic vigilance.” The left has displayed a kind of conditioned reflex response to the looming neo-fascist peril,⁴ triggered every time a new grouping emerged at the opposite end of the political spectrum. Accordingly, the AN, the *Lega Nord* (LN), and the *Forza Italia*, founded by Silvio Berlusconi in 1993, were all portrayed by leftists as the “fascism of the new millennium”: a threat to democracy disguised either as new-style populism, incipient plebiscitarianism, xenophobic racism, or mediatized authoritarianism.

Deep roots in Italian society: Fascism

Over the last two decades, it is only outside the parliamentary framework that one finds support – whether overt or disguised – for, or even full identification with, elements of fascism's political legacy. The clearest cases occur within the subversive hybrid cosmos of the extreme right. Roberto Fiore's *Terza Posizione* and *CasaPound* are the best known and most active groups, although neo-fascist organizations such as Milan's *Azione Skinhead* and the Veneto *Fronte Skinhead*⁵ also deserve mention.

4 Ernesto Galli della Loggia, “La perpetuazione del fascismo e della sua minaccia come elemento strutturante della lotta politica nell'Italia repubblicana,” in Ernesto Galli della Loggia and L. Di Nucci (eds.), *Due nazioni: Legittimazione e delegittimazione nella storia dell'Italia contemporanea* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2003), pp. 227–261.

5 Domenico Di Tullio, *Centri sociali di destra: Occupazioni e culture non conformi* (Rome: Castelvecchi, 2006); Nicola Rao, *La Fiamma e la Celtica* (Rome: Sperling & Kupfer, 2006); Stefano Bartolini, “Fascismo e neofascismo: I ‘nipoti del Duce’ tra eredità, novità, persistenze e sviluppi all'alba del nuovo secolo,” in QF: *Quaderni di Farestoria: Periodico dell'Istituto Storico Provinciale della Resistenza di Pistoia* (vol. X, no. 2-3, May-December 2008); Guido Caldiron, *La destra sociale da Salò a Tremonti* (Rome: Manifestolibri, 2009); Daniele Di Nunzio and Emanuele Toscano, *Dentro e fuori Casapound: Capire il fascismo del Terzo Millennio* (Rome: Armando Editore, 2011); Saverio Ferrari, *Le nuove camicie nere: Il neofascismo oggi in Italia* (Pisa: BFS edizioni, 2009); and Saverio Ferrari, *Fascisti a Milano: Da Ordine Nuovo a Cuore Nero* (Pisa: BFS edizioni, 2012).

These groups attracted attention in the 1990s and thereafter due to their militancy, their willingness to employ violence, and their attacks on anti-fascist symbols, movements, and individuals. The dividing line between extra-parliamentary neo-fascist militancy and the ex-fascist right has remained fairly fluid. Consider, for example, the case of Terza Posizione, which did not encounter any difficulties when it decided to join an electoral alliance created by Alessandra Mussolini, who was initially a major player in the MSI-DN, subsequently active in the AN, and finally a member of the Popolo della Libertà (PDL). As part of this alliance, Fiori's group ran in the 2004 European elections, the regional elections in 2005, and the general elections in 2006 and 2008, and succeeded in sending its leader to the European Parliament in Strasbourg.

Similarly, the two camps have continued to share common ground when invoking ideas drawn from the past. The cultural reference points that became apparent at AN's founding congress in 1995 are highly revealing in this respect. On that occasion, 62 % of the delegates subscribed to the assertion that "fascism was a positive regime," even while conceding that it made certain questionable decisions. Seven percent categorized Italy's twenty years of fascist rule as "the best regime ever devised." By contrast, only 18 % saw it as simply an "authoritarian" regime, and a mere 0.2 % called it a "brutal dictatorship."⁶ These convictions evidently were deep-rooted, for three years later, at the AN's party conference in Verona, members' positions had scarcely changed. Only 1.1 % condemned fascism, with 18 % regarding it as authoritarian and 61 % continuing to view it as a "good regime."⁷

The foregoing lends support for the thesis that a large swath of public opinion, which found its views represented in the MSI-DN while that party still existed, has not yet turned the page on the fascist past. It also

6 Piero Ignazi, "Legitimation and Evolution on the Italian Right Wing: Social and Ideological Repositioning of Alleanza Nazionale and Lega Nord," in *South European Society and Politics*, Vol. 10, no. 2 (2005).

7 Roberto Vignati, "La memoria del fascismo," in R. Chiarini and M. Maraffi (eds.), op. cit., pp. 43–82.

gives rise to the legitimate suspicion that a lingering inertia prevents many Italians from completing the transition to a genuinely liberal-democratic right-wing culture, i.e., one that is moderate rather than extremist.⁸ The *Lega Nord*, the Forza Italia, and today even the Partito Democratico (PD) have demonstrated that they flirt with a mode of thinking which, though it cannot be classified as nostalgic, in some sense adopts an accommodating stance toward the Mussolini era. Admittedly, however, it is not easy to find official statements in which these groups commit themselves on the issue. On the other hand, some of their adherents indubitably have made more or less convincing anti-fascist professions of faith. For example, Roberto Maroni of LN has referred to April 25, 1945 (Liberation Day, marking the liberation of northern Italy by the Resistance) as an “unforgettable date,” and Ignazio La Russa, formerly an MSI supporter, subsequently with the AN, and more recently a member of the PDL, has described this date as marking “a shared anniversary.”⁹ Maroni and La Russa have even taken part in official commemorations of key dates in the Resistance calendar, often meeting with hostile responses. For example, at the demonstration in Milan on April 25, 1994, the delegation from what was then the *Lega Lombarda* was initially greeted with cries of protest and later expelled. Twelve years later, this scene was repeated in Milan; this time, Letizia Moratti, a candidate for mayor in the Lombard capital, was on the firing line when she appeared alongside her invalid father, Paolo Brichetto, who had been deported to Dachau because of his role in the Resistance, for which he was later decorated.¹⁰ On the whole, however, there seems to be a sentiment on the right that is, to say the least, skeptical of, if not outright opposed to, the official vernacular of anti-fascism, in which the Resistance represents a sharp caesura in Italian history that puts a seal of approval on the republic’s democratic credentials.

8 Alessandro Giuli, *Il passo delle oche: L'identità irrisolta dei postfascisti* (Turin: Einaudi, 2007).

9 See La Repubblica, April 24, 2009. Cf. on this topic Mario Isnenghi, “Ben venga Umberto Bossi e il suo antifascismo,” in *Il Corriere della sera*, May 12, 1995.

10 Cf. *Il Corriere della sera*, April 26, 2006.

Usually lurking beneath the surface, this lingering pro-fascist bias in the ideology of the successor party to the MSI-DN goes hand-in-hand with opposition to the anti-fascist line that largely characterizes other center-right groups. Generally speaking, these parties seem to have adopted what is dubbed “grey memory” on this issue. This is a form of recollection that takes the sting out of the purported revolutionary outcome of the Resistance experience, so dear to the left, and instead relegates it to the past as a chapter that is now closed. In this way, the memory of the Resistance is stripped of its capacity to shape the present. Grey memory has always been the distinctive cipher of moderately conservative public opinion, that segment of public opinion that, while not being openly nostalgic, is nevertheless unwilling to adopt “red memory.” In other words, moderately-conservative public opinion rejects the markedly progressive version of Italy’s past that is propounded by militant anti-fascism, a form of remembrance viewed as a distinctive attribute of the left.¹¹

Berlusconi’s rehabilitation of Mussolini

In addition, the moderate right offers sketchy accounts of Italian fascism, relying mostly on allusions and clichés that circulate widely in the collective imaginary of weakly-politicized sections of Italian public opinion and are even more prevalent among those who are anti-political. The central argument runs as follows: even if fascism was a dictatorship, it was not as “brutal” as the Nazi regime, but was instead what might be described as a milk-and-water variant. To quote Silvio Berlusconi, the fascist government “sent people on holiday to confine them” on some picturesque island in the Mediterranean.¹² Reiterating that theme in 2013 on (of all days!) the Holocaust Memorial Day, and thus stirring up a flurry of polemics, the PDL leader proclaimed that the Duce, with the exception

11 Roberto Chiarini, 25 aprile: *La competizione politica della memoria* (Venice: Marsilio, 2005)

12 These are the expressions employed by Silvio Berlusconi in an interview with *The Spectator*, reprinted in *Il Corriere della sera*, September 11, 2003.

of his “worst fault,” the racial laws, “did well in many other ways.”¹³ Even if Mussolini was guilty of having curtailed liberty, Berlusconi continued, he nevertheless promoted worthy, beneficial public works programs, from land reclamation in certain regions to the creation of social welfare institutions.

These words were music to the ears of unrepentant nostalgics, who felt they were to some extent exonerated from anti-fascist proclamations that had cast them beyond the pale of democratic citizenship. To an even greater extent, Berlusconi’s sympathetic and positive account of the Mussolini regime functioned as a catalyst, bonding together voters averse to the left. Those voters were especially hostile to the left’s call to confer upon the Resistance a lofty status as the force that re-established national political life. Memory of the Resistance has been both the premise and the promise of democracy in practice, in some domestic versions of the socialist utopia. It was Silvio Berlusconi who took the first official steps to jettison this so-called anti-fascist discrimination just prior to his decision to “take to the field” of politics in 1993. That the phase-out of alleged anti-fascist discrimination came when it did was no coincidence. At that time an important round of voting was to be held for administrative elections, in which a movement favoring “democracy based on alternation in power” was launched as a multi-party initiative. Those events marked the resurgence in Italy of a right that, until that point, had been a missing part of the political spectrum, even though its advocates had always known that its values were influential and widely shared throughout civil society. The political niche it now tried to fill was “enormous, with the potential [for the right] to gain a majority, as the country’s entire history demonstrated.”¹⁴ When it came to the litmus test of the elections, the right did indeed prove to have not just a large pool of supporters, but even a “calling to form a government,” once the obstacle of anti-fascism had been cleared away.

13 These are the terms in which Berlusconi expressed himself on Holocaust Memorial Day. See press reports from the following day, January 28, 2013.

14 Ernesto Galli della Loggia, “Una destra diversa,” in *Il Mulino*, February, 2012, p. 249.

Rise, apotheosis, and fall: the formula of the Italian right

Heterogeneous and riddled with contradictions though it was, the center-right line-up succeeded immediately, emerging victorious in the first elections held under the new electoral law of spring, 1994, and taking over at Italy's helm, to the astonishment of the public. This success proved short-lived: just six months later, the coalition fell from power due to the emergence of insurmountable internal divisions. However, the center-right would again occupy Palazzo Chigi (the Prime Minister's residence) in the 2001-2006 legislature. Two years later, once the parenthesis of the center-left government had been closed, the center-right achieved a landslide victory, boasting the largest majority in the entire history of the Republic. This electoral triumph seemed to remove all obstacles from the government's path. Nevertheless, it soon became evident that the coalition's success concealed a plethora of unresolved political contradictions and constraints. To be sure, the demolition of the anti-fascist bulwark made it possible to weld together the various components making up the right. But that alone was not enough to push the right to resolve the many serious problems that undermined its unity and above all weakened its ability to function in government.

Rise, apotheosis, and fall: that formula might well be used to sum up the surprising parabolic arc traced by the Italian right immediately after its dramatic success. Its aura of invincibility vanished in the course of the term in office between 2008 and 2011. In the general elections of April 13 and 14, 2008, the coalition formed by the PDL, the LN, and a minor party, the *Movimento per l'Autonomia*, stunningly had earned 46.8 % of the vote, which translated into 344 of 630 seats in the Chamber of Deputies and 174 of 315 seats in the Senate (47.3 %). The coalition's numerical advantage arose as a consequence of the electoral reform introduced in 2005, which ushered in a proportional representation system requiring no minimum threshold of votes needed for a party to gain seats in parliament and offering a majority bonus for the winning party or coalition. There was every indication that Silvio Berlusconi, heading the government for the third time, would be able to navigate the new legislature

with complete equanimity, certain that there would be no shoals on which to run aground.

With the left in disarray, thoroughly disoriented after its resounding electoral defeat, the leader of the right-wing coalition gave free rein to his ambition to consolidate his hold on power. He never missed an opportunity to hammer home his image as a “champion of action.” Naples, buried under uncollected waste, became an “arena and mediatized backdrop more effective than any political mobilization” in which to extol Berlusconi’s image as a politician “symbolizing miraculous efficiency, almost a magician.” In Abruzzo, the prime minister rushed to proclaim his solidarity with and involvement in areas devastated by the earthquake that had ravaged the entire region, starting with the regional capital of L’Aquila. Berlusconi’s presence on the spot and his energetic commitment to reconstruction became a global media event when he took the world’s top leaders, including U.S. President Obama, to the scene of the catastrophe.¹⁵

It was not just the opposition’s aphasia that facilitated the rampant spread of the Great Communicator’s politico-media initiatives, but also the expulsion from his party and/or coalition of individuals and groups holding dissenting opinions. In 2008 Berlusconi shed his first awkward ally, Pier Ferdinando Casini’s *Unione dei Democratici Cristiani e di Centro* (UdC) which had proven unwilling to rubber-stamp his decisions. Then in 2009, he made his famous “running board speech” to announce, on his own authority, the founding of the PDL. In effect, his move outflanked a second ally, the AN: an even more redoubtable competitor than the first, since it still retained a residual grassroots organizational structure. On the eve of the merger, Fini’s party actually boasted twice as many members as FI. Without so much as a by-your-leave, the leader of the center-right presented his ally-competitor with a *fait accompli*. Fini was reluctant to play second fiddle in the project to create a single right-wing party, for he wished at least to avoid losing the negotiating clout

15 Ilvo Diamanti, “I luoghi della destra e la sinistra senza luoghi,” in *La Repubblica*, May 3, 2009.

guaranteed by the leadership of what was, if only in name, an autonomous organization. Ultimately, however, Fini also toed the line, partly out of an awareness of his isolated position within his own party. All the loose ends seemed to have been tidied up, with moves afoot to reinforce the alliance with the LN, and especially with its chief, Umberto Bossi, who had previously acted as a majority shareholder, always ready to spring traps to underscore the movement's "diversity" and consolidate his own position as the true defender of the North's interests.

A year after the 2008 elections, the left appeared increasingly justified in the fear that it would be no longer be able to stem the pro-Berlusconi tide. Indeed, it began to worry about the possibility that his supremacy might be transformed into an actual authoritarian regime: in other words – to put it in Gramscian terms – that his dominant position would be consolidated into "hegemony."

The uprising of the center-right

With one of his signature *coups de théâtre*, the leader of the center-right accepted an invitation from Dario Franceschini, PD Party Secretary, to attend the Liberation Day celebrations, although he had studiously avoided such events in the past. On April 25, he turned up in Onna, a small village in central Italy, which was the scene of a Nazi massacre of civilians on June 11, 1944. Sporting a scarf in the colors of the Italian flag, Berlusconi did not merely recognize that the Resistance "was a great chapter in our history, and forms the basis of our fundamental law, the Constitution," but went so far as to "pay homage" to the founding fathers, the authors of that text about which he had expressed such grave reservations (and which he would continue to call into question). The opposition was forced to praise "the enemy" and recognize that "a turning point has been reached." At the same time, however, they continued to voice concerns that the "step in the right direction" taken by Berlusconi "towards reconciliation of the country in respect of what happened sixty years ago" might be accompanied by "retrograde steps to-

wards authoritarian populism.” In other words, the opposition worried that Berlusconi would try to instrumentalize the position he had adopted in Onna in order to appropriate the commemorative legacy most dear to the hearts of the left. By so doing, he could eventually “nourish a totally uncritical relationship between the leader and his people, marginalizing all forms of representation, starting with the separation of powers and the various constitutional guarantees, as useless hindrances.”¹⁶ The undisputed leader of the right, having stripped the left of the main weapon it had used to keep him under suspicion as a potential saboteur of the bases of democratic legitimacy (in the form of the constitutional anti-fascism pact), finally appeared to have achieved the masterstroke that allowed him to breach the last dikes and dams holding back the deluge of his power. Such, at least, was the mood in Italy.

Further confirmation that the right was on the ascendancy came just a few weeks later, in the elections of June 6 and 7, 2009. Despite being involved in coalition talks, which traditionally have not tended to encourage the vigorous mobilization of supporters, the PDL-LN line-up managed to draw even farther ahead of the left in the European parliamentary elections. With 35.26% of the vote, the PDL proved to be the number one national party by a large margin (almost 10 percentage points ahead of its main rival, the PD, which chalked up 26.12%). Meanwhile, the LN achieved a more than satisfying 10.21% share. Among Berlusconi’s adversaries, too, there was a growing conviction that he would dominate the country’s political future.¹⁷

16 The entire speech made by Berlusconi at Onna can be found at http://www.corriere.it/politica/09_aprile_25/discorso-berlusconi-25-aprile-onna_00e34c08-31b6-11de-98f0-00144f02aabc.shtml. See also Giancarla Rondinelli, “A Onna Berlusconi fa il pacificatore,” in *Il Tempo*; Massimo Franco, “La scelta del Cavaliere,” in *Il Corriere della sera*; and Eugenio Scalfari, “La patria e il nuovo padre padrone,” in *La Repubblica*, April 26, 2009.

17 See Antonio Gibelli, Berlusconi passato alla storia: *L'Italia nell'era della democrazia autoritaria* (Rome: Donzelli, 2010) and Beppe Severgnini, “Il Cavaliere spiegato ai posteri: Dieci motivi per 20 anni di ‘regno,’” in *Il Corriere della sera*, October 27, 2010.

As the center-right scaled the heights of electoral support, it hit its apogee nine months later, in March of 2011. Regional elections scheduled for that month offered a key opportunity to mount an attack on the left, whose strength historically lies in its support networks in certain localities. The offensive from the center-right succeeded. The PD was left in control of only seven regions, while losing four, including two that play a fairly significant role on the country's political map: Lazio and Piedmont. With its victory in Lazio, the center-right gained control of the key region in central Italy, one that is also home to the capital. With its success in Piedmont, the center-right acquired the missing piece in the puzzle; since Lombardy and the Veneto were already in its grasp, it now controlled all of northern Italy, the most populous, wealthy, and modern part of the country and the stronghold of its political power. In absolute terms, the center-right acquired "double the level of support of the center-left."¹⁸

Yet all that glitters is not gold. The success of the coalition as a whole concealed the fact that its dominant partner had failed to gain any ground. In fact, compared with the results of the European elections held one year earlier, support for the PDL actually fell from 32.3 % to 26.7 %. The real winner was the LN, with its share of the vote increasing from 11.3 % to 12.7 %. It was rewarded, in part, for its passionate defense of the country's manufacturing sector: The LN had promoted the "made in Italy" label, often invoking popular buzzwords such as customs duties and protectionism and articulating the interests of small firms, which are the real backbone of the country's economy, especially in the North. Additionally, the coalition attracted votes by adopting measures (albeit mostly window-dressing) aimed at addressing the fears of the man in the street concerning urban decline. The LN and, to a lesser extent, its partners usually ascribed that decline to both petty and large-scale organized crime, and especially to illegal immigration.¹⁹ In the wake of the election,

18 Lorenzo Fuccaro, "Vanno al centrodestra le regioni più grandi. La Lega avanza al Nord," in *Il Corriere della sera*, March 30, 2010.

19 In Prato, a major textile industry center in Tuscany, the Northern League even disseminated "a pseudo-Chinese leaflet announcing that the city had already been invaded." Dario Di Vico, "E il Carroccio neo laburista conquistò operai e padroni", in *Il Corriere della sera*.

the party's future seemed more than promising even to its opponents. It displayed an impressive capacity to "play a leading role on all fronts," in both local institutions and social organizations, and an unparalleled skill in motivating its activists,²⁰ along with an ability to deploy "radically xenophobic and aggressive language when in opposition" while opting for "a reformist strategy when in government." In a nutshell, the LN was a textbook example of a "real party," a "party of identity," just as the main force on the left used to be (and will never be again).²¹

Overshadowed by and sailing in the wake of his last remaining ally, every obstacle seemed to have been cleared from Berlusconi's path, paving the way for him to implement the ambitious reform plan promised in the 2008 elections from which he emerged victorious. While he continued to chalk up success after success on the image and support fronts, his march to victory failed to resolve – and indeed actually appeared to exacerbate – the contradictions embodied in the strategy he had deployed to become the *dominus* of national politics, contradictions that previously had remained latent. A fundamental component of Berlusconi's political strategy lies in creating a form of party organization that establishes a direct relationship between the leader and "the people," thus shattering the traditionally absolute intermediary role of mass parties in representative democracies. Often described as a "downward spiral" or a "plebiscitarian inclination," this strategy is pilloried by his opponents as a threat to the constitutive basis of democracy. Berlusconi is known to dislike all the lengthy procedures, the shackles of procedural arrangements, that form the essence of parliamentary practice. And that dislike is matched by an aversion to the pressures and influences, the consensus-shaping, and the inevitable negotiations with partners that arise in any alliance of distinct parties. Those constraints have been especially evident in such a fractious alliance as Berlusconi's has been, with his coalition partners "taking part as if in a negative-sum game, seeking to put the brakes on

20 Gianluca Passarelli-Dario Tuorto, "Attivisti di partito nella Lega Nord: un caso anomalo?," in *POLIS*, 2/2012, pp. 255–284

21 Nadia Urbinati, "La Lega e la politica del doppio binario," in *La Repubblica*, April 6, 2010.

and constrict his power.” It is no coincidence that he had always aimed to found and then consolidate the center-right coalition, preferably under his own leadership. This led to the creation of a common electoral list and later – after the FI (in November, 2008) and the AN (in March, 2009) had been dissolved – to the united right-wing party “Il Popolo della Libertà” (PDL).

Berlusconi is not willing to share his power

It is however quite apparent that Berlusconi grew less and less inclined to share power as his position grew stronger. By 2008, as noted above, Casini had already left the alliance, and just a year later, Fini (as leader of the AN) was on the verge of doing likewise. While most of the AN supported an own single party, believing that it created greater political (and career) opportunities for them, Fini only submitted to the scheme presented by Berlusconi unwillingly, fearing that it would tie his hands. He was pushed to accept the *fait accompli* either out of fear of being abandoned by his own party or because, in the wake of the establishment of a united party on the left (the PD), the time really had come to do the same on the right. Taking refuge in his position as President of the Chamber of Deputies, Fini settled for carving out a new role for himself as a defender of civil liberties (on issues ranging from civil unions and in-vitro fertilization to the morning after-pill, biological wills, and even voting rights for immigrants in administrative elections), thus creating a still greater distance between himself and his original “comrades” and stirring up increasing tensions within the newly-created party.

Tensions reached breaking point on April 22, 2010, during a working meeting of the party’s national leadership. Reacting to Berlusconi’s cross-examination of the PDL’s co-founder, Fini responded with a phrase that was to become famous: “What’re you gonna do, chuck me out?” This set off a downward spiral; in the course of a few months it led first (on October 21) to supporters of the AN’s former leader setting up an autonomous parliamentary group (initially composed of 31 members of

parliament, a figure that would soon rise to 45), and subsequently (in February, 2011) to the birth of a new party, Futuro e libertà per l'Italia (FLI). The main cause of friction lay in initiatives that the secessionists held to be “extraneous to the electoral manifesto”: namely, draft legislation to mandate shorter trials and a proposal to reduce the statute of limitations for court proceedings, both of which were eagerly championed (*pro domo sua*) by the Prime Minister.²²

The center-right loses popularity

The *redde rationem* was not slow in arriving. It arrived on December 14, 2010, when Fini attempted to unseat Berlusconi through a vote of no-confidence, an effort that failed by just three votes. Although he had escaped *in extremis* and amid suspicions that he had bribed many supporters (either literally, in cash, or with promises of various kinds), the aspiring hegemon of national politics found himself facing an inexorable decline. In due course, he was forced to resign in November, 2011, just eleven months after the showdown with Fini. The crisis came to a head out of a mix of “decisional paralysis, external forces and a loss of credibility.”²³ After its apotheosis between 2008 and 2009, Berlusconiism was suddenly sliding towards collapse. The results of the June, 2011 administrative elections confirm this decline in the unforgiving language of hard figures. They represented a crushing defeat for the center-right, which lost ground on all fronts, even in so-called “symbolic” cities, the historic strongholds that had always demonstrated its territorial grip on power. The center-right was overtaken by the left in Milan and in many other cities in the North, including a not insignificant number of municipalities that had previously been the LN’s exclusive fiefdoms. Nor was that the end of it; the center-right lost in all the large cities that were genuinely

22 On this point see Davide Hine-Davide Vampa, “Un altro divorzio: il Pdl nel 2010,” in *Politica in Italia*, 2011, pp. 69–91.

23 Anna Bosco-Duncan Mc Donnell, “Da Berlusconi a Monti: default dei partiti?”, in *Politica in Italia*, 2012, p. 49.

competitive: in the first round, Turin and Bologna, and in the run-off, Naples, Cagliari, and Trieste, as well as Milan. In total, only twelve of the mayors or Provincial Presidents elected came from the center-right, compared with the 29 racked up by the center-left. It should be noted that the PDL had already seen a (slight) drop in support the year before. More recently, it had seemed increasingly weak and divided. The real surprise lay in the entirely unexpected nosedive of Bossi's party, which had appeared to be in fine shape, and had been touted as being "up-and-coming" until the eve of the vote.²⁴

Some unresolved problems were coming home to roost for the LN as well. In light of both its electorate's changed political expectations and the disappointing results produced during the considerable time the party had spent as part of the governing coalition, the recipe that it had followed ever since the early Nineties had lost its effectiveness. That recipe had included the following elements: pronounced centralization and a solid organizational structure; a "great capacity to listen [...] to the man and woman in the street;" skill in shaping its political program "in an often extremist and provocative form;"²⁵ and the ability to throw its weight around as though it were simultaneously in opposition and in government. The LN had long benefitted from protests by small producers in the most dynamic areas of northern Italy, who were revolting against the establishment in both politics and big business. With the worsening of the economic and financial crisis, it is precisely this neo-bourgeoisie that paid the highest price.²⁶ Bossi's party went from being the advocate of the aspirations of a modern, rich and dynamic Italy to being an advocate of fear, "that profound emotion of the peripheries, composed of

24 Roberto D'Alimonte, "La Lega punta al profilo 'nazionale,'" in *Il Sole24 Ore*, May 15, 2011; Roberto D'Alimonte, "Al Nord Lega e Pdl divisi perdono i sette capoluoghi," in *Il Sole24 Ore*, November 20, 2011.

25 Roberto Biorcio, *La rivolta del Nord: La Lega dalla contestazione al governo* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2010), p. VII.

26 Fausto Anderlini, "Il mito dell'espansione leghista," in *Il Mulino*, 5/2009, pp. 744–753.

rancor, disorientation, [and] the need for reassurance,"²⁷ which engulfed small entrepreneurs, self-employed people, and more generally a labor force threatened by globalization. The "League of Opposition 'Within' the Government" had become an untenable oxymoron. The dramatic let-down of the election results sounded a clear alarm bell for the LN's leadership, yet also left it "confused and doubt-ridden," casting a pall of depression over a party that just a few days previously had been the "strong man" in the governing coalition.²⁸

In the considerably smaller alliance that remained after Fini's defection, differences of opinion between the coalition partners came to a head, while on the horizon a storm was brewing on two fronts: in the media and in the world of finance. The media crisis affected Berlusconi personally, undermining the very basis of his credibility and authority, and the dramatic ramifications of the financial crisis overturned the center-right's parliamentary majority and triggered the Prime Minister's resignation. The fall of Berlusconi

There is a broad agreement that the leader of the center-right built his media fortune through "outright storytelling," by means of which he generated "projective identification, leading the public to identify with him as an individual, an enhanced version [...] of the common man."²⁹ His self-image as a "seducer-playboy" played a significant role within this "charming fairy-tale." It was also precisely the factor that would smash the "fairy-tale" to smithereens. Berlusconi had been attacked with great venom previously when he announced his intention to choose "show girls, actresses, singers" as candidates in elections to the European Parliament. However, the wave of scandal only began to gain real force when

27 Fausto Anderlini, "Il partito liquido e la durezza del territorio," in *Il Mulino*, 2/2009, pp. 199–209.

28 Ilvo Diamanti, "Lega: Il partito dei ribelli del Nord nella ragnatela del potere," in *La Repubblica*, June 16, 2011.

29 Sofia Ventura, *Il racconto del capo: Berlusconi e Sarkozy* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2012), p. 103. On the scandal see Stephen Gundle, "Berlusconi, il sesso e il mancato scandalo," in *Politica in Italia*, 2010, pp. 73–89.

the news broke (in April of 2009) that he had attended the eighteenth birthday party of a would-be model with whom he seemed to have such a close relationship that she called him “daddy.” The revelations continued with the discovery of parties held in the Prime Minister’s home, supposedly attended by “escort girls” hired especially for those occasions. Berlusconi’s wife, Veronica Lario, who decided to seek a legal separation in the wake of these events, referred to the young women in question as “shameless trash” who “offer themselves to the dragon to gain success and fame.”³⁰ The trust accumulated by the leader of the center-right was crumbling rapidly. The coup de grâce came shortly afterwards: an affair involving a girl, suspected of being underage, who was freed from detention thanks to a phone call placed by the Prime Minister himself. Berlusconi invoked *raison d’état* to obtain her speedy release, alleging that she was [Hosni] “Mubarak’s niece,” a version of events subsequently rubber-stamped by a vote in parliament.³¹

Nevertheless, the “moral issue” raised by the scandal would in all probability not have been enough to oust the head of government if the economic hurricane had not devastated Italian public finances around the same time, with yield spreads for Italian and German sovereign bonds skyrocketing to levels that were absolutely untenable for the government’s budget. Berlusconi, who had ignored calls for him to “step back” after being morally discredited, finally threw in the towel in November of 2011. His resignation opened the door to a technocratic government supported by a fairly broad multi-party majority that included representatives of both the right and the left. But politicians in the center of the spectrum were the most committed supporters of the unusual governing team. The only major parties outside the new coalition were former magistrate Di Pietro’s *Italia dei valori*, or Italy of Values, on the left and the LN on the right.

30 Piero Colaprico, “Il Drago, le vergini, i festini hardcore così si avvera la profezia di Veronica,” in *La Repubblica*, January 22, 2011. On the scandal see S. Gundle, “Berlusconi, il sesso e il mancato scandalo,” in *Politica in Italia*, 2010, pp. 73–89.

31 Pierluigi Battista, “La parabola dei mille giorni: Trionfo poi liti e dispetti,” in *Il Corriere della sera*, November 13, 2011.

The separation between the PDL and the LN and the reorientation of the LN

The ethno-regionalist LN was hit by the government crisis in the midst of the difficulties arising from its change of leadership, with power being transferred from the party's founder, Umberto Bossi, to Minister Roberto Maroni. The crisis also happened to occur at a time when the LN was just recovering from a dramatic downturn in its fortunes caused by revelations in the yellow press and in court proceedings that disclosed what could be described, at best, as sloppy management of public funds assigned to the party. In addition to Party Treasurer Francesco Belsito, those accused included what was known as the "magic circle" around Bossi and above all certain members of his own family, who allegedly siphoned off public monies for purely private expenses (such as a foreign degree for his son, Renzo Bossi, a regional councillor in Lombardy). This serious blow to the leader's credibility came at a time when Bossi was already facing physical difficulties stemming from health problems that had afflicted him a few years earlier. Furthermore, the episode exacerbated and intensified the power struggles over succession that had been raging within the party for some time.

This changing of the guard gave rise to a decisive change of course in LN strategy. The slogan "Prima il Nord" ("The North First"), immediately pronounced by the new leadership around Maroni, the party's freshly appointed Political Secretary, provides a clear snapshot of the altered political course steered by the LN, focusing entirely on center/periphery issues. This new regionalist tack weakened the party's ambitions to become a force to be reckoned with at the national level, and torpedoed any revolutionary or secessionist leanings it might have entertained. The LN decided instead to push for a project that seemed more within reach: concentrating on positioning itself as the most significant political force in the North. It therefore abandoned the most extremist of its temptations. In addition, the party fine-tuned its public image, moving away from the potent yet far-fetched ritual and symbolic imagery associated with Padania, which involved pilgrimages to the springs of the god Padus



On December 14, 2010, Fini tried to have Berlusconi removed from office through a vote of no confidence, a move that failed by only three votes

on Monviso or to the mouth of that “divine” river (the Padus, or Po) in Venice. Adopting a more pragmatic strategy, the party turned its attention to citizens’ concrete needs, in keeping with the model of city government successfully tried out in Verona by its mayor, Fulvio Tosi, who was also a member of the LN.

The new approach took into account the great impatience that had arisen toward their former coalition partner, the PDL, occasioned by both the lack of decisive action in government and by the conduct of its leader. LN members had become disillusioned by the various “pink-tinged (i.e., sex) scandals” in which Berlusconi was involved, not to mention the many charges of criminal activities brought against him by the judiciary. The “League within Government” turned back into the “League of Opposition,” parting ways with its former ally. That has been the story of the past year, during which the rift between the two traditional right-wing parties has become increasingly entrenched. The PDL sits on the government benches, albeit with ever more palpable unease in the light of the

unpopular measures that the Monti government has asked it to approve. Meanwhile, the LN is in the ranks of the opposition, and increasingly is assuming a combative attitude, despite its minority status.

New elections help to overcome political disagreement

This rift, however, does not signify that the links between the two traditional right-wing parties have been irrevocably severed. Changes in the political context brought about a rapprochement, even if it was purely tactical. Worn down by the perpetual symmetrical critiques from the two largest parties that held the majority, Prime Minister Monti (in response to an ill-timed attack by PDL Party Secretary Angelino Alfano) seized the opportunity to resign on December 21, 2012. This ministerial crisis led directly to new elections, over the course of which the political landscape changed in one fell swoop. The LN and the PDL now found themselves in the same boat as they battled the former head of government in the wake of his resignation. That struggle grew even more ferocious when Monti subsequently decided to stand for election, heading his own list. However, the two right-wing parties encountered considerable difficulties in re-establishing even a purely electoral partnership.

The LN had never been especially keen on Berlusconi in his persona as tycoon, and their distaste turned to outright rejection in the aftermath of the media sleaze-wave that engulfed him. However, much was at stake for both parties; neither could afford not to form a new electoral alliance with the other. That certainly held true for Berlusconi, who – after much stalling and numerous repeated (but regularly retracted) announcements that he was withdrawing from politics – ultimately decided to return to the helm of the PDL, with a view toward salvaging whatever could be salvaged. It was even more the case with Maroni, who was acutely aware of the need to bring home a victory if he did not wish to see his leadership collapse even before it had taken shape. He therefore decided to stake his position on winning the elections in Lombardy, which were being held in the wake of the wave of scandals that had afflicted the

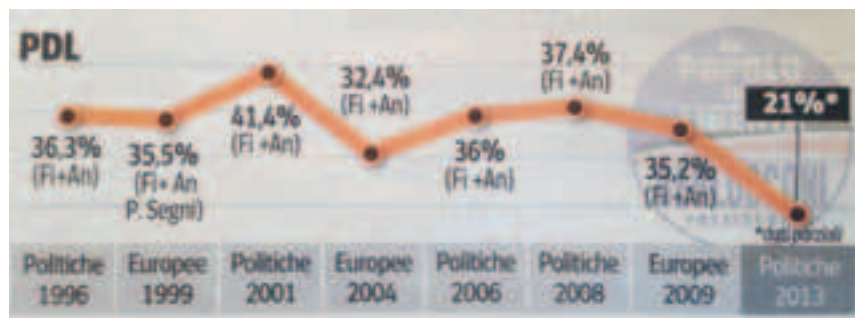
regional government. To put it in a nutshell, in order to avoid certain defeat, neither of the two leaders could afford to run the risk of going it alone.

The alliance that came into being after laborious and agitated negotiations³² allowed both parties to avert the Waterloo that would probably have occurred, considering both the discouraging poll numbers and the ailing party apparatuses of both partners. Thanks above all to Berlusconi's mastery of the art of televised propaganda, the center-right succeeded in blocking the predicted victory of the PD in both parliamentary assemblies. Maroni also managed to take over the Lombardy Regional Council, thus adding credibility to his ambitious project of creating a macro-region of the North (together with the two other Northern provinces, Piedmont and Veneto, that were already in the hands of LN governments). He evidently hoped to strengthen his hand for possible future negotiations with Rome on fiscal autonomy for northern Italy. However, the serious problems apparent on the eve of the vote still remained, even though the alliance had managed to avert the threats that faced it: the definitive collapse of the PDL and a daunting setback for the LN. Furthermore, the election results revealed how dramatic these difficulties actually were. Berlusconi's party lost more than six million votes compared with the previous elections (see Figure 1), while the LN's share of the vote fell by more than one and a half million (see Figure 2). It was perhaps the worst electoral performance in either party's history. The right managed to avoid a complete fiasco only because of the parallel drop in support for the center-left.

32 The greatest resistance to the agreement with the PDL came from Veneto, where a considerable number of LN members even threatened not to vote for the party's own candidates. Cf. Marco Bonet, "La fronda di Bozza & Co.: Farema votare Pdl e Pd," in *Corriere di Verona*, February 1, 2013, p. 18.

Electoral fortunes of the PDL

Figure 1



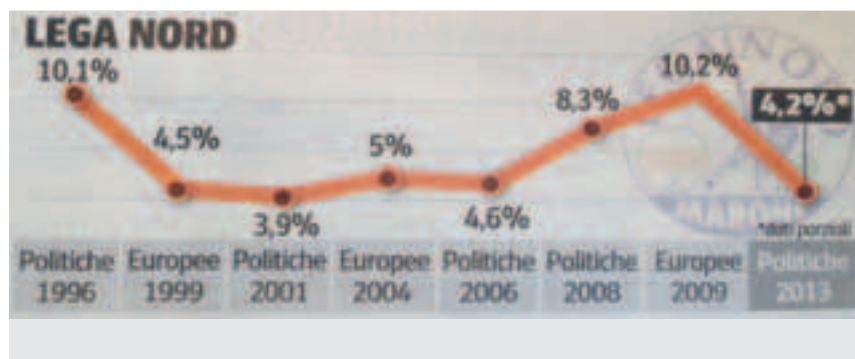
From left to right:

1996 general election; 1999 EP elections (joint list: AN and Patto Segni/Segni Pact); 2001 general election; 2004 EP elections; 2006 general election; 2008 general from 1996 through early 2013 election; 2009 EP election; 2013 general election (partial figures only)

Source: Corriere della Sera, February 26, 2012, p. 10

Electoral fortunes of the LN from 1996 through early 2013

Figure 2



From left to right:

1996 general election; 1999 EP elections; 2001 general election; 2004 EP elections; 2006 general election; 2008 general election; 2009 EP election; 2013 general election (partial figures only)

Source: Corriere della Sera, February 26, 2012, p. 10

Meanwhile, prospects remain rather uncertain for both parties. It will not be easy for Maroni to achieve his ambition of creating a macro-region of the North. Furthermore, his party has come under pressure due to competition from the newly founded Movimento Cinque Stelle. Many of the LN's original supporters, hard-hit by the economic crisis, either have defected to this movement or at least have been tempted to switch their allegiance.³³

The PDL's situation appears to be even more seriously compromised. No longer serving as a unifying force for the conservative end of the political spectrum, it is struggling to combat pronounced centrifugal forces that have already led many members to defect to other parties. The PDL has paid an especially steep price in this regard, since it now must compete directly with newly formed competitors, such as Fratelli d'Italia and Femare il decline. The most serious dilemma is that the PDL is entirely defined by Berlusconi's leadership, as became apparent in the course of 2012, when it briefly appeared that the party had begun the process of selecting his successor. Although that handover of power was soon reversed, it obviously cannot be postponed for too long. This judgment reflects first and foremost a simple practical consideration: namely, that Berlusconi's age is catching up with him. However, the main considerations here are political, revolving around Berlusconi's compromised credibility – a failing that is virtually impossible to redeem in this arena. Both domestically and internationally, he has lost too much standing in the wake of the multiple charges brought against him for fiscal and other crimes, not to mention the embarrassing scandals in which he has been implicated. He has also been dragged down by his loss of leadership over the right as a whole. When he first appeared on the political scene, the

33 The LN did worst in Veneto, where it obtained only 11.1 % of the vote – a true nose-dive if one considers that the party had won 27% of the vote in the last general election and had racked up 35% in the regional elections. This dramatic slump calls the party's role into question, particularly in what had been one of its strongholds and particularly in the eyes of its traditional electorate ("the VAT-declaring classes," entrepreneurs, and craftspeople), who are in fact going over to the Movimento Cinque Stelle. See Dario di Vico, "Il Nord tra vendite e rivoluzione: Cambia il popolo delle partite Iva," in *Il Corriere della sera*, February 26, 2013.

“Cavaliere” even managed to unite those it had seemed impossible to bring together: the LN, as an avowed enemy of “thieving Rome,” and the AN, steeped in nostalgia for Rome as a symbol of Italian unity, if not for “Imperial Rome.” Nowadays, after alienating along the way first Follini (in 2006), then Casini (in 2008), and lastly Fini (in 2009), Berlusconi is no longer even certain that he can count on the LN, his erstwhile ally. Adding insult to injury, ever since he left Palazzo Chigi, the ranks of his own party have thinned. The wave of defections has ultimately slowed only because many members calculated that although they could be certain of a slot on the party’s electoral list, they might not be able to secure one elsewhere.

In addition, certain constitutive features of Berlusconi’s political personality make him difficult to replace, on the one hand, yet simultaneously severely limit the Italian right’s future prospects, on the other. It is not easy to find a substitute to assume his role, as was seen in the 2013 elections; without Berlusconi the PDL runs the risk of losing its electoral base and internal party cohesion. At the same time, the party’s fate is sealed with Berlusconi at its helm, for several reasons. First, it is hard to imagine how an economically liberal, Western-style right could emerge when the movement is led by a figure intrinsically dependent upon state permits and licences, above all in the highly sensitive sphere of television. Second, it is hard to imagine how a party could consolidate its structures without the necessary internal democracy, ensuring that it is not dominated by Berlusconi’s henchmen. Third, it is hard to imagine how the right could become a national force if it maintains a special relationship with the LN, a party that is completely oriented to the north. Fourth, it is hard to imagine how the right can regain credibility at the international level, given Berlusconi’s current marginalization. That marginalization was blatantly and spectacularly demonstrated when Germany’s Angela Merkel and France’s Nicholas Sarkozy publicly laughed at him on October 22 of 2011, their derision making headlines worldwide and sealing Berlusconi’s death knell as a leader. Finally, it is hard to imagine a right that does not incorporate a strong sense of the state and its institutions into its identity.

Aside from the foregoing considerations, we must consider what can be described as the political “mistakes” that have been made by the right under Berlusconi’s watch. The list begins with the failure to invest in culture, that intangible resource that is vital for a political force to make its mark, and one that only can be obtained through a serious and prolonged investment in the media and the schools and through engagement with the intelligentsia. Historically weak in this domain, the Italian right has failed to rectify that shortcoming. The list continues with a lengthy period of government responsibility during which the party projected the image of an entity lacking firm convictions, as evidenced in the PDL’s repeated backpedalling on major electoral, economic, and institutional reforms. The list concludes with the retrograde form assumed by the Berlusconi right’s social message. Initially packaged as a promise of liberation from crippling powers and lobbies, this message took root as a dream of prosperity for all Italians. In the final analysis, however, it has been reduced to nothing but the ostentation of a leader who no longer looks like a vigorous, self-made man. Rather, as one perspicacious political commentator astutely noted, Berlusconi has morphed into an “Eastern satrap” surrounded by a bunch of parvenu “country bumpkins.”³⁴

34 Antonio Polito, *In fondo a destra: Cent’anni di fallimenti politici* (Milan: Rizzoli, 2103), p. 105 ff.

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Parliamentary elections in Portugal in 2011

The Extreme right in 21st-Century Portugal: the *Partido Nacional Renovador*

Riccardo Marchi

1. The extreme right at the dawn of Portuguese democracy

After the fall of the authoritarian Salazarist regime following the military coup of April 25, 1974, the Portuguese extreme right did not manage to maintain a presence on the political scene. This was partly a consequence of the wave of repression that followed the event and the reluctance of Salazarist “barons” to advocate a united front among like-minded groups. However, it was also due to the fact that the various nationalist factions, which were rather fragmented during the final years of the deposed regime, were unwilling to coalesce around a shared project. Instead, these factions opted to organize autonomously into a handful of small parties, which corresponded to some of the right-wing radical and less radical circles that had been active in the regime’s final years. National-revolutionary student groups that opposed the technocratic government of Salazar’s successor, Marcelo Caetano, formed the *Movimento Federalista Português-Partido do Progresso* (Portuguese Federalist Movement-Progress Party, or MFP-PP); conservative Catholic forces from the Salazarist school founded the *Movimento Popular Português* (Portuguese Popular Party, or MPP) and the *Partido da Democracia Cristã* (Christian Democratic party, or PDC); and radicals from the regime’s repressive and paramilitary organizations (the political police or PIDE/DGS, the Portuguese Legion, and Portuguese Youth) and the tiny intellectual circles inspired by counter-revolutionary or fascist ideas came together in the *Movimento de Acção Portuguesa* (Portuguese Action Movement, or MAP).

Although each party claimed to have its own specific profile, this alleged independence was not manifested in particularly original political proposals. Instead, during the first years of the transition, all the parties on the extreme right focused their efforts on two main objectives: defending the Portuguese empire, including advocating federalist solutions, and preventing the imposition of a Communist regime in the country. By late 1975, the first of those goals had been rendered obsolete by the rapid conclusion of the decolonization process, which reduced Portugal to just its European territories, while the second had been achieved: The *Partido Comunista Português* (Portuguese Communist Party, or PCP) and extreme left were cut down to size, although the main beneficiaries of that development were moderate anti-Communist forces, particularly the Socialists, led by Mario Soares.

During the tensest period of the transition to democracy (1974–1975), the extreme right – in its fragmented, weak, and marginalized condition – was easily swept aside by the repression exercised by the military, which was reacting to presumed or genuine counter-revolutionary endeavors. The extreme right remained fragile even during the normalization ushered in by the democratization process, which began between the end of 1975 and the first few months of 1976. The three extreme-right parties that were active in the second half of the 1970s – the PDC, General Kaúlza de Arriaga's *Movimento Independente para a Reconstrução Nacional* (Independent Movement for National Reconstruction, or MIRN), and the short-lived *Frente Nacional* (National Front, or FN) – all failed to attain the objectives they had set for themselves. They did not succeed in uniting activists from the Portuguese radical right; on the contrary, they lost voters, who increasingly either opted to abstain from electoral politics completely or voted tactically to support the two moderate center-right parties, the *Partido Social Democrata* (Social Democratic Party, or PSD) and the *Centro Democrático Social* (Democratic and Social Center, or CDS). At the same time, important leaders defected, such as José Miguel Júdice, who – disappointed by the radical forces' limited prospects of success – joined the PSD-CDS government coalition, called the *Aliança Democrática* (Democratic Alliance, or AD). In the elections of 1976, 1979, and 1980, the radical right never

won more than 1.2 % of the votes cast (achieved in 1979), and its share of the vote slumped to 0.4 % in the 1980 legislative elections. Paradoxically, that was the only time that it presented a united front, in the form of a coalition among the three extreme-right parties that aimed to counteract the attraction that the AD exerted on their traditional supporters.

Its hopes of assuming an institutional role as a parliamentary political force having been dashed, the Portuguese extreme right experienced the Eighties as a long period in the wilderness, with the PDC winning only around 0.5% of the vote in both legislative and European elections. The most interesting manifestation of the Portuguese extreme right during this period was the journal, *Futuro Presente*, and its struggles on the cultural front. The team that worked on the journal came from the university national-revolutionary scene of the Sixties and Seventies, and attempted to breathe new life into extreme-right political thinking by introducing the analyses of the French, British, and American “New Right” to Portugal. However, the project, which displayed a bizarre enthusiasm for Alain de Benoist, Margaret Thatcher, and Ronald Reagan, did not have a significant impact, even within its own sphere of reference. Some of the journal’s writers or editors, such as Jaime Nogueira Pinto and Nuno Rogeiro, attained key positions as political columnists and analysts, but did not give tangible expression in these roles to the cultural hegemony they aimed to promote by launching the *Futuro Presente*. The publication still exists today, but has no real impact as an instrument of renewal for the Portuguese radical right.

The Eighties also witnessed a significant generational and cultural rift in the Portuguese extreme right. After a long incubation period in the Nineties, radical activists were eager to try to gain a foothold in the political arena and take advantage of the winds of populism, identity politics, and protest that were beginning to sweep across Europe in the new millennium.

2. A new identity for the Portuguese extreme right

The profound changes that affected the Portuguese extreme right in the last two decades of the twentieth century arose out of new geopolitical and socio-economic scenarios emerging in democratic Portugal after the transition period had drawn to a close.

From the geopolitical perspective, the imperial myth that played a pivotal part in the collective imaginary of Lusitanian radical nationalism rapidly crumbled when decolonization was completed in the mid-Seventies. As a result, many leaders who had been radicalized during the years of colonial wars in defence of the empire stepped back, no longer playing an active role in politics, while activists who were politicized after the transition abandoned the myth of a multiracial, pluricontinental Portuguese empire.

On the economic front, Portugal's accession to the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1986 meant diminished national sovereignty, subjection to EEC policies in strategic realms such as agriculture and fisheries, and growing dependence on subsidies from Brussels. These developments led the Portuguese extreme right to adopt a pronounced anti-Europe stance, picking up on a strand that had always been present in the political culture of imperialist nationalism.

In societal terms, the increase in immigration from the mid-1980s on, primarily from former African colonies towards the metropolitan areas of Lisbon and Porto, transformed Portugal from a country of emigrants into a country shaped by immigration. This demographic shift stirred up xenophobic sentiments that were already latent in Portuguese society, particularly among the enormous community of *retornados* from Portuguese-speaking Africa. The increasingly pronounced multiracial and multicultural mix in the suburbs of these large metropolises had an especially marked impact on young people. An increasing number of them joined small ultra-nationalist groups, which in 1980s Portugal were characterized by political subcultures imported primarily from the Anglo-Saxon world, such as the skinheads and the white supremacist movement.

All of these factors contributed to the emergence of a new kind of extreme-right activist, lacking an organizational and training substratum handed down by previous generations and far removed from Salazarist nostalgia and traditional Portuguese nationalism's "Lusotropicalist" discourse (according to which Portuguese colonialism was more benign than that of other countries). The new right-wing extremism was characterized instead by pronounced ethno-nationalism and an emphasis on defending the racial and cultural homogeneity of European Portugal, in the broader context of the white community scattered across five continents. Between 1985 and 1991, the Movimento de Acção Nacional (National Action Movement, or MAN) was the breeding ground for this identity. The movement attracted press attention due to various episodes of violence, including the murder of an extreme-left leader (which was attributed to the skinhead contingent), together with the ensuing anti-constitutionality trial based on legislation addressing fascist organizations. MAN was little more than a tiny ultra-nationalist group, of scant relevance in terms of its membership numbers. However, the actions it undertook, as well as the galaxy of mini-groups that appeared when it broke up in the early 1990s, made it the training ground for a new radical political elite, which was eager to take up the challenge of founding a party to give voice to Portugal's extreme right as the 20th century drew to a close.

3. The "new" Portuguese extreme right: the *Partido Nacional Renovador*

The first steps in this new phase for the Portuguese extreme right were taken in the second half of the 1990s, when some elements from the new radical generation converged with the old Salazarist generation, grouped around the ephemeral acronym, AN (standing for *Aliança Nacional*, or *National Alliance*). The AN episode is also symptomatic of the organizational weakness of the Portuguese extreme right: its supporters never managed to register the party with the Constitutional Court, as they had trouble in drumming up the requisite 7,500 signatures. This legal

obstacle was not overcome until 1999, when the AN project was abandoned and its supporters infiltrated a party that was already registered with the Constitutional Court but no longer actually active: the *Partido Renovador Democrático* (Democratic Renewal Party, or PRD). In 2000, the PRD was re-established by radicals, who changed its name to *Partido Nacional Renovador* (National Renewal Party, or PNR) and adopted a logo more in keeping with their ideas: a flame.

The first years of the PNR's existence reawakened disputes between the old and new generations of radical activists, with the latter keen to assume direct control of the party and to align it with the most successful expressions of right-wing extremism in Europe. In 2002, forces pushing for renewal gained the upper hand, with, first, Paulo Rodrigues (2002–2005) and subsequently José Pinto Coelho (since 2005), who had started his career among the nationalist activists of the Seventies and Eighties, replacing António da Cruz Rodrigues, the leader of the Salazarist traditionalist Catholic camp, at the head of the party.

The new leadership immediately began work on rejuvenating the image of Portuguese nationalism, shifting it closer to the political discourse of European populism. Although it did formally accept democratic rules, this was a radical anti-system discourse, which placed anti-immigrant and anti-Islamic issues on the political agenda. In practical terms, the new leadership set its sights on winning a seat in parliament in the 2009 legislative elections as the icing on the cake of the party's renewal, coupled with increasing numbers of party activists and a stronger presence for the PNR across the country. They dramatically failed to achieve this goal, partly because the PNR's image became increasingly tarnished. From 2007 on, a number of the leading figures in the party were entangled in court proceedings related to the criminal activities of the Portuguese skinhead movement, which at the time was an active component of the party and, under the leadership of Mario Machado, was affiliated with the prominent neo-Nazi group, the International Hammerskin Nation.

Despite this process of renewal, the party still remained within the orbit of what political scientists categorize as the “old” extreme right. The PNR did not feel that it could identify with the values of the Carnation Revolution and the democratic regime established in its wake in 1974. Although the party abandoned the nostalgic and revanchist attitudes characteristic of old-style Salazarism, it continued to celebrate Salazar as the greatest 20th-century Portuguese statesman and to trumpet the authoritarian regime’s contribution to defending national interests and traditional values.

In this context, a series of interviews with PNR cadres on the margins of the 2010 National Congress revealed that all party members were either fairly dissatisfied or completely dissatisfied with the way Portuguese democracy functioned. They saw it as a partitocratic regime, controlled, as ever, by the same political elite. Nationalist activists were equally distrustful of all the country’s major institutions: the parliament, the government, the upper echelons of the state, and all the parliamentary parties, from the right (CDS-PP) to the extreme left (Bloco de Esquerda, or Left Bloc, BE), not to mention the media. The PNR anti-system stance is also apparent in its rejection of the right/left dichotomy and in its self-proclaimed nationalist identity, outside the framework of partitocratic polemics. The sole institution that party members regarded at all favorably was the Catholic Church, which they saw as the final bulwark in the struggle to defend traditional values.

In terms of political strategy, the focus in the first few years of Pinto Coelho’s party presidency was on gaining publicity, with provocative actions tailor-made to attract the attention of the national media. This also helped to compensate for the scant charisma of the party’s leader: Unlike other extreme-right groupings across Europe, the PNR did not derive any added value from promoting its policies through its leader’s personal magnetism.

Initially, campaigns to boost the party’s media visibility did enjoy some success, offering the spectacle of marches and demonstrations that were

rather unusual in the context of the Portuguese political agenda: against Turkish membership in the EU; against adoptions by homosexual couples, viewed by the PNR as unnatural and consequently undeserving of the rights accruing to civil unions; against the decriminalization of abortion, with the PNR participating regularly in actions organized by the pro-life movement rooted in the Catholic Church; against increasing levels of immigration from Brazil; and against the lack of security experienced by the large Portuguese-speaking community in post-apartheid South Africa. The most successful events were linked to anti-immigration issues, which played a vital role in political discourse during the first few years of Pinto Coelho's presidency. In particular, the PNR attracted national media attention with a demonstration it organized in 2005, along with two xenophobic billboard campaigns in central Lisbon in 2007 and 2008. In the first case, picking up on an episode of petty crime along the coast outside Lisbon that had been sensationalized by media outlets, the PNR managed to mobilize several hundred people to demonstrate against immigration and multiculturalism. It was the largest extreme-right demonstration – with the most effective display of public relations – since tensions had been at their height during the transition to democracy. Nevertheless, it was only a qualified success, facilitated by societal alarm stirred up by the media, and indeed a comparable demonstration organized in 2010 after a similar incident saw negligible turnout.

In the second case, the party bought advertising space along major thoroughfares in the Portuguese capital, plastering it with xenophobic posters. The first poster campaign encouraged immigrants to go back to their countries of origin, while the second presented the Swiss SVP's polemical manifesto, depicting white sheep chasing black sheep out of the country. These two campaigns provoked different reactions from Portuguese journalists. In the case of the SVP-inspired manifesto, removal of the posters by order of the city council of Lisbon led some renowned columnists to voice concerns, emphasizing that freedom of expression must be safeguarded for all legally-recognized political forces, a reaction that led to a more positive image for the PNR. The other campaign, calling

for voluntary repatriation of immigrants, became the butt of a satirical attack by a famous Portuguese comedy group, which placed a virtually identical, sarcastic billboard conveying exactly the opposite message next to the original; this stunt had the effect of distracting public attention and poking fun at the extreme right's message. Together, the two episodes demonstrate how institutional repression of the extreme right's legal political activities offered the PNR an opportunity to present itself as a victim and achieve a certain degree of solidarity, whereas the caricature mocking some of its attitudes left the party stymied, making it the object of public derision.

Anti-immigration billboard displayed by PNR

Figure 1



The PNR anti-immigration billboard displayed in downtown Lisbon's Praça Marques de Pombal in 2007 and the ironic billboard from the comedy group "Gatos Fedorentos."

Generally speaking, the campaigns the PNR organized to focus media attention on immigration during the first few years of Pinto Coelho's presidency definitely did raise national awareness of the party, yet they did not significantly increase its membership or its local support base. Since the start of the recent economic crisis and the concomitant interventions of the "troika" (the IMF, the European Central Bank, and the

European Commission) in Portuguese affairs from 2011 on, the party has slightly altered its political strategy, adopting a much less acerbic and provocative tone, and focusing (in particular) on the April 25th bankruptcy caused by the political class and (more generally) on the dangers of globalization. However, not even these issues, which are much more in tune with certain populist protest sentiments in Portugal and much less vulnerable to damaging accusations of racism, seem to have created a significant advantage for the party, which the general public continues to view as a politically unattractive, extremist force.

4. The PNR's political platform

4.1 Immigration

The PNR developed its ethno-nationalist discourse, which has been a hallmark of the Portuguese extreme right since the 1980s, to the full during José Pinto Coelho's presidency. The party adopts the classic posture of the European extreme right, viewing immigration as an invasion that poses a threat to national identity, security, employment, and trade. The PNR thus opposed the Socialist government's 2006 reform of legislation on nationality, which reinforced the principle of *jus soli* above that of *jus sanguinis*. The PNR's stance was diametrically opposed to that, calling for scrapping the Schengen Treaty, zero immigration, abolishing the family reunification mechanism, increasing public investment in the police, and lowering the age limit for criminal responsibility from 16 to 14 years. Further PNR demands included introduction of the principle of reversing migration flows (immediate expulsion of illegal immigrants convicted of crimes, and repatriation of economic immigrants unable to support themselves), a moratorium on benefits paid to impoverished immigrants, and withdrawal of funding from associations offering assistance to immigrants.

Parallel to measures to combat immigration, the PNR advocates the principle of national preference. Giving priority to the "native" population

and defending their rights is seen by the party as all the more urgent because the phenomenon of migration is causing demographic shifts that are likely to distort Portugal's ethno-cultural character.

Seeking to avoid accusations of racism and xenophobia, the PNR deploys populist discourse, claiming that anti-immigration campaigns simply represent the will of the people. Ordinary citizens, in this view, reject the provisions imposed by technocrats in Brussels, who are guilty of having exposed EU member states to this invasion of foreigners. At the same time, the party, like many of its counterparts across Europe, stresses that it is not opposed to immigrants as individual human beings, but is rather against immigration as such. It regards immigration as a phenomenon triggered by global capitalism that has brought in its wake higher crime rates, particularly among young second- and third-generation immigrants.

4.2 Europe and the European Union

The European Union is another key topic on the PNR's political agenda. In the two electoral campaigns in which PNR candidates stood for elections to the European Parliament (2005 and 2009), the party presented its case to voters by proclaiming that the European Union has a destructive impact on Portugal, both nationally and internationally. Ever since the early years of the transition to democracy, the Portuguese extreme right, which is traditionally Euro-skeptical, has pointed the finger of blame in the national arena at the governing parties (PS, PSD, and CDS) which have shaped all of Portugal's pro-Europe policies, culminating in the country's accession to the EU in 1986. According to the extreme right, this accession forced Portugal into dependency on handouts from Brussels, foisted Community directives upon the country that dismantled key domestic economic sectors (agriculture, fishing, maritime trade), and caused devastation on the environmental front with pointless, Pharaonic infrastructure programs and construction booms. The gravest consequences of EU membership – the increase in corruption and clientelism in managing Community funds and the loss of Portuguese purchasing power when the Euro was introduced – were further exacerbated in 2011,

with *de facto* suspension of national sovereignty in compliance with the dictates of the European Commission and the European Central Bank in their capacity as members of the troika.

The Portuguese extreme right also tapped into populist accusations that the people's wishes were being ignored when it came to European integration: In the three fundamental stages of this process (accession to the EEC in 1986, to Economic and Monetary Union in 1998 and to the Lisbon Treaty in 2007), the government in power always avoided a popular referendum. This strategy was tantamount to that pursued by other European partners, who organized outright reruns of national referendums that produced anti-Europe outcomes, thus providing further confirmation of the European Union's structural democratic deficit.

On the institutional front, the Portuguese extreme right rejected the federalist blueprint for Europe, for reasons that were as much cultural as they were geopolitical. Culturally this rejection stemmed first and foremost from the party's nationalism, which viewed the homeland as being of paramount importance, incompatible with any type of supranational power. Geopolitically, the rejection was rooted in their conviction that European integration is the first step toward establishing a "world government" that ignores national specificities. For the extreme right, the alternative to European integration is full national sovereignty flanked by multilateral agreements with other European states, particularly in the economic sphere, in order to boost the "Old Continent's" competitiveness on global markets.

Analyses from the Portuguese extreme right always distinguish between two concepts: the European Union and Europe. The latter is viewed as Portugal's natural frame of reference in the light of its historical and cultural baggage, particularly given the country's roots in the Catholic West. Conversely, the EU is seen as a mere technocratic superstructure in thrall to neo-liberal globalization. Now that it has shaken off any hint of the Euro-African fascination typical of old-school Lusitanian nationalism, this attachment to a clearly defined, exclusive European identity offers Portugal's extreme right the scope to incorporate into its program some

of the anti-Islamic issues central to similar groupings across Europe. In particular, the PNR considers opposition to Turkey's accession to the EU as a chapter in the struggle against the anti-European policy pursued by the United States, seen in the PNR's eyes as seeking to create dangerous Muslim enclaves on the Old Continent, as it did previously in recognizing Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo. Unlike other parties of the new extreme right in Europe, the PNR adopts an openly anti-American stance, lambasting Europe's "subjection" to the USA, condemning above all the deployment of European forces in the imperialist wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The extreme right therefore calls for Portugal to leave NATO and regain full military sovereignty.

Despite its pronounced isolationist tone, the PNR recognizes that immediately abandoning membership in international bodies is unrealistic, and would be detrimental to Portugal. In electoral campaigns it therefore prefers to talk about a phased, negotiated exit. In the meantime, it calls for a change of course in EU policies to remedy the unfair competition that Portuguese workers face due to the free circulation of labor, seeking also to allocate more resources to "native" families by transferring resources out of programs to assist immigrants in Portugal. Likewise, it demands measures to counteract the falling birth rate and the aging of the "native" European population. To achieve these goals, the PNR always has been involved in cooperation at the European level with other nationalist parties, both those that hold parliamentary seats and those that do not. In 2009 it joined the *Alliance of European National Movements* (AENM) as a founding member.

4.3 Reform of the state

While the PNR takes a clear stance and proposes drastic measures on immigration, abortion, homosexuality, and Europe, the picture is rather different when we consider its views on reform of the Portuguese state. This has been the central issue in political debate in Portugal ever since the start of the financial crisis, particularly under the tutelage of the IMF-ECB-European Commission troika.

If we consider the clarity – or lack thereof – in the reform policies proposed in Portuguese extreme-right discourse, a pronounced dichotomy between the *pars destruens* and the *pars construens* becomes apparent.

The *pars destruens* of the PNR draws on all the slogans of anti-system and protest populism: the corruption of the parties in power and economic lobbies, which makes a judicial intervention based on the Italian “Mani pulite” (“Clean Hands”) model urgently necessary; the political patronage system and the extravagant squandering of public monies by local administrations, which are also controlled by parties from the governing coalition; and the politicization of judges, which deprives the people of an equitable, well-functioning judicial system. During electoral campaigns the PNR adopts a more hardline anti-elitist tone, attacking rival parties across the political spectrum, and in particular targeting the moderate-right Portuguese party, CDS-PP, accusing it of propping up the alternating PS and PSD governments that have held power for nearly forty years. By taking this position the PNR seeks to establish its credentials as an anti-system party, to attract non-voters, and above all to head off tactical voting, which has always resulted in considerable support for the moderate right-wing party from voters who might otherwise be tempted to support more radical proposals, particularly on topics such as immigration, security and Europe. On the other hand, the CDS-PP, seeking to retain and attract voters, adopts a more radical line on these very issues during electoral campaigns or when in opposition.

Conversely, the *pars construens* is not so clear or forceful, putting forward a hybrid line that combines statist and liberalizing elements. The PNR frequently criticizes the current Portuguese state, painting it as a totalitarian Leviathan that demands ever more resources from citizens while offering fewer and fewer services. The PNR calls for modernization of the state by reductions in public debt, yet without dismantling the welfare state, seeking to achieve this through radical cuts in the numbers of public officials, but without raising the pensionable age for civil servants. When it comes to the private sector, the party advocates reducing fiscal pressure, establishing a more equitable distribution of wealth, and fostering small traditional businesses, which it claims are being hammered by ex-

cessive taxation. It rejects full liberalization of markets, as well as measures to make labor-markets more flexible and thus more precarious. It also calls for state price regulation of basic commodities, yet is opposed to drastic interventionist measures, such as nationalization of the banking sector. The party generally favors public-private partnerships to boost the national economy, even while it has consistently opposed the former Socialist government's plans for major public works projects (high-speed trains, new airports and motorways), viewing such schemes as wasteful, beneficial only to private interests and to the parties within the system. More recently, the PNR attacked the current center-right government's privatization program and its decision to open up the Portuguese economic system to foreign capital, with massive influxes of capital from China, Brazil and Angola.

These protectionist elements are counterbalanced by the party's acceptance of the idea of private sector investment in the welfare state, for example in pension funds, the healthcare system, and education. For the PNR, the state, which is obliged to provide such services, must concentrate on making the system sustainable rather than on ensuring that it remains entirely in the public sector. In particular, the extreme right proposes public-private partnerships in health and education through a voucher system. The idea here is that individuals and families could use vouchers in private-sector establishments, thus amortizing the costs and avoiding the shortcomings of the public sector. In the realm of education, the proposed family voucher is linked to the extreme right's struggle to ensure freedom of choice for families about the education of their offspring. The PNR believes that the state should merely provide a minimum school curriculum, common to all Portuguese students, leaving it up to families to determine the details of the course of study. Freedom of choice for families would apply above all for sensitive issues such as sexual education, which the PNR thinks should be optional rather than mandatory in public schools. The PNR's positive opinion of private schools, particularly Catholic ones, stems from their conviction that the public education system in democratic Portugal is the arena in which the left currently wins young hearts and minds through propaganda and indoctrination.

When addressing the issue of the welfare state's sustainability, the PNR generally prefers to focus on demographics and the problem of aging, with calls for more state support for Portuguese families and cuts in aid to immigrants. They reject the idea, favored by the governing coalition and the extreme left, that immigration could provide a means of funding the welfare system. In this case too, the state interventionism that the PNR advocates is to some extent at odds with the party's call for greater oversight on social welfare payments by tax authorities, coupled with cuts in benefits and in the minimum guaranteed income program, which the extreme right believes often turns recipients into "social parasites".

5. The PNR's electoral performance

In terms of electoral performance the results chalked up by the PNR in the first decade of its existence demonstrate how marginal the extreme right is on the Portuguese political scene. In its debut in the 2002 legislative elections, the PNR won an insignificant 0.09 %, equivalent to 4,712 votes. In the next legislative elections in 2005, the party doubled its share of the vote to 9,347 (0.16 %). There was a further slight increase in the 2009 legislative elections, up to 11,628 votes (0.20 %), and this trend continued in 2011, when the PNR received 17,548 votes (the equivalent of 0.31 %).

In the 2004 European parliamentary elections, the PNR received 8,405 votes (0.25 %), with a slight increase in 2009: 13,214 votes (0.37 %). At the local level, there was no change in the percentage of the electorate voting for the PNR in administrative elections, which did not even open up any significant scope for the party to establish a broader presence across Portugal.

Although the PNR has almost doubled its share of the vote during the last three elections, its marginal position becomes apparent if the absolute values for this electoral performance are compared either with those of the moderate right during the same period or with those of the extreme right from the late Seventies to the Eighties. In the former case, the PNR

obtained almost 18,000 votes in 2011, contrasting with support for the CDS-PP, now part of the governing coalition, which increased from 400,000 votes (7 %) to 600,000 votes (11 %) between 2005 and 2011. In the latter case, the *Partido da Democracia Cristã* (PDC) maintained an average of around 40,000 votes in the six legislative elections in which it stood between 1976 and 1987. In other words, the best result the PNR has achieved so far (17,548 votes) is still lower than the PDC's poorest performance (in 1976, with 29,874 votes received) and is equivalent to roughly just a third of the PDC's best showing in 1979 (in 1979, with 72,514 votes received). This comparison is significant when appraising the evolution of the challenge posed by the extreme right for Portuguese democracy since its establishment.

The PNR continues to put a positive spin on its performance, depicting it as a slow but inexorable march towards attaining the longed-for parliamentary representation. Over the last few years the party has therefore concentrated on consolidating its public image and in extending its reach across more of the country, aiming to capture the protest vote, which is reflected in increasingly low electoral turnout (41 % of eligible voters abstained in the last legislative elections, held in 2011). Over the last few months the party has developed a “national opposition” discourse, which now views globalization as the arch-enemy, personified in Portugal by the international troika (IMF-ECB-European Commission) together with its national “agents”: namely, all parties across the parliamentary spectrum.

6. Conclusions

The academic literature on the extreme right in contemporary Europe classifies Portugal among the countries where this phenomenon is fairly weak or indeed non-existent. This is often explained as the result of the country's experience of right-wing authoritarianism in the recent past – as is also the case for other countries in southern Europe (such as Greece and Spain) – which is held to inoculate Portugal against the re-emergence of a significant extremist presence. This analysis, which identifies a mar-

ginalized extreme right still linked to an authoritarian political culture, is in essence confirmed by the PNR's political experience, despite the renewal of the party since 2005 and its ethno-nationalist break with the myth of European-African Portugal.

The campaigns for national and European parliamentary elections in which the party has fielded candidates over the last seven years reveal how the PNR has attempted to break out of this marginalized position by incorporating topics and strategies typical of parties from the new extreme right across Europe. This involves adopting populist language steeped in notions of identity politics and protest; an anti-elitist stance, calling for direct democracy; a certain degree of economic liberalism in defending national capital from global high finance; condemnation of partitocracy; national chauvinism vis-à-vis the welfare state; anti-Europeanism; and anti-Islamism. However, the PNR has not managed to personalize its politics. The Portuguese extreme right lacks a charismatic leader of the type that has facilitated the rise of populist groups elsewhere in Europe. Initial attempts to make José Pinto Coelho the official face of the party have largely failed to impress the mass media and public opinion, and have not even worked with the various small groups that make up the Portuguese extreme right. Rather than rallying behind Coelho as a charismatic leader, these groups have taken advantage of his weakness, using it to provide a justification for the radical right's continuing fragmentation, which is caused more by personal differences than ideological, programmatic, or strategic ones. The most recent example is the rift within the PNR that gave birth to the short-lived Movimento de Oposição Nacional (National Opposition Movement/MON) in June, 2010.

In contrast to other populist groups that emerged as protest parties and developed into identity parties (e.g., anti-Islamism and anti-immigration), the origins of the PNR lie in the xenophobia that has informed radical Portuguese activism over the last twenty-five years. For much of that time, its political manifesto revolved around the ethno-nationalist struggle. It is only in the last two years that the party has changed its own political discourse, partly in response to its dismal electoral fortunes, and

has focused to a greater extent on the serious economic crisis that afflicts the country, accompanied by the discrediting of the political class, increasing levels of social conflict, and pronounced constraints on national sovereignty due to the troika's interventions. Although this is a potentially opportune moment for anti-system parties, the impact of the growing swell of public discontent in Portugal has not extended beyond public demonstrations. Despite the scale of these protests, they have not yet produced new anti-system parties, nor led to a significant increase in support for traditional opposition parties, specifically the Bloco de Esquerda and the *Partido Comunista Português*. It is therefore unsurprising that the extreme right has not seen even the slightest increase in membership figures to date. Furthermore, over the last two years the extreme right has been particularly sluggish about mobilizing support. The demonstrations traditionally organized on June 10 and December 1, marking historic, official anniversaries that play a key part in Portuguese national identity, attracted just a few dozen people. Even the extreme-right bloc organized at the large anti-government demonstrations in 2012 garnered scant support.

What explanations can be given for the weakness of the extreme right in Portugal? Why is the PNR likely to remain marginalized and in limbo for the foreseeable future, despite the existence of a growing pool of politically disenchanted citizens who potentially might be swayed by populist rhetoric? The reasons for this failure lie both within and outside the PNR. The most significant internal factor for the extreme right's limited success in Portugal is indubitably a crisis of leadership, with current leaders unable to rally the radical fringe around a common political project, to provide a clear structure for the party across the entire country, or even to make local cadres more professional, something that is indispensable if a party hopes to attain a modicum of local electoral success. On the contrary, the most visible PNR leaders behave like amateur volunteers, paying little attention to the developing strategies designed to improve communication with the public and make a mark in elections. The PNR is hardly represented at all at the grassroots level, although closer contacts here between the party and the citizenry, coupled with efforts to highlight

problems reflecting key PNR issues (such as security and immigration), might allow for a certain degree of success in administrative elections. That, in turn, could serve as a point of departure for institutional involvement, while also enabling party cadres to become more professional. As the PNR is not really represented across the length and breadth of the country, the electorate continues to view the party through the filter of the mass media, which depict it as an extremist group nostalgic for the former authoritarian regime and close to the headline-generating lunatic fringe.

In addition, one should note that, from an organizational point of view, the existence of a single extreme-right party rather than the multitude of radical groups active in the initial years of the democratic regime does not mean that there is greater cohesion at the nationalist end of the political spectrum; on the contrary it is indicative of the way in which the far right has atrophied, losing both members and intellectual capacity. This impoverishment in regard to human resources has been simultaneously the cause and effect of both falling voter and activist numbers and diminishing potential for dialogue and debate with the moderate right. During the transitional years, the radical right did tap into this potential, albeit with scant results, but the PNR, in contrast, has never sought to develop such contacts.

While the key internal determining factors in the immobility of the Portuguese extreme right are its uncharismatic, unprofessional leadership, its failure to establish a solid alliance of radical forces, and its limited grassroots presence, the most significant external factor is the competition it faces from the moderate right. The CDS-PP manages to modulate its own political discourse by picking up on sensitive topics addressed by the extreme right and thus averts a hemorrhage of its most radical voters (although existing studies do not offer a clear indication of precisely how large this more extreme fringe might be). Against that backdrop, the PNR's political program is not well designed to compete with that of the CDS-PP. On so-called "values" issues (such as patriotism, drugs, abortion, homosexuality, and the defense of the nuclear family), the PNR takes the

same positions advocated much more effectively by its more moderate competitor. When it comes to Europe, the CDS-PP has managed to shed the anti-Europeanism of the 90s, which did not sit well with the generally pro-European mood among the Portuguese public at large. It has adopted a more realistic stance of defending national interests within the European institutional framework, a more attractive proposition for conservative voters than the isolationism advocated by the extreme right. On immigration, the CDS-PP has managed to formulate a legalistic political discourse entirely devoid of racist overtones and more in tune with the general mood in Portugal. There are certainly pockets of latent xenophobia in Portugal, but it has proved difficult for parties to tap into them simply by adopting an ethnocentric tone. In addition, that kind of language has little impact outside the two metropolitan centers of Lisbon and Porto, where the number and impact of immigrants is not as great as it is in these urban areas.

Even anti-liberal topics, which constitute the major distinction between the PNR's program and that of the CDS-PP, do not serve as a significant magnet for anti-system voters. That is largely because these topics are monopolized by two parties from the radical leftist, anti-globalization camp, the PCP and BE. Both parties hold seats in parliament and are rooted in social movements that make them much more substantial and visible than the PNR. In that sense, the PNR's anti-globalization line, in contrast to those of the PCP and BE, does not have the slightest influence on the mood of anti-liberal protest that is increasingly prevalent within Portuguese public opinion.

Regardless of what happens to populism as a political phenomenon in Portugal, the current extreme right, in the form of the PNR and like-minded smaller groups, is highly unlikely to enjoy significant electoral success in the future. An increase in its membership numbers or activities is equally improbable. Sidelined as it is by other conservative forces, the extreme right's influence on the course of contemporary Portuguese politics is likely to remain marginal.

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Right-wing protests on July 17, 2010, against the Gay and Lesbian parade, Europride 2010, in Warsaw

Radical Nationalism in Poland: From Theory to Practice

Rafał Pankowski | Marcin Kormak

In the classic formulation of Ernest Gellner, “Nationalism is primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent. Nationalism as a sentiment, or as a movement, can best be defined in terms of this principle.”¹ Gellner contends that nationalism is “the organization of human groups into large, centrally educated, culturally homogeneous units.”² In practice, in Poland (and in the broader East-Central European region) the nationalist principle has expressed itself most often in the form of ethno-nationalism, where ethnic bonds of shared ancestry take priority over other affiliations.

The extreme right in Poland includes radical nationalist groups that subscribe to a strongly anti-pluralist, homogeneous vision of the national community and reject basic democratic values. Violence often accompanies extreme-right politics, either directly or implicitly. The “Brown Book,” published by the “Never Again” association, documented over 600 cases of hate crimes and hate speech in the period of 2011–2012. In Poland, the majority of the victims of right-wing extremist violence do not belong to ethnic minorities, but rather include political opponents, homosexuals, members of smaller religious groups, and the like.

Nationalist ideology here is often based on a belief that “Poles are Catholic” and its accompanying assumption that members of ethnic and religious minorities cannot be truly “Polish.” The founding father of modern

1 Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), p. 1.

2 Ibid., p. 35.

Polish nationalism, Roman Dmowski, famously argued in his 1927 book, “The Church, the Nation, and the State,” that “Catholicism is not an addition to Polishness, coloring it in some way, but is a part of its essence; in large measure it defines its essence. Any attempt to separate Catholicism from Polishness, to separate the nation from religion and from the Church, threatens to destroy the nation’s very essence.”³

Dmowski’s National Democrats (or the “Endeks” as they were known) developed as a movement in the first decades of the 20th century. They sought to prevent social revolution while redefining national political priorities. According to the Endeks, Polishness had to be defined in strictly ethnic terms, and thus they opposed not only the occupying powers, Germany and Russia, but also other groups, such as Jews. Gradually, anti-Semitism became a crucial part of the core message of the nationalist movement. Dmowski wrote, for example: “The struggle against the obstacles placed in the way of the Polish question by the Jews became henceforth the most difficult task of Polish politics.”⁴

Despite the fact the National Democrats did not hold power, by the late 1930s Dmowski’s ideas on nation and church became virtually hegemonic among Poles in general and university students in particular. As Szymon Rudnicki has said, “The general success of the nationalist movement owed to the indoctrination of a significant part of the society in the stereotype of ‘the Polish-Catholic’ as well as in extreme nationalism and anti-Semitism: three elements that crystallized into a specific mentality.”⁵

The National Democrats’ admiration for the Nazis was limited due to their deeply rooted anti-German stance. The political leadership of the Endek movement never condoned the genocide committed by the Nazis. However, it can be argued that the Endeks – through their anti-Semitic

3 Roman Dmowski, *Kościół, naród i państwo* (Warsaw, 1927).

4 Roman Dmowski, “The Jews and the War,” in Richard S. Levy, *Antisemitism in the Modern World: An Anthology of Texts* (Lexington, Massachusetts and Toronto: DC Heath and Company, 1991), pp. 188–189.

5 Szymon Rudnicki, *Obóz Narodowo-Radykalny. Geneza i działalność* (Warsaw: Czytelnik, 1985), p. 333.

campaigns in the 1920s and 1930s – contributed to a social climate of hostility toward Jews.

The National Radical tradition on the Polish far right, which resulted from a split in the Endek movement in the mid-1930s, can be seen as the Polish equivalent of European fascism. Inspired directly by the Italian and German models of the mid-1930s, it has survived well into the 21st century and today serves as a lodestar for contemporary extremist movements. The violent National Radical Camp (Oboz Narodowo-Radykalny, or ONR) was banned by the Polish government shortly after its formation in 1934, and although that ban remained in place until the outbreak of World War II, ONR groups in practice continued their activities semi-legally throughout the late 1930s. It is noteworthy that despite the appeal of Nazi ideology, only a minority of the National Radical activists collaborated with the Germans during World War II; many of them actually joined underground groups fighting the occupation.

After the war, the leader of the ONR faction known as “Falanga”, Boleslaw Piasecki, was allowed to reconstitute that group, under the label “Pax.” Officially registered in 1952, Pax attracted former members of the ONR with its nationalist, Catholic, and socialist rhetoric. Pax operated legally until the end of communist rule in Poland, running its own publishing house and enjoying representation in parliament.

The communist system enshrined the ethno-nationalist principle in the legal and political frameworks of each country in which it operated. Across Eastern Europe, communist institutional practice inscribed each territory and even each individual with an ethno-national essence, and ethnic homogeneity was positively celebrated. These measures generated an overall atmosphere of intimidation that culminated in the forced emigration of about 15–20,000 Jews from Poland in 1968 and 1969. Far from being an isolated episode, this was an element of “the long-term strategy of Polish communists seeking a nationalist legitimization.”⁶ The

6 Jan Skórzyński, *Od Solidarności do wolności* (Warsaw: Trio, 2005), p. 195.

anti-Jewish and nationalist discourse employed by the communist authorities had become a permanent feature of political life in Poland, one that would be echoed later by the nationalist and populist extreme right.

After 1989, national and ethnic minorities operated often with financial support from the state, to revive their cultures and traditions. However, as Michael Fleming argues, “the marginalization of minority communities continues to be the case despite the advent of the new minority rights regime, the entry of Poland into the European Union and the passing of a law on national and ethnic minorities.”⁷

The social and economic grievances that resulted from the transition to capitalism have rarely been framed in left-wing or progressive terms. In contrast, a nationalist and populist discourse is often invoked. In 2008, Naomi Klein observed: “If the left did not seek the votes of the socially excluded in Poland, the extreme right did.”⁸ According to Jacek Kuron, a leading politician who helped shape the Polish transition but grew increasingly critical of its outcome, “The shock had to lead to a rebellion. Perhaps that rebellion was largely irrational. Perhaps it was absurd and even dysfunctional from the point of view of those who rebelled.”⁹ “Unhappy people” fell prey to political manipulation; “their bad fortune was politically interpreted by someone, their frustration was politically explained, their aggressiveness politically channeled.”¹⁰ As David Ost notes, “Hatreds were a way to explain economic problems.”¹¹ Equally important, however, has been the further development of a nationalist culture that channelled social anger toward nationalist discourses.

7 Michael Fleming, “The Political Economy of Marginalization: The Belorussian minority in Podlaskie,” in *Annus Albaruthenicus* (2008), p. 45.

8 Naomi Klein, “Dlaczego wierzyacie neoliberalom?” in *Gazeta Wyborcza*, November 29, 2008, available online at <http://wyborcza.pl/1,76498,6004534,Dlaczego_wierzyacie_neoliberalom_.html> (last accessed November 30, 2008).

9 Jacek Kuroń and Jacek Żakowski, *Siedmiolatka czyli kto ukradła Polskę?* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, 1997), p. 79.

10 Ibid., pp. 16–17.

11 David Ost, “The Radical Right in Poland: Rationality of the Irrational,” in Sabrina P. Ramet (ed.), *The Radical Right in Central and Eastern Europe Since 1989* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), p. 88.

Politically, the Polish extreme right remained almost completely insignificant prior to the early 2000s. By that time, however, it had established sizeable cultural bases, pockets of social legitimacy which political organizations could build on. These cultural resources proved highly useful in helping the extreme right to enter the political mainstream around the middle of that decade.

The radical nationalist groups that emerged after 1989 have many things in common. First, they share a vision of national renewal that is predicated upon purging all alien influences, especially Jewish ones. Second, they are hostile toward both communism and liberal capitalism, which they identify with Jews and Freemasons. Third, their central political category is “the nation, understood as an unchanging and eternal entity”; they regard the nation “as the optimal form of community, one that therefore imposes deep obligations upon the individual.”¹² Finally, they are united by a violent rejection of pluralism and democratic values.

The number of Jews in Poland today is very small, estimated at about 10,000. Nevertheless, anti-Semitism still plays an important role in contemporary Polish far-right discourse. Ireneusz Krzemiński notes that “since 1992, social centers have appeared which can strengthen and conserve such attitudes – for example Radio Maryja, known for the public promotion of decidedly anti-Semitic views and opinions.”¹³ According to David Ost, “In Poland, the radical right’s hatred of choice has been the hatred of Jews.”¹⁴ Anti-Semitism can be seen as an “attack on the universal (that is, democracy) through an attack on a particular (an ethnic group),” and the relative absence of actual Jews does not seem to pose an obstacle to that sort of scapegoating. In the words of Konstanty Gebert, “Anti-Semitism without Jews must not necessarily fade away. It may also become fixed and permanent – and this is what happened in Poland.”¹⁵

12 Czesław Maj and Ewa Maj, *Narodowe ugrupowania polityczne w Polsce 1989–2001* (Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 2007), p. 272.

13 Ireneusz Krzemiński, “O Żydach i antysemityzmie po 10 latach,” in Ireneusz Krzemiński (ed.), *Antysemityzm w Polsce i na Ukrainie. Raport z badań* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, 2004), p. 33.

14 David Ost, “The Radical Right in Poland,” *op cit.*, p. 89.

15 Konstanty Gebert, *Living in the Land of Ashes* (Warsaw and Budapest: Austeria, 2008), p. 82.

In the period 2001–2007, the nationalist far right had its parliamentary representation in the form of the League of Polish Families (Liga Polskich Rodzin, or LPR), which garnered 8.4% of the vote in 2001 and 7.97% in 2005. In 2006–2007, the LPR entered a coalition government with the populist Self-Defense Party and the national-conservative Law and Justice Party (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, or PiS). The government used hardline nationalist language, while Radio Maryja, led by Father Tadeusz Rydzyk, provided the coalition with its main symbolic framework. The LPR head, Roman Giertych, held the post of the minister of education, and his controversial policies in particular led to a wave of civil society protests. In the autumn 2007 election, Giertych's party polled a mere 1.3% of the vote. Since then the far right has lost its parliamentary outpost.

The PiS has managed to seize the political terrain occupied by the LPR, replacing it as the chief advocate of right-wing views. Since 2007 it has been the main party of the opposition. According to Aleksander Smolar, the “vision of the state [held by the PiS leadership] is hierarchical, [revolving around] the nation, community, patriotism, traditionally-interpreted values, state paternalism, and social solidarity.”¹⁶ Thus, the ideology of the PiS could be characterized as national-conservative populism. The PiS absorbed the far-right surge through its appeal to illiberal democracy. In both 2007 and 2011, a number of activists with known far-right views were elected to parliament on the PiS ticket, and the PiS again drew a major part of its support from a strategic alliance with Radio Maryja. The xenophobic populist mentality represented by organizations such as Radio Maryja looks set to remain a significant factor in Polish politics in the foreseeable future.

Since 2007, extreme-right groups have re-focused their activity on the street level, and the November 11th Independence Day marches in 2011 and 2012 gave them a special opportunity to demonstrate their new

16 Kamil Durczok and Piotr Mucharski, *Krótki kurs IV RP* (Kraków: Znak, 2007), p. 30.

strength and presence in that arena. In what follows, we will attempt to describe some aspects of these important events, drawing information from eye-witness accounts and other reports.

On November 11, 2011, participants in the so-called Independence March organized in Warsaw by the All-Polish Youth (*Młodzież Wszechpolska*, or MW) and National-Radical Camp (*Obóz Narodowo-Radykalny*, or ONR) triggered riots in the streets, attacking police officers and causing considerable damage to property. About 10,000 people took part in the demonstration, including far-right hooligans supporting various Polish football clubs. Other participants included nationalists from Italy (*Forza Nuova*), Spain (*Democracia Nacional*), Sweden (*Nordisk Ungdom*), Hungary (*Jobbik*, *Hatvannégy Vármegye Ifjúsági Mozgalom*), Serbia (*Srpski Narodni Pokret 1389*), Slovakia (*Slovenské Hnutie Obrody*), Czech Republic (*Autonomous Nationalists*), Ukraine (*UNA-UNSO*), Belarus, and Lithuania (*Autonomous Nationalists*). In the city center, radical nationalists used force in an effort to confront anti-fascist demonstrators. Marching nationalists threw stones, trash bins, and flares at the police, and hurled various objects at the Russian Embassy while chanting offensive slogans. Damage was also inflicted on vehicles of media outlets that were reporting the event. A television camera recorded a masked man hitting a photojournalist in the face. A group of masked men destroyed a van belonging to the TV channel, TVN, and a mobile TV studio was set on fire. Other damaged media vehicles belonged to Polsat News, Polish Radio, and Superstacja TV. During the Independence March, participants chanted “Whole Poland, all white”; “Roman Dmowski, liberator of Poland”; “Tomorrow belongs to us – the nationalists”; and “Down with Brussels.” Some displayed Celtic crosses (an international racist symbol of “white power”), some wore clothes with a “Combat 18” logo, and others carried a banner which read, “Will Poland be the new Palestine?” On that day the police detained 210 people, including 92 citizens of Germany (participating in the counter-protests), as well as citizens of Britain, Belgium, Denmark, Spain and Hungary. Twenty-nine people were taken to hospital and 40 police officers were injured. Damage was

inflicted on 14 police cars, as well as to cobbled pavements, bus stops and random vehicles. In the evening of November 11th, President Bronisław Komorowski condemned the riots and discussed the necessity for legislative changes concerning the safety of public gatherings.

Two days later, the Warsaw Prosecutor's Office charged 46 people who were detained during the Independence March, including 35 individuals charged with aggravated assault on police officers. On November 15th, the police detained the man who had attacked the photo-journalist. The perpetrator turned out to be a football hooligan who had been detained previously in May of 2011 during riots that occurred after the final game of the Polish Cup in Bydgoszcz.

A parallel demonstration in Wrocław – the “March of Patriots” – was organized by the National Rebirth of Poland (Narodowe Odrodzenie Polski, or NOP). On November 5, an invitation to participate in that march had been posted on the website of Dawid Jackiewicz, an MP from the Law and Justice party (PiS). In attendance at the march were hooligans belonging to such clubs as Śląsk Wrocław, Sparta Wrocław, Promień Żary, Miedź Legnica, Gryf Słupsk, and Górnik Wałbrzych i Chrobry Głogów. Other participants included nationalists from Spain (representatives of Movimiento Social Republicano), Flanders (Nieuw-Solidaristisch Alternatif), Sweden (Svenskarnas parti), Italy (Forza Nuova), Ireland, and the Czech Republic. The radical nationalists threw firecrackers, torches, and rocks at the participants of an anti-fascist counter-demonstration. They also attacked the police, who wielded tear gas and batons. Meanwhile, they chanted: “Great nationalist Poland”; “Beat the red scum!”; and “Roman Dmowski – the liberator of Poland.” The hooligans of Śląsk Wrocław carried a banner stylized as the logo of Blood and Honor (an international neo-Nazi organization) and flags with Celtic crosses, while NOP members displayed a banner inscribed with the words, “Great Catholic Poland.” The day after the march, to celebrate the party's anniversary, the NOP held a congress under the slogan, “30 years of struggle.” Racist and neo-fascist leaders from many countries attended, among

them Roberto Fiore (head of Forza Nuova), Stefan Jacobsson (Svenskarnas parti), José Luis Vázquez (Movimiento Social Republicano), Kris Roman (Nieuw-Solidaristisch Alternatif), Robert Lane (Thought and Action, from Ireland).

One year later, on November 11, 2012, Warsaw was the site of the so-called Independence March, organized by All-Polish Youth (MW) and the National-Radical Camp (ONR). The Independence March committee included Jan Kobylański, the notoriously anti-Semitic chairman of the Union of Polish Associations in Latin America; right wing journalists Rafał Ziemkiewicz and Jan Pospieszalski; Roman Catholic Bishop Antoni Dydycz; and Law and Justice MPs Prof. Krystyna Pawłowicz, Artur Górski, and Stanisław Pięta. The event – which led to clashes that injured 22 police officers and caused 176 people to be detained – attracted about 30,000 participants, including members of other far-right organizations from Poland and members of the Hungarian neo-fascist party *Jobbik* (the Movement for Better Hungary) as well as football hooligans supporting Legia Warszawa, Jagiellonia Białystok, Wisła Płock, Lech Poznań, Resovia Rzeszów, Lechia Gdańsk and Zagłębie Sosnowiec. Several times, demonstrators clashed with the police, who deployed pepper spray launchers and water cannons. Nationalists chanted “Beat red scum!”, “Poland for Polish People, foreigners out!”, “Lvov and Vilnius we remember!”, “Neither red, nor rainbow, but rational”; and “Poland for the Polish, not for lefties.” They carried banners with Celtic crosses and the phalanx, a symbol used by inter-war fascist organizations. At a rally that took place at the end of the march in Agrykola Park, All-Polish Youth leader Robert Winnicki called for an “overthrow of the republic,” explaining that “we want to create power that lefties, liberals, and faggots are afraid of. We want to create the power of the Polish nation.” National-Radical Camp leader Przemysław Holocher said that people currently in power will be held responsible for all their deeds and will not be forgiven, to which the crowd responded by shouting, “Hang them!” Nationalists announced their intention to form the so-called National Movement (modelled after Hungary’s *Jobbik*) and recruit members of the Independence Guard (hit

squads modelled after the Hungarian Guard, a paramilitary organization established by *Jobbik* whose members wear black uniforms identical to the ones worn by Hungarian Nazis during World War II).

Football hooligans who took part in the Independence March battered a videographer with Polish Television and damaged his camera. According to his testimony, “I saw that the hooligans were beating a young man who was holding a tiny camera in his hands. So I began to film it. Once they were done with him, they went after me... I was hit at the back of my head and fell to the ground. Someone kept beating me, and then then took my camera and smashed it.”

In addition, participants of the Independence March attacked the office of “Lambda,” an LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans) welfare NGO. The perpetrators threw stones and bottles at the building and smashed three windows. Although several people were inside, no one was injured. The District Police Headquarters was notified about the attack, and when the incident was investigated the next day, a duty sergeant told one Lambda member that it would not have happened if LGBT people did not “flaunt their sexuality.” The organization filed a complaint about the policeman’s behavior.

In Wrocław, a parallel march occurred on November 11, 2012, organized by National Rebirth of Poland (NOP). Other groups that took part in the event included Autonomous Nationalists, Falangists, delegates from the Italian neo-fascist organisation Forza Nuova, nationalists from Belgium and the Czech Republic, and hooligan football fans of Śląsk Wrocław, Sparta Wrocław, Promień Żary, Chrobry Głogów, Lechia Zielona Góra and Miedź Legnica. During the march they chanted, “No to corporations, no to Eurocrats, Poland only for the Poles”; “No Union, no NATO, Poland only for the Poles”; “End the Jewish occupation”; “USA, empire of evil”; “National Radicalism”; and “Hit the red scum!” They brandished flags sporting the Celtic cross and the phalanx as well as a banner with the name of the Śląsk Wrocław football team written in the characteristic style used by Blood and Honor. Although several nationalists threw rocks

at policemen and firecrackers as passers-by, the police did not intervene. At the end of the demonstration, they burned the EU flag. After the march, dozens of men armed with sticks and bats attacked a building occupied by squatters, the Wagenburg Cultural Center. One of the victims said: "When the first car came near the building, two bald thugs came out of it and asked if there's anyone from Antifa here and whether we want a fight." Shortly thereafter, a group of men crossed over the fence and entered the premises. They threw Molotov cocktails and rocks at the building, broke windows, demolished equipment left outside, and vandalized parked cars. One of the squatters was severely injured with bats and brass knuckles, which left him with broken legs and head wounds. An ambulance took him to the hospital in critical condition. Two other persons also needed hospitalization. On November 13, the head of National Rebirth of Poland, Adam Gmurczyk, published a thank you note to the men responsible for the attack. He posted a picture on his Facebook account under the caption, "This is war. Our country, our rules," along with the following remark: "The media reported that after the Patriot's March a group of volunteers from Wrocław went to the local squat and helped renovate the place... I thank them for that. Do not stop!" On December 16th, police arrested five perpetrators of the assault: residents of Wrocław, aged 18 to 29, who were associated with football hooliganism. All were charged with active participation in violence against a person or property.

Examination of the Independence Day marches of 2011 and 2012 reveals an increase in the numbers of participants and a growing potential for mobilizing of extra-parliamentary far-right groups on the street level, amplified by their alliances with right-wing hooligans and football fans. The radical nationalist ideology promoted at the marches led to numerous conflicts and violent incidents. At the same time, support of right-wing parliamentarians and public figures for these marches underscores the highly problematic relationship between the anti-democratic extreme right and elements of the parliamentary conservative right. This relationship may aid the far right in further regaining its political legitimacy and influence.

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Right-Wing Extremism in Romania

Radu Cinpoes

1. Introduction

Extreme right-wing nationalism in Central and Eastern European (CEE)¹ countries enjoyed a surprising and dramatic resurgence after the fall of communism in the region (Verdery, 1993). Although Romania was no exception to this general pattern, it is nonetheless atypical by virtue of the unusual virulence and resilience of its rightward turn. The divergence stems from both the communist regime's deployment of nationalism as a means of consolidating and legitimating its rule, and the violent nature of the December, 1989 events and power vacuum² that emerged after the regime collapsed. Together, these factors helped to create a fertile breeding ground for right-wing extremism and, in a broader sense, were also partially responsible for the comparatively slow transition to a post-communist order. As a result, extreme right-wing groups in Romania scored electoral successes very quickly in the new era. The Party for Romanian

1 The descriptor "Central and Eastern Europe" is employed here in the same way Cas Mudde (2005: 162) used it: namely, to refer to those post-communist states that have joined the European Union (Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia).

2 I refer here to the fact that in Romania there were no organized groups able to challenge the dominance of the communist regime through elections and to make a legitimate claim for power (in the same way it happened, for example, in Poland or the former Czechoslovakia). As a result, members of the communist nomenclature were able to exploit the chaotic events of December, 1989 and to hijack the transition from communism.

National Unity (PUNR)³ and the *Greater Romania Party* (PRM) were the first extreme right-wing formations in CEE to enter government (as coalition partners) in 1992, followed by the Slovak National Party in 1993 (Mudde, 2005: 165). Subsequently, the PRM reached the peak of its electoral success in 2000, when it became the largest opposition party, and its leader, Corneliu Vadim Tudor, managed to enter the second round of the presidential elections, anticipating by two years Jean-Marie Le Pen's similar feat in France.

In recent years, the representation of the extreme right has increased in the parliaments of various CEE countries and across Europe generally, as evidenced by electoral outcomes in Bulgaria, Denmark, France, Greece, Hungary, the Netherlands, and Sweden, among others. Romania, however, seems to buck the trend. Since the year 2000, the PRM's support has declined consistently, and currently the party is not represented in parliament. Moreover, no other extreme right-wing party in Romania has managed to achieve significant electoral success, and the achievements of the PRM are unlikely to be replicated in the near future.

Comparatively speaking, then, the situation in Romania may appear reassuring. However, new radical right-wing groups have emerged and intend to participate in politics. Extreme nationalism, revanchism, and intolerance toward selected groups (including the Roma, ethnic Hungarians, and sexual minorities) are still manifest outside electoral politics, in both institutionalized and non-institutionalized forms. Furthermore,

3 The PUNR was the first extreme-right party to emerge in post-communist Romania. It was formed in March of 1990 as the Party for the National Union of Romanians in Transylvania (the PUNRT), the political arm of the Romanian Hearth Cultural Union (VR), which itself was born as a reaction to the organization of the ethnic Hungarians, in December of 1989, into the Hungarian Democratic Union of Romania, or UDMR (Gallagher, 1992). It changed its name to PUNR in June of 1990 (most likely to de-emphasize its local character in an attempt to build on the minimal success of the elections held during the previous March). However, the PUNR remained largely a parochial party. It was overtaken in terms of success by the Greater Romania Party (the PRM) and was eventually absorbed into the Conservative Party (PC). The VR later severed its ties with the PUNR. It still operates as a peripheral organization and it maintains its strong nationalist and authoritarian stance.

what I call *casual intolerance*⁴ is a common occurrence in public and private discourse. Far from being harmless, this widespread phenomenon contributes to the perpetuation and reinforcement of racism and exclusion in Romanian society. Thus, in order to establish an accurate picture of the extreme right-wing landscape in Romania, a closer examination is required. To that end, the present study surveys the current key players in that movement, focusing on their organization, rhetoric, support, and impact. In doing so, it also offers reflections on more general aspects of Romanian society.

Some brief conceptual clarifications are necessary at the outset. The literature on extreme nationalism and right-wing politics abounds in names and labels attached to the phenomena investigated. There is little agreement on what constitutes the “right,” which tag – “extreme right,” “far right,” “radical (populist) right,” etc. – provides the most accurate descriptor, and what kinds of political entities fall into that category (Hainsworth, 2008: 5–23; Mudde, 2000: 5–16; Eatwell, 2004: 5–15). For the purpose of this study, the label “extreme right” will be used with reference to groups that – following Mudde’s maximal definition – display nativism, authoritarianism, and populism as key ideological commitments (2007: 20–23). Thus, the extreme right exhibits “exclusionary representations of the nation” as well as anti-parliamentary, anti-pluralist, and anti-systemic tendencies, even when operating within the norms of liberal-democratic politics (Hainsworth, 2008: 11–12).

2. Extreme Right Actors

Despite the current lack of extreme-right representation in the Parliament, the landscape of extremism in Romania contains a plethora of diverse groups. Such manifestations occur both within and outside the framework of electoral politics. In the first category, three actors stand

4 The term “casual intolerance” borrows from Michael Billig’s (1995) notion of banal nationalism. It refers to day-to-day discursive practices displaying embedded intolerance that often go unnoticed, but have the negative effect of reinforcing stereotypes. Idioms such as “înecat ca țiganul la mal” (drowning like a gypsy by the bank/shore) are illustrative examples.

out: the *Greater Romania Party* (PRM), the *New Generation Party-Christian Democratic* (PNG-CD), and the “*Everything for the Country*” Party (TPȚ). These parties deserve close examination, whether owing to their previous electoral success (the PRM), their influence on partisan dynamics (PNG-CD), or the character and significance of their discourse (TPȚ).

Among groups that are not engaged in electoral politics, the New Right (ND) deserves special mention because of its overt use of the Iron Guard legacy (on which it competes directly with the TPȚ), the effective dissemination of its ideas on the Internet (and during various public appearances), and its thus far unrealized ambition to stand for elections. The Romanian Orthodox Church (BOR) is also an institution that has traditionally mixed a nativist form of nationalism with authoritarian tendencies and a propensity for involvement in public life.

In addition to these groups and institutions, which represent the most significant current extreme right players in Romanian society, many smaller organizations operate. Andreescu (2004: 172), for example, has identified 28 organizations holding racist and extremist views. It is exceptionally difficult, however, to confirm the number of such groups. Because many are organized as cultural associations and foundations, operate on a largely parochial level, and have limited memberships, their activities, and indeed even their appearance or disappearance, often fall under the radar. Moreover, a large number of groups are only active on the Internet, where they disseminate – often anonymously – racist, discriminatory, and intolerant materials and ideas. It is not the purpose of this study to identify and examine all such groups, but rather to concentrate on those with direct political relevance.

Finally, if we look at extreme-right subcultures, we find that there are no skinhead-type groups operating in Romania. Random acts of violence motivated by racism, homophobia, or intolerance do occur, but have not been widespread in recent years (the U.S. Dept. of State, 2011). Similarly, while cases of football hooliganism – in which fan groups display racist banners and utter racist chants (mostly hostile to the Roma) – do take

place, their outbreak is spontaneous rather than orchestrated in advance. These incidents are part of the *casual intolerance* phenomenon mentioned above.

2.1. The Greater Romania Party

Corneliu Vadim Tudor and Eugen Barbu, two former sycophants of Ceaușescu's regime, founded the PRM a year after they had established a weekly publication with the same name. Under Tudor's leadership, the PRM's success increased steadily, peaking in the 2000 elections, when it became the largest party in opposition. Just four years later, however, the party was already on the road to decline, for reasons that included a failed attempt by Tudor to shed the party's and his own anti-Semitic image (which undoubtedly alienated some core supporters); internal struggles; mass defections; and a realignment of the Romanian political landscape, which generated a challenge to Tudor's dominant "justice versus corruption" rhetoric. The party failed to secure any seats in the Parliament in the 2008 elections, and Tudor moved on to become a Member of the European Parliament (Cinpoes, 2010). In their most recent electoral test – the general elections of December, 2012 – the PRM hit rock bottom, garnering less than 1.5% of the votes and no seats in either legislative house (BEC, 2012a). This is the worst result ever for the party, and is likely to represent the end of electoral politics for Tudor and his cronies.

The PRM describes itself as "center-left, of a national direction" (Statutul PRM). However, the "national doctrine" outlined in its official publication highlights the PRM's glorification of its nationalist predecessors and its claim to represent their nationalist goals (Doctrina PRM). This, together with its staunch revanchism,⁵ its authoritarian organizational hierarchy, its hate speech against sexual and ethnic minorities (particularly

5 As its name (which points to the enlarged territory of Romania following World War I) suggests, the party has been militating openly for the restoration of the Romania's 1918 borders.

Hungarians, Roma, and Jews), and its determination to position itself against the political mainstream, warrants its inclusion among representatives of Romania's extreme right.

Ideologically, the PRM employs three broad value-frames, each with its own discursive component (Cinpoș, 2010: 115–122). First, the notion of territory and ancestry is expressed through an emphasis on Romanian territorial integrity. The historical continuity of Romania (defined in purely ethnic terms), coupled with the imperative of return to the country's pre-1940 borders, is a hallmark of PRM discourse. The ethnic Hungarian community in Romania is the central target of the party's hate-speech and fear-mongering. Hungarians are accused of plotting the secession of Transylvania with the cooperation, or at least connivance, of Romanian authorities, and the party has repeatedly called for the outlawing of the UDMR, which it refers to as a "terrorist organization" (see Agrigoroaie, 2003; *România Mare*, August 2002; Tudor, 2001: vol. II, 60; and Agrigoroaie, 2012). On the other hand, the PRM holds as one of its chief goals the unification of Romania with its so-called "lost territories" in Bessarabia and Bukovina. The party has consistently pursued this revanchist line, lobbying, for example, for the freeing of Ilie Ilașcu, who was imprisoned by the authorities of the self-proclaimed independent Transdnistria. He was subsequently freed and is a member of the PRM, having held a seat in the Romanian Upper House between 2000 and 2008.

The second value-frame in the PRM ideology is the notion of sovereignty and independence, and its corresponding articulation of Romania's position in Europe and the world, which is filled with ambivalence. On the one hand, the party emphasizes a mythologized version of Romania's historical continuity and its importance in Europe. On the other hand, the party has accepted membership in the EU, albeit reluctantly. Furthermore, PRM discourse focuses substantially on the external "other," which it accuses of conspiring ceaselessly to subjugate and destroy Romania. The favorite targets of the PRM's rampant anti-Semitism are the "Jewish Mafia," "Zionism," the USA (controlled by Israel), Judeo-Freemason groups, and Western elites more generally, who are supposedly trying to

gain hegemony through the establishment of a “New World Order” (Cinpoș, 2010: 118–120).

Finally, the Christian Orthodox tradition and accusations of material and spiritual corruption form an essential aspect of the PRM’s ideology. The corruption issue has featured prominently in party discourse, especially since the year 2000. Political elites and state institutions are blamed for the weakness of law and order in Romania. From this point of view, the PRM positions itself as populist anti-system party. I have argued elsewhere, however, that the extreme nationalist dimension of the party is relevant here, because nationalism serves to legitimize the solutions offered by the PRM and associate them with Romania’s Christian Orthodox tradition (Cinpoș, 2010: 121). Thus, societal economic failure goes hand-in-hand with widespread moral degeneration, for which both the political class in general and specific minority groups, such as gays and the Roma,⁶ are held responsible.

As is the case with most right-wing extremist groups, a charismatic leader – Corneliu Vadim Tudor – stands at the center of the PRM’s structure and organization. Internal democratic processes are absent, and decisions are made based on Tudor’s whims. This situation led over time to the alienation of prominent figures, who eventually left the party. In fact, Tudor himself has often emphasized his role as the party’s chief decision-maker. Individuals who have attempted to undermine his authority have been expelled from the party and subsequently named and shamed in the party’s mouthpiece magazines, *România Mare* and *Tricolorul* (Tudor, 2002; Cinpoș, 2010: 132–133, 168–170). More recently, Tudor and the PRM were also abandoned by their youth organization and the editor of the *Tricolorul.ro* newspaper.⁷

6 Tudor’s description of homosexuality as a “shallow and repulsive vice” that Romanians “judge very harshly, as being diabolical,” which was directed at the former US Ambassador in Romania, Michel Guest (who had openly declared he was gay), is illustrative of the PRM’s approach to these issues (Cinpoș, 2010: 140).

7 See statements explaining their actions at <http://www.ziarultricolorul.ro/>, January 30, 2012 and May 7, 2012 (last accessed on August 11, 2012).

Traditionally, the PRM attracted people sympathetic to the nationalist policies of the communist regime as well as former members of the communist nomenclature (including retired members of the army and of the *Securitate*) who resented their disempowerment (Deletant, 1993: 111–113). In other words, the members and supporters of the PRM are mainly drawn from among those who have been affected negatively by the post-communist realities and are likely to display nostalgia for the communist era (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2004: 63). That constituency tends to be older, not especially well-educated, and predominantly working-class (Sum, 2010: 22–23).

The controlling character of the PRM leader and his increasingly erratic behavior have led to a significant drop in both the party's membership rolls and its levels of electoral support. The main beneficiary of the PRM's decline is the People's Party – Dan Diaconescu (PP-DD)⁸ – which also has gathered support from those disgruntled with the Social Liberal Union (USL) and the Democrat Liberal Party (PDL). At the moment, the PRM retains only minor local influence, having won seven mayoral mandates and 600 local council seats (but not a single country council presidency and/or county council seat) in the elections of June of 2012 (BEC, 2012b). Once Tudor's term as a Member of the European Parliament (MEP) comes to an end in 2014, the party and its leader are likely to fall into complete obscurity.

2.2. The New Generation Party-Christian Democratic (PNG-CD)

The New Generation Party (which in 2006 changed its name to the *New Generation Party-Christian Democratic*) was founded by the former Bucharest mayor, Viorel Lis. In 2004, George Becali – the owner of the

8 The PP-DD is a populist party founded by Dan Diaconescu, the owner of the successful tabloid-type television channel OTV. It gained significant ground in the recent parliamentary elections, obtaining 47 seats in (13.98 % of the vote for) the lower house and 21 seats in (14.63 % of the vote for) the upper house (BEC, 2012a). However, the PP-DD does not meet the criteria for this study. While sharing some of the characteristics of extreme-right groups (populism being the most obvious one), it lacks a clear nativist dimension.

football club “Steaua Bucharest” and a controversial figure in Romanian public life – became the party’s leader. At this time the party moved in the direction of extreme nationalism, intolerance of difference, and Christian Orthodox beliefs. There was speculation that the PSD informally supported Becali’s decision to enter politics, in the hope that his party might erode the PRM’s electoral base (Shafir, 2004).

Whether or not such allegations are true, the party in 2004 did offer an alternative to potentially disillusioned PRM voters. However, it performed modestly at the polls, failing – with only 2.26 % of the votes for the Upper House and 2.23 % for the Lower House – to secure any seats in parliament. The 2008 elections brought similar results – 2.53 % in the Senate and 2.27% in the Chamber of Deputies – and again, no seats (SRSP, 2004; BEC, 2008). After 2008, the trajectories of the PNG-CD and the PRM intersected: despite previous verbal tussles between the leaders of the two parties, Becali ran on the PRM lists in the European Parliamentary elections of 2009 and secured an MEP seat, even while being investigated and arrested on charges of kidnapping! Like the PRM, the PNG-CD has been declining in strength; in the 2012 local elections, its performance was dismal, netting only one mayoral position and 108 local council seats (BEC, 2012b).

To add insult to injury, in October of 2012 (only two months before the parliamentary elections), Becali announced his intention to run as a PNL candidate, and subsequently won a seat in the Lower House (Adevărul, 2012; BEC, 2012a). One immediate consequence was that the PNG-CD did not compete in the elections but threw its support to the USL, of which the PNL is a part.

Under the leadership of Becali, the party’s ideology has come to resemble that of the inter-war fascist Legionary Movement, with an added twist of opportunism, demagoguery, and gutter talk. In the past, Becali has appropriated symbols and slogans of the Iron Guard, and the slogan currently displayed on the party’s official website – “Serving the Cross and the Romanian Nation!” – reflects a fusion of conservative Christian

Orthodox values with a mythologized nationalism. In terms of structure, the PNG-CD resembles the PRM, in the sense of being centered largely on its leader. Thus, what the party lacks in program is made up for by Becali's homophobia, intolerance, and rhetoric of insults. Becali already has been fined repeatedly by the National Council for Combating Discrimination for exclusionary statements against women, the Roma, and other ethnic minorities, and he is notorious for his prejudice against gays as well, having sworn that he would never hire gay players on his football team and having declared that "homosexuals are protected by Satan" (ProTV, 2012).

Becali's constant references to God and the Orthodox Church and his manipulation of Legionary symbols may have offered voters – as Frusetta and Glont argue – "a rallying point for protest against conventional politics" (2009: 564). However, crass populism thus far has been his recipe for success, and competition from the PP-DD on that score is likely to dash his prospects in future elections. As for the committed sympathizers of the Iron Guard and its legacy, it is unlikely that they were ever taken in by Becali's pretences. The PNG-CD's core constituency has been similar to some extent to that of the PRM. For a while, the PNG-CD was actually home to former PRM members and supporters. As Sum (2010: 22–23) points out, however, despite the common class base, the PNG-CD seems to attract more young and unemployed voters.

All in all, the road ahead looks bleak for the PNG-CD. After a tentative attempt to forge an alliance with the PRM for the local and general elections of 2012 (which could have been mutually beneficial, given that both parties were struggling at the time), their respective leaders failed to reach an agreement (Ionel, 2012). When Becali joined the PNL there was talk about the PNG being absorbed into the PNL. However, this possibility has been put on the back-burner, and it is unlikely to materialize, particularly in the face of resistance on both sides. Several prominent members of the PNL expressed their opposition to such a move, and voices of dissent were also heard within the PNG-CD camp: prior to elections, the Mediaș PNG-CD party organization, unhappy with



Parliamentary elections being held in Cluj, Romania, 450 kilometers from Bucharest, on December 9, 2012

Becali's machinations, defected en masse to the PDL (Georgescu, 2012; Evenimentul Zilei, 2012).

2.3. The “Everything for the Country” Party (TPT)

One party that – despite operating since 1993 – has only recently achieved (marginal) electoral success is “Everything for the Country” (TPT).⁹ The group was known as the Party for the Fatherland (PPP) until February of 2012, when a court approved its use of the name TPT, the moniker of the political arm of Romania’s Legionary Movement during the inter-war period. The party’s determination to solidify its right-wing bona fides are apparent not only in the name-change effort, but also in the statement

⁹ The party managed to obtain one single local council seat in the 2008 local elections and two local council seats in those of 2012, but in 2012 had a more visible public presence (BEC, 2008b; BEC 2012b).

on its official website specifying that it was “re-established in 1993” – a clear allusion to the Iron Guard (Partidul “TPT”; no date given). Only months after securing its new name, the party experienced further legal trouble and uncertainty. In July of 2012, the public prosecutor launched a court case against the TPT, demanding that it be dissolved because of its fascist, racist character and its continuity with the Legionary Movement (Ciupercă, 2012).

Membership in and support for the party comes mostly from younger, educated people, who sympathize with the fusion of ethnic nationalism, Christian Orthodox faith, folk traditions, and racial purity based on nationalist foundation myths that characterized the Iron Guard. With a few exceptions, such as the President of the Party, Coriolan Grigore Baci, who is in his fifties, most TPT members are in their thirties (including the executive president, Florin Dobrescu). At the other end of the spectrum, the party includes within its ranks a number of former members of the Iron Guard, some of whom survived imprisonment during the communist era. The inclusion of this latter group among party members legitimizes the party’s claim to continue the legacy of the Iron Guard.

Recently, the party has been trying to enhance its political profile as an actor with electoral ambitions. Its program incorporates garden-variety conservative themes such as the importance of the family, the church, and the struggle against bureaucracy and corruption, which it addresses in vague terms (Partidul “TPT”; no date given). However, the party is focusing its efforts on grass-roots activities. Once again emulating the Iron Guard, members of the TPT often organize ritualized activities and cultural events, ranging from marches to celebrations of revered nationalist heroes and personalities to work camps and visits to Christian Orthodox churches and monasteries. While participation in these events tends to be low in numerical terms, the party nevertheless aims for maximum visibility; for example, participants often wear traditional costumes and carry Romanian as well as party flags. Another point of similarity with its inter-war predecessor is the fact that the group has received significant moral support from monastic figures within the Orthodox Church.

Party discourse emphasizes what are considered to be central Romanian spiritual values (especially those rooted in folk traditions and Christian Orthodoxy) and highlights the threats they face from actors inside and outside the country. Thus, in the online publication *Buciumul* (The Bugle) – one of the TPT’s mouthpieces – one can find numerous articles denouncing plots by the Hungarian state or the Hungarian community in Romania designed to undermine Romanian territorial integrity. Likewise, the movement supports unionist claims concerning the “lost territories” of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina. In regard to external threats, Western organizations perceived as agents of globalization are often portrayed as the instruments of secret societies (such as Freemasonry) aiming to establish a New World Order. As is common in right-wing ideology, sexual minorities are also a central target, and several contributions to the online publication have alleged links between homosexuality and pedophilia.¹⁰

While irrelevant in electoral terms, the TPT’s recent public presence may hold relevance for the general social and political context. It reveals that the Iron Guard (and what it stood for) not only continues to have currency but can also be used openly as a legitimate discourse and political alternative in contemporary Romania.¹¹ The future of the party is still in the balance, depending on the decision of the courts. However, even if it is disbanded, it is likely that its members and sympathizers will find a different outlet for their extremist views.

10 Several entries on *Buciumul*, either original or imported from other online outlets, focus on these aspects. See, among others, the following articles: “Ce mărturisiri face un francmason pe patul de moarte,” available at <http://www.buciumul.ro/2012/06/25/ce-marturisiri-face-un-francmason-pe-patul-de-moarte/> and “Secretul mișcării pentru drepturile homosexualilor: pedofilia,” taken from the Christian Orthodox website, “Familia Ortodoxă” (<http://www.familiaortodoxa.ro>), available at <http://www.buciumul.ro/2012/06/28/secretul-miscarii-pentru-drepturile-homosexualilor-pedofilia/>

11 On a related note, the indecisive attitude of the courts in dealing with the party is, itself, telling of the inability of Romanian institutions to take a firm and unwavering position on extremism. For example, in 2012 a court deemed it legal that the party register under the name, “Everything for the Country,” after a different court rejected the same name in 1993. Only months later, yet another suit was brought against the party, this one raising the issue of its ideology rather than its name. It is odd that this issue was not addressed prior to that time, given that party’s ideology had not changed since its formation in 1993, irrespective of the name it carried.

2.4 The New Right (ND) Movement and the Nationalist Party

The TPT is not the only organization in post-communist Romania to lay claim to the legacy of the Iron Guard. Its main rival in that regard has been the New Right (ND) movement. Founded in 2000, the ND has been a consistent element in the extreme right landscape in Romania. The movement boasts over 25 local branches (including in Germany, Italy, and the Republic of Moldova) as well as an active online presence. Apart from its official Internet address (www.nouadreapta.org) and blog (<http://blog.nouadreapta.org>), the websites of some of its branches, and the many blogs created by members and supporters, the ND movement boasts a YouTube-based television channel with more than 70 uploaded videos and over 200 subscribers (YouTube, *NouaDreaptă TV*).

The similarities between the ND movement and the TPT party are manifold. Like the latter, the ND appeals primarily to young, educated people with strong nationalist leanings and Christian Orthodox beliefs. Its president is a 34-year-old lawyer, Tudor Ionescu, and most of its leaders are university students or graduates in their twenties and thirties.

The main themes of the movement's discourse are likewise drawn from a mythologized interpretation of Romanian history informed by Orthodox values. But its revanchist tendencies are more explicitly affirmed than those of the TPT. The official website, for example, displays the slogan, "For a dignified and strong greater Romania," along with a map that features the country's 1918-1940 borders. The group's "Bessarabian" branch and its activities in the Republic of Moldova reinforce this theme. Another central theme of the movement is opposition to the rights of sexual minorities. In regard to public appearances, the ND is best known for organizing counter-marches (called "marches for normality") against demonstrations by sexual minorities in Romania. More broadly, the ND focuses in unambiguously intolerant terms on anyone deemed to be contributing to Romania's economic, social, or moral decline. Externally, the preferred targets of the ND discourse are institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank, which are often portrayed as agents of Freemasonry

(ND, Acțiuni 2012). Internally, the “gypsy problem,” “Hungarian irredentism,” and the conduct of the entire political class are favorite scapegoats.

As recently as the end of 2011, the ND movement made an attempt to enter electoral politics, when it tried to register under the name of the Nationalist Party. The courts, however, rejected that application. As a result, the main relevance of the movement resides in organizing grassroots activities outside the realm of partisan competition, such as work camps, marches, and commemorative events. In this respect also, it resembles the “Everything for the Country” Party.

2.5 The influence of the Romanian Orthodox Church (BOR) on extreme-right discourse

The inclusion of the Romanian Orthodox Church in this study is justified by the role it has played in informing and influencing extreme-right discourse. The BOR has a long history of articulating and/or supporting an ethnically-based understanding of the nation. Over time, its ideological position has intersected (directly or implicitly) with that of other extremist groups. In inter-war Romania, the collaboration between the Iron Guard and the Orthodox Church was extensive, with a large number of priests sympathizing with the Iron Guard and even running for public office under the banner of the “Everything for the Country” Party (Iordachi, 2004: 35). Currently, the attitude of the BOR can be summarized – as Andreescu (2004: 178) points out – on the basis of four characteristics: its exclusivist, nationalist definition of the Romanian state (equating the state with the nation and the nation with the Orthodox faith); its authoritarian, fundamentalist tendency to subordinate the notion of rule of law to that of divine right; the use of aggressive instruments in order to protect its position; and the ability to mobilize people and resources to achieve its aims.

Considering that Romania has recently occupied sixth place in a global index of religiosity (WIN-Gallup International, 2012) and that Christian Orthodoxy is the country's dominant faith, it is not surprising that the Church should exert a large influence over public life. Politicians across the ideological spectrum tend to pander to the BOR – for example, by attending religious celebrations to curry popular support – and the institution is able to pressure parliament and political parties in order to achieve favorable outcomes for its various causes. During the electoral campaign of 2004, for example, after being repeatedly criticized by Pimen, the Archbishop of Suceava and Rădăuți, then Prime-Minister and presidential candidate Adrian Năstase was forced to seek a public reconciliation with the Archbishop and to support the Church's lawsuit seeking the return of 90,000 hectares of forest (*Ziarul de Iași*, 2004).

The nationalist and intolerant attitudes of the BOR are visible through its involvement in other areas of public life. It has been a staunch activist against the rights of sexual minorities through its publications and has provided a rallying point for civil society groups that oppose homosexual rights.¹² In addition, there are documented links between the BOR and neo-Legionary groups, including meetings of such organizations that have been hosted in churches and participation by Orthodox priests in events that they have sponsored.¹³

All in all, the BOR has played an important role in shaping right-wing practice and discourse in Romania. Not only has it provided ideological inspiration for extremist movements and organizations, but its involvement in public life has often lent legitimacy to extremist actions and views.

12 In 2006, for instance, twenty-two civil society groups and a number of private individuals signed a petition to the representatives of the BOR requesting them to take a public stand against “the aggressive agenda pursued in Romania by homosexual activists.” Details available at http://ro.altermedia.info/familiesocietate/societatea-civila-impotriva-promovarii-homosexualitatii-memoriu_4159.html (last accessed on August 11, 2012)

13 Pictures and articles available on the official websites of the TPȚ (<http://www.pentrupatrie.ro/>) and ND (<http://www.nouadreapta.org/>) document these links.

3. The Relevance of the Extreme Right in Romania

As argued earlier, and as indicated by our brief survey of relevant extreme-right organizations in Romania, there does not appear to be a serious chance that any of these groups will gain significant political ground in the foreseeable future. There are several reasons for this. First, the Romanian electoral system has been characterized since 2008 by mixed-member proportional representation, with a reasonably high threshold (5 % for political parties and up to 10 % for political alliances) for success, which favors larger parties (Monitorul Oficial, 2008). Second, the parliamentary elections of December, 2012 produced predictable results: the USL secured a comfortable majority in both legislative chambers, winning over 66 % of the seats in the lower house and over 69 % of the seats in the upper house. The *Right Romania Alliance* (ARD) – a last-minute coalition that brought together the PDL, the Civic Force (FC), and the *Christian-Democratic National Peasant's Party* (PNȚCD) – only garnered about 2 % more seats than the PP-DD, while the UDMR barely managed to surmount the electoral threshold (BEC, 2012a). The PRM failed dismally, and neither the PNG-CD (due to Becali's departure to the PNL) nor the TPT (hampered by its ongoing court case) stood for elections at all. The fact that extreme-right groups were not able to exploit the political instability that prevailed in 2012 may have been seriously compromised them. The traditional electoral base of both the PRM and the PNG-CD¹⁴ appears to have moved towards the next populist group promising unrealistic solutions to their problems; this time, it is the PP-DD that attracted support and emerged in the elections. In the meanwhile, supporters of the inter-war Legionary Movement are very much divided between the TPT and ND, with accusations and invectives being traded between members and supporters of the two groups in the robust Romanian extreme-right blogosphere.

14 It is important to point out that in the case of the PNG-CD, the party-leader conflation underscores the decline of the party. The fact that Becali managed to get elected with over 60 % of the votes in the Bucharest Sector 6 constituency suggests that large number of his supports followed him to the PNL (BEC, 2012a).

The fact that Romania does not appear to be following the trend of increasing electoral support for the extreme right visible elsewhere in Europe may seem laudable. However, there are some social, cultural, and political realities in Romania that may serve to temper one's optimism about the fading of the extreme right.

First, there is a very large number of extreme-right media sources, including many neo-Legionary, Internet-based outlets (websites, blogs, publications, Facebook groups and pages, etc.), that disseminate overtly racist and intolerant materials. We should not underestimate their importance.¹⁵ As Goodwin (2012) suggests, the Web can serve several purposes for such groups: it assists them in their "quest for credibility," it provides a space within which they can sustain the loyalty of their members and generate a sense of community and comradeship, and (last but not least) it offers them the possibility of instant communication and mobilization for collective activities. If nothing else, the Web has helped to validate messages and reinforce stereotypes that would otherwise not stand up to common-sense scrutiny.

Second, public opinion in Romania is susceptible to exclusionary and discriminatory messages. A survey by INSOMAR (2009) has uncovered highly prejudiced attitudes toward minority groups. The study found that people with atypical sexual orientations have the worst image in the eyes of the public, with 55 % of respondents proclaiming that sexual minorities need medical treatment, 90.5 % declaring that they would neither themselves marry a homosexual nor accept someone in their family doing so, and 70.9 % stating that they would not have a homosexual as a close friend. Negative attitudes towards the Roma also prevail, with 56 % of respondents declaring that they feel uncomfortable around Roma people and 20 % stating that the Roma should not be admitted to certain shops and public places.

15 As recently as January of 2013, for example, the police launched an investigation into a group named the Autonomous Nationalists in Timișoara, numbering around 30 members, which posted on its blog a reward offer of 300 RON (approximately €68 or \$87) to any Roma woman volunteering to undergo sterilization (Jedu, 2013).

Third, intolerant and discriminatory tendencies and practices are very much present in the discourse and actions of public figures, and – despite existing anti-discrimination legislation – are still treated with leniency or outright indifference by the authorities. One needs to look no further than the racist comments against the Roma made by two former foreign ministers, Adrian Cioroianu in 2007 and Teodor Baconschi in 2010, or the case of PSD Senator Dan Sova, who – despite having been involved in a scandal over his denial of the Jewish holocaust in Romania – was nevertheless appointed Minister for Relations with the Parliament (Barbu, 2011; Mihăilescu, 2012).

Finally, the fact that extreme-right parties have not been successful does not necessarily mean that people sharing their views are absent from mainstream politics. One characteristic of post-1989 Romanian politics is what has been dubbed *traseism politic*, or “political cruising.” Thus, several former members of extreme right-wing political parties have subsequently found refuge in other parties. Lia Olguța Vasilescu, who formerly occupied important positions in the PRM, is currently a prominent member of the PSD. The Mayor of Craiova, Anghel Stanciu, is currently a PSD Deputy, having abandoned the PRM in 2005. Valeriu Tabără – former leader of the PUNR – is currently a PDL deputy; Vlad Hoge, a young lawyer with extreme nationalist views, defected from the PRM to the PNG-CD, then to the PC, and most recently to the PP-DD, where he serves as executive secretary. The latest prominent case of party migration – George Becali’s move to the PNL (after running for the European Parliament elections of 2009 on the PRM’s lists) – shows that mainstream parties are willing to make unscrupulous compromises for electoral gain. There are many other such cases of party migration, and it is hard to imagine that the views held by politicians while they were active in extreme-right groups have not found at least some measure of support in the parties to which they now belong. If nothing else, the fact that some of the individuals mentioned above managed to rally significant electoral support may suggest that their success occurred because of those views and attitudes, rather than in spite of them.

All of these factors create a fertile breeding-ground for extremism and intolerance, and provide populist leaders and groups with themes that can be easily and effectively employed. President Băsescu, for instance, has shown a willingness to play the nationalist card on several occasions, emphasizing the national, unitary character of the Romanian state. His remarks hinting at the Hungarian government's mobilization of Romania's Hungarian minority in a secession plot have incensed a large number of citizens (Cinpoș, 2010: 179–182). And his response to the Moldovan Communist President's accusation that Romania is attempting to destabilize that country (alluding to the relaxation of a policy for granting Romanian passports to Moldovan citizens) is yet another illustration of tit-for-tat politics that trades on a revanchist interpretation of history (Kramer and Hill, 2009). While it is unlikely that such remarks would trigger actual conflict between Romania and its neighbors, they do function as exercises in populist point-scoring between officials in the countries involved. At the same time, longer-lasting exchanges of this sort may result in the mutual radicalization of political discourse, in growing support for extremist politics, and in the cooling of diplomatic relations between states.

We should also note that against the current background of economic decline and austerity, the extreme right does have the potential to gain ground. Antipathy towards the EU and other international organizations, such as the IMF, has been growing in Romania (as indeed it has elsewhere in Europe), but the country's current dependence on IMF loans has led an increasing number of citizens to view the government's relationship with that organization as one of puppet and master. This sentiment feeds straight into the anti-European and anti-globalization discourse of populist extreme-right groups. While it does not necessarily translate into support for such groups, it does open the way for a further radicalization of mainstream politics.

4. Dealing with the extreme right: possible counter-measures

The specialized literature highlights the challenges of dealing with the extreme right, owing to the diverse nature of the groups subsumed under this umbrella term and the kinds of threats they pose to democracy (Mudde, 2004). The concluding section of the paper will evaluate two ways of approaching these challenges, as they present themselves in the Romanian case: first, strategies involving political parties and state institutions, and second, strategies involving civil society, the media, and other non-state actors.

As far as the former are concerned, Romanian legislation prohibits a number of extremist phenomena. These include fascist, communist, racist, or xenophobic activities, organizations, and symbols, as well as discrimination based on race, gender, disability, ethnicity, nationality, language, religion, social status, beliefs, sexual orientation, or age, among other categories (the U.S. Department of State, 2011). In addition, state institutions such as Avocatul Poporului (the Office of the Ombudsman) and the National Council for Combating Discrimination (CNCD) are supposed to protect the rights of every citizen. However, state authorities, including the police, have often been criticized for providing inadequate protection for civil rights, for dragging their feet (especially in cases involving high officials), for playing down incidents involving anti-Semitic vandalism, and for mistreating certain groups of people, especially the Roma (the U.S. Department of State, 2011).

While progress has been made by state actors, the problem is that their public conduct is not on par with the legislative framework in which they operate. It is still quite common for members of mainstream political parties to adopt overtly nationalist, racist, or discriminatory stances in their public rhetoric, ranging from Holocaust denial to inflammatory statements.¹⁶

16 Some significant examples have been discussed earlier. In addition, it worth mentioning the legislative proposal made in 2010 by PDL MP Silviu Prigoană to change the designation “Roma” to “țigani,” allegedly in order to avoid confusion with “roman” (Romanian). The proposal was eventually dismissed by the Senate, but it had the support of the Romanian Academy. Meanwhile, an Internet petition advocating that change already has managed to collect over 77,000 signatures, and a kindred Facebook page thus far has attracted 20,000 supporters.

Thus, fines imposed on people such as Becali for his discriminatory utterances are merely slaps on the wrist, having no immediate consequences. Worryingly, the televised media appear to encourage such behavior. For example, Becali receives significant airtime on account of the high ratings that his offensive outbursts generate, and he is ever willing to oblige. A vicious circle that is very difficult to break is thereby created, one that normalizes prejudice and discrimination by casting them in the light of entertainment. As long as Romanian politicians persist in practicing “casual intolerance,” and political parties and state institutions are unwilling to sanction perpetrators in meaningful ways (e.g., removal from public positions and exclusion from parties), a culture of exclusion will be reinforced and legitimized.

Civil society organizations carry the twin burdens of educating the public in the spirit of inclusion and tolerance and of pressuring political institutions and media outlets to stop disseminating extremist and discriminatory materials. Over the long run, a “carrots and sticks” approach might yield positive results.

Education – the “carrot” in our analysis – is the most important prerequisite of a tolerant society, and this is an area that could be fruitfully addressed by NGOs and civil society groups. Since it is so often Romanian party elites and other public figures who express intolerant attitudes, efforts to increase their commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusiveness might help to reduce casual intolerance in the public at large. In its later stages, this project could shift toward the promotion of institutional changes that reflect similar commitments. Eventually, public institutions could be helped to develop in-house educational programs involving all members and employees, thus producing a self-sustaining framework. These specific short- and long-term activities might be combined with broader campaigns, such as lobbying the relevant authorities to improve the civic education curriculum in schools. NGOs are already devoting considerable effort to raising public awareness of discrimination and intolerance. Such educational projects, however, could benefit from more extensive public exposure.

Additional strategies could be modelled on the work of anti-fascist organizations in countries like the UK and Sweden, which often stage counter-protests (not unlike the marches by the ND in Romania) designed to minimize the impact of events organized by extremist groups. The idea here is not only to undercut the specific goals of those events and organizations, but also to display a robust and visible critique of extremism generally, and to provide channels and incentives for action on the part of individuals who are supportive, but otherwise passive and unengaged. Finally, applying more pressure on public authorities to enforce anti-discrimination legislation – the “stick” in our analysis – may also help to combat right-wing extremism and intolerance in Romania. Currently the CNCD is relatively toothless in dealing effectively with discrimination. The existing framework of criminal law could provide better protection to citizens, if only relevant authorities (such as police officers, prosecutors, and the courts) could be persuaded or pressured to make use of it.

Because public opinion in Romania is still highly polarized on issues of equality, diversity and inclusion, civil society organizations face an uphill struggle. But significant progress has been made in the past decade, thanks to both the establishment of the CNCD and the proliferation of organizations dedicated to fighting discrimination.

5. Conclusions

As this study has suggested, extreme-right groups have a low electoral profile in Romania. A visible surge in the political success of such parties is very unlikely in the near future, a prognosis confirmed by the outcome of the parliamentary elections in December of 2012. This is not to say, however, that there is no extreme right in Romania. It is troubling that racist, discriminatory and intolerant attitudes are latent in Romanian society. Casual intolerance is widespread, yet the political class seems unwilling to try to banish it from public life. As a result, racist or discriminatory statements often go unpunished. When politicians refuse to lead by example (which is certainly the case in Romania, given the

indifference and fecklessness of state authorities), civil society organizations must take up the slack by attempting to re-educate the public, even against formidable obstacles. In conclusion, despite the poor showing of extreme-right parties (which signals a difference from the current trend in other European countries), there is potential for the growth of extremism in Romania, which would align it with the general direction in Europe.

List of Abbreviations:

BEC	The Central Electoral Bureau
BOR	The Romanian Orthodox Church
CEE	Central and Eastern Europe
CNCD	The National Council for Combating Discrimination
EU	The European Union
FC	The Civic Force
IMF	The International Monetary Fund
ND	The New Right
PDL	The Democrat Liberal Party
PNG-CD	The New Generation Party – Christian Democratic
PNȚCD	The Christian-Democratic National Peasant's Party
PP-DD	People's Party – Dan Diaconescu
PPP	The Party for the Fatherland
PRM	The Greater Romania Party
PSD	The Social Democrat Party
PUNR	The Party for Romanian National Unity
SRSP	The Romanian Society of Political Sciences
TPT	Everything for the Country
UDMR	The Hungarian Democratic Union of Romania
USL	The Social Liberal Union

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Demonstrations in Kiev (Kyiv), Ukraine in November, 2012 after parliamentary elections

The Extreme Right in Ukraine's Political Mainstream: What Lies Ahead?

Mridula Ghosh

The results of the October, 2012 elections to the Verkhovna Rada (parliament) opened a new chapter in legislative politics in Ukraine, a large Eastern European country of 45 million people that is seeking closer integration with the EU. Despite modest expectations about their electoral prospects, both the extreme right and the extreme left won significant numbers of seats and established formal delegations (“factions”) in parliament, shunting aside their moderate, centrist, and democratic rivals. Significantly, the parliamentary leadership trio today consists of a Speaker from the ruling *Party of the Regions*, a First Deputy Speaker from the Communist Party (which won 13.18 % of the vote, translating to 32 seats), and a Deputy Speaker from the extreme-right All-Ukrainian Union *Svoboda* (or “Freedom”) Party, hereafter referred to as “*Svoboda*.” While the Communists have been represented in the national legislature ever since Ukraine achieved independence, the fact that *Svoboda* won more than 10.45 % of the proportional representation vote (which translated to 25 seats) as well as 12 seats in single-mandate constituencies struck many citizens like a bolt from the blue. For the first time, the extreme right *Svoboda* entered the 450-seat parliament with a 37-member delegation.

Svoboda's electoral feat raises several questions. What does this radicalization of national politics mean for Ukraine's plans to seek integration into Europe? What impact will the surge of right-wing extremism have on the future of the Ukrainian state, its democratic system, its pending association agreement with the European Union, and its role within the broader international community? The present chapter discusses these questions by reflecting on the history, ideological evolution, current situation, and international aspects of *Svoboda's* rise in Ukraine.

The emergence of the extreme right: a historical overview

During the early years of Ukrainian independence – between the late 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s – right-wing extremism and nationalist slogans demanding “Ukraine for the Ukrainians” never typified mainstream politics. Laws on language (1989), citizenship (1991), ethnic minorities (1992), and later the Constitution (1996) laid the country’s political foundations. To be sure, even then attempts were made to color everything in nationalist hues. For example, in the fall of 1993, the government’s Ministry of Education sent a letter to educational institutions ordering them to introduce “scientific nationalism” into the curriculum, reminiscent of “scientific communism” during Soviet times. In response to an outcry by intellectuals like Yevhen Bystrytsky, these efforts eventually were dropped.¹ However, two decades of faltering economic and social reforms, systemic problems, disputed policies (e.g., the infamous “language law” of 2012, which strengthened regional languages and distorted the notion of a mother tongue), constant tensions with Russia on gas price issues, and concessions to Russia in the 2010 Kharkiv accords all finally began to fragment the democratic bloc and simultaneously to strengthen far-right extremism.

Ukraine’s democratic political spectrum includes a large number of registered parties. Today, the inventory of parties according to ideology covers a broad range, including the liberal majority (66.18 %), the moderate left (3.86 %), parties with communist programs (1.45 %), and parties with no definite ideology (22.71 %).² Fourteen parties, occupying just 5.8 % of the political spectrum, declare themselves to be nationalists and/or national-minded rightists. *Svoboda* heads the list, followed by *Narodnyi Rukh Ukrainy*, the *Ukrainian National Assembly*, the *Social National Assembly*, the Congress of Ukrainian Nationalists, “Reformy ta Poryadok,” and a host of smaller parties: the Ukrainian Party, the Organization of

1 Bystrytskyi Yevhen “Chomu natsionalizm ne mozhe buty naukoyu” (“Why nationalism cannot be a science”), in *Politychna Dumka* 1994:2, pp. 30–35

2 <http://www.politico.ua>

Ukrainian Nationalists, *Ukrainska Soborna Partiya*, *Bratstvo*, the *Social Patriotic Alliance of the Slavs*, the *Ukrainian National Conservative Party*, *Samovryadna Ukrainska Derzhava*, and the *Ukrainian Platform Sobor*. In the wake of independence, a number of groups that propagate Russian nationalism have also begun to emerge, including the *Russkyi Bloc*, the *Slavic Party*, and some Cossack organizations, mostly active in the southern regions of Odessa and Crimea.

Historically, right-wing ideology draws on nationalist traditions in the western Ukraine, which developed between the two World Wars. At that time, Ukrainians fought first Polish and then Soviet domination, led initially by the Ukrainian Armed Resistance and later, beginning in 1929, by the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN).³ Both groups espoused terrorism, ethnocentrism, authoritarianism, bolshevism, and what they called “integral nationalism,” as embodied in the ideas of Dmytro Dontsov. In 1940, the OUN split into two factions, one moderate (OUN-M, followers of Andriy Melnik) and the other radical (OUN-R, followers of Stepan Bandera). Tactical collaboration with the Nazis led to total rejection of the OUN-R in the eastern and southern regions of the country, even though at this point the OUN-R’s armed wing, the Ukrainian Rebel Army (UPA), fought both the Nazi occupiers and the Russians. During the Soviet era, emigrant leaders of the OUN-R based in Munich softened their radicalism but continued lobbying for an independent Ukraine, and with the coming of independence they supplied the country’s youth with previously-banned nationalist literature.

One organization, the Union of Ukrainian Youth (formed in Lviv in the 1990’s), was initially enthusiastic about integral nationalism, but later its activist leaders, Oleg Vitovich, Anatoliy Shcherbatyuk, and Volodymyr Yavorskiy, were condemned and expelled for their right-wing extremist pronouncements. Radical nationalism was marginalized and found its place in Dmitry Dontsov’s Fan Club and the Ukrainian Nationalist Union,

3 Nahailo Bohdan, “RFE/RL Research Report,” June 1994

whose leader in Kyiv was Dmytro Korchynskiy.⁴ Smaller, newly formed nationalist parties – such as the *Ukrainian National Party* and *State Autonomy of Ukraine* – DSU – sprang up, but refused to cooperate with the moderate national democratic leaders of *Rukh* (such as Vyacheslav Chornovil, Mykhailo and Bohdan Horyn, and Levko Lukyanenko of the Republican Party) and rejected participation in elections. An inter-party assembly led by Yuriy Shukhevych (the son of Roman Shukhevych, who headed the UPA) was created to foster fuller cooperation among them. But this effort did not arrest their drift into marginalization and fragmentation. As a result of their isolation and disarray, they were unable to import their radical ideas into the mainstream of Ukrainian politics.

After the failed coup attempt of 1991 and the collapse of the USSR, this inter-party assembly was renamed the *Ukrainian National Assembly* (UNA). Its armed wing, known as the Ukrainian National Self Defence (UNSO), moved into the political arena, becoming involved in violent conflicts and organizing actions in Crimea, Moldova, and Georgia. Since 1993, the DSU under the leadership of Roman Koval and Ivan Kandyba has started openly using the slogan “Ukraine for Ukrainians,” advocating policies such as bans on mixed marriages and on the entry of non-Ukrainians into Ukraine, and the return of all Russians and Jews to their homelands. At the end of 1993, they established the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN Ukraine). Realizing that the name of OUN, an émigré organization banned in the former USSR, was being used in this way, leaders of the émigré group (headed by the widow of Yaroslav Stetsko, Ms. Yaroslava Stetsko) organized the Congress of Ukrainian Nationalists (CUN) in Ukraine in 1993. OUN Ukraine, after its emergence, openly declared itself to be both anti-Semitic and anti-Russian, and thus at odds with the policies of the CUN.

The electoral performance of extreme-right parties has been anemic for the past twenty years. A majority of them, including *Svoboda*, joined alliances to maintain their diminutive presence in the parliamentary

4 Ibid.

elections of 1998, 2002, 2006, and 2007. Most of the center-right parties – including the Congress of Ukrainian Nationalists, the *Ukrainian People's Party, Rukh*, and Reformy ta Poryadok – position themselves as national democrats rather than hardcore extremists. They align and build partnerships with the more ideological *Christian Democratic party* and with mainstream parties such as *Nasha Ukrayina*, *Batkivschyna*, and *Front Zmin*.

The All-Ukrainian Union *Svoboda* (previously known as the Social-National Party of Ukraine- SNPU) was formed in 1991 in the aftermath of a merger that fused Varta Rukhu, the Students' Brotherhood, the Organization of Ukrainian Youth ("Spadshyna"), and the Ukrainian Veterans of Afghanistan. Until its registration on October 16, 1995, *Svoboda* did not participate in elections. However, in 1994 its members won four seats on the Lviv city council and a few offices in western Ukraine, running as independents. In the 1998 elections, SNPU formed a bloc with Derzhavna Samostiynist Ukrayiny (DSU) called "Few Words" (Menshe Sliv), which received a miserable 0.16 % of the vote on the proportional representation list. Still, Oleh Tyahnybok, as a single-mandate constituency candidate, won a seat to the national parliament from the Buh district of Lviv oblast. The party has been active in forging alliances with its European counterparts. On May 21, 2000, Jean Marie Le Pen visited Lviv and attended the Sixth Congress of SNPU. Since that time, international cooperation and assistance have accelerated. In the 2002 elections, Tyahnybok retained his seat in parliament and joined the faction "*Nasha Ukraina*," but was expelled in 2004 after his openly anti-Semitic remarks created a public scandal. SNPU members won two local government races for the Lviv oblast council, while others captured a few seats in city and district councils and local governments in the Lviv and Volyn oblasts.

A major breakthrough took place on February 14, 2004, when SNPU's 9th Congress renamed the party *Svoboda*, heeding advice that its leaders had received from France's *Front National*. Under its new moniker, *Svoboda* made an unsuccessful attempt on July 4, 2004 to become the right's umbrella party by uniting the Congress of Ukrainian Nationalists and

OUN Ukraine. In 2006 it went on to contest parliamentary and local elections under its own banner for the first time, garnering only 0.36 % of the vote, well below the threshold for entry into the national legislature. Nevertheless, it did manage to win ten seats on the Lviv local council, nine seats on the Lviv city council, and four on the Ternopil city council. *Svoboda* then lost the 2007 national elections as well, with just 0.76 % of the vote, and did equally poorly in the 2008 local Kyiv elections. But it should be noted that the party's repeated failures and the low percentages of the vote that it captured were partly offset by a steady increase in the number of votes received, as *Svoboda* kept doubling its previous totals. On March 15, 2009, *Svoboda* won a staggering 34.69 % in a Ternopil oblast council by-election and formed a 50-member strong delegation in a council of 120 deputies. This success dramatically improved *Svoboda's* prospects as the extreme right's great hope in the 2012 parliamentary elections.⁵

Svoboda's ideological evolution

Nationalist discourse has been shaped by issues of history, national dignity, and a search for Ukrainian identity among all right-extremist groups (the UNA, UNSO, DSU, SPAS, UNTP, UPA, etc.). They base their appeals primarily on cultural affiliations rather than on promised economic advantages. However, *Svoboda* by now has extended its ideology and sloganeering to embrace national economic improvement and greater social equality, in addition to its traditional promise to defend everything ethnically Ukrainian. In so doing, it has marginalized the other extremist groups noted above and overshadowed similar national democratic ideologies espoused by the *Rukh*, *Nasha Ukraina*, and the Congress of Ukrainian Nationalists. *Svoboda* has tried to brand rival nationalist parties either as collaborationists with the allegedly anti-Ukrainian regime or as weak romantics, unable to achieve tangible results.

5 <http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/blog/alexander-j-motyly/extremism-ukraine>.

Ukrainian society faces some harsh realities. The country's democracy is in peril: It exhibits a poor human rights record; lacks a competitive, transparent market economy; grapples with endemic corruption; and witnesses a growing disparity between the rich and the poor, as well as falling living standards for ordinary citizens. And these are but a few of its problems. Soaring death rates, low birth rates, and mass emigration by Ukrainians seeking to earn a decent living have led to a critical population decline (by 2050, the country's population is predicted to fall by 36 %). The latter issues have not yet been addressed by any coherent demographic or migration policies. Some demographers have described these trends using inflammatory language, such as the following: "There is an overall tendency for the Europeanoid race in the Ukraine to disappear and be replaced by Asian and African races, which are expanding."⁶ However carefully such statements are disguised as "scientific," they serve to encourage ethnocentric, anti-immigrant nationalism among Ukrainian citizens. In addition, the country's political turmoil, its imprisonment of opposition leaders, and the government's infringement of freedom of speech and expression have all created fertile ground for right-wing extremism.

It is urgent that some effective response to this gathering crisis be found, but so far the centrist and center-left/social democratic political forces both within and outside of the parliament have not been able to manage that. The platform of the political left has largely been usurped by the Communists, playing the role of situational ally of the parties supported by big capital. One of the external factors favoring the extreme right in Ukraine is the intensification of populist rhetoric in Europe generally, as reflected in the results of both the 2010 European parliamentary elections and elections to several national parliaments. The successes of parties on the extreme right such as *Jobbik* in Hungary, the *Front National* in France, and the *Freedom Party* in Austria have paved the way for *Svoboda*, their "look-alike" in Ukraine. *Svoboda's* rise has been construed by many as

6 <http://for-ua.com/ukraine/2012/04/19/123401.html>.

proof of the “Europeanness” of Ukraine’s body politic. In fact, the party inadvertently has been hailed within democratic and pro-European academic circles.

Against this backdrop of a party clearly trying to reinvent itself, it is no accident that *Svoboda*’s website does not make programmatic references to the integral nationalism of Dmytro Dontsov and other nationalist literature. Instead, it cites Yaroslav Stetsko’s work, *Two Revolutions* (1951), as its principal ideological inspiration. (Stetsko was a leader and follower of Stepan Bandera of the OUN, who died in exile in Munich.) The essence of Stetsko’s argument is that the revolution should not end with the establishment of the Ukrainian state. Rather, it must go on to establish equal opportunities for all people to create and share in the material and spiritual values of society. Any national revolution must also be a social one by definition. In line with that doctrine, *Svoboda* has criticized national democrats for giving short shrift to issues of equality and fair distribution (perhaps out of fear of being identified with the political left). The party professes that “a Ukrainian revolution cannot be one-sided, in the sense that it is only nationalist. The driving force behind revolutions is its people, who symbolize the nation. The nation is a union of the living, the dead, and the unborn... There can be no genuine Ukrainian liberation in the absence of a national social revolution.”⁷ In this regard, *Svoboda* does employ left-wing rhetoric.

Svoboda has continued to maintain its original anti-Communist stance: The party does not accept members who are either atheists or ex-communists. But at the same time, *Svoboda* questions liberal, free-market values as well, associating them with corruption, economic inequality, and violations of human rights. In this respect it resembles the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) led by Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, which is in fact neither liberal nor democratic, but an advocate of aggressive Rus-

7 Miroslav Kabal, “Spadshyna Yaroslava Stetska” (“Through the Prism of Ukrainian Reality at the Beginning of the 21st Century”), available at <http://zakarpattya.net.ua/Blogs/91762-Spadshchyna-Iaroslava-Stetska-kriz-pryzmu-ukrainskykh-realii-na-pochatku-KHKHI-st>.

sian nationalism. At the same time, however, *Svoboda's* platform critical of oligarchy and big business puts it on the same terrain as the left, somewhat resembling the *Front National's* positions during the 2012 French presidential elections. *Svoboda's* nationalist populism and anti-capitalist stance resemble positions taken by the Communists. In the wake of continuing economic crises, political turmoil, and polarization, the party has enjoyed broad appeal, especially since the presidential elections of 2010. *Svoboda* champions government loans for large families, as well as public housing and rent allowances, once again echoing the Communist Party. Interestingly, in the manifestos of these two parties, which in other respects are polar opposites, almost identical phrases keep turning up. Both advocate the re-nationalization of privatized enterprises of strategic importance to the state, favor a ban on the sale of agricultural land, seek to strengthen the position of state-owned banks, and welcome the introduction of a luxury tax.⁸ Even though its recent policy stances have led politicians like Taras Chronovil to criticize the party as insufficiently right-wing,⁹ *Svoboda's* new ideological thrust has helped it gain traction amid other far-right radicals, nationalists and national democrats. On the one hand, *Svoboda's* leader, Oleh Tyahnybok, has emphasized in interviews that a nation is defined as a union of blood and spirit, and that Ukrainians are social nationalists (not national socialists) on the verge of effecting their third revolution.¹⁰ On the other hand, he resists accusations of being an anti-Semite or a neo-Nazi, even though on several occasions he has indeed made anti-Semitic statements.

Svoboda repeatedly has asserted that nationalism is what gave birth to the modern Ukrainian state. The party's self-proclaimed mission is to carry out important tasks that remain unfinished. In this vein, its "Program for Protecting Ukrainians" includes many traditionally right-wing extremist, xenophobic, and nationalist ideas: criminal prosecution

8 http://odfoundation.eu/files/pdf/ODF_15.08.2012_monitoring_Ukraine_EN.pdf.

9 <http://obozyrevatel.com/politics/53014-chornovil-tyagniboku-pozashivaj-svoim-deputatam-ryi.htm>.

10 <http://from-ua.com/politics/59d0de62e3b33.html>.

for “Ukrainophobia” (in other words, anyone who defames Ukraine or Ukrainians has committed a crime); the revival of the Soviet-era practice of indicating people’s ethnic backgrounds on their birth certificates and passports; a ban on adoptions of Ukrainian children by non-Ukrainians; preferential treatment for Ukrainian students in the allocation of dormitory space; and changes to existing provisions requiring equal treatment under the law, so that laws would henceforth favor ethnic Ukrainians. Moreover, since ethnic Ukrainians comprise more than 70 % of the population, the party also proposes proportional representation for ethnic groups in executive bodies. These undemocratic, xenophobic positions are supplemented by staunchly anti-Soviet and anti-Communist proposals, such as the mandatory dismissal of state employees who were on the payroll before 1991 and the prohibition of “pro-communist propaganda” in public settings (including monuments and street and place names).

The economic aspects of *Svoboda’s* program are shallow and populist. Although the party has called for safeguarding citizens’ socio-economic rights and combating oligarchy and big capital, it does not explicitly chart the way toward either greater national wealth or the redistribution of resources. *Svoboda* supports abolishing the VAT; implementing pro-family and alternative energy programs; and mandating state ownership of all farmland (to which farmers would have hereditary usufruct rights). Above all, it favors a state-directed market, since the central purpose of economic life supposedly is to achieve national glory.

This statist approach is also manifested in one of the party’s key foreign policy principles: zero tolerance for separatism. In *Svoboda’s* view, Ukraine should be united, and to strengthen national unity, Crimean autonomy should be abolished. Party literature portrays the Russian Federation as Ukraine’s main enemy and demands that it be forced to apologize “for its communist crimes.” Furthermore, *Svoboda* demands that Ukraine leave the Commonwealth of Independent States and all other post-Soviet structures. It is worth noting that, during the August, 2008 military conflict between Russia and Georgia, *Svoboda* quietly condemned Russian bombardment of Georgia, but expelled Dmytro

Snehirov (a party member from the Ukrainian city of Luhansk) for trying to recruit volunteers to fight in Georgia as irregulars.

In order to move Ukraine beyond its Soviet past, break residual ties with Russia, and transform the country into a regional power, *Svoboda* has called for both an explicit guarantee of accession to NATO within a set time frame and the reacquisition of tactical nuclear weapons. Even though *Svoboda* is affiliated with far-right counterparts in Western Europe (which oppose the widening of the EU), the party is not overtly hostile to Ukraine's EU accession. In public statements, it has upheld the idea of the European Union and even proposed that Ukraine should play a key role in the organization. In particular, *Svoboda* has stressed the need for more cooperation between Ukraine and the Baltic and Black Sea states. According to *Svoboda*, if Ukraine were to join the EU, that change would facilitate its shift away from Russia and would contribute to national glory. At the same time, however, *Svoboda* has openly criticized multicultural policies and the encouragement of diversity in Europe, and in that respect is closer to its far-right counterparts elsewhere.

It is in this context that *Svoboda's* Islamophobia comes to the surface. One need only look at the party's attitude towards Crimean Tatars, who are considered by most national democratic parties to be the "most pro-Ukrainian" ethnic group, more so than Crimea's ethnic Russians. *Svoboda's* official stance is that only ethnic Ukrainians are true patriots, thus disqualifying persons of "Tatar, Georgian, or Russian [descent].... Of course, the Crimean Tatars would like to ... turn Crimean autonomy into autonomy for their own nationality. For Ukraine, both Tatar and Russian autonomy in Crimea are equally threatening."¹¹ Similarly, while acknowledging the Chechen resistance (the majority of Chechens are Muslim), which aims at separation from Russia, *Svoboda* does not favor either aiding Chechnya or harboring Chechen refugees in Ukraine.

11 <http://www.tyahnybok.info/dopysy/zmi/005546/>.

Social support base and image-building

Active on the grassroots levels in the western regions of the country, where it has long been popular, *Svoboda* set out to expand its base of support in a systematic way. The party began by appealing to the youth subculture and to other groups susceptible to a radical worldview, and then moved on to woo intellectuals and other educated people through media campaigns and the use of social networks. *Svoboda* employs every available means to communicate to the broader public its positions on topical issues, including language, nationality, and the economic crisis. The media, in turn, use *Svoboda's* presence as fodder for sensationalist reporting. The campaign message that the party disseminated to the “lumpenproletariat” elements of the electorate depicted *Svoboda* as the only viable alternative to all other moderate nationalists, and those in power as belonging to “corrupt gangs.” Since 2010 – and following many failures – *Svoboda* has managed to reach an overarching agreement with the opposition bloc, even while maintaining its own identity. It has skillfully exploited popular resentment against Russia’s belligerent economic policies and political machinations toward Ukraine. By now it has convinced many citizens that it is the country’s only genuinely radical patriotic party, at least in comparison with other national democratic parties in the opposition. Thus, *Svoboda's* media strategy is an interactive one. Its statements are quoted more frequently than any other party’s pronouncements, whether it is doling out praise or criticism, and they are rarely forgotten.

It has been pointed out already that the party does not accept atheists and former communists as members. In fact, *Svoboda* has launched a major effort to attract or groom a new type of candidate, distinct from the old-guard politicians on both the left and the right. Consequently, the media portrays *Svoboda* as an anti-establishment force in politics. *Svoboda's* candidates for public office (e.g., Oleh Tyahnybok, Andriy Mokhnyk, Andriy Illyienko, Yuriy Sirotyuk, and Ihor Myroshnychenko) have enjoyed a very different public image from that of mainstream

politicians. In the public eye, they are not seen as especially wealthy, and they do not appear interested in traditional squabbles over posts and perks. Moreover, their names do not come up in connection with non-transparent dealings, corruption cases, or the misuse of privatization schemes. Although these candidates were known to have indulged in anti-Semitic slurs and other forms of hate speech, their pre-election populist image was rather well-received among apolitical citizens, both old and young, who were hoping for positive change. *Svoboda* candidates campaigned from door to door rather than relying only on costly advertising, and were accordingly perceived as “one of us” by those who supported them at the polls.

In its own internal flows of communication and control, *Svoboda* has always been a top-down organization that does not permit dialogue or encourage critical thinking and dissent. Yet it has made good use of “open” forms of grassroots exchanges, communicating with the public and attracting new recruits via social networks like YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and VKontakte. In this context, special mention should be made of the relations that *Svoboda* has maintained with what may be called the “informal” far-right, a category that includes the neo-Nazi underground, radical football fans, and hooligans. Members of these groups constitute hidden reservoirs of support for *Svoboda* and its ideology. Among them are those who openly propagate intolerance (e.g., by supporting total bans on immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers), including one part of UNA-UNSO; the Ukrainian National Labor Party and Patriots of Ukraine; skinheads; followers of Hetman Pavel Skoropadskiy; Fans of the Third Hetmanate; and the Delegation of the Right from the regions. There are also those who do not champion racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism, but nevertheless harbor other radical ideas, such as the moderate wing of UNA-UNSO; Tryzub; the Ukrainian Party; Banderivets; the *National Alliance*; both moderate and radical groups in OUN; the Youth National Congress; and Patriot: For the Defense of the Homeland.

Right-wing extremism has another dimension, one that is anti-Ukrainian. Among extremist groups that do not cooperate with *Svoboda* (and in fact speak out against it) are pro-Russian groups; Cossack organizations; the Russkyi Bloc Party, which is active in Odessa and has even won seats in regional and local councils there; and Islamophobic entities in Crimea, such as the Slavic party, which attack Crimean Tatars. Another extremist party, known as SPAS (*Social Patriotic Assembly of the Slavs*), champions pan-Slavic unity and the establishment of a socialist state in which only Slavs would be allowed to hold power and wealth. Anti-American and opposed to European integration, members of this party have attracted publicity by throwing bananas at an African pastor in April of 2007, counter-demonstrating against an anti-racist march in Kyiv in June of that same year, and supporting the Russian position in the 2008 conflict between Georgia and Abkhazia. Recruiting members from institutions of higher education, SPAS works with disillusioned youth and has also set up a unit of fighters, Chornaya Sotnya. What unites them with *Svoboda* and its allies are anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and anti-immigrant, anti-Roma attitudes. Although they do not cooperate with *Svoboda*, they do not criticize it, either.

A review of events from 2011 and 2012 suggests that *Svoboda's* current or former members and support groups have engaged in sporadic acts of violence in several regions of the country, although not always with a clear political aim in view. These actions include clashes with Hasidic Jewish pilgrims in Uman in the autumn of 2011 and on September 9, 2012. Extremists also picked fights with those who came to lay flowers at the Victory Monument in Lviv on May 9, 2011, and destroyed food kiosks and beat up foreign students in Luhansk that October. When such events receive media attention, *Svoboda's* leaders typically attempt to politicize the issues implicit in them. But if those provocations fail to attract attention, *Svoboda* keeps its distance from participants, so as not to face legal charges. *Svoboda* likewise taps into the Ukrainian skinhead movement. Once exclusively the haunt of adolescents, the skinhead scene has now been replaced by a more overarching ultra-right subculture, capable of

unifying several marginal militant groups.¹² The adherents of this sub-culture often choose symbolically significant historical dates on which to commit aggressive acts.

According to political scientist Ostap Kryvdyk, *Svoboda* relies on four ideological and/or social linchpins to broaden its base. First, *Svoboda* appeals to elements of the mass public who do not question its statements or demand political dialogue.¹³ Second, *Svoboda* proclaims that aggression and force are legitimate methods for resolving political conflicts. For example, on public occasions, party members typically chant the slogan, “Glory to Ukraine! Death to the Enemy!” (despite the fact that the death penalty has been abolished in the country). Third, *Svoboda* sometimes tries to hijack sensible causes that also appeal to NGOs and mainstream grassroots groups, in an attempt to burnish the party’s image. Finally, *Svoboda* tries to convey the mistaken impression that it is a true opposition party, while distorting Ukraine’s national identity.¹⁴ Recently the party put together a team of young politicians who may have engaged in anti-Semitic and anti-immigrant hate speech as reported in the media, but whose names never had been tainted by financial or privatization scandals or by associations with big capital. *Svoboda*’s efforts to airbrush its public image were directed at members of the urban, educated class, who seek fairness and a transparent, non-corrupt society based on the rule of law and whose votes could not be won through patronage and pork-barrel politics. And, indeed, many educated, higher-income people in Ukraine – heedless of the dangers of oversimplifying national issues and history – voted for *Svoboda* in the last elections, lending support to the remark of one party leader (Iryna Farion) that “people living in houses are the sympathizers of *Svoboda*, not people in dormitories.”¹⁵

12 http://smi.liga.net/articles/2012-03-29/4848234-v_ukra_n_b_lshe_nema_sk_nkhed_v.htm. See also <http://tyzhden.ua/Society/45537>.

13 Ostap Kryvdyk, “Neyakisniy Nationalism,” in *Ukrayinska Pravda*, April 20, 2011 <http://www.pravda.com.ua/articles/2011/04/20/6122719/>.

14 Ibid.

15 <http://tyzhden.ua/Columns/50/63780>.

According to national exit polls, 48 % of *Svoboda*'s electoral base consists of people with a higher education, and 47.5 % of the party's supporters are urban.¹⁶ Political scientist Andreas Umland has argued that four features of *Svoboda* distinguish it from its European counterparts. For one thing, Ukraine faces a genuine external threat – the aggressive posture of Russia – that *Svoboda* has been able to use as the cornerstone of its activities. Second, despite the fact that its support base is concentrated in the western part of the country, *Svoboda* never calls for regional separatism, but favors a unified Ukraine. Third, there is no *cordon sanitaire* between *Svoboda* and the national democratic opposition. The latter cooperates with *Svoboda* and thus makes it seem to be a more acceptable electoral choice. Finally, *Svoboda* can count on support from an ideologically-diverse electorate, including educated, reform-minded people. Many citizens who have voted for *Svoboda* favor European integration (64 %) and accession to NATO (42 %) and oppose joining a customs union with Russia (69 %).¹⁷ It is certainly paradoxical that many Jews, liberals, and members of ethnic minorities cast ballots for *Svoboda* in the last elections, seemingly oblivious to the hate speech and anti-Semitism that characterize the party's public pronouncements. Their decision to support *Svoboda* confirms the urgency of systemic reforms, since there appears to be a direct correlation between the rise of right-wing extremism, on one hand, and rampant corruption and inequality, on the other.¹⁸ A related issue in this context concerns the sources of party finance. Ukrainian parties generally do not divulge much about where their campaign funding comes from. Hence, some observers have speculated that *Svoboda*'s campaigns may actually be bankrolled by the *Party of the Regions*¹⁹ and/or by oligarchs.²⁰

16 <http://www.geopolitika.lt/?artc=5801>.

17 Ibid.

18 <http://tyzhden.ua/Colums/50/63780>.

19 <http://swiat.newsweek.pl/ukrainscy-chca-nam-odebrac-podkarpacie.71842.1.1.html>.

20 <http://gazeta.ua/articles/politics/346073>.

The extreme right in mainstream politics

Svoboda's success at the polls in 2012 should be viewed in relation to continuous changes that have occurred in Ukrainian electoral laws. In 1998 and 2002, the law provided for proportional representation of both the party-based and the bloc-based type, as well as for single-mandate constituencies for individual candidates. Although candidates for *Svoboda* (SNPU) could employ both options, that electoral machinery did not enable them to enter the mainstream. In 2005, a purely proportional system was introduced, using nationwide party lists, which required a nationwide party network. *Svoboda* had an impressive support base in the western regions but not all over the country, so it failed to cross the 3% threshold at the national level. Nevertheless, it did win some landslide victories in local elections in 2009 in western Ukraine.

The October, 2012 parliamentary elections were held under a new electoral law, passed on November 17 of the previous year, which established a mixed system.²¹ Under this system, half of the deputies are chosen through first-past-the-post elections in single-member districts, and half are chosen through proportional representation in nationwide multi-member districts, which have a 5% threshold. Several analysts predicted that this change would prevent *Svoboda* from entering the parliament,²² and results from opinion polls taken by the Research and Branding group on April 7 and September 7 of 2012 confirmed that *Svoboda* was unlikely to cross the threshold. However, other analysts opined that *Svoboda* might pick up a limited number of seats, either through victory in single-mandate constituencies or by striking agreements with opposition parties, as had happened in 2002, when *Svoboda's* leader, Oleg Tyahnybok, was elected as part of the *Nasha Ukraina bloc*.

21 http://portal.rada.gov.ua/rada/control/en/publish/article/info_left?art_id=290355&cat_id=105995.

22 <http://www.opendemocracy.net/opensecurity/anton-shekhovtsov/security-threats-and-ukrainian-far-right>.

Svoboda's 2012 electoral performance exceeded all expectations, but this was neither caused by an increase in their actual following nor by the appeal of their nationalist populist ideology. One of the major reasons for the party's relative success lay in the design of the ballot itself, which excluded the option of voting "against all." It seems reasonable to assume that many people who were disillusioned by existing opposition parties cast protest votes in favor of *Svoboda*.²³ At the other end of the political spectrum, similar protest votes against the ruling *Party of the Regions* apparently were cast for Communists in the southern and eastern sections of the country.

Although *Svoboda* candidates did engage in sometimes fierce competition with their better financed rivals, the party's foray into electoral politics did not improve the quality of democracy in Ukraine. Initially, following its victory in the 2009 and 2010 local elections, *Svoboda* lashed out against educational institutions that were unreceptive to its ideas. In 2010, having attained a majority on the Lviv city council, the party refused to exempt the Ukrainian Catholic University from land tax payments, in part because two of its professors, historian Yaroslav Hrytsak and former dissident Miroslav Marynovych, are vehement critics of radical nationalism. In a similar vein, *Svoboda* dismissed Taras Vozniak, the editor of the paper *Yi* and an active proponent of Polish-Ukrainian reconciliation, from his post as head of the international department of the Lviv oblast council. These moves served to alienate members of the intellectual democratic elite in western Ukraine.

Later, although these hardline nationalist actions were toned down, *Svoboda* proved unable to offer viable options for state building or for the reinvention of economic and social policy in an age of globalization. In this regard, it has not strayed far from the unrealistic, unworkable communist schemes of the recent past.²⁴ Nonetheless, *Svoboda* has con-

23 <http://tyzhden.ua/Columns/50/63780>

24 <http://www.pravda.com.ua/articles/2011/04/20/6122719/>

tinued to indulge in hate speech and anti-Semitism, while also implicitly legitimizing political violence by supporting a fighting battalion. Eventually, that sort of militancy provoked authorities into clamping down on dissidents under the pretext of combating terror. Excessive use of the police and overreaction to dissent by the authorities during the period 2009 to 2011 have resulted from *Svoboda*-style activism, with its threat of violence and collaboration with smaller far-right groups, including football hooligans. As a result of these moves and counter-moves, activism on behalf of critical social issues, usually undertaken by NGOs, has suffered a setback. For instance, demonstrations against the language law in July and August of 2012 in Kyiv and protests calling first for the release of and later for a fair trial for the former Minister of the Interior, Yuriy Lutsenko, and former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko were ineffectual. In short, *Svoboda's* activities have aggravated already serious problems of law enforcement and abuse of power by the police, instead of helping to contain or overcome them.

Prospects for a healthy democratic opposition in Ukraine have recently dimmed, due in large measure to the growing polarization of politics, as between the *Party of the Regions* and *Svoboda* or, on certain issues, the Communists and *Svoboda*. Right-wing extremists are showcased on prime-time TV shows and radio programs as well as in print as an alternative to the ruling mainstream party. On November 16, 2012, a right-wing march against illegal immigration in Kharkiv featured the open chanting of Nazi slogans. Video of the march was widely seen on Youtube and other social media. The far right launched a violent assault on protestors against homophobia in Kyiv on December 8 of the same year, and a fierce fight in the parliament at the opening session resulted in broken doors and cut fences. There have been calls for the introduction of nationality or ethnicity as a category in identification documents, for taking children away from allegedly “Ukrainophobe” parents, and for a boycott of history textbooks if full discussion of the UPA and Holodomor (famine) are not included in them. These are but a few of the actions through which *Svoboda* has defined its public image since becoming a parliamentary party. But it must be admitted that political authorities themselves are

partly to blame for provoking some of those actions. They are the ones who introduced the controversial history books, replaced Ukrainian nationalist leaders with pro-Russian, ex-Soviet officials, and passed a 2012 language law giving regional languages wider scope. The Communist Party also egged on the far right by attempting to restore statues of Stalin, in the wake of similar steps taken in Russia.

Svoboda has also maintained a high profile when it comes to xenophobia and anti-Semitism. After Oleh Tyahnybok, *Svoboda's* leader, was barred from the *Nasha Ukrayina* parliamentary delegation due to his scandalous anti-Semitic statements, the party grew more cautious and did not allow outbreaks of anti-Semitism to mar its three-month-long election campaign. However, during 2011 and 2012, social media occasionally featured Tyahnybok's remarks concerning the "Muscovite Jewish Mafia" and Ihor Myroshnychenko's reference to Mila Kunis, a Ukrainian-born Hollywood actress, as a "Jewess" (using the word "zhydivka," a derogatory term akin to the English "kike"). Anti-Semitism is common among *Svoboda* members on a personal level, and these remarks led the Simon Wiesenthal Center to rank the party fifth on a list of ten global sources of anti-Semitic, anti-Israel slurs in 2012.²⁵ To counter and mask this overt anti-Semitism, Tyahnybok gave pre-election interviews in which he seemed to favor the policies of Israel, comparing the patriotism of the Jews and their fight for Israel to that of Ukraine, met the Ambassador of the State of Israel to Ukraine on February 20, 2013. Ridiculous as it may seem, certain Jewish journalists have actually hailed Tyahnybok as Ukraine's Ben Gurion.²⁶

To shift public attention away from its bigotry, *Svoboda* has tried to focus policy debates on other topics. For example, in January of 2013, it launched a campaign against shale gas exploration in Kharkiv.²⁷ *Svoboda*

25 http://www.wiesenthal.com/atf/cf/%7B54d385e6-f1b9-4e9f-8e94-890c3e6dd277%7D/TT_2012_3.PDF.

26 <http://isradem.com/index.php?newsid=677>.

27 <http://www.svoboda.org.ua/diyalnist/komentari/035615/>.

representative Ihor Shwyuka argued that the process of hydraulic fracking used in shale gas exploration is ecologically dangerous, causing the contamination of ground water. *Svoboda* also alleged that because Ukraine's agreement with Chevron and Shell Oil lacked transparency and had not been discussed with the communities involved, it failed to meet basic democratic standards.²⁸ Finally, *Svoboda* introduced yet another pro-media initiative: a draft bill that would prohibit freezing the accounts and the property of media outlets when cases are filed against journalists.

However, *Svoboda's* moves and policies have done little to restore popular trust in democracy. Ukrainians in large numbers complain that they feel "disenfranchised" and "disempowered." In the words of Mykola Riabchuk, "We live in a country in which no one believes that the mass media simply report the news, that customs officials really try to arrest smugglers, or that law-enforcement agencies protect citizens rather than themselves and their true masters."²⁹ This high level of cynicism and mistrust has turned Ukraine into a "democracy without democracy" that is suffering from a crisis of values.

Forging a response to the extreme right

Social and political institutions have reacted to the growth of right-wing extremism in a variety of ways. Monitoring reports showed escalation of hate crimes during 2007 and 2008, as a result of right-wing extremism directed against Jews, Muslims, Roma, LGBT individuals, visible minorities, and foreigners. Crime levels fell in 2009 and 2010, but rose again in 2011, showing some slowdown in 2012.³⁰ *Svoboda* was silent even when, as was true in many cases, its sympathizers were responsible, while the

28 http://zaxid.net/home/showSingleNews.do?nardep_mi__ne_chukchi_zhell_maye_z_nami_rahuvatisya&objectId=1276504.

29 Mykola Riabchuk, "Toward an Anecdotal History of Ukrainian Politics," February 26, 2012, available at <http://ukraineanalysis.wordpress.com/2012/02/>.

30 <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/id-moe/09147.pdf>.



Oleg Tyagnibok, leader of the nationalist *Svoboda* party, speaks at the nationwide "Arise, Ukraine!"

authorities were often reluctant to investigate and prosecute these offenses. Thus, we can postulate a causal relationship between right-wing extremism and the proliferation of hate crimes. One can discern the effects of this causal connection even in ostensibly non-political venues, such as sports arenas. For example, in the run-up to Euro-2012, between September of 2009 and December of 2011, there were 85 cases in which hate signs (whether fascist, racist, anti-Semitic, anti-Islam, homophobic, or anti-Roma) were displayed in stadiums by right-wing extremist fans. They ranged from Celtic crosses to placards bearing anti-black, anti-Semitic, or anti-Islamic slogans, all of which are banned by the Ukrainian Professional Football League (UEFA). Tellingly, neither the disciplinary committee of the Ukrainian Premier League nor the UEFA chose to categorize these signs as expressions of group hatred, classifying them instead merely as "unpleasant" or "humiliating" incidents and imposing fines on the clubs involved.

The state has tackled the consequences of rightist extremism by enacting umbrella policy documents and penal measures, such as the Cabinet of Ministers Action Plan for Migrants' Integration into Ukrainian Society, 2011–2015, as well as Action Plans on regional levels in Chernivtsi, Donetsk, Dnipropetrovsk, and Luhansk. We should also mention the Action Plan for Implementation of the State Migration Policy Concept, 2011–2015; the draft Discrimination Prevention Strategy of Ukraine; and the Ethno-National Policy of Ukraine. In 2011, the Prosecutor General's office instructed all of its branches to enforce legislation intended to protect minorities against xenophobia and ethnic intolerance. Prosecutors were supposed to issue public reports detailing their progress. However, despite assistance from OSCE and the international community, the authorities have yet to publicize crime statistics and procedures in ways that meet European standards.

Civil society in Ukraine has responded to far-right extremism by trying to understand and eliminate its causes, monitor hate crimes, and promote diversity. More than 60 community projects were implemented in 2011 by organizations belonging to the Diversity Initiative Network. They run the gamut from educational projects intended to keep alive the memory of the Holocaust, to training sessions designed to promote tolerance and changes in school textbooks to incorporate material on the history of ethnic minorities. Efforts have also been made to lionize successful multicultural cities, attract international students, detect ethnic profiling, monitor on-line hate speech, and provide legal aid to victims of hate crimes. Civil society organizations also encouraged the playing of street football games during Euro-2012. However, these efforts have been mostly donor-driven and donor-dependent; there is little sense that participants "own" the programs, or that the programs can be sustained when donors lose interest. Community funding is still a rarity in Ukraine.

Ukraine's young democracy has stalled on its way to consolidation. Quantitative research has shown that institutional frameworks and formal elections have less impact on the robustness of political democracy than do improvements in socio-economic conditions, as well as the actual

content of laws and policies and the way that they affect citizens' daily lives.³¹ We need to pay far more attention to these substantive, non-institutional factors in order to bring a more representative political system into being. The so-called "December First Initiative,"³² launched in 2011 on the twentieth anniversary of the Ukrainian Referendum for Independence, has attempted to do just that. Even though it was begun in response to an appeal by three Ukrainian churches, it has been resolutely secular in content. The initiative, which includes critics of radical nationalism and internationally-known authorities in the areas of human rights, science, technology, and the arts, has championed reducing the gap between rich and poor, reinforcing the moral dimensions of development, and encouraging more solidarity in the redistribution of wealth. It has also called for the more effective protection of human rights and the establishment of a fairer system of justice. After the 2012 elections, the December First Initiative released a "Declaration of the Free Individual," which focused on building a social consensus against aggressive ethnocentrism. In that campaign it has recruited leading thinkers from around the country (including Professors Yaroslav Hrytsak, Myroslav Marynovych, and Taras Vozniak from western Ukraine and several intellectuals from Kyiv) who have tried to start a public dialogue on questions of national identity and other long-ignored issues. International conferences hosted by Germany's Friedrich Ebert Stiftung and the East European Development Institute have been especially relevant for the intellectual side of the anti-extremism project.

However, constructing a unified, left-oriented phalanx against right-wing extremism has proved to be politically difficult. In post-totalitarian Ukraine, a center-left, social democratic alternative seems unlikely to succeed in rallying anything close to a majority of citizens behind it. The anti-fascist youth organizations are focused more on fighting and flagging

31 Melanie G. Mierzejewski, "Stalled on Substance: Democratization and Public Opinion in Post-Orange Revolution Ukraine," available at http://www.ifes.org/Content/Publications/White-Papers/2010/~media/Files/Publications/White%20PaperReport/2010/Manatt_Melanie_Mierzejewski_2010Dec21.pdf.

32 <http://1-12.org.ua/>.

the far right; they have not matured enough to confront far-right extremism on a political level. The vague ideological platforms developed by liberal, democratic, and national democratic political parties so far have been unable to challenge *Svoboda's* populist rhetoric. On the contrary, they have been outflanked by it. For example, during the run-up to the October, 2012 elections, the ruling *Party of the Regions* inadvertently contributed to *Svoboda's* influence even while insisting that it opposed *Svoboda's* ideology. It bolstered *Svoboda's* visibility in media outlets dominated by the authorities and by its loyalists, urging them to publicize *Svoboda's* attacks on the national democratic parties that they regarded as their main opponents. In doing so, the *Party of the Regions* unwittingly strengthened a far more dangerous adversary. However, that situation soon changed, and *Svoboda* now allies itself with the opposition. Some moderate nationalist politicians have expressed the opinion that the far right in Ukraine today is simply populist, and far less radical than its predecessor parties of the 1930's and 1940's. Thus, they argue, *Svoboda* and its ilk will remain marginal politically. But that view seriously underestimates the threat posed by the extreme right in general and *Svoboda* in particular, which has become the main rallying point for hardline nationalism, overshadowing the more democratic parties in that same camp. As early as 2010, many citizens sympathetic with nationalistic ideologies had entered into open situational alliances with *Svoboda* within the framework of KOD (Komitet Opory Diktatury), a committee set up to unify the democratic parties against the *Party of the Regions*. A letter sent by 40 Ukrainian scholars and intellectuals in April, 2012 to exclude *Svoboda* from this alliance was ignored. Later the KOD was dissolved and a new alliance – the United Opposition – was formed on the eve of the parliamentary elections. Although *Svoboda* did not formally enter this union, it does participate in all of its public events. As a result, *Svoboda* has come to be perceived by the public as part of the democratic bloc.

Ukraine's international partners deplore the implicit inclusion of such an extreme-right party within the democratic opposition, and they have criticized the opposition's willingness to cooperate with it. In November

of 2012, an international scandal erupted when MEP Kristian Vigenin, on behalf of the Group of Socialists and Democrats, added a paragraph to a European Parliament resolution on Ukraine, demanding that the democratic parties disassociate themselves from *Svoboda*. *Svoboda*'s "racist, anti-Semitic, and xenophobic views go against the EU's fundamental values and principles," he observed, and "therefore, we urge the pro-democratic parties in the Parliament not to communicate with, not to support, and not to form a coalition with this party."³³ Despite this rebuke, Ukraine's democratic opposition announced that it will continue to cooperate with *Svoboda*.

Following this controversy, another arose, this time involving *Svoboda*'s European associates. It was reported that *Svoboda* had been excluded from the *Alliance of European National Movements* (AENM) because it was deemed to be too radical and chauvinistic. In a statement issued by *Svoboda*, the party's Deputy Head, Andriy Mokhnik, confirmed *Svoboda*'s observer status in the AENM, explaining that "there are conflicts within members of the AENM, but no war."³⁴ The "conflicts" to which he referred included quarrels with the Polish far-right party on the UPA's role vis-à-vis the Polish people and the Bandera issue, and with Hungary's *Jobbik* party on issues involving Greater Hungary and the proposal to give regional status to the Hungarian language in Ukraine's Transcarpathia. The Wikipedia web page on AENM (last consulted on January 30, 2013) notes that *Svoboda* has been a member party since 2009. However, the alliance's press releases issued since October, 2012 no longer list as a member either *Svoboda* or any other party from Ukraine. In a statement placed on its website on January 11, 2013, *Svoboda* itself claimed that it was and is simply an observer in the *Alliance of European Nationalist Movements*, rather than a full-fledged participant.

33 <http://www.vigenin.eu/en/news/News-of-European-union-12/European-Parliament-demands-political-isolation-for-far-right-party-Svoboda-3623>.

34 <http://www.svoboda.org.ua/diyalnist/komentari/035896/>.

Conclusions

Our analysis of *Svoboda's* gradual drift from the political margins into the mainstream reveals it to be the carrier of core elements of an extreme-right ideology. Its entry into the mainstream was facilitated by a decade of work polishing up its image, ideology, slogans, and tactics. Today the party displays the following features. First, it is perceived as a force close to ordinary people, and that fact alone gives it a public image quite unlike that projected by politicians from most other parties. Second, it employs populist social rhetoric to reach out to citizens at the grassroots level, while scorning elite politics. It is the role model for other extreme-right groups on issues of national identity, language and culture. The chief targets of *Svoboda's* attacks are the belligerent posture of Russia towards Ukraine and the policies and personnel of the ruling *Party of the Regions*, which has made concessions to Russia. In its turn, *Svoboda* is enlisted by the *Party of the Regions* as a sparring partner, being cast as a “nationalist enemy” of democracy and the market. As for center-right and opposition parties, they have not distanced themselves from *Svoboda's* anti-Semitic, xenophobic, and racist rhetoric, but instead have entered into situational alliances with *Svoboda*. In doing so, they have destigmatized and legitimized *Svoboda* in the eyes of the public, making it appear to be an equal partner with the other parties. These parties have reached no consensus on how to counter *Svoboda's* extreme-right ideology, even though the elements of a possible strategy have been detailed by intellectuals and within civil society generally.

Unacceptable to both Russia and Western Europe, *Svoboda* is the source of internal and external threats to Ukraine. Amid mounting discontent, the potential for more widespread social unrest is imminent. Intolerant messages that deepen regional, religious, and inter-ethnic divisions will simply add fuel to the fire. *Svoboda's* anti-Russian pronouncements may cause discontent in Russian-speaking parts of Ukraine. Indeed, the pro-Russian extreme right in those regions may turn to radical nationalism of their own, threatening Ukraine's territorial integrity. If Russia's policies vis-à-vis Ukraine do not change, *Svoboda's* anti-Russian rhetoric will

persist. But it is uncertain whether, and to what extent, *Svoboda* will reform, both inside and outside the realm of parliamentary politics. If it proves incapable of tempering its ideology and its policy proposals, ways must be found to contain it. Otherwise, the party is likely to do lasting harm to the country.

What kinds of internal reforms might we expect from *Svoboda*? To enter the mainstream, *Svoboda* should serve the public interest and concentrate on delivering results congruent with its electoral promises. It will also have to abandon its chauvinism, anti-Semitism, and xenophobia, which will be difficult, since those are core elements of the party's ideology. Externally, in order to be accepted in Europe, *Svoboda* must change enough that it can no longer be labeled a far-right extremist party. Until that time, other opposition forces should cease cooperating with *Svoboda*, as part of a "carrot and stick" approach to induce reform in the party. As the European economic and social crisis continues, the rise of right-wing extremism and Europhobia will be accompanied by mounting social and workers' protests. However, the idea of a unified Europe is predicated not only on its common market, but also on pan-European solidarity, which transcends geographic and ethnic divisions. If European integration is Ukraine's priority, these caveats need to be borne in mind.³⁵ To this end, Ukraine's European partners will have to be patient and engage in continuing dialogue with the country.

35 <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2012/04/20124185250195670.html>.

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Gabor Vona, chairman of the extremist right party *Jobbik* delivers a speech entitled "Members or be free" as party followers demonstrate in front of the building of the European Commission Representation in Budapest, Hungary, January 14, 2012

More Radical than the Radicals: the *Jobbik* Party in international comparison

András Bíró Nagy | Tamás Boros | Zoltán Vasali

Ever since the collapse of the Soviet empire in 1989, the extreme right-wing has been politically active in Hungary. Yet *Jobbik*,¹ the most successful party on the far right, did not even emerge as a party until 2003. In the 2006 parliamentary elections, *Jobbik* captured a mere 2.2 % of the votes, but soon thereafter its popularity increased dramatically.² The real breakthrough for the far-right radicals came with the founding of the Magyar Gárda (Hungarian Guard Movement) in 2007, the party's paramilitary wing. Two years later, *Jobbik* won 14.77 % of the vote in the European Parliament elections, a result that surpassed both its own expectations and predictions based on opinion polls. In 2010, the party succeeded in drawing even more supporters, posting an election result of 16.67 % of the vote in the parliamentary elections, which made it the third largest party in the *Hungarian National Assembly*.³

On the basis of this breakthrough, it seemed possible for a while that *Jobbik* might have a chance of becoming the second-strongest opposition party in a bipolar political system, alongside the existing right-wing-populist governing party, *Fidesz* (the Hungarian Civic Union). But as of this writing in 2013, one year before the next scheduled elections, it does not look like this will be the case. According to recent surveys, *Jobbik*'s popularity has declined slightly to 9 % in the overall population and

1 Editors' note: the name of the party means both "better" and "more right-wing."

2 Réka Várnagy, "Hungary," *European Journal of Political Research*, vol. 50 (2011), pp. 991–998

3 "A MIÉP-pel közösen indulva" ("In Association with the Far Right MIÉP"), available at http://www.valasztas.hu/parval2006/hu/09/9_0.html.

15 % among those who are definitely planning to vote.⁴ That decline, however, should not be interpreted as the start of a trend, for it is primarily due to two contingent factors: the scandals that have arisen from the party's increasingly anti-Semitic and racist messages, and a wave of resignations by members for whom *Jobbik* had become too radical.⁵ The ever more conflict-ridden political culture of recent years probably has prompted *Jobbik* to alter its profile, a change that is reflected in the campaign platform that it adopted in January, 2013.⁶

In this paper, we would like to analyze four aspects of *Jobbik* as a right-wing party that is unique to Hungary. First, we examine the extent to which the policies and rhetoric of the party resemble or deviate from those of other extreme right-wing parties in Europe. Second, we examine the instruments *Jobbik* uses in its political work and how these compare with those of other far-right parties. Third, we look at how *Jobbik* has affected the entire Hungarian political system and, specifically, the most important political parties since its entry into parliament. Finally, we present three scenarios to explore the possible prospects for *Jobbik* in the run-up to the 2014 parliamentary elections.

1. Policies, rhetoric, and ideology

Although our analysis focuses on presenting the singular character of *Jobbik* and showing how it deviates from other far right-wing European parties, it should be noted that in many respects its political views do in fact dovetail with the positions taken by its counterparts. The differences

4 "Medián: Ki alkalmasabb?" ("Who is Better Suited?"), January 23, 2013, available at <http://www.median.hu/object.9a5752eb-18c6-451b-aa98-ec5f7961d465.ivy>

5 "Megroppantotta a Jobbikot a Gyöngyösi-ügy" ("The Case of Gyöngyösi: A Severe Blow for Jobbik"), December 5, 2012, available at http://hvg.hu/itthon/20121205_Megroppantotta_a_Jobbikot_a_Gyongyosiugy

6 "Hét vezérelvvel készül 2014-re a Jobbik" ("Seven Guiding Principles of Jobbik for the 2014 Elections"), January 17, 2013, available at [http://jobbik.hu/rovatok/orsz%C3%A1gos_h%C3%ADrek/h%C3%A9t_vez%C3%A9rlvel_k%C3%A9sz%C3%BCI_2014-re_a_jobbik](http://jobbik.hu/rovatok/orsz%C3%A1gos_h%C3%ADrek/h%C3%A9t_vez%C3%A9rlvel_k%C3%A9sz%C3%A9sz%C3%BCI_2014-re_a_jobbik)

can be attributed primarily to circumstances peculiar to Central and Eastern Europe, as well as to Hungary's own distinct history. Moreover, *Jobbik* has made a conscious effort to showcase its otherness as compared to parties and movements operating elsewhere on the continent. In the international arena, Hungarian right-wing radicals are very careful about the political company they keep, since they know full well that their alliance policy attracts attention from the public. A poignant example of this situation is the dilemma the party experienced in deciding whether to join any delegation in the European Parliament following its electoral success in 2009. Only after long disputes did its MPs decide to refrain from joining any partisan delegation in the EP and instead to sit as an independent bloc.⁷

Topics that radical right-wing and extreme right-wing⁸ parties place on the European agenda do resonate with *Jobbik*, but only when they have nationalistic connotations. For example, case studies show that *Jobbik* pays very little attention to conflicts over immigration policy or multiculturalism, which are top priorities for other far-right parties. What singles *Jobbik* out is that its objectives are more intensely and narrowly nationalistic than those of its counterparts in the region. In fact, when it comes to matters that affect ethnic Hungarians living outside the country's present borders and irredentist claims on areas detached from Hungary after World War I, the party's standpoint is unacceptable even to potential right-wing allies.⁹

7 "Felvetődött, hogy Morvai különcködik Brüsszelben" ("Morvai Plays the Oddball in Brussels"), June 25, 2009, available at <http://www.origo.hu/itthon/20090625-jobbik-europai-parlament-frakcioalakitasi-alkuk.html>

8 We differentiate between the radical and extreme right. The former accepts parliamentary elections, the rule of law, and other basic democratic norms and procedures, whereas the latter seeks to change the system fundamentally.

9 "Elutasítjuk a Jobbikot' – radikális európai politikusok Budapesten" ("We Reject Jobbik' –Radical European Politicians in Budapest"), October 30, 2011, available at http://atv.hu/cikk/20111030_elutasitjuk_a_jobbikot_radikalis_europai_politikusok_budapest

According to political science literature, far-right parties in Central and Eastern Europe display some unique characteristics. First, they are more radical and less able to compromise on their social policies and ideology than similar parties in Western Europe. Second, their internal organization bears more resemblance to that of a movement than is the case with far-right parties generally.¹⁰ Finally, most experts emphasize that far-right parties in Eastern Europe display anti-democratic attitudes and often demand that restrictions be placed on free markets in order to favor national interests. These observations may fit *Jobbik's* situation as well, but are of less direct importance in analyzing its rise than the other two points.¹¹

Jobbik is also exceptional among other European far-right parties in its decision to denounce every prior Hungarian social consensus (e.g., that the country should be democratic, that it should belong to the European Union, and that racism and anti-Semitism should be unacceptable). Exploiting the self-image problems of Hungarian society, *Jobbik* does not hesitate to question almost all established policies. In so doing, it has radicalized even mainstream political discourse. Examples include its exploitation of the so-called “Roma issue,” its demonization of free markets, and its determination to probe into the country’s unresolved Communist past. It is sometimes said that Hungarian right-wing radicals differ from parties with a similar ideological bias by dint of their aggressiveness. Certainly, the founding of the militant Hungarian Guard underscores the partial truth in this claim. But we would argue that there is a deeper difference: Despite its marginal political position, the Hungarian far-right has begun to change the orientation of the entire society.

10 Michael Minkenberg, “Transnational Dimensions of the Central and Eastern European Radical Right Today: Does the Past Play a Role in the Shaping of the Present?”, transcribed text of a lecture at the conference on “Far Right Networks in Northern and Eastern Europe,” 2010.

11 Szabiba Csánó, “Radikális irányok. Az EU radikális pártjainak külkapcsolati víziói” (“Radical Directions: Visions of Radical Parties in the EU through Foreign Relations”), in *Fordulat* no. 2 (2011).

Jobbik and other radical-right parties in Central and Eastern Europe have managed to devise a recipe for electoral success. Its ingredients include hostility towards minorities, a left-wing populist economic policy, and socio-cultural conservatism. Moreover, championship of a strong state plays an important role in the party programs of *Jobbik* and its far-right brethren, such as the Greater Romania Party, Slovakia's National Party, and Bulgaria's Ataka. All of these parties have usurped parts of the "left" side of the political spectrum on certain economic issues; indeed, they sometimes even outdo the social democratic parties in their populist economic demands. For example, *Jobbik* calls for the (re)-nationalization of strategically important companies; the Greater Romania Party advocates price reductions on important consumer goods; and Slovakia's National Party insists that there should be a "social minimum," or a floor under the standard of living of every citizen.

At the same time, the rejection of liberal economic policy also means that these parties are extremely critical of foreign capital and multinational companies. The resistance against multinational companies is especially dangerous in Hungary because these companies generate over 50% of the nation's gross domestic product. By adopting a policy that discourages investments by the multinationals (which, we should emphasize, is not just a quirk of *Jobbik* but has also been embraced by the governing *Fidesz*), the right wing could lead the country into stagnation and, in the worst case, even toward economic collapse.

While parties in Western Europe target immigrants, far-right parties in post-socialist states target national minorities. The main scapegoats of the former are Muslims (although, as a matter of course, they reject immigrants regardless of the countries from which they come); in the case of the latter, it is clearly the Roma. But it must be noted that in Hungary, the right wing's hostility toward the Roma falls on particularly fertile ground. Sixty percent of the population maintains that the Roma "have crime in their blood," and 42% agree with the policies of discos and restaurants that deny them entry.¹² In Hungary meanwhile, the

12 Cf. <http://www.tarki.hu/adatbank-h/kutjel/pdf/a809.pdf>.

proportion of Roma in the overall population is increasing; according to estimates, that number already hovers around 8%. A satisfactory integration of the Roma has not even been achieved in countries with more resources and fewer Roma. For these reasons, *Jobbik's* anti-gypsy rhetoric has resonated quite positively among broad sections of the population and constitutes a ticking time bomb in relations between the Roma and non-Roma in Hungary.

In regard to foreign policy, two objectives figure prominently in the outlook of the Central and Eastern European right-wing parties under investigation here. First, Serbia's SRS, Slovakia's SNS, and Hungary's *Jobbik* all display an overtly pro-Eastern, Russia-friendly attitude (in contrast to Bulgaria's Ataka and Romania's PRM, which navigate between Europe and Russia). Second, all have imperialistic designs on their neighbors: The SRS seeks to create a Greater Serbia, the PRM aims to merge Romania and Moldavia, and *Jobbik* has not relinquished the hope of redrawing Hungary's boundaries so as to incorporate ethnically Hungarian areas lost after World War I.

Right-wing radical parties in Central and Eastern Europe share yet another foreign policy stance: unfriendliness toward the West. In keeping with their anti-Western attitudes, the far-right parties of Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia advocate rejection of Europe in a cultural sense, even though all of these countries are already members of the EU. Yet *Jobbik* is the only one to demand that its country withdraw from the organization. Public position papers confirm that radical right-wing parties in the other countries do not venture beyond expressing dissatisfaction with the EU. Besides the Hungarian party, other post-socialist right-wing radical organizations such as that in Serbia advocate a hard, Euro-skeptical line; in fact, the SRS rejects Serbia's candidacy for EU membership.

Again unlike its far-right counterparts, *Jobbik* not only rejects the European Union and contacts to the West, but also offers an alternative. The party has established active diplomatic relations with Iran and many Arab countries, and there are numerous indications that it also has strong cooperative partners in Russia. In Hungary, this “opening to the East” is not unique to *Jobbik* within Hungary; the Orbán government also follows that same ideology, albeit with a more refined approach that includes critiques of the European Union coupled with a much friendlier stance towards Russia, China, and Saudi Arabia. Table 1, below, highlights the important ideological aspects of right-wing European parties and shows the deviations in *Jobbik*’s profile.



Anti-EU demonstration by the extreme right in Budapest

Jobbik compared to other European far-right parties

Table 1

	Political and economic orientation	Relevant social topics	Foreign policy	Degree of Euro-skepticism	Scapegoats and enemies
Ataka (Bulgaria)	Left-wing populist	Healthcare, pensions, minimum wage increase	Complete neutrality, but open to participation in a European defense system	Soft – rejects the EU, but doesn't want to withdraw from it	National minorities (Turks, Roma), USA
British National Party (Great Britain)	Left-wing populist	Social housing, social benefits, healthcare	Proximity to former "white" colonies (Australia, New Zealand, Canada)	Hard – favors EU withdrawal	Immigrants (used to be blacks, but now predominantly Muslims)
Dansk Folkeparti, or Danish People's Party (Denmark)	Left-wing populist	Pensions, health	Friendly to the USA, NATO, and Israel	Soft – rejects the EU, but doesn't want to withdraw from it	Immigrants (mainly Muslims)
Lega Nord, or North League (Italy)	Right-wing/ economic liberal	Family support	Secession of northern Italy from Italy, neutrality	Soft – rejects the EU and favors withdrawal, given increased integration	Immigrants (mainly Muslims), "centralist Rome," southern Italians
Vlaams Belang, or Flemish Interest (Belgium)	Right-wing/ economic liberal	Pensions	Secession of Flanders from Belgium, "solidarity of European people"	Soft – rejects the EU, in many political areas, favors common European policy	Immigrants (mainly Muslims)
Fremskrittspartiet, or Progress Party (Norway)	Right-wing/ economic liberal	Pensions, healthcare	Support for the USA and Israel	Not Euro-skeptical – if the people voted in a referendum in favor of an EU accession, this would be accepted; supports membership in the EEA and Schengen	Immigrants from overseas; active state economic policy

Jobbik (Hungary)	Left-wing populist	Social benefits	Eastern alignment (Russia, China, etc.)	Hard – rejects increasing European integration, favors referendum to leave the EU	National minorities (above all the Roma), multinational companies, Communists
Partidul Română Mare, or Greater Romania Party (Romania)	Left-wing populist	Price reductions of most important consumer goods	Liaising role between NATO and Russia, merging with Moldavia	Soft – rejects the EU, but doesn't want to withdraw	National minorities (Hungarians, Roma, Jews)
Front National, or National Front (France)	Left-wing populist	Social benefits	Restoring "national priority" and "sovereignty"	Soft – rejects the EU, but doesn't want to withdraw	Immigrants (primarily Muslims), globalization
Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs, or Freedom Party of Austria (Austria)	Left-wing populist	Healthcare, family support, youth policy	Neutrality, but open to the East (Russia, China, etc.); critical of USA	Soft – rejects the EU for withdrawal given increasing integration	Immigrants (primarily the Muslims)
Schweizerische Volkspartei, or Swiss People's Party (Switzerland)	Right-wing/ economic liberal	Social benefits	Complete neutrality, partnership relations with the EU, the USA and countries in the Far East	Hard – EU as economic partner but against accession	Immigrants (primarily the Muslims)
Serbian Radical Party (Serbia)	Right-wing/ economic liberal	Pensions	Eastern alignment (Russia), creation of "Greater Serbia"	Hard – against accession	Opponents of Serbian irredentism (Albanians, Croatsians, Bosnians, the USA)
Slovak People's Party (Slovakia)	Left-wing populist	Family support, demand for a "social minimum"	Against NATO, solidarity with the Slavic nations	Soft – rejects the EU, but against withdrawal (EU as a "necessary evil")	National minorities (Hungarians, Roma)

2. Political instruments

In many ways, *Jobbik* is unique in Europe not only with regard to its political views, but also with regard to the political and rhetorical devices that it employs. Many other radical organizations resort to rhetoric that focuses attention on some imagined enemy, peddles social populism, or evinces skepticism about Europe. But it is much less common to find the blatantly fascist phrases used by *Jobbik*, not to mention its preoccupation with environmental issues. Below, we investigate the most important elements of *Jobbik*'s policy statements and see how these compare those of other far-right European parties.

2.1 Intensified scapegoating

The handiest, best-known technique of communication and identification used by far-right parties is scapegoating: holding an economic actor or an easily-recognizable group of people responsible for most social problems. *Jobbik*, of course, has identified plenty of regional enemies, as we have seen. But ever since its founding, the party has also kept alive the issue of Hungary's Communist heritage and the responsibility born by the Communist-era political elite for past and present wrongs. This technique is not merely a right-wing deviation from "normal" partisan behavior. It suggests a complex and all-embracing world-view, an ideological account of reality that urges members of the community to find scapegoats behind or in practically every aspect of economic, political, and social life.

In addition to displaying anti-gypsy attitudes, which are prevalent throughout Eastern Europe, *Jobbik* typically takes a firm stand against the activities of foreign-owned multinational companies. Moreover, it maintains that those responsible for today's alleged economic and moral crisis are former Communist and socialist politicians who have become economic liberals. By being loud and vocal about this message, the party manages to connect its position on Hungary's Communist past with its diagnosis of present-day problems. When it comes to interpreting the

activities of multinational corporations, the party has established a complex “system of messages.” It attacks a variety of unpopular trends, such as the “dumping” prices at which foreign companies sell food in Hungary, which are set so low that they eventually oust Hungarian products. *Jobbik* also blames the high cost of living in Hungary on the machinations of those same corporations, and laments the transfer of their profits abroad.

2.2 Social sensibilities and populism

Whereas other European parties on the radical right advocate healthcare and pension reform, these issues were put on the back burner when *Jobbik* was established and did not even receive significant mention in its platform prior to entering parliament. The party has not developed a viable scheme for reforming social systems. Its messages on the subject are limited to the claim that recipients of benefits enjoy subsidies to which they are not entitled. Party literature locates this charge within a broader “intellectual” critique of current policies that – as we have seen – features hostility to various enemies, especially the Roma. Under the pretext of revamping the social security systems, *Jobbik* expects the recipients of support services to perform compulsory labor or to work in some way with local self-government almost as a quid pro quo.¹³

With regard to overhauling the healthcare system, the party maintains first and foremost that services are used mainly by people who do not contribute to it. Similarly, *Jobbik* stresses that individuals with a “historical fault” (i.e., those who committed crimes as leaders of the Hungarian Communist Workers’ Party between 1949 and 1989) should not be eligible to receive pensions. Furthermore, it links the problem of private pension funds with a critique of the profit-oriented practices of multinational companies. *Jobbik*’s intended revamping of the pension system – which

13 “Kell-e közmunkaprogram?” (“Is a Mandatory Work Program Necessary?”), available at http://jobbik.hu/sites/jobbik.hu/download/K%C3%B6zmunkaprogram_Jobbik_2012_janu%C3%A1r_olvasm%C3%A1nyos.pdf

until recently did not include private pensions, but now does include state-sponsored private pension plans -- is risky for a party whose core voters are young people. The financial base of the existing pension system is dominated by the young, but given Hungary's declining population, it is not clear how long that system will be sustainable. The party ignores the question of whether a shrinking number of active workers will be willing and able to support a growing number of retirees. On the whole, when it comes to revamping government distribution systems, almost all of *Jobbik's* reform proposals are ill-conceived. They embody a preference for scapegoating enemies, rather than attempting to find real solutions to social problems.

2.3 Posture toward European integration

Compared to other radical right-wing parties on the continent, *Jobbik* is constantly changing its position concerning the European Union and its assessment of Hungary's membership in that organization. When the party was founded, it not only rejected accession to the EU and participation in European elections, but also regarded any commitment on the part of the Hungarian government to harmonize its legislative initiatives with EU norms as detrimental to the national interest.¹⁴ By 2009, that strict rejectionist position had changed because the protest mood among the Hungarian public that influenced the European election results enabled the party to score its first victory at the polls. *Jobbik* attributed almost every negative trend in Hungary to the supposed background machinations of the EU. The EU allegedly caused the bankruptcy of the Hungarian national airline, while rules governing the convergence criteria of the European Economic and Monetary Union supposedly put unnecessary constraints on Hungarian sovereignty. In recent years, Hungary's EU membership has posed a credibility problem for *Jobbik*, as the party has three MPs in the European Parliament. But its participation in EU affairs did not stop the party from blaming the ongoing recession

14 "A Jobbik külpolitikája a belügyekbe be nem avatkozás – a keleti nyitás sarkalatos nemzeti érdek," 2010 ("The Foreign Policy of Jobbik is the Non-Intervention in Internal Affairs – Opening to the East is a Key National Interest"), available at <http://kuruc.info/r/7/68115/>

on Hungary's financial obligations to Brussels. In fact, ever since the Treaty of Lisbon entered into force, the party has called for the withdrawal of Hungary from the EU. *Jobbik* has maintained this stance despite the fact that the cohesion funding granted by the EU provides Hungary's best opportunity for economic development.

2.4 Neofascism

According to political analyses of *Jobbik*, the blending of populist left-wing and neo-fascist ideological elements is another of its unique characteristics. In practice this means that the nostalgia for the extremes prevalent in the period between the two world wars plays a particularly large role in the identity of the party and its associated movements. Also specific to the positions *Jobbik* has taken in recent years are the waves of racism directed against the Roma, which have resonated positively with a populace already inclined toward hatred of this minority group. As mentioned previously, the Roma are portrayed as the main racial enemy by far-right parties in Central and Eastern Europe, while in Western Europe the far right has cast Muslims in this role. In contrast to other extreme right-wing parties in Central and Eastern Europe, where attacks are also geared towards other national minorities, *Jobbik* focuses almost exclusively on anti-gypsy agitation.

2.5 Ecological concern

As *Jobbik* has come to occupy a more prominent place on the political scene, it has faced a new challenge: pressure to take positions on a variety of policy and value questions, such as how to shape relations with Hungary's neighbors and the EU. On the one hand, these issues play into *Jobbik's* emphasis on the cultivation of national traditions. On the other hand, they could give the party a more open character in the future.¹⁵ Since its founding, *Jobbik* has been intensely focused on the radical

15 "Hét vezérelvvel készül 2014-re a Jobbik," ("Seven Guiding Principles for Jobbik for the 2014 Elections"), January 17, 2013, available at http://jobbik.hu/rovatok/orsz%C3%A1gos_h%C3%ADrek/h%C3%A9t_vez%C3%A9rvelvel_k%C3%A9sz%C3%BCl_2014-re_a_jobbik.

reinterpretation of national identity and the creation of a specific sub-culture derived from it. In this vein, the Hungarian Guard not only puts its stamp on the character of the party; it also offers its numerous young supporters a trendy image with which to identify.

According to the party's newly-heralded 2013 election strategy, it is now ready to offer solutions to environmental problems and thus become an advocate for the interests of future generations. This is an unusual change of course for a right-wing European party, since green causes tend to be identified with the left, but it might be seen as appropriate for Hungary's far right. On the one hand the Green party, known as *Lehet más a politika* (Politics can be Different) or LMP, is not in a position to represent eco-social ideas effectively; on the other hand, the dramatization of environmental conflict meshes well with *Jobbik's* xenophobia and criticism of multinational corporations.

2.6 Party development

Research on the development of far-right parties in Eastern Europe reveals that, with the exception of *Jobbik*, such entities tend to be weakest in countries having either many immigrants or a large national minority. *Jobbik's* exceptionalism in this regard could be attributable to its success in both fueling tensions and making its pseudo-solutions palatable to many citizens. To take just one example, in the party's strongholds in northeast Hungary, it has been able to convince the citizenry that it would deal effectively with local problems after gaining power. Another unique characteristic in *Jobbik's* development is its desire to create an enduring organization staffed by professionals. From 2006 onward, *Jobbik* deliberately built up its organizational network while also bidding for public media support and maintaining political activities at the street level. These are all important strategies for stabilizing *Jobbik's* base of support. The party needs to maintain a high and carefully polished profile to sell the public on its "enemies list" and to attract better educated and trained supporters. By 2013, things had reached the point that a segment of the mainstream media no longer even tries to isolate *Jobbik*. Moreover,

not only does *Jobbik* now have its own national newspaper and local papers as well as websites operated by foreign servers, but it has even launched its own online TV platform.

3. *Jobbik's* system-building power and its impact on other parties

After *Jobbik's* electoral success in 2010, many observers expected the entry of right-wing radicals into parliament to soften their aggressive and populist behavior. But this “domestication” of the far right either did not occur at all or happened in ways that few had anticipated. There was unquestionably a consolidation process, in that *Jobbik* attempted, at first in vain, to cultivate its image as a party competent enough to govern. One can discern this transition in the party's approach to politics in the different tone taken by its chairman, Gábor Vona, in public debates, as well as in the party leadership's division of labor. For example, in the budget debate or on issues concerning agreements with the EU, *Jobbik* tried to argue objectively, although it never quite overcame its political profile as the “people's tribune,” which it acquired due to its street-level political activities. *Jobbik* would like very much to have it both ways. That is, it wants voters to regard it as competent to govern, but not to think that it would moderate its extreme positions if it ever were to gain power.

In parliament, *Jobbik* came to realize that it was not alone in using unorthodox methods and that democratic opposition parties also often stage sensational political actions in public. Nevertheless, the party suffered a severe setback when it evidently pushed its rhetoric beyond the pale of acceptability. One of its parliamentary deputies, Márton Gyöngyösi proposed in 2012 that a list of government officials with a Jewish background should be compiled. That suggestion was such an affront to even minimum standards of democratic decency that *Jobbik* once again had to face criticism from all reputable political forces. Even today no one is really sure whether this episode, which tested the

boundaries of democratic norms, had been planned or was a spontaneous outburst. If the former, it suggests that *Jobbik* wanted to prove to its support base and to the general public that it had not abandoned its radicalism merely because it happened to sit in parliament.

As far as the inner workings of parliament are concerned, events of the present legislative period, combined with the established framework of parliamentary procedure, evidently have forced the left and green parliamentary delegations to cooperate with *Jobbik* to some extent on certain issues. Their incentive to do so arises from the rules required to convene committees of inquiry, but also from the legislative pace dictated by the two-thirds majority of the governing party. This grudging cooperation between ideological foes has not happened very often because, for most of those involved, it inflicts much greater moral damage in the eyes of the general public than any potential political benefit that it might bring. Thus, at least in its official posture, *Jobbik* operates more or less in isolation from other parties, both nationally and internationally. However, the measures taken by democratic opposition parties to whittle it down to size cannot be deemed a success. Despite joint protests against *Jobbik*, the democratic bloc has not yet achieved its most important goals of compelling *Jobbik* to change its policies or minimizing its social impact.

As a result of its presence inside and outside of parliament, *Jobbik* has had a dramatic influence on all the major Hungarian parties and has managed to transform the way in which political issues are framed. Below we examine the influence of extreme right-wing parties on the governing right-wing populist *Fidesz*; on the largest opposition party, the MSZP (Hungarian Socialist Party); and on the center-left green party, LMP, which was founded just a few years ago.

3.1. Influence of *Jobbik* on *Fidesz*

Two major observations can be made about government practices during the last two years. First, the *Fidesz* party does not see any particular risk to its own popularity in carrying out the main planks of *Jobbik*'s 2010

electoral platform, albeit with minor modifications. Second, *Fidesz* can get away with this because it is in Hungary's political culture to pay less attention to the substance of policymaking than to the apparent efficiency and skill with which policies are implemented. Table 2, below, reveals clear overlaps between the *Jobbik* platform and the decisions of the *Fidesz*-KDNP (*Christian Democratic People's Party*) governing coalition.

Comparison of *Jobbik* platform and *Fidesz* policies

Table 2

Jobbik's 2010 Electoral Platform	Policies of the Fidesz Government
"The contribution made by multinational companies to tax revenue is extremely small; the resulting gain is covered up with accounting tricks and removed from the country."	The government of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has imposed special taxes in the telecommunications and energy sectors, as well as on large retail chains, ¹⁶ which are, for the most part, owned by multinational corporations.
"The mandatory private pension system is to be eliminated and statutory pension insurance is to be brought back, but private accounts will remain. We allow free choice among the pension funds; there is no compulsory membership in private pension funds."	Fidesz has nationalized the savings in the private pension funds. Contrary to Jobbik's platform, however, the transfer was not the result of free choice. ¹⁷
"Contrary to the proliferation of neoliberal education policy, Jobbik supports the grading system and repeating grades in school."	The Fidesz-KDNP government reintroduced the grading system and sanctioned the practice of requiring struggling students to repeat grades. ¹⁸
"The principle has to be demonstrated that the Holy Crown and the state of Hungary, the Holy Crown ¹⁹ and the nation (consisting of people of different nationalities and religions), are one. In official texts and legal norms the Holy Crown stands for the state of Hungary."	The reference to the Holy Crown was incorporated into the Fundamental Law: ²⁰ "We respect the achievements of our historical constitution and the Holy Crown, which embodies the constitutional continuity and national unity of Hungary."



16 Cf. http://hvg.hu/gazdasag/20101018_kulonado_parlament.

17 Cf. http://www.fn.hu/belfold/20101124/annyi_magannyugdijpenztaraknak/.

18 Cf. <http://www.mr1-kossuth.hu/hirek/itthon/lehet-majd-buktani-es-osztalyozni-az-also-tagozat.html>.

19 Editors' note: Reference is made here to the crown allegedly worn by the first Hungarian king, Stephen I (969-1038 C.E.); the broader sense is that, according to Hungarian beliefs, the crown is the symbol of sovereign power, which even the king merely borrows from the crown he wears.

20 The Fundamental Law is the new Hungarian constitution, which took effect at the beginning of 2012.



<p>"Jobbik will draft a media act, designed to create a new kind of public sector according to the value principle,²¹ and establishes as its criteria the formation of a national identity, varied educational work, and balanced information. Instead of the current practice, in which imposing sanctions against individual media outlets often takes years, we are going to make it possible for sanctions to be imposed right away."</p>	<p>Fidesz crafted a media act, and changed the constitution to pass it. The Orbán government's goal was to put all Hungarian media under the auspices of officials assigned by the government.²² When justifying the bills there was growing acceptance for the "value principle." The newly- created media authority is empowered to impose severe sanctions.</p>
<p>"We are going to require elementary schools to organize a class trip in one of the last four years of elementary school to an area [supposedly illegitimately] separated from Hungary."</p>	<p>A draft resolution passed by parliament in October, 2010 on the initiative of the Fidesz government specifies that every young person in the public school system can participate in a class trip to an area in neighboring countries inhabited by ethnic Hungarians.²³</p>
<p>"The Christian roots of Hungary will be anchored in the Fundamental Law."</p>	<p>The reference to Christianity was adopted in the Fundamantal Law: "We are proud that the Hungarian state was put on a sound footing thousands of years ago by Saint Stephan and that Hungary was made part of Christian Europe. We commit ourselves to the nation-sustaining power of Christianity."</p>
<p>"The Károlyi²⁴ memorial will be removed from Kossuth Square without delay. We are initiating the reconstruction of the Regnum Marianum Church, which was blown up under Stalinist /Rákosiist tyranny. Roosevelt Square is to receive the name of ... Count István Széchenyi.²⁵ As a rule, all streets and squares that have names associated with negative historical figures or time periods are to be renamed, such memorials removed and taken to a suitable place."</p>	<p>In March 2012, the Károlyi memorial was removed from Kossuth Square. The square formerly known as Roosevelt Square was changed to Széchenyi Square by the Fidesz majority in Budapest's House of Representatives. According to a proposed amendment to the Municipal Act put forth by MPs of Fidesz and the KDNP, "public streets and squares or public buildings may not be named after people who were involved in the founding and/or upholding of systems of political tyranny during the 20th century."</p>



21 Editor's note: This means that Jobbik wants public media to aim at conveying values rather than merely providing entertainment.

22 Cf. http://hirszerzo.hu/belfold/20101126_sajtofelugyelet_mediatorveny_Szalai.

23 Cf. <http://csepel.info/?p=11244>.

24 Editor's note: Mihaly Karolyi (1875-1955) led Hungary during its short-lived 1918-19 democracy.

25 Editor's note: Istvan Szechenyi (1791-1860) was a prominent Hungarian statesman, political theorist, and modernizer.

<p>→ "[Jobbik champions] a nationwide program for the establishment of memorials to Miklós Horthy, Albert Wass,²⁶ Pál Teleki, Ottokár Prohászka, Cecile Tormay, Béla Hamvas and other great Hungarians who have undeservedly been forgotten"</p>	<p>This also applies to expressions or names of organizations which directly reference or commemorate systems of political tyranny in the 20th century."²⁷</p> <p>A square was named after Albert Wass, for example.²⁸</p>
<p>"In an effort to stop the accumulation of positions that politicians hold, we want to prevent MPs from simultaneously being mayors or MPs in a municipal or regional representative body."</p>	<p>In the bill to the parliamentary act that was introduced in March, 2012, Fidesz argued in favor of establishing the incompatibility of the positions of MP and mayor.²⁹</p>
<p>On the day of parliament's inaugural meeting, Jobbik tabled the suggestion of declaring the anniversary of the Treaty of Trianon³⁰ a national day of commemoration.</p>	<p>In May, 2010, the day the Treaty of Trianon was signed was declared a "Day of National Unity" by the National Assembly.³¹</p>
<p>"We want to put an end to the treasonable political practice characterized by extensive obsequiousness vis-à-vis the interests of the [European] Union, which the Hungarian Socialist Party has been pursuing, but also Fidesz and other parliamentary parties, sometimes even at the expense of Hungarian interests. One only needs to think of the hasty conclusion to the accession negotiations with the Union that were full of self-abandonment, the unconditional consent to Romania's EU accession, or the hasty consent to the Treaty of Lisbon, which has not even been read. If necessary, Jobbik is prepared to go head to head with Brussels. When it comes to deciding between the interests of the nation and the Union, we will not shy away from deciding in favor of our fatherland and our nation."</p>	<p>The Orbán government does not shun conflict with the EU. It puts national interests above those of the community. Communications from the government are often critical of EU institutions, and the rhetoric of Hungary's Prime Minister concerning the EU has become more radical in tone.³²</p>

26 Editor's note: Albert Wass (1908-1998), a celebrated Transylvanian novelist and poet, was denounced as a war criminal by the Romanian People's Tribunals and subsequently by the Simon Wiesenthal Center for having ordered the murder of civilians in 1940. Wass moved to the United States after the war, where he taught European languages and literatures at the University of Florida. Romania's extradition request for Professor Wass was denied by the U.S. Department of Justice for lack of sufficient evidence.

27 Cf. http://hvg.hu/itthon/20111109_Fidesz_KDNP_kommunista_utcanevek.

28 Cf. http://www.vasnepe.hu/kozugyek_politika/20110427_nevcserek_budapest_n_szell_kalman_ter.

29 Cf. <http://mno.hu/belfold/a-fidesz-benyujtotta-az-orszaggyulesrol-szolo-torvenyjavaslatot-1060189>

30 Editor's note: The reference here is to the Treaty of Versailles, which representatives of Hungary signed at the Petit Trianon Palace and which redrew the country's boundaries, leaving many ethnic Hungarians living in neighboring countries such as Romania and Slovakia.

31 Cf. <http://www.hir24.hu/belfold/2010/05/31/lesz-trianon-emleknep-junius-4-en/>.

32 Cf. http://index.hu/belfold/2012/03/16/orban_elnaspangolta_az_eu-t/.

Meanwhile, it can be clearly ascertained that on almost every issue related to values and political disputes, *Fidesz* has incorporated *Jobbik*'s positions. For example, *Fidesz* has taken over *Jobbik*'s use of the term "criminal politicians." With regard to the "Roma problem," *Fidesz* demands compulsory work in return for social benefits. The party's economic policy awards subsidies and preferential treatment to local producers in violation of international agreements. Politically, it is critical of EU norms and organizations, and it adopts a pro-Eastern alignment in matters of international trade. In legal matters, it seeks to reinstate the death penalty and demands stricter regulations on abortion. For the most part, these demands reflect those typical of *Jobbik*.³³

Overall, then, we can see that the ideology advocated by *Jobbik* is being implemented by the *Fidesz* government (with its two-thirds majority in parliament) in a slightly watered down version, but without any major changes in its tenets. The ideology developed by *Jobbik* is also becoming more radical. There were once psychological and social barriers that tended to confine far-right beliefs to a fairly small minority. But those barriers have gradually begun to erode. Both the media and the general population have become more willing to air such beliefs as though they were mainstream ideas and not moral/political taboos. For this reason, the duo consisting of *Jobbik* as the mastermind and *Fidesz* as the efficient agent holding government power pose a serious medium-term threat to Western values such as tolerance, cosmopolitanism, anti-racism, and solidarity.

Why would *Fidesz* try to "steal the thunder" of such a far-right party as *Jobbik*? One reason may be that *Fidesz* now sees *Jobbik* as a serious rival capable of attracting support from its own voter base. At one time, much of *Jobbik*'s support seemed to come from disillusioned ex-socialist voters, but recently the party has won over more and more voters with right-

33 András Bíró Nagy, Tamás Boros, and Áron Varga, "A szélsőjobboldal Magyarországon" ("Right-Wing Extremists in Hungary"), available at http://www.fesbp.hu/common/pdf/DE_PS_szelsojobboldal_Magyarorszag.pdf.

wing sympathies. Under the new electoral system, *Fidesz* has two feasible strategies for neutralizing its rival in the years to come. One such strategy would be to try to strengthen the democratic opposition parties, tempering the right-wing radicals by curbing their extreme character. For *Jobbik*, this outcome could be advantageous, enabling it to pride itself on being, if not the first, at least one of the few far-right parties to be given partial responsibility for governing as a coalition partner. The other possible strategy for *Fidesz* would be to retain and even broaden the two-track approach it has already implicitly adopted by strengthening its support for extreme ideologies.³⁴ Both strategies can be considered plausible, given that *Jobbik* has played an important role in the personal histories of several significant *Fidesz* leaders. That is, the two parties share some common ground not only in outlook and policy, but also even in terms of personnel and management. At the same time, *Fidesz* has to realize that the European Union is not so weakened by internal dissension that it cannot take decisive action against a power-grab by the far right in Hungary, as it once attempted to do against Austria.³⁵ Granted, those measures failed at the time. Nevertheless, EU sanctions against Hungary could do great long-term economic damage, irrespective of whatever short-term gains they might bring for the right. As noted, there has been much talk in this country about flogging trade with the East, but in fact the Hungarian economy still relies on exports to the West.

3.2 Influence of *Jobbik* on the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP)

Over the last two years, the presence of *Jobbik* has had several important consequences for the MSZP, the largest Hungarian opposition party. In the sphere of political communications, the right-wing radicals have forced other parties to offer more socially- and economically-populist messages if they hope to compete. *Jobbik*, with its predominantly left-

34 Zsolt Bayer, “Ki ne legyen?” (“Who is not allowed to?”), available at http://magyarhirlap.hu/ki-ne-legyen?utm_source=mandiner&utm_medium=link&utm_campaign=mandiner_201301.

35 Robert Spaemann, “Európa értékközösség vagy jogrend?” (“Europe: A Community of Shared Values or A Legal System?”), in *Kétezer*, volume 14, number 3 (2002), pp.11–18

wing populist policies, reflects this Europe-wide trend. In the poorest regions of Hungary, the MSZP apparently has not yet given up trying to win back the majority of its former voters who cast their vote for *Jobbik* or *Fidesz* in the 2010 elections. Yet *Jobbik*'s racist and anti-gypsy messages have struck such a chord in the electorate that the MSZP has found it extremely difficult to make headway against the latent and overt prejudices held by many citizens concerning the Roma and their alleged criminality. Those prejudices remain highly influential among the very groups that the MSZP would most like to attract. This competitive situation forces the MSZP to abandon its previously rather liberal economic policies in favor of more hardline leftist goals in an effort to win back former supporters. Alternatively, the presence of *Jobbik* gives the left wing the opportunity to highlight the risks to society inherent in radical right-wing ideas and views. It also offers the party an opportunity to champion social integration.

3.3 Influence of *Jobbik* on the Greens (LMP)

The relationship of *Jobbik* to the Greens has been highly ambivalent over the last two years. It should be stressed that the ecopolitical identity of the LMP is highly nuanced. Its message blends both criticism of the practices of the previous socialist elite and a rejection of the far right's prejudices and extremist views. In light of this, the party's basic principles include rejection of elitism in any form. Both the LMP and *Jobbik* frequently have expressed criticism of past legislative periods. The LMP's parliamentary activities have sometimes conveyed the impression that it might more inclined to collaborate with *Jobbik* than with the MSZP on certain issues in order to end *Fidesz*'s dominant political position. And yet, the LMP's quest for a partisan identity has soured its relations with right-wing radicals. True to the green principles for which it stands, the LMP has attacked globalization and advocated a more community-based economy. For example, the LMP criticizes EU policy in a manner which is superficially reminiscent of *Jobbik*, but the basic sentiment is similar. The political base of the Green Party is drawn mainly from better educated, urban strata with professional training. However, the party also has a

relatively strong “provincial wing,” whose members’ beliefs concerning the cultivation of traditions resemble those of the rural intellectual circles that support *Jobbik*.

4. Possible pre-election scenarios for *Jobbik*

One can envision three possible scenarios for *Jobbik*’s campaign strategy in anticipation of the 2014 elections. The first scenario sees a continuation of *Jobbik*’s current preference for extremist, racist, anti-Semitic rhetoric as well as its hostility towards the country’s elite. As long as the party continues on this path, it will not be able to attract large numbers of uncommitted voters or *Fidesz* supporters, and is thus unlikely to win more than about 10% of the vote. During election campaigns, voters are on the lookout for potential political leaders to whom they can entrust the country’s governance. Under the first scenario, undecided voters would opt either for *Fidesz* or the MSZP, and *Jobbik* would be frozen out of any governing coalition. Given the nature of Hungarian electoral law, the party might be able to garner enough votes to send roughly ten representatives to parliament.

The second scenario is based on the premise that *Jobbik* muffles its extreme rhetoric during the campaign season and makes an effort to attract both the more radical supporters of *Fidesz* and those voters who are undecided and disenchanted by the established, mainstream parties. To follow this path, the party would emphasize social issues and, in the months leading up to the parliamentary elections, would try to present plausible political solutions and viable candidates to the electorate. By moving toward the center, it could broaden its own base. Moreover, even assuming it had no chance of winning the election outright, in the event of a *Fidesz* victory *Jobbik* could support that party as a partner outside the governing coalition.

Third and finally, it is conceivable that the scandals that rocked the party so severely in the past could attract even more unfavorable publicity. For

instance, old stories about individual *Jobbik* politicians with suspicious pasts could be disclosed to the media or the names of questionable party sponsors could be leaked. *Jobbik* owes its appeal, among other things, to its reputation as an unblemished political force quite different from the dominant parties, which many citizens perceive as corrupt. If that image should get tarnished, the popularity of right-wing radicals could dip slightly below the current level come the next elections.

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A joint committee of the German federal government and the states considers a ban on the far-right NPD

Banning Extreme Right-Wing Associations in the Federal Republic of Germany

2

Gideon Botsch | Christoph Kopke | Fabian Virchow

1. Heading toward a ban of the NDP?

For several decades now, there has been much discussion of varying intensity in the Federal Republic of Germany about banning the German *National Democratic Party* (NPD). The NPD is the country's oldest right-wing extremist party, and currently its most visible. Founded in 1964 as a wide-ranging radical nationalist catch-all party, it has since evolved dramatically. In particular, its relationship with the openly active neo-Nazi movement has fluctuated. Since 1991, after a period of widespread dissociation from neo-Nazism, it has been receptive to incorporating increasingly extreme elements of the far-right political spectrum. As a result, more and more serious efforts have made to request the Federal Constitutional Court to ban the party.

A qualified minority of the judges (all that was required by law) ruled that the NPD lacked the requisite “distance from the state” in this case. Because domestic intelligence services – especially the state and federal Offices for the Protection of the Constitution – had infiltrated the NPD and recruited so many paid confidential informants from its upper echelons, it was difficult to say whether the Party's policies reflected the will of its members or the wish of the informants to get paid for delivering radical-sounding statements. However, when it was revealed in November of 2011 that a neo-Nazi group going by the name of “National Socialist Underground” (NSU) had murdered several tradesmen of foreign origin over a period of years, the political debate on effective measures to counter right-wing extremist organizations and activities was reignited. Although no direct link can be established between the

offenders and the NPD as a whole, and although the party cannot be held legally responsible for their crimes, the offenders and their accomplices, supporters, and sympathizers did move within the innermost circles of the party and in some cases were its members or officials. Therefore, in December of 2012, the Ministers-President of the Federal States agreed (with the state of Hessen abstaining) to file a new motion in the Bundesrat to ask the Federal Constitutional Court to ban the NPD, and urged the federal government and the Bundestag to file motions along the same lines. Thus, the controversy over whether or not to ban the party gained fresh momentum, as did debates regarding its prospects for success, its possible impact, and its legitimacy in a constitutional democracy. At the center of the controversy are the rarely-applied procedures for banning a party pursuant to Article 21, paragraph 2 of the Basic Constitutional Law (GG). The procedures for banning an organization pursuant to Article 9, paragraph 2 of the Basic Constitutional Law have generated less heat, perhaps because they are applied much more frequently.

Our intention in this article is to provide a summary of the so-called ban on associations used against extreme right-wing organizations over the history of the Federal Republic. To that end, we first clarify the legal framework that defines the various options for banning an association, as well as questions concerning legal jurisdiction (section 2, below). Next, we provide an overview of the various phases that have characterized such bans in the Federal Republic (section 3), and discuss how the extreme right-wing has reacted to the bans, focusing on the counter-strategies they have employed (section 4). We evaluate the efficiency or effectiveness of the association ban (section 5) and conclude with a brief synopsis of the implications of a ban on the NPD, should it be enacted (section 6).¹

1 The article is based on a joint research project of the Moses Mendelssohn Centre for European-Jewish Studies known as “Research Focus: Anti-Semitism and Right-Wing Extremism Research” at the University of Potsdam and the “Research Focus: Right-Wing Extremism/ Neo-Nazism” at the University of Düsseldorf. The results will be published as a monograph entitled “Banning Extreme Right-Wing Parties and Organizations: State Prohibition Policies in the Federal Republic of Germany. Between ‘true democracy’ and symbolic politics. 1950–2012” (Wiesbaden: Springer/VS-Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, forthcoming 2013).

2. Legal framework and jurisdictions

Political parties are considered banned in the Federal Republic if their unconstitutionality has been determined in a specific proceeding by the Federal Constitutional Court. Only the highest constitutional organs – the Bundestag, Bundesrat, and the federal government – are authorized to file an application for a proceeding to enact a ban. These constitutional organs can pursue the proceedings individually or collectively.

The legal hurdles facing a ban on associations are less formidable. Article 9, paragraph 2 of the Basic Constitutional Law states that: “Associations, the purpose or activities of which run counter to criminal law, or are directed against the constitutional order or against the principle of international goodwill, ... are illegal.” Because the fundamental right to freedom of association is constitutionally guaranteed in Germany, associations are also protected. However, their prohibition is not determined by legal proceedings, but rather achieved through administrative channels. The Right of Association regulates illegality in § 3, paragraph 1 as follows: “An association may only be considered illegal (Article 9, paragraph 2 of the Federal Constitutional Law), if it has been determined, by order of the prohibiting authority, that its purposes or activities run counter to criminal law or are directed against the constitutional order or the principle of international goodwill.”

The authorities currently granted jurisdiction over such prohibitions are the Bundesinnenminister (Federal Minister of the Interior), for associations that are active nationally or in more than one state, and the Landesinnenminister (State Ministers of the Interior) or the Senators for the Interior of the City States, in the case of associations whose activities are confined to a single state or city-state. Prior to the amendment of the Law of Association in August of 1964, bans could also be enacted by the Regierungspräsidenten (District Presidents); as such, there was an administrative level participating below that of the federal states.

The difference between these two types of bans is considerable, as parties enjoy particularly high constitutional protection. Therefore, formidable obstacles to the banning of a party can be expected, arising from the Basic Constitutional Law itself, including both rulings on bans by the Federal Constitutional Court against the SRP (*Sozialistische Reichspartei*, or *Socialist Reich Party*) and KPD (*Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands*, or *Communist Party of Germany*), as well as §§ 1, 32, and 33 of the Political Parties Law. Unlike an association, a party cannot be banned simply because it is unconstitutional: “It must in fact be actively militant, and demonstrate aggressive behavior towards the existing order.”² According to the exact wording of the law, a party that is unconstitutional, or an association that aims to disrupt the constitutional order, does need not to be deemed illegal, because it is inherently illegal from the start. In this respect, the unconstitutionality or illegality of a party is not set forth as a point of law, but rather established or ruled upon as a matter of fact.

Contrary to the perceptions of the extreme right, the instrumentalities for banning parties and organizations have not been adopted in the Federal Republic of Germany in a way that involves widespread “persecution” of the “national opposition.” Banning ordinances have been issued against organizations whose ideology, symbolism, or activities were tied to historical National Socialism and organizations that have plotted or committed direct violations against provisions of the criminal code.

Whether or not to issue a ban against an association lies within the discretion of the prohibiting authority, that is, the responsible Ministry of the Interior. Whether or not proceedings to ban a party are pursued before the Federal Constitutional Court initially rests with the discretion of one or more of the constitutional organs having jurisdiction over such matters. In this sense, banning an association or a party is always a political decision, a circumstance that renders it both possible and

2 Federal Constitutional Court KPD-Ruling 1956, available at http://www.mik.nrw.de/uploads/media/KPD-Urteil_01.pdf (last accessed January 31, 2013).

necessary to weigh the likely consequences of such a move. In the past, the decisive factor in the banning of right-wing extremist organizations was not necessarily that they posed a concrete or even substantial threat to democracy, but rather that they attracted considerable negative attention within Germany itself and in the international press. Where the pressure to act was not generated as a result of the publicity, most groups were allowed to keep operating under the law, even when the requirements for a ban were in fact met. These observations suggest that the prosecution and banning of right-wing extremist organizations has never been a simple, quasi-automatic procedure, a matter of simply following the law. There have always been grey areas and political complications.

Both the rarely-applied instrument of the party ban and the comparatively frequently-applied ban on associations are (among other legal provisions, ordinances, and political traditions) part of the core elements of the specifically German concept of a “militant” or “disputatious” democracy.³ Many other democratic countries, in contrast, make use of the instrument of an organizational ban solely in conjunction with the perpetration of criminal and violent acts. For example, Austria has a judicial device at its command that penalizes neo-Nazi activity under §§ 3 to 3i of the Prohibition Act of 1947, with which the NSDAP was disbanded and de-Nazification was regulated by law.⁴ The bans enacted in other European countries – such as in France against the *Ordre Nouveau* (1973) and the *Elsasskorps* (2006), or in Belgium against the *Vlaams Militanten Orde* (1983) – hardly can be compared to the procedures and practices that Germany uses to ban parties and associations.

3 See Jaschke (1991) and Weckenbrock (2009).

4 See the article by Brigitte Bailer in this volume.

3. The history of bans in the Federal Republic of Germany

Two phases of intensified banning activity can be distinguished. One extended from the 1950s into the early 1960s, while the other lasted throughout much of the 1990s. Between the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1980s, bans were extremely rare. Legal ban applications were submitted only occasionally during the 1980s and during the first decade of the 21st century. The first of the main ban-implementation phases occurred at the federal level during the time of “mainstream” coalition governments under Christian Democratic leadership, while the second occurred as constitutional democracy, parliamentary government, and an active civil society were gradually extended to the states of the former East Germany during the nineties. One could reasonably conclude that bans on right-wing extremist organizations served, in particular, to demarcate the outer limits of political tolerance.

3.1 Prohibition proceedings in the 1950s and 1960s

With the military defeat and the capitulation of the German Armed Forces on May 8, 1945, the Allies of the so-called Anti-Hitler-Coalition assumed governmental power in Germany.⁵ The Allies made it clear in the Potsdam resolutions that the NSDAP was “to be destroyed,” and that there would be “security measures put in place to ensure that they [the Nazi organizations] could never rise again in any form; all Nazi... activity and propaganda was to be prevented.” At the same time, the Allies committed themselves to “allowing and promoting all democratic political parties” throughout Germany. The occupying forces in the individual occupied zones regulated the founding of new parties as a way to breathe life into democracy in the future Federal Republic, and not – as maintained by the extreme right – to maintain long-term control or influence on the development of a consensus on political matters in the country. Licenses to found far-right parties were denied in many cases, such as for the

5 Ruhl (1989), p. 114ff.

Nationale Einheitspartei in the British sector in July of 1947, and later for other parties of similar provenance.⁶ With the establishment of the Federal Republic, however, the licensing practice became inapplicable. Subsequently, diverse right-wing extremist and nationalist groups were formed, while others that had already been active at a regional level united to form federal groups.⁷

The prohibition experience in West Berlin also must be considered within the context of prohibition in the Federal Republic of Germany as a whole. Its area of application lay outside that of the Basic Constitutional Law as a result of the Four Power Status. Allied law was repeatedly invoked when right-wing extremist associations were banned. During the 1950s and early 1960s, the Berlin Senator for Interior Affairs issued many prohibitions. The ban against the Bund junger Deutscher in August of 1951 was the first of such measures taken by German authorities after the war.⁸ In all, 25 far-right extremist organizations were banned during the 1950s, including the Bund für Wahrheit und Recht (Hamburg and Schleswig-Holstein) in 1952; the Freikorps Deutschland (Hamburg and Bremen) in 1953; the Reichsjugend Höller (North Rhine-Westphalia) in 1957; and both the Bundesverband der ehemaligen Internierten und Entnazifizierungs-Geschädigten (by the municipal government of Cologne) and the Soziale Hilfswerk für Zivilinternierte e.V. (by the municipal government of Düsseldorf) in 1959. It should be noted that the regional distribution of the practice of banning is not coincidental; the extreme right was able to develop a robust organizational base during the 1950s, especially in the northern and northwestern regions of the country.

The Sozialistische Reichspartei (SRP), banned in October of 1952 by the Federal Constitutional Court, was the first party in the Federal Republic

6 These were spin-offs of the (legal) Deutschen Konservativen Partei-Deutsche Rechtspartei.

7 We refer here and in what follows only to the Federal Republic of Germany and West Berlin. Because there was no freedom of association in the German Democratic Republic, no extremist right-wing organizations were either founded or banned there.

8 On the treatment of the NPD in West Berlin, see Laue (1993).

to be prohibited pursuant to Article 21, paragraph 2 of the Basic Constitutional Law. Prior to banning the SRP itself, the federal government already had set its sights on its paramilitary wing, the Reichsfront. Subsequently, organizations that followed in the footsteps of the SRP were prosecuted. For example, in Lower Saxony, 61 local voter associations were barred from participating in local elections in 1952, because they were considered cover organizations for the SRP. During that same year, when the SRP attempted to transfer its structures into regional divisions of the virtually non-existent Deutschen Gemeinschaft in northern Germany, it was denied the chance to take part in North Rhine-Westphalia's local elections. Prohibition orders followed in Lower Saxony, as well as in two Rhineland-Palatinate and three Hessian electoral districts.⁹ A federal government resolution prior to the 1953 elections to issue a ban against the Deutsche Reichspartei (DRP) before the Federal Constitutional Court was never carried out. However, the Rhineland-Palatinate Association of the DRP (which had cleared the 5% hurdle and thus successfully entered the state parliament) was banned in the aftermath of the so-called "swastika graffiti campaign" of 1960 (see below), on the grounds that it was merely a stand-in party for the SRP.

All other bans issued during the 1950s were effected in accordance with the Law of Association. In the 1960s, eleven extreme right-wing organizations were banned, including two ultra-nationalistic Croatian groups.¹⁰ Almost from the time of the NPD's founding in 1964, labor unions had asked for a ban on the party. Finally, in the wake of a series of NPD successes in regional elections between 1966 and 1968, the issue of a possible ban kindled fierce debate in the media and among the general public.

9 See Stöss (1986), especially p. 888, and Schmollinger (1986), p. 2304 ff.

10 Only German groups of the extreme right-wing are listed in intelligence agency summaries; foreign right-wing extremists fall under the category of "Foreign Extremism."

In hindsight, the 1960–61 banning of the Bund Nationaler Studenten (BNS), a group that was active on various university campuses, was especially significant. After all, this prohibition order pertained to an organization whose membership did not consist primarily of die-hard former Nazis or exponents of the extreme right-wing of the Weimar Republic. The catalyst for the BNS ban was the previously-mentioned swastika graffiti campaign that arose in the context of a right-wing extremist mobilization wave spearheaded by the organizations of the National Youth at the end of 1958 and the beginning of 1959.¹¹ The ban was one component of an “array of bans on events, publications, and organizations that focused on the right-wing extremist youth scene.”¹² These bans, particularly that of the BNS, were neither stopgap measures nor hysterical overreactions. Rather, democratic politicians used the graffiti campaign to crack down specifically on the most aggressive of the right-wing extremist youth associations, those which they had previously held in check through political sidelining and repression.

3.2 Prohibitions in the 1980s

Although the extreme right-wing scene was significantly fragmented after the NPD’s narrow defeat in the 1969 Bundestag elections and the party’s subsequent rapid decline in 1969–70, some of its elements had become considerably more radical (resurgent neo-Nazism, martial arts training groups, and the beginning of right-wing terrorist activity). However, the Ministers of the Interior were not able to push through organizational bans again until the 1980s. Notable among the targeted groups were the Wehrsportgruppe Hoffmann (which was banned in 1980) and the Volkssozialistische Bewegung/Partei der Arbeit. The latter, a radical and action-oriented spin-off of the NPD, was founded in 1971 by Friedhelm Busse (1929–2008), initially under the rubric, Partei der Arbeit (PdA). In the mid-1970s the PdA moved toward a thoroughly neo-Nazi

11 See Munzert (2007), pp. 85–86.

12 Dudek (1985), p. 90.

orientation. In this new guise, it hoped to reinvigorate the so-called “People’s Socialism” of the brothers Gregor and Otto Strasser, former NSDAP politicians who happened to have been critics of Hitler. The party also changed its name, adding the identifier Volkssozialistische Bewegung Deutschlands (VSBD). After a series of serious criminal acts were committed by VSBD supporters, the group was banned by the Federal Minister of the Interior along with the youth organization, Junge Front, in 1982.

A ban on the Aktionsfront Nationaler Sozialisten/Nationale Aktivisten (ANS/NA), led by Michael Kühnen, followed in 1983. In hindsight, Kühnen, who was described by contemporaries as charismatic, appears to have played a key role in the further development of the German neo-Nazi scene. This volunteer soldier was dismissed from the German armed forces in 1977 after he had established an openly neo-Nazi operational group with like-minded individuals in Hamburg, under the name of Aktionsfront Nationaler Sozialisten (ANS). After merging with other groups, the nationwide ANS/NA emerged in 1983. The rebuilding of the NSDAP was the organization’s declared objective. Their provocative appearances in public were spectacular, especially the so-called “jackass mask” action of May, 1978, in which demonstrators sported donkey masks and wore signs around their necks reading, “Jackass that I am, I still believe that Jews were gassed in Auschwitz.”

With the banning of the ANS and the previous banning of the VSBD/PdA, the legal structures of militant neo-Nazism in the early 1980s were hit by two harshly repressive blows in a short period of time.

3.3 Organizational bans in the 1990s: reactions to violent racist mobilization

During the first half of the 1990s, eleven neo-Nazi groups were banned country-wide. Those bans were preceded by a wave of violence unparalleled in postwar Germany, which included racially-motivated murders, arson attacks and bombings, and even pogrom-like riots against asylum seekers and migrants in Hoyerswerda, Rostock, and other cities. The

federal government reacted by supporting bans against an array of small neo-Nazi parties and organizations at the beginning of the decade. In this way, the federal minister of the interior and several state ministries attempted to control burgeoning right-wing violence, while simultaneously demonstrating to both domestic and international audiences their ability to act. Among the banned organizations were also those that attempted to claim party status, were registered with the federal election commission, or had previously run candidates for office. The most significant of these was the more and more openly neo-Nazi and notoriously violence-prone *Freiheitliche Deutsche Arbeiter Partei* (FAP).¹³

In September of 1993, the federal government and the Bundesrat submitted a request before the Federal Constitutional Court to establish the unconstitutionality of the FAP and thus to insure its prohibition. Had the Court acceded to that request, the FAP would have been the third party banned in the history of the Federal Republic, after the SRP and the KPD in the 1950s. But surprisingly, the Federal Constitutional Court refused to initiate party prohibition proceedings, claiming that the FAP was not actually a party at all. The Court ruled that, “based on an overall picture of their circumstances [...] and the strength of their organization, the number of their members, and their prominence in the public sphere,”¹⁴ there was not “sufficient warrant” of the FAP’s “seriousness of purpose” to deem it a real party. In other words, the Court said that the FAP was such a ragged, feckless, disorganized group that it could not seriously hope to affect the formation of Germany’s political consensus or effectively represent anyone in the Parliament. Hence, it could not be considered a party, despite the obvious fact that it claimed to be one, ran candidates for office, and won significant support at the polls! In sum, the Federal Constitutional Court stated that:

13 The FAP took part in the 1987 Bundestag elections; the 1980 local elections; the Landtag elections in Baden- Württemberg (1980, 1984, and 1988), Bremen (1987), Hamburg (1986), and North Rhine-Westphalia (1985 and 1990); and the 1989 European elections. The best result it achieved was to garner 20,000 votes, or 0.1 % of the electorate. Before the prohibition proceedings, the FAP intended to participate in the 1994 Bundestag and European elections. The incumbent party leader since 1988, Friedhelm Busse, was scheduled to head the Europe list.

14 Cited by Möllers and van Ooyen (2010), p. 175.

In view of the poor level of organization, inadequate degree of organized activity and party work organization, low membership, lack of continuous appearances in public, and lack of any resonance with the general population, the FAP does not represent a sufficiently serious threat in their political ambitions. It is not a party within the meaning of Article 21 of the Federal Constitutional Law, § 2, paragraph,1 part g. The special prohibition proceedings, which deviate from the general right of assembly, can find no application in this case, in particular because of the unique constitutional position of political parties before the Federal Constitutional Court.¹⁵

Although in hindsight the FAP ban appears to have been both long overdue and justifiable in substance if not in fact, the manner in which it was to be done and the legal form chosen to enforce it still gave rise to criticism. To this day, the decision of the Federal Constitutional Court in this instance remains politically incomprehensible and legally controversial. A legally water-tight FAP party ban should have been expected in light of the organization's overt Nazism; there was, generally speaking, no doubt about the FAP's unconstitutionality. Instead, the Federal Constitutional Court employed a different argument – one that was dubious from the perspective of democratic theory – to avoid banning the party. It simply claimed that the FAP was so insignificant a political force that it could not be taken seriously as a party, despite the fact that it did stand for elections, try to build its political base, and attempt to influence Germany's political consensus. For the purposes of a “militant democracy,” the implementation of statutory party prohibition procedure would have been more advisable. Precisely because of the regular participation of the FAP in elections, it seems reasonable to describe the ban of the FAP on the basis of the Law of Association as a “cold party ban” (Robert van Ooyen).

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 178.

4. Reactions to bans: moderation, radicalization, new forms of activity and organization

In political and social scientific discussions, there has been much disagreement about whether bans tend to moderate or radicalize supporters of far-right groups, and to what extent they limit or even prevent right-wing extremist activities. Although these questions cannot be answered definitively at this juncture, various patterns of reaction and tendencies can be observed by taking an historical view.

The wave of party bans at the beginning of the 1960s seems not to have led to any radicalization of the extreme right. Rather, the NPD, which was founded in 1964, deliberately selected the term “National Democratic” as its identifier, thus abandoning a prominent reference to the German Reich: one that their predecessors, the DRP, still had exploited. For years, the NPD avoided using a tone that would have branded them as displaying “aggressively militant” behavior, even though their ideologically radical world-view consistently came to the surface in their speeches and literature. Only after 1969 could one observe any obvious radicalization among their increasingly active supporters, and that change appears linked to the NPD’s defeat in that year’s federal elections. At that time, the practice of banning associations already had begun to fall from favor, so it cannot have played any direct role in the radicalization. On the contrary, there are indications that bans imposed on organizations such as the BNS helped to bring about a more moderate style of representation in the extreme right-wing during the mid-1960s. The competing DG likewise did not drift toward greater far-right extremism; instead, after expanding into the Aktionsgemeinschaft Unabhängiger Deutscher (AUD), it moved sharply to the left, breaking with the right-wing extremist camp in the 1970s. Eventually, some of its hard core got involved in the process of creating a green-alternative party.¹⁶

16 Stöss (1980).

While the banning wave of the 1960s did not result in the radicalization of right-wing parties, a trend in the opposite direction may be observed in the following decade. In the 1970s, when the political environment was devoid of bans, hardline far-right associations were on the rise. The fading of the NPD and the failure of the collective movement Aktion Widerstand initiated by the party brought about a process of regrouping and fragmentation in the extreme right-wing, whereby segments of this scene became significantly radicalized. New, overtly neo-Nazi groups and right-wing terrorist structures with individuals willing to use violence were born. Thus, there seems to be a clear link between declining federal repression and increasing radicalization on the right. However, it is impossible to determine the extent to which the absence of prohibition measures contributed to that outcome.

In the case of WSG Hoffmann, serious criminal acts were committed after the ban by some of its former members. One need only call to mind the Munich Oktoberfest assassination in 1980 and the Erlangen murders in the same year of the Jewish publisher, Schlomo Lewin, and his partner, Frieda Poeschke. Whether or not these incidents were connected to the organizational ban or whether there had been a prior escalation of violence in an already violence-prone organization cannot be determined here.

The neo-Nazi scene reacted to the wave of organizational bans in the 1990s with enlistments into the NPD's youth organization, Junge Nationaldemokraten (JN), and with an intensified build-up of so-called "Kameradschaften" (comradeships) that emerged frequently under the identifying names, "freie Nationalisten" (Free Nationalists) and "freie Kräfte" (Free Powers). The evident intention here was to conceal the degree of organizational sophistication and networking that was emerging on the far right as a means of keeping political repression at bay. However, it would be short-sighted to think that the increase in these comradeships was merely a reaction to governmental repression. The comradeships should be viewed as a new organizational model and as part of the social evolution of the far-right scene, which is partly driven

by the incorporation of strategic and cultural elements from new social movements.

The far right's attempt to avoid governmental prohibition proceedings by means of organizational legerdemain did not work. Its relative failure was demonstrated by bans on such organizations as the Hamburger Sturmes (2000), Berlin's Kameradschaft Tor (2005), and the Mecklenburgischen Aktionsfront (2009). Until bans were put in place in 2012 by the North Rhine-Westphalian Minister of the Interior against comradeships in Cologne, Dortmund, Hamm, and Aachen, it was above all the federal states of Berlin and Brandenburg that had made use of the instrument of the ban against those structures.

In a democratic polity, affected persons are at liberty to challenge the legitimacy of a prohibition proceeding before the responsible administrative court. Generally speaking, representatives of the extreme right-wing have had little success in the legal disputes that often follow a ban. Recently, however, the ban against a group called Blue White Street Elite, which was put in place in April of 2008, was lifted. More significant was the successful challenge to the prohibition orders that had been issued in May of 1961 by several state Ministers of the Interior against the Bund für Gotterkenntnis/Ludendorff (BfG/L) and the publishing house associated with the group, Hohe Warte, for aggressive anti-Semitism. In a series of court hearings, the last of which extended into the second half of the 1970s, the BfG/L managed to achieve its goal by arguing that it was a religious community and as such should enjoy special constitutional protection. The ban against the publishing house had been lifted at an even earlier stage, with the justification that the Law of Association did not apply to commercial entities. Today, the courts might not be so sympathetic to organizations of this kind, given that the religious privilege in § 2, paragraph 2, number 3 of the Law of Association was abrogated to make it easier for the government to combat Islamic radicalism.

5. How effective are federal organizational bans?

In any democratic society, a ban on a political party inevitably will cause controversy. First, there are serious philosophical issues involved. Should a society use bans as a last resort in combating racist, anti-Semitic, and extreme right-wing associations? Or is it wiser to eschew their use, considering that lively debate is indispensable for democracy and that bans involve an abridgement of fundamental rights? For these reasons there have been numerous discussions in Germany about the effectiveness, or lack thereof, of federal ban activity.

In some recent articles, political scientist Julia Gerlach has raised serious doubts about that very question. She claims that bans “function primarily as placebos,” and that their “effectiveness balance sheet” has been “positively abysmal”:

Aspiration and reality are out of synch. The effectiveness of bans is questionable. Moreover, collateral damage undermines a militant democracy. Banning organizations may handicap extremists in the short run. However, in the medium to long run, analysis of the active practice of banning associations shows that their effectiveness wanes over time, so that they eventually become unsustainable. Evidence suggests that association bans serve to stimulate creative strategies of evasion and help to weld together fragmented segments of the banned movements. The association bans against neo-National Socialism during the mid-1990s have led the banned groups to re-organize themselves by adopting autonomous organizational models. The bans have also radicalized and strengthened the NPD. The risks posed by neo-National Socialism are being shifted to the party level, where they become institutionalized and enable their advocates to gain access to state parliaments.¹⁷

This assessment, however, does not stand up to empirical examination. On the one hand, part of the apparent “fragmentation” of the scene in the 1990s was in fact a tactical ploy, as can be seen in the case of the net-

17 Gerlach (2012), p. 207; see also Gerlach (2007).

work of groups belonging to the *Gesinnungsgemeinschaft der Neuen Front*, which was under the influence of Michael Kühnen. On the other hand, the entry of the NPD into the state parliaments of Saxony and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania came about due to a long-term strategic plan designed to give the party some local strongholds, and therefore should not be regarded as the effect of federal banning practices. However, it must be admitted that state repression, as well as protest and resistance in civil society, will trigger learning processes on the part of some of the affected players. This is clearly not a fundamental argument against taking appropriate action, but it does shatter the illusion that there could be one measure that, all by itself, might eliminate the extreme right, racism, and anti-Semitism from the world.

In fact, while bans somewhat hampered the organizations in question, many of their leaders and members simply either defected to other extremist groups or sought to pursue their political goals through other means. The Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz (Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution) asserted in 2001 that some 70% of leaders and 40 % of the members of organizations banned in the 1990s “are still active today (or again) in a right-wing extremist context.”¹⁸ But if one analyzes these numbers, it turns out that, in fact, a significant proportion of neo-Nazi activists withdrew into private life after their organizations were banned. The previous federal banning policy was effective in two notable respects. First, by weakening the organizations with which they identified, it pushed many ex-Nazis to integrate into the society of the Federal Republic, especially during the 1950s and 1960s. Similarly, state sanctions discredited the overt, offensive, and systematic glorification of National Socialism, including its political objectives, propaganda and activities. The order to ban the SRP in particular had a strong signalling effect.¹⁹ However, it must be acknowledged that despite all the bans, the

18 BfV [Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution] (2001), p. 4.

19 This limitation was taken up in part with the traditional associations of the *Waffen-SS* in mind, because their activities could continue undisturbed in most cases, as long as they did not cross over the defining line that was outlined [compare to the *Hilfsgemeinschaft auf Gegenseitigkeit*; see Wilke (2011)]. Organizational bans were then pronounced individually – such as in 1966 in the case of the association of members of the former *SS-Division, Nordland*, who attempted to organize a political assembly only a few kilometres away from the historical site of Bergen-Belsen.

extreme right-wing core culture of the 1950s and 1960s did exert an influence on the following generation of true believers through the biographies of so many of the movement's leaders. Having no bans in place would undoubtedly have made little difference in that regard.

Second, extreme right-wing organizations with narrow membership and limited appeal can be held in check or even reshaped by bans. This observation applies in part to the BNS, the banning of which in 1960–61 had a lasting effect on the further development of the extreme right. In the end the BNS ban did not radicalize the group's former members; instead it forced them to moderate their public profile and behavior. Furthermore, bans imposed on the Wiking-Jugend, the Heimattreue Deutsche Jugend, and the Hilfsgemeinschaft für nationale politische Gefangene tended to curb their neo-Nazi activities. In the coming years, it will likely be difficult for the neo-Nazi movement to find effective replacements for these associations, which had been active for decades.

In addition, questions remain about the effectiveness of the bans with respect to their implementation. The bans of the 1990s, in particular, were ordered in reaction to an escalation of racially-motivated street violence; in this sense they were, to some degree, acts of “symbolic politics.” Some observers at the time expressed doubts about whether those bans were primarily intended to dismantle the far-right organizations. The FAP was able to prepare well for the ban, considering the long-running public discussion that preceded its imposition, the extensive period required for the procedure to take effect, and the warnings implicit in bans issued against other similar associations. In like cases involving bans on associations, the latter appear to have been either partially forewarned, or else inadvertently tipped off by press reports that a ban was in the works.²⁰ The Brandenburg LKA-head at the time is even quoted as having said that the bans had been implemented “in a rather lackadaisical way.”²¹

20 Cf. Siegler (1993).

21 Ibid., p. 130.



On December 12, 2012, NPD members protest against a possible ban on their party in front of the hotel hosting the Conference of Interior Ministers (of the German states) in Rostock-Warnemünde (Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania)

Once association bans are implemented, certain issues necessarily arise. Is there evidence that new organizations spring up to replace the banned ones? And might it be possible to keep up the investigative pressure on far-right circles for a longer time? In a nutshell, association bans have proven to be relatively blunt instruments, particularly if they are simply announced by the authorities but not followed up by continuing efforts to dismantle the organizations once and for all.

Regardless of how well or poorly the police and justice system implement prohibition orders, the positive political effects of such orders must not be overlooked. “Symbolic politics” are not negative per se; they are a kind of road map demarcating the limits of tolerance that a democratic polity and civil society are prepared to extend to those whose values are antithetical to democracy and who seek to destroy the system.

Even the rise and radicalization of the NPD over the last two decades cannot be interpreted monocausally as the consequence of bans imposed on neo-Nazi associations. The programmatic radicalization of neo-Nazism had become evident as early as 1991, as had the receptivity of some elements of society to its appeals. All this was happening under the tutelage of NPD leader Günter Deckert, well before the wave of bans in the 1990s commenced. The party was looking for a way to connect with the extreme right-wing youth movement, which had been rapidly growing since 1989, and the prospect of joining the NPD would have been of interest to activists of small, far-right youth groups even if bans had not been imposed later in the decade. The example of the state of Brandenburg speaks against the assumption that the bans inevitably strengthened the NPD. Although far more right-wing extremist groups were banned in Brandenburg since 1990 than in any other state, right-wing extremism is notably weaker there than elsewhere, and the Brandenburg branch of the NPD is indubitably the weakest organization among the five states that comprised the former East Germany.

Even if the significance of the bans is mainly symbolic, that fact implies nothing about their effectiveness or ineffectiveness. There is no way empirically to confirm or refute the frequently-expressed opinion that bans are legally ineffective and un-implementable in a regulative context. Nor can one say for sure whether they tend to radicalize the far-right camp and drive it underground. On the contrary, the banning of right-wing extremist organizations seems to have had a moderating effect overall on the propaganda, policies, and activities of the organized extreme right, while at the same time contributing to its isolation in the political culture of the Federal Republic.

6. What would ensue after an NPD ban?

People tend to overestimate both the negative and the positive effects of bans on extreme right-wing organizations. However, this insight does not entail any conclusions about the possible impact of a ban on the NPD, which can hardly be predicted with any confidence at this time. To evaluate those impacts, one must first distinguish between the lengthy period during which legal proceedings are occurring and the period after the Federal Constitutional Court has issued its ruling.

As we have seen, bans on political groups based on the Right of Association make subsequent appearances under the banned group's old name a criminal offence. But that does not apply in this case. The NPD could take advantage of the prolonged legal proceedings to denounce the proposed ban as undemocratic and to portray themselves as political victims. Indeed, the party followed exactly that playbook during the prohibition proceeding in 2000. During current political debates, concerns have been raised about the time frame of a new proceeding, which could begin as early as 2013. Since Germany will be holding elections in that year, the worry is that the NPD could exploit its victim role to gain more votes than it otherwise might receive. But while a segment of the neo-Nazi right did join the NPD as an expression of solidarity the last time a ban was considered, there was no wider support for the party evident among the general population. That pattern seems likely to repeat itself, not least because a ban application against the NPD will discredit it in the eyes of many citizens. Furthermore, the fact is often overlooked that such a proceeding would divert the party's time, money, and personnel into legal battles, leaving those resources unavailable for other political activities.

If called upon to make a decision in the NPD's case, the Court would consider not only the arguments submitted by the prosecution and defense, but also the verdicts reached in earlier proceedings against the SRP and the KPD. Those precedents are significant in defining more precisely



the guidelines governing when a party can be declared unconstitutional. The verdict against the KPD, in particular, raised the bar for a ban, by declaring that an unconstitutional attitude is not a sufficient justification for prohibiting a party. Rather, as the Federal Constitutional Court doubtless is keenly aware, there must clear evidence of aggressive, militant behavior against the existing order.

It should be noted that, if the Court does not follow up on the applications for prohibition, the NPD would be protected from any further threat of a ban for years to come. The effects of such a decision on the NPD's electoral prospects are unclear. If, on the contrary, a ban were to be implemented, its impact on the different regions of Germany and across the entire spectrum of activity and behavior of the extreme right would have to be analyzed. For example, should we expect to see more demonstrations, more acts of violence, and greater participation by the right in elections? To offer even an approximate answer, one would have to consider other factors as well, including the time frame involved and intervening variables such as actions taken by the state against follow-up

activities and the successes or failures recorded by the right in future elections. Based on past experience, it is safe to assume that a ban would not likely have much of an impact on extreme right-wing politics. But other questions can only be settled empirically, by means of systematic observation.

As momentous as a prohibition proceeding against the NPD might be, one must always bear in mind that it would affect only a part of the organized far right. There is a very real danger that a ban on the NPD would make it seem as though the entire right-wing extremist problem could be considered “solved.” In this respect, the prohibition of right-wing extremist parties and organizations always will be only one component in an overall strategy to promote democratic culture and defend it against racist and inhumane tendencies. While such prohibitions should not be regarded as panaceas, it would be wrong to suppose that they have no beneficial effects.

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The “Ban on Re-Engagement in National Socialist Activity” as a Social and Political Counter-strategy in Austria

Brigitte Bailer

1. Right-wing extremism and re-engagement in National Socialist activity: a clarification of terms

Terms such as right-wing extremism, right-wing radicalism, neo-Nazism, and neo-fascism have been a source of constant confusion and misunderstanding in political and legal discourse. For that reason, this paper starts by explaining these terms briefly, particularly with regard to their relevance for official and judicial action against groups or individuals categorized as such. The analyses of the Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes (DÖW), or Documentation Center of the Austrian Resistance, on Austrian right-wing extremism are based on the definition of that concept first developed by Willibald I. Holzer in 1979 and revised in 1993,¹ the main features of which are almost identical to those used by other researchers. Holzer concentrates on the central concepts of national community (*Volksgemeinschaft*) and integral nationalism, which in Austrian right-wing discourse always takes German nationalism as its point of orientation. From those concepts Holzer derives the individual elements of right-wing extremism. He certainly considers far right-wing ideology to be extreme; yet in his view it does not aim at a radical transformation of society in the sense of its stem, *radix* (Latin for “root”). Accordingly, Holzer rejects the label right-wing radicalism, believing it to be an inappropriate way to characterize this phenomenon.

1 Willibald I. Holzer, “Rechtsextremismus – Konturen und Definitionskomponenten eines politischen Begriffs,” in Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes (ed.), *Rechtsextremismus in Österreich nach 1945* (Vienna: Österreichischer Bundesverlag, 1979), pp. 11–97; and Willibald I. Holzer, “Rechtsextremismus – Konturen, Definitionsmerkmale und Erklärungsansätze,” in Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes (ed.), *Handbuch des österreichischen Rechtsextremismus* (Vienna: Deuticke Verlag, 1993), pp. 11–96

The term “neo-fascism,” which is used repeatedly in Austrian political propaganda, also fails to lay bare the ideological and historical reality of the movement so labelled. The recent academic debate on National Socialism and fascism shows that we need to distinguish between the Nazi regime in Germany and the fascist dictatorships that existed elsewhere in Europe at the same time. In the context of Austrian history, “neo-fascist” properly would refer to an ideology based on Austrofascism² or Italian-style fascism. However, the militant fringes of Austrian right-wing extremism did indeed align themselves with some elements of National Socialist ideology, which suggests that the term “neo-Nazism” accurately reflects the activist, ideological leanings of these groups.

Furthermore, the specific Austrian legal situation and the relevant jurisprudence are significant in this context. To be sure, the expression “right-wing extremist” as used in the sense defined by Holzer has been classified as a political value judgment rather than a legally actionable insult.³ On the other hand, the epithet “neo-Nazi” does indeed imply that the person so described has re-engaged in National Socialist activity. Hence, the use of the latter term can be successfully challenged in court in defamation proceedings because it alleges a criminal act. Against this background, the utmost care is recommended in the use of terminology, as employees of the DÖW learned the hard way in the wake of numerous judicial decisions. For example, the first Austrian work published on the topic of right-wing extremism in Austria after 1945⁴ (published in 1979) was challenged in court by some of the people named therein, who argued

2 As a designation for the dictatorship that lasted from 1933-1938, this concept is not without controversy among historians and political scientists. Cf. Ilse Reiter-Zatloukal, Christiane Rothländer, and Pia Schölnberger (eds.), *Österreich 1933–1938: Interdisziplinäre Annäherungen an das Dollfuß-/Schuschnigg-Regime* (Vienna, Cologne, and Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, 2012). The term shall be used here nonetheless, following Emmerich Tálos, “Das austrofascistische Herrschaftssystem,” in Emmerich Tálos and Wolfgang Neugebauer (eds.), *Austrofascismus: Politik – Ökonomie – Kultur, 1933–1938* (Vienna: LIT-Verlag, 2005), pp. 394–420.

3 “Documents on the proceedings,” in the Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes

4 Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes (ed.), *Rechtsextremismus in Österreich nach 1945*, op. cit. (Vienna: Österreichischer Bundesverlag, 1979)

successfully that the then-Federal Minister of the Interior, Edwin Lanc, wrongly used the two terms interchangeably in his foreword to the volume. Ultimately the claims had to be settled.⁵

2. Right-wing extremism under Austrian law: an overview⁶

Different levels of the Austrian legal system incorporate instruments for fighting the phenomena of racism, incitement against minorities, apologetics for the National Socialist regime, and re-engagement in National Socialist activity.

At the constitutional level, both the *Verbotsgesetz* (Prohibition Act), discussed below in some detail, and the 1955 *Staatsvertrag* (State Treaty) of Vienna⁷ are worthy of mention. The signatory states⁸ to the latter document, which restored Austria's sovereignty, imposed a ban on the *Anschluss* (annexation) of Austria to Germany in Article 4⁹ and, in Article 9, obliged Austria to "dissolve Nazi organizations." Austria was required to "continue the measures to eliminate all traces of Nazism from Austrian political, economic and cultural life, to ensure that the above-mentioned organizations are not revived in any form, and to prevent all Nazi and militarist activity and propaganda in Austria" (paragraph 1).

Relevant at the level of national laws is section 283 of the *Strafgesetzbuch* (Austrian Criminal Code),¹⁰ which mandates a prison sentence of up to one year for anyone who "publicly... incites or instigates a hostile act

5 "Documents on the proceedings," in the Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes.

6 The overview offered here is done from the perspective of a historian who has some practical experience with legal matters; an actual consideration of all the relevant issues would require an appropriate level of legal expertise.

7 *Bundesgesetzblatt* (Federal Legal Gazette) no. 152, 1955.

8 These were the allied powers from WW II: the USA, Great Britain, France, and the Soviet Union.

9 This term relates to the German nationalism that is constitutive of the ideology of Austrian right-wing extremism and neo-Nazism.

10 *Bundesgesetzblatt* 1974, no. 60, in the version of *Bundesgesetzblatt* I, no. 103 (2011).

against a domestic church or religious community or against a group committed by their affiliation to such a church or religious community, to a race, people, tribe, or state” or “seeks to incite against, insult, or disparage” such a group. Time and again, this provision has proven to be a useful instrument in the fight against publicly expressed anti-Semitism and cases of right-wing extremist and neo-Nazi agitation that cannot be prosecuted using other legislation. Yet its utility is limited when agitation is broadly directed (for example, against “foreigners” or “asylum seekers”).

Other provisions can be found in the area of administrative criminal law. For example, the *Abzeichengesetz* (Insignia Act)¹¹ imposes an administrative penalty on the wearing, exhibiting, and sale of the insignia of forbidden organizations or similar symbols. This act not only applies to relevant publications, but also – albeit rarely – to the sale of Nazi memorabilia at flea markets or by second-hand dealers. To take another example, Article III of the *Einführungsgesetz zu den Verwaltungsverfahrensgesetzen* (EGVG), or Introductory Act to the Administrative Procedures Act,¹² imposes penalties for discrimination “on the grounds of race, skin color, national or ethnic origin, religious denomination, or disability,” as well as less serious cases of re-engagement in National Socialist activity.

3. The Verbotsgesetz

3.1 Background

Shortly after the liberation of Vienna on April 13, 1945, political parties that had existed during the First Republic of Austria (1918–1933) re-established themselves, including the Social Democrats (SPÖ), the Con-

11 *Abzeichengesetz* 1960, *Bundesgesetzblatt* no. 84 (1960), amended by *Bundesgesetzblatt* no. 117 (1980), and *Bundesgesetzblatt* I, nos. 50 and 113 (2012). The last amendments related to formal matters such as the conversion of the fine from Austrian schillings to euros. But the 1980 amendments are more substantive; for example, they ban the use of symbols and insignias that are similar to those of forbidden organizations, while allowing their display in exhibitions or in publications aimed against these organizations.

12 *Bundesgesetzblatt* I, no. 87 (2008)

servatives (ÖVP) or *Österreichische Volkspartei*, and the *Communists* (KPÖ). In the case of the ÖVP, this step meant that the party re-formed on its Christian-Social base.¹³ The provisional government, made up of representatives of these three parties, declared Austria's independence on April 27, and the Cabinet Committee passed the *Gesetz über das Verbot der NSDAP* (Act on the Prohibition of the NSDAP) on May 8, the day of surrender. Alongside the ban of the party and all its auxiliary organizations as well as any new engagement in NSDAP-related activity, the *Verbotsgesetz* required National Socialists to be registered, and included atonement measures. However, until the autumn of 1945, when the Western powers recognized Austria's provisional government, the law could only be put into effect in the eastern part of the country, which was then occupied by the Red Army. A central function of the *Verbotsgesetz* was to purge political, economic, and social life of National Socialists and their influence. But the de-Nazification process, which was supposed to be carried out schematically according to specified criteria, soon revealed its limits. Political decision-makers as well as the general public regarded it as too rigid. However, the Allied Council refused to ratify a new version of the National Socialist Act passed in 1946 by the National Council that had been elected in November of 1945. The revised law was not passed until February of 1947, after more than fifty amendments – mostly more stringent provisions – had been added.¹⁴

At the same time, beginning as early as 1945, the newly-formed political parties had initiated some behind-the-scenes maneuvers designed to gain the allegiance of former National Socialists and their sympathizers. Moreover, they attempted to exploit on a grand scale the amnesty options

13 The Christian Social Party had been discredited due to its involvement in the establishment of the Austrofascist regime and for that reason was re-founded in 1945, albeit with continuity of membership with its predecessor.

14 For an overview see Winfried R. Garscha, "Entnazifizierung und gerichtliche Ahndung von NS-Verbrechen," in Emmerich Tálos, Ernst Hanisch, Wolfgang Neugebauer, Reinhard Sieder (eds.), *NS-Herrschaft in Österreich: Ein Handbuch* (Vienna: öbv & htp VerlagsgesmbH & Co. KG, 2000), pp. 852–883; here: p. 858 ff.

provided for in the Act to promote their own ends.¹⁵ In particular, the establishment of the *Verband der Unabhängigen* (VdU), or Federation of Independents, as a rallying point for the votes of former National Socialists, of whom more than 90% had regained the right to vote in the 1949 National Council elections, generated renewed political competition. The VdU also became a core around which right-wing extremist groups and organizations could crystallize and re-establish themselves.

Because of the intervention by the political parties, fewer and fewer people suffered the consequences of the National Socialist Act as “imprisoned National Socialists.” Nevertheless, the governing parties ÖVP and SPÖ made several attempts to end the de-Nazification process before the 1955 *Staatsvertrag*, all of which failed because of the resistance of the Allied Council.¹⁶ The signing of the *Staatsvertrag* ultimately opened the way to a comprehensive Nazi amnesty, which was passed by the National Council on March 14, 1957.¹⁷ The *NS-Verbotsgesetz* (National Socialist Prohibition Act) had thus achieved its primary historical task. Those parts of the Act that impose penalties for re-engagement in National Socialist-related activity have been unaffected by these amnesties and continue to make the *Verbotsgesetz* relevant to current conditions in Austria.

15 Studies on the SPÖ have already been done: see for example Wolfgang Neugebauer and Peter Schwarz, *Der Wille zum aufrechten Gang: Offenlegung der Rolle des BSA bei der gesellschaftlichen Reintegration der ehemaligen Nationalsozialisten* (Vienna: Czerin Verlag, 2004), and Maria Mesner (ed.), *Entnazifizierung zwischen politischem Anspruch, Parteienkonkurrenz und kaltem Krieg: am Beispiel SPÖ* (Vienna and Munich: Oldenbourg, 2005). Currently, only indirect conclusions about the situation in the ÖVP are possible, for example regarding the integration of former National Socialists in ministerial offices, such as Minister of Finance Reinhard Kamitz; Federal Minister of Agriculture and Forestry Franz Thoma; and Federal Minister of Trade and Reconstruction Josef Böck-Greisenau. All three were named by ÖVP General Secretary Alfred Maleta in the 1953 election campaign. See Brigitte Bailer-Galanda, “Hoch klingt das Lied vom ‘kleinen Nazi’: Die politischen Parteien Österreichs und die ehemaligen Nationalsozialisten,” in Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes (ed.), *Themen der Zeitgeschichte und der Gegenwart. Arbeiterbewegung – NS-Herrschaft – Rechtsextremismus. Ein Resümee aus Anlass des 60. Geburtstags von Wolfgang Neugebauer* (Vienna: LIT-Verlag, 2004), pp. 120–135; here: p. 129 ff.

16 Bailer-Galanda (2004), op. cit., pp. 127–131

17 28th session of the National Council, VIII legislative period, March 14, 1957.

3.2 The re-engagement ban

Section 3 of the original version of the 1945 *Verbotsgesetz* already contained a provision regarding re-engagement in National Socialist activity: “Engagement with the NSDAP or its aims, including outside that organization, shall be prohibited. Whoever continues to belong to this party or engages with its aims shall be guilty of a criminal offense and shall be punished by death and forfeit of his entire assets. In particularly extenuating cases, a prison sentence of ten to twenty years may be imposed instead of the death penalty.”¹⁸

In the amended version of the Act passed in 1947, this very brief provision had expanded to become sections 3a–3g. Sections 3a–f enshrined the ban on the re-establishment of a National Socialist organization and the support of any such organization through donations or in printed material. However, state prosecutors and courts preferred to use the very broadly worded catch-all provision of section 3g, paragraph 1, for prosecuting neo-Nazi activities. Beginning in the 1980s, they also applied it to Holocaust denial: “Whoever is active in a National-Socialist sense shall, unless the act is not subject to higher punishment under another provision, be punished with imprisonment between one and ten years, [or] in case of the perpetrator or the committed act being particularly dangerous, up to 20 years. A forfeit of assets may also be determined.” Paragraph 2 also made non-notification of such activities a criminal offense. The elements of the offense detailed in section 3 and the associated threat of punishment remain in force today. The death penalty, which the 1947 act had still included, was abolished in Austria in 1950 for ordinary proceedings and in 1968 for summary proceedings. Consequently, it was no longer part of the *Verbotsgesetz*.

3.3 Applications and associated problems before 1992

Shortly after the end of the war, those provisions that relate to re-engagement in National Socialist activity were used for the first time against a “Werewolf” group centered around Theodor Soucek, a merchant from

18 *Staatsgesetzblatt* (State Legal Gazette) 1945, no. 13.

Graz who had been a member of the NSDAP, the Hitler Youth, and the SA (the group recruited its activists from among former Hitler Youth and *Waffen-SS* members). On May 15, 1948, Soucek and two of his co-defendants were sentenced to death by the Volksgericht (People's Court) in Graz; however, their sentences were commuted to life imprisonment by the Federal President in 1949, and the men were ultimately released from custody after three years.¹⁹ In the second half of the 1950s, Soucek once again stepped into the limelight as the organizer of SS veterans' meetings and neo-Nazi youth associations.

After numerous German nationalist and right-wing extremist organizations succeeded in re-establishing themselves in the early 1950s, encouraged by the presence and initial electoral successes of the VdU, the democratic public was confronted by a resurgence of organized right-wing extremism. Neo-Nazi groups, especially, enjoyed considerable success with young people. That much became evident on the occasion of the so-called "Schiller commemorations" in October, 1959. Allegedly celebrating Friedrich Schiller's 200th birthday, thousands of right-wing extremists, Neo-National Socialists and members of German nationalist student fraternities participated in a demonstration in downtown Vienna. It was then that the democratic public came to realize how extensively these groups had re-established themselves after 1945. The security services reacted to these events by dissolving numerous militant right-wing extremist organizations, albeit not on the basis of the *Verbotsgesetz*, but instead on suspicion of extremist activities under the *Vereinsgesetz* (Act on Associations).²⁰

In the following decades, the *Verbotsgesetz* itself was rarely invoked. Between 1961 and 1967, the number of indictments and trials under the

19 Martin F Polaschek, *Im Namen der Republik Österreich! Die Volksgerichte in der Steiermark, 1945–1955* (Graz: Steiermärkisches Landesarchiv, 1998), pp. 205–231. Polaschek not only provides a detailed account of the trial against Soucek, but also mentions a number of other trials against re-engagement in National Socialist activity held in Styria in the 1940s.

20 Federal Ministry of the Interior, *Gesetzliche Bestimmungen und behördliche Maßnahmen gegen den Rechtsextremismus*, in *Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes* (ed.), *Rechtsextremismus in Österreich nach 1945*, revised and expanded 5th edition (Vienna: Österreichischer Bundesverlag, 1981), pp. 364–387; here: p. 366ff., p. 371ff.

Verbotsgesetz declined almost constantly, to the point that the Ministry of the Interior stopped collecting statistics on it. In the 1970s there were only a small number of cases pending. The Ministry lists only five.²¹

At the same time, the 1960s witnessed a steep rise in right-wing extremism and neo-Nazism. Right-wing extremist student groups such as the *Ring Freiheitlicher Studenten* (Ring of Free Students, consisting mostly of members of the German nationalist student fraternities, or *Burschenschaften*) achieved considerable success in the elections to the *Studentenvertretung* (Austrian students' parliament). The scandal surrounding an anti-Semitic university professor and former National Socialist, Taras Borodajkewycz, resulted in violent clashes between his supporters and anti-fascist counter-demonstrators.²² However, the defection of the neo-Nazi *Nationaldemokratische Partei* (NDP), or *National Democratic Party*, from the *Freiheitliche Partei* (FPÖ), or *Freedom Party*, the successor party to the VdU, in 1967,²³ signaled the incipient radicalization of a growing number of small but militant neo-Nazi groups and newspapers that proliferated over the following decade. The paucity of trials under the *Verbotsgesetz* during this period is thus clearly related to the tolerance and acquiescence displayed by the government and civil society toward even militant right-wing extremism. It also indicated that public officials were reluctant to initiate legal action against such groups. Until well into the 1980s Austrian politicians, including the then-Federal Chancellor Bruno Kreisky of the SPÖ, argued that it was better to keep these groups under public scrutiny than to drive them underground with statutory measures.

21 Federal Ministry of the Interior, *Gesetzliche Bestimmungen* (Vienna: Österreichischer Bundesverlag, 1981), p. 369ff.

22 Cf. Gerard Kasemir, "Die Borodajkewycz-Affäre 1965: spätes Ende für ‚wissenschaftlich‘ vorgetragenen Rassismus," in Michael Gehler and Hubert Sickinger (eds.), *Politische Affären und Skandale in Österreich: Von Mayerling bis Waldheim* (Thaur, Vienna, and Munich: Kulturverlag, 1995), pp. 486–501; and Heinz Fischer, *Taras Borodajkewycz – Einer im Vordergrund: Eine Dokumentation* (Vienna: Europa Verlag, 1966).

23 Junge Generation in der SPÖ Wien (ed.), *Von Hitler zu Burger: Zur Geschichte, Ideologie und Rechtssituation der NDP* (Vienna: Junge Generation in der SPÖ Wien, 1981)

Since the 1970s, the neo-Nazi, racist, and aggressively anti-Semitic press had become more prominent. Examples include the newspaper *Sieg* by Walter Ochensberger from Vorarlberg and the initially mainly anti-immigrant newspaper *Halt* by Gerd Honsik, a neo-Nazi activist who had been operating since the 1960s. Ochensberger's associations, such as the *Bund Volkstreuer Jugend* (Association of Youth Loyal to the People), were prosecuted under the laws on associations.²⁴ In the 1980s, both Ochensberger and Honsik turned to Holocaust denial. *Halt* mainly tried to influence the thinking of young people, especially schoolchildren. In a number of cases the publication was sent to teachers and distributed outside Viennese schools. In response, school administrators called upon historians and living witnesses to produce informational brochures to counter the distortions disseminated in *Halt*.²⁵ Similarly, at Vienna University a neo-Nazi student group known as the *Aktion Neue Rechte* (Action for the New Right) was established, and when the organization had little success in elections to the student's parliament, its members responded by committing violent acts.

One provision of the *Parteiengesetz* (Parties Act) passed in 1975²⁶ and having the force of constitutional law expressly stipulates that the activity of political parties may not be "subject to any limitation arising out of special legal provisions" (Article I, paragraph 3). This clause became an escape route for neo-Nazi organizations seeking to avoid a government ban or official dissolution. The decision of the NDP, ANR, and similar groups to register as political parties protected them from official intervention for a number of years. However, proceedings against the ANR in

24 This association was dissolved by the authorities in 1975. Wolfgang Neugebauer, "Organisationen," in Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes (ed.), *Rechtsextremismus in Österreich nach 1945, revised and expanded 5th edition*, op. cit. (Vienna: Österreichischer Bundesverlag 1981), pp. 161–249; here: p. 180ff.

25 Gesellschaft für politische Aufklärung, "Wissen macht Halt haltlos" (Innsbruck: Gesellschaft für politische Aufklärung, no date); Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes, Bundesministerium für Unterricht und Kunst (eds.), *Amoklauf gegen die Wirklichkeit: NS-Verbrechen und "revisionistische" Geschichtsschreibung* (Vienna: Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes, 1991)

26 *Bundesgesetzblatt* 1975, no. 404

particular demonstrated that the *Verbotsgesetz* could be used against both individual activists and political parties. A trial conducted in 1984 against functionaries of the ANR, including a German neo-Nazi and terrorist who had attempted to bomb Jewish-owned business establishments, ended with the conviction of the ANR's entire leadership. The judge in the case, Heinrich Gallhuber, took special care in formulating his instructions to the jury, a strategy that clearly succeeded.

A year later, in 1985, the Constitutional Court issued a landmark verdict that put paid to the instrumentalization of the *Pareteingesetz* by neo-Nazi groupings. Citing the *Verbotsgesetz*, the authorities responsible for elections to the student parliament (Österreichische Hochschülerschaft) refused to allow the ANR to participate in the 1979 elections. The ANR objected by filing a petition with the Administrative Court (Verwaltungsgerichtshof), which ruled in favor of the ANR's interpretation of the law. That ruling enabled the party to run candidates during the next elections, held in 1981, in which it won a seat. The *Verband Sozialistischer Studenten* (Association of Socialist Students) and the *Kommunistische Studentenverband* (Communist Students' Association) filed an objection on the grounds that certain provisions relating to the election process had been breached. When that claim was rejected by the Ministry of Science (which is responsible for university elections), the two groups filed an appeal to the Constitutional Court, which subjected the provisions of the *Hochschülerschaftsgesetz* (Students' Parliament Act) that governed the elections to judicial review. The Court ruled that the *Verbotsgesetz* would still be applicable even "if the law to which the public authority is subject²⁷ does not expressly stipulate... compliance therewith." It reasoned that "the ban on re-engagement in National Socialist activity is further not merely an ancillary aim of the state's activity for a specific domain that would have to cede to other ancillary aims of other domains, but instead an all-embracing requirement of all state acts... Every act of the state without exception must comply with this prohibition. No act by a

27 In this case, the act governing the elections to the Austrian students' parliament

public authority may be performed that would mean the involvement of the state in any re-engagement in National Socialist activity.”²⁸

Following this verdict, first the ANR and later (in 1988) the NDP were stripped of their status as political parties. That decision effectively eliminated any further legal obstacles to their dissolution.²⁹ Since that time, investigations have been carried out for elections at all levels (local, regional, and national) to determine whether any of the campaigning groups or parties has breached the ban on re-engagement in National Socialist activity through its internal statutes, programs, or activities. When this is found to be the case, such parties are not permitted to campaign. Thus, for example two neo-Nazi groups³⁰ were excluded from the Upper Austrian regional elections in 2009.

However, in the 1980s, the authorities still ran into problems in applying the ban on re-engagement in National Socialist activity to individual activists or newspaper publishers, such as Honsik and Ochensberger. Ochensberger’s National Socialist apologetics and even his open denial of the Holocaust did not result in criminal convictions. The jury acquitted him in every case, whether because the minimum punishments provided for in the *Verbotsgesetz* appeared too severe, as was supposed everywhere (though probably not correctly),³¹ or because they could not understand why the acts were punishable in the first place. The fact that section 3g

28 Constitutional Court, G175/84 (November 29, 1985), p. 17

29 Revocation of the NDP’s status as a political party: verdict of the Constitutional Court dated June 25, 1988, B 999/87-15. The dissolution of the NDP as a legally recognized association was effected via a notice from the Security Directorate of Vienna, association matters, dated November 21, 1988, no. I-SD-1272-BVP/88. For further detail on this process, see Brigitte Bailer and Wolfgang Neugebauer, “Rechtsextreme Vereine, Parteien, Zeitschriften, legale/illegale Gruppen” in Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes (ed.), *Handbuch des österreichischen Rechtsextremismus*, op. cit. (Vienna: Deuticke Verlag, 1993), pp. 102–238; here: p. 163.

30 These were Die Bunten (the Brightly Coloreds) and Nationale Volkspartei (National People’s Party).

31 See Heinrich Gallhuber, “Rechtsextremismus und Strafrecht,” in Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes (ed.), *Handbuch des österreichischen Rechtsextremismus*, op. cit. (Vienna: Deuticke Verlag, 1993), p. 583.

of the *Verbotsgesetz* was phrased in a vague and general way appears to have contributed to the difficulty that prosecutors encountered in bringing solid cases against neo-Nazis. Several preliminary investigations initiated against Honsik similarly did not result in any indictments.

3.4. The turning point: 1992

During the 1980s, some historians turned their attention to Holocaust studies. In Austria, this new focus was prompted partly by the controversy surrounding Kurt Waldheim, the former United Nations Secretary General who was elected as the Austrian Federal President in 1986. Many observers believed that Waldheim's wartime past had been portrayed in an excessively rose-colored light. In the wake of this affair, one could discern a growing awareness among the public, the political class, and the media about neo-Nazi activities in general and Holocaust denial in particular. Official and judicial powerlessness in the face of blatant, unrepentant Holocaust denial by Ochensberger and Honsik, which at the very least represented a mockery of and an insult to the victims, provoked severe criticism. Among critics, the most vociferous included Holocaust survivors such as Simon Wiesenthal, politically persecuted ex-dissidents (notably Hermann Langbein³²), the Jewish community generally, and the Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes. In May of 1990, a conference on the topic of suitable statutory measures for combatting Holocaust denial and re-engagement in National Socialist activity was held in Vienna.³³ The conference's findings and recommendations

32 Hermann Langbein, an Austrian resistance fighter, was incarcerated in the concentration camps Dachau and Auschwitz, where he played a prominent role in the camp resistance. After the liberation, Langbein dedicated most of his life to educating the public about the crimes committed at Auschwitz. See Katharina Stengel, *Hermann Langbein: Ein Auschwitz-Überlebender in den erinnerungspolitischen Konflikten der Nachkriegszeit* (Frankfurt: Wissenschaftliche Reihe des Fritz Bauer Instituts, 2012), vol. 21, and Brigitte Halbmayr, *Zeitlebens konsequent: Hermann Langbein. Eine politische Biographie* (Vienna: Braumüller, 2012).

33 Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes, Israelitische Kultusgemeinde Wien, Gesellschaft für politische Aufklärung (ed.), *Justiz und nationalsozialistische Wiederbetätigung: Protokoll der gleichnamigen Tagung am 15. Mai 1990 in Wien* (Vienna: Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes, Gesellschaft für politische Aufklärung, Israelitische Kultusgemeinde, 1991)

were taken up in the parliamentary proceedings that commenced shortly afterwards. While representatives of the ÖVP proposed a lowering of the minimum penalty in order to reduce the supposed or actual inhibitions of juries, the SPÖ worked on an amendment to the incitement provisions in criminal law.³⁴ An expert hearing convened by the Justice Committee of the National Council on November 20, 1991 was attended not only by parliamentarians and representatives of the Federal Ministry of Justice, but also by Simon Wiesenthal, representatives of both the Jewish and Slovenian communities, a number of lawyers, and this author, in her capacity as a historian, who also attended on behalf of the Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes.³⁵ Ultimately, members of parliament from the SPÖ and ÖVP agreed on a compromise motion which resulted in an amendment to the Act being passed on February 26, 1992. This amendment reduced the minimum punishments provided for in the Act while adding a new provision, section 3h, that threatened to punish “whomever attempts to deny, grossly downplay, condone or justify the National Socialist genocide or other National Socialist crimes against humanity in a printed work, in the broadcast media, through another medium, or through any other public channel, and does so in a manner that is accessible to many people.”³⁶ The provision also made it easier to prosecute offenders by dispensing with the previous requirement for what is known as the “mens rea,” or the subjective aspect of an offense. That is, prosecutors would not longer have to prove the perpetrator’s intention to engage with National Socialist activity through denying these crimes.

34 Motion 253/A of the MPs Dr. Graff and others relating to a federal constitutional act to amend the Prohibition Act (ÖVP motion); motion 139/A by MPs Dr. Fuhrmann, Dr. Schranz, and others relating to a federal act to amend the Criminal Code, appendices to the stenographic minutes, XVIII legislative period

35 387 of the appendices to the stenographic minutes of the National Council, XVIII legislative period

36 *Bundesgesetzblatt* 1992, no. 148

3.5 The application of the re-engagement ban since 1992

The February, 1992 amendment to the *Verbotsgesetz* constituted a breakthrough in the prosecution of re-engagement in National Socialist activity, because it enabled neo-Nazi publicists like Honsik and Ochensberger to be tried successfully for Holocaust denial. The discussions that occurred prior to the passage of the amendment also had important repercussions on the attitude of courts and juries. In December of 1991, before the amendment was even passed, Walter Ochensberger was convicted for the first time.³⁷ Gerd Honsik was convicted the following May.³⁸ Between 1992 and July 31, 2007, a total of 273 people were brought to justice under the *Verbotsgesetz*, and 70 trials were still pending.³⁹ The statistics provided in Tables 1, 2, and 3 show that the *Verbotsgesetz* has now become an instrument that is constantly deployed in combating re-engagement in National Socialist activity.

Complaints under the Strafgesetzbuch and Verbotsgesetz, 2008–2010

Table 1

Complaints	2008	2009	2010
Verbotsgesetz	360	396	522
Incitement (section 283, Strafgesetzbuch)	73	33	79
Other Strafgesetzbuch offenses (e.g. property damage, bodily harm, malicious threats)	304	253	380 ²
Abzeichengesetz	21	40	20
Art. III para. 1 no. 4 EGVG	77	69	39
Total	835	791	1,040

Source: Federal Ministry of the Interior, Federal Office of State Protection and Counter-Terrorism, 2011 *Verfassungsschutzbericht* (State Protection Report), p. 18.

37 *Kurier*, December 10, 1991; Wilhelm Lasek, “‘Revisionistische’ Autoren und ihre Publikationen,” in Brigitte Bailer-Galanda and Wolfgang Neugebauer (eds.), *Wahrheit und Auschwitzlüge: Zur Bekämpfung “revisionistischer” Propaganda* (Vienna: Deuticke Verlag, 1995), pp. 252-292; here: p. 276 ff.

38 *Die Presse*, May 6, 1992

39 Response to query by Federal Justice Minister Dr. Maria Berger, 1101/AB, XXIII legislative period, August 21, 2007

Convictions under *Strafgesetzbuch*, section 283, and *Verbotsgesetz*, section 3a ff. (2000–2010)

Table 2

Year	Section 283, <i>Strafgesetzbuch</i>		Section 3a ff., <i>Verbotsgesetz</i>	
	Criminal court statistics	Internal BJM statistics	Criminal court statistics	Internal BJM statistics
2000	0	1	31	32
2001	9	11	17	24
2002	7	9	17	20
2003	13	13	29	31
2004	9	14	31	29
2005	6	11	22	18
2006	6	9	19	17
2007	5	9	10	9
2008	3	3	28	32
2009	5	5	34	36
2010	9	9	40	43

Source: Federal Ministry of Justice, *Bericht über die Tätigkeit der Strafjustiz* (Report on the Activities of the Criminal Justice Authorities), 2010 *Sicherheitsbericht* (Security Report), p. 41.

Outcomes of other completed trials under *Strafgesetzbuch*, section 283, and *Verbotsgesetz*, section 3a ff. (2008–2010)

Table 3

Trial Outcomes	Section 283 <i>Strafgesetzbuch</i> (Internal BMJ statistics)			Section 3a ff <i>Verbotsgesetz</i> (Internal BMJ statistics)		
	2008	2009	2010	2008	2009	2010
Complaints/indictments	14	13	7	25	46	73
Acquittals	3	4	1	5	7	6

Source: Federal Ministry of Justice, *Bericht über die Tätigkeit der Strafjustiz* (Report on the Activities of the Criminal Justice Authorities), 2010 *Sicherheitsbericht* (Security Report), p. 41.

The 2012 *Verfassungsschutzbericht* by the Federal Agency for State Protection and Counter Terrorism in the Federal Ministry of the Interior recorded 436 complaints to the authorities under the *Verbotsgesetz* and 84 complaints on suspicion of incitement for 2011.⁴⁰ The reporting

40 Federal Office for State Protection and Counter-Terrorism, *Verfassungsschutzbericht* 2012, p. 17.

facility on the homepage of the Federal Agency for State Protection and Counter-Terrorism in the Federal Ministry of the Interior, which encourages reports about postings “with neo-Nazi, racist and anti-Semitic content” on websites or in newsgroups,⁴¹ received 338 notifications in 2011.⁴²

3.6 Social and political benefits of applying the *Verbotsgesetz*

The conviction of leading neo-Nazi propagandists in the aftermath of the 1992 amendment had some positive direct consequences. In particular, the associated prohibition of newspapers and flyers specifically targeted at young people precipitated a clear reduction in the channels available for disseminating neo-Nazi propaganda. Of course, that sort of content can be accessed on the Internet at any time, but (with the exception of chance finds) it usually requires a targeted search. This contrasts with the situation that prevailed before 1992, in which people who had shown little or no prior interest in such matters were exposed to neo-Nazi ideology. For example, the incidents described above (section 3.3) involving propagandistic pamphlets that were distributed in front of schools indiscriminately reached all schoolchildren. That the results of this kind of activity could be unsettling was demonstrated in 1987, when a purportedly genuine document casting doubt on the existence of gas chambers in various concentration camps was disseminated in schools through Honsik's *Halt*, giving rise to considerable uncertainty about the whole matter, even among teachers.⁴³ Now the security services can even use the *Verbotsgesetz* to combat propaganda on the Internet. For example, in January, 2013 the Vienna Landesgericht (Regional Court) convicted those behind the neo-Nazi website “Alpen-Donau Info” (Alps-Danube Info), although their lawyers have filed an appeal, which had not yet been

41 Cf. http://www.bmi.gv.at/cms/bmi_verfassungsschutz/meldestelle (January 17, 2013)

42 *Verfassungsschutzbericht* 2012, p. 20

43 Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes (ed.), *Das Lachout-Dokument: Anatomie einer Fälschung*. Vienna, Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes, 1999

decided as of April, 2013.⁴⁴ In this context, the 2012 *Verfassungsschutzbericht* points to a decline in neo-Nazi activities following the arrest of these individuals.⁴⁵

The comparatively higher number of complaints made and trials conducted over recent years probably has less to do with increased crime than with the more stringent application of the *Verbotsgesetz* and a heightened sensitivity on the part of the public, the police, and the judicial authorities. Such increased vigilance, in turn, reflects deeper historical knowledge and awareness of the National Socialists' crimes. Laws can always be understood as an expression of socio-political will. In this context, the amendment itself indicated a resolve on the part of the legislature to combat re-engagement in National Socialist activity and Holocaust denial more vigorously. The effects of that decision have ramified over the years. Trials under the *Verbotsgesetz* and the corresponding media reports in turn help highlight to the public the fact that re-engagement in National Socialist activity is punishable, which itself increases sensitivity towards the topic.

3.7 Criticism of the *Verbotsgesetz*

Since the time of its passage, right-wing extremists of all orientations have criticized and challenged the *Verbotsgesetz*, which they correctly view as a brake on their activities. In 2007, the FPÖ joined in this chorus of criticism, the most common argument being that the act supposedly restricts freedom of expression. FPÖ chief Heinz-Christian Strache asserted that independent-minded politicians were constantly experiencing a situation of “being criminalized through slurs and campaigns and forced into a corner where they don’t belong.”⁴⁶ This view was shared by National Council member Martin Graf, now the third President of the

44 *Wiener Zeitung*, January 12, 2013; *Der Standard*, January 12, 2013.

45 *Verfassungsschutzbericht* 2012, p. 17.

46 Quoted in <http://www.vol.at/news/vorarlberg/artikel/strache-will-verbotsgesetz-abschaffen/en/news-20070223-05195534> (last accessed February 24, 2007).

National Council,⁴⁷ as well as by Barbara Rosenkranz,⁴⁸ who ran for the office of Federal President in 2010. It is telling that her criticism of the *Verbotsgesetz* in this context damaged her reputation so much that Strache felt obliged to retract it.⁴⁹

However, there are also voices that criticize the *Verbotsgesetz* from a classical liberal perspective, as became clear during the 2005 trial of the British Holocaust denier, David Irving. Respected journalists, even academics, spoke out against the treatment of Holocaust denial as a matter for criminal law. They argued that unfounded “opinions” should be refuted through discussion, not threatened with punishment.⁵⁰ “In stable democracies,” so the argument went, “the fight against barbaric ideologies” should be conducted politically rather than through the courts.⁵¹ In this view, the Austrian people could also be trusted to “resist the resurgence of the National Socialist ideology”⁵² without court involvement. Similarly, in January of 2013, the severity of the penalty against Gottfried Küssel, an active neo-Nazi for decades and one of the suspected founders of the neo-Nazi website, “Alpen Donau Info,” was criticized by legal commentators and journalists amid demands for a further reduction in the minimum penalty.⁵³

47 Query made by MP Dr. Graf and colleagues to the Federal Minister of Justice, June 26, 2007, 1091/J XXIII legislative period.

48 Niederösterreichische Nachrichten (NÖN), November 5, 2007; see also *profil* 46, November 12, 2007.

49 Declaration by Heinz-Christian Strache, March 5, 2010. See [http://www.fpoe.at/news/detail/news/strache-verbotsgesetz-ist-wic/?tx_thgenericlist\[114\]\[offset\]=0&cHash=b561e84fc882ea06926dc0346e234c67](http://www.fpoe.at/news/detail/news/strache-verbotsgesetz-ist-wic/?tx_thgenericlist[114][offset]=0&cHash=b561e84fc882ea06926dc0346e234c67) (last accessed January 29, 2013).

50 The quotation, from Graz sociologist Christian Fleck, appears in his article, “Lasst den Irving doch reden!,” in *Der Standard* (November 23, 2005); see also *Der Standard* (December 3-4, 2005).

51 Georg Hoffmann-Ostenhof, “Der Fall Irving: Wie gefährlich ist der in Österreich verhaftete britische Nazi-Historiker wirklich?,” in *profil* 47 (November 21, 2005). Hoffmann-Ostenhof later admitted to having been wrong; see Hoffmann-Ostenhof, “Rauchen, Nazis und der Papst: Manchmal muss man seine Meinung überdenken – drei aktuelle Beispiele,” in *profil* 47 (April 2, 2010).

52 Michael Fleischhacker, “An den Grenzen der Meinungsfreiheit,” in *Die Presse* (February 22, 2006). In an earlier article, he had conceded that a repeal of the *Verbotsgesetz* is not yet possible; see Fleischhacker, “Demokratie oder Inquisition: *Das Verbotsgesetz* ist Ausdruck eines breiten Konsenses über den Unreifeegrad unserer demokratischen Kultur,” in *Die Presse* (March 6, 1992).

53 Cf. Florian Klenk, “Neun Jahre Haft für Gottfried Küssel sind unangemessen,” in *Der Falter* (March, 2013), p. 7.

In 2008, an international group of academics, including Austrian-born Eric Hobsbawm (the British Marxist historian, who died in 2012), spoke out against the ban on denying historical facts, arguing that it could “not be a matter” for “political authority” to “determine historical truth and to restrict the freedom of historians with the threat of sanctions.”⁵⁴ The academics pointed to a French law passed in 2008 that imposes sanctions on the denial of Turkey’s genocide of Armenians at the start of the 20th century – a law dictated by foreign-policy considerations. In contrast to this French law, with its clear political motivation, the Austrian prohibition on re-engagement in National Socialist activity and the associated ban on denying National Socialist crimes of violence occupy a completely different historical and political context. The Austrian *Verbotsgesetz* in no way impairs either serious historical research or academic freedom. Indeed, the assertion that the *Verbotsgesetz* restricts the right to free expression was rejected by the Constitutional Court as early as 1985. The Court ruled that the Convention on Human Rights should not “be interpreted such that it justifies the right of the state, a group, or a person to perform an activity or commit an act that has as its objective the abolition of the rights and freedoms... set down therein.”⁵⁵ It is precisely this objective, however, that is pursued by those who re-engage in National Socialist activity and Holocaust denial, their ultimate aim being to absolve Nazi ideology of the most serious crimes committed in its name and, in so doing, to make that ideology acceptable once again. In this way, an opinion becomes a political intention.

A range of legal arguments can be deployed against the abolition of the *Verbotsgesetz*, proving that it does not violate any of the basic rights enshrined in the constitution. Moreover, restrictions on the right to freedom of expression can be found in other contexts in the legal system as well. Insulting individuals or inciting hostility toward ethnic or religious

54 *Der Standard*, October 27, 2008

55 Constitutional Court G175/84, November 29, 1985

minorities, to name just two examples, are also prohibited under the Austrian legal system.⁵⁶

Aside from the legal and political arguments considered thus far, there are other important values at stake in this debate. For one thing, the skeptical discourse noted above, which has a decidedly classical-liberal slant, conflicts with the need to defend the memory and honor of the victims of National Socialist violent crimes.⁵⁷ Furthermore, it vitiates the resoluteness required to face down an anti-Semitism that is constantly re-appearing in new guises. “The ban on the Auschwitz lie,” writes the historian and writer Doron Rabinovici, “is aimed at the global hate preachers of our time, because the fable of the so-called Auschwitz lie has long become today’s blood libel. The intentional denial of the crimes is not an opinion, but a slogan of hatred. It assumes a global Jewish conspiracy. It is a symbol of identity, just like the swastika or Nazi salute. All survivors, all Jews, are branded as fraudsters. The mass murder is disputed despite knowing better, so that appetites are whetted for the next one.”⁵⁸

4. Closing remarks

The Austrian ban on re-engagement in National Socialist activity, which arose in the historical context of de-Nazification, has proven to be an effective instrument for preventing neo-Nazi propaganda and publications, particularly during the last 20 years. It has supplied legal grounds for the prosecution in the courts of neo-Nazi activities committed by groups and individuals. The increased use of the Act in recent years also

56 The lawyer Alfred J. Noll provides a whole list of statutory provisions; see Alfred J. Noll, “Die Abschaffer,” in *Die Presse* (December 17, 2005).

57 See also Alfred J. Noll, “Cui bono?” in *Die Presse* (January 3, 2006).

58 Doron Rabinovici, “Märtyrer schauen anders aus,” in *Die Presse* (February 25, 2006)

has generated an increased awareness among the general public that re-engagement in Nazi activity is wrong. The Act has been criticized both from right-wing extremist and classical-liberal perspectives – albeit with opposing motivations – as a supposedly unnecessary restriction on freedom of opinion. Where classical liberals interpret freedom of expression as part and parcel of an open society and a freewheeling democracy, right-wing extremists and neo-Nazis see the *Verbotsgesetz* as a restriction on their opportunities for publication and propaganda. It is specifically this criticism from the right-wing extremist perspective that underlines the necessity of bans on both re-engagement in National Socialist activity and the denial of National Socialist crimes of violence.

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One of the brochures outlining the XENOS special program, "exit to enter"

Labor-Market Oriented Exit-Support Work to Combat Right-Wing Extremism: the XENOS special program, “Exit to Enter” (Ausstieg zum Einstieg)

Petra Boumaiza

The Exit to Enter program (Ausstieg zum Einstieg) combines schemes and ideas designed to help individuals leave the far-right scene and either join the workforce or receive the job training and skills that would enable them to do so. The first of its kind in Germany, Exit to Enter was established under the auspices of the federal government’s XENOS – Integration and Diversity (*XENOS – Integration und Vielfalt*) program and part of its National Integration Action Plan (*Nationaler Aktionsplan Integration*) for combatting racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, and intolerance. Its mission was to bolster civil society initiatives and associations that try to combat far-right attitudes and behaviors and that help juveniles and young adults wishing to disengage from the far-right milieu. The specific focus of Exit to Enter is on providing exit support in the labor-market. This article will offer an overview of the approaches and accomplishments of the projects funded under the program, and will draw conclusions from the experiences gained to inform future work in the field of exit support.

To date there are very few practical or academic empirical measures of successful methods for supporting people who want to quit the far-right scene.¹ However, many studies show that school, training, and career play an important role in that endeavor. The first task for the XENOS

1 Cf. for instance S. Schelleter, “Staatlich organisierte Aussteigerprogramme für rechtsextremistisch orientierte Jugendliche und junge Erwachsene. Ein bundesdeutscher Ländervergleich,” Ph. D. Dissertation, Faculty of Education at the Philipps-Universität (Marburg: 2007); and Peter Rieker, “Rechtsextremismus: Prävention und Intervention. Ein Überblick über Ansätze, Befunde und Entwicklungsbedarf” (Weinheim and Munich: Juventa Verlag, 2009).

special program was to determine how preventive measures against right-wing extremism could be coupled with exit-support work and integration into the labor-market.

The idea of launching Exit to Enter at the Federal Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (BMAS Germany) was conceived in 2008, after grant applications were solicited under the aegis of XENOS. Many applications from worthy projects that were specifically devoted to the topic of far-right extremism could not be considered. Recognizing this shortcoming, officials quickly decided to invite a new round of grant applications for a special program offering assistance and support on the job market to people in the process of exiting the far-right scene.

Exit to Enter was launched in 2009 with an informational event about how to apply that was attended by 29 project management agencies. Participation was open to anyone with expertise in two areas: (a) combating right-wing extremism and doing exit support work, and (b) continuing education and upgrading skills for the labor-market. The Friedrich Ebert Foundation came on board as a partner, providing professional supervision and support for the networking process.²

Approximately seven million euros were provided to support local and regional initiatives against far-right extremism, including € 5 million from the European Social Fund (ESF) and € 2 million from the budget of the BMAS. Fifteen projects were supported in the period from 2009 to 2012. By 2013, the original funding had grown to nearly € 9 million (€ 6 million from the ESF and € 2.7 million from the BMAS). In 2012, after these initiatives have been up and running for three years, all were given the opportunity to apply for a fourth year of funding to consolidate whatever progress they had made. Thirteen initiatives took advantage of this offer.

2 This information is based on a January 23, 2013 interview with the XENOS project managers at BMAS.

In 2010 an independent assessment of Exit to Enter was undertaken by GIB Innovation Research and Consultancy (*Gesellschaft für Innovationsforschung und Beratung mbH*). Their interim report, presented in 2011, showed that the projects that received support were scattered across nine different federal states in Germany, although states in the eastern part of the country (with nine projects) were more strongly represented. This distribution points to the very different prerequisites and contexts of the projects. For example, some projects were located in areas in which right-wing extremists are very visible and the situation on the job market is difficult, while others were located in areas where jobs and job training are more readily available.

Exit to Enter enabled a range of project management agencies to experiment with different approaches toward accomplishing a common goal. That experimentation, in turn, generated ample experience and data about what strategies are most effective in promoting defections from the far-right milieu and helping defectors to integrate into the world of work. The FES, in its partnership role, should be able to enhance the ability of the various projects to network with and thereby learn from one another.

The program covers a wide variety of projects. In addition to being geographically dispersed throughout Germany, both relatively new projects and established project management agencies are represented. Alongside the standard preventive projects, there are others that emphasize exit-work geared to specific social milieus, as well as some that operate in “classic” fashion to facilitate exits. Sample projects from each of these forms of exit support are discussed below.

Far-right attitudes in the workplace

An employee discovered one of his young colleagues surfing the Internet. There he read that the colleague was on the candidate list of the far-right *National-Democratic Party of Germany* (NPD) for local elections in North Rhine-Westphalia. The next day he spoke to him: “There’s someone on there with the same name as you. Is it you?” Indeed it was the same

individual. Shortly after this conversation took place, the company that employed the man contacted the Office for Right-Wing Extremism and Violence (*Arbeitsstelle Rechtsextremismus und Gewalt Braunschweig*, or ARUG) in Wolfsburg.³ ARUG investigator Reinhard Koch did some research and spoke with colleagues in North-Rhine Westphalia until there were no more doubts. When confronted with the allegation, the employee revealed that some friends had asked him to sign a petition so that the NPD could participate in the coming election. In doing so, he also unwittingly enlisted as a candidate. “They pulled a fast one on him,” says Koch.

The young man accepted a new job in Lower Saxony and took advantage of that geographical separation to make a fresh start. He asked ARUG for targeted support in establishing a new circle of friends. “The stakeholders in the company passed on their contacts to colleagues,” who helped the individual create a social network. However, things do not always run as smoothly as they did in this situation. There are cases in which people enthusiastically affirm that they are coming for advice, but then fail to keep their appointments. “Some try to relativize their role,” says Koch. Others think that it is enough for them to change the image they project to the world. But deleting a few Facebook friends and groups does not suffice. “We use a completely different yardstick. We don’t want to white-wash the façade; we want to know what’s going on inside the walls,” stresses Koch.

When Koch’s phone rings, it is often works council representatives or shop stewards from companies in Lower Saxony who are on the line. Typically, they have received information that a particular employee is involved in far-right circles or activities. “It’s rare for people to be caught engaging in such activities at work,” says Koch. Instead, their involvement tends to be discovered either through social media or when they are spotted at far-right events.

3 The descriptions are based on an interview from November 9, 2012 with Reinhard Koch of the ARUG office in Wolfsburg.

Koch and his colleagues at ARUG developed the procedure that is then rolled out.

After the initial inquiry is made, their first move is to check whether the person in question is already known to have far-right affiliation. “If someone is familiar to us, we create a dossier from the available materials and make an assessment of his status within the scene,” says Koch. All relevant players and activities are recorded in the ARUG software, so that the information on which evaluations are made can be easily accessed. Reviewing those materials allows investigators to develop an overview of the situation in Lower Saxony.

The next step is for representatives of the company to approach the individual in question. According to Koch, “we have specific contact persons in the companies.” The latter have all been properly trained, since ARUG has designed and taught their courses. It has also drafted appropriate guidelines jointly with the companies. Meeting with the employee, the company explains its position and confronts him with the allegations. The employee is asked to consider how he intends to close the gap between his political views and the company’s fundamental values. At a second meeting, there are then two alternatives. If the employee does not want to change, an immediate assessment from the perspective of employment law is made. If the employee in question is cooperative but does not know exactly what he can do, the actual consultation process is set in train. “The person is given our business card,” says Koch. Then a classic exit-support process begins.

Exiting from right-wing extremism

The projects involved in the Exit to Enter program have drawn up a definition for exit-support work in which engaging with right-wing extremist ideology plays a central role. The definition reads as follows:

Supporting exit-willing people by helping to extricate them from the far-right scene and build a life beyond ideology, violence, and extremist activism has positive consequences for the future of the individual person. Also, society benefits in various ways when people leave the far-right scene. The exit of extremists can contribute to the destabilization of that milieu. It is thus a crucial element in the strategic confrontation with right-wing extremism and therefore helps to shore up the foundations of a democratic society. Hence, each case of individual defection is a boon for society. However, working to counteract right-wing extremism can only be successful if it has a long-term focus. That applies in particular to exit-support work. In order to remove individuals who are willing to quit from their milieu in the long term, we must provide them with ongoing professional support. No right-wing extremist leaves the scene overnight. An exit is always preceded by an extended period during which the person struggles with his or her doubts about ideals and ideology. The exit process itself also can go on for years. The decision to exit marks a fundamental turning point in the life of the individual. It is often linked to the desire for personal security, education, work, and social integration, as well as to the search for a new philosophy, for meaning and orientation. Exit means critical reflection: reworking, questioning, and overcoming the ideology that previously defined a person's actions and direction in life. It is essential for these individuals to leave previous peer groups, political parties, and large parts of their social milieu – a process that requires them to mobilize all their resources, and one that can quickly bring them up against the limits of their abilities if they lack access to competent contact persons and stable reference points. To counteract this problem and to promote the social and professional integration of those exiting the scene, professional exit-support work is required, which can only occur on a long-term, financially stable basis.⁴

The projects supported under the auspices of Exit to Enter were able to establish or expand their working methods as a result of funding they

4 “Tunnel Licht Blicke. Aus der Praxis arbeitsmarktorientierter Ausstiegsarbeit der Projektträger des XENOS-Sonderprogramms ‘Ausstieg zum Einstieg’” (Bonn: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung e.V., 2012), p. 66.

received. They are dedicated to very different and often highly intricate complexes of problems relating to milieu, security, and exit issues, and they also provide alternative approaches on an individual level. Exit support in this sense is not “classically” preventive; rather, it intervenes with a specific purpose in mind: persuading the exit-willing individuals to renounce violence, and preventing them from engaging in deviant behavior and having run-ins with the criminal justice system. The balance between preventive and interventional approaches varies from one project to another. The methodological and conceptual approaches of the projects are likewise widely heterogeneous. The following sections offer examples to illustrate different approaches to exit-support work.

Preventive work

Preventive work is defined by the project management agencies as follows:

Preventive work means proactively identifying the emergence of social problems and tackling them before they become serious. Right-wing extremism germinates in all social strata. There are many reasons for this. Deficient democratic awareness, social isolation, indifference to education, and lack of prospects, as well as internalized ideas of social Darwinism, notions of inequality, the supposedly enticing world of adventure offered by the far right, the alleged predisposition as well as the feeling of belonging to the far-right group are all factors that make the far-right scene look attractive. The content and objectives of preventive work are developed on the basis of scientific observations and insights. However, preventive work is driven primarily by the experience and instincts of the players. Engagement with the specific socio-economic conditions in affected regions, cities, districts, or residential quarters is essential. Preventive measures must be ‘tailor-made.’ They are constructions of the present, yet they seek to effect change for the future.⁵

5 “Tunnel Licht Blicke,” op. cit., p. 17

The preventive approach is illustrated by two associations: the Democratic Ostvorpommern – Association for Political Culture e.V. (*Demokratisches Ostvorpommern – Verein für politische Kultur e.V.*) and the Social Welfare Organization of Greifswald – Ostvorpommern (*Kreisdiakonisches Werk Greifswald – Ostvorpommern*).

Twenty-year-old “Martin” (not his real name) has suffered many losses of emotional attachment in his family. The person to whom he was closest was his grandmother. Until her death, she lived in a dilapidated house that she bequeathed to her grandson. Martin feels neglected by his parents, a biographical characteristic that he shares with many other young people with far-right leanings. Although Martin did earn a high-school diploma, he broke off his carpentry apprenticeship, for reasons including educational failings, lack of familial encouragement, tardiness, and drug abuse. Additionally, he suffers from dyslexia and has trouble expressing himself. According to the assessment of the project workers, these problems stem from an absence of support during his childhood and teenage years. Martin believed that his training company asked for too much of his time. As he saw it, the firm’s excessive demands were responsible for his failure, causing him to miss classes and qualification measures designed to prepare students for their tests. Not permitted to take the final exam, Martin entered the metaphorical “Hartz IV” social welfare revolving door. But in fact, documents furnished by the welfare agency show that his apprenticeship actually ended due to inadequate performance in the educational arena, coupled with the bankruptcy of the firm that was training him. The agency’s efforts to support Martin in completing his apprenticeship and providing him with an alternative training company did not succeed.

Martin does not understand the educational system well enough to help himself. Due to a lack of certain personal qualities, he is not in a position to make his way in the world on his own. He spends many nights drunk or high on drugs. The social welfare payments are too meager to repair the house that he inherited. Friends take him to demonstrations organized by the NPD. Martin discusses with his friends the possible reasons for his

failures. The conclusion always seems to be that parents, society at large, employment agencies, and business enterprises don't do enough for young people.

Martin's case manager offers him an opportunity to take part in the "scene change" (Szenewechsel) project for six months. Ideally, Martin thereafter will succeed in obtaining an internship, apprenticeship, or job. The case manager, seeking to reward Martin's efforts in the project, offers him an additional source of income by classifying him as a "one-Euro jobber." This means that Martin would have up to € 30 extra per week at his disposal. Martin agrees to take part once he has met the project workers. He is reserved and finds it difficult to bond with the group, so he is barely capable of teamwork. Still, the project workers quickly recognize his manual dexterity. However, in the first month, Martin is unable to stay focused on one task for any length of time. Unexcused absences on his part are routine. After he takes drugs at a public event during working hours, the employees threaten to kick him out of the project. The threat serves as a wake-up call, as Martin starts to face up to his shortcomings. In the last two months of his participation in the project, his punctuality improves and his active communication with staff members and participants increases. Martin attends an appointment with an addiction therapist, produces up-to-date job application documents, and begins to formulate achievable life goals. During an internship it becomes clear that Martin's ability and willingness to perform is, at least for now, sufficient only for simple supporting activities in the trades. It is agreed with the case managers of the employment agency that, for the most part, Martin will be offered jobs suited to his current level of ability. An apprenticeship is not in the cards.

Meanwhile, Martin changes his attitude toward far-right ideologies. Distancing himself from his former comrades, he devotes his spare time to renovating his house. After his stint in the project ends, he continues to turn to staff members with technical questions, in particular about correspondence with public authorities. It was planned from the outset that this sort of assistance from the project would extend beyond his

six-month period of formal participation. When Martin fears that he might backslide into his previous behavior patterns, he asks to be taken back into the project. This time, although the case manager does not offer any additional rewards for his accomplishments, Martin still shows up for all appointments. He is currently working as an assistant in a workshop in the region and remains in contact with the project workers.

Martin's example illustrates something of a textbook process. According to project workers, this is the way things transpire in 20 % of the cases. About 10 % of the participants drop out prematurely. While the remaining 70 % do exhibit change over the course of the project and do discuss both basic democratic values and personal opportunities, the long-term effects remain inconclusive.⁶ What additional experiences they have gathered from these cases and what challenges would need to be surmounted to make a project like this one permanent are explored below, using an example of social-milieu oriented exit-support work.

Social-milieu oriented exit-support work

Social-milieu oriented work to counteract right-wing extremism is a supplement to classic and preventive approaches. Such projects seek to offer counseling in residential areas in order to reach out to far-right young people and their social matrix. In academic circles, social-milieu oriented exit-support work is defined as follows:

Social-milieu orientation dissolves the classical distinction between case, group, and community work, and integrates the methods of social work into a multi-layered approach. The question, "What is the case?," now has a new answer: the traditional emphasis on the individual person – the so-called "classical" case – is replaced by a broader focus on human relations in their social milieu. The "case"

6 This example is drawn from "Tunnel Licht Blicke," op. cit., p. 17ff.

then includes not only a person's life story (though that is still involved) but also broader issues, such as the ... distributive policy followed by local governments, the function of the welfare system, the potential of city districts, and the resources of networks. That's the core.⁷

To this definition, the projects participating in Exit to Enter (the XENOS special program) add that: "In the context of right-wing extremism, social-milieu-oriented work often seeks to answer the questions of why young people seek shelter in far-right groups in their residential districts and why they avoid certain residential areas. The latter can be observed above all when young people take on a job or start a course of professional training."⁸

A good example is provided by the social-milieu oriented work performed by the "JUMP!" project in rural Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania. The example concerns "Mark" from a Demmin-based vocational training institute (names and places changed). He has been under the supervision of exit support for two years.

A project partner alerted the staff to the conspicuous young man. A project worker then visited the workshop and convinced Mark, then twenty two, to take part in a more extensive discussion. The conversation centered primarily on his family and his ongoing training as a parts finisher. Far-right issues were not discussed with Mark, despite the fact that he was wearing a T-shirt bearing the likeness of Hitler. The third meeting took place in his mother's 56-square-meter apartment. In the hallway, Mark proudly presented his black combat boots with white shoelaces and a lighter emblazoned with an imperial eagle above a swastika. His room, which was very small, was strewn with clothes and CDs and displayed a German Reich war flag. Mark was clearly addicted to

7 Frank Früchtel, Gudrun Cypian, and Wolfgang Budd, *Sozialer Raum und Soziale Arbeit – Textbook* (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2010).

8 "Tunnel Licht Blicke," op. cit., p. 43.

his computer, tobacco, and, to some extent, alcohol. In a long discussion, Mark told the JUMP! worker that he essentially grew up without a permanent father-figure. His biological father hanged himself after attempting to suffocate the three-year-old Mark with a cushion. The step-father who took his place died from cirrhosis of the liver, and the one after that did not stick around for long, either. Mark's childhood experiences included humiliation, subjugation, domestic violence, sexual abuse, and defenselessness. The third step-father, a reformed alcoholic, had been an emotional and practical crutch for Mark for several years. The trusting relationship that had developed between the two was expressed in loving gestures such as a welcome kiss and playful remarks.

Mark's relationship to his alcoholic mother was marked by recriminations, degradation, a sense of being overwhelmed, and general confusion and helplessness. His mother's stories made it clear for the first time that Mark's contact with the local far-right scene was intensive. According to his mother, "comrades" often came into the apartment listening to far-right music, talking for hours, and violating her privacy. The police regularly showed up in response to breaches of the peace. At the third meeting, Mark proudly spoke of the range of his activities with the Autonomous Nationalists (Autonome Nationalisten). Among other things, he was involved in poster campaigns and manned an NPD information stand. However, he did not become an NPD member. Mark acknowledged that he was charged with conspiracy to commit assault and battery, deliberate damage to property, and popular incitement after accompanying his comrades in a raid against the local youth club, but said he was acquitted at trial because the comrades testified in his favor. In a subsequent discussion, he altered the facts slightly, claiming that the charges were dropped because the plaintiff did not consider him to be a perpetrator and withdrew the complaint.

In June of 2010, after a prolonged "get acquainted" phase, Mark signed a document declaring his express willingness to exit the far-right scene and articulated personal goals that related in particular to his residential situation and career prospects. After his qualifying high-school diploma,

Mark successfully completed a ten-month part-time training course in the field of metalworking. He continued his vocational training as a parts finisher at the Demmin vocational training institute that he had attended before embarking on the exit program.

While the final examination before the chamber of trade and industry was pending, Mark searched for his own apartment with the case manager's assistance. Mark's mother's partner helped him with the move, and Mark's grandmother supported him financially. Mark combined this step towards independence with a self-initiated distancing from his former comrades in order to prepare himself for the examination with as few distractions as possible. He passed the exam with a final grade of satisfactory (the equivalent of a "C"). His strengths lay in the computer-based and practical part of the test.

To gain Mark's confidence further, the JUMP! project worker drew on his own experience as an archery coach. In this way he was able to connect with Mark both on a personal and a sporting level. Mark gratefully accepted the offer and developed into a passable archer. During a visit to an open-air museum in Slawendorf, the project worker broached the topic of the origin of the heathen and Germanic notion of "one true German people" that features so prominently in right-wing extremist discourse. A joint trip to Berlin, aimed at participating in multicultural experiences, cemented the relationship between Mark and his case worker.

At the same time, Mark was also progressing at a professional level. The case worker used his contacts to have the young man entered into the database of the local temping agency. Prior to getting his first job, Mark held an internship at a company that handles core removal work, which also was arranged by his case worker. Relying on his own self-discipline, Mark toughed out this physically demanding work for several weeks until he switched to a Demmin-based company that sets up stages. Mark then worked for the temping agency in Austria and Italy for three months as an installer of solar equipment, until he quit that job and returned to his family for Christmas. A job in a call center that he was offered was out of

the question. Mark's case worker arranged for him to attend a residential project in Neukloster for young people facing multiple barriers to employment. With the change of location, Mark also left behind his Autonomous Nationalist comrades. His contact to them had become increasingly sporadic in any event. In and around Neukloster, Mark spent a year engaged in a number of internships, including one at a shipyard and another in the metalworking industry.

In a range of discussions, the case worker and case manager spoke with Mark about his past associations with the far-right scene and far-right ideology. Misanthropic attitudes towards certain groups had been stirred up and reinforced by his new roommate, Nick, in Neukloster. The case manager was ultimately able to sound out the two men, resurrecting old objections to some of these attitudes and countering others in new ways. In a quasi-ritualistic act, Mark divested himself of his far-right artifacts and clothing. He was given some cash to purchase new clothes in exchange for the clothes he surrendered.

A geographical separation was achieved at the end of the residential stay by means of a move to Parchim. There Mark had an appointment at the job center – which the JUMP! workers had not known about – at which he signed an integration agreement. Because he did not uphold the terms of this agreement, his welfare payments were cut at the start of 2011, putting him in a precarious financial position. The JUMP! workers accompanied Mark to two appointments at the job center and were able to defuse the situation somewhat. When it became clear that Mark's integration into the job market would take some time, he was assigned a case manager by the job center. Mark was finally assigned to a new project aimed at providing a daily structure that, while it did not offer any professional improvements, benefitted him on a personal level.

Mark has now settled into his new environment. After two years he once again has a functioning friendship outside the far-right scene, in contrast to merely online relationship centered on computer games. His new friend, Steve, gives him the everyday support that the JUMP! workers

cannot always guarantee because of the physical distance between them and their client. The project has even enabled Mark to make contact with a young woman. Every two months the JUMP! project workers assess Mark's progress or regression on his journey away from far-right people, viewpoints, and stimuli.⁹

The sample cases featured in this article demonstrate the spectrum of the various projects and their different methods. What many projects have in common is a holistic approach, comprising the resolution of personal problems, the search for an apartment and training place, and the creation of a new social milieu. Work stabilizes, structures, and creates such a milieu. However, it must be borne in mind that successful integration into the job market does not automatically mean that a person has been liberated from the far-right mental horizon.

Regional differences are also reflected in the projects. In their February, 2012 report, independent assessors remark that: "from its content,... it [is clear] that the special program has generated quite a breadth and heterogeneity of approaches for supporting an exit from the far-right scene. On a detailed level the project approaches differ greatly from one another, even though there were of course clear overlaps in certain key areas of project development among them."¹⁰

The factors that account for success

The assessors count the qualifications of the project staff among the factors that determine a successful project outcome. "What really matters here is that competence both in the area of exit-support work/right-wing extremism and in integration into vocational training/the labor-market

9 "Tunnel Licht Blicke," op. cit., pp. 50-53

10 "Evaluation des 'XENOS-Sonderprogramms Ausstieg zum Einstieg,'" short report commissioned by the Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales (Berlin: Gesellschaft für Innovationsforschung und Beratung mbH, 2012), p. 6 ff; available at http://www.esf.de/portal/generator/18084/property=data/2012_03_19_evaluationbericht_aze.pdf

is available.”¹¹ Especially at the beginning of the special program, it was sometimes difficult to recruit qualified staff members to work in less attractive project regions. Project workers from the association Democratic Ostvorpommern and the Social Welfare Organization of Greifswald – Ostvorpommern emphasize that:

To facilitate personal transformations and successful transitions among the participants, it is essential to pay close attention to each and every individual. This is a time-consuming and lengthy process. Trust between project employees and the participants has to be built gradually – six months is barely enough time for this to occur. The emotional strain on the employees increases with each tragedy-laden biography they are faced with in the course of their activity. And when project participants do not make it through, their failure constantly causes the project workers to question whether they, too, have failed professionally.¹²

These observations underscore the importance of having well-trained and resilient employees.

The assessors also name networking as a further key factor for success: “Project management agencies that already had networks in the area of combatting right-wing extremism and labor-market integration, as well as with public authorities and other actors, were able to integrate themselves into the actual project work considerably more quickly than project management agencies that had previously not been active in these areas or had only been slightly involved.”¹³ Partnerships are frequently linked to personal contacts. For that reason, it is important to find staff members with the right background, training, and connections.

11 Ibid., p. 7

12 “Tunnel Licht Blicke,” op. cit., p. 20

13 “Evaluation des ‘XENOS-Sonderprogramms,’” op. cit., p. 7

In practice, structural barriers sometimes could be obstacles in the way of a successful exit. In one case, a young mother wanted to leave the scene, which would require her to relocate and maybe even get a new identity. However, the youth welfare service granted the father, a “leader of [far-right] comradeships,” visitation rights with his child. As a result, the woman was not able to make a clean break with her past; instead, she was required to distance herself slowly from the right-wing milieu, a goal that she never fully managed to accomplish.¹⁴ Such problems, which also frequently arise when collaboration is required across the borders of federal states, are not uncommon.

One particular problem area that emerged in the projects’ early stages was how to identify individuals potentially willing to exit. In this context, a further issue arose regarding collaboration with employment agencies:

In many cases it was difficult to enable project workers to approach exit-willing individuals directly, so that effort was largely abandoned in favor of access via multipliers in the corresponding projects. The strategy of recruiting participants through referrals from the job centers or employment agencies was largely unfeasible because, for a variety of reasons, the employees of public authorities such as these job placement centers are hardly in a position to identify and properly refer individuals with far-right tendencies or affiliations.¹⁵

14 “Tunnel Licht Blicke,” op. cit., p. 12ff.

15 “Evaluation des ‘XENOS-Sonderprogramms,’” op. cit., p. 11

Prospects for the future

Financial support enabled the projects participating in the Exit to Enter program to develop approaches for combining an exit from the far-right scene with integration into the world of work in a meaningful way. Networking played a key role in this endeavor, and was a component of project implementation from the outset. Regular network meetings organized by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation and professionally chaired by Kristina Nauditt and Gerd Wermerskirch from the ARGO team enabled the project managers to get to know one another better. Over time, the meetings led to a regular constructive dialogue. All projects had to develop and expand their areas of responsibility in one way or another. The workshops were helpful in this context, not least from the viewpoint of the grant administrators, who used them to supervise and direct project efforts.

The XENOS special program, as a key component of the effort of the federal government to dismantle far-right attitudes and activities in Germany, has yielded effective results. This was the reason why the projects received funding for an additional year (their fourth). Both the projects and the program itself received only start-up rather than long-term funding. The aim of that funding was to place project activities on a firm footing. The success of Exit to Enter in assisting local and regional exit-support initiatives is demonstrated both by instructive examples from the independent evaluation and by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation's "Tunnel Licht Blicke" brochure. We would like to express our gratitude to all the initiatives for their committed work, as well as the hope that they will succeed in carrying on their professional activities in the future.

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The people of Oslo try to express their grief with flowers. Flowers are laid all over the city to commemorate the dead and wounded from the attack carried out on July 22, 2011

Right-Wing Extremism in Norway: Prevention and Intervention

Katrine Fangen | Yngve Carlsson

The number of right-wing extremists within the general population of a country is not a reliable gauge of the likelihood of right-wing violence. On July 22, 2011, Norway witnessed one of the worst terrorist attacks in recent history, even though the number of right-wing activists there is low in comparison with most other European countries. Although Anders Breivik was not an active member of any extremist group, he was quite active in the virtual world of extremists on the Internet. Because this virtual world transcends national borders, Breivik's deed must be understood not only as a Norwegian problem, but as part of a larger European cultural crisis as well (Bachmann et al. 2012). This is reflected in extremist rhetoric concerning the danger of a Muslim takeover of the continent, a scenario that anti-Islamists label "Eurabia."

Different strategies must be developed to prevent street violence, harassment, and similar hate-inspired acts on the local level, and to prevent further large-scale terror attacks committed by individuals lacking clear ties to right-wing extremist groups, aside from their contacts on the Web. In Norway, one of the smallest countries in Europe in terms of population, problems with hate-related crimes and right-wing extremism are addressed by a combination of many measures. Compared with other countries, more weight has so far been put on preventive measures than on repressive (Vindino and Branden 2012). A strategy that has successfully been implemented in many Norwegian municipalities is social intervention, which is aimed at reintegrating perpetrators of hate crimes and participants in extreme groups into their communities.

In this article, we shall describe some of the measures that have been employed against racist violence and right-wing extremism and whose epicenter has been the municipality or community. We will also shortly comment on strategies designed to foster tolerance and a democratic spirit. The latter have a much longer time frame than the former, and their goals are more far-reaching. We will also discuss some Norwegian law-enforcement strategies, including the Police Security Service. We will begin our inquiry by looking at the situation in Norway regarding violent right-wing extremism.

Three questions guide this article. First, what characteristics have marked the right-wing scene during the recent decades? Second, what strategies have been developed to counter right-wing extremism? Finally, how effective are these strategies, and what are their limitations?

1. Right-wing extremism in Norway

If we disregard the July 22 terror attack for the moment, we will recognize that right-wing extremist activity has generally been a less serious problem in Norway, with its population of just 5.051 million, than it has in its Scandinavian neighbor, Sweden, with 9.555 million inhabitants. While there are approximately two to three thousand active and well-organized right-wing extremists in Sweden, there are probably not more than 150 to 200 in Norway. We should note, however, that the number of militants has varied considerably over time. The right-wing scene has experienced peaks and valleys during every decade since 1970 (Fangen, 2001: 75–104). It is nearly impossible to supply exact numbers, since there are no membership registers, and the statistics one uses depend on whether one counts only active participants or also includes fellow travelers. In all probability, the number of right-wing extremists in Norway seldom has exceeded 300 (Carlsson 2006), though there are, of course, vastly more citizens holding right-populist views.

Although the number of right-wing extremists has been relatively low, there have been several serious instances of violence during every decade since the 1970s. In some cases right-wing extremist violence has been committed by well-trained, well-organized groups, but more often it has been the work of amateurs, which is one reason why so many bomb attacks have failed. Every ten years, there has been at least one right-wing extremist bomb attack, but in none of the earlier attacks has anyone been killed (for a description of some of these attacks, see Strømme 2011). There have been racist murders and also murders caused by other motives such as paranoia (see Fangen 2011). Immigrant-owned shops and immigrant asylum centers have been targeted by arsonists, and several immigrants have been attacked and injured in street fights.

During the 1990s, Norway was home to several extreme right-wing groups, which attracted considerable attention in the media. Norwegian right-wing extremists during the first half of the 1990s were poorly organized, and the pool of talent and skill they could draw upon was limited. Few had more than a basic education, and many of the participants had troubled or even criminal backgrounds (Fangen, 1995, 1999, 2001; Bjørge, 1997; Bjørge, Carlsson, and Haaland, 2001). During the second half of the 1990s, right-wing extremists in groups like Viking and Boot Boys became better organized. They emphasized physical training, and in comparison with groups that predominated earlier in the decade, they were more ideologically oriented and not as visibly uniformed (Fangen, 2001).

The late 1990s saw the emergence of a new organization, “Vigrid.” Its leader, the 70 year-old Tore Tvedt, was inspired by William Pierce, who founded the National Alliance, the largest and most active right-wing extremist group in the United States. Vigrid praises old Nordic gods like Odin, glorifies Adolf Hitler, and denies the Holocaust. Although the organization does not directly encourage violence, it does promote a racist and violent ideology (Carlsson 2006). Furthermore, it opposes the “Zionist Occupation Government” in Norway, an idea that was also embraced by the Boot Boys and other far-right groups in the early 1990s (see

Fangen, 1998). This organization, with its elderly, father-figure leader, has tried to recruit young people all over Norway. It also managed to run candidates in the local county election in 2009, but they received just 179 votes (Strømmen 2011).

Extremism reached its peak in the mid-1990s and began to decline in the beginning of the 2000s. This decline was partly a function of preventive measures that were implemented in the municipalities, but it was also the result of the murder of young Benjamin Hermansen, who had a Norwegian mother and a Kenyan father. The crime was committed by two members of the group known as the “Boot Boys.” In its aftermath, many young people abandoned extremist groups, not wanting to be associated with such a heinous crime (Olsen, 2011).

Though on a national scale the problem of rightist extremism has been minor since the turn of the 21st century, right-wing extremist groups have been active in a few Norwegian communities, attacking immigrants and threatening political opponents. The most serious incident was the one referred to above: the January, 2001 stabbing death in Oslo of a mixed-race child by two members of the Boot Boys. Just two years earlier, in the small town of Sogndal in western Norway, a teenage boy drowned after having been chased into a river by two belligerent young men crying, “kill the nigger.” Neither of these victims had provoked the violent attacks in any way. Both the capital, Oslo, and the city of Kristiansand on the south coast have seen violent conflicts between right-wing militants and youth groups with immigrant backgrounds that resulted in injuries. Such conflicts always involve a potential for fatalities.

During the first decade of the 2000s, new right-wing groups, most of which had anti-Islamist ideologies, appeared on the Norwegian scene. The most notable of those groups were the National Defense League and Stop the Islamization of Norway (SIAN). The activity of the anti-Islamists of the 2000s has been located on the Web to a much greater extent than for the right-wing extremists of the 1990’s.

From the mid-1990s until 2006, approximately twenty Norwegian communities have harbored groups that can be labeled racist or right-wing extremist (Carlsson 2006). However, only a handful of these communities have hosted conspicuously violent groups for more than a few years. According to the police, the right-wing extremist scene had declined so much by 2010 that it could be classified henceforth as a minor problem (Storberget, 2010). Just a year later, the worst terror attack in Norway's history was carried out by a right-wing militant, albeit one who did not participate in any existing right-wing group, except for his activity on the internet. Breivik's act of terror came as a surprise because the right-wing scene had received relatively little public attention in the decade preceding his attack. The virtual scene, where an alert reader might have found clues to what was to come, had been poorly policed and mapped.

The Norwegian Police Security Service's Annual Threat Assessment of 2013, says that extreme right wing groups are still small and consist of loose networks. They argue that the main challenge is to ferret out the potential extremists who are not part of the organized far-right (similar to Breivik), because such individuals are difficult to detect. They comment that most far-right extremists in Norway denounce Breivik's terrorist attack, but there are some who support his attack on the government building (PST 2013). Despite this, the main conclusion, supported by commentaries from most researchers and journalists in this field, is that the number of right-wing extremists in Norway is still low, and the threat from this scene is still not as worrisome as it was in the 1990s.

2. Community strategies

Throughout Scandinavia, crime prevention policy combines suppression and formal and informal control with measures designed to reintegrate perpetrators into society. An important solution to the problem of right-wing extremism has been reform rather than punishment. In 428 Norwegian municipalities, the agents responsible for preventive work against racism and right-wing extremism are predominately municipal units

(e.g., schools, child care service, outreach workers and youth clubs), local police, political parties and their youth affiliates, anti-racist organizations, sport clubs, and religious groups. Municipalities enjoy great freedom in organizing preventive work as they see fit, and can decide which methods and measures to employ. Preventive work is often hidden in the daily activities of public institutions. In the following, we will provide an overview of some of the intervention strategies and measures that have been implemented when a right-wing extremist group is about to emerge, based on evaluations carried out in the 1990s and early 2000s (see a list of relevant evaluations in Carlsson, 2006).

The community strategy towards violent right-wing extremism was developed in situations in which the problem has been limited in scope. While the approaches that were implemented during the late 1990s and early 2000s can be fruitful when the goal is simply to limit recruitment to a local group or milieu and to facilitate disengagement, it does not necessarily prevent the kind of lone-actor terrorism that the Breivik case exemplifies. Intervention is most effective when the problem is limited and potentially manageable. When an easily identifiable but relatively small group is emerging in a local community, it may be possible to prevent it from attaining a “critical mass.” A group with 30 to 40 participants will normally be conspicuous in the community and therefore will find it easier to recruit individuals looking for action. It may also attract like-minded individuals from other parts of the country or abroad, both for social gatherings and for training. Before such a group grows too large, efforts should be made to dismantle it. This goal can be accomplished by encouraging wavering young people to disengage, while sending hardcore offenders through the court system and to prison. Youth in general may be repelled from the scene by public demonstrations against it; meanwhile, those already flirting with engagement may be deterred by empowerment conversations with the preventive police.

Some Norwegian communities have found it impossible to dismantle extremist groups completely. Even in such cases, however, communities may succeed in reducing their membership to a handful of persons. The

group will then no longer be a well-recognized public actor, and so the attractiveness of any parties and gatherings that it sponsors will diminish. In this way it will lose its power to win over new recruits. It is noteworthy that when the members of extremist groups grow older, their interest in recruitment may also decrease. Adult men between will be much less interested in bringing teenage boys into their circle of friends, unless of course the men happen to be deeply dedicated activists (Carlsson 2006).

As regards younger members, several techniques aimed at re-integrating them into the community by cutting their ties to the right-wing extremist movement, have been successful, as we will see in the following sections. Such reintegration must proceed step by step, combining different measures.

2.1 Parents' groups

Parents often feel helpless and perplexed when their children take part in the activities of an extremist group. Because it is so stigmatizing to be in this situation, the parents may find that they have no one with whom they can discuss it candidly. In response to this problem, parents groups were established in Oslo and Kristiansand in the late 1990s, when the local right-wing scene there had reached its peak (Carlsson 2006). The strategy was successful, since many new recruits to extremists groups are still young enough to listen to what their parents say. The parents in these groups not only shared information about their common predicament, but also established reasonable rules governing their children's attire, music, and outdoor activities. One important goal of such groups is to support parents who resolve not to turn their backs on their children, even those who hold offensive attitudes or commit violent acts. If the parents do reject their offspring, the latter probably will have no other alternative source of care and attention than members of the extremist group.

The formation of parental groups presupposes that the parents remain interested in the welfare of their children. But their success requires that

parents possess personal qualities, resources, and values that they can draw upon to turn wayward children around.¹ It must be acknowledged that not all parents have those assets. This is one reason why it may be useful to have an outsider facilitate discussions about ways to help at-risk young people. In both Oslo and Kristiansand, parent groups had the assistance of such a facilitator.

2.2 Building personal relationships outside the family unit

A study of the members of a right-wing extremist group in Kristiansand (Bjørge, Carlsson, and Haaland, 2001) revealed that some of the most active among them had been severely neglected by their families. In fact, some had parents with addictions and severe psychiatric problems, while the parents of others were already deceased. Clearly, it is pointless in such cases to try to use the parents as a “stepping-stone” back into the community. An alternative stepping-stone may be persons outside the family unit who are willing to establish ties to at-risk youth by listening to them and eventually winning their trust. These significant others may be able to support young people when they begin to tire of the racist associations or question their ideology (Aho, 1994).

Sometimes such individuals belong to the local community. In the small town of Brumunddal it was a prominent business leader who already knew some of the youth who were involved, and who fervently desired that they not end up as outcasts. He gave some of the boys both care and attention, and even offered them jobs in his company. According to Eidheim (1993), this businessman played a major role in weakening the racist scene in Brumunddal.

Of course, one cannot expect that such persons will spontaneously appear in every community. An alternative is the deliberate establishment of

1 The discussions in such groups may be very tense if some parents share the racist views of their children. This was a challenge in one of the Norwegian groups until these persons voluntarily stopped participating.

outreach projects, units, or practices that will foster the development of personal ties between ordinary community members and active extremists, racists, or gang-members. In Kristiansand, the Church Youth Project (CUP) plays this role (Carlsson and Haaland, 2004). This small, flexible organization exists outside of the huge municipal bureaucracy and has been in operation for 20 years. Its four professional social workers and staff of volunteers work with marginalized children and youth in the city. The professionals have managed to build personal relations with and gain the confidence of some of extremist ringleaders. They have helped them to find housing and work, or to resume their education. Their contribution may be as simple as assisting young people to obtain drivers' licenses, which in turn give them access to the labor-market.

The theory here is that over the long run, positive changes in their situation will either transform the attitudes of at-risk youth, or at least reduce their willingness to participate in violent acts. It is important that at-risk youth maintain ties to the community. This response to far-right conduct embodies a completely different strategy than the "kick-them-out" approach favored by some members of the anti-fascist movement (Fangen, 2001).

There are also examples in which field workers and preventive police officers filled the role of significant others. Some officers have been highly imaginative and successful in helping young people to abandon extremist views and commitments. They have used their networks to find them housing, places at school (e.g., sport schools or community colleges), and/or employment.

Former participants in the right-wing extremist scene who possess the necessary personal qualities and motivations may also play an important role in extricating others. The idea of using defectors in this capacity was launched in Norway in 1997 and adopted in Sweden the following year, with the establishment of EXIT Sweden, staffed by defectors. The one-time extremists have helped to reform young people by building personal relationships with them, and have thereby created a network of

“defectors for defectors” (Swedish Crime-Prevention Council, 2001). The Swedish project has also provided assistance to Norwegian right-wingers wanting to quit that milieu, and after having been featured in the German magazine, *Stern*, the project has served as an inspiration for similar efforts in Germany as well.

An important premise of the inclusion strategy is that many participants in extremist groups, including even prominent leaders, actually want to leave. They may feel as though everyone is against them; tire of constant conflicts with their enemies and associates; long for a more normal life; or start to question the group’s ideology (Fangen, 1995, 1999). Yet at the same time, they are unsure how to sever their ties with the group, since it fulfills many of their needs. Without outside assistance, they may be unable to extricate themselves from their current situation, and to act in ways that reflect their change of heart. (Bjørge, 1997). In many respects, their predicament resembles that of members of criminal gangs, sectarian groups or underground terrorist groups seeking to break free from their entanglements. They may need help establishing new social networks, or at least a chance to forge personal relationships with potential mentors.

2.3 Basing joint interventions on knowledge: models for analyzing local problems

Studies and observations of racist and violent youth groups in Norway show that the root causes of their emergence and the specific behavior that they display vary from one community to the next (Bjørge and Carlsson, 1999). It is therefore important to describe the character, magnitude, and seriousness of the problem, and also to try to identify both the manifest and latent factors that have shaped its specific expressions in each locality.

One lesson learned in the 1990s was that xenophobic violence is a phenomenon for which the entire community must answer (Carlsson, 2006). Ideally, the agencies charged with addressing the problem should also take part in efforts to describe and analyze it. Depending on the

model of mapping that is employed, participants in this process can include the police, the child-care service, relevant municipal departments, schools, voluntary organizations, and representatives from the youth population.

Three different models for mapping and analyzing local outbreaks of rightist extremism have been used in Norway (Carlsson 2006):

- An inter-organizational working group with knowledgeable representatives (5–10 persons) from relevant agencies cooperate to collect and analyze information, and to draw up an action plan. They normally also discuss the individuals participating in the group, the roles that they play, and how to deal with them. However, sharing information about individuals is not unproblematic because of confidentiality rules that bind public officials.
- A quicker method, which nevertheless can be sufficient to assess the problem, is to organize a short “mapping seminar” (lasting just one or two days) with 20 to 40 participants representing different agencies and perspectives. It is useful to bring in an outside expert who is experienced in running such sessions, as well as a person having in-depth knowledge of racist and right-wing militant groups and their modes of operation. In some cases, analysis will show that the problem at hand has little to do with racism or extremism, and that it must therefore be addressed by employing strategies from other “tool kits.” In other cases, the analysis will reveal a minor or nascent problem that can be handled with fairly simple measures.
- A more time-consuming and expensive strategy is to fund a project that calls upon outside researchers to provide a description and analysis of the problem. While the researchers obviously will incorporate the experiences of local agencies, typically their work will be informed by a broader perspective.

Such methods, of course, may also be combined. A mapping seminar may be arranged a few days after a serious episode to develop a plan for immediate action. The seminar may be followed by a more thorough analysis designed to provide the basis for longer-term prevention and

intervention if far-right extremism should prove to be deeply-rooted, complex, or menacing. The goal of such local mapping and analysis is to increase the success rate of interventions. Asking questions about what, when, how, how many, and why will reduce the risk of wasting resources on measures that might be ineffective or even counter-productive. For example, it makes sense to use different strategies depending on how well-organized the group is, whether it has links to foreign counterparts, or whether most of its members are in their 20s and 30s (as opposed to a pack of teenaged boys mixed up in an ongoing fight with a group of immigrant kids). A local scene with 100 participants must be met in a different way than one involving a handful of adolescents. In most Norwegian communities, such groups will be small. This means that individually-oriented measures of intervention can play an important role.

2.4 A competent, experienced advisory service

Municipalities confronting right-wing extremism for the first time are usually uncertain about what to do and tend to waver. As a consequence, the central government decided in 1996 to establish a pool of experts, “The Interdisciplinary Advisory Service for Local Action against Racism and Xenophobia.” This advisory service consisted of a dozen researchers and practitioners, including police officers, social workers, educators, and conflict mediators. Together, they offered expertise to municipalities that had to deal with problems for which they were unprepared. Usually a team of two advisors would help the agencies to analyze the problem properly, ascertain its magnitude, and offer advice as to which responses might be effective.

The Norwegian advisory service was established for the same reasons as the German “Mobile Beratungsteams.” Since the problem with racist or right-wing extremist groups on the local level is fairly limited in Norway, there are no permanent advisors as such. Rather, people used as advisors are employed by the police, research institutions, or municipal units, and are willing to assist localities that require expertise.

It is probably not a good idea to put together a team consisting of full-time advisors. In all likelihood, it would be difficult to get highly experienced individuals to accept full-time work in that capacity. Teams with fully-employed members may lack sufficient qualifications, thereby raising the risk that they may mislead those whom they are trying to guide.

In 2000, Denmark did establish an “emergency team” with permanently employed advisors. Its function was to advise communities with violent and troublesome youth groups, especially those with minority backgrounds. But the team was hardly used, probably because the advisors were not experts in the field, and it was dissolved after four years.

Norway has avoided using younger and less experienced advisors, who may be led by a strong political interest and who tend, in any case, to lack the professional distance and awareness that are so vital to performing that job. According to Lynen von Berg (2004), this seems to have been a problem with some of the advisory service teams in Germany.

The Norwegian advisory service “faded out” as a special service in 2005–2006. The need for expertise declined during the first years of the century. Besides; probably all crime-prevention coordinators within the Norwegian municipalities and all chiefs of police today know where to seek advice if a situation should arise. The most experienced advisors from the advisory service are still easily within reach.

2.5 The role of schools

In the sections above, we have mainly described strategies to diminish the size and influence of extremist groups. However, community strategies to prevent right-wing extremism should also include long-term strategies meant to foster democracy and tolerance. Here, schools are of major importance. According to Pels and Ruyter (2011) research on preventive measures against right-wing extremism in particular and radicalization in general, does not pay much attention to education. However, the

“development of children into democratic citizens is furthered if they are brought up in democratic schools.” This knowledge is reflected in the Norwegian official documents regarding right-wing extremism and Islamic radicalization too. In 2010, the Norwegian government released an action plan for preventing violent extremism (Storberget, 2010). The plan focuses partly on the responsibility that schools share to foster tolerance and include students of all backgrounds. Schools have an important role in signaling the unacceptability of ideologies that dehumanize refugees, homosexuals, and political opponents, thereby legitimating violence against them. In Norway, schools are given the role of educating students in the values of democracy, teaching them to interact with one another in respectful ways, and enabling them to develop multi-cultural understanding, ethical sensitivity, and social competence. The expectation is that this sort of education in citizenship itself will help prevent radicalization (Olsen, 2011). The action plan observes that in the spring of 2010, a task force was set up to report on attitude work in schools. Also, the Benjamin Award is given each year to a school that has made a great effort to carry out anti-racist and anti-discriminatory work.

3. Informal methods

3.1 Public demonstrations

Public demonstrations are of course not part of a coherent state strategy; they are instead a spontaneous response by communities galvanized into action by violent attacks on immigrants or by the implicit menace of local racist and right-wing militant groups.

In Brumunddal in 1991, 4,000 people (half the town’s total population) attended a public meeting at which a prominent right-wing extremist leader, seeking to add fuel to a local fire, was scheduled to speak. When he began talking, they all turned their backs without saying a word: first those in the front, directly before the speaker’s platform, then those in

the second row, and so on. This demonstration was carefully planned and it was preceded by a massive “word of mouth” mobilization campaign in the community. Oslo’s autonomous anti-racist movement had been told to leave the confrontation to the local population, and they complied. As a result of its success, this silent, non-violent protest spread to other parts of Norway, and has since become an important alternative to both vocal anti-extremist rallies and more direct encounters.

In 2001, after the racist murder of young Benjamin Hermansen, 40,000 people marched through the streets of Oslo in silent protest against racism and neo-Nazism. Marches were held in other Norwegian cities and towns, and even in Copenhagen, where 1,000 people took part.

The effects that such mobilizations have on youthful members of the extremist groups are uncertain. Although they may stigmatize and further isolate the latter, they do prove that racism and right-wing extremism enjoy little public support. That recognition alone may deter those flirting with such groups. In Brumunddal, some immigrants noted that this local demonstration revealed the reservoir of sympathy they enjoyed, suggested that they were under the protection of the local population (Carlsson, 1995), and even persuaded them not to leave the community.

3.2 “Night-walking” in contested terrain

Since the early 1990s, in probably more than a thousand Scandinavian cities and small towns, parents have volunteered to walk through the central business district, the suburbs, and other “hot spots” on Friday and Saturday nights to prevent heavy drinking, drug use, and violence among young people. In a typical mid-sized town of 25,000 to 50,000 inhabitants, there may be three or four groups on patrol, composed of five or six parents apiece, all wearing conspicuous yellow waistcoats or reflector vests. Their simple mission is to be visible, thereby bringing a sober adult presence into arenas otherwise dominated by youth. By circulating through the crowd and conversing with young people in a friendly manner, they exercise a kind of soft social control. Confronted

with violent or difficult situations, they are admonished not to interfere directly, but rather to contact their liaison-officers in the police force (Carlsson 2006).

Right-wing extremists in Norway have not proclaimed “national befreite Zonen” (no-go areas). But in some communities, they have been able to mark territory by making it unpleasant and unsafe for immigrants, and even local citizens, to pass through. In most of the communities with a visible racist or right-wing extremist group, “night walking” has been temporarily strengthened by mobilizing larger numbers of parents to join the informal patrols.

In the late 1990s in the Oslo suburb of Nordstrand, some local right-wing extremists maintained a highly visible presence in the suburban center on weekends. They held outdoor parties in the spring and summer that attracted like-minded individuals from other parts of Oslo and surrounding areas, as well as local youth. In groups of 15 to 20, parents walked through the center and either talked with the young people or stood silently among them. There was police back-up some hundred meters away in case the situation spiralled out of control. The conspicuous presence of adults in their yellow gear made this area less attractive as a rallying-ground. Although the most active right-wingers began congregating in another Oslo suburb (Bøler), few local youth followed them there. In this way, hard-core extremists were separated from those who merely had been flirting with their ideas.

To sum up, when a community notices that violent groups are becoming emboldened, one of the first responses that should be considered is to mobilize parents as night walkers. This tool deserves to be at the top of the box.

3.3 Dialogue meetings

As a strategy towards hindering further radicalization on the part of at-risk Muslim youths and forestalling hate crimes in general, a series of dialogue meetings in the Literature House in Oslo was started in 2009. These meetings usually involve experts or political speakers. The debates have focused on hate against Muslims or Jews, freedom of speech, the role of religion in the public arena, etc. The meetings are very important as forums where a variety of experts, authors, artists, political activists, etc., can meet and share or oppose each other's views, and thus it paves the way for a democratic forum for debate. However, the debates held there thus far have not involved young people attracted to far-right groups, despite the fact that the issue of far-right extremism has been on the agenda since the July 22 terror attack. One successful step has been to invite to the meetings youths who took part in the anti-Israeli demonstrations after the bombing of Gaza. However, it is not clear that this approach would work as well if one invited right-wing extremist youths, or adults adhering to such groups, to a debate of this kind.

4. Law-enforcement strategies

4.1 Preventive police work

Preventive policing has played a major role in responding to violent and extremist groups in Norway. As argued by Vindino and Branden (2012), the country has “a long-established system of community policing along with a highly liberal criminal justice system.” Small Norwegian police headquarters normally employ one or two preventive police officers, whereas bigger stations (covering 50,000 to 100,000 people) typically have departments with four to ten persons assigned to that task. One important tool in the preventive police officer's tool kit is the “empowerment conversation,” which has been run by local police force since 1998 (Vindino and Branden 2012). Both the young person (under 18 years of age) and his or her parents are obliged by law to meet at the police station

if the police are informed that the individual is engaged in unlawful activity or becoming involved with a problematic group or criminal gang. The purpose is partly to warn the youngster and the parents about the consequences of committing crimes and/or being associated with an unsavory group, and partly to discuss what can be done to prevent the youngster from travelling farther along that path. If at-risk teens and their parents are motivated to bring about positive change, the police can also call for assistance from the municipal services.

The warning, and the access to help that it enables, suffices to extricate some young people from the violent groups or extremist milieus to which they were attracted. But other at-risk youth have such complex and deep-rooted problems that empowerment conversations are of limited use. Unfortunately, simple and inexpensive measures like these are rarely panaceas.

In 2003, the Police Security Service ran a nationwide campaign against the Vigrid organization. The campaign was comprised of a series of police-led talks with young members of that group. At the time, the organization was attracting young people, both boys and girls, with its mystic rituals (baptism, confirmation, and even marriage performed in the name of the old Nordic god, Odin). In collaboration with the local preventive police, 95 young people known to have had contact with the group were summoned to the local police station for an empowerment conversation. They were informed about what Vigrid really was, and about the consequences of further involvement. Half of them immediately expressed their intention to break with the organization.

4.2 Local vs. national police intervention

Responsibility for dealing with purely local extremists and acts of violence rests with local law enforcement, even though the relevant information is shared among police agencies. It is the job of local police officers to try to prevent violence by patrolling the streets, intervening in acute

situations, investigating illegal actions, and bringing perpetrators to justice. Well-known violent extremists are usually closely monitored and thus have little leeway to commit crimes without being caught. In Brumunddal in the early 1990s, both the police and the court administration gave high priority to the issue of racist violence. Violent acts were quickly investigated and their perpetrators were brought to justice within a matter of weeks (Carlsson, 1995). Unfortunately, in some cases criminal procedures work slowly, so that there is an excessively long interval between the commission of a violent crime and the sentencing of the offender(s). That fact makes it harder to neutralize leaders quickly by detaching them from the rest of the group (Carlsson and Haaland, 2004).

By and large, the local police in Norway are unfamiliar with right-wing extremism and violent racism. Therefore, to combat irresolution and inertia, the Norwegian Police Directorate in 2001 produced a handbook on illegal right-extremist activity, in both an open and a restricted version. The handbook contains information about the phenomenon as well as detailed guidelines on how problems and situations should be handled by local authorities. The open version of the handbook contains a profile of the right-extremist groups and organizations operating in Norway and their characteristics; a discussion of the kinds of threats these organizations and groups pose to national security, political opponents, and immigrants in general; details about their modes of operation and their activities on the Internet; descriptions of the symbols they use and the occasions they mark; an acknowledgment of the constitutional liberties enjoyed by extremist groups to speak, gather, and demonstrate, as well as the provisions in the penal code that limit this freedom; and a discussion of the respective roles played by the national security police, the counter-intelligence service, and local police forces.

Ideological extremists who threaten political opponents and local political representatives are a matter for the Police Security Service. Extreme right-wing groups are monitored by the Police Security Service both at the

national and local level. Since extremist groups are few and Norwegian communities are transparent, the local branches of the security police are generally well-informed.

4.3 Measures against terrorism

Norway's anti-terror work has been carried out in cooperation with Europol since 2002. The country is also a member of the Eurojust and the Schengen network. This means that information in databases – fingerprints, passenger logs, and the names of thousands of persons suspected of or sentenced for terrorist activity (Hammerlin, 2011) – is shared across borders. To the extent that Norway has had an anti-terrorism policy, it has mainly been directed against al-Qaeda and Islamic radicalism, similar in that regard to the policies adopted by most other Western countries after 9/11 (Kellner, 2011: 28).

The police have probably the greatest responsibility to prevent large-scale terror attacks like the one that happened on July 22, 2011. A few years before the attack, Breivik's name appeared on a list of people who had purchased ingredients that can be used to make bombs. But the police security services paid little attention. Had they done so, they might have classified Breivik as a suspect in need of closer surveillance, and might even have been able to prevent his crimes entirely. Other police routines also failed to work properly at the time of the massacre itself. The communication system broke down because of all the phone calls that were made while the attack was happening, and no police helicopter was ordered to go to Utøya Island. Finally, there may have been too little security around the grounds, given that a camp operated by the nation's major party is almost by definition a potential terrorist target. But all of these observations are made by benefit of hindsight. It is probably fair to say that Norway has been struck by its own limited understanding regarding terrorism, which must be seen in light of the paucity of such attacks in its contemporary history.

In the Government's White Paper published on March 20, 2013, ten important measures to prevent terrorism were highlighted. These were as follows:

- To establish a national police operational center to strengthen the police's ability to coordinate response to emergencies and major incidents.
- Strengthen and increase the number of police emergency staff in peripheral places.
- Increase training for police designated to handle shotgun situations.
- Establish minimum staffing for all police operations centers and require special training for anyone working in these centers.
- Getting new tablet computers to police patrol cars with direct access to police IT systems. More tasks can then be handled directly from patrol cars.
- Ensure that volunteers receive equipment and access to the emergency radio network and can communicate with the emergency services in rescue operations.
- Strengthen the work of the national police security service by establishing a counter-terrorism center, improving access to government records and enhancing the opportunities to exchange information with other public agencies.
- Introduce security-coded lines for emergency communications in the ministries.
- Station emergency helicopters in northern Norway so that police forces can be transported by military helicopters in emergency situations.
- Introduce stricter regulation and control of bomb-making chemicals, and prohibit private persons' access to a variety of such substances.

The white paper follows the British anti-terror strategy centered on these four pillars: pursue, prevent, protect and prepare; and the EU's similar pillars; prevention, protection, pursuit and response. In comparison with the strategies described earlier in this article; and the strategies described in the Action Plan to Prevent Radicalization and Violent Extremism (Storberget 2010), this white paper focuses more on control and surveillance than on education and integration. In the chapter on prevention, the

focus is on police surveillance and criminalization of hate-speech, but earlier successful exit methods and the use of dialogues as a method are also mentioned. The most notable news in the white paper is the establishment of a national police operational center, which also was the measure that received most attention in the media.

5. Problem-solving pitfalls

When confronted with incidents of right-wing violence, local communities in Norway typically have been shocked, confused, and uncertain about how to respond. Because municipalities that encounter extremism for the first time lack experience to cope with it, they are in a danger of blundering into one of the following pitfalls.

5.1 Denying or belittling the problem

Right-wing extremist groups have received considerable media attention in Norway. Norway's threshold in giving such groups public attention is probably lower than in most other European countries, in view of its small population. Being labeled a "racist place" or a "Nazi community" has a stigmatizing effect on a town, so most towns try to avoid that fate (Eidheim, 1993). In some communities in which immigrants have been victims of violent attacks, local authorities have thus tried to deny that racist motives were involved. When there has not been any clear racist or right-wing extremist ideology behind the acts, it has been easy to interpret them in light of long-established categories of social deviance. For example, they may be attributed to "drunkenness" or downplayed as "boyish pranks." When communities fall back on well-established categories in that way, they sometimes fail to recognize that acts that have been committed, or new groups that have emerged, have taken on more serious dimensions (Eidheim, 1993).

Moreover, denial is tempting, because acknowledging that there is a problem may advance the stigmatization of the community. In some

communities, the local authorities have tried consciously to sweep such phenomena under the rug. Since small violent groups may dissolve and disappear by themselves, and since there is always a chance that the most recent violent act will be the last one, such strategies may sometimes succeed. The danger, however, is that the problem may spin out of control when not counteracted in a timely manner by the police, civil society and/or municipal authorities.

5.2 Inability to take action

Recognizing certain kinds of behavior as manifestations of right-wing extremism does not guarantee that they will be confronted in appropriate ways. Municipalities that encounter extremism for the first time will have neither the competence to analyze it properly, nor the right tools to intervene effectively. The result may be that nothing is done, or that it takes years for authorities to react, thereby allowing the problem to fester. Irresolution may also be the result of disagreement between key actors as to who bears responsibility. For instance, in the small town of Brumunddal in the late 1980s, municipal leaders claimed that the right-wing threat was a police matter, while the police claimed that it was the responsibility of the schools and social services (Carlsson, 1995). In the meantime, the problem grew to proportions never before witnessed in Norway.

5.3 Moral panic and visible action

The attention given by the national media to violent acts committed by individuals or groups has triggered shock and disgust in the broader public. In some cases, diagnosis of the problem is incorrect. What appears to be an act of racism or right-wing extremism may sometimes be the expression of a genuine conflict between individuals or groups that happen to be divided along ethnic lines. In such situations, one cannot always assume that the ethnic minority is the innocent victim and the ethnic majority is, by definition, a racist aggressor. Hasty responses may address only symptoms, rather than the real causes of such phenomena.

Local communities often opt to take symbolic measures that are highly visible but have little effect on the problem itself (e.g., building a new community youth house). In wealthy Norway it is easy enough to “throw money at a problem” in order to demonstrate a willingness to act. Such responses are usually chosen without thorough analysis of the problem’s true nature and origins. The causes of a racially-motivated violent act or the establishment of a right-wing extremist group are normally so complicated that symbolic measures alone will not put a dent in them.

5.4 Social exclusion leading to further radicalization

Most young people are not violent racists or right-wing extremists once and for all. Their identities are flexible and malleable, especially if and when their circumstances change (Fangen, 2001). In the moral panic that may follow an outrageous episode, it is often easy to forget this constructive perspective (Eidheim, 1993). As a result, a community may cut off all communication with members of the racist and right-wing extremist scene or exclude them by resorting to illegal and brutal methods of control. Exclusion, however, tends to make people inaccessible to integrative forces and only serves to harden their extremist views.

5.5 The lack of protection and lack of experience when faced with terrorism

After July 22, a commission took stock of all the things that went wrong, and which allowed this act of terror to take place. The commission also looked into the reasons why the police had been ineffective in stopping the action in its tracks, before so many people were injured or killed. (NOU 2012). Criticism of the government has been harsh. In particular critics have noted the tragic consequences of an emergency communication network that collapsed, and the consequence of not sending out the police helicopter, which would have enabled the police to get there much earlier, as well as the incapacity of the local police station to handle armed conflicts. The commission concludes one of the chapters of their report in the following way:

Breivik was a single man with limited resources. Yet he was able to acquire dangerous materials and prepare and implement devastating acts of terror with enormous human and physical costs. Breivik's personal development, lifestyle and preparations display certain patterns. His immediate family, social circle, society and responsible authorities picked up on various signals that occasionally provoked their astonishment and concern. An important reason why the signals were not put in the context of potential terrorist acts, is probably that Breivik's person and preparation methods broke with the prevailing view of who, what and how anyone can pose a threat to society. The perpetrator's preparation and execution of terrorist acts revealed in this way basic vulnerabilities and a lack of effective barriers against terrorism in the Norwegian society. (NOU 2012: 362).

In the report, it is documented that family members and other acquaintances of Breivik were concerned about some of his behavior, but they did not report their worries to the police. The question is, whether the police security service (in Norway abbreviated PST) could or should have detected his plans. The commission does offer criticism of the PST: for example, that they mainly focus on radical Islam as a threat in their anti-terror work and that they mention the blog-network where Breivik posted his comments, but did not see it as a security threat. Also they wonder why surveillance of hate-speech is the duty of the local police, not the PST. On the positive side, the commission notes, the PST has been involved in the work to encourage right-wing extremists to exit from their extreme affiliations. One important question is why the PST does not focus more on individuals who buy ingredients that might be used to produce bombs. The report says that the PST has traditionally tried to expose people who intend to carry out terrorism, before they go on to investigate whether those individuals also had the capacity to implement their plans, in terms of having access to weapons and other necessary equipment. Trade in legal and illegal weapons and chemicals, i.e., the acquisition of bomb-making capabilities has not been a matter that any PST has worked on (NOU 2012: 370). However, international experts regard it as useful to gather intelligence on trade with weapons

and chemicals. Global Shield was an international counterterrorism project that was launched in late summer 2010. The objective was to keep records of the export of 14 legally marketable chemicals that were known to be used in the manufacture of improvised explosives and to establish more effective restrictions on the ability of terrorists to acquire such weapons. It was through this program that the PST had already received a list of names that included the perpetrator's name in 2010. There was not much focus on this in PST at the time, but the police officer{omit comma here} who received the list, did a search in PST's archive on one of the 41 names appearing on the list of those who had bought dangerous chemicals, but these individuals did not appear in the PST's registers. The commission is critical of the lack of competence in the PST regarding arms and weapons intelligence. Both individuals employed by the customs service and Norway post were worried about the increased transfer of legal chemicals from Poland to Norway, and they warned the PST, but the attack of July 22 happened before the PST started to take the case into account.

6. The current situation

The climate of acrimonious public debate, coupled with deep misgivings in some segments of Norwegian society about immigration, set the stage for Breivik's terror attack. Nonetheless, if we look at group affiliations rather than at individual deeds, we find that the number of right-wing militants in Norway is no greater than it was a decade ago. In fact, the local groups in Kristiansand, Hokksund and Bøler (an Oslo suburb) have all decreased in size and are today probably no longer exist or their activity level is very low. However, it remains to be seen if this will continue to be the case. It appears that the Breivik terror act in 2011 has stirred up increased, rather than decreased activity in right-wing extremist groups.

When racism and violent extremism in a society are limited in scope, there is always a chance that some – indeed, perhaps most – such groups will dissolve of their own accord without intervention from the outside.

However, it is incontrovertible that the anti-Nazi vaccine left over from World War II is losing its potency (Carlsson 2006). At the same time, anti-Islamism is gaining increasing support in all Western countries, which may lend participation in right wing extremist groups an air of legitimacy. More generally, right-wing populism has gained strength throughout Europe during recent years, a pattern that also holds for Norway (Fangen 2011).

The strategies depicted in this article all have their limitations. Most of them do not address the forces that give rise to racism, intolerance, and totalitarian world-views. Preventing racism and fostering tolerance and democratic values is a longer-term and much more complicated task. Although the school system plays a major role in accomplishing this task, commitment to democratic procedures must be instilled in a variety of different settings.

Several of the strategies we have examined involve community-based forms of intervention aiming to prevent the establishment of racist and violent groups and/or to dismantle existing ones. Such strategies will not work as well when individuals with right-wing extremist beliefs operate within networks that transcend community boundaries, as Breivik did. New forms of communication have been established through the use of mobile telephones and the Internet, which makes the situation quite different today than it was during the early 1990s. From anywhere in the country, one can communicate with like-minded persons all over the world. Instead of belonging to a small and fragile local group, one can join right-wing movements that foster the feeling that one has undertaken a wider and more important “mission.” This virtual network makes it easier for like-minded people to “meet” and to generate feelings of unity and togetherness. The mobilization of individuals into a transnational force is likely one reason why the extreme right-wing scene has not waned more than it already has. Another limitation of the community-based approach is that it neither addresses the more developed organizational structures that are now evolving, nor weakens the music and culture industries that support racist and violent subcultures. However, it is probably possible to continue employing some of the

previous community-oriented methods after making appropriate adjustments. Even though today's extremists are not as conspicuous on the streets as they used to be, and although some are merely individuals sitting alone in their rooms and participating in a shared virtual reality, they are not necessarily completely isolated. There are people around them who can pick up on their signals. Therefore, if professionals such as teachers and youth counselors know which warning signs to heed, they can try to insure that at-risk individuals receive appropriate attention at early stages, before they drift into extreme groups. Research on lone-actor terrorists also reveals that other people generally knew about "the person's grievance, extremist ideology, views and/or intent to engage in violence" (Gill et al. 2012). Many struggle with problematic personality disorders; also lone-actor terrorists engage in a "detectable and observable range of activities" in advance of their terror attack.

Although strategies for intervening in violent and racist groups on the community level will not solve the problem posed by right-wing extremism once and for all, they do tackle one aspect of that problem. The community approach will remain important as long as extremist groups operate in localities. Insofar as members of extremist groups live most of their lives in neighborhood and small town settings, they will probably continue to do most of their recruiting there. If one hopes to reintegrate them into the mainstream of society, this should be done in the places where they already belong and have ties. The one exception to this generalization would be in cases where the at-risk individual wants to create a new identity and start a new life elsewhere.

It would be easy to dismiss the kinds of local interventions that have happened in Norway as attempts to douse minor brushfires. There are no magic bullets that can eliminate racist and totalitarian attitudes and violent behavior once and for all, so the local intervention remains a useful tool in combating right-wing extremism. But it is not the only tool at our disposal. In addition, we need to put greater emphasis on preventive measures, such as influencing young people to become more tolerant and keeping them from becoming marginalized in the first place. Further-

more, it is important to heighten awareness among professionals such as police officers, youth workers, and teachers about the signs of an impending drift toward extremism. Such concerns should be communicated across professions with a shared interest in youth welfare, as well as with parents. As for repressive measures, it is easy to request more surveillance, more video cameras, and more control in the wake of terror attacks. However, we think it is more important that police should seek to integrate information from several sources in order to develop a more complete picture of what is happening. So, for example, when someone buys ingredients that might be used for making bombs, security agencies should search the Internet to determine whether the purchaser holds extremist views. In this case it should be possible to keep potentially dangerous individuals under fairly strict surveillance in order to stop attacks in the planning stages. The nexus between hate crime and terrorism is an important area for more research and focus from the police.

As a general rule, prevention strategies should stress the gathering and sharing of intelligence more than is now the case, especially across different police agencies and professional associations. Our ideal goal would be that signs of extremism at the local level or in the virtual world of the Internet should not go undetected and unreported, and that there should be more concern to focus on the interconnection of access to weapons and chemical ingredients that might be used to construct explosives, and expression of extreme views on the Internet. In addition, one should not disregard the far-reaching goals of fostering democracy in schools and there should be a continuous effort to detect and to prevent racism locally.

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Martin Schulz at the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (November 30th 2009)

A Diversified Europe United against Right-wing Extremism and Right-Wing Populism

Martin Schulz, President of the European Parliament

There is no doubt now that we are experiencing the worst crisis since the establishment of the European Union. And we also are coming to understand the price we are going to pay for it. Increasingly, the long-term consequences of the destruction of unimaginably valuable assets are becoming clearer: distortions of the real economy, diminished confidence in democratic institutions, a tattered social fabric, and the weakened cohesion of Europe. If we don't succeed in weathering this crisis soon, Europe will be permanently damaged.

In Greece and Spain, half of all young people are unemployed. Many others are caught in a vicious circle of internships and temporary contracts. More and more, there is talk of a "lost generation" vulnerable to disappointment, frustration, and anger. Such circumstances create a breeding ground for right-wing organizations and parties in large sections of Europe.

After receiving the Nobel Peace Prize on behalf of the European Union in Oslo in December, 2012 together with the President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, and the President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy, I visited the Norwegian island of Utøya, which became the epitome of terror on July 22, 2011. It was on this day that Anders Breivik, a lone gunman, murdered 69 young socialists who were holding their traditional camp on the island. Disbelief and unfathomable anguish and sadness for the many victims set in across Norway and Europe as a whole. Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg reacted to this right-wing attack in an impressive and exemplary manner by calling for more democracy, transparency, tolerance, and humanity. And the people of Norway heeded his call.

The Nobel Peace Prize as an honor and a warning

In the first half of the 20th century, arrogance, envy, and mistrust created a poisoned atmosphere among the nations of Europe, and indeed much of Asia as well. Such hostility eventually led to devastating wars that employed modern industry to enhance the lethality of weapons. The fact that we have overcome this poisoned atmosphere is an accomplishment for which Europe was quite rightly honored with the Peace Prize. In announcing its decision the Nobel Prize Committee remarked that it “would like to focus on what it regards as the EU’s most important accomplishment, namely, the successful fight for peace and reconciliation, democracy and human rights and the stabilizing role the EU has played in the transformation of Europe from a continent of wars to one of peace.”

All of these European Union accomplishments frustrate the designs of extremists and populists on the radical right. Nonetheless, there is still a great deal of mistrust on the continent. There are politicians, clever people, and well-educated, intellectually sophisticated elements in our societies that consciously pursue a right-wing agenda. Their carefully planned and targeted public pronouncements reflect xenophobic and indeed often racist values. Part of their political vision features the exclusion of those who look, behave, and worship differently. But we shouldn’t delude ourselves. There are forces in Europe that seek to fuel hatred for minorities because they stand to benefit from that hatred politically. Most of them pursue their aims in subtle, roundabout ways rather than embracing those goals openly.

There are of course some people who are openly xenophobic and racist and who, for that reason, are easy enough to identify. And then there are those who are not immediately identifiable as xenophobic and racist because of their shrewdly chosen words. But the two groups’ intentions are the same: making every effort to turn minorities into scapegoats for societal problems. If, in my capacity as a politician, I maintain that my nation comes first, that implies that all other nations’ interests and needs

should occupy a subordinate place. That is a relatively simple way to set one's priorities, and to many citizens it sounds good and patriotic. The goal of such pronouncements usually involves actualizing a definite political program that is backed by strategic planning. The arguments of such far-right figures are designed to reach a very specific group of people: namely, voters in difficult social and economic situations who are struggling to cope with everyday life and haven't received satisfying explanations for their plight. Right-wing populists and extremists offer them a simple answer: "The other guys over there are at fault."

The Nobel Peace Prize is not to be taken solely as an acknowledgement of our historical accomplishments. It is far more important to interpret the award as a call and a warning to lead the European Union out of its crisis of democratic legitimacy. We won't be able to succeed in doing this without a firm commitment to the European idea, to more democracy, and to designing our society in a pro-active way. Another important advance in the recovery of Europe would be the expression of collective outrage whenever right-wing extremist and populist parties enter parliaments on the national and/or transnational levels.

The right wing's opposition to the European Union

The European Union has always been a thorn in the side of the political right-wing. Rejecting the basic notion of European integration based on transnational solidarity, the right believes that the nation-state should be primarily responsible for ensuring security within its own borders and fending off external threats. Right-wing extremists respond to almost any conceivable economic or security problem by advocating tighter border controls and greater isolation from a rapidly globalizing world that many of them perceive as antithetical to the national interest.

Right-wing populists and extremists capitalize on lingering xenophobia, stirring up popular emotions with rhetoric about their countries being swamped by foreigners. Their arguments are rooted in romantic fantasies

that posit a degree of social homogeneity that has never existed. They don't feel comfortable in ever-more-diverse modern societies because traditional reference points and social milieus are fading away, gender roles are changing and ethnic and religious affiliations are multiplying. Troubled by these new realities, they are drawn to simplistic quick fixes revolving around hate-mongering and fear.

Right-wing populists fear the globalized world and are unable to flourish in it, but because they don't want to admit as much, they look for someone to blame for the anxiety they are experiencing. To be sure, the scapegoats they select vary considerably with time and place. The National Socialists scapegoated and subsequently murdered Jews, Sinti, and Roma as well as leftists, homosexuals, and the terminally ill in their unprecedented campaign of extermination. In the 1960s, guest workers were blamed for unemployment, a decline in values, and high rates of crime. Following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Muslims immediately began to encounter hostility from many quarters. In 2008, "Eurocrats" were added to this enemies' list, since they are allegedly concocting a diabolical plan to turn the free countries of Europe into a kind of "EUdSSR."

Indirect influence and agenda-setting

The far-right movement in Europe constitutes a genuine cause for alarm. Right-wing populists claim to be plain-spoken individuals who are simply giving voice to truths that "politically correct" observers refuse to utter. They justify their taboo-violating statements by invoking freedom of expression ("Of course we are entitled to say that!"). Yet the real purpose of their provocations is deliberately to whip up popular passions in the countries where they agitate. In doing so, they influence statesmen, whether directly or indirectly, by creating the impression that governments are responsible for certain problems and ought to be addressing them. A recent study conducted by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation determined that "the political effectiveness of right-wing populists is

measured first and foremost not by what they are actually capable of implementing but, rather, by the extent to which they are able to co-determine political discourse on sensitive sociopolitical issues. Their indirect influence and agenda-setting remains their biggest success.”¹ Populist parties succeed over and over again in steering public discourse in the direction they prefer and then inducing established parties to follow suit.

Meanwhile, right-wing populists have changed their strategies so as to become smoother and more successful. In Holland, Finland, Austria, Italy, France, Sweden, Denmark, the Czech Republic, Rumania, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Switzerland, populist right-wing parties have exerted a fairly extensive influence over public opinion and even on government action. The new slickness is reflected in their selection of targets and topics. For example, the classic hate campaign, to the tune of “foreigners get out,” has been replaced by Islam-bashing, which is often disguised as a discourse on human rights. All of a sudden, right-wing populists express concern about the role of women in Islam and declare the burka a menace to society. Using the same logic, they play the role of advocate for democracy and freedom of expression, and wax indignant that these values seem to be lacking in the Islamic world. The hypocrisy of their criticisms is breathtaking, especially when we recall that it is these exact same individuals who have attempted repeatedly to limit freedom of expression and democracy in their own countries. Moreover, right-wing populists like to take advantage of high-profile developments like the Occupy Wall Street movement as a pretext to attack globalization and, almost casually, to make that phenomenon appear wholly responsible for unemployment and economic inequality. In a study carried out by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, the position of right-wing populists is described as follows: “they are creating the illusion of a small and intact world which can be protected from global economic cycles.”² Ultimately,

1 Werner T. Bauer, *Rechtspopulismus in Europa. Vergängliches Phänomen oder auf dem Weg zum politischen Mainstream?* (Berlin: 2010), p. 15.

2 Florian Hartleb, *Nach ihrer Etablierung – Rechtspopulistische Parteien in Europa* (Berlin: 2011), p. 31.

many right-wing populists set their public relations machinery into action when the crisis broke out in Europe. With breathtaking speed, Islam-bashing was accompanied by EU-bashing.

Right-wing extremist and right-wing populist parties in the European Parliament

Since the electoral victories of France's *Front National* under Jean-Marie Le Pen in the mid-1980s, far right parties have become political fixtures all across Europe, receiving between 10 and 20% of the national vote in many countries. During the last two decades, they have once again been operating on the national political stage in Central and Eastern Europe. In some cases, right-wing populist and extremist parties actually have made it into the government. The widely expressed hope that the far right would become "disenchanted" with government involvement has not come to pass. Meanwhile, right-wing extremist and right-wing populist parties now not only operate on the municipal, regional, and national levels, but also may be found in some institutions of the European Union as well.

The presence of far right parties in the European Parliament (which has grown continually since 1979, declining only slightly in 1999) is paradoxical, because their political views completely negate the values of the European peace project. Right-wing delegations share enough common ground, both programmatically and ideologically, that they can launch coordinated campaigns on the European level. Almost all of them are intensely skeptical of the euro-zone and indeed the whole idea of a united Europe; they reject immigration and the multicultural societies to which it often gives rise; and, of course, they detest globalization. These areas of common concern are enough to serve as the cornerstones for potentially successful cooperation. Communication among right-wing extremist and right-wing populist parties has undoubtedly grown, but the movement lacks structure and, generally speaking, has not issued in specific commitments for the parties involved. For this reason, talk about the

European far right as a functioning political unit would be premature. Because right wingers have not succeeded in creating formal structures, international organizations, or a coherent platform to bind them together, their level of institutionalization remains low. Most importantly, there is a lack of ideological justification in right-wing belief systems for international cooperation. Thus far, leadership disputes, doctrinal differences, and special national interests have trumped pragmatic considerations.

A unified “anti-” attitude

On a European level, right-wing extremism and right-wing populism have mainly functioned as protest movements. The fact that they have not been consolidated into a coordinated political force is something for which we should be grateful. It is above all shared “anti-” attitudes and hostilities that hold together the European right wing. Almost all far-right movements on the continent are racist, xenophobic, and anti-democratic, being particularly vocal in their opposition to parliamentary democracy. They attempt to justify their “anti-” positions by pointing to the allegedly dire consequences of globalization, integration, and immigration.

The European Union has become one of the main targets of the far right precisely because of its achievements: its opening of national economic regions, its supranational character, and Turkey’s candidacy for membership. In a plenary discussion of the EU Parliament held on February 19, 2008 in Strasbourg, the chairman of the *Front National*, Jean-Marie Le Pen, forcefully articulated the stance of the European right: “Nations that date back thousands of years and are highly regarded are being sacrificed in favor of a constructivist utopia, which is being defenselessly exposed to the fatal consequences of globalization and rampant liberalism, including mass immigration, uncertainty, economic ruin, social catastrophe, and moral and cultural decline.” Le Pen went on to denounce Europe’s contemporary character as a supranational institution and multicultural society, a turn of events that allegedly poses a risk to national

independence: “National resistance is considered legitimate; resistance is a right citizens have, and a duty for patriots.” Renouncing the Treaty of Lisbon and the deepening political centralization that it brought forth, the Frenchman referred to the EU constituent assembly as a “Congress of Shame” and remarked that Versailles had once again become the stronghold of the project for French sovereignty.

Following Le Pen’s lead, the enemies of European integration present themselves as resistance fighters against the “totalitarian EU super-state.” A supposed thousand-year-old “natural” national culture is contrasted to the “constructed” character of a united Europe. Europe’s right wing wants to recast the current model of a “Europe of fatherlands” or a “Europe of peoples” as a “prison of nations” in which people with different languages, religions and cultures are compelled to live together. Accordingly, they champion a confederal Europe based on independent national cultures. But exactly how this confederation should look is seldom specified. There is only agreement on negative points: how and what Europe shouldn’t be.

The rejection of European integration as a supposed harbinger of further globalization is often presented by the right wing in a more positive light as a defense of European culture and national identity. When the far right does defend Europe, that defense is almost always couched in terms of a clash of civilizations, such that the “Christian occident” must be protected against external enemies and threats. Alternatively, the extreme right sometimes serves up a Eurocentric vision of a “white” continent. In this discourse, the right wing defends Europe by turns against Islam, the USA, globalization, or multiculturalism. The implicit goal is to preserve an ethnically homogeneous and economically autonomous Europe for the benefit of the “white race.” Thus, for example, all of Europe’s right-wing parties reject the candidacy of Turkey to become an EU member country because for them Europe is an inherently Christian civilization.

Globalization lends itself particularly well to being portrayed as a bogymen that far-right groups can attack to showcase themselves as the nation's gatekeepers. The nation as a community bearing a single language, history, and tradition is contrasted to a universalistic world culture bent on submerging all national differences in a fog of homogeneity. Furthermore, the right creates the illusion that European countries should insulate themselves from globalization not only to maintain coherent national identities, but also to prevent mass job-loss. The economically protectionist, ethnically homogeneous nation-state is thus supposed to fend off cultural, political, and social influences from the outside precisely at a time when societies and states around the world are becoming increasingly interdependent.

Demands to end immigration are often the prelude to proposals that would allow discrimination in employment, education, and social-welfare systems. It goes without saying that the decision to grant preferential treatment to the members of one's own nation implies less favorable treatment of those with immigrant backgrounds. One of the most serious potential threats of right-wing extremism and right-wing populism lies in the appeal that this bogus and perverse causal chain might have for desperate people. If acted upon, right-wing nostrums would result in institutionalized legal discrimination against whole classes of people. We have to be resolute in opposing this affront to civil society, and we must resist the erosion of our community of values: indeed, the whole idea of an international community of nations under the rule of law.

The vulnerability of Europe's right wing: opportunities for counter-strategies

Efforts to promote cooperation or mergers among right-wing extremist and right-wing populist parties at the European level are inherently paradoxical. This is so because "internationalists among the nationalists require that anti-Europeans unite to form a European movement, and

that the nationalists appear willing to organize themselves on a supra-national level.”

Currently, right-wing parties in the European Parliament do not constitute a uniform political block. Their divergent understandings of nationhood and nationalism based on their different cultural traditions complicate any Europe-wide cooperation among them. Proponents of an ethnic model of nationhood champion a “Europe of peoples” that builds on ethnic communities and nationalities rather than on existing states, while proponents of the nation-state or “statist” model are pursuing a “Europe of fatherlands.” This ideological friction has been a constant source of tension and dispute within Europe’s right wing.

In 2007, for instance, a fascist faction formed in the European Parliament under the chairmanship of the French MP, Bruno Gollnisch, who referred to Auschwitz as an insignificant detail in the history of the world. It fell apart in its first year because Alexandra Mussolini, the deputy chairperson, wouldn’t accept the fact that the Romania Mare party (the extreme right-wing Greater Romanian Party, which was a coalition member) opposed the stigmatization of Romanians and their being put on a level with the Roma in Italy. This case clearly revealed that the formation of an international faction of ultra-nationalists was not going to work.

Up to now, far right parties have been unable to create political networks that would enable them to use the instruments of a transnational democracy against transnational democracy itself. But this observation is by no means intended to trivialize the already-existing networks of readily-deployable, violence-prone, flexible, and multinational fascist groups in a free Europe. We must find ways of reducing these groups’ potential for violence and disruption.

Fortunately, it is within our power to utilize the forces of democracy itself to defuse the far-right threat. The ultranationalist, xenophobic, anti-Semitic, anti-Islamic, and homophobic value system characteristic of

extreme right-wing and right-wing populist parties poses a threat to the democratic way of life. The advances of right-wing forces can be stymied by distinguishing among individual groups, identifying their internal tensions, and insisting on a solid line of defense for fundamental democratic norms and their validity for all persons.

Defending the European model of society

Europe is an idea. This idea distinguishes our continent from other parts of the globe in which, at least to some extent, different ideas, values, and standards prevail. What Europe stands for is the desirability of a tolerant and open society rooted in the notion of solidarity, such that no one is stigmatized or excluded on the basis of race, class, religion, or gender. In this way, unity can exist in the face of cultural diversity. We must do all that is in our power to defend this model against each and every attack launched by right-wing populists and extremists.

The European vision of the good life is inherently both social and democratic. These terms do not just define the goals of European politics, but are rather intended to describe something more fundamental. The social philosopher Oskar Negt summarized the model in a short polemic: “It is the achievements of the welfare state that have given European democracies their stability. Humanizing working conditions, shortening working time and prolonging life expectancy, safeguarding pensions and allowing for general preventive health care, and many other factors have contributed significantly to the fact that democracy as a way of life has endured for so long, indeed over half a century.” Often we may no longer recognize the benefits of our model. In this context, the saying “you can’t see the forest through the trees” is quite apropos.

If, in times of crisis, we ever feel tempted to discard our model of society to increase the competitiveness of EU member states, we should remind ourselves that the social market economy was forged in the aftermath of the Second World War by astute politicians who recognized two things.

First, they understood that markets require a political framework. Second, they understood that the key features of our social market economy – access to education and healthcare, progressive taxation, co-determination, pensions and unemployment insurance – serve exceedingly well to stabilize democracies and thereby build a bulwark against extremism.

A value-oriented union of states

In the fight against right-wing extremism and right-wing populism it is crucial that the European Union should remember its character as a union of states that is founded on certain values, which we have not only the right but the obligation to defend. Possible attacks come from many different quarters, including the standpoint of cultural relativism, which calls into question the universality of human rights and other fundamental rights. It would be utterly wrong to abandon our carefully designed, socially balanced model of society as though it were some antiquated relic that might weaken Europe in its competition with other countries. If that were to happen, Europeans would lose right off the bat, and the world would be robbed of the hope that coexistence among peoples can be arranged peacefully and fairly.

The European unification process itself was the proper riposte to the fascism, militarism, and ultra-nationalism that caused the deaths of millions of people and devastated an entire continent during the first half of the 20th century. The history of Germany during this epoch culminates in a descent into the darkest depths that any human civilization has ever reached. For this reason, I have made it my business as a German MP in the European Parliament to speak up whenever I believe that Article 1 of the Basic Law of the Federal Republic is at stake. The statement that “human dignity is inviolable” is the best defense against racism, anti-Semitism, hatred of minorities, and xenophobia, which unfortunately have yet to be vanquished in Europe.

The fight for social justice

The campaigns for social and distributive justice and for equal access to education constitute another aspect of any core strategy to defeat racism and xenophobia. It must be our goal to convince people that we want to help them to find work and to improve their and their children's future prospects. We always must bear in mind that the internal cohesion of a society depends on individuals feeling that public affairs are being handled fairly and in a spirit of solidarity. If democratic parties fail to address these concerns, many of our citizens, overwhelmed by desperation and feeling abandoned by mainstream society, will be vulnerable to seduction by the Siren song of the far right. As xenophobia and racism become more deeply entrenched, the far right has an easier time winning converts to its cause. And, in turn, when large portions of a population become receptive to the nostrums of right-wing extremists, the dangers of racism and xenophobia escalate.

Thus, our key task is to show people that we are fighting for social justice and for equal participation in the prosperity of the nation, and indeed of the entire transnational economy. Embattled individuals need proof that they have not been abandoned by the democratic political system, and that decision-makers are looking out for their interests. If we can convince such people that democratic parties – far from being indifferent to their fate – are actually striving to assist and protect them, that alone would represent a major victory against racism and xenophobia. The European Union is up to the task of delivering prosperity and social equity to its citizens even while competing economically with other regions of the world. Only a unified Europe can hope to master the challenges of the 21st century. The temptation to retreat into the putative idyllic nation-state imagined by the right wing is rooted in a dangerous misconception. Isolation promises no solution because Europeans depend existentially on one another, both as individuals and as entire nations.

The fight for educational equality

We have entered a completely new phase in history, one that is characterized by the dissolution of the boundaries that formerly existed between economics and politics. As the world has become increasingly complicated, understanding it is more difficult than it has ever been. If citizens are to grasp present-day realities in all their complexity, access to information must be expanded. Thus, education and the qualifications and skills that it imparts are of vital importance.

Unfortunately, as things stand in Europe today, all citizens do not enjoy equal educational opportunities. Poverty, in particular, represents a significant handicap. In Europe today, there are an increasing number of private schools and universities, which only children from wealthy backgrounds can afford to attend. This is a dangerous development. The chance to improve one's ability to understand the world and to succeed in it should not be contingent upon parental income. Thus, it is an indispensable obligation of the state to ensure that education is equally accessible to every social class, every child, every young man and woman.

The unfair allocation of educational opportunity underlies many of the socio-economic divisions in the contemporary world. In turn, conflicts among individuals and hostility to ethno-cultural minorities usually involve socio-economic distinctions and the defense of inherited privileges as well. For this reason, the struggle to attain greater social and distributive justice and equal access to education also become important tools in the struggle against racism and xenophobia.

Educated people don't need artificial or virtual enemies on whom to project their prejudices. On the contrary, they have the tools to meet the challenges of the modern world along with everyone else. This is why greater attention to social justice must be supplemented by educational equality. Both policies are crucial to solving the major problems of the 21st century and containing right-wing extremism.

Those who speak foreign languages, appreciate literature, watch foreign films, patronize museums, and enjoy familiarity with customs, beliefs, and values different than their own are more cosmopolitan than citizens who do not. They are in a better position to understand other people, including ethnic and religious minorities. And they are generally less susceptible to racism, because their educational attainments deepen their insight into other cultures. Hence, they do not need such crude categories as race to classify other human beings.

The extreme right-wing, of course, opposes both cosmopolitanism and equal access to education. They would prefer to retain the old elitist system so that their children eventually can occupy key economic, political, and cultural positions. Extending equal educational opportunities to everyone would help to combat both the anti-democratic ideology and the hegemonic social aspirations of the far-right.

Diversity and plurality

Some of Europe's greatest strengths are to be found in its many distinct languages, cultures, and traditions. We must never allow the diversity of European societies and peoples to be overshadowed. But that is exactly what would happen if the world were viewed through the lens of a simplistic "us against them" dualism. We will always have a rich mix of people from vastly different origins and backgrounds. If we intend to do justice to all people – as is our goal and our cause – then we must strive to eliminate such black-and-white-thinking. We have to make an effort to ensure every individual a place in society in keeping with his or her specific, individual nature.

But for this to happen, each person in his or her individuality must in turn respect the requirements of society as a whole. There are human rights, but there are also human responsibilities. Among the responsibilities incumbent on all human beings are included: solidarity, justice, and respect for the freedom of others. Those who subscribe to these values

have a place in society. But those who refuse to accord to others the rights and respect that they themselves demand implicitly weaken all social bonds. They are usually the ones who want to exclude or marginalize groups such as blacks, Jews, Roma, Sinti, and homosexuals.

No democracy without an active civil society

Without an active civil society, democracy can't function, and the fight against right-wing extremism won't succeed. A political community needs citizens who are committed to defending it and its core values. Governments do not operate on a different plane from the individual citizens who are their constituent elements, as many officials used to think. Germany in the past furnishes an example of this mistaken view. There, "nationals" at best were treated as subjects and at worst as mere subordinates. A state's vitality depends upon having citizens who, acting either as individuals or jointly as a community, do their part to promote the common life. The list of civic organizations is of course lengthy and diverse. It includes participants in one-world groups, members of the German Life Saving Society (who try to prevent drowning deaths), singers in church choirs, volunteer firefighters, Amnesty International activists, and the coaches of sports teams. Civil society is organized communally, regionally, and nationally. We see its impact across a wide variety of situations, such as when unions and employees negotiate wages and hours, or when representatives from different religious communities discuss their respective values and beliefs at national integration summits. Civil society encourages open debate and negotiates matters of common concern. In so doing it disseminates different perspectives, experiences, and expertise among members of the public. Once the discussions and hearings have been concluded, a politically democratic decision has to be reached. This is the procedure that obtains in the member states of the EU.

Yet hardly anyone talks about either the presence or the promotion of a pan-European civil society. Many regard the comprehensive democratization of the EU as impossible simply because a European public sphere

is lacking. A robust and authentic public sphere not only requires functioning democratic institutions like a parliament, but also a vibrant civil society and an attentive media. How do we go about creating a European civil society? Or does one already exist without our really being aware of it? After all, companies, unions, parties, and many non-governmental organizations find themselves in the midst of the Europeanization process. Many have come a long way in this regard, while others still have a long way to go.

Europe needs to strengthen its democracy

Europe will either be democratic or it will fail; conversely, without Europe our democracy will fail. And this is exactly the outcome that right-wing extremists desire. In a world in which more and more areas of life are globalized, cross-border cooperation has become a heightened necessity. Climate change, regulation of the financial markets, combating hunger, refugee issues, and effective arms control cannot be tackled by individual states alone. More and more decisions are being made by heads of government in international forums.

Even if the EU ceased to exist tomorrow, European states would still need to find joint solutions to their problems. That is why even the collapse of the EU would not restore to its member states the sovereignty and freedom of action so hoped for by euro-skeptics. Just like all other countries, European states are limited in their sovereignty by the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and other international treaties. This would remain a fact regardless of whether the European Union existed or not.

The EU is a unique experiment in introducing democratic principles into transnational relations via a political union. It aims to allow democracy to flourish in a globalized and interdependent world. In discussions on the future of the EU there should be less focus on the question of whether or not countries could regain their sovereignty by reviving the nation-state. That is an endeavor that is doomed to fail. The real question

is how we can inject more democracy into the EU when globalization seems to require more technocratic and less democratic decision-making.

Complex answers for complex challenges

There is no panacea for the current European crisis, and whatever far-right populists and extremists offer by way of illusory solutions will not work. We must try to develop complex answers to meet complex challenges, and must not countenance those who promise quick fixes and eagerly identify scapegoats. Europe is complicated and often frustrating, that goes without saying. There are shortcomings in European institutions just as there are in the member states, but those who think that things would be better without a unified Europe are sadly mistaken. In truth, every flaw that is uncovered in the EU, every bureaucratic absurdity that we mock, is one additional proof that oversight and public monitoring do work. In other words, the public must recognize that the extreme right-wingers who detest the Europe Union are overlooking one of its great success stories: its ability to improve and adapt its institutions in the face of criticism. I am convinced that a failure of the EU would usher in a sequence of events that could rapidly spin out of control. Old demons would resurface, and insensitive nationalism would be encouraged. Unfortunately, in the current crisis that is already beginning to happen.

If these demonic forces ever were to succeed in commanding a majority in the member states, the transnational solidarity of the European Union – and with it the most successful peace project in the human history – would be severely compromised.

We need the EU more than ever

I would never have imagined that demons long believed to have been banished would return. But simple-minded populism is once again gaining ground. In many member-states, extreme right-wing parties,

such as Geert Wilder's *Freedom Party* in the Netherlands, *Jobbik* in Hungary, and the *Front National* in France, are gaining ground. And we are allowing them to do so. As the Irish political philosopher and statesman Edmund Burke put it, "all that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing." Freedom and democracy have to be defended each and every day. We all need to take a stand against the return of mindsets that have brought nothing but disaster to the people of Europe. These are the very same mindsets that are capable of breaking up the EU.

The awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to the European Union is both a warning and at the same time an incentive: a warning not to squander our legacy, and an incentive to work through our problems. Thorborn Jagland, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, emphatically formulated the mandate of the Nobel Peace Prize at the award ceremony: "We are not gathered here today because we believe the EU is perfect. We have come together in the belief that we have to solve our problems here in Europe together." He concluded his speech with the admonition that in order to meet these challenges successfully, "we need institutions that are able to make the necessary compromises. We need institutions to ensure that not only national states but also individuals exercise self-control and moderation. In a world full of risks, compromises, self-control, and moderation are the major necessities of the 21st century."

If we combine the power of the 27 (soon to be 28) EU member states, of our 500 million people, and of the world's richest single market, we can make a difference. We need the EU today more than ever. If we don't stick together, if we go our separate ways, we will drift off into political insignificance, forfeit our ability to act, and put our democracy at risk of failure.

Europe needs to reform itself so that its diversity and its model of society will continue to be viable in the years to come. And for this reason, we have to learn to improve our democracy and strengthen and defend our own unique model of society. I am firmly convinced that Europe is up to the task.

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The Narrative Principle: Good Practice in Anti-Hate Crime Interventions, within the Radicalisation Awareness Network

Harald Weilnböck

No form of antisocial conduct threatens to corrode the fabric of liberal democratic regimes more than the hate crime. Verbal and physical attacks on targeted groups, motivated by political or religious worldviews that disdain universal human rights, undermine the civic philosophy on which liberal and non-violent societies are founded. Unfortunately, in contrast to crimes like sexual offenses and domestic violence, which have been studied extensively by scholars and which we have devised methods for preventing, research on hate crimes is still in its infancy. We do not yet know very much about how to steer at-risk youth away from developing group-focused enmity and the exclusionary proclivities that they foster, ranging from discrimination and bullying to violence and terror. What may be worse, we do not know how to oppose and effectively defuse violent, extremist messages in the internet and in the culture at large: i.e., to create deradicalizing narratives. Nor do we know very well how to deal with existing fictional narratives centered on these issues (cf. footnotes 6 and 7 below). Thus, we find it difficult to avert and defuse the debilitating effects of illiberal ideologies on the body politic.

The Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN), which was established by the European Commission in September of 2011, ten years after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, recognizes that while it is necessary to bolster intelligence and security networks in order to counter hate crimes, violent extremism, and terrorism, that strategy in and of itself is insufficient. Public safety requires that we embed intelligence and security functions into civil society at large, by raising awareness of the problem and by developing sophisticated, effective techniques for preventive measures

with at-risk groups and for intervening with would-be offenders. Accordingly, the RAN – as an umbrella organization composed of local actors, professional intervention practitioners, research experts, policy makers, and civil society groups – incorporates diverse perspectives and operates across a variety of social arenas. The intention here is to increase community strength and resilience in the face of the challenge posed by extremism. By design, the RAN is divided into a number of working groups, which currently include Community Policing, Deradicalization and Exit Interventions, intra- and extra-European dimensions (Diasporas), Internet and Social Media, (Mental) Health Services, Prevention (Early Interventions), Prison and Probation Services, and Victims of Terrorism. The collective aims of these working groups are to exchange experiences, knowledge, and good practices, and to draft policy recommendations for the EU and its member states.

Early on, during the RAN's preparation phase, it was understood that specialized social entrepreneurs and independent practitioners from grass-roots organizations have vital roles to play in delivering anti-hate crime messages to the public, conducting anti-extremist interventions, and training staff members. These non-governmental field actors



Cecilia Malmström, a member of the European Commission, attends the inaugural event of the Radicalisation Awareness Network

frequently share the same cultural background as their clients. Moreover, they are often able to access even the most at-risk and hard-to-reach environments, and to penetrate the language, habits, and cultural narratives of radicalized individuals. As such, they are in a better position than government officials to build relationships of mutual trust and confidentiality with clients. Trust and confidentiality, in turn, are indispensable in facilitating deradicalization. Thus, it is not surprising that NGO practitioners often have achieved better rates of success at lower cost than governmental bodies, which tend to lack access to and respect among disenfranchised, radicalized communities, and may even sometimes unwittingly “exacerbate division” (EC Combating Radicalization 14781; January, 2005). Hence, as early as 2009, the EC’s Stockholm Program stated that the “[k]ey to our success [in deradicalization] will be the degree to which non-governmental groups ... across Europe play an active part” (17024/09).

To that end, the RAN decided to establish “Derad,” a working group on deradicalization, exit interventions and hate-crimes prevention that comprises experienced first-line practitioners from various EU Member States.¹ These individuals have many stories to tell concerning the different contexts of their work, the methods and strategies they have employed, their successes and failures, and the levels/ lacunas of public awareness in the national media and partisan discourse, in light of the ever-present risks of populism and sensationalism. Some of these individuals are engaged in training and quality management, and/or are willing to contribute to a “good practices” approach that is designed to be transferable and adaptable to different working areas and EU member states. The Derad group is concerned with violent extremism of all kinds, whether motivated by religion (e.g., cult violence), politics, ethnic issues and

1 Adding to the RAN work are the “Women/Girls in Extremism” project (WomEx/EU), conducted by Cultures Interactive (CI, Berlin) and two projects conducted by the Violence Prevention Network (VPN, Berlin): “European Network of Deradicalization” (ENoD/ EU), which establishes profiles of good-practice approaches, and the “European Platform of Deradicalizing Narratives” (EDNA/ EU), which collects deradicalizing narratives for the Internet.

other forms of ideology, or gang codes of conduct. Its working definition of violent extremism and/or terrorist radicalization fits any individual and/or organization that supports attitudes contrary to accepted principles of human rights, civil liberties, the constitutional order and the rule of law. Such individuals or organizations hold world-views full of resentment and encourage their followers to embrace an unyielding in-group/out-group distinction. They also foster conduct grounded on basic ideologies of superiority/entitlement, as well as separation/discrimination/exclusion. Sometimes those ideologies give an aura of legitimacy to group-focused hostility, hate crimes, and violence. Typically, such organizations aggressively recruit young people and draw them into a condition of enthusiasm and obedience as well as dependency and fear. Thus far, the Derad working group has gathered many deradicalization practitioners, mostly from NGOs. However, the group also includes statutory first-line prevention practitioners working in prisons, probation agencies, sometimes even in intelligence services and community policing.

As a first step, the Derad group conducted international practitioner workshops with some forty participants each, as well as smaller focus groups and individual interviews with colleagues from numerous European countries. Derad also drew substantially on recent intervention research.² In the wake of all this preparatory work, the group has finally issued the first draft of its “Good Practice Guidelines/Principles” and

2 That research includes the TPVR project (EU/“Towards Preventing Violent Radicalization”), conducted by the London Probation Trust in conjunction with its German partner, the Violence Prevention Network (2009-11); the LIPAV project (EU/“Literary and Media Interaction as Means of Understanding and Preventing Adolescent Violence and Extremism”), conducted by Cultures Interactive; governmental “Federal Model Projects” (including VPN and CI, among others); and the Belfast-based CHC project (EU/“Challenge Hate Crime”), conducted by NIACRO (Northern Ireland Association for Care and Resettlement of Offenders) in affiliation with German partner VPN. The results were effectively reconfirmed by the following sources: the Copenhagen conference, “Tackling Extremism: Deradicalization and Disengagement” (2012), which was organized by the Danish Ministry of Social Affairs and Integration (http://www.strategicdialogue.org/Tackling_Extremism_-_Conference_Report.pdf); “Preventing Extremism: A Danish Handbook Series,” the OSCE recommendations reports on anti-Semitism and discrimination against Muslims (2008/10); and Saskia Lützing, “The Other Side of the Story: A qualitative study of biographies of extremists and terrorists” (2012).

“Policy Recommendations,” which will be summarized below. Although roughly half of the European member- and candidate-states have been involved in articulating these principles, the process of putting together full-fledged profiles of particular approaches and organizations is still in its preliminary stages. In anticipation of many more such profiles, we will consider later in this article the work of two NGOs that seem to reflect the formulated principles in their deradicalization activities.

In the spirit of the Innovation Union initiative³ and of “Europe 2020 – A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth,”⁴ “EU policymakers have recognized the importance of societal challenges”⁵ and have committed themselves to ensuring “that research being undertaken is translated into products and services which serve to address societal challenges.” In this sense, Derad will strive to transform expert and practitioner knowledge into products, guidelines, and training materials that support those who do first-line work in preventing hate crimes and violent extremism.

The overarching principles of good practice in hate-crime prevention and deradicalization, as stated here, are assumed to apply across societal milieus, EU member states, and group-focused varieties of hatred and extremism. Furthermore, good-practice interventions should be applicable in any institutional setting in which deradicalization efforts are needed: prisons, probation offices, schools, youth clubs, community institutions, etc. The description provided below will be organized into two sections, one pertaining to the interventions themselves along with their methodological components and the other to the desirable structural or contextual factors surrounding them. It will be followed by a discussion of two Berlin-based organizations that exemplify good-practice interventions: Cultures Interactive and the Violence Prevention Network.

3 http://ec.europa.eu/research/innovation-union/index_en.cfm?pg=why.

4 <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2010:2020:FIN:EN:PDF>.

5 <http://i3s.ec.europa.eu/commitment/13.html>.

1. Components of good-practice interventions

1.1 Building trust and relationships

Good-practice interventions succeed in conveying respect and building personal trust in order to be able to challenge the individual's beliefs and thereby facilitate personal change. These interventions provide a safe and confidential space for establishing sustainable working relationships between clients and practitioners, and among the clients as a group in their own right. The latter is a highly demanding task, since it involves winning over a type of person who is profoundly alienated from authorities and from society at large, and who therefore tends to be suspicious and volatile, perhaps even possessing a paranoid mind set. Yet, building personal trust, which includes establishing confidence and guaranteeing confidentiality, is by far the most important – indeed, utterly indispensable – prerequisite for any good-practice approach to prevent and/or work-through hate crime, extremism, as well as small- and large-scale terrorism. Unless this all-or-nothing prerequisite has been met, an intervention will only have a limited capacity to challenge and confront clients, and to facilitate changes in their personal attitudes and behavior.

A trust-based working relationship is substantially different from the fraternizing comradeship among buddies, fellows, homeboys, etc. that typically exists in adolescent groups, but sometimes (counter-productively) develops between social workers and their clients. The existence of a trustful work relationship always rests on the twin elements of support/respect and confrontation/critique. Moreover, in such a relationship, there is always an agreed-upon objective that gives the joint work effort its focus (e.g., the client's development of certain desired skills).

It is crucial to note here that in good practice, building trust between clients and practitioners is predicated upon the talents of the personal facilitator, which can be developed by training in specific skills. Moreover, good practice rests upon one pivotal contextual factor that will be elaborated further below: namely, the requirement that independent, non-governmental practitioners from outside the institution are involved,

and that their work is accompanied by visible trust between statutory and non-statutory actors.

1.2 The narrative mode and the life-world as foci

In their methodology, good-practice practitioners generally focus on facilitating narrative exchange, as opposed to argumentative or ideological discussion. Narrative exchange means that conversations between clients and practitioners revolve around sharing personally lived-through experiences, events, and encounters that – subjectively perceived – comprise autobiographical memories and carry an emotional charge. It involves a dialogue between life-worlds that results in the establishment of a personal relationship. For these reasons, narrative exchange and trust-building are both closely linked and interdependent. Conversely, exchanges carried out in the “argumentative/rational mode” tend to focus upon theories, opinions, and ideologies rather than divulging and sharing personal life experiences. They fuel debate, but do not by themselves create trust and understanding.

Hence, successful anti-hate-crime practitioners are able to nurture in clients the capacity to engage in narrative exchanges with others, and to recount emotionally significant memories and observations that may harbor potential interpersonal and/or social conflict. In more concrete terms they are often able to:

- encourage the client to cultivate the capacity for telling stories, i.e., narrating subjectively significant personal experiences. Furthermore (and always proceeding with caution), practitioners can often induce the client to bring into the open whatever positive or negative emotional charge these experiences may carry.
- help the client to actively listen to and respect comparable narratives told by other people – in fact, to “co-narrate them.” In other words, the anti-hate-crime practitioner may encourage and teach the client to assist the story-telling processes of others in informal social situations.
- instill an appreciation for personal or familial experiences and the value of recalling and recounting them.

This focus on narrative and on trust-based storytelling may sometimes unearth feelings of embarrassment, shame, insecurity, fear, or helplessness, on the one hand, and aggression or hostility, on the other. Of course, these affects have frequently been instrumental in generating acts of hatred and violence, so they must be handled with great caution. The emphasis on narrative will bring to light experiences of personal ambivalence, contradiction, and internal conflict as well as experiences that can facilitate compromise, all of which will have to be acknowledged.

By contrast, so-called “extremist narratives” usually lack genuine narrative quality; that is, they rarely convey much first-hand experience. In fact, extremists instinctively avoid narratives proper, preferring to engage in argument and debate. That way, they can sidestep or suppress the narrative level of exchange. It is for this very reason that good-practice approaches strive to narrativize opinions and contestations by exploring the areas of personal experience that, consciously or not, fuel them. Enhancing and deepening the narrative quality of an interaction should facilitate personal change, development, and deradicalization in the client.

1.3 Emotional intelligence

Good-practice deradicalization interventions highlight emotional, as opposed to cognitive, learning and intelligence. More specifically they seek to foster the acquisition of what might be termed “conflict intelligence”: the ability to handle conflict in productive ways. Accordingly, such interventions do not emphasize educational topics or intellectual issues as such. Instead they focus on the subjective – and most often conflict-laden – dimension of a topic and on “identity issues.” Emotional learning needs to be the main focus here, because the prejudice and hostility that fuel conflicts and hate crimes are primarily guided by affect, even though they sometimes may wear cognitive or ideological masks.

1.4 Voluntary participation and the incremental buy-in

In good-practice anti-hate crime and deradicalization interventions, participants enroll on a voluntary basis only. Such programs work best with those who are genuinely motivated to take part. Hence, participation must be freely chosen, rather than assigned, coerced, or mandated, and dropping out must neither be held against clients nor go on their records in any way. Under those ground rules, the dropout rate tends to be minimal, usually around three to five per cent. By the same token, only modest forms of incentives – if any at all – should be offered to potential participants. Still, the principle of voluntary participation by no means rules out motivational one-on-one conversations and mentoring. Those forms of encouragement can help support clients once they have expressed possible interest in taking part in deradicalization programs and undergoing personal transformations.

1.5 Group-based interventions

In some good-practice approaches, the most significant phases of the work take place in and with the group. Here, attention is paid to the group dynamics and the relationships that the participants develop with one another. In principle, no one-on-one intervention can possibly be as effective and profound in its deradicalizing impact as a group-work approach.

However, good-practice group-work approaches always have to make sure not to exceed an appropriate level of intensity. If and when the need arises, practitioners should offset and balance group work with pedagogical exercises and supplementary one-on-one sessions. This tactic is especially crucial whenever the client makes the transition from one institution or stage of life to another (prison, probation, community, school, employment, etc.).

1.6 Open-process, participatory approaches and methodological flexibility

Good-practice methodology is based on “open-process interaction.” This approach builds upon and explores participants’ concerns and reactions as they emerge during the group interaction process, while the facilitators confine themselves to making suggestions. There is no strict syllabus, fixed session plan, or established toolbox to govern interventions; rather, they are characterized by methodological flexibility and eclecticism. Open-process, participatory, and exploratory interaction is indispensable for building trust, respect, and personal commitment with client groups that are difficult to engage.

Clients who come from sub-cultures in which group-focused hatred and violent extremism are the norm will hardly change their attitudes and behavior simply because they are told or taught to do so, or because they have passed through a cognitive-behavioral training program having a particular modular structure. Instead, the participants should explore the issues that have arisen on account of their behavior and offenses, even though and precisely because they may not be used to doing that. Typically, these will involve issues of prejudice, extremism or harassment, often arising from the clients’ personal histories. The point is to encourage them to take these steps in their own way rather than being taught or persuaded to do so.

1.7 Likely topics and issues of open-process anti-hate-crime work

If the aforementioned methodological principles of narrative group work have been put into place, and the group members have gradually committed to this process, the following topics and issues are likely to come up in conversations, and/or may be suggested easily by facilitators:

- commonly shared and/or individual issues of biography and social circumstance.
- experiences of unstable family conditions, dysfunctional parenting, and chronic relational stress at home (of which clients are often hardly

aware). These phenomena quite frequently encompass deprivation, denigration, and violent victimization, although clients tend to belittle or deny the impact of such experiences. Moreover, some clients may report abuse of alcohol and drugs as dysfunctional coping strategies in their families.

- one's own patterns of behavior within the group work intervention itself. For example, some clients may try to establish power relationships by claiming superiority over, denigrating, or trying to subdue other group members.
- events or experiences within a clique of peers who serve as a surrogate family upon which clients may become highly dependent.
- experiences of being personally recruited by radical organizations.
- friendship and loyalty versus dependency and subjugation.
- gender issues such as manliness, sexual attractiveness, homosexuality, etc.
- matters of politics or religion, in which participants discuss and reflect on their commitments and beliefs. They may have to confront the simplified thought-patterns and pseudo-logical explanations that underlie their conduct. Here too, geopolitical conflicts as portrayed in the media may come to light during group discussions.
- fictional media narratives, and how they affect the thoughts and actions of certain individuals.⁶

6 The particular option to work with fictional narratives has certain methodological ramifications. See www.weilnboeck.net: the FP7 projects (in DG research), "Media/Trauma Therapy" (MTT), 2005 to 2007 EU DG Research/Marie-Curie-Actions, FP 6, EIF No. 23953, and "Media/Cultural and Violence/Extremism Prevention" (LIPAV), 2008 to 2011 EU DG Research/Marie-Curie-Actions, FP 7, ERG No. 203487. See also the following articles, all by the present author and available on his website: "Provincializing Trauma: A Case Study on Family Violence, Media Reception, and Transcultural Memory," originally in *Journal of Literary Theory* (6:1, 2012), pp. 149–175; "Towards a New Interdisciplinarity: Integrating Psychological and Humanities Approaches to Narrative," in Sandra Heinen and Roy Sommer (eds.), *Narratology in the Age of Cross-Disciplinary Narrative Research* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009), pp. 286–309; "Mila – eine Fallrekonstruktion der qualitativ-psychologischen Literatur- und Medien-Interaktionsforschung (LIR)," originally in *Psychotherapie und Sozialwissenschaft* 10:2 (2008), pp. 113–146; and "Die Anwendung der Gruppenanalyse in der Kulturvermittlung: Trauer-Abwehrarbeit in einer Sitzung des Gruppenanalytischen Literaturseminars über Judith Hermans 'Hunter-Tompson Musik,' originally in *Arbeitshefte Gruppenanalyse*, 28. Themenheft: Kultur und Gruppenanalyse (2/2002).

- most importantly, the violent act narrative, in which the client tells of having played the role of perpetrator or victimizer, committing acts of hatred, denigration, and violence against others.

Group sessions devoted to the discussion of violent acts that participants have committed will be especially intense, both narratively and emotionally. Moreover, they will sometimes be linked to their putative opposite: experiences of victimization and denigration. Research and practitioner experiences both clearly indicate that what is needed here is a frank, highly detailed, emotionally honest exchange about such incidents.

Conversely, cognitive-behavioral training programs with modular structures are not well suited to supporting open-process, exploratory, narrative exchange and to developing personal capacities for (co-)narrative interaction – at least as such programs are currently implemented in many sectors of intervention work. To the contrary, cognitive-behavioral approaches often enable facilitators and clients to avoid direct (co-)narrative interactions altogether. They evoke obedience rather than helping to induce a personal transformation on the part of the client.

1.8 Civic education: political debate over perceived and real injustices

Narrative-, emotional-, and life-world-oriented exchanges prevail in good-practice approaches, and rightly so. However, matters of civic education and political debate should not be neglected, even though we should recall that talking about ideology or morality to clients with fundamentalist leanings does not work well. The reason is that ideology and morality were not what originally motivated their antisocial conduct. Instead, those elements were, more often than not, layered on top of pre-existing violent and extremist dispositions to justify actual conduct.

Still, ideological beliefs and the simplistic attitudes and opinions that often accompany them are in fact internalized as someone becomes an extremist. Facilitators need to probe into how such beliefs got embedded in the individual's personal history and how he or she became invested

in them emotionally. Instead of aiming to win arguments, on the level of cognition and attitudes, one may aspire at best to sow “seeds of doubt.” For this group of clients, doubts, questions, and ambivalence are not yet generally accepted as viable options of thought.

Aside from ideological beliefs, particular attention needs to be paid to perceived grievances and injustices, whether real or imagined, that participants may bring up in the course of conversations. Such grievances need to be acknowledged and fleshed out by a more in-depth narrative exchange. At the same time, it is crucial to remember that mainstream society and its official representatives may have frequently – even systematically – acted in high-handed ways that did abridge people’s rights.

1.9 Pedagogical exercises emphasizing personal responsibility

There are a variety of traditional methods used in educational group settings that help to illuminate what democracy and human rights might mean in actual practice. “Diversity training,” “anti-bias work,” and similar approaches – if not imposed and/or overdone – can enable the members of a group to work through their racist, exclusionary, or discriminatory tendencies. These approaches may help to foster a value system in clients consistent with the requirements of a liberal society, while simultaneously enhancing clients’ prospects for responsible citizenship.

1.10 History, (youth) culture(s), and fictional narratives

By the same token, interventions derived from good-practice narratives and directed against hate crimes always have an intrinsically temporal dimension, albeit perhaps a fairly straightforward one that does not entail the systematic teaching of “history lessons.” History (in the limited sense intended by the interventions) suggests that things develop over time and that their outcomes depend on certain formative, real-world circumstances. But above all, history in our context teaches that lives and outcomes can be changed, at least in principle. Hence, it is vital that the starting point of interventions be the biographies of individual clients,

as nested within their family histories. Once those matters have been elucidated, practitioners may turn their attention to history in the broader, socio-political sense.

Furthermore, good-practice approaches must take cultural factors into account, since these too provide a context that shapes people's behavior. Accordingly, groups may introduce and work with media narratives, whether drawn from fiction, film, music, or websites, in an effort to encourage the participants' own creativity and reflection. As is well known, young people are generally attracted to youth-cultural activities. They are also avid consumers of media productions, especially fictional narratives that provide entertainment and/or involve issues of identity.⁷

2. Good-practice intervention programs in context

2.1 Independent outside practitioners

As suggested above, with regard to the formal setting of interventions, the ideal facilitator of the deradicalization process has non-governmental status and comes from outside the institution of the client (whether it be a prison, a probation office, a school, etc.). It is essential that facilitators

7 As already alluded to in footnote 6, the humanities' fields of literature, culture, and media studies may have a bigger role to play in practical approaches to extremism and violence prevention interventions than is generally realized – or deemed opportune – in these fields. For instance, Fiction Narrative Interaction Research (FIR) is a novel methodological design of humanities research. While investigating processes of cultural/aesthetic interaction, FIR also aims at developing new schemes and tools that are applicable in both media/culture teaching and preventive social interventions, thus crossing over and synergizing putatively far-apart academic and administrative areas (e.g., EU-DG Research, DG Justice, and DG Home Affairs). The FIR design enables the humanities to approach, in an empirically rigorous manner, the twofold-question of: (a) What are people actually doing, in mental, biographical, developmental, and social terms, when they read/view books, films, songs etc., i.e. when they interact with fictional narratives of their personal choice? (b) What do specific fictional narratives actually “do”: i.e., what emotions do they evoke in readers, and what sorts of interactions do they facilitate, by virtue of their forms and contents? These questions – and the FIR design – may well be brought to bear on topics of violence and extremism prevention and thus assist in developing impactful methods of intervention (as planned for a project proposal to the European Research Council 2014).

be able to act with a certain degree of independence and thereby provide a safe and confidential space for participants. It is likewise essential that facilitators are perceived by their clients to enjoy such independence, so that trust- and relationship-building can succeed.

Independence and confidentiality are the dual requirements of good-practice anti-hate-crime work. Without them, an intervention has little chance of long-run success, and may even have adverse effects. This is true for two reasons. First, radicalized individuals – especially those who are institutionalized – are unlikely to trust an employee whose reports and decisions can affect their fate. Second, people who agree to participate in state-of-the-art interventions stand to experience profound personal changes, ones that evoke deep-seated emotions and sensitive, even painful, memories. The experience can be compared to undergoing psychotherapy. For good reasons, it is not permissible for patients to be counselled by practitioners who have existential power over them: job superiors, caregivers, family members, and the like. Anti-hate-crimes practitioners must have the independence and the authority to provide a secure and confidential atmosphere in which clients can speak and interact freely.

2.2 Institutional support for outside practitioners

However, good practice, as provided by independent practitioners, relies heavily on the institution itself. For an intervention to succeed, the institution needs to be on board. It must understand the good practice approach and actively signal both its high esteem for the incoming facilitators and its readiness to support, secure, and continue their work. For this purpose, institutional staff members need to be educated about the complexity of anti-hate-crime and deradicalization work. Statutory employees and institutional leadership should be encouraged to request appropriate consultancy and staff training from the independent practitioners and/or their organizations.

2.3 The relationship between NGOs and the state

The EC's 2009 *Stockholm Program* states that the "key to our success [in de-radicalization] will be the degree to which non-governmental groups ... across Europe play an active part." Practitioner organizations, mainly NGOs and civil-society groups, clearly need stable sources of funding if they are to carry out the Program's goals. It is essential, both for reasons of principle and reasons of financing, to set up legal and budgetary structures that make it easier for independent practitioners to engage in the interventions mandated by governmental institutions.

One obvious desideratum is to provide a degree of professional and vocational security for non-governmental practitioners' organizations. For that to happen, society must become more resilient and develop more effective ways to prevent young people from getting involved in extremist milieus and violent activities. That step, in turn, presupposes a degree of trust between governmental and non-governmental organizations. Individuals who are involved in extremist or terrorist activities typically view the state as an enemy. To them, the state is an entity that abuses and distrusts its own citizens. In order for deradicalization efforts to succeed, there must be an appearance of trust between statutory and civil community actors as well as support for and confidence in outside practitioners.

2.4 Practitioners' intervention styles

Whenever narrative and open-process exploratory interactions are the preferred approach (whether in one-on-one or in group exchanges), practitioners should develop intervention styles designed to foster strong working relationships. In particular, practitioners should signal trustworthiness, authenticity, curiosity, institutional independence, and respect for the client. They ought to evince a critical attentiveness that is simultaneously accepting yet confrontational. The point is to maintain a basic distinction between the client's personhood, which will be accorded respect, and the client's offensive behavior and extremist opinions, which will be probed and questioned.

2.5 Practitioner training, professional assistance, and quality management

To be successful, deradicalization approaches must rely on professional facilitators who possess relevant skills and knowledge on the level of both personal attitudes and methodological practices. Hardly anyone has ever been able to implement state-of-the-art methodology simply by reading case studies. We need to institute a “train the trainer” program, assisted by a pool of experts having both a deep understanding of what strategies work and significant experience in implementing those practices and in adapting them to different circumstances.

2.6 Party-political and media discourses

Public discourse on hate crimes, violent extremism, and human rights exerts a strong influence on deradicalization work done with at-risk individuals. It is therefore indispensable to pay heed to the ways in which representatives from governments, political parties, media outlets, and other public institutions portray victims, perpetrators, interventions, prejudices, and possibly-mainstream extremist views. Currently, within the overwhelming majority of EU member states, incidents of group-focused hatred, extremism, and terrorism are often neglected, covered up, or manipulated by populist and partisan interests for their own ends. Moreover, the media tend to treat these problems as sensationalist fodder instead of adopting intelligent strategies for preventing and resolving them.

In this respect, the least that a deradicalization intervention can and should do is to acknowledge and discuss these public discourses, and to highlight the duplicities of mainstream, allegedly non-extremist media narratives that are in fact populist and/or sensationalist. In addition, it would be helpful if political parties could agree on a code of conduct cutting across partisan lines, providing guidelines or rules on how best to depict extremist actions and attitudes in public discourse. Such a code would apply – in however slightly different ways – to representatives of governments, political organizations, and the media.

2.7. Involvement by third parties

In addition to engaging independent specialists from outside a given institution, good practice also frequently relies on another third-party element. Carefully chosen members of different groups within civil society should be invited to enter the institution as interlocutors, commentators, and witnesses with special experiences. So, for example, good-practice guidelines would call upon so-called “formers” (those who have abandoned violent lifestyles), as well the victims and survivors of extremist acts (although certain methodological cautions are appropriate for this group). It can also be useful to ask respected or charismatic representatives from the community or mainstream society to play a role within the institution. Family members, especially, may contribute to deradicalization processes in certain cases.

To be sure, the practitioners themselves will have to think through, prepare for, and mediate the participation of third parties in deradicalization work. Also, the presence of the third parties must be carefully embedded in established intervention protocols.

In general, however, it seems desirable that the risk-averse perspective that has characterized most statutory counter-extremism and prevention activities should be supplemented by a perspective that is both more inclusive and less driven by security concerns. Bridges need to be built across the chasm separating binaries such as “civil vs. public,” “statutory vs. non-governmental,” “professional vs. volunteer,” “national vs. local (or international),” and “East vs. West” (cf. the Copenhagen Convention of 2012, footnote 2).

2.8 Testimonials and ‘deradicalizing narratives’⁸

Some approaches attempt to use audio-visual testimonials and – yet to be properly defined – “deradicalizing narratives” The sources of such materials include “formers” and their families, moderate community voices, social workers or field experts, and the victims and/or survivors of terrorist acts and hate crimes. We should acknowledge that the methodology for developing deradicalizing narratives is still in its early stages. Considerable thought must be given to the techniques that will be used: interviews, post-production of the AV material, and ways to embed it in off-line intervention programs. Clearly, not every testimonial or narrative actually will have a deradicalizing effect upon every kind of at-risk individual at every moment in the process of personal development. Also, when a process of deradicalization is set in motion, it may still fail and even backfire. Apart from that, and pending current fundamental research,⁹ it seems beyond question that any such audio-visual testimonials should meet three basic criteria.

First, they should be largely in “narrative mode” in the sense delineated above: “sharing certain experiences one has personally lived through.” This implies that the individual who testifies should provide a full account of interactions and events as subjectively perceived; i.e., the report should be saturated with details, personal involvement, and emotion. That will signal that the testimony is trustworthy and will help to foster mutual trust. In other words, such testimonies should not concentrate on opinions, thoughts, ideologies or theories, let alone “counter-arguments” (see section 1.2). Instead, well-designed video productions will narrativize such opinions and ideologies by exploring the personal experience that, consciously or not, fuel them. In that way they should facilitate self-reflective thought and authenticity in emotion.

8 Cf. Harald Weirnböck, “Do we really need ‘counter narratives’? And what is a ‘narrative’ anyway? – Current misunderstandings about and solutions for building an approach of ‘deradicalizing narratives’ interventions,” EDNA and ENoD website (forthcoming).

9 Within the ISEC project, “European Platform of Deradicalizing Narratives” (EDNA, by VPN, Berlin).

Second, video materials should also be carefully embedded in a systematic off-line intervention process. Toward that end they must be both systematically prepared beforehand and elaborated in depth afterwards. The point is to enable viewers to develop, personalize, acknowledge, and reflect upon their subjective reactions to such testimonials, and to express them within the group process of the intervention.

Finally, video testimonials should be designed expressly for the purpose of deradicalization and anti-hate-crime interventions. They should not be exploited for use in some other context. For example, they should not be used for purposes of media sensationalism, or misappropriated by political actors for their own ends, such as to stoke populist emotions. At the same time it would be unwise to use such testimonials to drive home ethical lessons within mainstream society, such as that a person should adhere to certain values, and pass moral judgments on others. Finally, the testimonials should avoid catering to the special interests of different interviewee groups (e.g. victims' rights lobbies).

By and large, the content and form of a deradicalizing testimonial should conform to the spirit of the intervention principles themselves. For example, such testimonial would deal with a variety of experiences and circumstances, including the following:

- how the individual fell into and subsequently disengaged from violent extremism;
- the difficulties that may have accompanied the exit intervention, including whatever complications may have arisen with family members, peers, co-religionists, etc.;
- incidents in which the individual may have been a perpetrator and/or victim of hate speech or hate crimes;
- cultural and media products (whether documentary or fictional) that played a role in the individual's personal evolution (cf. footnotes 6 and 7);
- the individual's erstwhile and current social or political grievances;
- allegedly non-radical, yet potentially extremist, attitudes within mainstream society;

- the personal backgrounds, experiences, and motivations of deradicalization experts, as well as those of the family and community representatives who have been affected by their work.

Interviewing and postproduction methods will usually determine the kind and degree of narrativity that a testimonial can achieve. There are certain criteria that contribute to a testimonial's believability and emotive power. These include the following elements:

- the degree of detail and completeness found in the account (e.g., what triggered an episode or incident, what the actor intended to accomplish, what transpired and with what results, and how the actor subjectively evaluated it);
- the extent to which incidents are successfully placed within autobiographical and wider-world contexts;
- the account's consistency, as judged by psycho-linguistic criteria;
- the personal affect and range of emotional expression displayed by the story-teller;
- the degree of introspection and self-awareness in evidence;
- the amount of expressed reality-checking, personal ambivalence, and/or conflict;
- the field-specific credentials of the narrator;
- the interactive quality of the interview process, as evaluated according to the principles laid out above (see footnote 6, 2008).

In short, interviewing and postproduction methodologies follow the very same principles as good-practice interventions themselves: they proceed in an open-process, narrative, and relational manner; allow for emotional investment and ambivalence; occupy a confidential and exploratory space; and involve both trust and challenge. Conversely, deradicalizing strategies based on crafting arguments against extremist messages tend to be non-narrative in character and to have little transformative effect.

2.9 Cross-institutional, long-term support relationships and change-management

Successful disengagement from extremism is facilitated by the existence of required stable practitioner and mentoring relationships that persist when the client leaves an institution and enters a new sphere of life. Non-statutory, non-governmental practitioners who can move easily among different social sectors are obviously in a good position to provide such mentoring.

The necessity for cross-institutional coaching may be most evident in the case of imprisoned clients. Here an inmate's deradicalization practitioner should already be in place during his or her time in prison; the relationship developed there should be retained in the early stages of the ex-offender's reintegration into the community, assisting the client with change management. However, the existence of a stable, on-going support system is also important for clients making other types of institutional transitions, such as the transition from school to workplace.

By the same token, interventions have to be long-term and be accompanied by visibly strong institutional and societal commitments. Project-style interventions of a short- to middle-term duration may even be counter-productive, since they can enhance frustration and distrust on the part of clients, most of whom tend to be volatile and to have scant experience in commitment and responsibility. Here, only long-term and resilient mentoring relationships will suffice to create the interpersonal trust and respect that set the stage for successful deradicalization.

2.10 What doesn't work: pure anger management and cognitive-behavioral training

Having explored the issue of what methods and strategies are most likely to work in facilitating deradicalization, we next turn to the question of which approaches have little effect, or possibly even adverse effects.

Academic research and practitioner exchange workshops agree on the shortcomings of two commonly touted alternatives: fully modularized cognitive-behavioral training programs (CBT), and pure anti-aggression or anger management programs (AM). CBT approaches generally do not support open-process, exploratory, and participatory exchange. On the contrary, they may unintentionally serve the function of deterring direct (co-)narrative interaction between facilitators and clients and among clients in the group. Often they end up producing compliance without conviction, a “let’s-get-it-over-with” attitude that does not truly engage the individual or issue in personal change. Anger management (AM) courses, for their part, often tend to be superficial in the sense that they do not probe into biographical issues such as the genesis, function, and targets of an individual’s aggression. Unless CBT and AM techniques are carefully embedded into a solid methodological framework of open-process, relationship-based, and narrative intervention work, their effectiveness will suffer, and they may actually turn out to be counter-productive.

3. Examples of good-practice approaches in anti-hate-crime and deradicalization work

As we have seen, the most successful approaches to deradicalization are open-process, exploratory interventions. Methodologically speaking, they are narrative and relational in their focus, and are based on trust and challenge. Offering confidentiality and commitment, they are best delivered by skilled, specially-trained non-governmental practitioners who are empowered to act independently within and across statutory institutions and are proactively assisted in their interventions by the institutional staff. Open-process approaches share a number of characteristics. They:

- focus on the development of emotional intelligence;
- occur within group settings;
- touch upon biographical, familial, gender-related, and power issues;

- employ advanced civic education and fictional or cultural texts;
- include representatives of the family, the community and civil society;
- combine both accepting and confrontational modes of interaction; and
- are accompanied by state-of-the-art quality control.

The “European Network of Deradicalization” website (ENoD),¹⁰ which is being constructed by the Violence Prevention Network and liaises closely with the RAN initiative’s Derad working group in Brussels, will soon be able to supply profiles of deradicalization efforts throughout Europe that utilize, or are in the process of developing, good-practice approaches. In the meanwhile, we can profit from the examples provided by two Berlin-based NGOs: Cultures Interactive and the aforementioned Violence Prevention Network.

3.1 Cultures Interactive

Cultures Interactive (CI) is a non-profit association dedicated to “violence prevention and intercultural education.” Although the group occasionally works in Poland and the Czech Republic, its efforts are concentrated in towns and rural communities in eastern Germany and in inner-city districts of Berlin that suffer from high degrees of social tension.

Methodologically, CI has developed a youth-cultural approach to promoting human rights awareness and democratic values and responding to violent extremism and hate crimes. It delivers both prevention and deradicalization interventions, depending on the context and the target group. CI works with issues of neo-Nazism and similar extremist ideologies, radical Islam and jihadism, everyday racism and xenophobia, and other forms of group-prejudiced, exclusionary and violent behavior, especially on the part of at-risk young people from disadvantaged backgrounds.

10 <http://www.european-network-of-deradicalisation.eu>.

The CI approach combines civic and historical education with peer-taught workshops in various youth-cultural practices and styles as well as psychologically-based, open-process interactions, the so-called “We-Among-Ourselves-Group” (WAOG). The civic education modules feature exercises in team-building, diversity training, and anti-bias courses, as well as work in gender awareness and anger management. Meditation techniques are also incorporated into the program. As is the case with the WAOG, group discussions often highlight documentary and fictional media narratives (films, TV, songs) chosen by the young people themselves.

The youth-cultural workshops draw on diverse forms of creative expression, including rap music, slam poetry, break-dancing, comic and graffiti art, skateboarding, techno-disc-jockeying, as well as film and digital music production. Conducted according to principles of informal peer learning, these workshops sometimes incorporate historical materials as well as materials relevant to civil society today. The urban youth-cultural practice workshops enable CI to reach out to individuals who are alienated from traditional pedagogical institutions and approaches, and are therefore difficult to engage by any other approach.

The “We-Among-Ourselves-Group” tries to promote self-awareness by applying principles derived from psycho- and socio-therapeutic casework. Under the guidance of a facilitator, participants enter a voluntary, confidential, and open-process setting in which they can converse about experiences and issues that emerge in the group as a whole. Here they discuss their life experiences as well as thoughts and ideas they may have entertained in certain situations. Those discussions may be prompted by the civic-education and youth-cultural modules. Only the most basic rules of mutual respect and protection are obligatory here. Ideally, the facilitator plays a maximally non-directive role; only when necessary does he or she help the group to focus on emergent topics, organize conversational turn-taking, summarize or clarify the session dynamic, or solicit observations and insights gained in the process. Common discussion topics include the youth culture, leisure-time activities, friendships,

interpersonal conflicts, instances of violence, betrayal, or delinquency, displays of loyalty and assistance, and above all, issues of gender and identity. Quite often family matters come up, as do experiences participants have had in orphanages, pediatric psychiatry, juvenile detention, or prison.¹¹

CI has recently instituted and tested a youth-cultural “train the peer trainer” initiative, the Fair Skills training program, designed to help young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to become facilitators of youth-cultural workshops. Fair Skills emphasizes soft skills, as formulated by the “European Framework of Key Competences.” These include “social and civic competences” (i.e., “interpersonal and intercultural skills”), “critical thinking,” “constructive management of feelings,” and “cultural awareness and expression” (EC Recommendation 2006/962/EC). The training is given in three intensive one-week courses, followed up by close supervision on the job.

CI works in different settings, offering one- or two-day workshops in schools and youth clubs located in disadvantaged rural, small town, or inner-city areas. Building on such workshops, CI conducts community conferences and open-space discussions for young people and their local representatives as a way of promoting youth participation and social cohesion. For example, its current Federal Model Project, “Deradicalization Guidelines for Youth Workers,” develops programs, tool kits, and principles for social workers and youth centers in deprived areas where youngsters are attracted by right-wing extremism. Similarly, CI’s WomEx initiative, an EU applied research project on “Women/Girls in Extremism”, examines the roles that girls and women play in extremism and what we can learn from practitioners that work in anti-hate-crime and

11 Harald WeInnböck, Silke Baer, and Peer Wiechmann, “Hate Crime Prevention and Deradicalization in Environments Vulnerable to Extremism: Community Work with the Fair Skills Approach and the We-Among-Ourselves Group,” originally published in *Zeitschrift des Informations- und Dokumentationzentrums für Antirassismusbearbeitung in NRW* (February, 2012); soon to be available at www.weinboeck.net and www.cultures-interactive.de.

deradicalization settings with girls and women, and investigates good-practice gender methodologies. Stakeholders in these initiatives include teachers, social workers, police officers, public administrators, youth clubs and associations, and local media outlets. They receive instruction and training about right-wing-extremism, fundamentalism, and hate crimes, and how to deal with them.

3.2 The Violence Prevention Network

The Violence Prevention Network (VPN) has developed a particular group intervention approach for incarcerated juveniles convicted of hate crimes rooted in Neo-Nazism, Islamism, or some other violently prejudiced ideology. Two specialized non-statutory practitioners from outside the prison system facilitate the program. These practitioners also cooperate to deliver staff training in the institution. Ex-offenders, family members, and civil society representatives are brought in for special sessions to support the process.

The VPN program focuses on issues of personal biography, upbringing, peer-groups, gender, and delinquency, with special emphasis on dysfunctional family dynamics and incidents of violence, abuse, or disrespect in the client's past. Young offenders are encouraged to explore the connections between past events and their own readiness to act out violently and to hold extremist attitudes in regard to politics or religion. In addition, modules of civic education and political and/or religious debate form a significant part of the intervention.

The VPN's approach puts a premium on not reducing the young adults to their status as criminals. On the contrary, each participant is taken seriously and respected as someone with his own history, conflicts, and potential for personal development. At the same time, the violent act that he committed is systematically analyzed and confronted, as are the illiberal, undemocratic, and anti-human-rights attitudes that helped to motivate it.

Once sufficient trust is established within the group, the central element of the program can be employed: the so-called “violent act session,” in which every participant strives to reconstruct the actions, feelings, and thoughts that transpired during the course of his crime. These sessions are highly demanding for the group and the facilitators alike. Perhaps surprisingly, confronting the inhuman brutality, the ghastly injuries, and the hateful fantasies and actions bound up with the crime’s commission often proves to be an overwhelming experience for the offenders themselves. But the participants assist each other in this regard, without letting anyone off the hook too easily. In the aftermath of the violent act sessions, most of the individuals in the group are able to accept their responsibility and build a new sense of self and of empathy with others, thus paving the way for a future that is free from violence and hatred.

Most importantly, although the process unfolds within the context of, and with the help of, the group, it is always accompanied by one-on-one sessions. The fellow inmates who also committed hate crimes and/or racist acts of aggression have proven able and willing to support the process of respectful but intense questioning of the other program participants, as well as themselves. Participants join on a voluntary basis only, after having had some prior interviews. They are offered only modest inducements, such as opportunities to play football together. Just as they are not required to engage in the program, it is not noted on their official records if they choose to drop out. The dropout rate, however, happens to be very low (around 2%).

Civic education – i.e., interrogating the participants’ neo-Nazi, fundamentalist, or otherwise extremist beliefs and helping them to adopt attitudes that are more tolerant, liberal, and respectful of human rights – remains an absorbing and challenging task throughout the whole of the intervention. However, the group work described above makes the task decidedly more achievable. Pedagogical exercises, role-playing about how to deal with situations of conflict, provocation, and insult, and the crafting of autobiographical narratives all assist in this process, as do sessions with carefully chosen family and friends in the prison.

After the training program, a change-management module is employed. This module features developing resource and risk analyses, recruiting helpers from the offender's family or the larger community, and building up a local support network. Post-release coaching, which may take up to twelve months, is provided by one of the two facilitators to each ex-offender, in order to assist him to make the transition from prison to the larger society. A central goal here is public protection: i.e., reducing the rate of recidivism, which for hate crimes is generally estimated at around 76%. The logic behind this is that working with perpetrators will decrease the number of victims and the amount of damage and social costs.

In EU member states, many additional approaches toward deradicalization and hate-crime prevention have been developed, mainly by NGOs. These approaches and organisations soon will be made public through the "European Network of Deradicalization" (ENoD) and through resources provided by the Radicalisation Awareness Network. That, in turn, should improve our capacity to formulate sound policy recommendations for preventing and averting violent extremism.

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Lessons Learned: Can Germany's "labor-market oriented exit initiative" be adapted for other countries?

Kristina Nauditt | Gerd Wermerskirch

Exit assistance, a German program designed to help people who want to leave the far-right scene, has been successful enough that some of its best practices might be applied elsewhere in Europe. But it is not yet entirely clear which factors have contributed most to successful outcomes, and which practices could be transferred beneficially across borders. We have entitled our article "Lessons Learned," partly in order to emphasize that there is no "one size fits all" approach to exit assistance. Practices must always be tailored to fit the precise circumstances that exist on the ground.

We have also called our article "Lessons Learned" in order to avoid misunderstandings. The piece is devoted to identifying the limitations and risks inherent in any Europe-wide expansion of a labor-market oriented exit initiative. While we cannot do separate studies for specific countries, we can certainly draw on the cumulative experience of projects developed under the aegis of Germany's XENOS special initiative program, *Ausstieg zum Einstieg* or "Exit to Enter." It should be possible to identify the criteria for successful outcomes in that program in order to help similar programs in other countries to function better.

At the outset, we would like to advance two caveats. First, exit assistance cannot be considered in isolation from other pillars that support our work against right-wing extremism. For example, governmental institutions that regulate social systems, such as job centers, must be functioning properly. The work of civil society groups, such as mobile counselling teams or victim counselling centers, is also indispensable to the anti-extremist campaign. And it is vital to strengthen local alliances against

the far right at the community level, or – if no such alliances exist – to create them. The other caveat is that exit assistance must genuinely help people to disengage from the right-wing milieu. Labor-market integration is only a second step, one that can serve as yardstick for measuring the individual's progress toward leading a normal life. Here we must underscore the fact that many right-wing extremists are neither young nor unemployed, whereas labor-market integration is primarily focused on young adults who either have tired of the far-right scene or are looking to integrate into society after serving jail sentences for crimes they have committed.

The labor-market integration approach has not been without its critics. The chief complaint about the Exit to Enter program has been that the preference given to right-wing extremist youth in regard to employment opportunities works to the detriment of other job-seekers. In the worst case scenario, preferential treatment actually could enhance the attractiveness of right-wing extremism. This criticism is most often heard in areas where job placements are rare, especially in regions that are economically depressed. It would need to be taken into account if one were trying to design programs with similar objectives for other European countries, particularly those on the continent's southern periphery. How can right-wing extremists be integrated into a (non-existent) job market when nearly half of all young people are already unemployed?

We have attempted to develop criteria to gauge the success of the projects we have carried out over the past few years. To do so requires defining more precisely what a successful exit might look like and under what circumstances offering employment to a formerly far-right client might be appropriate. In the field of social services, it is always difficult – if not impossible – to devise such criteria. Nevertheless, we must try to address preliminary questions, such as what it means to “exit” a scene, and how we know when someone has done so successfully.

According to the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, “No right-wing extremist¹ will drop out of the scene from one day to the next. Exiting is preceded by a long period of self-scrutiny, accompanied by doubts about the

ideology and ideals the person had hitherto embraced. Moreover, the exiting process can take years. Generally, exiting the right-wing extremist scene is a turning point in the life of the individual who has made the decision to do it. It is often associated with a desire for enhanced personal security and education, stable employment, and social connectedness. Furthermore, the person considering an exit may also be determined to alter his/her view of the world in search of new sources of meaning and orientation. In short, exiting entails a process of critical reflection as well as the successful questioning and overcoming of prior ideological tendencies and behavior. In order to accomplish such a dramatic personal transformation, the individual involved has to distance him/herself from previous peer groups, leaving behind a large portion of his or her accustomed social circle. That transition places severe demands on anyone. Those who depart the right-wing milieu have to mobilize all their psychological and material resources, bringing them quickly to the limits of their capacities unless competent contact people and stable points of reference are available to assist them.”²

In this context, the celebrated case of neo-Nazi Michael Fischer, the partner of Nadja Drygalla, who was the rower in the German Olympic-eight team, may prove instructive. By the standards set in the excerpt, Fischer would not be classified as a dropout from the far-right milieu. Presumably he is still active in this realm, despite information to the contrary. In this case, at least, one cannot speak of a prolonged and conscious exit process.³ The example demonstrates how far-reaching the

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- 1 Contrary to a widespread view, there are staunch supporters of right-wing extremism among women and girls, as well as female drop-outs from the scene.
 - 2 *Tunnel Licht Blicke: Aus der Praxis arbeitsmarktorientierter Ausstiegsarbeit der Projektträger des XENOS-Sonderprogramms ‘Ausstieg zum Einstieg’* (Berlin: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2012), p. 66ff. Compare to the definition of exit given by EXIT Germany, available at <http://www.exitdeutschland.de/EXIT/Navigation/Ausstieg/Ausstieg-K332.htm> (last accessed February 5, 2013).
 - 3 Compare to “Langjähriger Neonazi Michael Fischer. Sieben Indizien, die gegen einen Ausstieg von Drygallas Freund sprechen, in *Süddeutschen Zeitung* (August 7, 2012), available at <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/langjaehriger-neonazi-michael-fischer-sieben-indizien-die-gegen-einen-ausstieg-von-drygallas-freund-sprechen>. See also <http://www.publikative.org/2012/08/05/fischer-ausgestiegen-zweifel-an-drygalla-aussage> (last accessed February 17, 2013) and <http://www.zeit.de/gesellschaft/zeitgeschehen/2012-08/drygalla-npd-rostock> (last accessed February 17, 2013).

process of exiting is, how strong the desire has to be to distance oneself at all levels, and the degree of know-how that a professional exit program requires.

In order to lay the groundwork for designing a program that could be replicated elsewhere, we have divided the article into two sections. We will first describe the successive phases of the exit process, specifying the criteria that must be met before an exit can be deemed successful. These criteria were developed in part collaboratively at the network meeting of the XENOS special initiative program. In the second section we will provide a checklist for an exit program that is based on, among other things, a 2012 conference sponsored by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation.

1. The exit process

To determine whether the principles of labor-market-oriented assistance can be made to work across Europe, we must first survey the structure of the exit process itself. As we proceed, we can compile a checklist that will enable us to determine whether the framework and preconditions for a transfer of such programs across national boundaries actually exist. This may not turn out to be the case, since the social, economic, and political institutions in each of the 27 EU countries differ significantly from one another.

The process of leaving the right-wing extremist scene occurs in stages. The model recommended here is based on the “unfreeze – move – refreeze” scheme devised by Kurt Lewin, or – to express it using the vocabulary of EXIT-Germany – “Making the decision, Leaving the scene, Restructuring.”⁴ In fleshing out the model, we identify seven phases, which will be discussed in section 3.

4 In addition to building on the work of Kurt Lewin and of EXIT-Germany, we utilize concepts developed under the aegis of the Verein zur Förderung akzeptierender Jugendarbeit Bremen, or VAJA (the Association for the Promotion of Acceptance-Oriented Youth Work, Bremen), by Professor Dr. Kurt Möller of Esslingen University.

- The stimulus phase, involving occasions that, by their very nature, tend to move an individual toward the exit.
- The contact-seeking and case history phase, in which the setting and situation of the client are reviewed and clarified.
- The trust phase, during which the goal is to build confidence and trust between client and professional.
- The de-radicalization phase, the critical stage during which the ideological thinking of the exit-willing individual is subjected to scrutiny.
- The re-orientation phase, in which the exit-seeking individual leaves behind his/her prior social milieu.
- The stabilization phase, which aims to make the exit permanent by offering the client personal recognition, fostering his/her sense of efficacy, and encouraging participation in democratic social processes.

As each phase draws to a close, observers can use certain indicators to characterize the type of exit they are witnessing and to decide whether and to what extent it has worked. In this regard, labor-market integration is a significant indicator that an exit is progressing well.

We provide below a narrative describing how someone might pass through the stages of the exit schema. Of course, this ideal-typical description of disengagement will never match up perfectly with the personal history of a given candidate. Actual personal histories are not always easy to categorize; real-world experiences spill over into a variety of problem areas. Also, while the model suggests stringency, the reality is much more complex and multi-faceted. Practical work with participants willing to make an exit suggests that the phases sometimes overlap or repeat. In everyday assistance work, it is often necessary to expand and refine these phases. But despite such limitations, the model help us to gain insight into ongoing discussions within the network of the Exit to Enter program.

2. The exit phases

2.1 The stimulus phase

This phase takes place before the actual counselling process begins. Exit-willing individuals begin to have doubts about their lives and behavior. There can be many reasons for their change of heart, but those involving family and friends are especially prominent. For example, a good friend may have left the scene behind, or the disillusioned right-winger may have embarked upon a career change or even be on the verge of becoming a parent and worrying about how the child will fare. Other reasons for wanting to defect may include disappointments about and violence within the scene itself. But the state and civil society may also encourage exits from right-wing milieus. A person considering an exit may have faced official sanctions, such as jail time, or been offered incentives from the local community, such as the chance to participate in sports. The catalysts can be many and varied, but the outcome is that exit-willing individuals seek out an offer of assistance, access to which they can find in a variety of ways. The stimulus must appear serious to the individual in question, especially when it emanates from social networks that tie the person to others. This is where the preventive and community-oriented services that democratically strengthen civil society come into the picture. The milestone indicating transition to the next phase is reached when the exit-willing individual makes contact with a counselling service. At this point, the actual case management begins. It follows a systematic, carefully thought-out path in which the individual to be counselled is supported throughout his or her exit.

2.2 The contact-seeking and case-history phase

This phase begins with an initial interview conducted by the counselling agency. During the interview, the participants get acquainted. The client receives an overview of the services that the agency offers, while the agency acquires a fuller understanding of the client's situation by assembling a case history. Interviewers usually focus on determining the types

of affiliation and the strength and tenacity of the ties that the client had with right-wing circles, and the client's willingness to alter his or her ideology, values, and behavior. Part of this process includes a survey of possible criminal activity. The success indicator for transition to the next phase is the maintenance of regular contacts between the individual and the counselling party. Counselling and support objectives are jointly established and documented.

2.3 The trust phase

Contact with the client is deepened and intensified here and, ideally, an atmosphere of mutual trust is created as the client and counselor define and discuss various exit strategies.

The counselling agency may begin to consult with authorities and institutions and attempt to coordinate and mobilize outside help. This aspect of the support work, which continues throughout the remaining exit process, is necessary because the client's case history usually exposes an array of problems, such as a criminal record, drugs, debt, and deprivation.

Trust has been established when both sides believe that the time has come to start the de-radicalization process. A binding agreement on the next steps is the success indicator in this phase.

2.4 The de-radicalization phase

We have chosen the term coined by EXIT-Germany, "de-radicalization," as the label for this phase, because exit efforts now will focus upon the right-wing radical ideology to which the client has been committed. Here, the far right's tendency to deal in dehumanizing stereotypes (racism, sexism, social Darwinism, anti-Semitism, historical revisionism, and rejection of democracy and its pluralistic core values) occupies the top of the agenda. At the same time, counselor and client must recover and review the latter's personal history, with its often painful, personality-

distorting experiences. The client must recognize and realistically assess violent patterns of oppression and repression, and must also learn conflict management skills. The counselor will probably also encourage the client to reflect upon the victims of right-wing violence and what they must have suffered and endured. Eventually, the client must decide to cast off erstwhile allegiances. Once this break has been accomplished, the client has to be protected against threats from former comrades and associates.

The first successes are visible near the end of this phase, when educational or career performance has improved significantly. If things go well, the client will have attained a stable, advanced level of critical self-reflection and recognized his or her former ideology as wrong. At this point it is also crucial to provide the individual with a stable social support system of governmental institutions (social welfare, youth services, etc.) and nongovernmental institutions (debt counselling, psychological counselling, etc.). Those services, coupled with the counselling the client has received, may pave the way for a reorientation in his or her thinking and behavior.

At the end of the de-radicalization process, the individual has systematically “dropped out” of the right-wing scene and has been relocated in a new setting. He or she either will be pursuing a skilled trade or career or creating job market opportunities through schooling, vocational preparation, or in-firm training. The individual is now ready for daily life away from his or her former milieu.

2.5 The re-orientation phase

After beginning a more normal life, the ex-right-winger may face an unexpected challenge: threats from former associates that may become so grave that the person needs to assume a new identity. The goal of this phase of the de-radicalization process is provide a stable social atmosphere within which pluralistic, democratic values prevail and the client can gradually disengage from the support system, conducting his or her own affairs more autonomously.

Indicators of success at this stage include the client's willingness to submit applications without prodding by authority figures and to employ constructive conflict management strategies in everyday life.

2.6 The consolidation phase

In this final phase of the de-radicalization process, individuals re-define their personal identities as people who, having severed all ties to the right-wing milieu, are members of mainstream society. They achieve a stronger sense of efficacy, participate in democratic processes, and reshape their social environment. Tolerance towards minorities opens doors to new contacts, opportunities, and ways of seeing the world. These shifts in exit-seekers' social circles may enable them to develop a new political orientation, perhaps even to the point of making an open break with the far right and a public commitment to combat its views and practices. Nothing is more unsettling to right-wing extremists than "betrayal" from within their own ranks by people who have had the courage to change.

3. Lessons learned

The time has come to examine the criteria that will enable us to assess which aspects of the German exit program might be adapted successfully to circumstances in other European countries. The criteria are based, among other things, on conclusions reached by participants in an international conference entitled "Seeing Light at the End of the Tunnel: Perspectives on Labor-Market Oriented Exit Work." Held in Berlin on October 12, 2012, the conference was sponsored by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation.

The eight criteria for a successful program, which we review below, are as follows:

- Governmental recognition of the seriousness of the problem;
- Development of standards of assessment and evaluation;
- Prevention as an integral part of combating right-wing extremism;
- Engagement of independent agencies in exit programs;
- Recognition of the need for a national strategy against right-wing extremism;
- Labor-market and exit assistance;
- Involvement of the new media;
- Collegial collaboration.

3.1 Governmental recognition of the seriousness of the problem

To be effective over the long term, successful exit programs presuppose a demonstrated political will on the part of public officials in the countries where they are to be implemented. Such a commitment will be reflected in both an intensive examination of right-wing extremist ideologies and their local manifestations and a critical, no-holds-barred public review of the country's history. This process of self-scrutiny must be carried out in a serious manner; it cannot be merely an occasion for concocting excuses for the past misdeeds, and it presupposes a degree of clarity in dealing with right-wing extremist ideology that is rarely encountered in European politics-as-usual. Only through an open, transparent examination of far-right beliefs and deeds can widely held worldviews change and the dangers of right-wing extremism be seen in the proper light. Unfortunately, Germany is not a good model in this regard, because right-wing extremism there is still being downplayed and swept under the rug.

3.2 Development of standards of assessment and evaluation

As has been pointed out already, we need to develop standards for evaluating the quality and success of exit work before we try to transfer the approach to other countries. This requires that we carry out a detailed examination of right-wing extremist ideology to understand the hold

that it has on some citizens. It also requires that we identify a well-established route that individuals must follow to demonstrate credibly that they have managed to exit the far-right scene. In our description of the exit process in section 2, we have attempted to present several such indicators of quality and success.

3.3 Prevention as an integral part of combating right-wing extremism

Exit work is simultaneously prevention work. Antifascist and anti-racist curricula should be offered in schools, sports clubs, and civic organizations, targeting ideologically at-risk individuals. To put it in a more positive way, education should encourage learners to value democracy and pluralism as aspects of the fundamental human rights that accrue to all. A parallel initiative would provide competent counselling for the parents and siblings of right-wing extremists. Even though young people seem most likely to espouse the more radical right-wing opinions, older adults also may benefit from intervention. Adolescents, after all, do not dream up their far-right ideas all by themselves; typically they hear such sentiments from parents and grandparents, leading them to believe that their elders want them to enter the far-right scene. In short, preventive measures against the blandishments of the extreme right have to be systematic and broadly targeted at the entire social setting in which they arise and are reinforced: not just the individual case, but the group and indeed the entire community.

3.4 Engagement of independent agencies in exit programs

The German experience shows that privately-run projects are usually more flexible and independent than those directed by government bureaus. Generally speaking, bottom-up approaches generate more knowledge and greater commitment than top-down ones. However, the former can only be developed locally; hence, the design of such programs, as well as their respective strengths and weaknesses, will vary widely depending on the history, region, and country in which they are implemented. In Germany, the projects that worked well were those that

rested on a strong, pre-existing local network. In practical terms, that means there have to be well-established, ongoing contacts between program staff and the police, the justice system, social workers, and local youth. Once such connections have been forged, exit work has a good chance of succeeding.

Experience also demonstrates that flatter hierarchies and interaction on equal terms among all participants promote the exit process. In contrast, excessive bureaucracy and inconsistent allocations of authority detract from the effectiveness of exit assistance. Likewise, state authorities in a federal system should take responsibility for the program's success; when they do not, the resultant confusion can pose a significant obstacle to program effectiveness.

With these considerations in mind, the wisest approach would seem to involve assisting and empowering local people who are trying to develop relevant projects suited to their needs. At the FES conference, Graeme Atkinson of the British "HOPE not hate" campaign formulated his group's approach to anti-fascist work as follows "We want to put people in a position that enables them to do the work of combating the far-right at the grassroots level."⁵ To make his approach work, contact needs to be made with the "hot spots" so that a civil society movement against right-wing extremism can emerge from below.

3.5 Recognition of the need for a national strategy against right-wing extremism

Due to differing historical experiences, it is vital to identify and investigate existing right-wing extremist structures and their origins in each country. Once one has achieved a clearer understanding of the roots and forms of right-wing extremism in a given society, one can create a sociological analysis of the far-right milieu that ties into the problems of

5 *Impulse gegen Rechtsextremismus* (Berlin: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, February, 2012), p. 6.

the day. Only then can an effective national action plan to combat extremism emerge. In short, it is necessary to examine the entire system, including the legal, economic, social, and political environment in which individuals are imbedded. We must try to understand and influence the concentric circles that begin with the individual person and radiate outward to encompass his or her family members, friends and contacts, and broader socio-cultural sphere.

Bernd Wagner of EXIT rightly criticizes Germany for lacking a national strategy to combat right-wing extremism.⁶ The only state government working on a recognizable overall strategy is that of Brandenburg, whose independent program, “Tolerant Brandenburg,” promotes three of the policy pillars noted earlier: victim counselling, mobile counselling services, and alliances against the far-right. A single individual, who enjoys the status of “state secretary” (or high-ranking civil servant), coordinates the inter-ministerial cooperative work and the interface with civil society. Brandenburg’s success is thus ultimately attributable to its former Representative for Foreigners, Almuth Berger, and the *Regionalen Arbeitsstellen für Bildung, Integration und Demokratie*, or Regional Centers for Education, Integration, and Democracy. However, an important pillar is missing from this program: the exit work component.

What conclusions can we draw from the successes of Brandenburg’s program and the deficiencies of others? For one thing, routine financial support of civil society services and activities in the states is generally necessary. In addition, regular state financial support is needed to coordinate the four pillars. Finally, the dismantling of previous institutional support, such as political adult education, live-in adult education centers, and youth association work, should be discouraged even when budgets are being cut elsewhere.

6 Bernd Wagner, *EXIT: Letzter Halt Ausstieg* (Berlin: Exit Deutschland, 2012), p. 13. Wagner speaks in this context about federal fragmentation.

The fight against right-wing extremism as a central goal of public policy ought to be exempt from budget cutting. It should never be forgotten that European unity is founded on shared values, above all the protection of social, political, and civil rights. Fascist movements across Europe are determined to undermine and destroy those values, and careful examination of their activities shows that they are starting to do exactly that. Thus, there is real danger that right-wing extremist movements will undermine the peace in Europe by pitting ethnic groups against one another. Only if the community supports programs to combat right-wing extremism can democratic values such as the protection of minorities, individual freedom, and equality be secured.

3.6 Labor-market and exit assistance

The FES-sponsored *Mitte* (Center) study shows that right-wing extremist attitudes among Germans grow stronger with repeated episodes of unemployment. At the same time, providing jobs is not enough by itself to induce individuals to leave the far right milieu. It is an unfortunate fact that not all employers are immune to right-wing extremist ideology; hence, they might not be willing to hire someone who is trying to break away from it. In any case, exit-willing individuals may find motivation to persevere in their job hunt because they long to create a more mainstream, socially-accepted lifestyle for themselves, which requires having a job, or at least an internship or apprenticeship. Furthermore, a regular daily routine can contribute to curtailing the behavior and dress that distinguishes far-right adherents and promotes their “bonding.”

In addition to a detailed analysis of the local situation, it is crucial to make a detailed survey of employment opportunities – or lack thereof – in the towns where exit-willing individuals live. Here, certain preliminary questions must be considered, such as how the community reacts to support programs for right-wing extremist youth, and what kinds of work opportunities are available for drop-outs. However those questions are answered, it remains true that case-by-case, personalized assistance and long-term professional support are essential to help most people to leave the far-right milieu permanently.

3.7 Involving new media

The pan-European exit assistance initiative should thoroughly examine both the opportunities and the risks posed by new media and social networks. Current trends and scene-typical developments can be observed here. On-line communication and networking are often the open door through which far-right ideologies and aficionados enter the lives of curious young people. Therefore, special projects are recommended at the European level, which would focus on these new media, perhaps finding ways to counter their pernicious influence.

3.8 Collegial collaboration

Practical experience suggests several important lessons concerning the situations of professionals who work with exit-willing individuals. In addition to providing competent assistance and support to such people, they should be on the alert for changes in other aspects of their clients' lives, as well as their own. Working collaboratively allows contact partners in the team to reflect upon their mental health situations and enjoy a collegial exchange of thoughts and ideas. Obviously, professionals in the field of exit-assistance need to have good general educations in addition to the specialized training that prepares them for the challenges of dealing with right-wing extremists.

4. Concluding remarks

Networking plays an important role in exit assistance work. Pan-European networks and an exchange of experiences by those working in the field in different countries are essential.⁷ At this point, the main objectives should be to share information on program implementation options and gather baseline data that will allow for country comparisons. The

7 Cf. the article by Harald Weirnböck in this volume.

wheel does not need to be reinvented, but national strategies need to be coordinated and developed at the international, federal, and local levels.

In the spirit of the philosopher Martin Buber, a first step would be to stimulate a genuine dialogue among all interested, involved, and affected citizens, professionals, and public representatives. Ever since the XENOS program began, we have moderated the network meetings for the Friedrich Ebert Foundation. That experience, among other factors, has led us to recognize that the networks and their activities work best if they receive external support. Their meetings, especially, should have moderators/facilitators from outside. Specifically, we champion the establishment of an enduring body charged with organizing joint dialogue meetings among stakeholders in the fight against far-right extremism. Such meetings would facilitate an exchange of ideas, strategies, and practical experiences, so as to better monitor and counter extremism at all levels of European society. Perhaps exit programs and labor-market integration will then be identified as valuable tools in this important fight.



Working groups at a conference organized by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Berlin to combat right-wing extremism.

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Appendices

RIGHT-WING
EXTREMISM
IN EUROPE

Analyses, Counter-strat
cient Exit

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