

Nora Langenbacher, Britta Schellenberg (ed.)

# IS EUROPE ON THE "RIGHT" PATH?

Right-wing extremism and  
right-wing populism in Europe



**FRIEDRICH  
EBERT**   
**STIFTUNG**

Forum Berlin

FES **Projekt**  
GEGEN  
RECHTS  
EXTREMISMUS



Nora Langenbacher, Britta Schellenberg (ed.)

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right-wing populism in Europe



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# Preface

Dear Readers,

Right-wing extremism is not a national phenomenon. Xenophobia, anti-Semitism and racism exist in many countries and the extreme right is continuously extending its cross-border networks. Attitudes towards parts of society which are based on the premise that humans are unequal, discriminating actions and structures, or open hatred and violence reflect an alarming extent of group-related enmity in many countries of Europe and worldwide.

As shown in a recent study by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung titled “Intolerance, Prejudice and Discrimination: A European Report<sup>1</sup>”, anti-democratic attitudes are dramatically spreading in European mainstream societies. According to this study by the University of Bielefeld, about 50 percent of respondents from eight European countries take the view that there are too many immigrants in their countries, and wish for an employment prerogative for locals in times of crisis.

In many places, right-wing extremists try to use these discriminating attitudes to establish themselves in politics and in society through different strategies and structures. They organize parades and revisionist commemorations, establish loose comradeships or mobilise voters to support their parties in entering parliament – unfortunately not without success. In recent years, Europe has rather seen a boost in right-wing extremism.

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1 German: “Die Abwertung der Anderen: Eine europäische Zustandsbeschreibung zu Intoleranz, Vorurteilen und Diskriminierung” (Zick et al., published by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2011).  
Download: <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/do/07908-20110311.pdf>

Particularly in times of crisis, right-wing extremists and right-wing populists in many places are trying to use the fears of European citizens to promote their “cause“ by providing simple answers to complex social challenges. As a result, not only were 29 right-wing representatives elected to the European Parliament in 2009, but in Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands, Austria and Eastern Europe, too, they scored in national elections with slogans of scapegoatism and exclusion.

What danger does the extreme right therefore pose? How does it show and organize itself in Europe and her regions? What manifestations and strategies can we identify and what counter-strategies can we develop? What role do politics and civil society play in the work against right-wing extremism and what are the next essential steps? Is Europe on the “right“ path?

These lead questions both shape and structure this anthology and form the basis for the work against right-wing extremism which the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) is deeply committed to. The central FES-Project “Combating right-wing extremism”<sup>2</sup> has therefore continuously worked for many years on different strategies for democracy and against right-wing extremism, and has offered dialogue platforms for experts and activists from the fields of science, politics and civil society. Additionally, the publications and studies of the FES serve to inform and shape political debates on a regular basis.

Since 2009, the international dimension of right-wing extremism constitutes an individual working line of this continuous work of the FES. Within the framework of the XENOS special programme “Ausstieg zum Einstieg”<sup>3</sup>, the German Federal Ministry for Labour and Social Issues, the European Union, and the European Social Fund assist the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in its efforts for a European debate and networking building.

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2 German: FES-Projekt “Auseinandersetzung mit dem Rechtsextremismus”.

3 German for “Quitting for a new start”.

With their help, two international large-scale conferences have been organized since 2009 with experts from all over Europe. Following a first conference in November 2009 focussing on analysing the problem by European countries and regions, an OPEN SPACE conference for democracy took place in November 2010 searching for joint socio-political solutions.

This anthology combines the insights gained at these events in the form of scientific analyses of manifestations of the extreme right in different parts of Europe. Additional articles document the resulting discussions and conclusions for the socio-political debate. The photos and images contained in this book demonstrate how dramatic this issue is, but as well document the extensive interest in and awareness of it, as well as the creativity of democratic resistance witnessed at our conferences.

This publication of the Project “Combating right-wing extremism” of the FES wishes to contribute to the socio-political debate on right-wing extremism as a threat to Europe’s democracies and societies. With this book, we would like to give constructive impetus for the fight against right-wing extremism, xenophobia, and racism, and for a Europe of democracy and solidarity. We of course hope that you will enjoy reading it.

Our heartfelt thanks go to Britta Schellenberg, co-editor and -author as well as to the other authors for their articles, along with thanks to all those involved in completing this publication. This anthology (in both German and English language) as well as other publications and information on the FES’ work for democracy and against right-wing extremism can be found online at <http://www.fes-gegen-rechtsextremismus.de>.

*Nora Langenbacher*  
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Forum Berlin, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung



# Introduction: An anthology about the manifestations and development of the radical right in Europe

## Goal, structure and content of this anthology

This book pools authoritative analyses by recognised scholars on manifestations, strategies and topics of the radical right<sup>1</sup> in the light of the increasing threat by right-wing extremism and right-wing populism to European democracies and societies. The anthology looks at different European countries and regions, giving an impetus for the development of effective counter-strategies.

The authors of the 13 country analyses address the structures of the organized radical right in Europe and analyse their topics and target groups. With a glance at the attitudes in the mainstream of society they elaborate on the question of whether and by which strategies right-wing populist and extremist players have been so far “successful”, and which role expanding trans-national networks play in this process. The articles at the beginning and at the end of this book address the title question, whether Europe is “on the ‘right path’”, and which socio-political steps are to be taken in order to maintain a democratic Europe based on solidarity.

As this book contains a collection of texts by different authors, the following chapters vary in style and approach. The first one is a political article written by Martin Schulz, Member of the European Parliament, on the basis of a speech he delivered at a conference of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. While Martin Schulz answers the question “Is Europe on the

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1 Defined by Michael Minkenberg: Thus, the radical right includes the extreme right, xenophobic right, populist right, and fundamentalist-religious right. Further on the concepts and terms used, please see the article by Minkenberg in this book, page 37.

‘right path’?” from the European policy point of view, the subsequent article by professor Michael Minkenberg introduces the topic perspective. By defining concepts and terms, this article provides a framework for the European analysis and the country studies in this anthology.

The book closes with two contributions addressing the question of which socio-political strategies result from the analysis on hand. They are based on discussions conducted with representatives from the fields of politics, science, and civil society at two international conferences hosted by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. These final articles aim to enrich the future academic and political debate about further steps to promote democracy and human rights throughout Europe.

## **Right-wing populism and right-wing extremism in Europe**

The analyses in this anthology make it clear that right-wing extremism and right-wing populism have regionally different characteristics while at the same time displaying similarities in terms of strategies and contents. In the following, some core similarities of the phenomena described in this anthology will be summarized since they are of central importance for an indispensable European debate. As a result, common topics, strategies and typical causes and prerequisites for the success of right-wing populist efforts can be elicited from the studies.

There are three core far-right topics and mobilisation strategies that constitute the main success factors of right-wing extremist and right-wing populist players: their attempt to make use of social issues, to picture politics per se as corrupt and to propagate ascriptions of national identity. Three related socio-political crises – described as the crisis of distribution and access, the crisis of political representation, and the crisis of identity<sup>2</sup> – point to unsolved problems of democracies, and at the same time remind us of the imperative of innovative and modern societies.

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2 See Frank Decker: Die populistische Herausforderung. Theoretische und ländervergleichende Perspektiven, in: Frank Decker (Hrsg.): Populismus in Europa. Bonn 2006, 9-32, p. 22.

## The radical right acts as a defender of current “social issues”– or: Right-wing extremism and right-wing populism as a result of the crisis of distribution and access

Analyses of right-wing extremism and right-wing populism in different countries show that the radical right appeals to those on the losing side of current social processes. Be it the *British National Party*, the *Progress Party*, or the *Danish People’s Party*<sup>3</sup>: the target groups always comprise people who are, in the course of economic and social processes of change, threatened by losses in terms of labour, income, prestige, access to education and leisure time. The main target groups in Western Europe are therefore people from the lower and lower middle class. Additionally, a broad middle class might also be a target group in Eastern Europe. This correlation is not new or unexplored. Eventually only a fraction of the population in European societies profits from the increasing liberalisation of the markets and global interconnectedness, while others feel barred from economic and technological gains.

Right-wing extremist and right-wing populist players make use of these fears of relegation and loss to act in many places as so-called advocates of the common people or of the losers of globalised economic processes. Despite the fact that not long ago the right-wing parties of today welcomed neo-liberal economic ideas (some of these parties, such as the Austrian *FPÖ*, continue to favour market liberalisation and medium-sized enterprises), today they propagate a “national and social” policy welcoming the welfare state taking care of (only) its ethnic-national citizens. This is reflected by slogans conjuring “Socialism” or by calls to “safeguard the welfare state“, or “jobs for Germans first“. It is especially in the Nordic states, where social justice is a highly cherished value, that the radical right aggressively criticises the dismantling of the welfare state. It is also a nostalgic glance to the past: A longing for the economically prosperous

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3 For further information on the listed parties and their abbreviations here and elsewhere in the text, please consult the chart on page 25.

times of the 1950s and 1960s, for a country where public welfare was about to be established, for a high level of employment, for progress, and – this is where the far right makes the connection – for an ethnically homogeneous society without immigrants. It is against this background that parties such as the *British National Party (BNP)* emerge as “representatives of the British working class”. In post-communist Eastern European countries the extreme-right’s call for state control over the liberalised market is much stronger than in the West.

Even if there is no direct causation between a low social status and the support for right-wing extremism, a strong relation between “subjective deprivation”, i.e. the subjective feeling of being unprivileged, and extreme-right orientation is documented.<sup>4</sup> In some population groups, the “subjective” feeling of being disadvantaged often has a real basis. It is not only since the financial and economic crisis that educationally deprived population groups from the lower classes have had to put up with heavy losses and with the deprivation of social prestige.<sup>5</sup> But while these deprived groups have so far traditionally voted for the left (see article on Sweden in this book), they have now lost confidence in leftist politics – not least because they were held responsible for the negative developments not only of the conservative, but also of the liberal and of the social democratic governments. In some countries, these groups today turn to radical-right parties (see article on Norway in this book).

As a result, the latest success of radical-right parties is also a result of a crisis of distribution. Voters act as “angry (young) (wo)men”, experienc-

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4 The correlation between economic deprivation and disintegration or their threat and extreme right attitudes is examined among others by the study “Die Mitte in der Krise. Rechtsextreme Einstellungen in Deutschland 2010” (Decker, Weißmann, Kiess, Brähler 2010) published by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.

5 This is reflected by the situation of unskilled people on the labour market: While the employment rate in the EU is 84 percent among the highly skilled, it is 70 percent among those with medium qualification, and 49 percent in the case of low-skilled people. See New Skills for New Jobs: Action Now. A report by the Expert Group on New Skills for New Jobs prepared for the European Commission. European Union 2010.

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=568&langId=en>



ing themselves more and more as marginalised groups. This crisis goes beyond the merely economic level, being therefore a “crisis of access”, too, extending to all aspects of life: Many economically deprived people have fewer possibilities to participate in social and cultural terms, and have poorer access to education.

### **Right-wing populists as advocates of the common people – or: Right-wing extremism and right-wing populism as a result of the crisis of political representation**

The second core topic or style element of the radical right in Europe is to disdain politicians, political parties, and democracy as such. Their slogans and campaigns challenge the fact of “the people” being represented by the politicians in power. They characterise them and other socio-political players as corrupt and not authentic and accuse them of “representing only their own economic interests” and of being “elitist”. By moaning about the population’s social problems they call for taking tough action in order to uphold the interests of the people. The so-called “party corruption” and “criminal foreigners” or “welfare parasites” are the established concepts of the enemy. At the same time, right-wing politicians, such as Jean-Marie Le Pen of France, draft the vision of something like a police state, where security and the fight against immorality are central issues.

Nonetheless, right-wing parties often present themselves as the “true voice” of the people and as representatives of “the man in the street”. In Switzerland, for instance, they emphasize their politics by cleverly orchestrated referendums such as that on “the minaret ban” (see article on Switzerland in this book). Pleas by the radical right for more direct democracy – and less parliamentarism – are not unusual in other European countries, either. Right-wing extremist parties in Western Europe, for instance, organize different initiatives against “Islam” and “the Muslims” on a regular basis, in particular against the building of mosques, which often interact with each other (see article on Germany in this book). The extreme right, however, varies in different European countries in terms of

its understanding of state and politics: While right-wing extremists in young democracies of Eastern Europe have a nationalist/fascist and communist past, and refer to authoritarian political ideas of the early 20th century (see articles on Poland and Hungary in this book), right-wing radicals in the old democracies (Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden in this book) assertively stand in the democratic tradition of their countries. Hence the *Swedish Democrats*, the *Danish People's Party* or Geert Wilders' *Party for Freedom* see themselves as the actual representatives of the democratic values of their country. Their campaigns making a stand against allegedly authoritarian Muslim immigrants discriminating against women are one example for their self-staging as "advocates" of liberal-democratic values. In doing so, the parties knowingly place themselves into the democratic discourse demanding freedom of opinion for themselves and attacking opponents as racists, denying them an equal participation in the country's political process.

By depreciating politics in general – especially with the reproach that "the people's" voice remains unheard by an elitist parliamentarism – right-wing players nourish anti-democratic and anti-parliamentarian feelings. They use people's frustration and disenchantment with the performance of the political system for their own purposes. Thus, in many countries, right-wing extremism is a product of a crisis briefly called a "crisis of representation" by political scientist Frank Decker.<sup>6</sup>

Following the assumption of a crisis of representation of democratic politics, it might be interesting to compare the voters of radical-right parties with each other. According to the above-described crisis of distribution, this firstly involves the losers in the current changes in society. Secondly, in some countries, it is striking that the number of young men among those voting for right-wing parties is above average.<sup>7</sup> The follow-

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6 See Frank Decker: Die populistische Herausforderung. Theoretische und ländervergleichende Perspektiven, in: Frank Decker (Hrsg.): Populismus in Europa. Bonn 2006, 9-32, p. 22.

7 In Austria, for instance, the right-populist FPÖ became strongest among the those in their thirties (Sept. 2008). In all, the party achieved 17 percent of the votes; among first-time voters (16 to 19 years) they attained 44 percent.

ing argument also supports the thesis of a crisis of distribution and representation being a cause for the right-wing's success. Young men feel adequately addressed by H.C. Strache (FPÖ, Austria) or Gábor Vona (*JOBBIK*, Hungary) leading very modern electoral campaigns (featuring visits to discos and raps in the case of Strache) and believe that they are able to come to grips with their precarious social situation.

### **Right-wing populists as “conveyors of meaning” or: Right-wing extremism and right-wing populism as the result of a crisis of identity**

The subject of “identity” or identity policy constitutes a third cultural topic and field of agitation for the right-wing extremists. It is especially connectable to the *mainstream* of society because it can be made an existential subject of debate in the first place and because it affects all members of (the majority) society: In times of rapid social changes, new global communication, information, and job opportunities, issues of identity become more relevant and pertain to everyone. While processes of change are mostly welcomed by some segments of the population, others feel overtaxed or simply reject them.<sup>8</sup> The latter are in danger of losing reference points for their identity by the perceived or actual deprivation or disintegration. This so-called “crisis of identity and meaning” in terms of the individual as well as the whole of society is taken up by right-wing players who offer a regressive utopia: They cling to the concept of nation and people, superelevating it and marginalizing everything that seems “alien”. The goal of right-wing radicals is an ethnically homogeneous society. Thereby, the right-wing utopia of a homogeneous community promises to resolve social and individual problems by excluding “the guilty” or “the others”. In this logic, all that is alien must be identified and ruled out in order to ensure the nation's/the people's survival.

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8 Britta Schellenberg, Dispersion and Differentiation: The Structures and Trends of the Radical Right in Europe, in: Bertelsmann Stiftung (ed.): Strategies for Combating Right-Wing Extremism in Europe. Gütersloh 2009, S. 531–546, p. 531.

Le Pen and the French *Front National* realised the significance of the identity issue for the right-wing radicals at a very early stage, and propagated the “white race” as a core concept of European identity (see article on France in this book). In this context, however, it must be pointed out that the reference to and the distinction or depreciation of the so-called “others” is also popular among different social forces.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, the definition of “others” is rather mutable and subject to the zeitgeist. In today’s Western Europe, it is “the Moslem” culture and religion in particular that are considered “others”. Anti-Semitism, however, continues to be one of the core elements of the radical right. Yet, it has different guises for different right-wing players: from open hatred calling for violence among the extreme right and the fundamentalist Catholic right (e.g. in Poland) to codes and secondary allusions (such as in the reference to the “American East Coast”) among the moderate right-wing radicals. In the Netherlands, Denmark, and Sweden, such developments are rather contradictory: They either exclude anti-Semitism or even seek proximity to Jews or the state of Israel. They recognise the Holocaust as a historic and national point of reference.

Along with the isolation of groups on the basis of their religious affiliation, “others” apostrophized as aliens comprise minorities such as Roma, disabled or homeless people, the poor or the unemployed. In Eastern Europe, the roster of enemy groups is clearly larger and they are rejected much more violently: Not only the Roma, but also Jews, ethnic minorities (such as the Turks in Bulgaria), and homosexuals are targeted by right-wing hatred (see articles on Bulgaria and Poland in this book).

Considering the theory of a crisis of identity as one of the causes for the right-wing radicals’ success, and their strategy of identity-offers based on exclusion, it becomes clear that, especially in the light of the high level

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9 See the studies by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung on extreme right attitudes in Germany 2006, 2008, and 2010. The most recent study is titled “Die Mitte in der Krise. Rechtsextreme Einstellungen in Deutschland 2010” (Decker, Weißmann, Kiess, Brähler 2010).

of prejudice against the so-perceived “others” as documented by the recent FES-study “Intolerance, Prejudice and Discrimination: A European Report”<sup>10</sup>, politics and society are facing an exigent challenge.

With a glance to Eastern Europe, the crisis of identity, as an explanatory approach, offers an interesting framework of analysis, since the processes of social change have been and are much more profound there: The often traumatic experiences of the Eastern European transformation after the end of the Cold War and of the collapse of the Soviet Union brought about social tensions and frustrations, political conflicts and crises of identity everywhere, leading, among others, to an increase of nationalism. People complain about solidarity having been eliminated and about an overall political alienation. Anxieties with respect to the new, accelerated, and global world are particularly widespread here.<sup>11</sup>

This overview of the core strategies and topics of the radical right suggests that the success factors of right-wing extremism are, among others, to be found within the unsolved problems and conflicts of our modern democracies: with the instrumentalisation of the crisis of distribution, representation and identity by right-wing extremists and right-wing populists. It will be decisive for Europe’s future development whether these crisis phenomena can be counteracted by enforcing social democracy, and whether it will be possible to react to the right-wing radicals’ attempts to profit from these crises, with active commitment against exclusion and right-wing extremism.

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10 In German: Die Abwertung der Anderen: Eine europäische Zustandsbeschreibung zu Intoleranz, Vorurteilen und Diskriminierung (Zick et al., published by Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung, 2011).

11 József Bayer: Rechtspopulismus und Rechtsextremismus in Ostmitteleuropa, in: Österreichische Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft (ÖZP), vol. 31, 2002 (3), p. 265–280.

## The role of the media, of the local level, and of international networks

Three further aspects responsible for the success or failure of right-wing extremism and right-wing populism in Europe shall be mentioned here: the role of the media, the significance of the local level, and the enhanced international interconnectedness of right-wing extremism.

### *The role of the media*

Looking at the interaction between the radical right and Europe's societies we should not forget about the central significance of the media in this debate. Not only representatives of democratic parties make use of the fact that the media strongly affect public and political debates. Extreme-right players have therefore emerged as media professionals in many places. They stage themselves to suit the media and utilise the media's natural interest in drama and conflict, not without success. The authors of this book mention the media's influence on the election success of right-wing extremist parties (see especially the articles on Bulgaria and the Netherlands in this book). Especially in countries where individual political players have a strong influence on the press and television stations (such as Italy and Bulgaria) the media can strongly affect the different political trends. The analyses of the Netherlands and Bulgaria trace the interaction of media attention to Wilders (*Party for Freedom*) and Siderov (*Ataka*) and their election successes. The open debate on Nick Griffin and his *British National Party (BNP)* in the British media (in particular his interview with BBC) rather seems to harm the *BNP* (see article on Great Britain in this book). If media companies ally with other players of society as in the case of Poland and the extreme right *Radio Maria*, it leads to an even more dramatic connection between mainstream society and the extreme right (see article on Poland in this book).

### *The significance of the local level*

The role of the local level in the radical right's development and success should not be underestimated. First, extreme-right outbreaks of violence and subculture activities can take place on a local level. Secondly, it is the local level where the right's electoral political success is rooted. Germany, for instance, has undergone an alarming development in recent years with respect to the sub-cultural "local" side of right-wing extremism. Not least because of the high pressure of repression on their structures, extreme-right organizations have become increasingly autonomous: They developed the concept of "comradeships" and "coalitions for action", loose associations of right-wing extremists that are active on a local as well as on a regional level, and the autonomous nationalists, young people dressed in black opposing society and its representatives in a violent way (see article on Germany in this book). Meanwhile, these groups exist in other countries, too, (e.g. the Czech Republic) and co-operate across borders (see below). In Eastern Europe, local paramilitary groups play a specific role. With the *Hungarian Guard* or the "Militia" for instance, the *Jobbik* party created an instrument to fight against, expel, and even kill the Roma population in particular. This "Militia" is especially active in rural areas and has spread in Eastern Europe in recent years. The existence of these paramilitary organizations shows that the radical right in Eastern Europe accepts violence more than the right in other parts of Europe.

The relevance of the local level, however, should not only be highlighted in terms of the subculture: Elections on a local and regional level are also crucially important for a long-term success in national elections. The subtle expansion of the radical right originating from the local level is best shown by countries where right-wing extremist parties have been successful only recently (see articles on Sweden and Great Britain in this book) or have not been successful on a regional level yet (see article on Germany in this book). In Italy, too, the regionally focussed *Legha Nord* constitutes a stable political force in the Italian party system with a blend of right-wing extremist ideology and regional chauvinism (see article on Italy in this book).

### *International networks of the extreme and the populist right*

Transnational processes of exchange and learning play an important role in the success of right-wing extremism and right-wing populism in Europe. Here, it is especially the subculture which is highly influenced by global or at least European right-wing extremist networks. Right-wing extremist music is listened to, produced, imitated, and adapted across national borders. Not only has the sheer amount of music available increased but it is also more easily accessible on the internet. Additionally, tourism to concerts and demonstrations links right-wing extremists across borders and results in international movements all over Europe. Thereby, the internet plays an increasingly important role in the radical-right scene: A seemingly endless number of web pages and internet forums arise as means of communication for political information and propaganda, and as a medium for music and fashion.

Nonetheless, the level of networking does not only increase in the sub-cultural milieu: The analyses in this book show that right-wing extremist parties and organizations look for international alliances through modern communication channels. In ideological terms, these transnational networks are based on the presumption of a similar collective identity between the “allies”. The essence of this “basic identity” is expressed by the following “14 words” formulated by David Lane, an American right-wing extremist, which have become a code and cult in the right-wing scene: *“We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children.”* Thus, right-wing extremists define their identity as “white” and people-related, believing it to be existentially threatened.

In Western Europe, jointly organized protests against “Islam” and “the Muslims” constitute the main focus of European party political activities. The alliance *“Cities against Islamization”* is an example of transnational cooperation comprising initiatives from Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Spain, Italy, France, the Netherlands, and England. With the help of



the “*Alliance of European National Movements*“, right-wing extremists additionally try to gain influence in the European Parliament and beyond. It comprises right-wing extremist parties from different European countries, but only the French *Front National*, the *British National Party*, and the Hungarian *Jobbik* have managed to enter the European Parliament so far.

Along with networking potential, however, there is sufficient potential for conflict that stands in the way of a joint ideology and of international affiliation: Along with continuous latent border conflicts (ownership claims of territories of a neighbouring country, in particular but not only in Eastern Europe), this mainly includes the depreciation of a potential partner of transnational exchange (e. g. of the Romanians by Italian right-wing extremists) as well as ideological differences (e. g. the varying significance attached to anti-Semitism and historical revisionism).

### **Conclusion: Identifying commonalities, perceiving differences**

The country analyses in this book show that right-wing populists and right-wing extremists are able to achieve partial successes in Europe (for recent electoral success see table 1). They highlight how strongly historical developments and current social processes of change affect their manifestation in different countries (in political terms: Eastern and Western Europe, but also in geographical terms: Northern, Southern, Western, and Central Europe). The articles also underline how important the regional context and particularities are for understanding right-wing extremism and right-wing populism.

Also, the analyses in this book show the extent of interlinkages between the different players of the extreme right in Europe. Therefore, a pan-European approach is both necessary and expedient when – in the light

**List of countries presented in this publication. Representation of right-wing extremist parties in the European and national parliaments.**

**Table 1**

	EP elections 2009	last national elections
Bulgaria (BG): Ataka	11.96 %, 2 seats	9.36 % (7 / 2009)
Switzerland (CH): Swiss People's Party (SVP)	*	28.9 % (10 / 2007)
Germany (de) National Democratic Party of Germany (NPD)	–	(municipal and regional election successes)
Denmark (DK): Danish People's Party (DPP)	15.3 %, 13 seats	13.9 % (11 / 2007)
Spain (ES)	–	–
France (FR): Front National (FN)	6.3 %, 3 seats	4.3 % (6 / 2007)
Hungary (HU): Jobbik	14.77 %, 3 seats	16.7 % (4 / 2010)
Italy (IT): Lega Nord (LN)**	10.2 %, 9 seats	8.3 % (4 / 2008)
Norway (NO): Progress Party (FRP)	*	22.9 % (9 / 2009)
the Netherlands (NL): Party for Freedom	17 %, 4 seats	15.5 % (6 / 2010)
Poland (PL)	–	–
Sweden (SE): Swedish Democrats (SD)	–	5.7 % (9 / 2010)
United Kingdom (UK): British National Party (BNP)	6.2 %, 2 seats	(municipal election successes)

\* non-EU

\*\* The extreme right *Alternative Sociale (AS)* and the *Alleanza Nazionale (AN)* have been amalgamated by Berlusconi to become the *Popolo della Libertá*.

of counterstrategies – it comes to the question whether “Europe is on the ‘right path’”. Here, it is of importance to pay attention to the above-mentioned European “crises” that serve, among others, as a basis for the radical right’s success and strategies. These and other conclusions drawn from the subsequent articles can also be found in the final chapters of this book, which focus solely on strategies.

If this anthology enhances the debate on right-wing extremism – up to now conducted mainly in national context – by adding a European dimension, if it triggers and contributes to a transnational analysis and if it enriches the search for common European strategies for democracy and against right-wing extremism, it will have served its purpose.

*Nora Langenbacher & Britta Schellenberg*

GEGEN  
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EXTREMISMUS



EUROPÄISCHE UNION



## Combating right-wing extremism as a task for European policy making<sup>1</sup>

As chairman of a large multinational group in the European Parliament, I am confronted in daily political life with the question that gives the present volume its title: “Is Europe on the ‘right’ path?” Sometimes in the European Parliament we have the feeling that Europe is more on the ‘right’ than on the ‘left’ path. Regrettably, this was illustrated by the most recent European elections in 2009. Right-wing extremism in Europe is a phenomenon we increasingly have to tackle in everyday parliamentary life.

### Right-wing extremists in the European Parliament

A fascist group was represented for the first time in the European Parliament in the previous electoral period. As a result, my colleague Kristian Vigenin, deputy chairman of our parliamentary group, was commissioned to direct an “Extreme Right Watch” Group. We set up this “observation centre” because racist, xenophobic and anti-Semitic statements have become part of daily affairs in the European parliament. At the beginning of this conference, the organizer, Ms. Langenbacher, stressed that anybody making this kind of statement at meetings organized by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung would be excluded from these events. This is not the practice, however, in the European Parliament: whether in the general assembly or in the corridors or committees, in the recent past such statements have not led to expulsion or sanctions. Meanwhile, such remarks have become so frequent that we have simply not been able to follow up who said what, and where and when, and to what extent this

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1 This article summarizes an opening speech delivered by Martin Schulz at the FES Conference “Is Europe on the ‘right’ path? Right-wing extremism in Europe” on November 30, 2009.

was covered by the rules of procedure. The new fascist parliamentary grouping perpetrated permanent breaches of convention in a way that has become systematic. When no sanctions were imposed for racist, xenophobic or anti-Semitic statements, they were presented as permissible and therefore no longer subject to prosecution or sanction in the future. By deliberate breach of taboos, racist, xenophobic and anti-Semitic remarks were thrust into normal daily parliamentary affairs. In our opinion, this is an extremely dangerous development.

## Success and failure of European defence mechanisms

I will now attempt to explain the problem of right-wing extremism in Europe and the creeping normalisation of extreme-right statements in politics from the perspective of everyday parliamentary affairs in the European Parliament. At the same time I will try to factor in the level of the national parliaments and governments in the European Union. We have come to accept that openly xenophobic, extremist or even anti-Semitic parties are part of EU governments without an outcry from the democratic camp. Yet the situation was different not long ago, in 2000, when Austrian Christian Democrat prime minister Wolfgang Schüssel invited Jörg Haider's party, the FPÖ, into the Austrian government. When Schüssel made Haider respectable in Austria, there was an outcry across Europe and the European Union imposed sanctions on Austria. At that time, the Austrian president of state, Thomas Klestil, from the Austrian People's Party, felt compelled to make Mr. Haider sign a declaration supplementary to the coalition treaty stating that the future government would uphold all European and international human rights conventions. This was a unique procedure: the president of a democratic country, an EU member state, having to specifically commit the governmental parties to these basic principles. The *Sonderpapier* that was added to the coalition pact in Austria in 2000 is actually what every democratic government has to commit to as a matter of course!

In Poland, when the *League of Polish Families* (LPR) received the culture minister's portfolio, the chairman of the party, Maciej Giertych, made the following remark during a debate in the European Parliament on the liberation of Spain, Portugal and Greece from the fascist dictators Salazar, Franco and the colonels in Athens: "We must build monuments to Franco and in Europe. These heroes protected our continent from Bolshevism." Mr. Giertych's son, deputy chairman of the LPR, was the former Polish culture minister who wanted to make creationism compulsory in biology textbooks and dismiss homosexual teachers from school teaching. Meanwhile, in Italy, during a debate in the Italian Parliament about the boat refugees in the Mediterranean, Umberto Bossi, chairman of one of the government parties, the *Lega Nord*, declared, "When I see those little boats, I want to hear the cannon roar."

At the beginning of this electoral period we anti-extreme-right members of the European Parliament successfully combined our forces – not without controversy – to prevent Jean-Marie Le Pen from becoming senior president of the European Parliament. Le Pen was legally convicted of hate crimes several times in France, and coined the phrase, "Auschwitz is a mere detail of world history" – to which his deputy, Bruno Gollnisch, added, "And a forgotten one to boot."

## **Avoidance and habituation in confronting right-wing extremism**

We have to record a disturbing process of habituation to the breaching of taboos – not merely in the extreme-right scene, but at the core of democratic institutions. This, in my opinion, is the really dramatic development in Europe. It is also dangerous for another reason: for some time now, West European politicians have sat back comfortably and tried to present the development of new anti-Semitism and racism as an Eastern European phenomenon. In their view, the expansion of the European Union has meant that immature democracies from central and eastern

Europe have been brought into the Union. For the moment, the argument goes, we have to live with the idea that in these societies the democratic institutions on one hand, and the population's democratic consciousness on the other, have not been as well developed as in the western countries of the EU. Consequently, we have to live for a while with phenomena that are against basic rights, anti-democratic, anti-Semitic, homophobic and Islamophobic.

I have rejected this kind of argumentation from the very start, because I am aware of the statistics: the biggest extreme-right-wing party in Europe is the *Front National* in France. In fact, its leader actually reached the second round of the presidential elections in 2002 and already gained a bigger share of the vote in the first round than the strife-ridden French left. Le Pen even won 18 percent of the vote in the second round against Chirac! – 18 percent for a man who claims that Auschwitz is a mere detail of world history! The situation in Belgium is similar: in Antwerp, the biggest city in Flanders, the biggest party is *Vlaams Belang*, which is openly xenophobic, racist and partially neo-fascist.

## **Right-wing extremism – a phenomenon across Europe**

Right-wing extremism is a European-wide phenomenon. We can ascertain a disturbing extent of anti-democratic attitudes – from the extreme-right-wing margins of society to the solid bourgeois centre – as well as a drastic rise in open manifestations of violent, aggressive extremism. The latter is dangerous, but identifiable and consequently easier to combat. What worries me more is the persistent, permanent breach of taboos that makes extreme-right-wing ideology respectable by clothing it in the garb of democratic legitimacy. I regard it as particularly dangerous when people who work in democratic institutions help towards making this ideology acceptable. The “minaret initiative” in Switzerland in November 2009 is a good example of this.



Attitudes like this, however, are barely quantifiable for researchers because in a large part of our society underlying fears can no longer be expressed, not even in opinion polls. In Switzerland these subterranean fears were channelled by the *Schweizerische Volkspartei* (Swiss People's Party), an openly xenophobic, far-right party led by Christoph Blocher, which is generally perceived as right-wing conservative. Its goal is to defend the "Christian West" and its values against the alleged threat of Islamisation. Poster campaigns such as that of the "black sheep" or the woman in a burqa standing in front of a minaret illustrate this in a deliberately shocking way. To quote Blocher, "We had the Turks at the gates of Vienna once, we don't need that again."

## The need for a broad alliance locally and across Europe

As democratic parties from the left, we are, together with the democratic parties of the centre and the christian social parties of the centre-right, not in as position to stop these parties that are called right-wing conservative but are actually extreme-right wing, in their campaign to oversimplify politics by fixating on fear. One of our greatest challenges is how to reach the people susceptible to this fear-fixated politics. How do we get to the Muslim-haters, the homophobes, the anti-Semites? This is a difficult question, but we have to tackle it.

After serving for years as mayor of a city on the Rhine, I am well aware of the challenges this issue poses for a politician. Back in 1989 was the first occasion when I had to contest an election against the *Republikaner* (Republicans) in my home city in North-Rhine Westphalia. For the first time, the *Republicans* fielded their own candidates right across the lists in two cities in the Aachen district. One of them was my home, an industrial city near Aachen with 37,000 inhabitants. Why did they choose to stand in our city? – because it was a place where, in the course of 6 months in 1989, the population of 37,000 was rapidly increased by the arrival of 1,000 refugees from Zaire. As a result, as mayor I had to organize the use

of school sports halls, homes for children and young people, sports club premises etc. to accommodate the refugees. This provoked an outcry in the city. The mood could be summed up by the angry question: “Why don’t you do anything against the ‘niggers?’”

At that time I was 33 years old, North-Rhine Westphalia’s youngest mayor and still active in the Young Socialists. I declared, “My duty is to follow the laws of the Federal Republic of Germany. As long as I am mayor of this town, the laws of the Federal Republic of Germany will be respected here. The law on accepting refugees does not require me to ask why somebody is coming here – other institutions are responsible for that. I am obligated to ensure that anybody who comes here is looked after.” The mayors of nearby towns pointed to my willingness to provide assistance, and kept away. The result was an accommodation project that stretched our capacities beyond the limit. Within a few weeks the *Republicans* had spotted the budding potential: they whipped up people’s fear of being “swamped by foreigners” in order to profit from a possible rise in xenophobia.

I stood up against this and attempted to discuss the issue with people, day and night. During the local elections in October 1989 we were eventually able to keep the *Republicans* out of the city council – but only because the churches and trade unions backed our campaign. The whole of public life was dominated by a single question. The so-called opinion makers stood up against the *Republicans* and supported me as mayor. A wrench occurred in the society of a small city where *everybody* – from the vicar to the trade union official, from the sports club chairman to the leaders of the opposition on the city council – said, “We’re not going to put up with that!” In other words, there was social mobilisation for the maintenance of shared basic values, and against racism. If this kind of social mobilisation works, it can shut out right wing extremists.

It does not work if the silent majority fails to get involved, or even goes as far as concealing personal opinion. This was the case with the opinion polls in Switzerland in 2009, when respondents in telephone surveys

said, “No, I don’t want anything to do with it,” and then went to the polling booths and said, “No to minarets!”

To combat right-wing extremism in Europe we need to be conscious of specific basic values – values that have to be regarded as inviolable across the spectrum from right to left! If these basic values are challenged, they have to be communally defended. The civilising advance of the European Union consists in its recognition and shared defence of precisely these basic values as common property. This applies to society as a whole, not just individual commissioned representatives. If we take this challenge seriously across every population group, across all social strata and across all the opinion makers from various social groupings, then we can keep Europe on the “right path”. If this fails, if parts of society do not fight back because deep down they secretly accept the theses of the right-wing extremists, or even agree with them, then the far right has already won.

## **We need a debate about values!**

The debate about our values is consequently our key task. This should not be delivered like a sermon, but should be the subject of everyday discussion. Article 1 of the German constitution states: The dignity of human beings is inviolable. Our ex-party chairman, Franz Müntefering, is fond of quoting former German president Johannes Rau, who pointed out that this does not mean, “The dignity of *German* people is inviolable.” Every citizen of our country who acknowledges the basic values of this country has an obligation to this particular phrase: The dignity of human beings is inviolable. It is easy to say this on a Sunday, but what matters is the Monday when you happen to meet your neighbour of colour, or a Muslim woman, a disabled person or anybody else from a minority obviously in need of protection by the strong majority. In a nutshell, civic courage. In my view, civic courage is one of the key values for protecting and implementing the aspiration, “The dignity of human beings is inviolable.”

Yet when do we actually discuss civic courage in this society? When do we discuss civic courage in any European society? The lack of social debate on basic values is something that increasingly characterises every European state – to a disturbing extent, I think. We do not talk enough about the values that should define our democratic society.

The extreme-right senses this and is launching an attack on democratic institutions. We have already seen this twice in the European Parliament when it tried to build its own parliamentary group. The far right wanted to have its own parliamentary group in a multinational parliament – whose existence is the expression of the will to institutionalise these common basic values – in order to destroy those very values. This reminds me uncannily of the situation in the Weimar Republic when the Nazi parliamentary group openly admitted that it wanted to use the instruments of Parliament to destroy democracy by means of that parliament. The goal of far-right parties in the European Parliament is to destroy the European Union. Fortunately, all their efforts to date to build a permanent parliamentary group have failed, either due to their own internal contradictions or simply because they are incapable.

## **Problems of the far right in Europe – opportunities for counter-strategies**

I would like to conclude with an example that can inspire hope. In 2007 a fascist group was formed in the European Parliament, led by Bruno Gollnisch, whom we mentioned above as describing Auschwitz as a detail of world history that could be forgotten. The group collapsed within its first year of existence because the deputy chairperson, Alexandra Musolini, refused to acknowledge an objection by the extreme-right-wing party *Romania Mare*, which also belonged to the fascist parliamentary group. *Romania Mare*, which stands for Greater Romania, protested against the “stigmatisation” of Romanians in Italy and their being treated as equivalent to Roma. This clearly illustrates that the building of an international grouping of ultranationalists does not work.

This is just the point where we can intervene to make such parties identifiable as extremist, ultranationalist, anti-Semitic, xenophobic, anti-Muslim and homophobic. We can record that to date these parties have barely been able to network in the political arena in such a way as to enable them to apply the instruments of a transnational democracy against the transnational democracy itself. This also reveals an opportunity that we have to grasp. In saying this, I certainly do not want to underplay the networking of violence-prone and flexible fascist groups that is already in existence and has the capacity to mobilise relatively fast in free Europe. Obviously, we have to react to this as well.

In the democratic spectrum we have a great opportunity: we can stop the forward march of these groups by separating out individual groups and exposing their internal contradictions, along with advancing clear demands for a decisive line of defence for the basic democratic values of everybody. These are the main starting points that we, as the Social Democratic grouping in the European Parliament, want to implement along with the other democratic parliamentary groups.



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## The radical right in Europe today: Trends and patterns in East and West

*“The spectre of Fascism is constantly hovering over America, but always seems to land in Europe.” (Tom Wolfe)*

Tom Wolfe’s dictum is indeed true: more than sixty years after the end of the Second World War, with Europe largely reunited, radical-right-wing, ultra-nationalist and xenophobic movements and parties have become part of the normal political scene. While no significant far-right party has emerged in the United States, the phenomenon seems to be multiplying in Europe. Countries such as the Netherlands and Bulgaria, which have long been distinguished for their lack of such parties, are now following the general European trend. Especially noteworthy in this respect is that a variety of radical-right-wing movements and parties can be seen in the new EU member countries in central and eastern Europe – and this despite the fact that immigration, the key topic of the West European far right, is not yet on the agenda here at all. By ‘yet’, I mean that something is changing in the new EU member states. My analysis will focus on this East-West relationship of the European far right. It will demonstrate that we are concerned with a large variety of widely different ideological and organizational forms of right-wing radicalism that require a differentiated approach.

### ***Key insights on the topic***

1. Present-day European right-wing radicalism is a *modern* phenomenon that has undergone several phases of renewal. These phases were either visible as the consequence of modernisation spurts in postwar Western societies, or appeared as newly constituted forms in the wake of the regime changes in Eastern Europe.
2. Present-day right-wing extremism in Europe is an *international* phenomenon that should always be examined comparatively. This is not an argument against country-specific approaches, but against studies whose criteria derive from national traditions rather than comparative concepts.

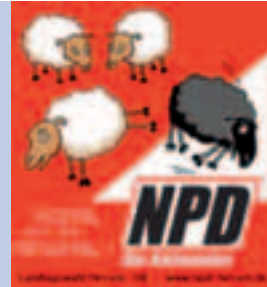
## **The term 'radical right'**

To start with, I would like to propose a definition of right-wing radicalism based on modernisation theory, which refers to specific mechanisms and semantics of inclusion and exclusion. Ultimately, these arise from an exaggerated, radical concept of nation as the primary We-group that exhibits a tendency to closure, particularly in periods of accelerated social and cultural change. I define right-wing radicalism as a political ideology or tendency based on ultra-nationalistic ideas which tends to be directed against liberal democracy – although not necessarily directly or explicitly so. The ultra-nationalist core of radical-right-wing thought consists of the fact that in the construction of national affiliation, specific ethnic, cultural or religious criteria of inclusion or exclusion are accentuated, condensed into collective ideas of homogeneity and linked to authoritarian political models. In other words, this is top-down politics claiming to act in the name of the people. The *Schweizer Volkspartei* (SVP) already gave us a vivid preview of what this can look like some years ago. The events in Switzerland show how close we are to a development that underscores the dramatic import of the question “Is Europe on the ‘right path?’” – although the label ‘right-wing extremist’ certainly does not apply to everybody who voted for banning minarets in November 2009.





Election poster of the SVP:  
 "People's initiative for the deportation of criminal foreigners. Creating security."



Election poster of the NPD:  
 "Social must be national!  
 The Nationals."

This poster (on the left) comes from the election campaign for the Swiss National Council in 2007. The legend reads: "People's initiative for the deportation of criminal foreigners." This draws a clear demarcation line between "inside" and "outside": there is a boundary between those who belong inside – the white sheep – and those who do not belong inside – the black sheep. The poster has become an export hit. The idea was adopted by a German party with which Mr. Blocher (the SVP leader – *editor's note*) certainly did not want to be associated; in fact, he sued the NPD for plagiarism. The NPD had copied Blocher's poster for the state elections in Hesse in 2008. The Hessian National Democrats omitted the criminal foreigners and concentrated instead on the slogan "Social must be national!" – i.e., they linked social issues with nationalism. This is a fairly old phenomenon in the history of 20th century radical-right-wing movements.

### Advantages of the term "right-wing radicalism"

My concept of right-wing radicalism differs from other commonly used concepts in several respects, without excluding them as variants of right-wing radicalism. The term *fascism*, for example, refers to specific histori-

cal phenomena.<sup>1</sup> In my definition it represents a subgroup and cannot be used as a synonym for right-wing radicalism because it only concerns a group of the radical-right-wing that relates explicitly to these specific historical models. Conversely, *right-wing populism* is a category that often remains analytically unspecified in the definitions, and is highly inclusive, with movements such as the German *Republikaner*, the Italian *Forza Italia*, the *BNP* in the UK, the Canadian *Reform Party* and the American *Ross Perot* ranked side by side.<sup>2</sup> However, I would argue that right-wing populism is rather an expression of a political style – transcending party boundaries, perhaps even partially transcending camps – and in this respect is not useful for the analysis of specific groups. I would distinguish the term *right-wing extremism* – which is particularly popular in Germany – from my concept of right-wing radicalism, because in Germany at least it often includes an anti-constitutional element<sup>3</sup> that involves interpretation and exclusion on a state-operated normative basis: an extremist is somebody who positions himself or herself against the *free democratic constitutional order* and outside the democratic consensus. Perhaps this definition makes sense when state authorities are concerned with the phenomenon, but sociologists and political scientists should not be so quick to let the state determine who and what should be analysed.

My argument is that right-wing radicalism occupies social space in both organizations and media, and in orientations and environments within the population. The concept of right-wing extremism held by the German secret service, the *Verfassungsschutz*, does not cover the latter – and definitely should not cover it. In this context, organized right-wing radicalism should be differentiated yet again with regard to its organizational formation – and this should be done using the criteria of party or non-

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1 Griffin, Roger. *The Nature of Fascism* (New York: St. Martin's Press 1991).

2 Decker, Frank. *Parteien unter Druck. Der neue Rechtspopulismus in den westlichen Demokratien* (Opladen: Leske + Budrich 2000).

3 Backes, Uwe and Jesse, Eckard. *Politischer Extremismus in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung 1989); Backes, Uwe and Jesse, Eckard. "Die 'Extremismus-Formel' – Zur Fundamentalkritik an einem historisch-politischen Konzept." *Jahrbuch Extremismus und Demokratie* 13 (Baden-Baden: Nomos 2001) 13- 29.

party forms. Again, the non-party forms of the radical right should be further distinguished according to the degree of organization. On the one hand are manifestations that take the form of movements, that is, organizations or ‘networks of networks’ that are not highly structured and not geared towards elections or public offices, but nonetheless aim to mobilise the public in general and develop a specific mobilisation potential in particular. On the other hand, there is a conglomeration of small groups in the sense of a subcultural environment. This operates relatively autonomously from larger groups, organizations and parties, and is more violence-prone than groups on the other two levels.

### **Phases of right-wing radicalism in Western Europe: Reinterpreting old political concepts**

Three phases of radical-right-wing mobilisation can be distinguished in Europe (and North America) after the end of the right-wing dictatorships of the interwar period of the 20th century:

- 1) The immediate postwar period (McCarthyism in the USA, Poujadism in France, SRP und DRP in the Federal Republic of Germany, MSI in Italy);
- 2) The 1960s and early 1970s (Wallace movement in the USA, NPD in the Federal Republic of Germany, Powellism and the *National Front* in the UK);
- 3) The 1980s and 1990s, when radical-right-wing parties distinct from their predecessors were established in almost all the democracies (see Table 1 below).

In this context we can speak of a renewal of right-wing radicalism after 1968. It can be observed on both the ideological and the organizational level.

## Ideological and organizational renewal after 1968

***Ideological renewal:*** From an ideological viewpoint, the concept of “ethnopluralism”, which contrasts with the traditional, biologically based hierarchy of racial differences, has spread in Western Europe since the 1970s. Yet at the same time it accentuates the incompatibility of cultures and ethnicities, which not infrequently leads to a naturalisation of social relations. Ethnopluralism is therefore an updated defensive strategy against immigration and integration.

The philosophical circles, political entrepreneurs and think tanks of the “New Right” have played a particular role in the ideological renewal. This New Right is notable for its efforts to develop a counter-discourse to the “ideas of 1968”. The key point here is the attempt to initiate a “culture war from the right” and cultural hegemony in the pre-political arena. This “culture war” was closely linked to a political vision of Europe that understood Europe as a unified cultural space. Based on the slogan of the “third way”, it was directed against both the capitalist USA and the communist Soviet Union. The radical right gave these opponents the joint label “vodka-Coke imperialism”.

At the level of discourse between parties, we should emphasise that hardly any of the present-day radical-right-wing parties presents clearly dictatorial or autocratic political concepts. This applies most of all to the highly successful parties in Belgium, Austria, France and Italy. They do not want to abolish democracy but to reinterpret it into an “ethnocracy” in their sense of the term. Almost all the parties share an exclusive concept of the nation. With slogans such as “Les Français d’abord!” and “Deutschland den Deutschen”, they aim to link affiliation to the nation, and to tie rights to participate in the goods and services of the system, in particular the welfare state, to ethnic criteria. These slogans differ from earlier demands by groups such as *Algérie française*, or the NPD call of the 1960s, “Breslau, Königsberg, Stettin – German cities just like Berlin!” In the case of the German parties, however, revanchist ideas of a return of

lost territories still persist. The French *Front National* is the most advanced party of the ideological renewal. It has come to terms with the loss of Algeria and has adopted populism from the Poujadism of the 1950s, but not Poujarde's anti-modern economic programme.

**Organizational renewal:** The ideological renewal is accompanied by an organizational renewal. A wave of newly-founded radical-right-wing parties and groups can be observed in almost all West European democracies since the mid-1980s. Between 1965 and 1995, 19 far-right parties were established in Western Europe. From the beginning of the 1980s, half of these parties achieved an average of more than 4 percent in national elections. The electoral successes of individual parties vary, at times considerably, depending on the political culture of the countries and the opportunity structures.

## Factors for the success of the radical right

We can generally say that far-right parties in Europe were successful in situations where they succeeded in creating the following “renewal cocktail”, consisting of three elements:

1. Modernisation of their ideology and strategy (renunciation of fascism, biologicistic racism and open hostility to democracy), as well as
2. adaptation to the political opportunity structures while preserving connectivity to the idea of the nation and, resulting from this
3. the development of an individual profile in distinction to other political players. This has succeeded better in France than in Germany, because in France there is apparently more scope for this type of delimitation strategy in the sense of a populist ultra-nationalism while such a strategy was more severely discredited in Germany during the postwar development and has consequently constricted the political space for parties of this kind.

**Election results of radical-right-wing parties (%) in selected EU member countries, national parliamentary elections (averages) and election to European Parliament (EP) 2009\***

**Table 1**

	1980– 1984	1985– 1989	1990– 1994	1995– 1999	2000– 2004	2005– 2009	EP 2009
Belgium (B)	1.1	1.7	6.6	19.9	13.8	14.0	10.1
Denmark (DK)	6.4	6.9	6.4	9.8	12.6	13.9	14.8
Germany Federal Republic (D)	0.2	0.6	2.3	3.3	1.0	2.1	1.7
France (F)	0.4	9.9	12.7	14.9	12.4	4.7	6.3
Great Britain (GB)	-.	0.6	0.9	-.	0.2	0.7	8.3
Italy (I)	6.8	5.9	17.8	15.7	4.3**	8.3**	10.2**
Norway (N)	4.5	8.4	6.0	15.3	14.7	22.5	--
Austria (A)	5.0	9.7	19.6	24.4	10.0	28.2	17.8
Sweden (S)	-.	-.	4.0	-.	1.5	3.0	3.3
Switzerland (CH)	3.8	6.3	10.9	9.3	1.3	30.0	--
<b>Average (Ø)</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>8.7</b>	<b>10.4</b>	<b>7.2</b>	<b>12.7</b>	

The following parties were included in the calculations:

Belgium: *Vlaams Blok, Front National*; Denmark: *Fremskridtsparti, Dansk Folkeparti*; Germany: *Republikaner, DVU, NPD*; France: *Front National, Mouvement National Républicain*; UK: *British National Party, National Front*; Italy: *Movimento Sociale Italiano, Alleanza Nazionale, Movimento Sociale-Fiamma Tricolore, Lega Nord*; Netherlands: *Centrumpartij, Centrumdemocraten, List Pim Fortuyn, Geert Wilders PVV*; Austria: *FPÖ, BZÖ*; Sweden: *Ny Demokrati, Sverigedemokraterna, Nationaldemokraterna*;

\* Minkenberg, Michael. "Rechtsradikalismus/Rechtsextremismus". Kleines Lexikon der Politik. Ed. Nohlen, Dieter. 3rd revised ed. (Munich: Beck 2003), 425–431. <http://electionresources.org/> (last accessed: 17.7.2010).

\*\* without AN, but incl. *Lega Nord, Movimento Sociale Fiamma Tricolore, Mussolini, Rauti*

## The players of the radical right in Western Europe

However, we should differentiate and supplement the field of the radical right in Europe yet again, because in terms of organizational form we are not only concerned with parties, and not only with a single ideological type. According to which figures are targeted for exclusion in radical-right-wing discourse, we can identify different ideological playing cards (see below Table 2, first column):

- an autocratic-fascist right wing characterised by its ideological proximity to the fascist and autocratic regimes of the interwar period;
- a racist or ethnocentric right wing distinguished by an agenda of ethnic segregation and the belief in the superiority of their own respective ethnicity or by an “ethnopluralist” argument for the incompatibility of cultures and ethnicities;
- an authoritarian-populist right wing that is less clearly defined than the other variants but is characterised by internally authoritarian structures focused on a charismatic leader and some kind of populist discourse that excludes specific groups; and finally
- a religious-fundamentalist right wing that uses primarily religious argumentation to defend the “purity” and superiority of its own culture or own people.

All these variants are dominated by an anti-pluralist concept of nation that aims for internal homogeneity and/or communitisation. All the variants also display a populist style targeted against the established elites. There are undoubtedly overlaps and fluid transitions in the different individual versions. If we add the three organizational types to this to achieve a rough structuring of the field of players and organizations in the radical-right-wing “family of players”, the result is a matrix with ideological and organizational variations; in Table 2 this is applied to selected West European countries.

**Players in the West European radical-right family (1990s)**  
**(respective countries abbreviated as in Table 1 shown in brackets)**

**Table 2**

	Party and election organizations	Social movement organizations (SMO)	Subcultural environments
Fascist/autocratic right	NPD/DVU (D) MSI/AN (pre-'95)(I) MSFT (I) BNP (GB)	ANS/FAP, NPD (D) Den Danske Forening (DK) FANE (F)	neo-Nazis (all) skinheads (all) "Kameradschaften" (D) Dansk Front/ White Pride (DK) FNE (F)
Racist/ethnocentric right	Vlaams Blok/Belang (B) NPD/DVU (D) Republikaner (D) Dansk Folkepartiet (DK) Front National (F) Lega Nord (I)	ANS/FAP (D) NPD/DVU (D-Ost)  Aarhus Mod Moskéen (DK)	Neo-Nazis (all) skinheads (all) "Kameradschaften" (D) GUD (F)
Authoritarian-populist right	FPÖ/BZÖ (A) MSI/AN (from '95) (I)		
Religious-fundamentalist right		New Era (DK) Comités Chrétienité-Solidarité (F)	

*Abbreviations/translations:*

- AN: Alleanza Nazionale (National Alliance)
- ANS: Aktionsfront Nationale Sozialisten (National Socialist Action Front)
- BNP: British National Party
- BZÖ: Bündnis Zukunft Österreich (Alliance for Austria's Future)
- DVU: Deutsche Volksunion (German People's Union)
- FANE: Fédération Action National-Européenne (Nationalist European Action Federation)
- FAP: Freiheitliche Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (Free German Workers' Party)
- FNE: Faisceaux nationalistes européennes (Nationalist European Fascists)
- FPÖ: Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (Austrian Freedom Party)
- GUD: Groupe Union Defense (Union Defence Group)
- MSI: Movimento Sociale Italiano (Italian Social Movement)
- MS-FI: Movimento Sociale Fiamma Tricolore (Social Movement-Tricolour Flame)
- NPD: German National Democratic Party



## Variations in the radical right in Western Europe

The groupings vary in strength in the different countries. In comparing the relative strengths of individual types of organization in Western Europe, a pattern emerges that we shall briefly summarise here. Firstly, there is a group of countries where the radical-right party sector is strong but the movement sector rather weak. This includes especially Denmark, Austria, France, Italy and Belgium (taking into account that in Belgium the *Vlaams Blok/Vlaams Belang* does not stand for election in the Walloon part of the country, and consequently only the election results in Brussels and Flanders are counted). In contrast, Germany, the UK and Sweden make up a group of countries where the situation tends to be reversed: a weak or fragmented party sector corresponding with a strong movement sector or environment of violence.

As I have shown elsewhere<sup>4</sup>, these variations can be better explained by cultural than by structural factors. All four countries with strong radical-right party sectors are largely Catholic – in the case of Denmark, Protestant – and exhibit a mainly cultural concept of nation. Additionally, in these countries, Islam – a non-Christian religion – forms the second-largest religious community. Conversely, the three countries with weak party and strong movement sectors are largely Protestant and historically influenced by an ethnic image of the nation. This is confirmed once again in comparing East and West Germany: in the new Federal German states (formerly part of the socialist German Democratic Republic – *editor's note*), which can be categorised as Protestant or even completely non-ecclesiastical, the movement sector is particularly distinctive, whereas the party sector is especially strong in the states of former West Germany, particularly in the predominantly Catholic south of the country.

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4 Minkenberg, Michael (2003a): 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, Nr. 2, S. 149–170; Minkenberg, Michael (2008): *The Radical Right in Europe: An Overview*. Gütersloh: Verlag Bertelsmann Stiftung.

In comparing these countries, the impact of structural and institutional factors such as polarisation in party competitions or election systems (proportional representation or majority vote) is less clear. Under the political opportunity structures the reaction of other political players to the radical right has a bigger influence than factors like the election system. Repression or exclusion constrains radical-right parties but cannot prevent the movement sector from developing comparatively strongly. This raises important questions about the correct approach to right-wing radicalism and the choice of methods in relation to the intended goals.

## **Eastern Europe: Authoritarian past and radical system change**

The perspective on Eastern Europe is somewhat marred by the fact that here we are analysing new democracies that, unlike the West European countries, have not been intensely researched previously. Nonetheless there is now a series of data providing information on the extent to which the phenomena in Eastern Europe are comparable with those in Western Europe. The starting point for this observation is that we are dealing with fairly young democracies, generally without a history of democracy. Aside from the Czech Republic and Slovakia, all the post-Warsaw Pact states have an authoritarian past, even in the interwar years. Most of the East European countries experienced a radical change of system with the construction of relatively new political structures including open party competition.

## **Eastern Europe – Regional comparison**

In Eastern Europe one should look both at the regional specificities of the phenomenon and its causes, and at its qualitative and quantitative variance in the era of system change and consolidation of young democracies. For example, the spectrum of average radical-right-wing election successes in Eastern Europe fluctuated considerably in the 1990s and shortly afterwards.

**Election results of radical-right parties (%) in selected Eastern European countries: national parliamentary elections 1990–2004 (averages) and election to European Parliament 2009<sup>6</sup>**

**Table 3**

	1990–1994	1995–1999	2000–2004	2005–2009	EP 2009
Bulgaria (BG)	-.-	-.-	-.-	8.7	11.9
Poland (PL)	14.1	8.0*	7.9	11.1	1.5
Romania (RO)	5.8	9.2	20.9	3.2	8.6
Slovakia (SVK)	5.4	9.1	7.0	11.7	5.5
Slovenia (SLO)	n.a.	n.a.	4.4	5.5	2.9
Czech Rep. (CZ)	6.8**	6.0	1.1	-.-	-.-
Hungary (H)	0.8	5.5	4.5	1.7	14.8

The following parties were included in the figures: Bulgaria: Ataka; Poland: KPN, ZChN, LPR, NOP (EP 2004); Romania: PUNR, PRM; Slovakia: SNS; Slovenia: SNS; Czech Rep.: SPR-RSC; Hungary: MIÉP, Jobbik.

\* estimated vote share for the ZChN and KPN, which contested in 1997 as partners in the Solidarnosc AWS electoral alliance (overall result: 33.8%)

\*\* Czech National Council

Source: see Table 1.

The success of radical-right parties in East Europe indicates the following regional specificities:

- There were no significant radical-right parties in the Baltic countries (and in Bulgaria up until the emergence of *Ataka* in the June 2005 elections), although the conditions for them were definitely favourable.
- In the Czech Republic, support for the Republicans almost totally evaporated at the end of the 1990s.
- In Hungary the decline of Csurka's *Truth and Justice Party* (MIÉP) and, more recently, the successful emergence of *Jobbik* (17 percent of the vote in the 2010 parliamentary elections) indicates an interchange in the radical-right party camp.
- Conversely, in Romania and, to a lesser extent, Poland, extreme-right parties, taken together, have frequently totalled percentage results in double figures, achieving unprecedented electoral success.

- The situation in Poland is particularly fluid. The restructuring of the party system and reorganization and renaming of individual parties are on the agenda. Additionally, we should emphasise the specifically Polish feature of the presence of clerical-nationalist parties. In the period from the Polish parliamentary elections of 2001 to the elections of 2007 the newly founded religious-fundamentalist *League of Polish Families* (LPR) was represented in parliament. The party was oriented to the right-wing ideologue of the interwar years, Roman Dmowski, and is linked to the ultra-Catholic anti-Semitic radio station, *Radio Maryja*. The LPR also draws on the tradition of older radical-right parties such as *ZChN*, *ROP* and *SN*.

## Radical-right players in Eastern Europe

In evaluating election success we also have to distinguish which type of party within the radical-right camp we are dealing with.

- In Romania up until EU accession, there was a powerful autocratic-fascist right wing borrowing from the ideology of fascist and right-wing authoritarian regimes of the interwar period, but it has since suffered considerable losses.
- The right-wing parties in Hungary and Czechoslovakia, Slovakia and Slovenia are less fascist or nationalist-communist and rather more ethnocentric/racist.
- In Poland there is also a religious-fundamentalist tendency.

Aside from this, it is important to make the organizational distinction we have already mentioned between parties, movements and subcultural environments. There are undoubtedly overlaps and fluid transitions in individual cases, especially with regard to historical orientations (fascist/nationalist-Communist) and present-day orientations. The table below gives an overview of radical-right players in Eastern Europe:

**Dominant players in the radical-right family in Eastern Europe (post-1989):  
Russia (R), Romania (RO), Poland (PL), Czech. Rep. (CZ), Hungary (H)**

**Table 4**

Alignments of the radical right	Parties / Election campaign organizations	Movement organizations	Subcultural environments
Fascist-autocratic right	R: LDPR CZ: SPR-RSC H: MIÉP	R: Pamyat, RNE PL: PWN-PSN, PNR	Skinheads
Ethnocentric/racist right	PL: KPN, SN, SO CZ: SPR-RSC H: MIÉP	RO: Vatra Romaneasca PL: PWN-PSN, Radio Maryja	Skinheads
Religious-fundamentalist right	PL: ZChN, LPR	PL: Radio Maryja	

*Abbreviations:*

- KPN: Konfederacja Polski Niepodległej (Confederation for an independent Poland)
- LPR: Liga Polskich Rodzin (League of Polish Families)
- MIÉP: Magyar Igazság és Élet Pártja (Hungarian Justice and Life Party)
- MPR: Miscarea pentru Romania (Movement for Romania)
- PDN: Partidul Dreapta Nationala (National Right Party)
- PNR: Polish National Rebirth
- PRM: Partidul Romania Mare (Party for Greater Romania)
- PSM: Partidul Socialist al Muncii (Socialist Workers’ Party)
- PUNR: Partidul Unitati Vatra Romaneasca: Romanian Cradle
- ZChN: Zjednoczenie Chrześcijańsko Narodowe (Christian National Union)

Unlike the party spectrum, the sector of radical-right movements and small groupings in Eastern Europe has largely not been researched, and there is very little reliable information available. What exists, however, conveys a picture of a lively and to some extent violent movement sector in most of the countries in the region. This sector is heavily influenced by certain key organizations such as *Vatra Romaneasca* in Romania or the *PWN-PSN* and *PNR* in Poland, as well as the *Hungarian Guard* (which is linked to the *Jobbik* Party). The ideology of these groups can be classified largely as fascist-autocratic. Aside from this, we should mention “ideas

generators” such as the ultra-Catholic radio station *Radio Maryja* in Poland, which has been broadcasting since the mid-1990s. Along with its standard Catholic messages, this station reaches several million listeners with its religious-fundamentalist, anti-modern, nationalist, xenophobic and periodically anti-Semitic content. Beyond these organizations there is a growing scene of violent right-wing groups and skinheads. For example, in Polish cities there are regular gatherings of hundreds of militant supporters, while anti-Semitic or fascist graffiti on buildings is not an unusual sight. In the Czech Republic and Hungary there is also a scene of violence-prone right-wing extremists who often seek out Roma as victims and can count on a certain degree of sympathy among their fellow-citizens. The Hungarian skinhead scene was estimated at around 4000 supporters in the 1990s.

## Comparing Eastern and Western Europe

The dominant radical-right forces in the East European countries differ from the majority of Western variants with regard to both organization and ideology:

The Eastern European radical right is less developed organizationally than its Western counterpart – a fate it shares with most of the political parties in the region. Consequently, we should not confine our view of this phenomenon only to the right-wing parties, but should also consider their relationship to the movements and environments of the far right. From this perspective we can clearly see that the extreme-right party sector – assessed both in terms of degree of electoral success and organization – in the consolidated democracies of Eastern Europe (the Baltic states, Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic etc.) is weaker than in most Western democracies, notably Austria, Belgium and France.

On the other hand, it is difficult to estimate the militancy and violent tendencies in the movements and small groups sector in Eastern Europe. It seems to be at least as extensive as in those western countries where it is particularly prevalent (Germany, Sweden, USA). In this context the top country on the international list seems to be a non-EU country, Russia, whose quality of democracy is open to question in any case.

The radical right in Eastern Europe is more oriented to the past than its western counterpart, which means it is more anti-democratic and more militant. In most of the countries where democracy is not yet “the only game in town” (Juan Linz), this opens up opportunities to the radical-right-wing that it does not have in the West.

At the same time the political space is relatively constricted, at least for radical-right parties, because nationalism pervades the ideology not only of the right-wing parties but of most of the mainstream players as well. This can be ascribed largely to the process of nation building in Eastern Europe, the dominant concept of nation and the special circumstances of regime change after 1989.

In large parts of the region, national consciousness crystallised without the state; the ethnic idea of the nation evolved as the dominant type. State continuities are consequently of shorter duration than for most Western European states, and have developed with great variations (e.g., with Romania and Hungary at one pole and the Baltic states or Ukraine at the other). Another feature of post-socialist Europe to be highlighted is the complex configuration of nations between nation building processes, national minorities on home territory, and groups from the home nation in “external” regions. In some states like Hungary and Romania they play an important role, not only for the radical right.

Alongside this, specific cultural factors have their effect on the qualitative impact of the radical right. In Poland the importance of Catholicism means there is the additional variant of religious-fundamentalist organizations. The Catholic Church's ambivalent role towards anti-Semitism may help to explain why the election results for far-right parties in Poland were fairly high until recently, although the general context was not particularly favourable.

Finally, fascist-autocratic parties tend to dominate the far-right scene in countries where regime conflict has not been resolved (Russia; Romania until the beginning of the 21st century).

## Conclusion

Comparative research on right-wing radicalism across Europe offers revealing perspectives on the functioning of established and new democracies, and the degree of threat from the radical right. In general, a comparative treatment offers perceptions particularly in the field of radical-right-wing players and groups and their supporters – about the different impacts in the comparison of individual countries, for instance. It is also very important to look at the radical-right's interaction with its environment – for example, the possibility of its being tolerated by other players in the democratic spectrum. There has, in fact, been a shift here. Various studies show that from the 1980s up to the present day, the framework conditions have shifted towards a higher rather than a lower degree of tolerance. This has led to adaptation or familiarisation mechanisms. Last but not least, comparison between East Central Europe and the “West” provides important insights about democracy in general. Beyond the obvious differences in the history and current situation of individual countries, we can also identify overarching similarities, for example, in terms of the relations between the party and movement



forms of right-wing radicalism or in the patterns of interaction between radical and moderate political players.

The question of the appropriate way to deal with the radical-right-wing at the level of the state, politics and society cannot be answered if we fail to differentiate between organizational and ideological variants and ignore the relevant social and political context of the conditions of mobilisation. The range of variations of this phenomenon, as well as the variations in electoral success, argue against monocausal explanations such as the belief that it is possible to identify immigration in the West or the authoritarian past in Eastern Europe as unique causal factors.



## The radical right in Germany: Its prohibition and reinvention

Because of its Nazi past, Germany as a nation is associated with the topic of right-wing extremism. Nazi Germany propagated the ideology of inequality and implemented the extermination of people regarded as unfit to live. The Holocaust and its systematic planning, along with the deliberate refusal of many people to acknowledge what was happening, has become inscribed into European history as a nightmare image and a terrible warning. Why has no extreme-right-wing party today succeeded in entering the Bundestag, the German parliament – whereas radical-right-wing parties have won seats in the national assemblies of many other European countries? How has German right-wing extremism developed in the recent past? How is it currently manifested and what trends can be discerned?

The first part of this contribution analyses the key players in the radical-right-wing sphere in Germany.<sup>1</sup> Firstly, we shall look at the political parties and their voters, then at movement-type organizations and the sub-cultural milieu. Secondly, we shall elucidate popular attitudes and public discourse that show affinities with right-wing radicalism. The third section considers the extent to which a transnational network of radical-right-wingers is real and sustainable. Finally we shall draw conclusions and discuss the present threat to plural, democratic German society from the radical right.

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1 My definition of the radical-right is based on that of Michael Minkenberg. On the ideological level the radical-right-wing “family” encompasses: the extreme right, the xenophobic right, the populist right and the religious-fundamentalist right. On the organizational level it covers political parties, movement-like organizations and the subcultural milieu. Cf. the article in the present book by Michael Minkenberg.

## I. Actors

### 1. Political parties:

Radical-right-wing players in the Federal Republic of Germany have always taken their cue from Nazism; to date, any attempts to create a modern radical-right-wing party have failed.<sup>2</sup> Germany's most successful radical-right-wing party today is the *Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands* (National Democratic Party of Germany — NPD). The party's image and situation are characteristic for the development of the present-day radical right. We shall also describe the DVU, the *Republicans* (REP) and the *Pro* parties.

**NPD:** The NPD was set up in 1964. Twelve years after the *Sozialistische Reichspartei* (Reich Socialist Party), the successor to the Nazi Party, was prohibited, the NPD emerged as an amalgamation of several splinter groups and the *Deutsche Reichspartei* (German Reich Party), which had already been banned in Rhineland-Palatinate. Many NPD functionaries and members were former Nazis. The initial NPD programme was a heterogeneous mix of Nazi, anti-communist and, initially, conservative Catholic elements. Core demands were German reunification and revision of the Oder-Neisse border. Between 1966 and 1968 the newly founded party won seats in seven regional assemblies. In the 1969 general election the NPD unexpectedly failed to reach the 5 percent requirement for entry to parliament (it won only 4.3 percent of the vote), and was subsequently weakened by internal policy quarrels.

The NPD has been led by its present chairman, Udo Voigt, since 1996. Under his leadership the party succeeded in breaking out of the marginalisation since the 1970s. In the year Voigt was elected, the party pub-

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

lished a new programme it has maintained to this day.<sup>3</sup> It is nationalist and populist, includes elements of anti-capitalist and nationalist revolutionary thought, and advocates a form of national socialism. The party is openly hostile to the ruling system and propagates a biological concept of race with ensuing political demands (including dispossession and expulsion of Germans with migrant backgrounds). Under Voigt, the NPD has formed new networks, especially in “central Germany” — the party’s term for the five former East German federal states — and gained access to the extreme-right subculture that spread from the 1990s on. In 1998 the party’s national conference decided on a “three-pillar” concept designed to end its traditional role as a purely electoral party. Three strategic campaigning areas were defined for the medium-term political struggle: the “battle for the streets”; the “battle for minds”; and the “battle for voters/representative assemblies”.<sup>4</sup> The idea behind this concept was that the NPD could only achieve political power if it firstly mobilised sympathisers “on the street” and secondly, if it stepped up its populist and nationalist educational work, trained party members and created intellectual networks. Thirdly, and on the basis of the first two goals, the party wanted to win elections – starting with local and moving on to regional and national elections. A fourth “pillar” was added at the end of 2004: the notion of unifying the extreme right with the “battle for organized will”. This was based on recognising that electoral success could only be achieved by cooperation with other right-wing parties and the *Freien Kameradschaften* (Free Associations). Today the former old men’s party is particularly active in reaching out to young people in various ways including leisure activities or distribution of free CDs. The NPD’s “School Playground” CD, which has appeared in various versions since 2006, promotes right-wing ideology and boastfully describes the party as “the movement”.

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3 See <http://www.npd.de/parteiprogramm/> (31.08.2010)

4 Apfel, Holger. “*Alles Große steht im Sturm*”. *Tradition und Zukunft einer nationalen Partei* (Stuttgart 1999) 469f., 359f.



Cover of the NPD Schoolyard CD 2005: "Here comes the horror of all leftist petit bourgeois and crammers!"

The NPD's strategic development from a classical political party to an organization with features of a movement, and its foray into the subculture, is not only in tune with the times and particularly attractive to the young. The integration of subcultural and movement-type right-wing extremism is also a response to the constitutional treatment of right-wing players in the Federal Republic of Germany, which is carried out very repressively.<sup>5</sup> In its interplay with the repressive state, right-wing extremism in Germany has largely abandoned its fixed, institutional structures. By now the NPD has effectively taken up the "cat-and-mouse" game: it has entered the subculture and is trying to participate in the creation of a "counter-world" aimed at provocation. Moreover, it is increasingly open in its principled rejection of Germany's Basic Law.<sup>6</sup> The party is anti-constitutional – that it is not banned is primarily because the first prohibition procedure (2001–2003) failed because of procedural errors, and because some interior ministers feared an NPD ban could lead it to agitate even more strongly underground, where it would be more difficult to control.<sup>7</sup>

5 Schellenberg, Britta. "Strategien gegen Rechtsextremismus in Deutschland, Analyse der Gesetzgebung und Umsetzung des Rechts." *C-A-P Analyse* 2/2008  
<http://www.cap.lmu.de/download/2008/CAP-Analyse-2008-02.pdf> (31.08.2010).

6 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany.

7 Liberal parties such as the Greens have spoken out against prohibition because they see other concepts for combating right-wing extremism as more effective (e.g., boosting people's involvement in civic counter-campaigns).

Nowadays, however, the NPD, like some other extreme-right-wing parties, is endeavouring to win acceptance in mainstream society. Operating in environments and regions seen as neglected and marginal because of structural weakness and population decline, they have succeeded in attracting broader segments of voters with nationalist social romanticism and counselling programmes. In 2010, particularly in some areas of the East German federal states, the party had a fairly active and stable base; this was confirmed by electoral mandates in municipal and local councils. Moreover, it recently had electoral success in Saxony (2004 election: 9.2 percent; 2009: 5.6 percent) and Mecklenburg-West Pomerania (2006 election: 7.3 percent). In Thuringia in 2009 the NPD just missed entering the federal state assembly (2009: 4.3 percent), but in Saarland in 2009 it failed to repeat the relatively good result it achieved in 2004 (4 percent).

The NPD recently experienced an “existential crisis”, for various reasons. In early 2009 the German parliamentary administration authority imposed a fine of 1.7 million euros on the party for serious deficits in its 2007 annual accounts. At the same time the party treasurer made a voluntary declaration that there had also been irregularities in 2006. From 2009 onward several federal state interior ministers — especially in states governed by the Social Democratic Party (SPD) — began preparing a new prohibition procedure against the NPD. However, despite being shaken by the heavy pressure of the repressive state as well as in-fighting between radical and more moderate tendencies, and scandals (including a child pornography scandal involving an NPD deputy in Saxony), in 2010 the NPD was Germany’s most successful radical-right-wing party.

Aside from the NPD, the main right-wing parties to achieve election success in recent years were the *Republicans* (REP) and the *Deutsche Volkunion* (German People’s Union — DVU). However, their importance is now diminishing.

**Deutsche Volkunion (German People's Union – DVU) – Cooperation with the NPD:** The founding of the DVU should be seen in the context of a fragmentation and partial radicalisation of radical-right-wing extremism in the 1970s and '80s. The DVU, which draws on nationalist conservative traditions, was founded in 1971 as an association and in 1987 as a party. The DVU has been described as a “virtual party” because it has no active grassroots base and is largely run by its founder, financier and former party chairman, a millionaire named Gerhard Frey. In the 1990s party membership was relatively high (1992: 26,000), but this has been shrinking dramatically for years (2008: 6,000). The party's work centres on northern and eastern Germany. It successfully contested elections in Schleswig-Holstein (1992: 6.3 percent), Saxony-Anhalt (1998: 12.9 percent) and Brandenburg (1999: 5.3 percent; 2004: 6.1 percent). Brandenburg was the only place where it succeeded in winning seats in the federal state assembly for the second time in 2004. In 2009 the DVU lost its seats in the Brandenburg Assembly; since then it has becoming increasingly insignificant. The steady success of the DVU in the Hanseatic City of Bremen (1991: 6.2 percent; 1999: 3.0 percent; 2003: 2.3 percent; 2007: 2.7 percent) can be explained by the specific electoral law in this city (an electoral victory in Bremerhaven suffices for entry to the state assembly), and not by wide support from the residents of Bremen.

Before the state assembly elections in Brandenburg and Saxony in 2004, the DVU and NPD made an electoral agreement, the so-called “Germany pact”. By eliminating competition between the radical-right-wing parties, they intended to improve the chances of meeting the 5 percent barrier requirement for entering state and regional assemblies. In fact, the DVU won seats for the first time in the Brandenburg assembly, and the NPD in the Saxon assembly. However, the Germany pact ended in 2009 when the NPD campaigned in the Brandenburg assembly elections without mutual agreement.

In June 2010 the present DVU party chairman, Matthias Faust, concluded a joint agreement with the NPD leadership for a fusion of the two



parties. After fierce internal criticism and attempts to deprive Faust of his powers, the DVU and NPD eventually conducted a membership poll on the fusion; 90 percent of members of both parties voted in favour.<sup>8</sup> At the time of writing, in August 2010, the fusion of the two parties seemed imminent. Parallel to the fusion talks came the foundation in June 2009 of a DVU youth organization, the *Junge Rechte* (Young Right-wingers), which attracted attention with its up-to-date Internet presence.

**Die Republikaner (Republicans – REP):** The REP was set up in 1983 by neo-conservatives dissatisfied with Germany’s mainstream conservative parties, the *Christian Democrats* (CDU) and *Christian Social Union* (CSU). Their aim was to usher in a right-wing conservative turn. Particularly from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, the Republicans were successful under the leadership of Franz Schönhuber, a charismatic Bavarian TV moderator, but their success was confined to the regions of former West Germany, and especially southern Germany. In Baden-Württemberg the party won around 10 percent of the vote (1992: 10.9 percent; 1996: 9.1 percent). Under the present party chairman, Rolf Schlierer, who has led the REP since 1994, the party has settled into a fairly conservative, less radical position. Today it is almost insignificant. It acknowledges Germany’s Basic Law, but demands “preservation of the German homeland” and opposes what it calls a “multicultural society” and a “multinational state”.

**Other radical-right-wing parties. The civic action group Pro Köln (Pro Cologne):** The civic action group *Pro Cologne* is, perhaps, the most modern European variant of radical-right-wing extremism in party form, because it originates from right-wing populism. It describes itself as “populist”, as a “citizens’ movement”, and puts the topic of Islam with its widespread connotations of fear, at the heart of its political agenda, with slogans like, “We oppose the Islamisation of Cologne”). The party’s other

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8 NPD: clear vote for fusion of NPD and DVU. <http://www.npd.de/html/247/artikel/detail/1655/> (30.08.2010). The NPD members agreed on condition that no additional debts would be incurred through the fusion.

hate targets include Roma and migrants in general, who are described as “criminal elements”. *Pro Cologne* was set up as an association in 1996 and survived into the new millennium through the efforts of activists from the extreme-right-wing scene. In 2004 it succeeded in winning 4.7 percent of the vote and took four seats on Cologne city council. Its offshoot, *Pro NRW*, is the geographical extension of *Pro Cologne*. These parties attract attention particularly through initiatives against the building of mosques.<sup>9</sup> *Pro Cologne* is currently the most successful of the various right-wing populist and extreme-right-wing electoral alliances.

Similarly, the publicity of the Bavarian action group, *Bürgerinitiative Ausländerstopp* (Citizens’ Initiative to Stop Foreigners), focuses on the “anti-Muslim” issue. In 2008, the party, which has been described as an NPD “cover organization”, managed to win two seats on the city council in Nuremberg, and one seat in Munich.

**The importance of local and regional elections.** Compared to gains in Europe as a whole, the electoral success of radical-right-wing parties in Germany is relatively small. While the parties register some success in federal state assembly and local elections, to date they have made no impact at the national level and in elections for the European Parliament. (The exception is the *Republicans*, with 7.1 percent in the 1989 European elections.)

It is at the local and regional level that Germany’s radical-right-wing parties can make gains. Deputies from the DVU, NPD, REP, and the *Stop Foreigners* action group and *Pro-Cologne* hold seats in several local assemblies, and in municipal and parish councils. Taking advantage of the local electoral regulations that waive the customary 5 percent barrier requirement in many places to award seats at a municipal level on only 2 percent or 3 percent of the vote, radical-right-wing parties are steadily

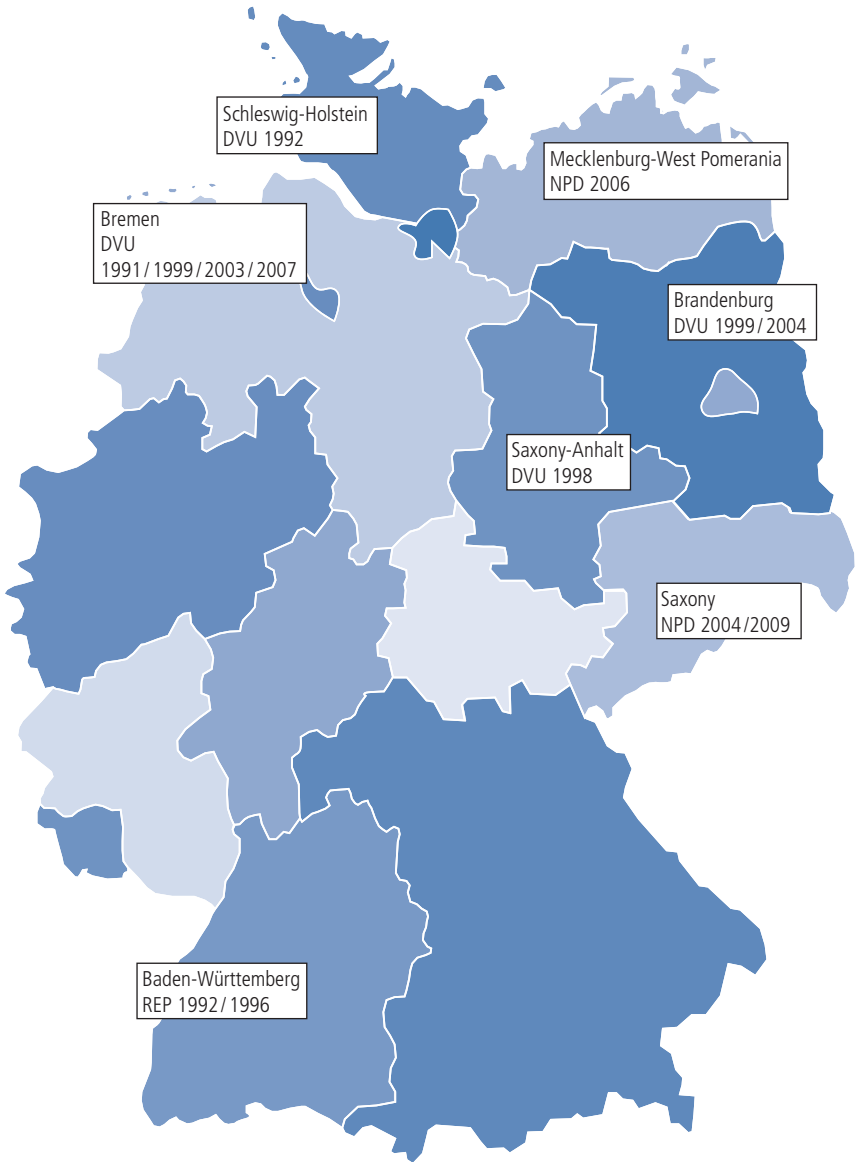
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9 Häusler, Alexander (ed.). *Rechtspopulismus als “Bürgerbewegung”. Kampagnen gegen Islam und Moscheebau und kommunale Gegenstrategien* (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften 2008).

extending their base. By now, a total of over 200 deputies from radical-right-wing parties hold seats in German district councils. The NPD recently achieved great success in percentage terms (in individual cases around 10 percent or even 20 percent) in local elections in Saxony (2004: 26, 2009: 72), Mecklenburg-West Pomerania, Thuringia, Saxony-Anhalt and Saarland. In the latest federal state elections in Mecklenburg-West Pomerania, the NPD won over 30 percent of the vote in some localities. Taken as a whole, however, the success of the radical-right-wing parties remains limited.

Germany's radical-right-wing parties are scarcely able to participate directly in shaping politics. The *cordon sanitaire* maintained by all the other parties excludes the radical-right parties from cooperative action and denies them posts in working groups and decision-making bodies. The *cordon sanitaire* is unlikely to be lifted in the near future, as radical-right-wing parties are generally regarded as unacceptable. Yet there are cases of joint action at local level on a short-term basis, such as when the NPD takes up issues like school closures or public funding cuts in youth projects. Here, the NPD can score by picking up issues that lead to joint action.

It remains to be seen whether this success can be sustained in the longer term – or even heralds the establishment of the radical right on the national level. In fact, the NPD's entry into the federal state assemblies in Saxony and Mecklenburg-West Pomerania indicates a disturbing degree of widespread and more enduring support for the party. The latest general election results support this trend: although the radical right is generally seen as having no chance in national polls, in 2009 the NPD achieved 4 percent of the vote in Saxony and 3.3 percent in Mecklenburg-West Pomerania, and a national average of 1.5 percent.



**Voter structure:** A representative statistical survey of elections to the federal state assembly in Brandenburg reveals a characteristic overall picture of DVU and NPD voters. In 2004 the DVU achieved its best results among young voters: the party gained 13.5 percent of the vote in the 18-25 age group and 11.2 percent in the 25-35 age group compared with a total voter share of 6.2 percent. In general, twice as many men as women voted for the extreme right; in fact, among the 18-25s, 17.6 percent of male voters chose the DVU.<sup>10</sup> Characteristic data on the voters' educational level, social environment and profession are as follows: lowest secondary school certificate, mostly job training/apprenticeships, working class, and (less frequently) unemployed.<sup>11</sup> To sum up: in broad comparison, voters for radical-right parties are generally young, male, and belong to lower or lower middle class strata of society. Even in federal states such as Saxony-Anhalt, where the DVU failed to win seats in the federal state assembly, around 10 percent of under-29s voted for a radical-right party. The election campaigns for young people seem to have an impact. Extreme right wing supporters are young – they respond to the far-right's rejection of existing conditions and the use of propaganda terms like “nationalists” and “socialists”. In terms of regional distribution, up until the mid-1990s radical-right-wing parties achieved better results in western Germany than eastern Germany. Since the end of the '90s support for the radical right has been higher in eastern than in western Germany.

## 2. Movement-type organizations and the subcultural milieu

There is now a heterogeneous network of extreme-right groups and programmes in Germany that increasingly evades traditional state control. The developments in the subcultural and movement-type area show the innovative power of (activist) far-right extremism in Germany. The fragmentation and radicalisation in the 1970s and '80s led not only to the

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10 *Representative election results. Landtagswahl 19.09.2004.* (Potsdam Brandenburg: Landesbetrieb für Datenverarbeitung und Statistik January 2005) [http://www.statistik.brandenburg.de/six-cms/media.php/4055/BVII2-5\\_04\\_online\\_LTW2004\\_repräWS\\_ebook.pdf](http://www.statistik.brandenburg.de/six-cms/media.php/4055/BVII2-5_04_online_LTW2004_repräWS_ebook.pdf) (25.08.10).

11 <http://www.infratest-dimap.de/umfragen-analysen/bundeslaender/sachsen-anhalt/wahlreport/1998/> (31.08.2010).

formation of new parties such as the DVU and Republicans, but also to the emergence of an activist wing of neo-Nazi paramilitary groups, including the *Wehrsportgruppe Hoffmann* founded in 1973. After the political system change at the end of the 1980s and beginning of the '90s, everyday radical-right-wing violence increased significantly. "Fascho" (neo-fascist) groups that had already formed by the end of the 1980s in former East Germany began to agitate more openly, and organized West German neo-fascists also used the opportunity of the dissolution of communist East Germany to build new structures in the newly integrated East German states. A number of extreme-right organizations were prohibited following successive waves of attacks on hostels for asylum seekers in Hoyerswerda and Rostock and racist murders in Solingen and Mölln. The radical-right scene reacted by restructuring, and stopped applying for official status (e.g. as registered associations). Instead, the concept of the locally based society *Kameradschaft* (Free Association), a group of around 10-30 persons in a loose network, was developed. The *Free Associations* or their regional units, the *Action Alliances*, regard themselves as part of a "national resistance", a "radical right united front". There are around 150 regional and supra-regional *Free Associations* in Germany. Their bastion is Saxony, which houses around 40 Free Associations. The self-styled *Free Nationalists*, for instance, stage pagan festivals (solstice parties), gather at concerts, and travel together to demonstrations and other radical-right events. Many of them are responsible for violent attacks and the establishment of "no go areas".<sup>12</sup> The loose, autonomous structure of the Free Associations has largely enabled them to evade state repression, and it is only recently that a few of these groups were prohibited (e.g., the *Kameradschaft Oberhavel* and the skinhead grouping, *Skinheads Sächsische Schweiz*).

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12 "Fear zones" is another term for areas where members of specific (population) groups are at particularly high risk of violent attacks, and their safety is not guaranteed.

Since around 2002 a new group has become an established part of the far right in Germany – and an export: the *Autonomen Nationalisten* (Autonomous Nationalists). Originating from Berlin and Dortmund, they have now spread throughout the country. Their supporters are mostly very young (around 14 years of age) and adopt the clothing styles and some of the habits of left-wing groups, particularly the autonomous *Schwarze Blocks* (Black Blocs). They dress in black, often with Palestinian scarves, and use the Internet for recruitment and propaganda. Their videos, chats and blogs are up-to-date. They usually dissociate themselves from Nazism and focus primarily on present-day social issues, posing questions from the perspective of young people in today's society. The group is attractive to some young people in precarious situations, offering temporary accommodation (e.g., beds for homeless children), and work. This gives their social criticism a genuine basis. However, the group fluctuates considerably, with many supporters leaving the scene again after a few months.

Demonstration  
by the NPD and  
autonomous  
nationalists:  
"German  
Intifada"



Aside from these structured organizations, there is another widespread phenomenon: young people influenced by radical-right-wing ideas but without specific group membership. There is a fairly large range of radical-right music, clothing, fashion accessories and codes available, which attracts numbers of young people, although it is difficult to estimate exactly how many. These young people cannot (yet) be counted as part of the hardcore right. They are fascinated by the far-right subculture with its products and range of services. Over the past few years, radical-right-wing music has become better known and more popular – not least because it is qualitatively better, more professional and varied, ranging from Heavy Metal to Rock and sentimental ballads. The most popular far-right “rockers” include the Zillertaler Türkenjäger, Landser, Annett and Faustrecht;<sup>13</sup> but the far-right scene does not listen exclusively to German bands. In addition, far-right shops and mail order firms have been set up, to sell fashionable scene outfits. Current popular styles include dark T-shirts and hoodie shirts, sneakers and shirts with radical-right-wing labels, codes and symbols. Trade names such as Thor Steinar, *CONSTAPLE* and *Walhalla* indicate membership in the far-right scene. Practised experts can spot radical-right codes in many locations: on street signs, at subway entrances, or on house walls and as accessories worn even by young people who are otherwise not obviously from the far right.

**Offences and violent crimes:** Whereas political parties in Germany are usually less successful than their European counterparts, radical-right subculture in Germany is seething. After the political system change of 1989, the number of radical-right offences and crimes of violence increased dramatically. The trend only reversed slightly in the second half of the 1990s, but resumed significantly upwards in 2000. The number of offences almost doubled from 2002 to 2008, and violent crimes rose by around 16 percent (see fig. 1). At present the number of reported offences has achieved a deplorable record: almost 19,894 offences, of which 1,042

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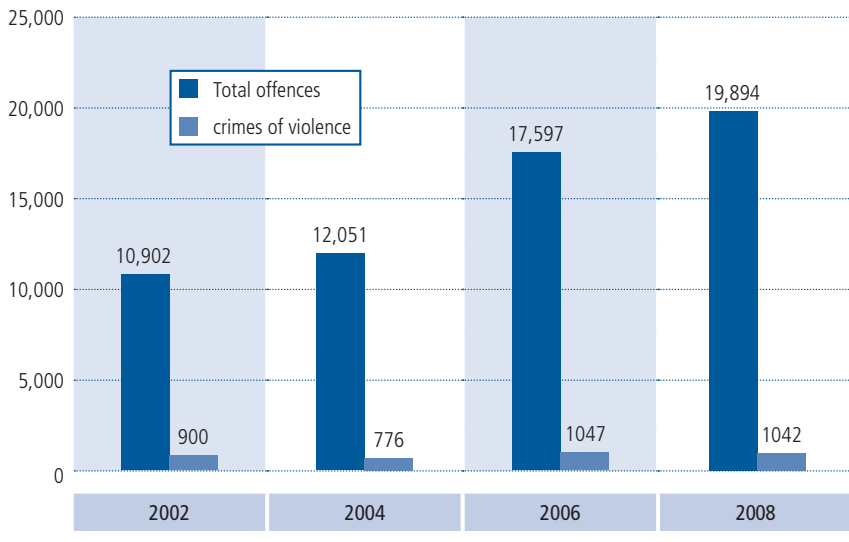
13 Schellenberg, Britta. *Demokratie und Rechtsextremismus. Auseinandersetzung mit rechtsextremer Musik*. (Schwalbach: Wochenschau Verlag 2010).



involve violence.<sup>14</sup> This means that on average, every day in the Federal Republic of Germany there are at least two to three violent attacks by radical-right-wingers. The chances of falling victim to a radical-right-wing attack are three to four times as high in the area of former East Germany than in the west.

Extreme-right offences and crimes of violence

Fig. 1



Around half of the far-right crimes of violence recorded by the German Office for Protection of the Constitution for the year 2008 are xenophobic (395) or anti-Semitic (44). Another considerable strand of violence targets (supposedly) left-wing extremists (358) and other political opponents (76). These crimes of violence almost all involve bodily harm. A study published in September 2010 in the Berlin daily “Tagesspiegel” and

14 If not otherwise indicated, this refers to: Bundesministerium des Innern (ed.), *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2009*. 24-33. I am referring to the year 2008 because the data for 2009 were still not complete by press date. Only limited comparison is possible with the situation prior to 2001 because the Federal German Statistical Office changed its data collection methods in 2001.

the weekly “Die ZEIT” recorded 137 victims killed by far-right and racist violence in the 20 years since Germany was reunited (1990-2010).<sup>15</sup> Germany scores high in European comparisons of extreme-right wing and racist violence.

The great majority of offences are propaganda felonies (14,262), including activities such as use of anti-constitutional symbols. Prohibiting such actions has to be seen as the characteristic response of Federal Germany’s “watchful” democracy; this kind of prosecution has not been taken up on a European level.<sup>16</sup> However, in comparison with other western European countries, cases of coercion/threat (144) and damage to property (1,197) are also relatively high in Germany. These incidents involve a significant proportion of hate crimes (including incitement to racial hatred). On average, a new far-right crime is reported almost hourly in Germany.

## II. Attitudes and discourse

### The spread of radical-right attitudes in the population

Attitude surveys indicate that around 8,2 percent of the population shares hard-core right-wing extremist views. After extreme-right-wing views have been declining continuously since 2002 recent opinion polls show renewed growth in 2010. According to the study by the University of Leipzig, “Die Mitte in der Krise”, commissioned by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, almost 35 percent of the population believe that “the presence of so many foreigners is a threat to Germany”. There is a rise in the categories ‘assent to dictatorship’ (5,1 percent), ‘chauvinism’ (19,3 percent), ‘xenophobia’ (24,7 percent) and ‘social Darwinism’ (3,9 percent). In eastern Germany some of the categories found much more approval than in the West (‘agreement of dictatorship’ 6,8 percent,

15 In a further 14 fatal incidents there is suspicion of extreme right-wing or racist motivation. Journalists responsible for information: Frank Jansen, Heike Kleffner, Johannes Radke, Toralf Staud. <http://www.zeit.de/themen/gesellschaft/todesopfer-rechter-gewalt/index> (27.09.2010). See also Forner, Rebecca in cooperation with Opferperspektive e.V. and the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, n.d., *Wanderausstellung Opfer rechter Gewalt seit 1990* [www.opfer-rechter-gewalt.de](http://www.opfer-rechter-gewalt.de) (27.09.2010).

16 See the relevant discussions prior to the enactment of the EU framework decision of 2007 under German European Council presidency.

'xenophobia' 35 percent, 'social Darwinism' 6,2 percent).<sup>17</sup> The study on "group-focused enmity" (GMF) by social scientist Wilhelm Heitmeyer records similarly high acceptance of xenophobic statements. The study, which collects data on an annual basis, illustrates a sharp rise in Islamophobia in the German population. Despite the relatively low proportion of Muslims in the German population (around 5 percent), the study shows 46 percent agreement with the statement, "There are too many Muslims in Germany", and 52.2 percent of respondents held the view that Islam is an intolerant religion. Germans' opinion on Muslims and Islam therefore largely corresponds to that of the rest of the European countries covered by the study (average country samples: 44.2 percent; 54.4 percent). However, German respondents agreed least frequently with the statement, "Muslim culture fits in well in Germany" (16.6 percent) – which means the Germans are the most critical about Muslim culture (country sample average: 31.3 percent).<sup>18</sup> The study also shows a connection between various different hostile attitudes: the homeless and jobless are also targets of "enmity".<sup>19</sup> Another development can be observed in the spread of "new anti-Semitism" which differs from "old anti-Semitism" in that it does not openly admit to anti-Semitic attitudes but expresses anti-Jewish prejudice in the form of criticism of Israel, especially in equating Israel with Nazism and fascism (even when the issue is not about Israel and Israelis, but about Jews).<sup>20</sup> While this "new" anti-Semitism is quite widespread, the levels of agreement with openly anti-Semitic statements are still fairly high. Almost 15 percent of respondents agreed positively with the statements, "Jews operate through nasty tricks more than other people", and "Jews simply have something special and unique about them, and don't fit in so well with us".<sup>21</sup>

17 Decker, Oliver; Weißmann, Marliese; Kiess, Johannes; Brähler, Elmar. *Die Mitte in der Krise: Rechtsextreme Einstellungen in Deutschland 2010*. Ed. Nora Langenbacher. (Berlin: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung 2010).

18 Zick, Andreas and Küpper, Beate. *Meinungen zum Islam und Muslimen in Deutschland und Europa. Ausgewählte Ergebnisse der Umfrage Gruppenbezogene Menschenfeindlichkeit in Europa* (Bielefeld University December 2009). [http://www.uni-bielefeld.de/ikg/zick/Islam\\_GFE\\_zick.pdf](http://www.uni-bielefeld.de/ikg/zick/Islam_GFE_zick.pdf) (31. 08.2010). Countries studied: D, GB, F, I, NL, P, PL, HU.

19 Heitmeyer, Wilhelm (ed.) *"Deutsche Zustände"*. Series 1-9 Frankfurt am Main 2002-2010.

20 Schellenberg, Britta. *"Die Zähigkeit von Vorurteilen. Holocaust-Gedenken immunisiert nicht gegen Antisemitismus."* Internationale Politik 2 (February 2005) 48-55.

21 Decker, Oliver et al (see note 17).

### A threat to political culture: ethnicising and biologising discourses

The present political, media and public discourses about the issue of “migration”, “foreigners” and “Islam” can be described as particularly problematic because they encourage radical-right-wing attitude patterns. Whereas German law today with the reformed regulations on nationality (2000) contradicts a purely ethnic definition of German nationality, and the immigration law of 2002/2004 reflects Germany’s new perception of itself as a land of immigration, sections of the media and the population persist in maintaining a biological idea of nations. The emphasis on migrant status in relation to certain Germans who, although they are Germans, are picked out as “the others” in contrast to “us Germans”, is often part of a widespread biological concept of the nation. It is notable that groups that appear “strange”, such as migrants, or foreigners, are significantly overrepresented in media reports in relation to their statistical share of the population. They are also particularly often subject to negative judgement. In many cases the actions and attitudes of migrants themselves are held responsible for the “foreigner problem”, for example by categorising their attitudes or marginalising them. They are represented as being involved more than average in criminal activity or causing conflicts, and less often as people living “normal” lives in Germany.

The ethnicisation or biologisation of problematic social relations or individual dispositions creates favourable conditions for an extreme-right-wing perception of reality. Conflicts are interpreted as battles for survival between specific groups of people or races”, and individuals are attributed a specific value by virtue of their categorisation into ethnic or cultural groups, thus denying them opportunities for development as a whole. Radical-right-wingers also latch onto the provincial desire for sameness and homogeneity of judgement and exclusion of heterogeneity and individuality, as well as a general scepticism about democracy (as a system and a way of life).<sup>22</sup>

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22 On xenophobic discourse in Germany see, Schellenberg, Britta. “Country Report: Germany.” *Strategies for Combating Right-Wing Extremism in Europe* ed. Bertelsmann Stiftung (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann 2009) 179-248, esp. 215f.

The current social and demographic change arouses fear in many people in Germany. Whereas some people profit from the opportunities of the information era and the global world, others are afraid of being left behind by these changes. This fear has a real basis, because almost a quarter of today's school-leavers finish school lacking skills in reading, arithmetic and science subjects, and are ill equipped to cope with everyday life. Their level of competence is regarded as insufficient for further education or training. Given these statistics, there is a basic pool of almost 25 per cent of so-called "unemployables" who hardly have a chance of ever finding work.<sup>23</sup> Members of a growing segment of the population not only feel that their personal future is insecure, but suffer very real economic losses and loss of status. Radical-right-wing players can make points with protests against these developments – even if only in a limited way in Germany because the Left Party (*DIE LINKE*) continues to be seen as the political representative of societal issues, and is correspondingly able to win the trust of voters.

### Creeping local expansion

Recent publications have examined the expansion of right-wing extremism at the local level. Dirk Borstel attests to the fact that "diverse regional analyses" give "clear indications of growing establishment of far-right structures at local level", and confirm that people are increasingly accepting right-wing extremist manifestations (organizations, parties etc.). In some areas, right-wing extremists are seen as "normal" political players; this trend is quite advanced in two east German regions, the eastern part of West Pomerania and the Saxonian Schweiz.<sup>24</sup> As early as 2005, Toralf Staud spoke of right-wing extremism dominating everyday culture in parts of the rural areas of eastern Germany, and described this phenom-

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23 For results of comparative studies on education see, Schellenberg, Britta. "Integration ist Integration. Deutschlands Einwanderungspolitik: Bildung ist der erste Schritt." *Internationale Politik* 11/61 (Nov. 2006) 90-96, esp. 94.

24 Borstel, Dierk. "Der immergleiche braune Sumpf? Neuere Entwicklungen der rechtsextremen Szene." *Strategien gegen Rechtsextremismus. Die Grünen/Europäische Freie Allianz* ed. Albrecht, Jan Phillip, MEP (Berlin 2010) 9-20, esp. 16. [http://janalbrecht.eu/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/20100615\\_strategien\\_GE\\_final04-web.pdf](http://janalbrecht.eu/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/20100615_strategien_GE_final04-web.pdf) (30.08.2010).

enon as the “process of the east German provinces becoming fascist”.<sup>25</sup> Aside from electoral success, one sign of the racist influence and a test of the extreme-right-wing mood is the welfare of groups of potential victims of far-right violence. Victims’ action groups complain of a climate of radical-right-wing violence in specific areas, and tacit agreement among the local population with acts of violence. The work of associations that counsel victims reveals that in some areas victims of far-right violence receive no support from within their communities, and there are great inhibitions about openly discussing problems of right-wing extremism and racism.<sup>26</sup>

**“Nazism” – a losing formula – and pluralism:** Despite the evident potential for extreme-right-wing attitudes among the German population, so far radical-right-wing parties have had considerable difficulty in gaining credibility and acceptance. Firstly, they are frequently accused of having incompetent staff, of corruption, and of personal deficiencies. Secondly, they are discredited in most people’s eyes by their close relationship to Nazism. In addition, the generally growing support for plurality and individualism should be seen as a “losing formula” for right-wing extremism. Attitude surveys show that the oldest generation (people born before or during the Nazi era) tend towards right-wing extremism more strongly than people born and socialised in the Federal Republic of Germany. Younger generations tend to be more liberal and cosmopolitan, even if not free of extreme-right-wing attitudes.<sup>27</sup> The Shell Youth Study (2010) showed that the majority of young people have a generally positive attitude towards social change. Some 84 percent of them actually associate globalisation with the freedom to be able to travel, work and study all over the world. However, some sectors of young people are sceptical about social change, and 10 percent of them already feel a depressing lack of opportunity at a young age.<sup>28</sup>

25 Staud, Toralf. *Moderne Nazis. Die neuen Rechten und der Aufstieg der NPD* (Cologne 2005).

26 Grell, Britta et al (ed.). *Hate Crime Monitoring and Victim Assistance in Poland and Germany*, publ. Nigdy Więcej and Opferperspektive. Warsaw/Berlin 2009. See also <http://www.opferperspektive.de/> (4.9.2010).

27 Bergmann, Werner. “Wie viele Deutsche sind rechtsextrem, fremdenfeindlich und antisemitisch? Ergebnisse der empirischen Forschung von 1990-2000.” *Auf dem Weg zum Bürgerkrieg? Rechtsextremismus und Gewalt gegen Fremde in Deutschland* ed. Wolfgang Benz (Frankfurt a. M. 2001) 41-62.

28 [http://www.shell.de/home/content/deu/aboutshell/our\\_commitment/shell\\_youth\\_study/downloads/#subtitle\\_1](http://www.shell.de/home/content/deu/aboutshell/our_commitment/shell_youth_study/downloads/#subtitle_1) (17.09.10).

### III. The radical right's transnational networks – Sustainable alliances?

As well as becoming increasingly established locally, the radical right has also formed a denser network in the 21st century. One particularly relevant aspect of global interlinking is the medium of the Internet. Exchange between radical-right-wingers both within Germany and across Europe is becoming more and more commonplace. Observers note the far right's increased use of the Internet and websites like *MySpace* and *YouTube*. Music groups (e.g. the Nazi Black Metal groups) also use the Internet to make their music accessible to a wider public. In Germany the growing number of extreme-right-wing German-language Internet sites presents a special challenge to the Office for the Protection of the Constitution. The German state apparatus is not able to suppress this activity because of the cases where radical-right-wingers (cooperating, for example, with foreign servers) are not subject to the legal regulations of the German constitutional state.

In Germany, events like the commemoration of Rudolf Hess (which was held annually in Wunsiedel, Bavaria, until its prohibition in 2005), the "People's Festival – for a Europe of fatherland fans" in Jena or Pößneck (Thuringia), or May Day in Berlin (2010) show how right-wing radicalism is becoming increasingly international. The NPD leadership is not only involved in subcultural events; it also tries to improve and deepen relationships with extreme-right-wing parties abroad. For example, in November 2004 NPD chairman Udo Voigt visited the European Parliament as the guest of Alessandra Mussolini (then chairwoman of the extreme-right-wing party *Alternativa Sociale*, which is now part of Berlusconi's *Popolo della Libertà*). The purpose of the visit was to pave the way for improved future cooperation between Europe's radical-right-wing parties.<sup>29</sup> However, up until now some influential European parties have main-

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29 See Grumke, Thomas. "Globalisierte Anti-Globalisten." Strategien gegen Rechtsextremismus, *Die Grünen/Europäische Freie Allianz im Europäischen Parlament* ed. Albrecht (Berlin 2010) 26.

tained a strategic distance from the extreme right German party – not least for fear of losing prestige. To date, the NPD has not been accepted as a member of the network of electorally successful far right European parties, but only as a member of an extreme form of the radical-right movement: the *European National Front*, *La Falange* (Spain), *Noua Dreaptă* (Romania) und *Forza Nuova* (Italy).



Poster of  
„Anti-Islam  
Congress“

In thematic terms it is clear that anti-Islamism is an issue that provides a starting point for European cooperation among the extreme right. For instance, *Pro Cologne* participated in the European network “Cities against Islamisation”, which also included the Belgian party *Vlaams Belang* and the Austrian FPÖ. Leading figures from the European far right travelled to Cologne for the anti-Islam conferences in 2008 und 2009 – although they could hardly make any effective publicity out of it because of the thousands of counter-demonstrators in Cologne. In March 2010 *Pro NRW* organized an “international conference for a European-wide minaret ban” in Gelsenkirchen; as in Cologne, representatives from *Vlaams Belang* and the FPÖ attended. In addition, a particular characteristic of Germany’s Nazi-influenced extreme right is the international exchange with Holocaust deniers – a position shared with Muslim anti-Semites, which stands in sharp contradiction to the anti-Islam stance of the radical right.



## Conclusion and prospects

The development of German right-wing extremism is heavily influenced by governmental agencies' highly repressive treatment of extreme-right activities. Radical-right-wing organizational structures and activities have steadily changed, adapted and taken up flexible forms. Moreover, by using the Internet and transnational networking, radical-right-wing players are transferring their activities to more liberal countries abroad and evading suppression in Germany. These developments, particularly against the background of radical-right-wing programmes available and accessible everywhere and at all times, present new challenges to German society and its institutions.<sup>30</sup>

Unlike the situation in most European countries, radical-right parties in Germany have so far failed to make breakthroughs on the national level. However, a certain degree of stabilisation is becoming apparent in specific groups and areas. Today, radical-right-wing groups are particularly strong at local levels – and in some places they already influence the interpretation of reality. As a result, for some years now the NPD has increasingly won local and regional mandates, especially in rural areas of eastern Germany. It is also worth noting the common developmental phases of the NPD and the extreme-right subculture since the end of the 1990s. Since that time, right-wing radicalism in Germany has been marked by a lively subculture and diverse movement-type organizations. The *Free Associations* and the *Autonomous Nationalists* are groupings that emerged in Germany and have since become established in other European countries. A high level of violence is also characteristic of the extreme-right scene.

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30 Schellenberg, Britta. "Strategies for Combating Right-Wing Populism and Racism. Steps towards a pluralist and humane Europe." *The Roma: A thorn in the side of new Europe?* ed. OSCE/ODHIR (forthcoming); Bertelsmann Stiftung (ed.). *Strategies for Combating Right-Wing Extremism in Europe* (Gütersloh: Verlag Bertelsmann Stiftung 2009); Georgi et al. (ed.) *Strategien gegen Rechtsextremismus vol 2: Handlungsempfehlungen für Politik und Praxis* (Gütersloh: Verlag Bertelsmann Stiftung 2005).

On the ideological level, anti-Semitism and the belief in an existential threat to German identity from conspiratorial powers still play a dominant role. Social issues are used as pegs for campaigns and demonstrations, both by the radical-right-wing parties and by far-right organizations and subcultural groups. The radical right could gain strength if prejudices, fears and the feeling of being at the mercy of unfair developments grow among the population, and political counter-measures fail to achieve the necessary momentum. Another trend from which radical-right-wing parties (particularly *Pro Cologne*) have only partially been able to benefit so far is hostility towards Muslims and other population groups such as migrants and the homeless. These attitudes occur considerably beyond the far-right spectrum. The trend towards ethnicisation and biologisation of social problems by the media and representatives of public life is highly problematic. In these discourses, prejudices against migrants and foreigners are often intermingled with prejudices against people with little education and lower social status – the so-called lower class. It will be relevant for the development of radical-right-wing parties and for right-wing radicalism as a whole whether democratic parties prevail in social debates with arguments for human rights and democracy, or whether these discourses are conducted in a way that is overwhelmingly xenophobic and allows xenophobic prejudices to be easily transformed into support for radical-right players.

Aside from the developmental factors favourable to the radical right, we should also point out that in the past few years a sector of society has become increasingly vigilant about radical-right aspirations (or at least, those of neo-Nazis), especially in the national public political arena. This is due to the tireless commitment of some individuals with an influence on public opinion and decision-making, such as journalists, lawyers and politicians, as well as the continuous work of civic initiatives that have been able to develop and professionalize with the help of state funding programmes. In all, German society has not only become more hetero-

geneous but also more open and liberal. For the present, we can assume that critical public awareness of the radical right and the internal problems of radical-right-wing parties, along with the ongoing force of repression, will succeed in preventing widespread electoral success by the radical right.





Jean-Yves Camus

## The extreme right in France: Redrawing of the map to be expected

### The record of the extreme right in France

A strong extreme right has been a permanent feature of French political life since the election of the first local councillor for the *Front National* (FN) in the city of Dreux, in September 1983, after the *Conservative Party* led by Jacques Chirac had made an agreement with the FN. Following the FN's first nationwide success in the 1984 European election, the mainstream right-wing parties decided to ban any kind of agreement with Jean-Marie Le Pen. Nevertheless, the FN's ideas have reached a very wide segment of the French electorate and have had an influence on the political agenda of the right on issues such as immigration, law and order, multiculturalism and the definition of national identity. Despite a brief period of decline following the election of President Sarkozy in 2007, the FN recovered in the polls in 2010.

Founded in October 1972 by former militants of the neo-Fascist movement *Ordre Nouveau*, the FN is the first far-right party since 1945 to achieve electoral success over such a long period. This is partly due to Le Pen's personal charisma and his ability to unite the different and often conflicting factions of this political family. In late 1998, before the split between Bruno Mégret and Le Pen, the party had 42,000 paid-up members. Figures for 2010 are not available: although the FN claims a membership of 60,000, the real figure is unlikely to exceed 15,000. Attendance at the annual FN rally on May 1, which previously attracted up to 10,000, has fallen to around 2,000.

## The electoral situation

From 1984 on, the FN steadily gained 10 to 15 percent of the vote, a very damaging situation both for the left (which lost many of its working-class voters) and for the conservative right, which lost seats in Parliament because the FN candidate succeeded in reaching the second ballot in the legislative elections in many constituencies. The party's electoral success peaked in 2002, when Le Pen was runner-up to the incumbent president, Jacques Chirac, in the first ballot of the presidential election, polling 16.86 percent, a total of 4.8 million votes. However, Le Pen was defeated in the second ballot, receiving 17.79 percent to Chirac's 82.2 percent<sup>1</sup>. What seemed at the time like a thunderbolt should be understood in the light of two factors. Firstly, Le Pen took second place in the first ballot because there was an unusually high number of candidates (16), and because the votes for the left and the extreme left were scattered among 8 candidates. Secondly, the FN leader did not get many more votes on the second ballot than he did on the first: all the mainstream political parties, including the majority of the far left, asked their supporters to vote for Chirac to avoid Le Pen victory – despite their strong opposition to the incumbent President's policies. This sums up the major problem of the FN to this day: it has never been able to build a coalition or enter an alliance with a mainstream right-wing party, and it has remained an irritation and a haven for the protest vote. The “cordon sanitaire” the other parties imposed on it from 1984 onwards kept the FN out of power, from city council to the national government. The result was that it failed to gain credibility and some of its supporters began to think that their FN vote was a lost vote. Opinion polls throughout the period from 1983 to 2002 estimated that more than 80 percent of voters in France did not trust the party and did not wish to see it in Government<sup>2</sup>.

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1 On the second ballot, Le Pen received 5.525 million votes, comprising his votes on the first ballot plus the 666,000 cast for Bruno Mégret, plus 55,000 votes.

2 Mayer, N. *Ces français qui votent Le Pen*. (Paris: Flammarion) 2002.

The election results for FN in the period 1992-2007 were as follows:

Table 1

Regional 1992	13.8%
Local (cantonal) 1992	12.31%
National 1993	12.7%
EU 1994	10.5%
Local (cantonal) 1994	9.67%
Presidential 1995	15.3%
National 1997	15%
Regional 1998	15.4%
Local (cantonal) 1998	13.9%
EU 1999	5.69%
Local (cantonal) 2001	7.12%
Presidential 2002 (second ballot)	16.9%
National 2002	11.34%
EU 2004	9.8%
Regional 2004	14.7%
Local (cantonal) 2004	12.1%
Presidential 2007	10.44%
National 2007	4.29%
European 2009	6.47%
Regional 2010	11.42%

In 2007, when former minister of the interior Nicolas Sarkozy decided to contest the presidency, he opted for a strategy of siphoning votes away from the FN by using a populist rhetoric that “stole” some aspects of the extreme-right programme, especially ideas on law and order, immigration, multicultural society and moral values. As a result, the ageing Le Pen (then aged 79) received only 10.44 percent on the first ballot and was heavily defeated by Sarkozy (then 52), who polled 31.18 percent.

Approximately 70 percent of those who had voted for Le Pen in 2002 voted for Sarkozy in 2007 on the second ballot. This particularly applies to the middle class and those in the professions, but the FN retained a significant part of its base among the working class and the jobless, especially in the areas hit by the industrial crisis, such as northern and eastern France. Prior to the 2010 regional elections it seemed very unlikely that the party could come back to national prominence, because of Le Pen's age and the factionalism within the FN, and also because the Union pour un Mouvement Populaire (UMP) strongly dominated the conservative right.

Events proved this wrong. The FN made an unexpected comeback, receiving 11.42 percent of the national vote, with peaks at 20 percent for Le Pen in the Provence-Côte d'Azur area and 18.3 percent for his daughter, Marine, in Nord-Pas de Calais. This result can be explained as follows: firstly, mid-term elections are always risky for parties in government, and the UMP paid a heavy price for Sarkozy's waning popularity (positive opinion poll responses of 32 percent in January 2010, below the 37 percent positive responses for the prime minister, François Fillon). Sarkozy's popularity has been undermined by his personal style, persistent high unemployment, economic recession, unpopular tax-cuts for the better-off and strong opposition to his call to postpone retirement age. Consequently, the FN was again able to mobilize the protest vote. Secondly, it is important to understand that there is an intrinsic ideological difference between the UMP and the FN, and this reflects on the electorate. While the UMP has adopted a restrictive immigration policy and the government has tried to pass legislation that would ban the full Islamic veil in public places, the average FN voter not only wants an end to immigration, he wants the state to order compulsory repatriation of immigrants to their "countries of origin" and, in the wake of the Swiss referendum on minarets, he simply wants Islam to be banned. The same applies in relation to law and order: FN voters are not satisfied with tougher sentences for offenders – they demand the return of the death penalty. As for a multicultural society, there is actually a huge difference between stressing the need for immigrants to assimilate into French mainstream cul-



ture and the far right's belief in the superiority of the "white race" as the core value of European identity. This explains why most of the ethnocentric and authoritarian FN voters who switched to Sarkozy in 2007 have returned to the fold.

In line with much of Western Europe, France has extreme-right-wing political parties other than the *Front National*. The *Mouvement pour la France* (MPF), led by Philippe de Villiers, is an arch-conservative party that opposes Islam, multiculturalism and the European Union, but does not belong to the extreme right. Under the banner of Declan Ganley's Libertas movement, it polled 4.8 percent in the 2009 European election and acted as a bulwark against the FN vote. The fact that in 2010 the MPF aligned with the UMP in the regional elections certainly helped the FN to gain votes. Two distinct alliances of parties from the far right end of the political spectrum contested the 2010 elections. The *Parti de la France* (PDF) ran in four regions under its own banner and in two others on a common slate with the *Mouvement National Républicain* (MNR) and the *Nouvelle Droite Populaire* (NDP) led by the former FN MP, Robert Spieler. On its own, the PDF polled between 1.46 percent and 3.71 percent. On the common slates with the slogan, "No to minarets", it received 2.46 percent and 3 percent. In three regions the *Bloc Identitaire* fielded candidates who were joined by former FN and MNR dissidents. They polled 4.98 percent in Alsace, 2.69 percent in Provence and 0.61 percent in Languedoc. In local by-elections candidates from the Bloc Identitaire received more than 5 percent in the Nice area.

## The organization of the extreme right

### Political parties

#### Front National

The extreme right is divided into a myriad of rival groups jostling for the leadership of this party family when Jean-Marie Le Pen steps down from the FN presidency in January 2011. What is now at stake is the ideo-

logical identity and tactics of the FN in the presidential election of 2012 and beyond, and the outcome will differ greatly depending on whether Marine Le Pen or Bruno Gollnisch takes over the party. New alliances will emerge then, either with the “modernist” outlook of Marine Le Pen or the “traditionalist” approach of Gollnisch. The basic principles, however, will not change. As always, they will be: populism; xenophobia with a social agenda of “priority for the French”; opposition to the European Union and the euro currency; and finally, opposition to the “Big State”, but with the demand for better social services for French “natives” only. What may change is the style of leadership. Marine Le Pen is much less prone than her father or Gollnisch to utter blatantly racist statements or even propagate anti-Semitism or Holocaust denial – but that does not make her the French Gianfranco Fini.



Marine Le Pen



Jean-Marie Le Pen



Bruno Gollnisch

The official campaign for the election to the FN party presidency opened in September 2010. For the first time in the history of FN, its leader will be elected by all paid-up members in a secret ballot. In June 2010 two candidates were officially endorsed by at least 20 local federations of the party, and were allowed to stand. Bruno Gollnisch (b. 1950) is an MEP and the secretary-general of FN. Marine Le Pen (b. 1968), also an MEP, is a party vice-president. On 30 June 2010, Jean-Marie Le Pen announced in the daily newspaper *France-Soir* that he would back his daughter’s candidacy. But even after he steps down he will undoubtedly continue to keep watch on the party’s internal affairs.

## Other political parties and extreme-right groups

Apart from the FN, the extreme-right consists of the *Mouvement National Républicain* (MNR), the *Parti de la France* (PDF) and the *Bloc Identitaire*. The MNR was founded in 1999 by Bruno Mégret, the FN's former second-in-command, as the result of a split. Led by Annick Martin, it polled only 0.39 percent in 2007 and is almost defunct. The *Parti de la France* is led by Carl Lang, a former top executive of FN who left in 2008. It is a splinter party that was launched in January 2009, mostly as a group trying to gear itself to Le Pen's prospective retirement. The PDF is a mix of ex-FN arch-conservatives, Catholic fundamentalists and neo-fascists. The *Bloc Identitaire*, launched as a political party in October 2009, is headed by Fabrice Robert. Originating in the family of nationalist revolutionary sub-parties, it evolved into a populist movement rallying around slogans of European nationalism such as those propagated by the *Lega Nord*, and opposition to Islam. Dissociating itself from the traditional extreme right, it focuses on cultural or ethnic identity values. The inaugural convention of the *Bloc Identitaire* was attended by foreign delegates from the *Lega Nord*, the radical wing of the Swiss SVP and *Plataforma per Catalunya*. *Bloc Identitaire* is certainly the most innovative far-right formation in terms of ideology and political tactics. It is attempting to break away from French "Jacobin" nationalism and to promote local regionalist groups, while keeping its distance from the populist and racialist orientation of movements such as Pierre Vial's *Terre et Peuple*. In June 2010 it attracted considerable media attention by staging an event in Paris with the secularist, alternative left group Riposte Laïque, with the aim of alerting citizens to the "Islamisation" of the French capital. Among other groups, we should mention the Nouvelle Droite Populaire, which has been part of the "Cities against islamisation" grouping since January 2008, and has contact to the *Pro Cologne* movement.

Every time the FN rose in the popular ratings, the extra-parliamentary extreme right lost militants. The uncertainty about the FN's future has led to a limited revival of neo-fascist groups: the violence-prone street

brawlers of the *Groupe Union Défense* (GUD) which was re-founded in October 2009, the *Renouveau Français*, a Catholic-fascist group linked to Austria's *Nationale Volkspartei*, and the *Oeuvre française* led by Pierre Sidos. The annual street rally of the radical far right in Paris on 9 May 2010 confirmed the emergence of a small but growing independent nationalist group, *Nationalistes autonomes* (*Autonome Nationalisten*) in the capital and in Eastern France, under the influence of the kindred German movement. The French extreme-right comprises the following distinctive features: a Nazi skinhead movement, currently numbering less than 1,000 but gaining ground in northern France and represented mainly by the *Hammer-skins*, and to a much lesser extent by *Blood and Honour* affiliates; the residual intellectual influence of monarchist and Catholic fundamentalist groups, embodied in the remnants of the royalist *Action française* and the ultra-traditionalist *Fraternité Sacerdotale St. Pie X*; and the fact that the New Right, and especially its major thinker Alain de Benoist, have expressed their opposition to the FN<sup>3</sup> and want to act solely on a meta-political level. Despite this dissociation, we can say that the agenda of the New Right had a tremendous influence on the shaping of the Front National's ideology in the 1970s and up until the mid-80s. Several prominent leaders of the New Right think tank, GRECE (*Groupement d'études et de Recherche pour la Civilisation européenne*), switched to the FN, including Pierre Vial, Yvan Blot, Jean-Claude Bardet and Jean-Yves Le Gallou. They brought with them an articulated and intellectual definition of ethnicity, anti-egalitarianism and organicist socio-economic ideas.

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3 Although a regular contributor to "Junge Freiheit", de Benoist is not a nationalist conservative and tries to distance himself from the political right wing. *The Conservative Revolution* is, however, the major influence on his thought.

## Social movements

The extreme right has almost no influence on social movements: FN's attempts in the mid-90s to launch trade unions and professional associations quickly ended in dismal failure due to lack of support and lack of legal recognition. The youth wing of the party (*Front National de la Jeunesse*), which serves as a training school for future party executives and has always been a hotbed of radical ideologies, never numbered more than 1800 members. Currently led by David Rachline, it mainly supports Marine Le Pen. The FN has no influence in academic life or in the media, and does not maintain a think tank. However, in May 2010, Louis Aliot, the former secretary general of FN and a supporter of Marine Le Pen, announced that he was launching an FN think tank, *Idées-Nation*, in support of her candidacy. *Fondation Polemia*, led by Jean-Yves Le Gallou, can be regarded as the think tank of the *Identity* movement, while the *Club de l'Horloge* disseminates the ideas of the nationalist conservative right wing. The number of far-right publications sold at newsstands, as well as far-right bookshops (aside from mail order or online), is falling but still remains larger than in most European countries (6 publications; a dozen bookshops). The *Front National*, affected by cuts in public financing following its poor elections results in 2007, has completely stopped publishing newspapers except for two subscription-only publications issued in the specific context of the internal contest for the party presidency: *Nation Presse Info* is supporting Marine Le Pen, while *Droite Ligne* is supporting Gollnisch, who also has the backing of the weekly *Rivarol*, which has sold at newsstands since 1951 and is an extreme anti-Zionist publication that allows freedom of speech to Holocaust deniers. The number of extreme-right websites does not seem to be growing significantly; only a few are professionally designed and offer innovative content. These include: <http://www.nationspresse.info>; [www.voxnr.com](http://www.voxnr.com); <http://fr.novopress.info> and <http://zentropa.splinder.com>.

The extreme right is a kind of counter-society with its own codes and traditions, but the overwhelming majority of FN voters have no connec-

tion to it. The average FN voter feels deeply alienated from the elites and the social movements; he/she tends to drift away if denied the chance to vote for FN (as in the 2008 municipal elections, when the party failed to field candidates in all the major cities). In any case, all the surveys show that the average FN voter is not religious, although many FN party executives in the 1980s and '90s were Catholic traditionalists.

## International networks

The FN was the driving force behind the wave of similar parties that rose in Western Europe, and it eventually succeeded the former Italian far-right party, MSI, as the leader of the far right in Western Europe. Emerging from the lunatic fringe to become an important party, the FN soon took over as the bright star of the European extreme right. This partly explains why, following its first electoral success in 1984, Le Pen began contemplating the idea of building a transnational network both within and beyond the European Parliament. The most recent grouping of this kind was *Identité, Tradition, Souveraineté*, which existed in the European Parliament from January until November 2007 but, like similar previous groups, collapsed because of internal in-fighting. These attempts to create an umbrella group in Strasbourg, as well as a transnational network of parties under the name "Euro-Nat", have generally been misinterpreted. In the 1970s, when the MSI sponsored the *Eurodroite* network, it had very little to gain from this, and the move was primarily motivated by a genuine commitment to "spreading the faith" in countries where the far right was weak, or keeping it alive where it was threatened, such as in Greece and Spain after the collapse of the dictatorships. By contrast, FN-led groups were only launched in order to compensate for the party's complete lack of credibility on the "home front", in an attempt to appear as a party with numerous high-level or mainstream connections abroad. FN's international contacts were forged without reference to their ideological validity or practical relevance, and the party seems to have known very little about some of its foreign partners: in 1996, the FN staff

member in charge of handling contacts for the youth wing of Euro-Nat was incapable of properly defining the ideological affiliation of the Portuguese movement that belonged to the network. In fact, the FN has not made a serious effort to build a transnational network on an ideological basis. It is well aware that this is an impossible task, and in any case, the real reason for these contacts was for Le Pen to boost his ego by meeting kindred politicians who were part of ruling coalitions, notably in Austria, Romania, Slovakia and Russia or, in the case of Flanders, who could potentially become the main political force in government. The only serious aspect of the grouping in the European Parliament is that the assembly granted the FN important financial and administrative resources that it used to hire staff members and publish propaganda or organize events; this was actually useful to the party on the national level.

The FN's current transnational network is the *Alliance of European National Movements*, formed in Budapest on 24 October 2009 under the chairmanship of Bruno Gollnisch. The Alliance's founding members are *Jobbik*, the *Movement for a Better Hungary*, the Italian *Fiamma Tricolore*, *Sverigedemokraterna* from Sweden, the *Front National* from Belgium, the *British National Party*, the *Partido Nacional Renovador* (Portugal), the *Movimiento Social Republicano* (Spain) and the Ukrainian *Svoboda Party*. Under new European Parliament regulations, the network needs 25 MEPs from 7 different member states to be able to form a parliamentary group. Nor are the activities of the Alliance likely to boost the party's popularity at home<sup>4</sup>: in August 2010 the Alliance was due to meet in Japan at the invitation of a local far-right party, *Issuikai*. Apart from the Alliance, the FN maintains close relations with several like-minded parties across Europe, such as the FPÖ (especially through Andreas Mölzer). Other successful parties such as Geert Wilders' party in the Netherlands and the Scandinavian populists reject cooperation with the FN because they see it as being outside the mainstream. In 2009 *Vlaams Belang* unofficially dissociated itself from the FN after having worked with it very closely since the 1980s.

The international networks of the extra-parliamentary extreme right are informal. The neo-fascist umbrella organization *European National Front* (ENF), which included the *Renouveau Français*, *Forza Nuova* and the NPD, seems to have become inactive.

## Social attitudes

The activity of the extreme right should be seen in the context of the growing number of racist/anti-Semitic incidents as compared to the 1990s. The annual survey of the Commission Nationale Consultative des Droits de l'Homme (CNCDH) recorded 467 racist incidents in France in 2008 and 1026 in 2009, mainly aggression and threats towards the Arab/Muslim and African/Caribbean communities.



Synagogue with right-wing extremist slogans in France



Paradoxically, this does not mean that French society is becoming more intolerant. The same report shows that in 2009, 54 percent of respondents claimed they were “not racist at all”, an increase of 2 percent over 2008. On the other hand, 49 percent agreed that “there are too many immigrants in France”, and 50 percent said that when integration failed, the immigrants were mainly to blame for not adopting the French way of life. Nevertheless, some ethnic minorities are still victimised by specific prejudices: the survey reported 69 percent of respondents as saying that the Roma are “an insular group” and 44 percent holding similar opinions about Muslims. 29 percent consider the Jews to be a group isolated from the rest of society, and Jews are facing a rise in violence perpetrated by a minority of the migrant population of North African origin. When asked about their biggest problems in everyday life, 60 percent of French respondents mentioned unemployment and the fear of impoverishment (terrorism: 11 percent; religious fundamentalism: 10 percent; immigration: only 7 percent). The influence of the extreme right can be seen in the negative image of the Muslim faith: 30 percent of respondents had a negative attitude to Islam and 73 percent saw the wearing of the hijab as a problem. In every case, prejudice against minorities is strongly correlated to voting for the far right or traditional right, but also with being male, a senior citizen, or working class with a low educational level and below-average income. The report also noted a sharp increase in the number of anti-Semitic incidents, which rose from 459 in 2008 to 815 in 2009, mostly as a result of mass mobilization by the extra-parliamentary left and the Islamist movement against Israel’s Operation Cast Lead in Gaza. While a significant proportion of the racist incidents against Muslims seem to be perpetrated by young people from the extreme right who make use of neo-Nazi symbols, the overwhelming majority of anti-Semitic incidents have no far-right background. However, as French law prohibits recording the ethnicity and religion of citizens and using them in statistics, it is impossible to prove that the majority of perpetrators of anti-Semitic incidents come from the Muslim community. In relation to



Election poster of the Front National: "Defend our colours"

the long tradition of strident anti-Semitism within the French extreme right, a sector of the extremist groups is now anti-Jewish and anti-Israel, but others, such as the Bloc Identitaire and even Marine Le Pen herself, have struck anti-Jewish/anti-Zionist prejudice off their agendas. Conversely, the *Parti Antisioniste* (PAS), which contested the 2009 European election in the Paris area (polling 1.23 percent of the vote) was an unfamiliar new mix of Islamists, radical left anti-Zionists and neo-fascist anti-Semites gathered under the leadership of the comedian Dieudonné. Although the so-called Red-Green-Brown alliance does not really exist, there are increasing links between the radical-right and extreme anti-Zionists. In April 2010 the Iranian ambassador to France gave a lecture to a mixed audience of leftists, Islamists and neo-fascists in a Paris meeting room owned by a leader of *Renouveau Français*. The meeting was set up by "Flash", a fortnightly national-revolutionary magazine, and was attended by Thomas Werlet, the leader of the tiny *Parti Solidaire Français*, a strident anti-Jewish activist group.

### Target groups and their approach

In sociological terms, voters for Le Pen or FN in elections between 2002 and 2007 had the following background:

Table 2

	Presidential 88	Presidential 95	Presidential 02	Presidential 07
Total	15	15	17	11
<b>Sex</b>				
Male	18	19	20	12
Female	11	12	14	9
<b>Age</b>				
18–24	14	18	13	10
25–34	15	20	17	10
35–49	15	16	18	11
50–64	14	14	20	12
65 and over	16	10	15	9
<b>Occupation</b>				
Farmer	10	10	22	10
Manager	19	19	22	10
Middle-level executive	14	4	13	7
Low-level employee	14	18	22	12
Worker	17	21	23	16
Unemployed	17	28	20	11
<b>Sector</b>				
Private	16	16	20	12
Public	14	14	14	11
<b>Education</b>				
Primary school	15	17	24	13
Secondary school	17	20	21	13
Lower school leaving certificate	13	12	15	8
Higher school leaving certificate	10	13	11	3
University degree	9	4	7	4
<b>Catholic Observance*</b>				
High	13	8	12	5
Low	13	13	18	10
No observance	16	19	20	12
No religion	10	14	15	12

Numbers represent percentage of total votes.

\* There are no data for other religions.

The chart can be interpreted as follows: firstly, the FN is predominantly a male party – the gender gap is not narrowing with time, although Marine Le Pen is now the FN media representative and main spokesperson. The party's main constituency is middle-aged and retired people, and its impact on young people is limited by its negative image as a party led by an old man who is the only surviving elected politician to have been an MP under the Fourth Republic. The average FN voter has a low income, low educational level and low social status. He/she is not religiously observant. The overwhelming majority of FN voters come from a Catholic background, although there are some Protestant strongholds in the Alsace region. The numbers voting for FN within the Jewish and the Muslim populations remain below 5 percent, despite Le Pen's efforts to attract the second-generation immigrants' vote in the suburbs during his 2007 campaign. It is likely to decline further because of the party's emphasis on the issue of "Islamisation" in the 2010 elections campaign.

The major themes of FN propaganda have barely changed since the party was founded in 1972. Immigration and mobilization against the "decline" of the nation are the priority issues, alongside rewards for hard work and the policy of granting social benefits to "native" French people only. Showing appreciation for small business entrepreneurial skills and meritocracy comes second, as befits a party with its constituency in the working class and the professions. Law and order (including the re-introduction of the death penalty) come third. The FN has also gained votes by posing as anti-elite and against corruption, presenting itself as the only alternative to the "bande des quatres" (Gang of Four) made up of the Conservative/Liberal Right, the centre-right and the Socialist Party.

## Prospects for the extreme right

The *Front National* has declined recently due to Jean-Marie Le Pen's poor showing in the 2007 presidential election and the subsequent cuts in public funding for the party. In 2010 it was forced to sell its oversized headquarters, lay off a section of its permanent staff and keep its cam-

paigns low-key. The party's image has been damaged by the internal strife over Le Pen's successor as chairman. However, Sarkozy's victory over the FN proved short-lived because the conservative right underestimated voters' anger at a government that is not delivering on the promises it made in 2007 for improving the social and economic situation. Although it is unlikely that the FN candidate in 2012 will succeed in reaching the second ballot, it is now clear that the party will survive the change of leadership. The first (and most likely) scenario is that Marine Le Pen will become chairperson and will try to change the image of the party in a way that many supporters see as "moderate". This means she could lose the really diehard ideologues and militants and would have to attract new voters from the mainstream right, especially among women and young people. The second scenario is that Bruno Gollnisch will take over the chair. In this case the FN will remain an ostracized movement, loyal to the basic principles of the extreme right but unable to develop beyond its present state. Whoever wins, there is the possibility of a split – although the failure of MNR and PDF indicate that probably no splinter party could survive outside the *Front National*, at least as long as Jean-Marie Le Pen is still alive. It is important to understand that if Marine Le Pen succeeds her father she does not intend to follow a Fini-type strategy; while differing from her father on topics such as anti-Semitism or the Second World War, she has no intention of changing the fundamentals of FN ideology on issues such as immigration, opposition to Islam, multiculturalism, and law and order. However the FN develops, its politics will probably be a mix of traditional extreme-right positions and the mainstream tactics of parties like *Lega Nord* or the *Dansk Folkeparti*.

Whatever happens, Le Pen's retirement will undoubtedly redraw the map of the French extreme right.



# The situation of the extreme right in Great Britain

## Traditional perspectives for the analysis of the British extreme right

Until a few years ago, the position of the extreme right in Great Britain was usually analysed within a paradigm of supposed 'British exceptionalism' – that, in contrast to many other countries of Europe, Great Britain (which excludes Northern Ireland) had been largely inured against extreme-right politics. Such parties that were active in the 1930s, the 1950s, and the 1960s and 1970s had some contemporary support and political impact, but they proved evanescent and did not put down any social roots.<sup>1</sup>

## The need for a new perspective?

While it is true that the British situation is not that of countries such as France or Belgium, any claim to exceptionalism may now need qualification in the light of the emergence since 2000-01 in some localities of the *British National Party* (BNP), albeit the only British extreme-right party of any present-day importance. The party was founded in 1982 as one of the spin-offs from the disintegration of the earlier *National Front* (NF) but

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1 This argument and the supposed reasons for Britain's distinctiveness in this respect are rehearsed in several sources; for example, Eatwell, R (1992), 'Why has the extreme right failed in Britain?', in Hainsworth, P (ed), *The Extreme Right in Europe and the USA* (London: Pinter), 175-92; Eatwell, R (2000), 'The extreme right and British exceptionalism: the primacy of politics', in Hainsworth, P (ed), *The Politics of the Extreme Right: From the Margins to the Mainstream* (New York: Pinter), 172-92; and Husbands, C T (1994), 'Following the "continental model"?: implications of the electoral performance of the *British National Party*', *New Community*, 20(4), 563-79.

only with the election in 1999 of Nicholas Griffin as its Chair to replace the aging John Tyndall (1934-2005) has it achieved a degree of political credibility as well as support, despite persisting factionalism within it and the defection at various times of some of its locally high-profile activists. Griffin has a long history of activism in the British extreme right, from his early days in the NF. The BNP's voter base, disproportionately male and largely but not exclusively white working-class or petit-bourgeois, has similarities to that of the old NF and until recently was very specifically concentrated in certain locations: towns in Lancashire such as Burnley and Oldham; towns in Yorkshire such as Bradford, Keighley and Dewsbury; Stoke-on-Trent in the northern west Midlands; Birmingham and some towns around it, such as Dudley; certain parts of London, especially inner and outer East London; and parts of neighbouring Essex. Until 2008 this success, in terms of seats won, was limited to victories in lowest-tier local-authority elections and by-elections.

### **The level and basic features of current BNP support in Great Britain**

However, in May 2008 the BNP achieved the election of a member of the London Assembly in an election based upon a proportional-representation principle this seat was won on the basis of 5.3 percent of the vote across Greater London as a whole (3.9 percent of the eligible electorate). In the constituency covering the BNP's London heartland of inner and outer East London, the level of BNP support was 9.8 percent, with an additional 1.3 percent for the NF (3.9 and 0.5 percent respectively of the eligible electorate).

Then, in June 2009, albeit partly assisted by the lack of popularity of the governing Labour Party and by a general disillusion with the major parties, the BNP succeeded in the European Parliament elections in electing two MEPs, Griffin himself from the North West constituency and Andrew Brons from the Yorkshire & Humber constituency. This was achieved on the basis of 8.0 and 9.8 percent respectively of the votes cast



(2.6 and 3.2 percent of the relevant electorates). Rather more worryingly, whereas in the past one would have said that the nation-wide support for the extreme right was probably no more than about 1 percent, the level of BNP electoral support in the 2009 European elections even in the party's weaker locations shows that it managed to spread to a degree from beyond its heartlands. Its overall national support in the 2009 European elections was 6.0 percent (2.1 percent of the eligible electorate). In the South East constituency, where it is not a political force, it nonetheless managed 4.4 percent of votes cast (1.7 percent of the eligible electorate).

Most standard published opinion polls do not report BNP support separately and, in any case, there is evidence that such polls that do specifically report the BNP's support substantially underestimate its potential strength. One national poll taken (probably by Internet or telephone) in exceptional circumstances in October 2009 on the day immediately after the appearance of the BNP leader on a highly publicized BBC television programme [see below] reported support at 3 percent, in contrast with the previous month's 2 percent.<sup>2</sup> The same poll also reported that 22 percent of respondents would 'seriously consider' voting for the BNP in a future local, general or European election. Forty-three (43) percent shared some of its concerns but 'had no sympathy for the party itself'. A high 12 percent said that they completely agreed with the BNP, but 38 percent completely disagreed and two-thirds said that they would under no circumstances vote for it. Some of these figures may seem alarming, but the circumstances of the poll mean that they should probably be regarded with at least some circumspection, if not scepticism. The 'true' figure – putting together the evidence of the 2009 European Parliament results but also by-election results of the time – for BNP support in late 2009/early 2010, if measured accurately and at a time without particular sensitivity to the BNP, would probably have been around 4 percent in Great Britain, and very slightly higher in England alone.

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2 Prince, R (23 October 2009), 'One in five "would consider voting BNP" after Nick Griffin Question Time appearance', Daily Telegraph online, [www.telegraph.co.uk](http://www.telegraph.co.uk), accessed 1 November 2009.

As it happens, the national and local elections that took place on 6 May 2010 give an excellent and very recent opportunity to assess the genuine level of current voter support for the BNP in Great Britain; this was a contest that lacked the somewhat artificial context of a second-order election, as was the 2009 European Parliament election. More analytically helpful is that these results also give an excellent indication of where the BNP's relative strongholds now are, and hence what factors may be relevant in precipitating support for it. In the 2010 general election the BNP fielded candidates in 338 of the 632 constituencies in England, Wales and Scotland – the widest general-election appearance ever by an extreme-right party, exceeding even that of the NF in 1979, which had run in 303 constituencies. Almost all the BNP appearances were in England, but 12 were in Wales (out of 40 constituencies there) and 13 were in Scotland (out of 59 constituencies there). Overall, the party won 3.8 percent of votes cast in seats fought, though the figure in England was slightly higher (3.9 percent). All the performances in Scotland and most of those in Wales were below the national average figure, whose level is broadly consistent with what might have been inferred from a variety of sources, including opinion polls after adjusting for their known underestimation, of the level of national support for the BNP over the past year at times when there was no particular public sensitivity to it.

The electoral performance of the BNP in the 2010 general election was widely interpreted by commentators as a setback because nowhere did it achieve any really significant result, let alone win any of its target seats – although it fared considerably better than the closest relevant comparison, the general-election performance of the NF thirty-one years earlier, which was a mere 1.3 percent in 303 constituencies fought. Still, the increase to 3.8 percent may be partly attributable to the continuing decline of partisan electoral alignment to the mainstream political parties, a phenomenon that has been a much-discussed feature of the political sociology of Great Britain for more than four decades.<sup>3</sup>

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3 For one of many standard discussions of the phenomenon, see Denver, D (2007), *Elections and Voters in Britain* (2nd ed; Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan), 72-4.

What is interesting, however, is where BNP support has persisted, where it has declined, and where it has emerged over recent years. The inner London East End constituencies, where the traditional heartland of the extreme right was historically based, have become much more multicultural and tolerant. Instead, this extreme-right support has migrated to certain outer London working-class suburbs and is now to be seen in constituencies such as Barking, which was the BNP's prime target seat where Griffin stood as candidate, and its neighbouring Dagenham and Rainham. These were in fact the BNP's best constituency performances in 2010 with 14.6 and 11.2 percent of votes cast respectively. Support in nearby Thurrock (7.9 percent) and Hornchurch & Upminster (6.4 percent) also reflects this migration from inner east London.

Looking elsewhere, there remains some BNP support in parts of the West Midlands, where there has long been some proclivity for racist politics. West Bromwich West and Walsall North constituencies (9.4 and 8.1 percent respectively) are examples of this. In recent years the BNP has also built up a base in Stoke-on-Trent, formerly famous as Britain's foremost potteries town, and it had earlier won a number of local council seats there. It had expectations, if not of winning, then of performing impressively there, especially in the Stoke-on-Trent Central and South constituencies; its eventual 7.7 and 9.4 percent were well above the national average, but less than what it had hoped. Long-time areas of support in Lancashire also remain relative strongholds, though less so than some years ago. Ashton under Lyne (7.6 percent), Blackley & Broughton (7.2 percent), Burnley (9.0 percent), Heywood & Middleton (7.0 percent), Makerfield (7.4 percent), and Oldham West & Royton (7.1 percent) are the most significant examples of support in this area. In West Yorkshire, formerly the basis of Britain's woollen industry and where the NF had earlier done well, are also examples of relative BNP strength: Batley & Spen (7.1 percent), Hemsworth (7.0 percent), Leeds Central (8.2 percent), Leeds East (7.8 percent), and Morley & Outwood (7.2 percent).

What is perhaps most noticeable about the 2010 results is, however, the emergence to prominence of parts of South Yorkshire as some of the BNP's areas of very highest support. A string of parliamentary constituencies in this area saw some of the BNP's best performances: Barnsley Central (8.9 percent), Barnsley East (8.6 percent), Normanton, Pontefract & Castleford (8.4 percent), Rotherham (10.4 percent), Rother Valley (7.7 percent), Sheffield Brightside & Hillsborough (7.8 percent), and Wentworth & Dearne (7.6 percent). This is precisely the part of the country probably hit hardest in the longest term by the fallout from economic restructuring in the 1980s and 1990s, having been the heart of the British coal and also steel industries till the extensive mine-closure programme and deindustrialization processes of those years.

The BNP's most public successes in the past decade have been its ability to win seats on local authority councils in elections fought on a ward basis, the 'ward' being a geographical unit electing one (or sometimes more) local councillors. Before the recent round of local-authority elections, also held on 6 May 2010, the BNP's overall tally had been 57 local-authority councillors (all of them in England). This represented a far more impressive achievement than that by any previous extreme-right party, but it is still a minuscule fraction of the more than 22,000 of all such seats. The BNP also has just three councillors at the next highest level, the county – in Lancashire, Leicestershire and Hertfordshire (the last north of London). These local elections on 6 May 2010 were all conducted on the first-past-the-post principle, which works against smaller parties. However, of the 28 local council seats (out of the total of 57) being defended by the BNP in May 2010, all but two were lost, leaving the party with a current tally of 31 such seats. In Barking & Dagenham, where the party had previously held 12 seats won in 2006, it had even hoped to capture the council but in the event lost all its 12 councillors.

It is not difficult to point to some factors that contributed to this setback by the BNP – even if it is not easy to assess their respective relative impor-

tance. There was a very strong anti-fascist campaign against the BNP, especially in Barking & Dagenham and this mobilization of anti-fascist activists must have made a difference.<sup>4</sup> However, one should not discount other factors – the local elections and the general election were held on the same day, meaning that their electorates were conterminous and so local-election participation was higher than normal for such elections; the lower turnout in local elections has historically assisted extreme-right parties in terms of vote share, even if only when the local or national mood runs in their favour. There is also the simple matter of voters' disillusion; although some BNP elected officials were undoubtedly conscientious in their duties, others were not – failing to attend council meetings or to respond to the individual concerns of their constituents. Former voters were then disappointed that their earlier vote, albeit having led to the election of their chosen candidate, did nonetheless not lead to any noticeable improvement in the circumstances that determined their vote in the first place.

Election poster of the BNP: "The new battle for Britain – Yes to putting British people first"



4 For details, see Lowles, N (June 2010), 'Routed', Searchlight, 420, 4-7, and generally at [www.hopenothate.org.uk](http://www.hopenothate.org.uk).

## The BNP and the media response

The BNP's Euro-victories in 2009 and the fact that it is now in England still clearly the fifth largest party (after the three traditional parties, plus the United Kingdom Independence Party) threw into disarray the usual past policy of mainstream political parties and the mainstream media of 'outcasting' the BNP. Amid much controversy in October 2009 the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) invited Griffin on to 'Question Time', a premier weekly television current affairs programme with a studio audience (members of an interested public in a different locality each week ask questions on topical political issues to a panel of celebrities, usually senior politicians from the major parties or other public figures). Griffin duly appeared on Thursday 22 October 2009 amid much media controversy and was forced to face some difficult questions from the chairperson and from other panel members. Although there were polling reports of increased support for the BNP immediately after the programme and the BNP was variously claiming 3,000 to 4,000 requests for new membership, it was generally agreed – including latterly within the BNP itself – that the performance was not helpful for the party's image.

It is the socio-political environment of its areas of support that has assisted the BNP, which has relied variously on anti-immigrant, anti-asylum-seeker, anti-Muslim and anti-Asian appeals, depending on time and context. The Lancashire and Yorkshire towns where it has made an impact have experiences earlier in the decade of white/Asian conflicts, and tend also to have had high levels of segregation and little contact between whites and other ethnic groups. However, the spread of BNP support seen in the 2009 Euro-elections may have meant that, at least on that occasion, the normal degree of social determinism of BNP support was lessened, as those with these phobic views across wider sections of society were drawn to the BNP. Still, the more distinctive geographical pattern of BNP support in the 2010 general election suggests that a degree of social determinism in its support has been restored.

The danger to democratic politics posed by the extreme right in Great Britain is the risk of the banalization of support for it – the view of a part of the electorate that voting for the extreme right is a normal, even if a risqué or ‘daring’ or unconventional demonstration of hostility to the political system. It is that sentiment against which some Labour politicians, especially those seeing a strong extreme-right sentiment in their locality, have been warning for some time, although it would be very wrong to suggest that the banality of extreme-right sympathy is a national phenomenon. However, it can undoubtedly be a local factor in those places where the BNP has established a foothold.

## Other extreme-right phenomena in Great Britain

The BNP has been the only recent significant political party on the British extreme right. However, the NF – with its heyday in the 1970s – continues to exist, even if it has long ago been thoroughly eclipsed by the BNP. In the May 2010 general election the NF had initially intended to run a candidate in 25 constituencies but, in the event, managed only 17, distributed quite widely across the country and averaging only 1.4 per cent in these constituencies fought. There has been a suggestion that some disaffected former BNP supporters have gravitated into the NF, though that is largely only an activist phenomenon.

There are also some niche activities that attract a few who are sympathetic to the extreme right, including some football club support and White Power rock music, but these phenomena do not obtrude upon the wider society – except that a group calling itself the *English Defence League* (EDL) (with a small Welsh companion group, the *Welsh Defence League*) has since the summer of 2009 been making a significant public impression in the media, with marches usually in cities and towns with large Muslim populations. It has not contested elections but has confined its activities to controversial marches, which have now occurred in Birmingham, London, Leeds and other places, and which have often been asso-

ciated with violence between its members and its opponents. It and the BNP have mutually sought publicly to distance themselves from each other but there is much evidence of EDL activists in some locations who have also been active in the BNP, as well as active in football hooliganism. Despite its claim to be against only Islamist extremism, critics accuse it of general Islamophobia. The alleged precipitating event for EDL's formation was a small but vocal demonstration by a few Islamist extremists against the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Anglian Regiment when it publicly celebrated its return from Iraq with a march through the town of Luton on 10 March 2009. As discussed below, this organization may assume a greater public prominence in the light of the BNP's electoral setback in 2010. Several other extreme-right groups do exist but are wholly marginal.

## The structure of extreme-right support

Formal political parties of the extreme right seek to mobilize support principally on the basis of ethnic expulsionism or exclusionism (though also adhering to other, traditional, right-wing concerns), and there is a hierarchy of commitment to any such party – ranging from a core of activism to a penumbra of less-committed support.<sup>5</sup>

- Extreme-right activism by individuals who attends meetings, go on marches, assist in elections, and even stand as candidates
- Passive membership by those who sympathize but do not become involved in any actual activism
- Persistent and loyal voters for such parties
- Occasional, intermittent or one-off voters for such parties
- Sympathisers with such parties who do not actually vote for the parties
- Sympathisers with some or all of such parties' policies who do not otherwise support these parties

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5 Other categories would be needed to encompass other types of extreme-right movement, besides political parties.



The first four categories would, for example, encompass those 22 percent who, in the earlier poll discussed above, would seriously consider BNP voting. The last category might be the 43 percent who shared some of the BNP's concerns but would never vote for it.

However, there are reasons to argue that the British population, whatever its temporary temptations may be, is not generally significantly disposed to ethnic exclusionism. Survey data can be dismissed as only a superficial reflection of the true views of the adult population, but nonetheless should not be discounted. A Citizenship Survey conducted in 2007-08 reported that 82 percent of people in England perceived their community as cohesive, agreeing that their local area was a place where people from different backgrounds got on well together. Eighty (80) percent of respondents reported regular meaningful interactions with people from different ethnic or religious backgrounds.<sup>6</sup>

Even so, the evidence that does exist within the British population of some specific hostility, or at least uneasiness, with respect to Asian and Muslim people cannot be wholly discounted. The best and most recently available reliable data on such attitudes come from the annual British Social Attitudes survey, in this case the one conducted between June and November 2008.<sup>7</sup> The survey asked respondents about their feelings towards a number of different ethnic and religious groups, using to do so a so-called 'feeling thermometer' ranging from 0 to 100 as its measuring instrument. A value of 50 indicated supposed indifference to the group concerned, although this response was undoubtedly also used by many who felt merely no prejudice against that particular group. Zero indicated extreme adverse feeling and anything else below 50, some varying level of adverse feeling. Complementarily, the values of 51 to 100 indicated increasing levels of positive feeling. Unsurprisingly, 'white people' were

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6 Lloyd, C (2009), Citizenship Survey (London: National Centre for Social Research); <http://www.natcen.ac.uk/study/citizenship-survey-2007-08/findings#chapter1>.

7 Calculated from National Centre for Social Research (2010), British Social Attitudes Survey 2008; <http://www.britisocac.com>.

most favourably assessed; only 2 percent of respondents gave any level of adverse feeling score to that group, and 42 percent were at the midpoint of indifference.<sup>8</sup> Black and Jewish people attracted some limited levels of adverse feeling, at 11 and 14 percent respectively, with midpoint indifference percentages both of 49 percent. However, for 'Asian people' and specifically 'Muslim people' percentages of negative feelings were noticeably higher and would be slightly more so if Asians were excluded from the percentage denominator; 21 percent of all respondents expressed some level of negative feeling towards Asian people and for Muslim people it was as high as 35 percent; the respective midpoints of indifference were 46 and 41 percent. Thus, almost two-fifths of non-Muslim respondents had some degree of negative feeling about Muslim people but, although this finding is undoubtedly a social fact, past experience has shown that the ability of the BNP to convert this into support on anything but a local level has generally been very limited.

### **The interaction between the extreme right, the state and organizations of civil society**

The core of extreme-right support is clearly less numerous – its penumbra of support most numerous. Whilst there may be policy initiatives that are targeted to reduce pro-extreme-right sympathy in the penumbra (e.g., in national immigration policy or initiatives on matters such as urban regeneration that can be targeted at localities), most activities by the state that directly combat the extreme-right focus on the core alone and have little effect upon the much larger numbers of passive supporters and sympathizers. Indeed, in the last analysis the options available to the constitutional state to deal with a party such as the BNP are rather lim-

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8 These and the following data of this paragraph cover all ethnic-group respondents in the sample, whose percentages of self-assessed ethnicity were: of some type of white origin, 91 per cent; of some type of black origin, 2 per cent; of some type of Asian origin, 5 per cent; and of mixed or other origin, 2 per cent.

ited and it is correspondingly difficult for the state, by its own actions, actually to reduce extreme-right voter support. Of course, activists who break the law may be prosecuted as appropriate using the criminal or civil law. However, such state actions are largely irrelevant to the issue of how to reduce large-scale voter support. The scope of the state's actions in this respect is further circumscribed by the fact that most of the policies that extreme-right supporters might want to see implemented for their benefit (such as ethnic preference in favour of whites in the allocation of local resources such as social housing or state-school places) would simply be unlawful. Even the use of a criterion such as length of time as a local resident to be a surrogate for an ethnic criterion may in certain circumstances be unlawful for being indirectly discriminatory.<sup>9</sup>

We can examine the societal position of the BNP by looking at how the state and its civil-society organizations interact with it, and vice versa. Above was discussed one instance of quasi-state interaction with the BNP, viz., Griffin's appearance on a television programme, but in general the instances where the BNP has been integrated into the organs of the state are few and of little consequence. There was some controversy when in 2009 the BNP member of the London Assembly and in 2010 the two BNP MEPs were invited to a Buckingham Palace garden party. As it happened, the 2010 invitation to Griffin to the garden party was withdrawn after he had used it in the media to claim that it showed the acceptance of those who had voted BNP. Andrew Brons, his MEP colleague, did attend the garden party but was reportedly shunned by the other guests. Instead, most initiatives involving the BNP by the state and its organizations, or by agents of civil society such as trade unions, are directed against the BNP.

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<sup>9</sup> See Husbands, C T (2002), 'Combating the extreme right with the instruments of the constitutional state: lessons from experiences in western Europe', *Journal für Konflikt- und Gewaltforschung*, 4(1), 52–73 (Link: [www.uni-bielefeld.de/ikg/jkg/1-2002/husbands.pdf](http://www.uni-bielefeld.de/ikg/jkg/1-2002/husbands.pdf)).

## Initiatives by agents of the national state against the BNP

Initiatives against the extreme right by the state have been principally by statute or based upon the criminal law. Although the Home Office does have a monitoring unit, state surveillance and monitoring has, at least until relatively recently, been largely incident-driven and not proactive, unlike the state's longer-term interest in potential Islamist terrorists. Legislative provision against incitement to racial hatred (and, since October 2007, incitement of hatred based on religious belief) is the principal means used by the state against the more overt expressions taken by extreme-right sentiment. However, prosecutions have been few, limited to the most notorious examples and taken only against individual offenders. There have been no proscriptive actions against extreme-right parties or organizations per se, although a substantial number of organizations alleged to support Islamist terror have been banned.

Members of the police are explicitly banned from being members of the BNP and similar right-wing groups. A leak of the BNP membership list on to the Internet in 2009 nonetheless revealed the odd policeman who was a member. The ban may have deterred some police from joining, or perhaps even deterred persons sympathetic to the BNP from joining the police, but little more. Prison officers are also forbidden from membership, although there has often been strong suspicion of extreme-right-wing sympathy among some of this group. There has been some discussion among teachers as to whether membership of the BNP should be forbidden, although that has not so far happened. However, these issues are scarcely even an irritant to the appeals of the BNP, and for some may increase its appeal.

There has been another and recent action by an organ of the British state against the BNP. The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), the UK's body with the statutory duty to enforce equality legislation, wrote to the BNP on 22 June 2009 demanding under race-equality legislation that it altered provisions of its constitution concerning its whites-

only membership criteria, which were seen as racially discriminatory, as defined in terms of statute. The BNP then sought a brief extension, which was granted. When its ultimate response was considered inadequate, the Commission issued legal proceedings on 24 August 2009 in respect of the party's constitution and membership criteria. The Commission won on the point that the BNP's then membership criteria were directly racially discriminatory. The BNP realized that an amendment to these criteria would be needed and Griffin's proposed draft change was put to a special meeting of the party's membership at an extraordinary general meeting held on 14 February 2010. However, in March this revised version, which also required a long vetting interview of intending new members, was then ruled by the Court as indirectly racially discriminatory (i.e., setting up a criterion that members of one ethnic group would find it much more easy to satisfy than members of other ethnic groups). The new version required applicants for membership to oppose 'any form of integration or assimilation', which was seen as less likely to be an option for those in mixed-race relationships. Whilst apparent indirect discrimination, unlike direct discrimination, can in English law be allowed if it can be objectively justified, the BNP was unable to provide any such justification. Griffin's further attempts at revising the constitution of the party have been seen as cosmetic and not in the spirit of the Court's ruling. The matter remains without settlement, with legal action against Griffin for disregarding a Court order being a possibility.<sup>10</sup>

This action by the EHRC undoubtedly had some impact in that it harassed the BNP, which had been obliged to commit funds to argue its case. However, its overall and longer-term effect is arguable. Despite the publicity, there remains little evidence or prognosis that it will really hurt the BNP, which is never going to become a racially diverse organization. The constitutional change, whatever its final form turns out to be, will clearly have been reluctantly accepted and its most public effect so far has been

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<sup>10</sup> Walker, P, and Taylor, M (9 May 2010), 'BNP faces legal threat amid new racism claims over redrafted constitution', The Guardian online, [www.guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk), accessed 17 June 2010.

that one or two older and embittered anti-Muslim Asian Britons, still upset about the massacres associated with the partition of India in 1947, are likely to become members, to be merely tolerated by the general membership. This sort of formal action is probably the most intrusive available to the state to intervene in the affairs of a party such as the BNP, for which – whatever its general odious features – actual proscription is not a viable policy option.

### **Actions against the BNP by trade unions and the local state: 'Outcasting' by the legal process**

In 2007 the trade union for train-drivers, the Association of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF), successfully won a decision from the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) that Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights did not oblige it to accept into membership those who belonged to extreme-right parties that publicly espoused policies and views that were hostile to its own union policies and positions on multicultural issues.<sup>11</sup> The British government responded to this by changing the legislation inherited from the era of previous Conservative government that prohibited the use of political-party membership or affiliation as a criterion by which a trade union might determine who was allowed to join it. However, the manner in which this decision was transposed into English law by section 19 of the Employment Act 2008 was so circumscribed by exceptions and derogations that critics argue it is effectively inoperable; this measure will hardly have significant impact.

Exclusion of BNP activists is a matter in which both trade unions and some employers may have an interest. Even before the 2007 ECHR judgment, the civil law had occasionally been conditionally willing to support trade unions who wished to exclude BNP activists on the ground that their political beliefs opposed the declared aims and policies of the trade union.

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11 The case reference is: *Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers & Firemen v United Kingdom* (2007) EHRR, App No 11002/05, (2007) All ER (D) 438 (Feb).

Also, in particular specified circumstances the law upholds the right of employers to dismiss extreme-right employees whose political beliefs or activities interfere with the full and proper execution of their job. The most significant case concerned a local authority that successfully dismissed a publicly known BNP activist who had been employed as a bus driver often driving ethnic-minority children to and from school.<sup>12</sup> English case law on dismissals from employment evaluates the question of fairness according to a 'range of reasonable responses' open to the employer – thus, the courts have accepted that dismissal of a publicly known BNP activist whose job brings him into regular contact with those whom he might not wish to see in the country is, on that basis, 'reasonable'.

However, 'outcasting' of the BNP by organs and agents of the state cannot always be effectively done, especially in local authorities where BNP councillors have been elected. Having been legally elected, such councillors are entitled to certain prerogatives from the state in order to do their job. They are expected to represent the interests of those who did not vote for them as well as those who did. A policy to deny them access to the facilities needed to act as councillors would be counter-productive and certainly unlawful.

## The BNP in international context

The BNP's attitude on international matters is interestingly ambivalent. Far less than some other West European extreme-right parties has it established itself as part of a European ethnic project. That may be partly because what now disturbs some of its supporters is less immigration from former British colonies than does immigration from parts of eastern Europe. Also, there persists a strong suspicion among many on the extreme right about the UK's inclusion in Europe.

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12 The case reference is: *Redfearn v Serco Ltd trading as West Yorkshire Transport Service* (2006) Court of Appeal, EWCA Civ 659, (2006) IRLR 623.

Certainly, Griffin is far more at home in dealing with non-European extreme-right groups. He has well-attested relationships with leaders of some of the more unsavory parts of the American extreme right, for example. The BNP is reportedly sending a representative in August 2010 with members of other extreme-right European groups on a visit to Japan to make contacts with a Japanese extreme-right group.<sup>13</sup>

On the other hand, Griffin himself as an MEP seeks to place himself at the centre of the European extreme right, even as successor in this role to Jean-Marie Le Pen. The *Alliance of European National Movements* (AENM) is an umbrella group of the non-aligned extreme-right MEPs, who are hampered by now having only 8 MEPs in the European Parliament from three different countries, but Griffin reportedly seeks the vice-presidency of this group.<sup>14</sup>

## Discussion and Conclusion

The setback suffered by the BNP in the 2010 local and general elections may be a false dawn for any prediction of the long-term decline of the extreme right in Great Britain. True, it had led to some consequences; Griffin announced his intention to step down from the leadership in 2013, although that was almost certainly largely to preempt the possibility of a leadership challenge from one of several contending factions within the BNP. Even so, there has been such a challenge and in August 2010 a leadership election process was supposedly ongoing, although Griffin had been attempting to place impediments in the way of the campaign of his most serious contender.<sup>15</sup>

However, the reason for a generally more precautionary prognosis on the future of the extreme right in Britain is the possibility that, whilst some

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13 Williams, D (August 2010), 'BNP joins far-right junket to Japan', Searchlight, 422, 20-1.

14 Williams, D (August 2010), 'Griffin looks to Europe', Searchlight, 422, 11.

15 Gable, S (August 2010), 'Griffin plays dirty to cling on to BNP leadership', Searchlight, 422, 4-10.



of those who may have more marginally supported the extreme right have fallen away, committed extreme-right activists (albeit a much smaller number of individuals) may be motivated by the setbacks suffered by the BNP to transfer their energy into alternative, and more militant, types of extreme-right activity.

That was one outcome from the electoral rejection of the earlier NF after the 1979 general election won by Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Party. The NF disintegrated into several different groupings and some of those seriously committed to the extreme right then focused their attention instead on more extreme, and (usually) non-electoral, organizations of the 1980s, such as the *British Movement* and *Column 88*.

There is certainly some preliminary evidence that this pattern may be going to repeat itself since the 2010 election. More than ever, the BNP may teeter on the brink of factional disintegration and Griffin's position and status may have been weakened.<sup>16</sup> Now the possible vehicle for disaffection on this occasion is the *English Defence League* (EDL) mentioned above, the organization formed only in March 2009 purportedly to campaign, usually by means of street demonstrations, against 'militant Islam' in Great Britain. This organization differs to an extent from the British Movement of the 1980s, and certainly from the deliberately clandestine *Column 88*, in the very public nature of its activities, specifically marches and demonstrations in cities around England and Wales with significant Muslim populations.<sup>17</sup> Locations such as Bradford (in West Yorkshire), Dudley (in the West Midlands), Cardiff (in Wales), and Tower Hamlets (a borough in London's East End) all have significant Muslim minorities and are being targeted in 2010 for EDL demonstrations, although one intended in east London in June 2010 was in the event cancelled. As stated before, the EDL and the BNP have earlier sought each independ-

16 Lowles, N (June 2010), 'Defeated', Searchlight, 420, 8-12.

17 There was even a verified report on a BBC television report about a group of football supporters, albeit a very small one, at the World Cup in South Africa, who were brazen enough to sport EDL-motif T-shirts.

ently to declare that the one is not related to the other, but there can be little doubt that there is overlap of support among EDL activists. A recent report suggests a support base of the EDL of some thousands of activists in the country willing to participate in marches and demonstrations when these are organized in various cities. Convicted football hooligans and supporters of militant extreme-right groups are reportedly being attracted to its cause. It is also reported that there is strong support among serving army personnel.<sup>18</sup> It remains to be seen whether the EDL can establish a significance presence, either on the streets of particular locations or even as a pressure group baiting the Establishment, but there is every indication from its present activities that it seeks to attract the sort of people who were BNP activists and supporters and that it is likely to be around at least for several years.

Also, although extreme-right expression specifically through the BNP may have declined, this does not mean that the BNP could not recover, nor (even if like the NF of the 1970s it does collapse to insignificance) that some similar organization could not emerge to take advantage of a situation propitious to mobilizing racist electoral support.

True, the BNP is far more inserted into mainstream politics than the NF ever was. The BNP may now have fewer local councillors than before May 2010, but it still has a member in the London Assembly and two members of the European Parliament. Moreover, British electoral politics is now in flux in the light of the coalition outcome of the 2010 general election in the United Kingdom. The junior partner in the governing coalition, the *Liberal Democrats*, have long been committed to a constitutional change in the national electoral system to some form of proportional representation. Clearly, any extreme form of proportional representation if implemented, operating on a national or regional level,

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18 Taylor, M (28 May 2010), 'English Defence League: inside the violent world of Britain's new far right', The Guardian online, [www.guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk), accessed 17 June 2010.

might well see the BNP winning a few parliamentary seats, despite its recent setback and the expressed intention of Griffin to stand down as leader in 2013. However, the form of alternative voting system most likely to be adopted if the promised referendum on the matter agrees to change, *viz.*, the alternative-vote system within individual constituencies, whilst giving some weight to voters' second-vote preferences, is not likely to be a system from which any small extreme-right party would gain much benefit.

Thus, major electoral breakthrough by the BNP or any similar party remains unlikely, but extreme-right activity may be manifested in other ways. Great Britain may seem likely to have a pattern of future longer-term extreme-right support continuing the historical ebb and flow of the phenomenon over past decades. The BNP may succumb to the factionalism that has been the fate of some of its predecessors, although there are indications that the BNP may be longer-lasting than previous examples. Since 2000 it has survived much opposition and till 2010 suffered no serious setbacks. Whatever its fate may turn out to be, the issues that assisted its rise are as likely to persist and intensify as to mitigate – the long-term prognosis for the economy is not optimistic and anti-Islam feeling and general Islamophobia are likely to remain powerful mobilizing factors for the foreseeable future.



## Right-wing extremism and populism in the Netherlands – Lessons not learned

Imagine a pamphlet announcing that the “Muslim Fifth Column is taking over Europe. We will soon be living in Eurabia under sharia law.” Or imagine a pamphlet saying that the “world conspiracy of Jews, this dirty vermin that keeps on returning to pollute our societies, has taken control of the banks and industry again.” In the Netherlands, both pamphlets would provoke public outcry against the authors, since the year is 1989 and we have just stepped out of our time machine to witness the ensuing protest marches and the imminent arrest of the neo-Nazis who distributed these pamphlets. Those were the good old days when the extreme right was small, when mainstream racism and anti-Semitism did not openly exist, and any word or sign of discrimination was immediately attacked by anti-racists, anti-fascist groups and all loyal democrats. In those days, support for the rights of economic immigrants, or *guest workers*, as they were called back then, was the norm and not the exception. In Western Europe everybody on the left side of the political spectrum had faith in a future of equality and freedom from discrimination, while those on the right who kept silent were branded as racists, or at least apologists. During the 1980s, anti-racist and anti-fascist groups built up considerable popular support, to the extent that anti-racism in the Netherlands became the norm and any dissenting voice was immediately labelled racist or fascist.

### Time shift

Imagine a website with the announcement: “The Muslim Fifth Column is taking over Europe. We will soon be living in Eurabia under sharia law.” Or imagine a weblog or forum saying that the “world conspiracy of

Jews, this dirty vermin that keeps on returning to pollute our societies, has taken control of the banks and industry again.” Many people would agree with the first statement or at least would not be offended by it, while the second statement would no longer provoke the outrage it used to do. Jewish community groups and remnants of anti-racist organizations would try to take action, and the rest of the population would just shrug their shoulders and ignore it. On this occasion we are not using our time machine – it is the present day, the year 2010, it is the era after 9/11, the Madrid and London bombings and the murder of Theo van Gogh. Today we are living with with fear of terrorism by Muslim extremists. Islam in Europe is increasingly seen as a threat, not only by the resurgent extreme right but also by populist parties and a section of the mainstream.

### Development of the extreme right: The 1980s and '90s

The recent history of right-wing extremism in the Netherlands starts in the latter part of the 1980s. In the late eighties and early nineties the Netherlands saw a new revival of right-wing extremist groups, and although most of them had political aspirations, the only one that seriously attempted to participate in elections was the *Centrum Partij* (*Centre Party* – CP). It was led by Hans Janmaat, a disaffected social studies teacher who set it up after being a member of most of the mainstream parties in the Netherlands. The *Centrum Partij* agenda was a simple racist one: blaming foreigners for all the ills of the country. The CP soon ran into trouble since it tried to ‘unite’ the entire spectrum of right-wing extremists, from hard-core neo-Nazis to ‘moderate’ Muslim haters and xenophobes. A rift was unavoidable. The first split-off formed a new party, the *Centrum Partij 86* (CP ‘86), with a membership of radical-right-wingers, protagonists of violence and thinly disguised neo-Nazi sympathisers. The more extreme CP ‘86 won four seats in Dutch municipal elections in 1990, and five seats in 1994, but collapsed due to internal radicalisation. It was officially banned as a criminal organization by a court verdict of 1998.

Those sections of the party that remained more moderate developed into the *Centrum Democraten* (*Centre Democrats*), trying to gain public trust by pursuing a milder agenda that was xenophobic, chauvinistic, anti-Black and at times anti-Semitic. Although the voter-base of the *Centrum Democraten* was rather small, they succeeded in getting elected to a number of Dutch city councils. At the height of their popularity in 1994 they had a total of 77 seats throughout the country, and won three seats in parliament in the general election the same year. Interestingly, in the run-up to both the council elections and the general elections, several investigative journalists infiltrated *Centrum Democraten*. This resulted in a flood of newspaper and magazine articles and even a TV documentary on the Amsterdam chapter of the party, in which one of the candidate council members boasted about setting fire to an aid centre for Surinamese drug addicts. Although he was elected, he had no opportunity to take up his seat: he was arrested for arson, convicted and sent to jail. Before the 1994 elections the media hardly ever reported on right-wing extremists. This situation changed slightly after 1994, but as the initial shock of having a racist party in parliament wore off, the media lost interest and stopped reporting. The media then effectively operated a news blackout on the extreme right, which resulted in the *Centrum Democraten* losing all their seats in the general elections of 1998; they have never been able to recover from this setback.<sup>1</sup>

## Hard-core extremists: Without public support but winning

Between 1998 and 2007 the Dutch extreme right failed to make any headway. It was a small, incestuous group of around 500 hard-core extremists who constantly fought each other and were successfully harassed by Dutch anti-racist and anti-fascist groups. No charismatic leader

1 'De Centrumdemocraten (CD) electoraal'. *Kroniek extreemrechts 1945-2003*.

Anne Frank Foundation, Amsterdam.

<http://www.monitorracisme.nl/content.asp?PID=182&LID=1>.

Jaap van Donselaar. *Monitor Racisme en Extreemrechts*, 3rd report (Leiden: Universiteit Leiden 2000) 43.

or classic strong man emerged at that time. The visible hard-core activists, mostly of the “Sieg Heil” skinhead type, were not attractive, to say the least, for a Dutch public guilt-ridden about the Holocaust. A few small splinter groups re-formed into new political parties and won some seats in local councils, but the aspired breakthrough never happened. Instead, the diehards completely abandoned the idea of getting elected into democratic structures, and started concentrating on forming radical activist movements. By now they have succeeded in creating a group of young followers, mainly through the Internet. This involves around 1000 hard-core young neo-Nazis and some 10,000 sympathizers – not very significant, given that the Dutch population numbers 17 million. It is still a cause for concern, however, because the young extremists seem to be becoming radicalised quickly, as a number of academic and governmental studies show, and there is a rise in the number of hate crime incidents with a neo-Nazi background and targeted against individuals.<sup>2</sup> In addition, part of the hard core, united in the “action group *Nationale Volks Unie*” (NVU) has successfully challenged the old policy of the majority of Dutch mayors of not allowing extreme-right demonstrations in their towns. By taking mayors to court over the issue of freedom of speech and actually winning, the NVU has changed the whole dynamic; now mayors allow all extreme-right demonstrations and all counter-demonstrations, but try to keep protesters apart, in terms of both time and location, focusing increasingly on public order rather than content or ideology.<sup>3</sup>

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- 2 Dutch Ministry of Internal Affairs. Actieplan polarisatie en *radicalisering* 2007 – 2011. 4, 5. Anne Frank Foundation, Amsterdam. *Kroniek racistisch en extreemrechts geweld 1945 – 2008 – Toename en verharding*, <http://www.monitorracisme.nl/content.asp?PID=316&LID=1> and Anne Frank Foundation, Amsterdam. *Kroniek racistisch en extreemrechts geweld 1945 – 2008 - Respons op racistisch geweld*. <http://www.monitorracisme.nl/content.asp?PID=307&LID=1>. Landelijk expertisecentrum van Art.1, Anne Frank Stichting. *Universiteit Leiden Monitor Rassendiscriminatie 2009. 143 – 149*. <http://www.art1.nl/scripts/download.php?document=843>.
  - 3 Anne Frank Foundation, Amsterdam. “Jurisprudence demonstrations extreme-right in the Netherlands”. <http://www.monitorracisme.nl/content.asp?PID=230&LID=1>.



## The new arena: It's the mainstream, of course!

Meanwhile, populism has fared much better. The *Lijst Pim Fortuyn* (LPF), led by the flamboyant, charismatic Pim Fortuyn, was a populist party with a strand of xenophobia and anti-Islamic attitudes. Mr. Fortuyn, a full professor, a journalist and openly gay, had already been a member of most Dutch political parties. In 2002 he was invited to become leader of the *Leefbaar party*, a new, mildly populist movement. Fortuyn accepted, and rapidly gained success by offering people classically simple solutions to complicated issues. However, when he gave an interview stating that he intended to abolish the first article of the Dutch constitution – the article guaranteeing equality and non-discrimination – the *Leefbaar* leadership expelled him. Undeterred, within a few days Fortuyn started his own party, the *Lijst Pim Fortuyn* (LPF), taking with him most of the *Leefbaar* constituency and publicly declaring that he was going to be prime minister. On May 6, a few days before the general elections of 2002, an extremist animal-rights activist murdered Pim Fortuyn. Despite this, the government decided to let the elections take place as planned, and the LPF won 26 parliamentary seats. The newly formed coalition of LPF, *Conservative Liberals* and *Christian Democrats* lasted only 86 days before it collapsed. After numerous internal LPF problems, the *Christian Democrats* and the *Conservative Liberals* resigned from the cabinet, which led to new elections. The LPF returned with only eight seats in parliament, and finally disappeared completely from the political map in 2006.

The tone had been set, however. Xenophobic populism was no longer taboo, and although extreme-right groups have not been elected again, in the past 10 years support for right-wing ideas has grown, especially among young people who are becoming radicalised under the influence of the Internet and neo-Nazi recruitment. At the same time, there is growing support for racism and xenophobia in the mainstream, and this is actually more dangerous.

## Wilders, a “success story”

The major newcomer on the populist front in the Netherlands is Geert Wilders, former member of the Conservative-Liberal *People's Party for Freedom and Democracy*, which he left in 2004 because of the party's positive stance on Turkey's proposed European Union membership. Since becoming a one-person 'group' in parliament, Wilders has voiced anti-Islam and anti-Muslim rhetoric. Initially he did this as a lone member, but since the 2006 elections his new party, the *Party For Freedom* (PVV), has been represented in parliament with nine seats. Wilders is outspoken on a number of issues such as immigration, freedom of speech, the fundamental beliefs of Islam, and the behaviour of young Moroccans in the cities. His relatively tame 2008 film about Islam in the Netherlands, *Fitna*, caused controversy all over the world. On 21 January 2009 the Amsterdam Court of Appeal ordered Wilders' prosecution for “incitement to hatred and discrimination”. The case is due to be tried before a judge in the autumn of 2010.

Wilders was also banned from entering the United Kingdom on 12 February 2009,, on the grounds that the UK Home Office viewed his presence as a “threat to one of the fundamental interests of society”. The ban was lifted after Wilders appealed. He visited the UK on October 16, 2009.

Riding the wave of post 9/11 anti-Muslim feelings in the Netherlands and elsewhere, Wilders' popularity increased rapidly almost by the month. His standard operating procedure is simple. He never engages in any debate. He launches sound bites, both inside and outside parliament: for



Geert Wilders

example, he asserts that the Koran is a fascist book that should be banned; or he demands an end to Muslim immigration and says that he wants to delete all anti-discrimination articles from the Dutch penal code (“Because I WANT to discriminate.”).

Wilders’ rhetoric and ways of debating are highly reminiscent of the Nazi era. He thinks Muslims should clean the streets with toothbrushes, as Jews in Vienna were made to clean the streets with small brushes shortly after the *Anschluss* of 1938. If Wilders is challenged on this, if people try to argue with him on any point, he will refuse to debate but will assert that his opponent is talking rubbish, or is mentally ill or a member of “the left-wing church”. He publicly accused his major opponent in parliament, Alexander Pechthold, leader of D66, the Liberal Democratic Party, of being an accomplice of Theo van Gogh’s murderer. He called the minister of integration “stark raving mad”. With his storm-trooper rhetoric and odd bleached haircut, he could be the offspring of a bizarre marriage between Mozart and Joseph Goebbels.

From the moment Wilders’ popularity started to rise, he strongly denied any association with the extreme right; he presents himself as a staunch supporter of Israel, asserts that he does not want any contact with neo-Nazis, and calls himself a “friend of the Jewish people”. Wilders travels to Israel regularly and unfailingly visits friends like the ultra-right politician Avigdor Liebermann or right-wing West Bank settlers. For years it was generally thought that his pro-Israel and pro-Jewish stance was mere posturing, a convenient way to keep the skinheads out of his party, but it seems Wilders is playing a double game: MEPs from his party are known to have attended a meeting of unaffiliated extreme right-wing members of the European Parliament at which Holocaust deniers like Jean-Marie Le Pen, Nick Griffin and others were also present.<sup>4</sup>

Wilders’ PVV is not a political party in the usual sense of the term. The party has no members and no party structure; it is simply a foundation

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4 “Who do you think you are kidding?” The New Statesman (23 July 2009) <http://www.newstatesman.com/uk-politics/2009/07/party-griffin-bnp-european>.



Election poster of the PVV,  
portraying Wilders:  
"More security – less immigration"

with Geert Wilders himself as the sole member of the board. His parliamentarians are all hand picked and were invited to run by Wilders himself. Wilders does not want a democratic party structure since he sees this as too big a risk for his leadership. The media are not allowed to attend party meetings; people present at the meetings are not allowed to speak about them. In common with other populist leaders, Wilders sees a need for total leadership and total control.

## Wilders and the media

Wilders and his gang thrive on attention and claims of victimisation while constantly trying to prove that "they are slandered, demonized and ignored" by the other parties and by those he labels as "members of the left-wing church", which ultimately includes anyone who criticizes him. He has succeeded in elevating the "extreme sound bite" to an art form, and the Dutch media has lavished him with attention. Geert Wilders operates as follows: he sends an SMS or Twitter message saying that Muslims are the cause of the traffic jam problem in the country. The media will publish this ludicrous claim and invite politicians and experts to comment on it. The item will thus dominate the media for some days. Naturally, Geert Wilders will refuse to give any interviews or to debate this idea on television. Then he will follow this up with a new message asserting that everybody who criticizes his ideas is trying to demonize

him and deprive him of freedom of speech. The result is maximal attention for Geert Wilders and his party, and growing popular support. To many, Geert Wilders appears as the “man of the people” who dares to publicly express what nobody else dares to say: the “truth about the Muslims who are trying to take over the country.”

## Wilders’ impact on politics

For some time the other Dutch political parties in parliament tried either to ignore Wilders or to take him seriously and debate with him. After four years, as these approaches had hardly worked, the other parties belatedly decided to try a full frontal attack, analysing and challenging every remark uttered by the *Party for Freedom* (PVV) to expose the total lack of any real ideas, plans or solutions on the part of Wilders and his party. Unfortunately this seems to have had no effect. As so often, part of the support for populism or extremism is not related to logic or debate; it is emotional.

A significant section of Dutch society feels that Wilders is right, that Muslims are a danger to society, that the left controls the media, and that any measures to integrate migrants into society are just “a left-wing hobby”. Research shows that 16 percent of the PVV voters have higher education qualifications; most of them are male and atheist. Surveys show that they are disappointed in politics<sup>5</sup> or “hedonistic and conservative, only self-interested”.<sup>6</sup> These voters do not trust what is called “the multi-cultural establishment” because they blame the establishment for all the ills of society, and above all for the presence of what they see as the main culprit: the Muslims.

More seriously, after the government and politicians saw the polls in mid-2009 which projected that the PVV would become the biggest party

5 [http://www.volkskrant.nl/binnenland/article1152465.ece/Wilders\\_scoort\\_bij\\_hoger\\_opgeleide\\_kiezer](http://www.volkskrant.nl/binnenland/article1152465.ece/Wilders_scoort_bij_hoger_opgeleide_kiezer)

6 [http://www.volkskrant.nl/binnenland/article1152465.ece/Wilders\\_scoort\\_bij\\_hoger\\_opgeleide\\_kiezer](http://www.volkskrant.nl/binnenland/article1152465.ece/Wilders_scoort_bij_hoger_opgeleide_kiezer)

in the country with 32 seats in parliament, they started to toughen up their rhetoric on immigration and security – two major PVV issues – and to quietly advise government-funded anti-racism organizations to tone down on the issues of populism, the LPF, Pim Fortuyn, Wilders and the PVV. The Ministry of Internal Affairs commissioned Jaap van Donselaar, a prominent extreme-right expert and anthropologist from the University of Leiden, terrorism expert Professor Bob de Graaff (University of Leiden) and Hans Moors (an expert on radicalisation from the University of Tilburg) to update a 2006 research report on radicalisation.<sup>7</sup> In the report, Geert Wilders' PVV was described as a “radical party of the new right wing”. When the report was published, not only did it infuriate Wilders and his supporters, but it also emerged that the civil servants from the Ministry of Internal Affairs who had commissioned the academics were not entirely happy with this conclusion.<sup>8</sup> A media storm developed in which half of the country rejoiced that Wilders had finally been unmasked as an extreme-right-winger, while the other half protested that the report was “unscientific”. Politicians pussyfooted, reluctant to be accused of what Wilders calls “demonisation”. Only D66 leader Alexander Pechtold, who had been openly saying for years that Geert Wilders was a right-wing extremist, outspokenly claimed that the report had proven him right.<sup>9</sup> The message was clear: morality was abandoned and the lessons of the past were forgotten; the hunt was on for the PVV voter.

## Local elections 2010

On March 3 local elections were held for the Dutch City Councils. The PVV ran in only two cities, Almere and The Hague. Unwilling to repeat the mistake the LPF had made in 2002 when they rushed to put people on their list who were patently unqualified on the whole, Geert Wilders

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7 Drs. Hans Moors en Mr. drs. Lenke Balogh (IVA), Dr. Jaap van Donselaar en Prof.dr. Bob de Graaff (CDH), IVA/University of Tilburg, 27-01-2010 – Polarisatie en radicalisering in Nederland. <http://www.nuansa.nl/uploads/eb/a0/eba0dd6c540e2e2785a204a38eb0aef6/verkenning-polarisatie-en-radicalisering.pdf>

8 <http://www.mareonline.nl/categorie/achtergrond/artikel/0910/19/06/>

9 [http://www.volkskrant.nl/archief\\_gratis/article1344282.ece/We\\_konden\\_niet\\_om\\_Wilders\\_heen](http://www.volkskrant.nl/archief_gratis/article1344282.ece/We_konden_niet_om_Wilders_heen)

decided to hand-pick only a small number of candidates, led by two of his aides from the PVV parliamentary faction. Wilders organized workshops for the candidates, schooling them personally and hoping to retain enough control to crush any possible dissent. On March 3, the PVV won nine seats on the Almere City council and eight in The Hague. Wilders and his associates were euphoric. Sietse Fritsma, leader of the PVV The Hague faction, asserted, “Now we’re going to drive the other parties crazy”. Despite all the boasting and promises of change, neither in The Hague nor in Almere did the PVV succeed in forming a coalition with the other parties. The ban on headscarves as propagated by Wilders was just one of the many problems. True to populist form, the PVV did not want to compromise at this stage of the game, certainly not in view of the upcoming general election in June. However, when the PVV’s poll ratings fell because people thought Wilders didn’t really want to be in government, he changed his stance, claiming it was a misunderstanding.

Meanwhile, Wilders had been working hard to finalise his list for the general elections, and although the vetting of candidates was rumoured to be quite stringent, several problems emerged. One of the PVV candidates, a former security guard for the Dutch Jewish community, had previously been fined for carrying a concealed weapon, a minor offence. However, the media soon broke the story that he had petitioned the Jewish Community Council to “exclude Jews who agree with the UN Goldstone report”.<sup>10</sup> In an e-mail apparently leaked to the press, he described them as “despicable little Jews”. Within a few days he had withdrawn as a PVV candidate, declaring that “he did not want to live under a magnifying glass for the next four years”. Another two candidates dropped out shortly afterwards, one for falsifying biographical information, the other for fraud. Raymond van Roon, leader of the PVV Almere fraction, also came under attack when an anti-fascist research group published texts he had written as a young man in 1971 expressing his admiration for the fascist regime of the Greek colonels and toying with the idea of a military

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10 A 2009 United Nations Report, Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict, which has become known as The Goldstone Report after its author, Richard Goldstone.  
[http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/specialsession/9/docs/UNFFMGC\\_Report.pdf](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/specialsession/9/docs/UNFFMGC_Report.pdf)

putsch in the Netherlands. He was also briefly a member of the extreme-right-wing *National Security Brigade*. In the summer of 1971 he advertised in the press, calling for the formation of an “extreme-right vigilante patrol against disorder and subversion”. De Roon and Wilders downplayed these incidents as youthful errors, and De Roon was able to keep his council seat and his candidacy for parliament on the PVV list. It is interesting, however, that in January 2010 De Roon launched a proposal for creating “city commando groups to maintain public order”.

### **PVV candidates: A problematic bunch**

During the long haul between the two elections, Geert Wilders had to work hard to keep his candidates on track. All was not well, even in his close circle. Hero Brinkman, a former policeman and one of Wilders’ aides, had a drinking problem that caused several scandals, including a fist fight in Nieuwspoor, the Dutch Parliament’s bar, news centre and journalists’ haunt, where Brinkman tried to hit a barman because he was refused further drinks. It earned him the nickname “Drinkman”. The second scandal was about threats against the co-owner of his house, a building contractor who had moved in with Brinkman and was living in one half of the house while working on renovating it. There were money quarrels and mutual threats, and the police had to intervene several times a week. It was another publicity disaster for the PVV. The situation finally calmed down and Hero Brinkman announced that he was renouncing alcohol completely – but then came another bombshell. Breaking the PVV code of a permanent media boycott, a week before the general elections Brinkman appeared on TV to announce that he was concerned that the PVV was not a democratic party, that it actually had no members and that he wanted a real party structure and a “PVV youth movement” as well. Everybody was in suspense. It seemed this would be the end of Hero Brinkman. It is known that Geert Wilders does not tolerate dissent and does not tolerate competition for the leadership of the PVV. But Brinkman stated quite clearly that Geert Wilders would create no problems for him (although he did wait to grant his interview until it was too late to remove him from the list of candidates). Indeed, since it was just a week



before the elections, Geert Wilders simply decided to keep up appearances. The day after Brinkman's stunt, Wilders, suddenly very willing to talk to the press, stated that all was well inside the party and that Brinkman naturally had a right to speak his mind. He even added that "the idea of a democratic structure for the PVV" would be discussed internally after the elections.

For the moment, another problem for the PVV had been defused. It is widely thought that after the elections Hero Brinkman will not serve long as a PVV parliamentarian.

## General election of 2010

Finally came the day that some people in the Netherlands, especially Muslims, had dreaded: the general election of 9 June 2010. A glance at the PVV election programme provided ample reasons for anxiety: among other things, it called for banning the Koran, ethnic registration of all citizens and a tax on wearing "head rags" (headscarves). Perhaps it was a momentary lapse of reason that prompted Mark Rutte, leader of the Conservative Liberal VVD to comment: "the PVV is just a normal party".

After midnight on election day it became clear that there would be a landslide for Wilders. This was confirmed by the results on the morning of 10 June: 24 parliamentary seats for the PVV. The Christian Democratic Party, led by outgoing prime minister Jan Peter Balkenende, lost half its seats, a reduction from 41 to only 21 seats. The *Social Democrats* of the PvdA ended up with 30 seats, a close call on the major winner, the Conservative Liberals of the VVD, which rose from 22 to 31 seats, becoming the largest party in parliament. Negotiations for a coalition started immediately. Throughout the election campaign VVD leader Mark Rutte had said that "it would be wrong to ignore the PVV", thus recycling an earlier attitude in parliament: "Don't ignore PVV voters, they have genuine issues." The former was a thinly veiled attempt to win back "deserting" VVD voters, the latter a half-hearted attempt to sideline the PVV by indulging voter complaints about Islam, integration and security, wheth-



Geert Wilders (PVV) and Mark Rutte (VVD), Prime Minister of the Netherlands

er or not these complaints were justified. Other parties such as the *Social Democrats*, the Left-Greens and the Liberal Democrats of D66 openly ruled out a coalition with the PVV. Only the Christian Democrats and the radical Socialist Party announced they would keep all options open. VVD leader Mark Rutte, however, did not beat around the bush. Repeating his description of the PVV as “a normal party”, he stated his preference for a coalition with Wilders and the Christian Democrats, which would result in a narrow majority of 76 of the 150 seats in Parliament. The PVV and VVD were not very far apart on social and economic issues; in fact, Geert Wilders was once a VVD member. Apparently power-hungry, Wilders already decided the morning after the election to drop one of his main differences with the VVD on tax benefits for home owners, an issue he had been defending up until the night before. This classic turnabout, which Wilders claimed his voters would agree to, marked an initial crack in the PVV’s populist armour. Suddenly the PVV was displaying behaviour it had always vociferously objected to: compromise, the despised modus operandi of democracy.

The VVD, suddenly the largest party in parliament, appointed a senator and VVD party member to explore possible new coalitions, with a coalition of VVD-PVV-CDA as first preference. Talks were held, but the Christian Democrats of the CDA, having lost half their seats, were reluctant to join. What is more, a large part of their Christian constituency is ada-

mant about the Wilders issue and will not tolerate any coalition with the PVV. To quote a local party baron, “This man and his party do not fit with our way of viewing the world.”

## Further developments

Much of the month of July 2010 was spent in an attempt to form a “Purple-plus” coalition between the *Social Democrats*, the *Green-Left party*, the *Liberal Democrats* of D66 and the VVD, with Mark Rutte still sulking because he would have preferred a Black-Blue-Christian coalition. On 20 July the negotiations broke down over financial issues. The VVD wanted to make huge financial cuts, while the *Social Democrats* wanted moderate ones. At that juncture Queen Beatrix called in Ruud Lubbers, a former Christian Democrat prime minister<sup>11</sup>, UNHCHR High Commissioner and serving Dutch minister of state, to mediate and report on the possibility of a majority coalition. Surprisingly, Lubbers, who had spoken out in the past against the PVV (and even published a booklet to that effect<sup>12</sup>), examined the possibilities of a VVD, CDA and PVV coalition or even a minority coalition schema with the PVV supporting the Liberals and Christians without officially being part of the government. Next, the Queen appointed Ivo Opstelten, the leader of the VVD, to explore the feasibility of this. Negotiations were set for Monday, 9 August, and it was already clear that the parties would aim for the minority coalition option. Geert Wilders, who had periodically referred to his party’s wish to support the government in this way, was particularly enthusiastic. In this constellation he would enjoy all the benefits of government without the responsibility, as his much-admired friends from the *Danish Volksparty* had been doing since 2000. He proposed to support most of the CDA and VVD policies, but already stated that on issues those parties could not agree with, particularly the PVV’s anti-Islam rhetoric, there was an agreement to disagree, while Wilders would be permitted to continue making anti-Muslim statements in parliament.

11 1982–1994

12 *De vrees voorbij. Een hartenkreet*’ Ruud Lubbers. (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij De Bezige Bij 2007)

The country seemed to be holding its breath. It became clear that a government of this kind would be bad news not only for Dutch Muslims but also for the population at large. The VVD and CDA were proposing huge cuts that would have an impact mainly on the lower and mid-income groups, still the largest section of the population. Wilders would probably not oppose this, but his voters would not be happy. The worst of all options seemed to be in prospect here. Of course there was always a possibility that negotiations would break down. While the VVD seemed to have no problem any longer with Geert Wilders, the Christian Democrat CDA members were still not all convinced, despite the fact that CDA leader Maxime Verhagen transformed most of his earlier concerns about the PVV into a rather hypocritical approach. He let it be known that “since there will be no formal coalition with the PVV, only support from the PVV, the CDA can uphold its principles”, but within the CDA there was renewed and growing dissent over Verhagen’s position and the possible ‘quasi-coalition’ with the PVV. The final decision was to be made by the CDA congress due to be convened after the conclusion of the negotiations, so there was still a chance that Geert Wilders would be left empty-handed.

### Perspectives

What can we learn from all this? One thing is that Mark Rutte and his VVD have become completely shameless. They were the only party to strongly favour a coalition with Wilders right from the start. As Rutte now claims, that was because of the election programme similarities on the subject of migrants and security. It is true that most of the election campaign concerned the crisis and the economy, but “integration” and “Islam” were always hovering in the background. Stating that a xenophobic and extreme-right wing party, an undemocratic party, is *normal* reveals a lot about one’s position. The only prominent VVD member who openly protested against Rutte’s flirtation with Wilders was Frans Weisglas, former speaker of the house, who spoke out on two occasions<sup>13</sup>.

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13 <http://www.nu.nl/nieuws/2267246/weisglas-fel-coalitie-met-pvv.html>  
[http://www.trouw.nl/nieuws/politiek/article3148171.ece/Weisglas\\_\\_te\\_weinig\\_bezwaren\\_VVD\\_tegen\\_PVV.html](http://www.trouw.nl/nieuws/politiek/article3148171.ece/Weisglas__te_weinig_bezwaren_VVD_tegen_PVV.html)

The second lesson to be learned is that the left wing is not united enough to stop a coalition with the PVV. The *Social Democrats* of the PvdA, the *Socialist Party SP*, the *Green-Left* and the *Left/Liberal D66* had enough seats together (65 of the 150) to make an approach to the *Christian Democrats* (21) and keep both the PVV and VVD out of government. Sadly, PvdA-leader Job Cohen showed no interest in ruling again with the *Christian Democrats* – the wounds from the previous coalition were still too fresh – and D66 leader Alexander Pechtold regarded the *Socialist Party SP* as “too radical”. The *Social Democrats* and the other left-wing parties were unable to jump over their own shadow – a situation that seems to have become a tradition on an international level.

The third lesson to be learned is that the Netherlands, which has persistently tended to deny its role during the Second World War in voluntarily assisting the Nazis with the “final solution to the Jewish question”, has now totally broken free from the “politically correct” chains of the past. The PVV, CDA and the VVD are not the only parties guilty of this. The other parties have also decided that it is easier to be a supermarket and satisfy voters’ demands. They are ignoring the fact that the social contract also implies that at times it is *morally right* to disagree with voters, argue with them, and educate them. However, our political elite does not want to be seen as an elite, but instead wants the voters to put a coin in their particular slot every four years. What about the warnings of the past? Uplifting the masses? Creating a better world? According to this perspective, those are corny old socialist ideas!

By now, the Netherlands has completely abandoned its aspirations to be a guiding light for human rights, equality and anti-racism. We can step back into our time machine and shut the door firmly. Some might argue that the next stop could be Berlin, Weimar Republic, 1932... Yet hopefully there is a very long way to go before we reach that – if ever. Let us make sure we don’t!



Roberto Chiarini

## The extreme right in Italy

The extreme right in Italy exhibits very special characteristics, both ideologically and with respect to its politics, and even as to how it defines itself on the scale between right and left.

Italy, in fact, is the only Western democracy in which a political force that unmistakably harks back to fascism can be observed in the institutions of the state as a whole as well as those of the periphery. This situation pertained without a break in the entire period from 1945 to 1994. What is more, the country is proud of this. For half a century (and more), the Right was synonymous with fascism, although without people having made any distinction between the extreme and moderate Right, let alone between its parliamentary and extra-parliamentary manifestations. The Right as such has always presented itself as a force that was not only against the system but also refused to pledge loyalty to the institutions of democracy.

It was hostile to the system, because it represented a concept of state and society radically different from the existing order: it rejected building parliamentary institutions and favoured a presidential regime; it rejected the political system, which it regarded as party rule and therefore disqualified, and it opposed the capitalist economic order; instead, it wanted a corporative “third way” based on “complete cooperation between the different factors of production”, between workers and employers.

It was disloyal in the sense that it discredited the republican order as the direct result of the dishonourable “betrayal” of the nation on 8 November 1943. Moreover, it pursued a political initiative aimed at denying recognition to the leadership class that developed from the anti-fascist

parties. It also refused to accept the institutions of parliamentary democracy because it suspected them from the start of having surrendered the original vision of the nation as an organic, integral whole as defined by fascism, and not reducible to an individualist or class concept of society.

This had two consequences. Firstly, the term “Right” could not be used in democratic speech, with the result that none of the parties of the so-called “constitutional arch”<sup>1</sup> on which the anti-fascist republic was founded were ever prepared to describe themselves as “right wing”. Even the Christian Democrat party (DC), which had become established as a stable bulwark against the communist threat and in practice had fulfilled the function of a right-wing pole in the system, always refused to describe itself as right wing. It claimed to see its mission in terms of the famous definition by its founder, Alcide De Gasperi, as “the centre looking towards the left”. On the other hand, the Right was constantly under suspicion of promoting ideas – and often initiatives as well – aimed at overthrowing the government, or planning a putsch or conspiring in terrorist attacks. This started in 1964 with the controversial “Plan Solo” in which the military branch of the carabinieri would have been prepared to secure military control of the state by occupying the so-called “neural centres”, and especially by arresting and quickly removing prominent persons they defined as “most dangerous” politically, and continued up to the famous “strategy of tension” in the mid-1960s that ended by threatening the stability and possibly even the maintenance of the institutions of democracy. It is no coincidence that up until the 1980s, no democratic (or anti-fascist) party was ever prepared to accept even a public encounter – let alone any form of cooperation – with the MSI. The DC

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1 The term “constitutional arch” refers to the parties that drew up and jointly enacted the Constitution of the Italian Republic in 1948: Democrazia Cristiana (Christian Democratic Party – DC), Partito Comunista Italiano (Italian Communist Party – PCI), Partito Socialista Italiano (Italian Socialist Party – PSI), Partito Socialista Democratico Italiano (Italian Social Democratic Party – PSDI), Partito Liberale Italiano (Italian Liberal Party – PLI), Partito Repubblicano Italiano (Italian Republican Party– PRI). In fact, the only party after the Second World War to be excluded from the “constitutional arch” was the neo-fascist party Movimento Sociale Italiano (MSI) – *translator’s note*. See also, “List of Abbreviations” at the end of this essay.



never took a step that would have contributed to legitimating the neo-fascist party in any form, although it benefited happily throughout the 1950s from parliamentary support from the right, both from the MSI and from the monarchists (merely tolerated support, it must be said, and not based on any formal agreement), in order to firm up its shaky government majorities. This was the same DC that operated numerous forms of administrative cooperation on the local level across half of Italy. Even the PLI, which remained bitterly opposed to any kind of opening to the left after Giovanni Malagodi took over as chairman (1954-1972), never succumbed to the temptation to accept support from the neo-fascist party at local level. The general public perceived the MSI as the right wing of the political spectrum (but still loyal towards state institutions) – and it has behaved accordingly.

### **From the old neo-fascist right to the new neo-populist right**

The beginning of the 1980s saw the acceleration of the “long march of Italian neo-fascism through the institutions” – though it could be described as a constant process of “stop and go”. The first concrete results began to emerge. Up until then the neo-fascists wavered between the attempt zealously to preserve their own nostalgic identity, and the effort to come out of the ghetto of illegitimate existence by entering the democratic game in some way. The party diluted its real and symbolic relationship to fascism. At the same time the democratic forces stopped excluding it from the democratic framework – even the left (PRI, PSI, PCI) and several institutional office holders (from designated prime minister Bettino Craxi, who held exploratory talks with the MSI in the process of formation of his first government in 1983, up to Italian president Pertini who, again in 1983, visited the deathbed of the young murdered MSI supporter, Paolo di Nella, in Rome). Although the ideological temperature sank, however, the ideological distance from the other parties remained.

This was the basis for a development in the course of around a decade that led slowly but irrevocably to the extremists becoming a moderate

right wing that was no longer disloyal but acknowledged the institutions of democracy, and no longer thought in nationalist, but in European terms. The process of renewal changed their ideological heritage and political programme, and even their self-classification on a left-right spectrum increasingly shifted toward the centre. As the “original goals” of its identity began to crumble and even its historical role as an alternative force in relation to the “constitutional arch” parties vanished, the MSI sought to compensate with new alliances and trends, initially in the only arena that seemed to offer it some opportunities for a new start beyond the traditional path of neo-fascism: in Europe, towards the New Right that was beginning successfully to take up the theme of “anti-politics” in the old continent, and the issue of protest against party domination and foreign immigrants, and for increased security. For a period of around a decade, the old neo-fascist right seemed to rediscover itself by modernisation and to become the neo-populist New Right. The MSI’s discovery of Le Pen’s *Front National* is convincing proof of this. After Le Pen’s rise to stardom in the European New Right firmament, the MSI welcomed him jubilantly on several occasions.

### **The topic of “immigration”: A reminder of fascism and critique of the system?**

The process of the Right’s complete conjunction on democratic tracks ran into problems when it came to the thorniest topic, the immigration issue. The newly founded Right endeavoured to achieve a new evaluation, away from being seen as anti-system and towards a version of conformity with the system. To a large extent it retained the logic of its previous argumentation. All it omitted was talk of the typical “other” tendencies that it had used until shortly before to maintain its emphasis on “otherness”. What remained were the references to the “big streams of migrations from the African, Middle Eastern and Balkan coasts”, the “very sharp rise in the birth rate” and the “large degree of economic un-

derdevelopment” of these peoples. The difference is that these references no longer served to put on trial the “culture of materialism” that fed on the “new Enlightenment”, but were now introduced in a project to preserve the “development model” that existed in “our country” and that was “so special” despite “numerous persisting contradictions”.

The new groupings did not deviate from this line in the following four years. They tried their best to win the maximum level of agreement with public opinion for their ideas, particularly in highly dramatic moments, as in December 1997 when the immigration issue entered a new phase after the landing of thousands of Kurds on the Calabrian coast, which was seen as the fearsome harbinger of further uncontrollable waves of “desperados”. The threat from illegal immigration no longer served only as a specific reference point in internal party discussion, but became one of the many arguments with which people tried to fight the centre-left majority. Emphasis was placed on the “collapse of public order”, on the relation between the presence of “illegals” and criminality, on the instrumental character of what was now an advanced government plan to grant for immigrants (which was denounced as blatant vote-getting), and on the “protection of the weakest”, to which the Right laid claim.

The new Right no longer goes into the streets to oppose the government’s policies on these issues, and usually eschews the arsenal of xenophobic protest. Basically it appeals to European norms. At least, this is the case when immigration law is discussed in the Senate. The main argument against the government is that it “does not implement European Union norms” and that it has been forgotten that the European authorities recently requested again that the member states “be cautious in granting right of asylum” and simultaneously recommended that “people who have immigrated from countries outside the Community and who have no right of stay in the territory of the Community” should be “expelled immediately”. If we are looking for an example for Italy, it can be found in France – no longer the France of Le Pen, but of Juppé.

Even in cases of “angry protest” against the presence of migrants, Gianfranco Fini’s party, the *Alleanza Nazionale* (National Alliance – AN), which emerged from the MSI in 1995, avoids being swept along on the wave of protest, as it still was only a few years ago. This is shown by incidents such as the riots in San Salvario in Turin, or in the Via Meda in Milan. The AN’s party newspaper did not make this front-page news, but consigned it to an inside page in the regional news section. Moreover, the paper even avoided judgements that could be confused with calls for protest, and opted instead for quoting the representatives of the angry residents. It also made an effort to present “non-agitated reporting”. It argued that the protest was aimed not at foreigners from non-EU countries, but against drug dealing and criminality; anyway, this was proven by the fact that the demonstrators also invited properly registered immigrants to join the protest. It was really the government that stood accused. “We’re fed up with illegality,” declared the chairman of the committee from San Salvario. “We’re tired of being victims of break-ins and violence that we report to the authorities without anybody taking any notice of us.” (...) “The state is not available.”



Election poster of the Alleanza Nazionale (National Alliance):  
 “Defend your values, your culture,  
 your district”

Election poster of the Forza Nuova (FN):

“Certain people want our residential districts to fall into the hands of non-natives and drug dealers

Others want order and safety  
Closing our borders.  
Aliens’ deportation Special acts”



Fini’s party offered further evidence of goodwill when an ordinance on legalising illegal immigrants, the “Sanatoria Dini”, was due to be enacted. The AN complained about the Prodi government’s obvious lack of will to cooperate with regard to the opposition’s proposals, as it showed it was not prepared to accept a certain suggested textual change in the law by immediately tying this to a vote of confidence. The new strategy of argumentation is halfway between a (sharp) reference to the dissatisfaction of anti-foreigner public opinion, and a (weak) disposition to a policy for integration. It is aptly expressed in the slogan published in November 1996, “As much solidarity as possible, as much security as necessary.” In the end, the integrational power of the political system seems to have triumphed over the instrumentalisation of anti-immigrant protests as a means of fighting against the system.

## From opposition to the system to entry into government: Italy's first party of the centre right

The AN continued to develop rapidly, notwithstanding the opposition of numerous incorrigible nostalgists, the intellectual objections of many people and the confused ideological worldviews of their intellectual surroundings. It succeeded in appearing credible as a genuine democratic force, and finally achieved the merger with Berlusconi's party, *Forza Italia*, which resulted in March 2009 in the emergence of a single party of the centre right (for the first time in the history of the Republic): *the Popolo della libertà* ("People of Freedom"). As we have indicated, its path was not without contradictions and there were some stubborn attempts to defend convictions that had held up until then. In the summer of 1993, in the midst of the astonishing turn towards liberal democratic shores, the party emphasised "the impossibility of communal life between the disenfranchised from non-EU countries and those who try [...] to defend their own resources." The party newspaper wrote, "It took the popular rebellions of Genua, of Stornara (in the province of Foggia in Puglia), and of Villa Literno (in the province of Caserta in Campania) to persuade all the 'do-gooders' that the open door policy is no longer the correct means of channelling the stream of immigrants."

In any event, democracy has been so convincingly adopted by the heirs of the Italian extreme right that some of the best-known exponents of the old neo-fascist party excel as spokesmen for a right wing that has cleaned out the old influences from the fascist era (nationalism, corporativism, the "third way", between capitalism and socialism, etc.). The PDL has even unmistakably rejected the latest key issues adopted by the populist right in Europe: protest against immigrants, threats to security, criticism of parties, rejection of European bureaucracy and the banks, etc. The last party boss of the MSI, Gianfranco Fini, has placed himself at its head, installed as the successor of the historical MSI leader Giorgio Almirante, who never apologised for his errors in the period of the *Repubblica*

*Sociale Italiana* (1943-1945). In 1990 this same man, Fini, went as far as to threaten a petition campaign to repeal the so-called Martelli Law (*legge Martelli*). For the first time, the law had opened the possibility for illegal immigrants living in Italy to legalise their status. At the same time, Fini proposed a plebiscite on abolishing the law in case parliament did not revoke it.

The ideological change was so radical that the same former MSI members campaigned – from their operational base, the “Fare Futuro” (Shape the Future) Foundation – for a constitutional amendment in concord with the left opposition. The goals were: a society that appreciated people’s merits, a bioethical policy that would respect the right of the individual more than hitherto, an immigration policy aimed at integrating new arrivals – instead of marginalising them, let alone deporting them as a recently enacted law of Berlusconi’s prescribed – by awarding them citizenship after just five years residency (instead of the usual waiting period of 10 years), and automatically giving an Italian passport to those born in the country. Within the AN there was no lack of voices and movers (especially at the grass roots and in many areas of the periphery) who adopted the new causes for protest, partly because the mood in the political debate began to swing powerfully against immigrants. This led the AN spokesman, Maurizio Gasparri, to demand “increased toughness in deporting” illegal immigrants, and to describe the proposal to give voting rights to migrant residents as “a nonsensical hypothesis”, while other party comrades of his – we are harking back to the period 1995-1996 – spoke of “reverse racism”. Some of them even demanded the installation of “an emergency telephone to defend white people”. But the former MSI people had neither the intention nor the strength to set themselves up as spokesmen for the growing protest on this issue, because they were afraid that this wave could pull them in a direction they do not want to take. In any case, the extreme left has been in search of its own identity since the dissolution of the MSI.

## Where is the extreme right?

It seems there is not a single acknowledged player (such as MSI in the past), either within the political system or in public opinion, which stands for the extreme-right-wing arena and its political tendency, a tendency that has important adherents in Italy as well as other countries. Nobody wants to take on this role, while the Left has difficulty in identifying the extreme right. In turn, it has suspected the new representatives of the right in each of the three parties that made up the centre right until the PDL was founded. First it spotlighted the *Lega Nord* (for its xenophobia), then the AN (because it never really renounced its fascist history), and finally *Forza Italia* (on account of its populism).

Unlike the other democratic countries in Europe, Italy is incapable of translating these causes of social unease into clear political issues. Consequently, they do not lead to revival of a fascist-type right wing – aside from minorities that fail to get into parliament, such as *Movimento Sociale – Fiamma Tricolore*, the grouping led by Pino Rauti, former member of *Repubblica Sociale Italiana* (1943-1945), who split from the old MSI when the AN was set up, or *Forza nuova*, headed by Roberto Fiore and Massimo Morsello, to mention only the more representative, along with the neo-Nazi group, *Naziskin*. This unease, however, has also not helped in the emergence of a right wing of a post-materialist kind. None of the parties takes it up specifically as a key political issue; it does not reach the level of important topics on the national political agenda. As is often emphasised, the main reason why this unease is not openly given political weight is that in Italy there is a kind of reflex reaction that automatically results in any attitude and/or any political group being disqualified if it can be linked with the historical legacy of fascism.



## The Lega Nord

Over time, the party led by Umberto Bossi increasingly developed strength as a political enterprise in one of the most important fields of combat of the extreme right in Europe. In fact, there is no doubt that the *Lega Nord* has made anti-immigrant politics into its main campaigning issue – along with protests against taxation and security policy. At the same time it is clear that, from the start, rejection of foreigners played a major role in the electoral decisions of *Lega* voters. Yet Bossi's party did not make anti-foreigner attitudes the primary goal and trademark of the movement from the very beginning. In the past it has frequently changed its chosen key issues to win at the polls. However, it has never inclined towards neo-fascism or anti-Semitism; and it has never given its conception of community a biological ethos.

The *Lega Nord* arose in the northern part of Italy and in the most highly developed and modernised regions of the country, where it has (almost) exclusively maintained its voter base. Its main demands from the start included conserving this territory and its material prosperity and the traditional values still found there. It has always presented itself as the political expression of the people of the Po Valley, for whom it generously “invents their own tradition”. This issue has been a guiding thread in its development. After initially supporting federalist reform of the state (1992-1993), the party later radicalised its demands by calling for an open split-off by the north (1996), only to reappear as a pioneer of decentralisation (1997-1998), and more recently to demand devolution,<sup>2</sup> before returning to federalism when it re-entered the government (2001–2006 and again from 2008).

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2 The term “devolution” means transfer of competencies from the central state to the regions, provinces and municipalities; since 1997 the term has been used in the UK to describe the transfer of central parliamentary powers to the new Scottish Parliament – *translator's note*.

A revealing passage in the first issue of the monthly journal “Lombardia Autonomista” spoke for the “Padani” (the inhabitants of the Po area) even before Bossi’s party was founded. For many years the journal was the sole means of communication for the members of this new political formation:

*“Lombardi, [...] It doesn’t matter how old you are, what job you do and what your political opinions are. What counts is that you – like all of us – are Lombardi. This is the only really important thing, and the time has come to remember this and give it a political voice [...] today Lombardy no longer belongs to the Lombardi; Padania (the Po Valley) no longer belongs to its residents. It is only a geographical term without political meaning, a territory devoid of rights in the face of flooding by strangers. Its population is a mass of people without political identity, anonymously organized into a failed nation state that is dragging us down with it into the abyss, without a way out and without hope.”*

The leaders of the *Lega* are well aware that it is one thing to defend “Padania”, but quite another to be accused of xenophobia. They have always been careful to redefine their xenophobia from a principle issue to one of opportunity. Aware of the pitfalls of disqualification and irresponsibility, they have consistently used clever rhetorical phrases in the attempt to bat the accusation of hiding anti-democratic behaviour behind the practical screen of anti-fascism back at their critics – to whom this now applies, in fact. According to the *Lega*, the real culprits in the destruction of the basic principles of civil intercourse are the supporters of an “open door” policy for people from outside the EU. “Immigration from the Third World subverts society and leads to fascism.” “Autonomy is [...] the purest form of taking sides.” These are just two slogans that illustrate vividly how the *Lega* has always endeavoured to rid itself of the obstructive reputation of the neo-fascist Right, or in any case, of racism.

Most importantly, we have to examine the language used by the *Lega Nord*. In this context we can quote the statements of some leading *Lega* figures. To illustrate our point, we shall pick out a mayor of a big city and two members of the European Parliament. In a public speech in the year 2000, the mayor of Treviso, Giancarlo Gentilini, dared to compare immigrants from “Third World” countries with “bunnies” (...) “for hunters to practise shooting on”. This invitation to hunt down foreigners landed him with penal charges, but he was subsequently acquitted.

Another *Lega* representative, Erminio Boso, is responsible for equally hair-raising statements. Boso came to fame for his shocking proposal to take Black people’s footprints and send them to Mont Blanc for the election. We should not omit two other calls to persecute foreigners: the game “Rimbalza il clandestine” (“Bounce the illegal immigrant”), that Bossi’s son, the future regional council member for Lombardy, suggested on Facebook to “scare off” illegal immigrants, and the call, “Illegal immigrants: Torture them! It’s self-defence!” printed on a flyer produced by the *Lega* that also appeared in Facebook.

Election poster of the Lega Nord:

“Guess who’s last?

For the right to housing, education,  
employment, and health

Let’s yield right of way to Monregalesi”

(Lega Nord and Padanian Youth  
Organization)

Monregalese is the name of the region  
around Mondovi (Piedmont, Cuneo Province)



## Measures against illegal immigrants from outside Europe

Aside from the rallying calls, the facts also count. On the national level, at least two measures for discriminating against migrants from outside Europe were enacted following urgent demands by the *Lega*: the Bossi-Fini law and the Directive on Security. The law bearing the name of its first signatories, that of the head of the *Lega* and the then chairman of *Alleanza nazionale* (AN), was passed in 2002. It prescribes that permission to stay, permits for place of residence and Italian citizenship should be issued only to foreigners who can provide evidence of fixed employment or an income sufficient for their economic needs. Additionally, this regulation allows expulsion of a person by public legal authority by escorting them to the border, as well as deportation to their country of origin in international waters. The so-called “Security Pact” passed this year results in the statutory offence of *clandestinità*, illegal residence, being written into the penal code. Equally discriminatory are measures to exclude unemployed immigrants from outside Europe from “any form of support for subsistence”.

On the periphery, individual local authorities have frequently introduced particularly obnoxious provisions. These range from the “battle against spitting” which is actually explained as “a type of behaviour common among Bengalis” (Monfalcone in Friaul), to the requirement for an application for a housing permit to be accompanied by a police clearance certificate (Ospitaletto, Brescia), and from inspection of the apartments of “fiancés” (Cernobbio, Como) to refusal of support for the unemployed (Brignano, Gera d’Adda), and from strict denial of accommodation for foreigners in public institutions (Prato) to “Operation White Christmas”, so called because it was proposed to check foreigners in the city area on Christmas Day to determine whether they had valid permits of stay (Coccaglio, Brescia); and finally, to the introduction of night-time patrols – and these are only some of the most recent measures.

## A special Italian way?

Do we have to conclude that the *Lega* is the Italian version of the extreme right in Europe? It is difficult to answer this question clearly. The case of Italy exhibits certain special features that cannot merely be traced back to the classical model of xenophobic parties. The Italian peninsula indubitably shows clear tendencies toward neo-populism, against immigrants, and towards xenophobia and law and order; but it is also true that no party to date has claimed or explicitly occupied this political space for itself; nor has any party made these demands as a whole into its own special trademark. Only the *Lega Nord* displays a sharply anti-immigrant attitude with openly xenophobic peaks, and it also has a clear tendency to stress the issue of security. Nevertheless, to ease the pressure, the far-right parties seem to take note of political realism as soon as they have government responsibility (at the time of writing, one of their exponents, Maroni, holds the post of interior minister), and to emphasise the opportunist rather than the ideological side of their struggle. Bossi's party originated as a regional party, and has remained as such, both in terms of its territorial affiliation and its political identity. Its party headquarters, its members, its supporters and voters are (almost) exclusively rooted in the north (especially in Veneto, Lombardy and Piedmont). At the same time, its deepest desire remains the defence of the material and ideal interests of the "Padanic people". This is a vague category that has no historical basis, if you will, yet it raises a "northern question". It presupposes a situation of suffering for a part of the country and the party has committed itself to its liberation as its true task.

The *Lega Nord* is an ideological party when it comes to strengthening its supporters' "we-feeling" and stimulating their campaigning spirit, as befits a mass party (the only one that still exists in Italy). Yet it is capable of becoming a realist, and even opportunist, party when it assumes responsibility in local town halls, even to the extent of poaching voters from the right and the left. This works, because the *Lega Nord* – as has been

sharply observed – “knows how to use a language that is xenophobic and aggressive when it is an opposition party, but operates a reformist strategy when it is part of the government.” As a minority on the national level, wherever it gains a foothold it develops a “majority power of attraction”. In other words, it succeeds in being competitive on the right wing to the point of a superior position in relation to the PDL in the north (in the regional elections in 2010 in Veneto it won 35 percent of the vote, a good 10 percent more than Berlusconi’s party); but also on the left wing, and particularly because of its pronounced success in local communities. For this reason, too, it evokes interest – and almost envy – even among the left, which sees itself deprived in the north not only of its voters but also of the political virtues that once constituted the PCI’s capital: in other words, being both “a campaigning party and a government party”. It is precisely this quality that has enabled the *Lega Nord* to reach beyond the borders of the Po Valley in recent elections and into the traditional “red” areas where other political camps stood no chance against the forces of the left in the past. In the elections last March, the *Lega Nord* won over 13 percent of the vote in Emilia Romagna and even registered success in Tuscany and in Le Marche, where they won an honourable 6 percent of the vote. As (almost) the dominant power in the north, and competitive in central Italy, at the start of the 2010s the *Lega* is turning out to be respected and influential in national government as well.

**List of Abbreviations:**

MSI	Movimento sociale italiano (Italian Social Movement)
AN	Alleanza Nazionale (National Alliance)
FI	Forza Italia! (Forward Italy!)
PDL	Popolo della libertà (People of Freedom)
DC	Democrazia Cristiana (Christian Democracy)
PCI	Partito comunista italiano (Italian Communist Party)
PSI	Partito socialista italiano (Italian Socialist Party)
PDSI	Partito socialista democratico italiano (Italian Social Democratic Party)
PRI	Partito repubblicano italiano (Italian Republican Party)
PLI	Partito liberale italiano (Italian Liberal Party)





## Transformations and “direct” successes on the right-wing fringe: Switzerland as a model for Europe?

In a nationwide referendum in Switzerland on 29 November 2009, 57.5 percent of voters approved the ban proposed by the Swiss popular initiative against the construction of new minarets. This meant amending the Swiss constitution to prohibit the building of any further minarets in Switzerland. The referendum result made headlines in the international media and was criticised as exclusionary, discriminatory and xenophobic.<sup>1</sup> “A vote for intolerance” was the verdict of the New York Times, which went on to describe it as “a strong and urgent message [...] for all Western nations where Islamic minorities have been growing in numbers and visibility, and where fear and resentment of Muslim immigrants and their religion have become increasingly strident and widespread.”<sup>2</sup> The campaign operated even before the vote, and provoked outrage particularly with a poster depicting rocket-shaped minarets on a Swiss flag with a woman in the foreground wearing a niqab (facial veil). Conversely, Europe’s right-wing populist parties greeted the referendum result enthusiastically and called for similar votes in their own countries.<sup>3</sup> They also praised the anti-minaret poster, and some parties, such as the *Front National* in France and the small party *Pro-NRW* in Germany, even copied it for their own campaigns.

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1 See e.g., Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung 30 Nov. 2009; Süddeutsche Zeitung 30 Nov. 2009; Der Standard 30 Nov. 2009; Libération 30 Nov. 2009; Le Monde 1 Dec. 2009.

2 New York Times 30 Nov. 2009.

3 NZZ am Sonntag 13 Dec. 2009.



Election poster  
of the SVP:  
"Peoples' initiative  
for the deportation  
of foreigners.  
Creating security"

Looking at the long tradition of right-wing populism in Switzerland, the signal importance of direct democracy for right-wing populist mobilisation and the regular recurrence of xenophobic argumentation in debates about immigration policy, it is clear that the minaret initiative is not an exception. It should rather be seen in the context of historical continuity. The leading players on the initiative committee came from the *Schweizerischen Volkspartei* (Swiss People's Party – SVP) and the *Eidgenössisch-Demokratische Union* (Swiss Democratic Union of Switzerland – EDU); both belong to the right-wing populist party camp that has existed in Switzerland since the 1960s. Slogans used in the anti-minaret debate, such as the “creeping Islamisation of Switzerland”, are reminiscent of the “flooding” theses of right-wing populist parties in the 1960s and ‘70s against immigration from Italy. Both graphically and in terms of content, the anti-minaret poster was also within the tradition of the type of political campaigns run by the SVP since the 1990s – campaigns that have regularly aroused public controversy due to their provocative style and xenophobic content.<sup>4</sup>

4 E.g., the “Little Sheep” poster of 2007. See the article by Minkenberg in the present volume (fig. 1).

The extent to which right-wing populist campaigns influence the climate of attitudes in the population and the behaviour of voters in decision-making is shown by the analysis of the vote on the minaret ban. When asked the major reason for their decision, 38 percent of respondents repeated arguments put forward by the initiators, such as that minarets are “symbols of Islamisation”, and that the issue was about “defending the Christian faith”. Some 81 percent of “Yes” voters agreed that the initiative would set a trend against the increasing spread of Islam in Switzerland and Western Europe.<sup>5</sup>

As the present article will show, all the tendencies on the right-wing margin can look back on a long history, especially the new right, which is active on the level of cultural and discourse. As in other West European countries, it emerged in Switzerland at the end of the 1960s and its development has repeatedly intersected with that of right-wing populist parties. The beginnings of extreme-right groups date back to the immediate postwar period, although they continued to be typified by their underground character until the 1980s, and were barely perceived by the general public. Since then the extreme right has become established as a subculture that exhibits dimensions of youth culture on the one hand and is structured through individual organizations, ideologies and publications on the other. With their exclusionary, anti-egalitarian ideas, the right-wing populist parties, the New Right and the extreme right feed on similar ideological sources. There are differences, however, in terms of the activities and strategies they employ to achieve their political and ideological goals, as well as in the positions they adopt in society and in the political system in Switzerland.

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5 Hirter, Hans, and Vatter, Adrian. Analyse der eidg. Abstimmung vom 29. September 2009. (Bern 2009) 31, 33.

## Right-wing populist outsider parties and the power of direct democracy

On 2 June 1970, 46 percent of eligible Swiss citizens voted for the popular initiative against foreign infiltration calling for the percentage of foreigners to be restricted to 10 percent – which would have resulted in one-third of the foreign population having to leave the country. The debate preceding the vote was very acrimonious, and resulted in the highest voter participation since 1947 (74.1 percent), even though women were still not eligible to vote in Switzerland at that time. The initiative was submitted by the *Nationalen Aktion gegen die Überfremdung von Volk und Heimat* (National Action against Overforeignization of People and Homeland – NA), a citizens' action committee set up in 1961 that had developed into a political party with a stable organization during the 1960s and still exists in the Swiss party arena up to the present day. The NA won its first seat in the national parliament in 1967 with James Schwarzenbach, one of the first prominent right-wing populist leaders in postwar Europe. The NA's main goal was to stem immigration and reduce the proportion of foreigners because, as its party newspaper alleged in 1968, Switzerland was being "flooded by foreign workers", and the high birth rate among migrants resulted in the country being buried under "an avalanche of foreign births".<sup>6</sup>

The 1970 referendum is regarded as the political starting point for right-wing populism in Switzerland. Firstly, it enabled this kind of politics to take root in the Swiss party arena, even if it remained weak in electoral terms. Secondly, right-wing populist players discovered the power of direct democracy in relation to migration policy issues. Aside from the NA, the right-wing populist camp included *Vigilance* from Geneva, which presented itself as an anti-establishment party from 1964 on, and the *Schweizerische Republikanische Bewegung* (Swiss Republican Movement – SRB), founded by James Schwarzenbach in 1971 as a split-off from the NA. In 1975 they were joined by the EDU ("Eidgenössisch-Demokratische Union"),

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6 *Volk + Heimat* 7 (July 1968) 3.

which mutated into a fundamentalist Protestant party in the 1980s and increasingly spoke out against Muslim migrants and Islam.<sup>7</sup>

The splintering of the right-wing populist party camp increased further with the founding of the *Autopartei Schweiz* (Car Party of Switzerland – APS) in 1985 and the *Lega dei Ticinesi* (Ticino League) in 1991. While the parties shared the characteristics of anti-establishment attitudes, radical criticism of government migration policy and rejection of Switzerland's accession to supranational organizations, they were each distinguished by particular programmatic points. The APS, for instance, focused on anti-environmentalist issues, the EDU wanted to increasingly incorporate religious Christian values into politics and society, and the *Lega* operated regionalist-based politics of identity. The right-wing populist camp achieved its best electoral result to date in the 1991 National Council elections when the four parties, the APS, *Lega*, EDU and NA, which were renamed *Schweizer Demokraten* (Swiss Democrats – SD) in 1990, won an electoral share of 10.9 percent, with 16 seats in the 200-strong National Council.

The right-wing populist splinter parties compensated for their outsider role in the parliamentary landscape by regularly using the instruments of direct democracy. Despite their marginal position in party politics, they succeeded in creating widespread debate on specific topics, and making large sections of the population aware of their demands, while engaging in agenda setting and simultaneously exercising pressure on political decision-making processes. Activities in the field of direct democracy were also moments of mobilisation that led to strengthening the parties' identity and internal cohesion. In addition, they fostered cooperation within the party camp, which was important for the small parties with their relatively weak party organization and restricted circle of party activists.

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7 In 1990, during the referendum on liberalising church law in the Canton of Bern, the EDU party president warned that it would be “really dangerous to play down the Islamic threat to our country”; *EDU-Standpunkt 5* (May 1990) 1. See also, Skenderovic, Damir. “Feindbild Muslim: Islamophobie in der radikalen Rechten.” *Der Islam in Europa. Zwischen Weltpolitik und Alltag*. Eds. Altermatt, Urs, Delgado, Mariano, and Vergauwen, Guido (Munich 2006) 79-95.

In the period from 1968 to 1990, the right-wing populist parties alone launched nine popular initiatives on issues of migration policy, of which six culminated in referenda. Although they were all rejected at the polls, in some cases with overwhelmingly large majorities, they certainly influenced Swiss immigration policy – as evidenced, for instance, by the popular initiative of 1970 that contributed to the government making the transition from a rather liberal rotation policy to a more restrictive policy of stabilisation.<sup>8</sup>

### Transformation and rise of the Swiss People's Party (SVP)

The right-wing populist camp in Switzerland has seen fundamental changes since the beginning of the 1990s. The dominance of the SVP testifies to a high level of party political cohesion for the first time. Having operated since the 1910s as a right-wing conservative force in the Swiss party system, from 1991/2 the party went through a structural and programmatic change comparable to that of the *Freiheitlichen Partei Österreichs* (Austrian Freedom Party – FPÖ) after Jörg Haider took power in 1986.<sup>9</sup> The SVP's extraordinary rise to become Switzerland's electorally strongest party by far makes it a model of success for the new right-wing populism in Europe.

After 50 years of stagnation, the SVP increased its share of the vote in the National Council elections from 11.9 percent (25 seats) in 1991 to 28.9 percent (62 seats) in 2007 – an increase unique in Swiss electoral history after 1919. The SVP also doubled the number of its seats in cantonal parliamentary elections from 297 (1991) to 554 (2010). The gains in the

8 Mahnig, Hans and Piguet, Etienne. "Die Immigrationspolitik der Schweiz von 1948 bis 1998. Entwicklung und Auswirkungen." *Migration und die Schweiz. Ergebnisse des Nationalen Forschungsprogramms "Migration und interkulturelle Beziehungen"*. Ed. Wicker, Hans-Rudolf, Fibbi, Rosita and Haug Werner (Zürich 2003) 65-108, esp. 78ff.

9 On the development of the SVP since the beginning of the 1990s, see Mazzoleni, Oscar. *Nationalisme et populisme en Suisse. La radicalisation de la "nouvelle" UDC*. 2nd revised ed. (Lausanne 2008); Skenderovic, Damir. *The Radical Right in Switzerland. Continuity and Change, 1945-2000* (New York/Oxford 2009) 123-172.

National Council elections were at the cost of two centre-right parties, *Freisinnig-Demokratischen Partei* (FDP) and the *Christlichdemokratischen Volkspartei* (CVP), whose combined vote had fallen by 8,7 percent since 1991, as well as the SD, APS and *Lega*, whose total electoral strength was also reduced by 8.7 percent and which were largely ousted by the SVP. In addition, most of the leadership of the *Freiheits-Partei Schweiz* (Freedom Party of Switzerland – FPS), as the APS has been called since 1994, defected to the SVP in the late 1990s. In view of these electoral successes, in 2003 the SVP temporarily gained a second seat on the Federal Council, blasting the “magic formula” that had held sway since 1959, and that determined a fixed governmental apportioning between the four major parties, the FDP, CVP, SVP and *Sozialdemokratische Partei der Schweiz* (SPS). It is true that there was regular internal party opposition in the SVP, particularly from the cantons of Bern and Graubünden, against the right-wing populist course that the party was adopting under the auspices of Christoph Blocher and the Zurich Cantonal Party. However, this was primarily about issues of style and image, and less about political content and the new ideological direction of the party. An internal regrouping took place with the founding of the *Bürgerlich-Demokratischen Partei* (Conservative Democratic Party of Switzerland – BDP) in 2008, which was joined by dissident SVP members and is currently represented in 14 of the 26 cantons.

Compared with the splinter parties, the SVP had much better preconditions in terms of organizational structure, internal party cohesion and capacity for mobilisation. Since the SVP was not a newly established party, at the start of its transformation process it already had a stable party structure that it was able to build up to strength. Alongside numerous newcomer local party sections, they set up 12 new cantonal parties between 1991 and 2001, which meant they were represented in every canton. The party, whose roots were particularly in the Protestant regions of German-speaking Switzerland, expanded to Catholic areas and western Switzerland. In contrast to the splinter parties, which are often weakened by internal quarrels, the SVP succeeded in overcoming internal party dif-

ferences by running the party strictly, with the top party leaders occasionally resorting to an authoritarian leadership style. They could also rely on significant financial resources, far exceeding those of the other major parties, and deployed these to professionalize the running of their campaigns and their political marketing.<sup>10</sup> With strongly media-oriented political communication and provocative campaigns, the party also followed the trend of increasing media influence in politics that occurred later in Switzerland compared with the other Western democracies. In all, the SVP succeeded in achieving a “nationalisation” of the party that is unusual for the Swiss federalist political system. It did so by strengthening the national party organization, profiling a common political agenda and unifying the federal Swiss electoral and referendum campaigns.

As with the splinter parties, direct democracy also represented an important opportunity for the SVP. In 1992 it launched a national petition for a referendum for the first time with the popular initiative “Against Illegal Immigration” and, as a result, actually started developing into a “plebiscite party”.<sup>11</sup> On the one hand, the SVP used the political and discursive scope for action provided by the instruments of direct democracy. This enabled the party to publicise arguments and interpretations on specific topics and to present proposals for legal solutions. This approach proved especially successful in immigration policy. On the other hand, the system of direct democracy offers considerable potential for oppositional politics. It allows social and political groups to register their op-

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10 Between 1996 and 1998 the SVP spent 8.8 million Swiss francs on its campaigns; comparable figures for the other major parties were: FDP 5.8 million, SPS 4.6 million and CVP 2.8 million. According to estimates, the SVP spent 10 million Swiss francs alone for the 2007 election campaign for the National Council, far more than the other parties spent; see *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* 22 March 2000; Udriș, Linards. “Medienwahlkampf 2007. Alles drehte sich um die SVP.” *Medienheft* 28 Dec. 2007.

11 In addition there were the following four federal Swiss initiatives to date: “Surplus of Gold Reserves to the AHV-Fund – Gold Initiative” (referendum 2002), “Against Abuse of Law on Asylum” (2002), “For Democratic Naturalisation” (2008), “For the Expulsion of Convicted Foreigners (Expulsion Initiative)”. 2010 Aside from this, the SVP played a leading role in several referendum campaigns such as the two Naturalisation Reforms (2004), the Treaty of Schengen (2005) and the extension to Romania and Bulgaria of the Treaty on Freedom of Movement of Persons (2009).



position selectively and purposefully, but without mounting fundamental opposition to the system. This allows the SVP to play a double role as a party of opposition and of government, by using referenda as symbolic moments to present itself as the critic of the “political class” and the trustworthy representative of the “people”, while simultaneously participating in political power as a National Council party. Even the openly declared “move into the opposition” after Christoph Blocher was voted out of office as National Councillor in 2007 proved to be temporary and not principled – by 2008 the SVP had already re-entered the Federal Council with the election of Ueli Maurer, one of the main movers in the transformation of the party.<sup>12</sup>

### SVP agenda and voters

As with other right-wing populist parties, the SVP’s “winning formula” consists of linking up a programme for immigration and European policy based on the politics of nationalism and identity with neo-liberal positions in economic and taxation policy. Its appeal to the “people” and to a “we-feeling”, along with persistent attacks on social elites such as politicians, intellectuals and academics, is characteristic of populism and part of the SVP’s strategic repertoire that helps to distinguish it from the so-called “establishment” and present itself as the only true representative of the people. From the beginning of the 1990s the SVP focused particularly on immigration, a topic for which it previously showed little interest.<sup>13</sup> Aside from the classic themes of migration policy such as regulation and limits on immigration, it focused mainly on asylum and refugee policy and questions of integration. The SVP’s forays on asylum and asylum seekers aim at presenting the issue solely as problematic and conflict-laden, as illustrated by the constant use of the metaphor of “abuse”.

12 Clive H. Church, Adrian Vatter. “Opposition in Consensual Switzerland: A Short but Significant Experiment.” *Government and Opposition* 44/4 (2009), 412–437.

13 On the SVP’s migration agenda, see Skenderovic, Damir and D’Amato, Gianni. *Mit dem Fremden politisieren. Rechtspopulismus und Migrationspolitik in der Schweiz seit den 1960er Jahren*. (Zurich 2008).



Poster of the anti-minaret campaign  
in Switzerland:  
“Stop! Yes to the ban of minarets”

Moreover, it operates with culturalist patterns of argumentation and interpretation that highlight the incompatibility of different cultural and religious identities in order to warn against cultural conflict and emphasise the inability of particular immigrant groups to integrate.<sup>14</sup>

Various surveys conducted since the 1990s confirm the growing importance of real or supposed differences in the way migrants are perceived by the Swiss population. In a poll in 1994, for example, 34 percent of respondents thought that foreigners from Serbia and 32 percent of respondents thought that foreigners from Bosnia were “actually out of place in Switzerland”. By 1997 the figures had risen to 43 percent and 42 percent. A survey published in 2000 recorded that 40 percent of Swiss citizens questioned did not want to have a Kosovo Albanian as a neighbour. In a 2007 poll, 45 percent of respondents said they would prefer not to have a Kosovo Albanian as a family member. These indications of widespread culturally based attitudes to migration are also reflected in the results of

14 Since the late 1990s the SVP has used culturalist argumentation particularly in connection with Muslim immigration. See, e.g., the programmatic publication by the SVP in the City of Zurich, “Konzept für eine Zürcher Ausländerpolitik“ – 1999.

a survey from 2006: 66 percent of female and 59 percent of male respondents were sceptical that a *modus vivendi* could be achieved with migrants from a different cultural background.<sup>15</sup> Since the 1990s there has also been an overall rise in sceptical attitudes to migration – which is related not least to the growing strength of the SVP and its anti-immigration campaigns. Whereas 33 percent of respondents in a poll in 1994 demanded measures to reduce the proportion of foreigners in Switzerland, 46 percent of respondents took this position in 1997. In a survey published in 2006, 59 percent of respondents alleged that the present-day numbers of foreigners in Switzerland were reaching the limits. In the same survey, 43 percent voiced the opinion that foreigners were exploiting the welfare state in Switzerland – an indicator mirroring the above-mentioned “abuse” rhetoric of the SVP.<sup>16</sup>

Looking at the studies on SVP voters, we can see that their social profile became significantly more varied during the 1990s and 2000s; its massive gains in votes have won the party grass-roots supporters from almost every social group.<sup>17</sup> While the SVP could continue to rely on its traditional voters living in rural regions, who were mostly male, belonged to the old middle class and tended to be self-employed workers, it also registered considerable growth among the labour force, voters in lower and middle income groups and those with a low or average level of formal education, as well as among residents of urban areas and Catholics. An-

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15 Nef, Rolf. *UNIVOX-Kultur I E-97* (Zurich 1997) 3f.; Longchamp, Claude, Dumont, Jeannine and Leuenberger, Petra. *Einstellungen der SchweizerInnen gegenüber Jüdinnen und Juden und dem Holocaust* (Bern 2000) 11; Longchamp, Claude et al. *Kritik an Israel nicht deckungsgleich mit antisemitischen Haltungen. Antisemitismus-Potenzial neuartig bestimmt* (Bern 2007) 24; Cattacin, Sandro et al. *Monitoring Misanthropy and Rightwing Extremist Attitudes in Switzerland* (Geneva 2006) 31.

16 Nef 1997: 10ff.; Cattacin et al. 2006: 27.

17 On the change in SVP voter support, see e.g., Kriesi, Hanspeter et al. (ed.) *Der Aufstieg der SVP. Acht Kantone im Vergleich*. Zurich 2005; Blanchard, Philippe. “‘Nouvelle’ UDC: nouvelle électeurs? Évolution de 1995 à 2003.” *L’Union démocratique du centre: un parti, son action et ses soutiens*. Ed. Mazzoleni, Oscar et al. (Lausanne 2007) 155-180; Seitz, Werner and Schneider, Madeleine. *Die Wählerinnen und Wähler unter der Lupe. Eine Analyse anhand der Befragungsdaten der Schweizer Wahlstudie “SELECTS” (Nationalratswahlen 1995–2003)* (Neuenburg 2007).

other striking feature is the relatively even distribution of income groups among SVP voters, indicating that the profile of so-called “modernisation losers” and socio-economically disadvantaged social groups has only limited validity. Instead, the SVP’s electoral successes clearly show that the link, also made by other European right-wing populist parties, between neo-liberal positions and nationalist and exclusionist demands appeals both to well-off and less well-off voters.

### The new right: from culture to politics

In Switzerland, as in other West European countries, a new right has emerged since the 1960s. It has gathered together a variety of intellectuals, authors and journalists grouped around circles, periodicals and publishing houses.<sup>18</sup> Unlike in France or Germany, however, the new right in Switzerland has barely been able to get established as an independent and theoretically innovative philosophical current and to influence debate in the cultural pages of the press or academic circles. Embedded in the transnational transfer of ideas and interpretations, the Swiss new right has confined itself primarily to adopting arguments and concepts from Western Europe’s new right and adapting them for the conditions and debates in Switzerland. This import of ideas has had an effect on the political agenda of right-wing populist parties particularly in German-speaking Switzerland, where the new right is increasingly trying to link up party politics and intellectual work and the political and journalistic public arena.

A clear example of the party political commitment of the new right in German-speaking Switzerland is the newspaper “Schweizerzeit”, which was founded in 1979 as the successor to James Schwarzenbach’s paper, “Der Republikaner”, and belongs to the new right’s neo-conservative strand. The paper has been closely linked to the Zurich wing of the SVP

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18 On the new right in Switzerland, see Skenderovic 2009, 173-273.

since the end of the 1980s, and supports its programme on migration and foreign policy. Its editor in chief was one of the driving forces behind the minaret initiative; in the run-up to the referendum he published numerous articles in *Schweizerzeit* that used anti-Islamic stereotypes and clichés and stirred up anti-Muslim feeling. As early as 2004, before the referenda on two civil rights proposals on naturalisation policy, he declared that he had proof of “rapid Muslimisation of Switzerland that was taking place via forced naturalisation”.<sup>19</sup> The “*Schweizerzeit*” has also played an important part as a bridge to the New Right in the Federal Republic of Germany. Authors of German magazines such as “*Junge Freiheit*”, “*Criticòn*” and “*Mut*” wrote in “*Schweizerzeit*”, and conversely, staff journalists and writers from “*Schweizerzeit*” authored articles in Federal German New Right publications, particularly in “*Junge Freiheit*”.

Another force in the neo-conservative current is the *Stiftung für abendländische Besinnung* (Foundation for Occidental Consciousness – STAB). Founded in 1968, its activities are concentrated mainly in intellectual and cultural life, such as the publication of written works and the award of a highly paid prize, the STAB Prize. In 1997, for instance, the prize was awarded to Irenäus Eibl-Eibesfeldt, a controversial behavioural researcher from Germany who is a former disciple of Konrad Lorenz. The founder and long-serving chairman of STAB argued in a cultural differentiatialist way when he wrote that in the Foundation’s view, “the nurturing of cultural identity is a means of preserving ethnic variety”, and that people should recognise that “particularly immigrants from Islamic countries” are not ready “to give up their own peculiarities or even their faith.”<sup>20</sup>

Aside from the neo-conservatives, the New Right in German-speaking Switzerland comprises two other tendencies, the environmentalists and the nationalists. The ecological current that emerged in the 1970s is also close to the right-wing populist parties, in particular the original *Nationale*

<sup>19</sup> *Schweizerzeit* 19, 3 Sept. 2004, 1.

<sup>20</sup> Jenny, Hans. *Um was es geht. Reflexionen zum Gedankengut der Stiftung für Abendländische Besinnung (STAB)*. (Zurich 1998) 50, 87.

*Aktion*, with which it shared nationalist environmentalist arguments prioritising protection of the national community's "living space" and linking demands on population policy to restrictive positions in migration policy.<sup>21</sup> The nationalist current ultimately concentrates on foreign policy issues; it has represented isolationist positions and identity politics since the mid-1980s and collaborated with right-wing populist parties in direct democracy campaigns.<sup>22</sup>

In French-speaking Switzerland the New Right has long pursued the strategy known as "metapolitics", as interpreted by the French *Nouvelle droite* in its "cultural struggle from the right". This follows the argument that it is the right time to change the thinking of the people with cultural and intellectual work, which would then necessarily have an impact on political and social relations.<sup>23</sup> This approach also corresponds to the classical view of the tasks of an intellectual – not focusing on the institutional methods of politics but dedicated to the work of debate and publishing instead. Consequently, up until the 1990s the New Right in French-speaking Switzerland concentrated its interests on cultural, intellectual and academic areas.

Aside from the counter-revolutionary strand that regards the Enlightenment, the French Revolution and the "Cultural Revolution of 1968" as responsible for the erroneous ways of modern society, there are also the Integrists who are not solely concerned with theological questions and internal Church affairs. Instead, their supporters see religion, politics, and society as closely interlinked areas in which hierarchy, authority and tradition have to be firmly established as principles. Switzerland is the

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21 One example is the environmental association Umwelt und Bevölkerung/Association Ecologie et Population (ECOPOP), which was founded in 1971 and is active on population policy issues. It declared that "from an environmental perspective Switzerland [should not] continue to be a country of immigration."; see ECOPOP. *Thesen zur schweizerischen Migrationspolitik* (Bern 1992)10.

22 Among the most influential groups is the *Aktion für eine unabhängige und neutrale Schweiz* (AUNS), which has a large membership and is closely interlinked with the SVP. It has played an important role in several plebiscite campaigns against Switzerland's membership of supranational organizations.

23 Tagueieff, Pierre-André. *Sur la Nouvelle droite. Jalons d'une analyse critique* (Paris 1994).

centre for international Integristism, embodied in the *Priestly Society of Saint Pius X* and its seminary for priests in the village of Ecône in the Canton of Wallis.<sup>24</sup> The Society attracted international attention in 2009 when one of its four bishops publicly denied the existence of gas chambers in the Nazi concentration camps. It has over 100,000 followers worldwide, and has influenced numerous groups, publications and publishers in the French-speaking part of Switzerland over the past 40 years with its authoritarian and anti-egalitarian ideology. It has also regularly taken positions on social issues: for example, the Swiss section of the Society issued a communiqué in 2009 calling for support for the minaret initiative in order to prevent the further propagation of Islamic doctrine.<sup>25</sup>

The last strand of the New Right in French-speaking Switzerland we should mention is the *Nouvelle droite*. It has links with the current of the same name in France around the *Groupe de recherche et d'études pour la civilisation européenne* (GRECE), and with its leading ideologue, Alain de Benoist, and has tried since the early 1980s to revitalise the Indo-European heritage by propagating neo-pagan ideas. Its goal is to offer a hierarchically structured model of society as an alternative to the egalitarian and universalistic European traditions based on Judaeo-Christian principles. For a long period the *Nouvelle droite* was publicly associated with circles like the *Cercle Thule*, *Cercle Proudhon* and *Association des Amis de Robert Brasillach*, which published New Right literature, organized events with representatives from the European New Right, and produced newspapers and periodicals. Since the end of the 1990s, supporters of the *Nouvelle droite* have also got closer to the right-wing populist party camp, and some began to play an active role in party political work.<sup>26</sup>

24 Schifferle, Alois. *Die Pius-Bruderschaft. Informationen – Positionen – Perspektiven* (Kvelaer 2009).

25 For excerpts from the communiqué, see the Internet website of the Priestly Society of Saint Pius X : *DICI. Documentation – Information – Catholiques – Internationales*. <http://www.dici.org/actualites/suisse-la-construction-de-minarets-desormais-interdite-constitutionnellement> (accessed 1 Jul. 2010).

26 A prominent example is the leading representative of the *Nouvelle droite* in the French-Speaking part of Switzerland who operated as general secretary of the Geneva SVP and stood as a candidate for the National Council on the cantonal party list in 1999. After fierce criticism in the media, the national Swiss SVP succeeded in getting him expelled from the Geneva section; see e.g., *Le Temps*, 3 Sept. 1999 and 13 Sept. 1999

## The extreme right: On the margin of politics and society

In contrast to the experience in other West European countries such as Germany and Italy, extreme-right parties were unable to gain a footing in the Swiss party system after the Second World War.<sup>27</sup> The few isolated parties that contested local and national parliamentary elections did not achieve any significant electoral successes. In fact, the political influence of the extreme right in Switzerland has remained extremely minor right up to the present. The extreme-right consists of a diffuse, mostly loosely organized subculture; public authorities estimate its membership at around 1,200 persons.<sup>28</sup> Around 700 people participated in the largest recorded extreme-right rally to date, in 2005.

These figures contrast with the results of a 2005 survey of around 3,000 young people aged between 16 and 20 and on voluntary post-school training courses. Some 9.6 percent of the respondents claimed to sympathise with extreme-right groups or regarded themselves as members of these groups. In addition, one in ten of the respondents had previously been a victim of extreme-right violence.<sup>29</sup> The striking discrepancy between the figures indicates that aside from the organized extreme right there is a considerable number of young people who have various points of contact with right-wing extremism. This applies in the first place to their lifestyle, which is expressed in fashion styles, codes and musical tastes. The young people's attitudes, which are characterised by exclusion with regard to the migrant population and by pronounced nationalism, exhibit shared features with the extreme right. These young people, who are only loosely connected with the extreme right, often call themselves

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27 For a historical overview of the organized extreme right in Switzerland after 1945, see Skenderovic, Damir. "Organized Right-Wing Extremism in Switzerland: An Overview Since 1945." *Right-wing Extremism in Switzerland. National and International Perspectives*. Ed. Marcel Alexander Niggli (Baden-Baden 2009) 28-38.

28 Bundesamt für Polizei. *Bericht Innere Sicherheit 2008* (Bern 2009) 41.

29 Schmid, Martin and Storni, Marco. *Jugendliche im Dunkelfeld rechtsextremer Gewalt. Viktimisierungprozesse und Bewältigungsstrategien* (Zurich 2009).



“patriots”. To date there has been a general lack of research on this phenomenon, and a lack of more precise data on its dimensions.<sup>30</sup>

The extreme right in Switzerland ranges from internationally linked Negationists through well-organized groups typified by authoritarian leadership to barely structured skinhead scenes mainly influenced by young men. This diffuse picture began in the 1980s and developed similarly in most West European countries. Its main distinguishing features include the sharp fall in age of the right-wing extremist camp, which began in the mid-1980s and was influenced by the rise of the racist skinhead movement. The extreme right went on to develop into a diffuse subculture that became part of global right-wing extremism through new communication methods like the Internet, and has become commercialised in recent years with the growing sale of CDs, clothing and propaganda material. Finally, we can observe a heightened tendency to violence. Attacks on accommodation for asylum seekers and against Jewish institutions, and violence against migrants and political opponents have become elements of extreme-right mobilisation.

In Switzerland, as in other West European countries, there are repeated discussions on the relationship of right-wing populist parties to the extreme right. Whereas attention primarily focused on the *Nationale Aktion* during the 1980s and at the beginning of the 1990s, from the second half of the 1990s there was growing public interest in the SVP.<sup>31</sup> Critics accuse the party of insufficient demarcation from extreme-right actors, while exponents of the SVP counter that the party explicitly demarcates itself from the extreme right, and argue that it is precisely the SVP that is

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30 Overall, the situation of data on the extreme right in Switzerland is weak, as the authorities and the public barely see right-wing extremism as a long-term problem; see Skenderovic, Damiir. *Strategien gegen Rechtsextremismus in der Schweiz: Akteure, Massnahmen und Debatten* (Bern 2010).

31 Udris, Linards, Imhof, Kurt and Ettinger, Patrik. “New Chances for Attracting Attention. The Extreme Right and Radical Right in Swiss Public Communication. 1960-2005.” *Right-wing Extremism in Switzerland: National and International Perspectives*. Ed. Marcel A. Niggli (Baden-Baden 2009) 41-57.

helping considerably to stem right-wing extremism because, they say, it raises questions the population is concerned with. The perspective on linkages between right-wing populist parties and the extreme right in the past 40 years shows, firstly, that both strands, as members of the political family of the radical right, feature similar ideological reference points and socio-political ideas. Secondly, they are interlinked in the sense of a collective actor, which is expressed in organizational and structural networks and personal interactions. These mostly take the form of topical relationships that seldom develop into continuous, structurally consolidated cooperation.

## **Conclusion:**

### **The dominance and integration of right-wing populism**

The right-wing populists in Switzerland occupy a dominant position on the right margin of the political spectrum. Whereas the groupings and scenes of the extreme right adopt blatant outsider positions in society and politics, and the parties active in parliamentary politics explicitly dissociate themselves from them, right-wing populist parties are accepted as participants in the party contest and the political system, and – in the case of the SVP – are even integrated into the ruling coalition. The relationship between the New Right and the right-wing populists is much more permeable and characterised by cooperation. In this situation what is most significant is the New Right's ideological function in supplying formulations of right-wing populist argumentation and interpretation of social questions.

Swiss right-wing populism is assuming a pioneering role in Europe. Aside from France, where the Poujade movement emerged briefly in the mid-1950s, Switzerland was the only European country so early after the Second World War to exhibit such consistency in the formation of movements on the margin of right-wing politics but not directly derived from fascist models. Since then, seven right-wing populist parties have succeeded in entering the national parliament – more than in any other

European country. Moreover, Switzerland has the right-wing populist party with the largest electoral share in Western Europe – the SVP.

The sharp rise in support for right-wing populism among the Swiss population from the 1990s, as expressed in the SVP's electoral successes, can be explained by the widespread thesis from electoral research that in Switzerland, as in other Western democracies, the traditional socio-structural lines of conflict have noticeably diminished. In the 1990s they were replaced by a new phenomenon, the “opening-demarkation” conflict that increasingly influences the electoral behaviour of voters. In this respect the SVP has succeeded in appealing to the supposed losers in the processes of globalisation and modernisation with anti-Europe and anti-foreigner policies. On the other hand, we should remember that a large segment of SVP voters do not belong to the group of economically disadvantaged persons. Moreover, parties play a key role in the perception of social conflicts, and consequently have sustained influence on the motivations for voter decisions. With its identity politics on questions of European integration and migration, the SVP itself has correspondingly made a major contribution to the influence of the new “opening-demarkation” conflict.

The strength of right-wing populism in Switzerland depends above all on the openness of the political system. On the one hand, the country's right-wing populist parties are very active in using the institutional opportunity structure of direct democracy. Between the 1960s and 2010 they submitted 18 popular initiatives on the national federal level and achieved calls for 15 referenda. It is hardly surprising that other right-wing populist parties in Europe extol direct democracy as the ideal political system and, in doing so, express their basic mistrust of intermediary forms of representative democracy. In their view, direct democratic decisions are not merely the only genuine declaration of will of the “sovereign people” and therefore the unequivocal expression of the *volonté générale*, but also a clear majority decision not based on compromises negotiated by the political elite.

On the other hand, the traditional system of Swiss consociational democracy, in which the integration of political and social forces is central to the decision-making process, is the basis for the integrative strategy towards the SVP, which is different from the demarcation strategy of a *cordon sanitaire*. The SVP, as a member of numerous cantonal and local executive committees and of the National Council since 1929, has long since proved its governmental responsibility and is treated accordingly by the established parties. It is not perceived as a pariah party. Although the other main parties occasionally criticise the SVP's confrontational style, strategy of polarisation and obstructive politics, to date neither the two centre-right parties, the FDP and CVP, nor the Social Democrats have seriously doubted the modalities of consociational democracy. However, given the smouldering political and ideological divergences, the question arises to what extent the call for adherence to concordance and consensus primarily serves the purpose of retaining party political power at the cost of principles of anti-discrimination in the Swiss migration society.







## Right-wing extremism in Spain: Between parliamentary insignificance, far-right populism and racist violence

The charges: incitement to racial hatred, unauthorised possession of weapons and setting up an illegal organization (*Asociación Ilícita*). In early June 2010, 14 members of the Spanish skinhead section *Blood and Honour* (B&H) received prison sentences from one to three-and-a-half years. The judge also ordered the dissolution of the organization. This was the third time a neo-Nazi organization was sentenced in Spain as an illegal association. Although the penalties imposed by the court were less severe than those demanded by the public prosecutor, this was a signal verdict. Experts hope the judgement will be used as a precedent in future.<sup>1</sup> To date, there has been a low level of public awareness about the presence of extreme-right-wing organizations in Spain – and they have operated with impunity.

### The present face and extent of right-wing extremism

“Nobody is interested in the topic. There is no kind of preventive policy.” This is the view of journalist Xavier Vinader. Looking at the issue of present-day right-wing extremism, he reached the surprising conclusion, “They are a danger, they are present, but fortunately they are not important at all right now.”<sup>2</sup> In the last general election to the Spanish parliament, the extreme-right-wing parties combined won only 0.2 percent of the vote.<sup>3</sup> Yet for left-wingers, migrants, homosexuals, homeless people

1 “Entrevista Esteban Ibarra, Movimiento contra la Intolerancia.” *El País* 06.07.2010. [www.elpais.com](http://www.elpais.com), last accessed 06.07.2010.

2 Interview by Frauke Büttner with Xavier Vinader, 09.06.2010 in Barcelona.

3 Büttner, Frauke. “Wahlschlappe in Spanien.” *Der Rechte Rand* 112, May/June 2008.

and others, racist and extreme-right-wing violence are part of everyday life in many places in Spain. The non-governmental organization *Movimiento contra la Intolerancia* (MCI) has been working in the field of prevention of right-wing extremism and fostering of tolerance for the past eight years. It has reported over 80 deaths caused by extreme-right-wing violence since 1991. It estimates the number of incidents and attacks motivated by racism, right-wing extremism, homophobia and anti-Semitism at 4,000 annually.<sup>4</sup>

The Spanish authorities keep no systematic records on extreme-right-wing organizations and their members and voters. Observers estimate around 70 groupings, of which 20 are political parties. According to police figures, their total membership numbers 10,000. MCI regards this figure as a minimum.<sup>5</sup> Its chairman, Esteban Ibarra, thinks 15,000 would be more realistic. Female participation in the far-right scene is estimated at around 20 percent. To date, however, there have been no gender-specific analyses on the functions and dimensions of women in the far-right movement in Spain.

Networking and agitation on the Internet have developed a considerable dynamic over the past few years. Extreme right-wing and racist content is disseminated on over 200 websites; national Internet mail-order firms distribute clothing, books and music. There are currently over 60 active Spanish far-right rock bands, and at least 20 known concerts a year, some of them openly publicised on the Internet.<sup>6</sup>

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4 Movimiento contra la Intolerancia. *Informe Raxen Especial 2010. Ofensiva Xenófoba durante la crisis económica*. (Madrid: *Movimiento contra la Intolerancia*, 2010) 52, 58. On the work of the MCI, see Büttner, Frauke. "Handeln für Toleranz und gegen Rechtsextremismus in Spanien – Ansätze des ‚Movimiento contra la Intolerancia‘". *Rechtsextremismus in Deutschland und Europa* ed. Spöhl, Holger and Kolls, Sarah (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2010) 177 ff.

5 Duva, Jesús. "10,000 'ultras' unidos por la xenofobia." *El País* 08.10.2006, last accessed 02.07.2010; and *Movimiento contra la Intolerancia 2010*, 58.

6 *Movimiento contra la Intolerancia 2010*, 39



Demonstration by the  
"Movimiento Social  
Republicano",  
June 26, 2010 in  
Zaragoza.

Slogans: "Work: rather  
a right than a duty".  
"Capitalism cannot be  
reformed. It can only be  
destroyed."



## Forms of far-right organizations

Spain's extreme-right scene can be divided into four spectrums, although in some cases their boundaries are fluid in terms of membership: (1) nostalgic Franquist, Falangist and ultra-religious organizations; (2) right-wing populist parties with various degrees of radicalism; (3) neo-Nazi and nationalist revolutionary organizations; (4) forces with party alignments and extreme-right-wing football fans.<sup>7</sup>

One of the main nostalgic Falangist organizations is *Falange Española de las JONS* (FE de las JONS); founded in 1933, this is Spain's oldest far-right party and at present the majority of extreme-right votes in general elections. In real terms, in the 2008 elections for the Spanish senate and parliament, its share of the vote was marginal, some 0.05 percent. The only extreme-right party represented in parliament after the death of dictator Francisco Franco was *Fuerza Nueva*, which won a single seat in 1979 under the leadership of the fascist Blas Piñar. *Fuerza Nueva* was a con-

<sup>7</sup> See also Cantarero, Joan. *La huella de la bota. De los nazis del franquismo a la nueva ultraderecha* (Madrid: Ediciones Planeta, 2010) 91 ff.

glomerate of several ultra-right Falangist tendencies that banded together after the government decreed the dissolution of the Franquist unity party, *Movimiento Nacional*<sup>8</sup>. In the early parliamentary elections of 1982 Blas Piñar lost a large number of voters to Alianza Popular, the right-wing conservative party.

Today there are 13 Falangist splinter groups<sup>9</sup> harking back to Falange founder José Antonio Primo de Rivera and the ideology of National Syndicalism, the idea of a single national hierarchically-structured trade union representing both employers and employees. Other nostalgic far-right groups include *Confederación Nacional de Combatientes* (National Confederation of Ex-Veterans) and foundations such as *Fundación Francisco Franco*, which are based on Franquism. Parties like *Alternativa Española* and *Movimiento Católico Español* link up with the Catholic-fundamentalist spectrum.

In the 1990s and 2000s, right-wing populist, neo-Nazi and nationalist revolutionary parties emerged, with youth organizations and affiliated forces. Their common denominator is massive rabble-rousing and polarisation against migrants.

The association *Circulo Español de Amigos de Europa* (Spanish Circle of Friends of Europe, CEDADE), was influential in the emergence and ideological alignment of many ultra-right groups in Spain. CEDADE first became active in 1966, when Franco still ruled Spain. It provided an umbrella for Falangists and former veterans of the División Azul, ex-SS and Gestapo officers, and neo-Nazis, who built up this influential European neo-Nazi organization; it dissolved in 1993. Journalist and author Joan Cantarero sees its demise “not as the end, but as the beginning of the most active neo-Nazism in Spain.”<sup>10</sup> In the mid-1990s, former CEDADE

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8 Bernecker, Walther L. *Spaniens Geschichte seit dem Bürgerkrieg* (Munich: Beck'sche Reihe 1997) 226.

9 <http://servicio.mir.es/registro-partidos/index.htm>, last accessed 24.11.2009.

10 Cantarero, Joan 2010, 24.

Website of the Democracia Nacional: "Behave or back off! Initiative against the high crime rate among foreigners".



activists were involved in neo-Nazi parties such as *Democracia Nacional* (DN) and *Alianza por la Unidad Nacional*, now *Alianza Nacional* (AN). Other ex-CEDADE cadres like Pedro Varela Geiss focussed their energy on supra-party ideological work. Geiss founded a bookshop in Barcelona, *Liberia Europa*, which sells literature glorifying the Nazis.

One of the newer parties is *Movimiento Social Republicano* (Social Republican Movement, MSR), which describes itself as patriotic-socialist; to some extent it copies the image of the Autonomous Nationalists and integrates the most radical segment of the neo-Nazi scene. The close interlinking of these groups was demonstrated in the B&H trial in June 2010: 17 of the 18 accused had been candidates on MSR electoral tickets some years previously.<sup>11</sup> In September 2009, MSR chairman Juan Antonio Llopart was sentenced as managing director of the publishing house, *Ediciones Nueva Republica*, for justifying the Nazi genocide.<sup>12</sup> The MSR has an electoral alliance with the right-wing populist party *España 2000* and with *Frente Nacional* (*National Front*, FN), which was founded in 2006. This alliance

11 "El líder de la organización nazi Blood & Honour, condenado a tres años de cárcel." *El País* 05.07.2010, last accessed 06.07.2010; and Peris, Joana. "Juicio a un brazo político de los neonazis." 12.06.2010. <http://www.diagonalperiodico.net>, last accessed 07.06.2010

12 Amical de Mauthausen y altres camps, SOS Racisme-Catalunya, *Comunicat davant la sentència de la Secció X de l'Audiència Provincial de Barcelona del procés judicial de la Llibreria Kalki*, 08.10.2010, <http://www.sosracisme.org/accions/comunicat.php?doc=185&cat=0>, last accessed 15.06.2010; and *La Vanguardia* 08.10.2009, [lavanguardia.es](http://lavanguardia.es), last accessed 15.06.2010.

is the second attempt to create a common electoral platform; the first attempt, in 2000 – when the neo-Nazi DN participated instead of the FN – was a miserable failure.

Groups similar to *España 2000* on the far-right spectrum include FN and several splinter groups from the Catalanian *Plataforma de Catalunya* (PxC), which tried to present a profile outside the left-right discourse. The PxC was founded in 2002 by Josep Anglada i Ruis, who was previously active in several groups including the extreme-right-wing *Fuerza Nueva* (New Force). In the 2007 elections the PxC managed to treble its share of the vote and won 17 seats in municipal assemblies.<sup>13</sup>

Aside from the organized parties of the extreme right, there is a wide spectrum of non-aligned far-right forces in Spain, ranging from nationalist revolutionary and patriotic organizations to extreme-right-wing skin-heads and cultural-political groups and their networks. An array of far-right activities is available in the youth culture sphere; these events are usually hardly visible and are held in semi-public or private spaces. Concerts and demonstrations foster – sometimes close – links with the neo-Nazi, national-revolutionary parties MSR, DN and AN. In addition, ultra-right football fans have been an acute problem for years: they are responsible for many of the 4,000 hate crimes committed annually.<sup>14</sup>

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13 Fernandez, David. "Ultras europeos financian la lista de Plataforma de Catalunya." *Diagonal* 124, 23.04.2010; Casals Meseguer, Xavier. "La Plataforma per Catalunya: la eclosión de un nacional-populismo catalán (2003-2009)." *WP 274* (Barcelona: Institut de Ciències Polítiques I Socials 2009).

14 Cantarero, Joan 2010, 95; Movimiento contra la Intolerancia. *Racismo y violencia ultra en el fútbol* (Madrid 2005) 7 ff.

## Target groups, key topics and strategies

The conservative, nationalist and ultra-Catholic spectrum is a target group for the nostalgic and Falangist extreme right. The slogans of the national-syndicalist orientated Falangist groups are predictably aimed at workers as well. The right-wing populists also target workers on the labour market issue but, like the neo-Nazi and nationalist revolutionary groups, the populists focus carefully and concentratedly on the young. Concerts, demonstrations and football stadiums are important recruiting grounds. The right-wing populist PxC has evidently succeeded in making a breakthrough from the usual clientele of extreme-right parties and winning voter support from a wide range of political areas.<sup>15</sup>

The Franquist, ultra-religious and Falangist far right frequently highlight the maintenance of traditional values such as the family and the Christian religion. Clear positions on abortion and homosexuality are evident throughout the extreme-right spectrums. For example, *FE des las JONS* ran a counter-campaign at the time of the liberalisation of the abortion law, while AN tried to polarise public opinion with an anti-homosexuality poster on International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia.

The glorification of the Franco regime peaks every year around 20 November, the anniversary of the death of Francisco Franco and of Falange founder José Antonio Primo de Riveras. Memorial processions and Catholic masses, often accompanied by fascist symbols, are held in the Valley of the Fallen cemetery, near Madrid. Because such activities have been prohibited on the site itself since the Law on Historical Remembrance<sup>16</sup> came into force, in November 2009 activists raised their arms in the fascist salute in front of the entrance. Reports on the commemorative events can be found on the Internet on the websites of organizations from the

15 Erra, Miquel/Serra, Joan 2008, 13.

16 For the debate on the law and commemorative policy, see Bernecker, Walther L. and Brinkmann, Sören. *Kampf der Erinnerungen. Der Spanische Bürgerkrieg in Politik und Gesellschaft 1936-2008* (Nettersheim: Verlag Graswurzelrevolution 2008) 339-355.

fringe far-right spectrum. However, participation from these circles is not particularly high: younger organizations like the MSR, which focus on anti-capitalist and environmental issues, no longer relate to Franquism.

In the spectrum of neo-Nazi parties and non-aligned forces, massive anti-Semitic agitation is an integral part of the programme. Surfing the Internet yields numerous examples of relevant caricatures, boycott calls against Israel, and links to anti-Semitic events and readings. There is topical reference to Nazism in the scene, such as the eulogies to Adolf Hitler and Rudolf Hess in the publications of the Spanish section of B&H, the group that was sentenced in June 2010.

Almost all the parties agree on defence of “Spanish national unity”. The Falange website features statements against the Catalanian Statute of Autonomy and in favour of the political unity of Spain. The neo-Nazi party AN put out stickers in Catalonia with the legend, “Don’t let them force you into silence. Speak Spanish. Rebel!”<sup>17</sup> By contrast, the programme of the MSR – *España 2000’s* partner in the new electoral alliance – demands recognition of the “peoples” that “make up Spain” and their different traditions, languages and cultures.<sup>18</sup>

“Social justice” is another important issue for the extreme-right wing in Spain. It is usually linked with presenting the far right as a political alternative to the government. In the 2008 elections, parties such as *Falange Auténtica* demanded “more democracy” and “more solidarity and patriotism”. Whereas most of the Falangist parties avoid, or even reject, racist patterns of argumentation, *La Falange* (FE), which incorporates the most radical forces in the spectrum, describes immigration as a threat to the “national identity”.<sup>19</sup>

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17 Alianza Nacional,

[http://www.lostuyos.net/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=187:ino-te-calles&catid=58:campanas&Itemid=2](http://www.lostuyos.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=187:ino-te-calles&catid=58:campanas&Itemid=2), last accessed 18.11.2009.

18 Movimiento Social Republicano. MSR. *La alternativa para el siglo XXI* (Molins de Rei: Ediciones Nueva República 2008) 22.

19 Cf. Cantarero, Joan 2010, 92; and FE/La Falange *Ideas aprobadas en el Congreso Nacional Extraordinario de FE-La Falange el 7 de junio del 2008*, 07.06.2008, [www.lafalange.org](http://www.lafalange.org), last accessed 07.07.2010.

Aggressive, covert and open racist agitation is characteristic of Spain's right-wing populist and neo-Nazi scene. Social and economic problems are given an ethnic cast, and the issue is more acrimonious than ever in a period of economic crisis and high unemployment. "Solutions" are propagated in the form of more or less extensive exclusion of migrants from the labour market and social or health care, with the slogan, "Spaniards first!"

In the run-up to the forthcoming local and general elections, the MSR, España 2000 and FN have announced a joint campaign intended to present their proposals for dealing with the crisis and "its connection with the corruption of the system and with immigration".<sup>20</sup> This was clearly shown at an FN demonstration in April 2010 when *España 2000* demanded the resignation of prime minister Zapatero on the grounds that he was responsible for corruption and "mass immigration".<sup>21</sup> In the past ten years the far right has held several demonstrations in working-class areas with a high migrant population, for example in Valencia and Madrid. This strategy aims to mobilise new supporters and, at the same time, to intimidate residents from migrant backgrounds.

The far right also treats the topic of criminality in ethnic terms by portraying migrants and Muslims as a threat to security. Mobilisation against the building of mosques is currently one of the key issues for the different groups, from right-wing populists to neo-Nazis. PxC says it is not against immigration but only "against the installation of Muslim immigrants in our country". Yet the Catalanian party made restrictions on migration and social services for migrants one of its key themes from the very start. Experts see a risk in this far-right strategy of exploiting popular issues.<sup>22</sup>

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20 See declaration of 23.05.2010 on website España 2000, 31.05.2010. *Comunicado conjunto de España 2000, Frente Nacional y Movimiento Social Republicano*, <http://www.esp2000.org/comunicados/1133-comunicado-conjunto-de-espana-2000-frente-nacional-y-movimiento-social-republican.html>, last accessed 07.07.2010.

21 Erra, Miquel and Serra, Joan. *Tota la veritat sobre Plataforma per Catalunya. L'ultradretà Josep Anglada al descobert* (Badalona: Ara Llibres S.L. 2008) 74, 7879 f.

22 Casals Meseguer, Xavier. "La Plataforma per Catalunya: la eclosión de un nacional-populismo catalán (2003-2009)", WP 274 (Barcelona: Institut de Ciències Polítiques i Socials, Barcelona, 2009) 23/24; and interview with Vinader, Xavier 2010.

Campaigns against Islam borrow motifs from other European parties. DN, for example, used the motif of the anti-minaret campaign from the referendum in Switzerland in 2009. The parties are positioning their campaigns to strategic advantage at a juncture when the discussion on the approach to Muslim fellow citizens is on the public agenda. The anti-Muslim discourse is also gaining momentum through activities of other parties, such as a petition by the mainstream *Partido Popular* (PP) against the building of a mosque in Badalona.<sup>23</sup>

Europe continues to be an important point of reference for many of the parties from the extreme-right-wing scene. The MSR, for instance, uses the so-called “Europe of nations” as a political reference; cultivating a rebellious image with its black-and-red flame, the party advocates an “Indo-European” Europe based on “blood right”.<sup>24</sup> Turkey is explicitly rejected as an EU member state. Several parties from the far-right spectrum campaigned in the last EU parliamentary elections. Despite their fundamental rejection of the EU as an institution, their goal is to achieve institutional representation on the national or European level. At present a strategy of normalisation can be observed in the spectrum whose members are organized in parties, even if some, like the MSR, hold strongly divisive, radical positions.

## Electoral success and political attitudes within the population

At present, Spain’s right-wing extremists are far from gaining parliamentary representation. In the 2009 elections to the European Parliament, neo-Nazis, ultra-Catholic and Falangist parties received only around

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23 Marín, Angel. ABC: *El PP de Badalona promueve una campaña contra una mezquita*. 11.02.2009, <http://www.abc.es/20090211/catalunya-catalunya/badalona-promueve-campana-contra-20090211.html>, last accessed 07.06.2010; and García, Jesus 14.09.2009. “Sin mezquitas en mi barrio.” El País, [www.elpais.com](http://www.elpais.com), last accessed 06.07.2010.

24 MSR. “Ponencia sobre Europa.” <http://www.msr.org.es/>, last accessed 18.11.2009.



60,000 votes.<sup>25</sup> The results were similar in the Spanish parliamentary elections in March 2008, when nine far-right parties altogether gained a total of 50,000 votes (0.2 percent). Top of the list was the *FE de las JONS* (13,000), closely followed by the DN with just over 12,500 votes. In the local elections of 2007, around 50 far-right representatives succeeded in entering various town halls as deputies,<sup>26</sup> of whom 17 were from the PxC, which received 12,400 votes.<sup>27</sup> At a conference in Barcelona-Sants in March 2010, Anglada announced to an audience of around 700 people of various ages and from different segments of the far-right spectrum that the party would be running in the Catalan elections in autumn 2010.

There is no doubt that 0.2 percent of the vote on a national level is marginal. However, the significance of right-wing extremism should also be seen in terms of so-called hate crime and attitudes among the population. It is a cause for serious concern, firstly, that there is a persistently high number of violent attacks with an extreme-right-wing or racist background. Recently MCI detected a new quality of extreme-right agitation and spoke of a “xenophobic offensive in the context of the economic crisis”.<sup>28</sup>

Secondly, opinion polls register growing rejection of immigration. According to the last survey by the Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas C.I.S (Centre for Sociological Studies) 77 percent of respondents in 2008 agreed that too many immigrants were living in Spain. In the year 2008 the level of agreement was 60 percent. The same survey recorded that 42 percent of respondents regarded the immigration laws as too tolerant.<sup>29</sup>

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- 25 Cf. Elecciones Parlamento Europeo 2009. 08.06.2009. <http://elecciones.mir.es/resultados2009/99PE/DPE99999TO.htm> last accessed 18.11.2009; and antifeixistes org 09.06.2009 [http://www.antifeixistes.org/3271\\_lextrema-dreta-puja-europa-60000-vots-lestat-noves-estrategies-dels-ultres-espanyols.htm](http://www.antifeixistes.org/3271_lextrema-dreta-puja-europa-60000-vots-lestat-noves-estrategies-dels-ultres-espanyols.htm), last accessed 18.11.2009.
- 26 Ministerio de Trabajo y Inmigración (ed.), Cea Dáncona, Maria Angeles and Vales Martínez, Miguel S. *Evolución del racismo y la xenofobia en España. Informe 2008* (Madrid 2008) 290.
- 27 See <http://www.elmundo.es/especiales/2008/02/espana/elecciones2008/resultados/congreso/globales/> last accessed 06.07.2010; Fernandez, David. “Ultras europeos financian la lista de Plataforma de Catalunya.” *Diagonal* 124 (23.04.2010).
- 28 Movimiento contra la Intolerancia 2010, 3.
- 29 Ministerio de Trabajo y Inmigración (ed.), Cea Dáncona, Maria Angeles and Vales Martínez, Miguel S. *Evolución del racismo y la xenofobia en España. Informe 2009* (Madrid, 2009) 44, 74.

There is also growing rejection of the building of mosques, or sympathy with such rejection. In the C.I.S poll in 2007, 39 percent of respondents already thought it acceptable for protests to be made against building a mosque in their neighbourhood. Two years previously, 30 percent agreed to this statement. All the same, in 2007, 29 percent of the population could imagine acceptance of a party that argued that immigrants of a different ethnic origin or religion caused social problems.<sup>30</sup>

A survey of 23,000 Spanish secondary school pupils and 6,000 teachers revealed alarming results: almost two-thirds of the respondents refused to work with Moroccans and Roma. Over half of those questioned would not want to share a desk with pupils of Jewish faith, and 8 percent sympathised with extreme-right/racist groups. However, it should be noted that 90 percent spoke out clearly against these groups.<sup>31</sup>

On the international scale, in a survey conducted in spring 2008 by the Pew Research Centre, Spain heads the list in relation to anti-Semitic and Islamophobic attitudes: 46 percent of Spanish respondents expressed dislike of Jews, and the figure for Muslims was even higher, at 52 percent.<sup>32</sup>

## International networking in the context of improved European cooperation

Over the years, Spanish fascists have cooperated with people such as old Nazis who lived undisturbed in Spain, and with Italian neo-fascists. Since 1994 there has been cooperation between the German NPD and the Spanish *FE/La Falange*, which was affirmed by the establishment of the

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30 Ministerio de Trabajo y Inmigración 2008, 30, 35, 183, 165, 293.

31 Movimiento contra la Intolerancia. *Informe Raxen 39* (Madrid, September 2008) 46 ff.

32 Unfavorable Views of Jews and Muslims on the Increase in Europe <http://pewglobal.org/reports/cache.php?ReportID=262>, 17.09.08, last accessed 24.11.2009.

Alianza Nacional at a Demonstration on February 13, 2009 in Dresden: “You may destroy the walls but never the hearts”.



Internet platform *European National Front*<sup>33</sup>. NPD representatives travel regularly to Madrid for the memorial ceremonies around 20 November, and Spanish neo-Nazis to demonstrations and conferences abroad. In Germany, some of the Spaniards sentenced in the H&M trial took part in the Hees March in Wunsiedel in 2004, representatives of AN were present at an attempted procession by right-wing extremists in Dresden in February 2009, and members of *FE/La Falange* travelled to the neo-Nazi march in Berlin on 1 May 2010.

It is notable that in recent years the leadership echelons of right-wing populist and neo-Nazi parties have increasingly concentrated on international networking. In November 2009, NPD chairman Udo Voigt dined in Madrid with leading activists from *España 2000*, FN and MSR. That same weekend, a public meeting was held in a Madrid hotel with Manuel

33 Grumke, Thomas. “Die transnationale Infrastruktur der extremistischen Rechten.” *Europa im Visier der Rechtsextremen*, ed. Angelika Beer (Berlin: Die Grünen/Europäische Allianz im Europäischen Parlament, 2009) 15.

Canduela from *Democracia Nacional*, Roberto Fiore from the Italian party *Fuorza Nuova* and Nick Griffin from the *British National Party*; MSR members broke up the meeting. DN has been a member of the *European platform Euronat* since 2005, and evidently in fairly close contact with the *European National Movement* (ENB) founded in Budapest in October 2009.<sup>34</sup> In 2008 the DN chairman travelled to the Anti-Islam Congress organized by *Pro Cologne*, which was shut down by counter-demonstrations. In spring 2010 PxC representatives participated in the Anti-Minaret Conference in Gelsenkirchen; shortly afterwards Josep Anglada made agreements with the FPÖ in Vienna, and it was reported that he was hoping for support from the *Lega Nord*, *Front National* and the Swedish multi-millionaire Patrick Brinkmann.<sup>35</sup> The expansion of international contacts with a view to logistic and political support is undoubtedly very important for Spain's right-wing extremists. The increased activity in this area indicates that these contacts will be significantly expanded in the coming years.

## Conclusions

To date, Spain's far right is barely represented at the parliamentary level and this is unlikely to change quickly in the near future – aside from possible regional success for right-wing populists in the Catalonian elections and local elections. However, we should reflect that there are various underlying causes influencing the present weakness of the extreme-right-wing party spectrum, and these causes are susceptible to change. They include lack of adequate staff and internal quarrels. We can

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34 Eurorex.info. "Europa: Rechtsextremes Netzwerk in Budapest gegründet." <http://www.eurorex.info/2009/10/24/europa-rechtsextremes-netzwerk-in-budapest-gegrundet/> last accessed 24.11.2009.

35 Fernandez, David. "Ultras Europeos financian la Lista de Plataforma de Catalunya." *diagonalperiodico.net*, 23.04.2010, last accessed 06.07.10; and Cantarero, Joan and Gayo, Alberto "Los que pagan a los Ultras españoles." *interview.es*, 10.05.2010.

also assume that right-wing voters are committed to the mainstream party *Partido Popular* as the strongest parliamentary force on the right. These, and other factors, could conceal the real potential of extreme-right-wing and racist political concepts. Recent research shows the existence of corresponding attitude patterns in the population.

The greatest threat at the moment certainly comes from the right-wing populist spectrum in all its dimensions. With its hostility to Islam and its covert and open racist political concepts it could connect up with these attitude patterns.

The parties and organizations from the nostalgic groups oriented towards Franco, and those from the Falange spectrum, are not politically relevant factors in present-day Spain. We can assume that their significance will continue to diminish, especially as many of their members die off. However, there are repeatedly campaigns and issues which the Catholic spectrum in particular can take up, as shown by the mass demonstrations against abortion and homosexual marriage. In addition, newer parties like the MSR are perpetuating the concept of Falangism.

The parties and non-aligned organizations from the neo-Nazi and nationalist revolutionary spectrum are developing a dangerous dynamic with their racist agitations and activities; up until now this has mainly been expressed through propaganda, various kinds of attacks, and exclusion.

It is necessary to make a clear analysis and definition of the forms in which right-wing extremism is manifested and to work for the consistent development and application of existing and new state and civil measures against them. To stem the tide of these phenomena that threaten democracy and to halt the increasing strategic interlinking on the international level, both inside Spain and beyond its borders, it is essential to improve exchange on the European level in relation to analysis, intervention and prevention.



## The radical right in Bulgaria: ATAKA – rise, fall and aftermath

### New phase: Nationalist and social demands

In view of how relations between ethnic Turks and Bulgarians developed in the wake of the changes after 1989, Bulgarians believe they are generally a very tolerant society. Bulgaria succeeded in developing a model very different from its close westerly neighbours, which experienced far greater tensions. Bulgaria was able to develop a very tolerant ethnic model, without real tension between Bulgarians and ethnic Turks. In view of historical relations and the fact that Bulgaria is a country not only of different ethnicities but also of different religions, with a large Muslim population, many observers, among them Western politicians and social scientists, followed these positive developments with interest.

Until 2005, almost 15 years after the post-Communist changes in Bulgaria, there was no party or significant political movement in the country that based its activity and ideology on hatred, exclusion, or non-acceptance of different population groups. Consequently, the first electoral success of the Ataka Party came as a major surprise to most Bulgarians. It is interesting to note that the main ideological points of the Ataka Party's political programme were a mixture of nationalist and social demands. Attempts are often made to generalise about the extreme-right wing in Europe, but in fact, the roots of the various far-right movements in different countries vary greatly. Maybe this differences partly explains why it is difficult to find a general response to these movements – it is not really possible to apply the same counter-actions in every country.



ATAKA  
emblem and map

## ATAKA: A project of ethnic aggression

In the Bulgarian case, there was a mixture of strong nationalist demands and an ideology based on the disappointment many people felt about the changes in Bulgaria. This was shown by the unexpected success of Ataka, whose rise – interestingly enough – began only around three weeks before the elections. No opinion poll managed to spot this trend from the start. It was only a week before the elections that several pollsters predicted for the first time that Ataka would succeed in entering parliament. It actually managed much more than that – it won more than 8 percent of the votes.



ATAKA protest in front  
of the Turkish embassy.  
ATAKA Poster:  
"136 years since the  
assassination of  
Vassil Levski by the  
Turkish spawn".



This was something of a shock for the democratic parties in Bulgaria, firstly because it caught them all by surprise. Secondly, the language Ataka introduced into Bulgarian politics was shocking. Ataka has pioneered an aggressive manner of speech, especially in relation to Roma, homosexuals and politicians. Typical Ataka slogans involve assertions like: “All Roma are criminals”, “Homosexuals are sick”, and “Politicians grunt like pigs”. This is very brutal language, the like of which had not been seen in all the previous 15 years of Bulgarian democracy. Today the Bulgarian population is no longer shocked – it has become accustomed to this type of language. However, one effect of using such rough expressions to begin with was that it created the impression that Ataka and its leaders were the only ones who talked about reality, who spoke in a way that was understandable; that everybody else was lying, simply because they used over-polite language, whereas the leaders of Ataka alone were sincere towards the public.

This kind of behaviour, which became much more evident after Ataka entered parliament, succeeding in gaining ever wider influence. The party leader Volen Siderov came second in the first round of the presidential elections in 2006, a situation very similar to that in France when Jean-Marie Le Pen was able to reach the second round of the presidential elections. In Bulgaria it was a clear sign that the traditional parties, not only the right-wing but also the left-wing parties, failed to counter the Ataka movement directly and effectively.

Fortunately, Ataka’s influence has remained on the margins, reaching around 8-9 percent of the electorate. One reason for this was the major internal conflicts within the party: there were serious tensions, both personal and political, because of the way the party operated – similarly to any party of this kind. The actual influence of the party has always been largely based on the popularity of its leader, Volen Siderov. Without him, Ataka would be considerably weaker. Siderov belonged to the democratic forces in the early years after the post-Communist changes, until he

**Electoral results of the major political parties in Bulgaria  
(Parliamentary elections 1990-2009, % of the valid votes)**

Table 1

Party	June 1990	Oct. 1991	Dec. 1994	April 1997	June 2001	June 2005	July 2009
Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) and electoral alliances	47.15	33.14	43.58	22.07	17.15	30.95	17.70
Union of Democratic Forces (SDS) and electoral alliances	36.20	34.36	24.17	52.26	18.18	7.68	6.76
Bulgarian Agrarian People's Union (BZNS)	8.0	3.9	-	-	-	-	-
Movement for Rights and Liberties (DPS)	6.03	7.55	5.43	7.60	7.45	12.81	14.50
National Movement Simeon II (NDSV, NMSP)	-	-	-	-	42.74	19.88	3.02
Ataka	-	-	-	-	-	8.14	9.36
Democrats for Strong Bulgaria (DSB)	-	-	-	-	-	6.44	-
Bulgarian National Union Alliance (BNS)	-	-	-	-	-	5.19	-
Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria (GERB)	-	-	-	-	-	-	39.70
Order, Legality and Justice	-	-	-	-	-	-	4.13

launched the Ataka party. His current political behaviour totally contradicts what he stood for in the early 1990s.

The following Table 2 shows which groups were particularly attracted by the party and its leader in the parliamentary elections in 2009. Briefly summarized, the voters for Ataka were overrepresented among the male Bulgarians older than 61 years of age. They were underrepresented in Sofia, among the voters having higher education, among the women and among the voters of Turkish and Roma ethnic origin.

The Ataka Party has also been able to play a relatively important role on the European level since the first elections for the European Parliament in Bulgaria. The Ataka Party gained three seats out of a total of 18, and

Votes for Ataka (in %)<sup>3</sup>

Table 2

a) By type of settlement

Sofia	Regional Town	Small Town	Village
4.7	10.0	10.0	10.0

b) By age

18-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61+
8.7	7.7	8.6	9.3	11.5

c) By education

Higher/University	High School	Primary and Lower
6.2	10.9	10.0

d) By gender

Male	Female
11.8	7.0

e) By ethnic group

Bulgarian	Turk	Roma	Other
10.7	0.8	1.7	7.8

was a founding member of the parliamentary group, “Identity, Tradition, Sovereignty” in the European Parliament. Today, Ataka holds two of Bulgaria’s 17 MEP seats in the European Parliament.

## Alliance with a TV station

Another reason for Ataka’s success is that it had the backing of one particular TV station from the earliest days of the party. Indeed, the party’s popularity has been closely linked to the success of this TV station. Here we see an example of the power of the media in Bulgaria: this touches on the issue of media freedom and the extent of this freedom in relation to the dissemination of Ataka’s particular kind of attitude, language and ideas. The TV station in question is a cable channel with a fairly extensive network. In the electoral district where I was first elected as a Mem-

ber of Parliament, for example – this was in 2005 – this channel had widespread coverage in part of the region. To estimate its influence, it makes sense to examine two neighbouring villages. One of the villages could receive this TV station, while the neighbouring village could not. When the election results were announced, it was evident that in the village which received this TV channel there was a high percentage of votes for Ataka – as much as 15 to 20 percent. The neighbouring village recorded just a few isolated votes for the party. This example shows the interrelation between the media and an extreme-right-wing party, and demonstrates its powerful effect in those elections in particular.

## **Overall impact of the extreme right on government and society**

Another issue that is certainly important in many countries is the link between the extreme-right and populist right-wing movements. Here you can see very clearly that both types of movement cover a certain sector of the electorate that sometimes votes for the populist right wing, and sometimes for the extreme right. This interaction is evident in many other countries as well. In the specific case of Bulgaria, the far-right party, Ataka, is officially not in the government, and not in a formal coalition with the party in power – yet they maintain that they fully support the government and are actually part of the ruling majority without officially being in the coalition. This is a new development which implies that the party is able to play its own role in the national parliament. While it is not part of the government, it still fully supports it. The party therefore exerts influence on current governmental affairs, but can also act visibly and assertively in the public arena. As a result, this extreme-right party has been able to influence political life as a whole in Bulgaria since 2005. This is not just in the past: Ataka still has an influence on policy and it will now be difficult to reverse this completely. However, as a result of its support of the government Ataka ceased to be the only and

genuine opposition to “the system” in the eyes of its voters and is progressively losing support. Such a trend is not a surprise and reflects similar developments in other countries – once they become a parliamentary force and particularly when they take governmental positions, such parties are not able to implement in practice their easy answers to difficult questions, and this has a lethal impact on them.

Volen Siderov  
formally backs  
the future  
government of  
Boyko Borisov  
and his party  
(July 2009)



Regarding the use of aggressive speech, it is interesting to note that after this style of language was introduced by this extreme-right-wing party, political discourse has never returned to normal. The present governing party in Bulgaria, GERB, is a member of the European People’s Party (the centre-right grouping in the European Parliament – *ed. note*), yet the leader of this governing party and Prime Minister Borisov uses a similar kind of aggressive speech himself. In fact, his way of speaking closely resembles the brutal mode of expression first introduced by Siderov, the extreme-right-wing leader of Ataka. This is another reason for the dissolving support for Siderov – there is a new hero in political life and Ataka’s more moderate supporters are simply shifting their backing to Borisov. Ataka is fading out, but the scars will remain on Bulgaria’s political system.



Invenier:

Participants:

Key messages:

→ we need better documentation  
of results

# Identity and bigotry: Nationalist populism and the extreme right in contemporary Poland

## National identity

Polish national identity oscillates between the opposing alternatives of inclusion and exclusion. On the one hand, the 1997 Polish Constitution and the bulk of legislation affirm equal rights for all citizens, irrespective of ethnicity or religion. On the other, there have been reports of Polish state agencies informally applying the test of religious identity. For example, there are cases of people applying for official status as certified Poles in the territories of the former Soviet Union being asked to recite Catholic prayers to prove their affiliation to Polish culture, or being required to demonstrate detailed knowledge of Catholic holidays and the biography of Pope John Paul II.<sup>1</sup>

## 'Polish means Catholic'

"Polish identity has always been associated with the Church, and the language of conversation with God has been Polish." This statement was made by Alicja Grześkowiak, the Speaker of the Polish Senate, in an official speech about Polish exiles in Kazakhstan.<sup>2</sup> This quasi-official perspective on national identity might be seen as a symbolic triumph for the idea of the 'Catholic Pole'. The exclusionary notion of the 'Catholic Pole' was the backbone of the political ideology of Roman Dmowski, the founder of the pre-war National Democratic movement.

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- 1 Kowalczyk, B. *Nie wiesz, od kiedy JP II był papieżem, nie będziesz Polakiem* <[http://www.pardon.pl/artykul/6858/nie\\_wiesz\\_od\\_kiedy\\_jp\\_ii\\_byl\\_papiezem\\_nie\\_bedziesz\\_polakiem](http://www.pardon.pl/artykul/6858/nie_wiesz_od_kiedy_jp_ii_byl_papiezem_nie_bedziesz_polakiem)> accessed 16 November 2008.
  - 2 "Kronika senacka." *Diariusz Senatu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej* 47 (5 October 1999). <<http://www.senat.gov.pl/K4/DOK/DIAR/47/4707.htm>> accessed 20 August 2008.

On 7 January 1999, a resolution in the Polish parliament extolling Dmowski's political heritage was carried by a vast majority (311 votes for, 35 against, 54 abstentions). The resolution made no mention of anti-Semitism or any other controversial issues that might have tainted the idealised image of the nationalist leader. Even more significantly, representatives of all parliamentary factions, including the centrist and left-wing parties, seconded the resolution. Józef Oleksy, a former prime minister and a key leader of the post-communist Social Democrats, spoke in favour of the resolution. Oleksy emphasised that he represented the collective view of his party.<sup>3</sup> This incident reflected the weakness – in fact, the absence – of the Polish Social Democrats' own historical narrative. They even went so far as to accept Dmowski's exclusionary ethno-religious definition of Polish identity.

Meanwhile, social protest has frequently been expressed through radical-right and nationalist rhetoric.<sup>4</sup> For example, Zygmunt Wrzodak, leader of the Solidarity trade union, framed the social conflict radically in terms of identity:

*“We are witnessing a great battle for Poland. The united forces of the left are fighting fiercely against the Catholic Polish nation. The nihilists' aim is to eliminate our pride and national aspirations from the hearts and minds of Poles. Our fatherland was born of holy baptism, our understanding of Polishness is permanently linked with our Catholic faith. This is why the mighty forces of red evil that are trying to destroy Poland and the Poles attack our Church and holy faith.”<sup>5</sup>*

Wrzodak went on to become a key leader of the *Liga Polskich Rodzin* (*League of Polish Families* – LPR) and was elected to parliament on the LPR ticket in 2001, and again in 2005.

3 Pankowski, R. “Sejm mówi ‘tak’.” *Nigdy więcej* 10 (1999).

4 Ost, D. “The Radical Right in Poland: Rationality of the Irrational.” *The Radical Right in Central and Eastern Europe Since 1989* ed. Ramet, S. P. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999) 106.

5 Wrzodak, Z. *Wrzodak* (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Wers, 1997) 5.



## The National Rebirth of Poland (NOP): Violence and the swastika – no anathema for the right

Violent extreme-right groups have benefited from similar rhetoric. The most notable is the *National Rebirth of Poland* (*Narodowe Odrodzenie Polski* – NOP), which has been one of the most dynamic extreme-right organizations active on the street and in the youth scene since the late 1990s.<sup>6</sup> At that time it began to infiltrate skinhead groups, inciting them to attack political enemies. The NOP recruited several hundred activists throughout Poland; in 1999 Szymon Rudnicki quoted estimates of 1000–1500 members,<sup>7</sup> mostly from the Nazi skinhead scene. The majority of members were in their twenties, and included both young working-class males and university students. The organization often recruited its members at football stadiums. The NOP drew its strength from the anti-Semitic culture that came to dominate many sports stadiums in Poland, with rival gangs routinely labelling each other's clubs 'Jewish' as a term of abuse. Many NOP activities took place on the street, frequently resulting in violence and physical attacks on alleged enemies of the movement.<sup>8</sup>

The NOP adopted a fascist-style symbol, 'the hand with the sword', also known as the 'Phalange'. The NOP announced its main programmatic goal to be 'national revolution', implying a violent seizure of power. According to one programmatic statement, the national radical takeover "will be violent – you can expect blood".<sup>9</sup> The group promised the prohibition of any political organizations it deemed 'anti-national', including those who supported Polish membership in the EU and NATO. The party publication "Szczerbiec" suggested the use of guerrilla methods against NATO troops in Poland. It also called for Polish volunteers to fight on the

6 Pankowski, R. and Kornak, M. "Poland." *Racist Extremism in Central and Eastern Europe* ed. Cas Mudde (London-New York: Routledge, 2005) 161-163.

7 Rudnicki, S. "Nationalismus und Extremismus im Polen von heute und ihre historischen Wurzeln." *Transodra* 21 (November 2000) 17.

8 Kornak, M. *Brunatna Księga* (Warszawa: Collegium Civitas and Stowarzyszenie Nigdy Wiecej, 2009).

9 Sitnik, K. "Zasady Rewolucji Narodowej." *Szczerbiec* 11 (1994).

side of the Serbian military against NATO intervention.<sup>10</sup> In the late 1990s the NOP aroused attention for its specific focus on Holocaust denial. It published and distributed several books espousing so-called historical revisionism.

The NOP is officially registered as a political party and enjoys all the benefits of state support provided by the law on political parties, despite repeated calls from the general public and the media for it to be banned.

Most significantly, the NOP became the Polish branch of the *International Third Position* (ITP, later renamed *European National Front* – ENF), an international alliance of European neo-fascist organizations led by Roberto Fiore, the founder of its Italian wing, *Forza Nuova* (*New Force* – FN). According to an editorial in “Searchlight”, the international monthly magazine monitoring neo-fascism throughout Europe, “Of all the extra-parliamentary far-right extremists across Europe, it is the political soldiers of the FN and ITP that now pose the greatest danger”.<sup>11</sup> The NOP organized international ideological and paramilitary trainings for member groups of the ITP/ENF, including the German *Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands* (National Democratic Party – NPD). An NPD representative expressed his satisfaction that, “for the first time since 1936, German and Polish nationalists are sitting at the same table”. In a bid to relativise the war guilt of the Nazi Reich, he added that during the Second World War “both sides made mistakes”.<sup>12</sup> The NOP’s nationalist credibility was badly tarnished after the anti-fascist magazine “Nigdy Więcej” publicised this cooperation. The NOP subsequently fell out with the NPD over issues such as Polish control of former East German territories, and even went on to provoke a split in the ENF.<sup>13</sup>

According to its own statements, the NOP was an anti-Semitic and racist revolutionary group dedicated to violent overthrow of democracy and

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10 Pankowski, R. “Myślałem wtedy: Dawniej Polacy walczyli w zbrojach, dzisiaj walczą w gładach – wywiad z Pawłem Bolkiem.” *Nigdy Więcej* 17 (2009).

11 “Editorial.” *Searchlight* (January 2000).

12 Pankowski, R. “NOP, patrioci i folksdojczce.” *Nigdy Więcej* 12 (2000/2001).

13 Mieśnik, P. “Oni już tu są!” *Trybuna* (21 September 2006).

prone to political violence in its everyday activities. Despite this, it had links to the political mainstream. The example of the NOP could be read as an early sign that even the most radical expression of revolutionary nationalism was no anathema for the Polish right. For instance, Michał Kamiński, an NOP member in 1989–90, later became a mainstream right-wing activist known for his unabashed use of the slogan “Poland for the Polish” while campaigning in the ethnically diverse Białystok region. He gained further notoriety for his trip to London to pay homage to Augusto Pinochet when the latter was being held in custody there. Kamiński later became an MP and then MEP for *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość* (Law and Justice – PiS), and finally, in 2009, chairman of the European Conservatives and Reformists Group in the European Parliament.

## The new millennium: The rise of the extreme right as a political force

The Polish extreme right was almost completely insignificant in the mainstream political arena until 2001. By that time, however, it had developed sizeable cultural bases and pockets of social legitimacy that could be used to build political organizations. These cultural resources proved very useful in allowing nationalist populism to enter the political mainstream in 2001, when it won its first parliamentary seats, and even more profoundly in 2005 when it came to dominate the Polish political landscape.

## Radio Maryja: Creating a broader movement

The Catholic-nationalist *Radio Maryja* was created by Father Tadeusz Rydzyk, a member of the Redemptorist order. A nationwide broadcasting licence enabled it to reach an audience of millions, making it one of the largest national media outlets. Most of them were elderly pensioners, many of them living in the countryside. In addition to being a platform for religious messages, *Radio Maryja* established itself as an important political force with a clear xenophobic and anti-Semitic agenda. Since its inception, *Radio Maryja* has propagated a narrative based on nationalist

extremism, anti-Semitism and conspiracy theory, both coded and open. According to one assessment, “Anti-Semitic content broadcast on *Radio Maryja* includes ugly stereotyping, conspiracy theories, claims that Jews were responsible for communist-era repression and accusations that Jews are using the Holocaust as leverage for compensation payments from Poland.”<sup>14</sup> *Radio Maryja* directly supported a variety of extreme-right groups, and this support culminated in calls to vote for the *League of Polish Families* in 2001 and, since 2005, for Law and Justice. On another level, its role was equally important in terms of agenda setting, i.e., legitimising the extreme-right discourse on various issues and disseminating it widely.

*Radio Maryja* empowered for the extreme right in Poland. It provided an invaluable outlet for the movement to express itself, as well as a forum for internal and external communication and a space for mobilising cultural resources. Ultimately it achieved a watershed in creating the culture of a broader movement. Led by the charismatic Father Rydzyk, *Radio Maryja* has eventually become a genuine social movement in its own right, with a powerful political influence. *Radio Maryja*'s rise to prominence within the Church has been similar in character. It has risen from a relatively marginal position to become a leading voice in the Polish Catholic Church.

## Polish politics – Tabloid-style

A further cultural change occurred up to the mid-2000s and has undoubtedly influenced the outcome of political events. Due to increasing competition in the media market, a qualitatively new format for mass communication emerged in Poland in the form of the tabloid press. The appearance of “Fakt”, a daily newspaper owned by the Axel Springer Corporation and modelled on its German counterpart “Bild”, altered the media landscape. “Fakt” rapidly became Poland’s biggest-selling paper. Interestingly, although it is German-owned, “Fakt” had no compunction

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14 Anti-Defamation League. *Poland: Democracy and the Challenge of Extremism* (New York: Anti-Defamation League, 2006) 4.

about inciting nationalist, and especially anti-German, feeling. This simplified, aggressive journalistic style has since been described as the ‘tabloidisation’ of Polish politics. As Cas Mudde has pointed out, changing media landscapes have had an impact on the rise of populism across the Western world, not least due to increasing commercialization, “which has led to a struggle for readers and viewers and, consequently, a focus on the more extreme and scandalous aspects of politics.”<sup>15</sup> It has been argued that the tabloid-style coverage of politics was an important factor in the electoral success of the populist parties in 2005.

Electoral results of right-wing political parties (parliamentary elections)

Table 1

Year	2001	2005	2007	2009 (European Parliament election)
LPR	8.30 %	7.97 %	1.30 %	(as Libertas) 1.14 %
PiS	9.50 %	26.99 %	32.11 %	27.40 %
Self-Defence	10.50 %	11.41 %	1.53 %	1.46 %

## Extremists enter the political mainstream

Subsequently, two nationalist-populist parties, the *League of Polish Families* (LPR) and *Self-Defence*, entered a coalition government with the right-wing conservative Law and Justice Party. The final composition of the coalition was announced on 5 May 2006. *Self-Defence* leader Andrzej Lepper and LPR leader Roman Giertych became joint deputy prime ministers and ministers of agriculture and education respectively. *Self-Defence* members also received the housing and social policy portfolios, and the LPR was given the newly created Ministry of Maritime Economy, where the ministerial post went to 28-year old Rafał Wiechecki, an LPR youth activist with a record of football hooliganism. There was a widespread perception that extremists were entering the political mainstream.

<sup>15</sup> Mudde, C. “The Populist Zeitgeist.” *Government and Opposition* 39:4 (2004) 553.

It was Giertych's nomination as Minister of Education, however, which provoked the strongest protests. Ad hoc demonstrations were called and open letters protesting against the nomination gathered hundreds of thousands of signatories, including many members of the country's intellectual elite. In an interview following the extremist parties' official entry into the coalition, Prime Minister Marcinkiewicz, talking to a journalist from "Corriere della Sera", cited Austria's co-optation of the Freedom Party into the government, claiming it had helped to "civilise" that extremist party:

*"It is not the first time that parties with populist ideas have entered the government of a European country. I am thinking of Austria. Our situation is identical."*<sup>16</sup>

*Radio Maryja* provided the main symbolic framework for the coalition and Father Tadeusz Rydzyk was instrumental in bringing the partners together. By 2006, the PiS-LPR-*Self-Defence* coalition was able to appear as a natural reflection of ideological convergence. It was arguably no longer an issue of two extremist parties entering a coalition with a mainstream democratic party, but rather of three parties of different shades of nationalist populism joining forces for a shared vision of a radical anti-liberal transformation. The PiS-LPR-*Self-Defence* coalition lasted barely more than a year, until the summer of 2007. During this brief period it did not fundamentally change the country's outlook. For example, it did not command enough votes in parliament to effect constitutional change. Much of its time in office was occupied with internal tensions and conflicts that eventually led to its downfall.

Nevertheless, the Kaczyński government left its mark on Poland. Its immediate effect can be observed in the rhetorical climate it created, rather than in any actual policies or institutional changes it succeeded in introducing. In his capacity as prime minister and PiS leader, Jarosław Kaczyński

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16 "Wywiad z premierem Kazimierzem Marcinkiewiczem w 'Corriere della Sera'" (14 June 2006). Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, <<http://www.msz.gov.pl/Wywiad,z,premierem,Kazimierzem,Marcinkiewiczem,w,Corriere,della,Sera,6441.html>> accessed 28 January 2009.

made it clear he identified with the version of Polish identity promoted by *Radio Maryja*. The kind of intimacy that existed between the country's leadership and the social movement fostered by *Radio Maryja* was unprecedented. During this period *Radio Maryja* did nothing to tone down its radical nationalist and – particularly – anti-Semitic ideology. For example, on 27 March 2006, *Radio Maryja*'s regular commentator, Stanisław Michalkiewicz, who had been an LPR parliamentary candidate, read out a vehemently anti-Semitic speech on air that included the following statement:

*“We have had Jews making scenes in Auschwitz concentration camp, the exaggeration of the incident in Jedwabne and now the preparations for the propaganda event in Kielce to commemorate the anniversary of the so-called ‘pogrom’. (...) The US press [is] controlled by the Holocaust industry (...). ‘Tolerance’ means, in fact, accepting the Jewish point of view, while ‘dialogue’ means indulging every whim of the Holocaust industry. ‘Gazeta Wyborcza’ plays a crucial role in this process of taming – it is a unique example of the Jewish fifth column in Poland. (...) the managers of the Holocaust industry are trying to extort dollars from the Polish state.”<sup>17</sup>*

One of the earliest decisions of the PiS in power was to abolish the government commissioner for equal rights for men and women – an authority that had overseen state anti-discrimination policies in various fields, including ethnicity, race and sexual orientation. The move was in clear contradiction to obligations imposed by the European Union Race Equality Directive.<sup>18</sup>

The contents of Polish foreign policy changed as well: bombastic anti-Russian and anti-German attitudes became the rule, accompanied by a

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17 Michalkiewicz, S. *Full Text of Radio Maryja March Radio Broadcast*, European Jewish Congress website (2004) <[http://www.eurojewcong.org/ejc/news.php?id\\_article=538](http://www.eurojewcong.org/ejc/news.php?id_article=538)> accessed 28 January 2009.

18 Vermeersch, P. “Ethnic Minority Protection and Anti-discrimination in Central Europe Before and After EU Accession: the Case of Poland.” *Journal on Ethnopolitics and Minority Issues in Europe* 1 (2007).



Never Again Association protests against right-wing extremism and racism: “No more Nazism on Allegro”. Allegro is the biggest Internet sales company in East-Central Europe and often used by neo-Nazis.

staunch pro-American position on issues such as the continuing war in Iraq. Significantly, Mariusz Muszyński, a notorious anti-German right-wing publicist, became the government’s official plenipotentiary for relations with Germany. In a widely reported gesture, President Kaczyński cancelled his participation in a Polish-German-French summit after a satirical article in the German left-wing daily “Tageszeitung” likened him to a potato.<sup>19</sup> The Polish public prosecutor even launched a formal investigation into the newspaper’s alleged defamation of the president.<sup>20</sup>

Another disturbing feature of the government’s policy was the wide recruitment of members of right-wing extremist organizations into the administration, including top positions in various civil service spheres and state-controlled sectors of the economy. This occurred on such a scale that it went beyond isolated cases and began to assume systemic dimen-

19 Smith, C. G. “Poles Fear Political Twins Will Double Drift to the Right.” *New York Times* (19 July 2006)

<<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/07/19/world/europe/19poland.html>> accessed 29 January 2009.

20 Agence France Press. “Poland: ‘Potato’ Case Dropped.” *New York Times* (19 July 2006)

<<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9C03E3DE1131F93BA35751C1A9619C8B63>> accessed 29 January 2009.



sions. In many cases it involved young, highly inexperienced individuals whose main claim to fame had been as leaders of skinhead groups or publishers of extremist fanzines.<sup>21</sup>

The government's educational policy became, predictably, another field of huge public controversy. One of Giertych's first steps as education minister was the sacking of the director of a national teacher training centre for publishing the Polish edition of "Compass", a human rights manual published by the Council of Europe, because it contained a section on homophobia. Giertych repeatedly vowed not to allow any kind of "promotion of homosexuality" in schools under his control, and even proposed making this a specific criminal offence.<sup>22</sup> In fact, politicised homophobia was not confined to the LPR, but also very much in evidence in the discourse of the PiS. To quote Prime Minister Kaczyński:

*"I guarantee that if a member of the PiS were to become Minister of Education, he would take the same position as Giertych. (...) I want to make it clear – I am also against the promotion of homosexuality in schools. (...) I don't see any reason to support the fashion for promoting homosexuality."<sup>23</sup>*

The Polish delegation led by Giertych refused to sign a joint declaration by all the Council of Europe's education ministers encouraging common approaches to teaching history. Giertych was reported as saying, "There is no agreement with [the Council of Europe's] interference in our teaching of history and religion."<sup>24</sup> At a meeting of EU education ministers in Heidelberg, Germany, in March 2007, Giertych shocked his European counterparts by calling for an introduction of a pan-European 'Charter of the Rights of Nations', which would include a complete ban on abortion

21 Kornak, M. "Młodzież Wszechpolska u władzy." *Nigdy Więcej* 15 (2006).

22 Amnesty International. Poland: *School bill would violate students' and teachers' rights and reinforce homophobia* (20 March 2007) <<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/EUR37/001/2007/en/dom-EUR370012007en.html>> accessed 29 January 2009.

23 Janecki, S., Kania, D., and Dzierżanowski M. "Nie mam konta." *Wprost* 20 (2007).

24 "Historia tylko nasza". *Monitor Edukacji* (6 May 2007) <<http://www.monitor.edu.pl/newsy/historia-tylko-nasza.html>> accessed 27 January 2009.

and ‘homosexual propaganda’. A Kaczyński government spokesman subsequently had to explain that this particular proposal by Giertych was not an official position of the Polish cabinet – but Giertych nevertheless retained his ministerial post.<sup>25</sup>

Giertych provoked yet another barrage of criticism after he announced his decision to change the required reading list for school pupils. Works by foreign authors such as Kafka, Goethe and Dostoyevsky, as well as ‘unpatriotic’ Polish authors including Witold Gombrowicz, Bruno Schulz, Stanisław Witkiewicz and Joseph Conrad, were to be removed from the curriculum.<sup>26</sup> Giertych’s position was reinforced by Ewa Sowińska’s appointment by parliament as official spokesperson for children’s rights, a constitutional post established in the 1990s to safeguard human rights for children and youth. An LPR activist and *Radio Maryja* protégée, Sowińska achieved international notoriety for supporting the demand to scrutinise the popular children’s TV series “Teletubbies” to determine whether it promoted homosexuality.<sup>27</sup>

### The reaction of democratic players: The end of the extreme right in power

Demonstrations by students and teachers, along with other forms of protest against Giertych’s policies, were a common feature during the Kaczyński government. Opposition formations included a coalition of civic groups under the banner “Giertych Musi Odejść” (Giertych Must Go! – GMO). In addition, the media constantly published highly damaging information on the neo-Nazi connections and behaviour of members of the LPR, which attracted increasing public attention because these activities now involved the inner circle of a ruling party.<sup>28</sup> Public indifference to the issue of extreme-right infiltration into political life seemed to be reaching an end, or at least diminishing.

25 “Education Minister’s ‘scandalous’ address at EU meeting.” *Warsaw Business Journal* (5 March 2007).

26 Pezda, A. “Na indeksie Giertycha.” *Gazeta Wyborcza* (31 May 2007).

27 Dzierżanowski, M. and Nowicka, K. “Sowińska: sprawdzimy, czy teletubisie nie promują homoseksualizmu”. *Wprost* (27 May 2007).

28 A selection of quotes can be found in “Z prasy.” *Nigdy Więcej* 16 (2008).

Mass emigration, especially of educated young people, coincided with the PiS-led government. In the period 2004–2007 it was estimated that over a million people left Poland for other countries such as the UK and Ireland. According to official statistics, 2.27 million Polish citizens were living abroad by 2007.<sup>29</sup> The main reason for this massive migration was the high unemployment rate, which later fell from around 18 percent of the workforce in 2006 to 11 percent in 2008;<sup>30</sup> other reasons mentioned included dissatisfaction with the general direction of the country. For some groups, such as gay people, emigration was a way to break out of a climate of intolerance that found its official expression in the homophobic policies under the Kaczyński administration.<sup>31</sup> Emigration was a demonstrative form of protest, but it also weakened the home-grown opposition to nationalist-populist authority. It looked as if the PiS's grip on power was firmly consolidated, and even some of its critics predicted two full terms under Kaczyński's rule, especially as the economic situation was seen to be improving – not least thanks to the generous injection of EU funds.

However, history took a very different course. The Kaczyński government collapsed much sooner than expected. An early election called on 21 October 2007 resulted in a surprising defeat for the populist right and a resounding victory for the liberal democratic opposition. In this emotionally charged election, the PO received 41.5 percent of the vote compared to only 32.1 percent for the PiS. The once-mighty LPR with its bloc of several far-right allies received only 1.3 percent and failed to win a single seat in parliament. *Self-Defence* fared equally badly, with 1.5 percent. The poor results for the LPR and *Self-Defence* meant that they even failed to qualify for state funding, which is reserved for parties that win at least 3 percent of the vote.

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29 Główny Urząd Statystyczny. *Informacja o rozmiarach i kierunkach emigracji z Polski w latach 2004 – 2007* <[http://www.stat.gov.pl/cps/rde/xbcr/gus/PUBL\\_Informacja\\_o\\_rozmiarach\\_i\\_kierunk\\_emigra\\_z\\_Polski\\_w\\_latach\\_2004\\_2007.pdf](http://www.stat.gov.pl/cps/rde/xbcr/gus/PUBL_Informacja_o_rozmiarach_i_kierunk_emigra_z_Polski_w_latach_2004_2007.pdf)> accessed 29 January 2009.

30 Macierewicz, P. "Polska przestała być liderem bezrobocia." *Gazeta Wyborcza* (2 March 2008).

31 Graham, C. "Gay Poles head for UK to escape state crackdown." *The Observer* (1 July 2007).

Mass mobilisation of young voters in particular was the key to the government's defeat. There was a widespread sense of urgency, and as the results came in the country's youth exploded in celebration. In the words of a British observer, Poles were "celebrating the demise of the two-year experiment in isolationism, nationalism, and intolerance."<sup>32</sup> This did not result, however, in the extreme right completely disappearing from the parliamentary landscape. A number of activists known for their far-right attitudes were elected on the PiS ticket, which again derived a large part of its support from its strategic alliance with *Radio Maryja*.

Although the dynamic of internal conflict was the immediate cause of the government's collapse, other factors contributed to its subsequent electoral defeat. The increasingly critical stance of the independent media and the mobilisation of civil society were hugely important in denying social respectability to nationalist ideology. Parallel to the rise of the extreme right, the anti-fascist and anti-discrimination movement had been building up its own cultural resources since the mid-1990s, with its own sources of legitimacy and its own support bases in vital cultural circuits such as popular music. The successful campaign Music Against Racism, is a prime example.<sup>33</sup> As a result, the extreme right was confronted with a powerful and variegated counter-movement.

## Conclusion and further discussion

In 2007 the forces of the liberal opposition managed to break through the political apathy that had previously been predominant in Polish society – at least to some extent. Donald Tusk, the leader of the opposition, inspired voters with his positive message of 'the politics of love' as a symbolic alternative to the politics of hate propagated by the alliance of the PiS, LPR and *Self-Defence* in the final days of the campaign.

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32 Traynor, I. "Poland rejects populism and xenophobia in favour of pro-Europe liberal conservatives." *The Guardian* (23 October 2007).

33 Pankowski, R. "Muzyka przeciwko rasizmowi." *Kultura w procesie zmiany. Z badań nad kulturą w Polsce lat dziewięćdziesiątych* ed. Jawłowska, A. and Woroniecka G. (Olsztyn: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warmińsko-Mazurskiego, 2003); Kornak, M. "Muzyka przeciwko rasizmowi." *Lewą nogą* 12 (2000).

It is noteworthy that solidarity from abroad played a relatively negligible role in the victory of democratic politics over the extreme right in Poland. In fact, opposition largely came from young people, civic organizations and the country's media. On this occasion, international reactions to the extreme-right's participation in the government of an EU member state were extremely low-key, particularly compared to the EU's response when Jörg Haider's *Freedom Party* entered the Austrian government in 2000.

In 2010 both the LPR and *Self-Defence* were still in existence as extra-parliamentary political parties. Nevertheless, the bulk of these parties' previous electoral support, and a large part of their former activist base, had found an enduring political home in Jarosław Kaczyński's Law and Justice party. *Radio Maryja* has continued to provide a symbolic framework for PiS political culture, and the party, once considered centrist, has established itself firmly at the far right end of the spectrum, with occasional forays into the political middle ground. The PiS absorbed the extreme right surge through its appeal to non-liberal democracy, and its position as the main opposition force against the liberal government remained unchallenged.

On 10 April 2010 Polish President Lech Kaczyński and his wife, with almost 100 members of the Polish political elite and other persons, died in a plane crash in Smolensk, Russia. Shortly before, support for Law and Justice had fallen to around 20 percent in the polls, and it was set to lose the forthcoming presidential election. After the tragic accident, however, PiS support rose again. Various conspiracy theories about the accident were circulated by far-right players, including *Radio Maryja*, which has remained closely linked with the PiS. There were fears of renewed social polarisation and a revived right-wing populist campaign in the wake of the presidential election of 20 June 2010, in which Lech Kaczyński's twin brother, Jarosław, ran for the presidency as a standard bearer for the hard right.



Pal Tamas

## The radical right in Hungary: A threat to democracy?

In terms of its language, ideological outlook, images of enemies, the terminology used by its leaders and its patterns of social perception, the Hungarian radical right is a movement strongly embedded in specific traditions. It has more historical roots than its critics are willing to admit.

### Evolution

The radical-right tradition played an important role in 20th-century Hungarian political history. Although not continuous in its physical or organizational forms and frameworks, it was rather organic, despite extended breaks in intensity and major ideological focuses. In the period from 1919 to 22, and again from 1944 to 45, it was a mainstream political and ideological force in the country and actively participated in government. All the main topics of the radical right emerged in those years: the isolation of Hungary in the region, the “injustice of Trianon” (the new borders established in the post-1918 period), political and economic anti-Semitism and the left as extra-national, excluded from the “national body”.

A well-known writer, Istvan Csurka, was responsible for the re-establishment of the radical right in Hungary after 1989. Csurka was then deputy chairman of the governing *Hungarian Democratic Forum*, but was expelled from the party due to nationalist radicalism and created his own movement, a political party (MIEP) and a monthly journal (“*Magyar Forum*”). In the 1998 elections MIEP received 248,000 votes and won seats in the Hungarian parliament. In 2002 it received only 243,000 votes and failed to cross the parliamentary threshold. In 2006 significant segments of the

radical vote went to *Fidesz*, while MIEP (in coalition with a new radical party, *Jobbik*) received only 119,000 votes. In political terms, at this time MIEP was a one-man show run by the aging Csurka. As he grew older, the party's influence and previously intense media presence declined. Meanwhile, the other radical-right party, *Jobbik*, set up by young university graduates, has been fairly successful. In 2009 it entered the European Parliament and in 2010 it won seats in the Hungarian Parliament as the third biggest party in numerical terms, with more than 700,000 votes totalling 12.18 percent of the vote. In the current parliament, *Jobbik* is in opposition, but it is close to the governing party, *Fidesz*, on many issues. However, the radical-right scene is rather fragmented: aside from the two parties mentioned above, there are a dozen smaller, but visible, independent groups competing for media attention and potential supporters.

## Ideological baggage

The main political themes of the period from the 1920s to the 1940s have remained dominant elements of today's radical right in Hungary. There is no genuine innovation – unless one regards the discovery of anti-Roma feeling for mobilising the masses as an innovation. However, the Roma population was much smaller before the Second World War than it is today, and demographic extrapolations were not as fashionable in the Carpathian Basin as they are now (at least in relation to the Roma population). In fact, old ideological baggage was reassembled in new organizational forms in the mid-1990s. Some of the most important elements of this process were:

- a. Preserving the way Hungarians felt about the world in the 1920s and early '30s. In this sense, though the Hungarian radical right was party to the pro-Hitler coalitions, it was not a simple reflection of them. The ideologies that could be seen as closely related to the more recent anti-immigrant, somewhat isolationist, European fears about living



space for Europeans are also merely incidental elements. Ultimately the radical right in Hungary represents a highly peculiar and wholly outmoded yet persistent fear originating from the 1920s, but without the specific social carriers of the original fear. Back in the 1920s, civil servants and army officers (though not only these groups, of course) were most directly affected by the collapse of the traditional Hungarian state. Some of them were also representatives of the national radical right, often in contrast to conservative officers and officials from that milieu. Today the same messages are being repeated by a radical right that is fundamentally different from that milieu in terms of social origin and labour market opportunities, in an international environment that is entirely different from that of the past.

- b. In the period from 1918 to 1919, disintegration was a fundamental experience for numerous groups in Hungarian society, even if they did not agree with the radical-right's interpretation of events. The system in power from 1919 to 1945 generally accepted only one of many possible interpretations: that of grievance. "A mutilated Hungary is no country at all" was the lament that children at school had to chant every day for decades. A more deeply analytical interpretation was simply out of the question. This was the dominant approach to every important issue. The radical right played a major role in 1919-1920 (its officer squadrons commanded or organized hangings and pogroms); but it was then practically forced out of power, partly under international pressure and partly out of consideration for good taste (aristocrats and survivors from the old elites also comprised the majority of the new elites). Nonetheless, a permeable border between the conservative right and radical right persisted in this first generation. Well-known politicians and public intellectuals crossed this borderline, switching directions depending on changes of era or major events. A less well-qualified, more plebeian branch of the radical right appeared towards the late 1930s, and the conservative elite made this branch rather unwelcome, mainly for social rather than ideological reasons.

- c. Essentially, a similar system was created when the political centre-right in Hungary reorganized in the second half of the 1990s. The “new” radical right was devoid of ideological innovations, and the clean slate introduced in 1945 had removed radical-right literature from circulation. Cautious anti-US campaigns, anti-globalisation slogans or EU scepticism are not among the prime ideas of the Hungarian radical right. It even has problems with leftovers from the past, as Hungarian proponents of the radical right could not rely on them as a system: a kind of new ideological system is being assembled from shreds of memories and scaremongering based on hearsay. Numerous groups hoped to continue where they had left off in 1944. Since there is a system of interconnected vessels in place, the sewage pouring out of the radical-right vessels is causing more serious ideological contamination throughout the system than the radical right in the old pipeline network back in the 1930s. Other analysts, however, disagree strongly with this viewpoint. They argue that Csurka learned a lot from Jean-Marie Le Pen about mixing leftist political interests with rightist ideologies, and during the past two years there have been a few – unsuccessful – attempts at a movement modelled on Sinn Féin. Moreover, 2008 saw the initial organization of some kind of “parallel Hungary” cells, which also ended in failure. What we witnessed was social demagogy similar to that of the Hungarian movements of the 1930s, even without Le Pen, and there was no sign of ideological innovation in the above organizational models – which, incidentally, also failed.
- d. Naturally, the radical right has an anti-communist dimension, but interestingly, it is not nearly as dominant as might be assumed. Besides, the most prominent representatives of anti-communism back in 1989 were not the national conservatives but the liberal dissidents (which explains why they lost the first free election after the system changes). The first radical-right formation to detach itself from the conservatives – István Csurka’s MIEP – was, perhaps, verbally confrontational, but by the time the radical right regrouped again in the 1990s it saw

its main enemies not as much in the pre-1989 system as in the liberal middle class that it regarded as the winners in the change of system. Even then, they were only able to apply ready-made ideological schemas and the only thing readily available was anti-Semitism, which they simply rehashed. This first generation of the radical-right initially proved to be a political failure with its ideology of “protecting the Hungarian nation against cosmopolitan Jews” – which the rightists considered very topical. This made no sense to people below the middle classes, or in small towns and villages (which were left in a kind of a ideological vacuum in political terms). With the entry of a new party, *Jobbik*, in the mid-2000s, the second wave of the radical right discovered the Roma issue as the major social topic for small towns and villages in Hungary. However, although the first generation of the radical right was relegated to the background, its themes were not abandoned.

## Public opinion

Many contemporary observers describe the radical right as a special sub-culture isolated from mainstream opinions and the institutions of the dominant political culture. However, in the case of the radical right in contemporary Hungary (as with many cases in other countries) this statement is simply not valid. In more general or more specific forms, the radical right expresses a concentration of views that already exist in the mainstream, and are present in fragments or more hidden forms. The Hungarian radical right is presently unable to generate original worldviews, concepts or cultural icons, but it can be quite effective in using available concepts and presenting them for public discussion. In a sense, its strength lies in agenda setting and proposing explanations of social problems, mostly for the poorly educated and frustrated segments of the population in times of crisis when the political order loses legitimacy. From the mid-2000s, support for the post-1989 order has been decisively weaker in Hungary than in the other new democracies of Eastern Europe.

In 2008 we developed an indicator system for monitoring the political radicalisation of Hungary. This system was used in 2008-2010 to study changes in public opinion. (It involves annual surveys with personal interviews in representative national samples of 1500 persons.) The three-part questionnaire investigates the popularity of cultural icons of the radical right (historical revisionism, anti-Semitism, anti-Roma attitudes, popularity of authoritarian political solutions, etc.), mapping perceptions about dynamics of national conflicts and investigating the society's current capacity for protest. The major conclusion is that radical-right opinions are obviously more pronounced on those issues, but do not show fundamental differences from mainstream views in their direction and form. This means that large sections of public opinion would not be prepared to accept the political programme of the radical right, but are not at all hostile to its arguments. In the given period, there was a growth in the level of support for the radical right (according to respondents' own definitions, from 1–7 on left-right axes).<sup>1</sup>

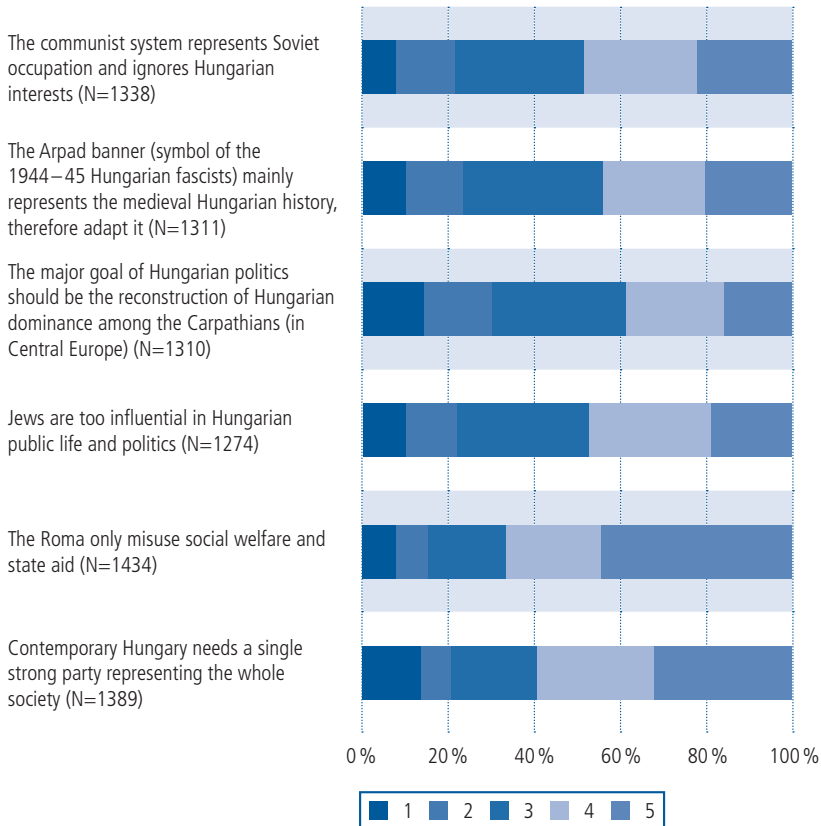
In Hungary in the period under study, the popularity of the democratic order in terms of crisis management was low, and its support continued to decline until early March 2010. The majority of the sample was prepared to support a one-party solution and the concept of a strong leader to solve the nation's problems.

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1 Data from surveys by the Institute of Sociology, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest.

Value statements in the Hungarian society, 2010

Fig. 2



Source: Data from surveys by the Institute of Sociology, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest.

Traditional elements of national radicalism remain popular for between one-third and one-fifth of the left (but are more vocally supported by the supporters of *Fidesz* and *Jobbik*). Ideas about Hungarian geopolitical dominance in the region and the popularity of the Arpad flag, the traditional insignia of the Hungarian fascists, are more typical right-wing attitudes, but do not simply separate the radical right from other segments of society. Negative stereotypes of Roma are widespread throughout Hungarian

society. A major difference between the left and the right can be discerned in the intensity of anti-Semitic opinions. The radical right is anti-Semitic in open, clearly defined forms without any linguistic codes, developed in the past few years among right-wing hardliners.

## Organizational structures

By the late 2000s, the system of the Hungarian radical right comprised three main elements:

- a. Firstly, the political parties of the radical right. There are currently two parties: MIEP from the 1990s, which we have referred to as a first-generation party (established in 1993), and *Jobbik*, established in 2003 and now the leading radical-right formation. According to typological analyses by political scientists, in Parliament these parties play the role of internally criticising democratic policy-making, or amplifying the radical external critique and rejecting the existing system. Likewise, they take up varying ideological issues and should accordingly be divided into different ideological sub-types, such as neo-fascist, religious, ultra-conservative, neo-populist, etc. Radical-right-wing parties in Hungary do not fit ideologically to these categories, and there are no signs of their undertaking any “internal reorganization” that would enable categorisation. In line with the above description of their historical evolution, it is certain that neither of the two radical-right Hungarian parties has adopted the option of religion (leaving aside some centre-right trends). However, some elements of the other trends can definitely be found in the parties and, in even more pronounced forms, in the underlying movements. During its single term in Parliament in the 1990s, MIEP generated no major scandals and since then it has realised that it will not succeed in entering Parliament again, but as a recognised political force it is entitled to certain state subsidies and – rather less frequently – to some media attention

as well. MIEP is well content with this: apparently it has no particular intention of conforming to any external model. The issue of “democratisation”, which is a necessary step towards entry into Parliament, seems to be more difficult for *Jobbik*. Some analyses already regard *Jobbik* as a democratic party by virtue of its successful participation in elections.<sup>2</sup> Given the party’s current state, we take a radically different view. *Jobbik*’s leaders, such as Gábor Vona, head of *Jobbik*, regularly make statements to a very wide public that democratic politicians would never make. Since the party was elected to Parliament, I regard parliament as containing non-democratic MPs.

- b. The second element – radical-right discourse – consists of politicians and politically active groups positioning themselves in the parliamentary system, not in a radical-right-wing party but in another political party (currently this means almost entirely on the right wing of *Fidesz*). Recent analyses of the Hungarian radical right even fail to take these groups and leaders into account. We will do so here without classifying *Fidesz* as a radical party. However, we know from a number of surveys that in 2008–2009 around a third of respondents who identified themselves in opinion polls as sympathisers of *Fidesz* were also attracted to various radical-right ideologies. As the only umbrella party for the centre-right, *Fidesz* had relied on their votes since 2002. Binding these voters to the party requires disseminating radical messages and the active involvement of genuine politicians. Today *Fidesz* has to compete for radical votes with *Jobbik* and perhaps with MIEP – this will probably lead to further escalation of extremist declarations.

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2 Republikon Intezet: “Fasiszta veszely”, vagy demokratikus radikalizmus? A *jobbik* programjanak elemzése [“Fascist danger” or democratic radicalism? On the political program of the *Jobbik* Party] (Budapest: Republikon 2009).

- c. The radical-right movement is rather fragmented in terms of ideology, culturally, and in the leadership techniques it employs. Researchers have been able to discover little about personal affiliations, cooperation between the three radical-right sectors, the flow of political resources or any possible distribution of operations. At the same time, the above-mentioned three sectors compete for subsidies, funds and various resources. Interviews and websites occasionally reveal details about tactical differences or personal conflicts, but we know almost nothing about the veracity of these morsels of information, however carefully they are garnered. No publicly available information can be found to reveal the nature of cooperation between the relevant organizations.

### Youth subculture

In the last 3–4 years, radical-right-wing groups have been re-established as part of youth subculture. Similar trends could be observed on the western European radical-right-wing scene. In Hungary, however, the roots of this trend are partly local. Even in the period of transition to democracy, Hungarian youth had a rather low level of interest in politics. The leaders back then were not the young, but people in their forties who entered politics or public life in or after 1968. In 1989–91 they entirely influenced the dominant cultural style and the media discourse of transformation; the generation in its twenties had no share in this. In the early or mid-1990s university reforms began, and student numbers started to rise dramatically. But the jobs available in the late 1990s did not correspond to the growing supply of graduates. Distrust in the transformation, in politics and in the dominant forms of public discourse among the young (and in some way educated) was an almost direct outcome of this disparity. The young became fundamentally alienated from politics, or the political forms developed by their elders.



The only exception was the campaign in 2002 by *Fidesz*, the right-wing governing party, to mobilise support from important urban youth groups. After the defeat of *Fidesz* at the general election, a relatively small but significant section of these young people became radicalised and established various websites, projects and networks for future activities. *Jobbik*, the new political party on the scene, initially emerged as a student organization. The structures it developed, with “patriotic rock bands”, youth camps and other projects, soon began to involve senior high school pupils and other non-student groups. This radical-right scene offered its members communal lifestyles, local solidarity cells and a feeling of belonging that is quite rare in contemporary student life.

### Ethnic tensions and manipulation of public attention

The traditional ethnic inclusion strategy of the Hungarian radical right after 1918 deployed different forms of anti-Semitism. In 1944-45 the Hungarian far right was very deeply involved in the Holocaust in the country. Major strands of anti-Semitism are also present, both historically and today, albeit in milder or merely symbolic forms, in ideologies of other, non-radical-right-wing milieus. Statements on this issue are often hidden, well “coded”, because the scene wants to avoid international scandals on this topic, but among the far right it remains a matter for emotional debates and calls for renewed exclusion. *Jobbik's* major political innovation has been to re-focus the ethnic agenda onto identity politics and to attempt to substitute the hostile image (or at least, the threat) of the Jew, for that of another ethnic group, the Roma. In today's Hungary, prejudices against Roma are more intense and acute than against Jews. At the same time, Roma are less visible and less readily defended by the international public than Jews since the Holocaust. The liberal code of political correctness in public speech after the changes of 1989 made it impossible for the political elites, both from the left and the right, to process the frequent conflicts on issues of Roma-Hungarian cohabitation which were very clearly evident in the public arena, although in sup-

pressed forms. *Jobbik* had almost no political competitors when it set the agenda publicly with its labelling of Roma as criminals. In October 2006 in the small town of Olaszliszka, local Roma lynched a Hungarian bystander whom they accused of being involved in a car accident. After this killing, despite grim forecasts of inter-ethnic conflicts, there was no formal revenge by the majority populace. However, the public arena was reshaped, with the Roma topic becoming a key issue in the national social and political debate. In August 2007 *Jobbik* established a paramilitary organization, the *Magyar Garda* (“Hungarian Guards”) ostensibly for “restoring public order” and “dealing with Roma crime”. The *Garda* became especially active in smaller villages with a mixed Hungarian and Roma population where political parties, and even governmental agencies, are not really present. Media focus on the *Garda* helped *Jobbik* to build a stronger presence in the national media. In 2009 the *Garda* was banned by court order, but re-established immediately by *Jobbik*. Following this, their paramilitary uniform was banned, but was displayed again in public when *Jobbik*’s leadership entered the Hungarian parliament in May 2010.

## Public image management

In the 1990s, MIEP used the most traditional forms of political communication and mobilisation: mass meetings (Csurka succeeded in gathering around 100,000 people at his annual rally in Heroes’ Square in Budapest), lengthy speeches, television as the major political medium, and long articles in the press. The radical scene of the 2000s employed shorter articles, networks to organize street actions, the Internet as the major channel for intra-group communication, shorter timelines for mobilisation, and the dominance of symbolic actions (i.e., attacks on the Soviet monument in Budapest). However, the major targets of this new far-right communication are not members of the far right but the national audience of broader news media (this has similarities with the media strategies of terrorists). In this way, relatively small and fragmented groups have established themselves as important political players with the general public.

Starting from the events of September-October 2006, radical-right-wingers have try to arrange violent illegal mass street incidents in Budapest twice or three times a year. Today there is a heated debate on the websites of radical groups about the effectiveness and impact of such actions. Whereas some people believe in the symbolic and media importance of these “revolutionary” events, more and more groups in this milieu see them as counterproductive, alienating the broader right wing from the movements. In fact, in 2008-9 such activities declined very sharply in terms of popularity and support, both in radical and more centrist right-wing milieus.

## Public perception of the radical-right scene

Broader social perceptions of the radical right and its public treatment in the last two decades can be divided into four phases. The agenda and rhetoric of these phases differ significantly.

**a. Gestation period up to autumn 2006:** In this phase, the public paid little attention to the radical right. Over time, the peculiar fervour with which left-liberal intellectuals reacted to the emergence of the radical right as represented by Csurka around 1992, the creation of the party's profile and rapid expansion of their weekly “Magyar Fórum”, largely subsided, at least superficially. From 1992 to 1996 this was still a significant issue in internal affairs, giving rise to an association of political parties and movements (such as Democratic Charta). Thousands – and on some occasions, tens of thousands – of intellectuals organized mass meetings, and to some extent laid the foundations for the left-liberal coalition government of 1994. Officially, the Charta was a civic movement. In reality it was run by the intellectual representatives of left-liberal parties, and its inner core certainly came from party politics. Although there were active opponents who rejected the various radical-right agendas, they rarely linked up and were by no means united in a definable movement: distinct groups addressed the issue of minorities and the Roma question, while others reacted vehemently to anti-Semitism. There were points of contact between these

groups. Their sympathisers numbered tens of thousands (with a much smaller highly active core for mobilisation). The small liberal parties were typically of an urban character, and more sensitive to human rights issues due to their experiences and relations with defectors from the period before 1989. Their sympathisers in Budapest included a relatively high proportion of people of Jewish origin who were especially sensitive to anti-Semitism. It was this political wing that was more concerned with an anti-fascist stance and with guaranteeing the protection of civil rights and minorities within the country (in Hungary the left was far less inclined to see this issue as requiring rapid and decisive action). In a certain sense, the Liberal Party considered and treated this issue as its own, and took care always to be the first to send the relevant messages to the media, to be the one to identify the genuine adversary, to determine whom to fight and whom to treat as merely “errant” people who happened to make a “mistake”. Many observers think that anti-fascist posing was part of this small party’s identity. The conservative right distanced itself from radicalism much more decisively than it did subsequently – it actually expelled Csurka from the party, which gave rise to the creation of a series of independent radical-right parties. However, they did not fight more vigorously because they assigned little significance to the far right. Meanwhile, on a social scale the pre-1945 rightist ideologies were actively reconstructed under the banner of doing historical justice to the nation; newspapers and periodicals were started and book publishing and distribution organized for the radical right without any systematic opposition. Opponents of the radical right occasionally pointed out conspicuous cases, but this remained intermittent. Criticism of the radical right was random, reactive and received with disinterest by the masses. During the Socialist government the core members of the Charta also calmed down and began to feel quite secure. At the end of the 1990s, conflicts with groups of Roma increased (but were only occasionally manifested in violent local action). However, they were not met with mass expressions of solidarity in support of non-Roma people.

**b. Between the movements of autumn 2006 and the establishment of the Magyar Gárda (“Hungarian Guard”):** In the autumn of 2006, the radical right took to the streets with violent mass demonstrations, serious street clashes, riots, and barricades. At the end of September, they temporarily occupied Hungary’s national TV station. The protest movement enjoyed the support of the entire right, and seemed to rely on it to get into full swing. It is still unclear whether it really aimed to overthrow the government or simply to blackmail it with the threat of an alternative. In the end, it opted for the latter, and subsequently a gap developed between the direct programme of the parliamentary right and the burgeoning movement supporting it. This was really the moment of birth for the radical right as it exists today. In the autumn of 2006, Csurka – heavily marginalised by then – played a more minor role in street mobilisations. The government and the police were assertive, the leftist-liberal press was outraged, and the parliamentary right openly supported the radicals in many respects, although it did not adopt its objectives. However, no counter-movements took root; there were no organized political counter-measures. There might have been individual ad-hoc objections, and debate was slowly beginning



Picture of the Hungarian Guard

on the possibilities of curbing hate speech. Solidarity with the Roma and opposition to anti-Semitism was merely marginal, and always focused on some particular event.

- c. Struggle with the Hungarian Guard up to Jobbik's success in 2009 elections to the European Parliament:** The establishment of the Hungarian Guard and other early *Jobbik* activities mobilised the groups targeted by the radical right's hate speech. Budapest's liberal intellectual milieu initiated public counter-demonstrations taking a clear stand against the radical right. With a base of activists now 15 years older than in the 1990s, and with weakened party support, the Democratic Charta was also activated. The Roma also started to organize some self-defence groups. The leftist liberal government was struggling against growing racism to the best of its ability. Yet it was unable to make progress in enforcing harsher regulations on hate speech because its liberal faction was not prepared to accept stricter measures. Direct solidarity with groups targeted by the radical right was at a low level, limited to proclamations by a few hundred people willing to sign manifestos. No matter what the objections, the signatories tend to resemble a kind of post-dissident opposition culture surviving in a reserve. However, the blatant activities of the *Hungarian Guard* generated some counter-publicity; yet compared with the radical right, the target of its objections, this was pale, lacking in numerical strength, and enervated. The frustration provoked by the *Guard* was more extensive and people expected the government to impose harsher constraints; but to the surprise of the public, in a democracy defined in very broad terms in 1989, the government could do very little. It was still unable to initiate a well-organized and forceful counter-offensive. Although in theory it might actually want to, it had no means, no mandate and no experience to impose prohibitive measures in a democratic framework.

- d. **2009 – April 2010: from Jobbik’s growth in popularity to the party’s entry to the Hungarian Parliament:** In the eyes of the leftist liberal groups, up to this point *Fidesz* and *Jobbik* were one and the same – and understandably so. After the European Parliamentary elections, *Jobbik* became the main opponent. However, *Jobbik* was organized and run by young people; its social base was growing week by week. Its liberal opposition comprised older people who were less mobile and had minimal political support. The leftist government was struggling to survive and the Liberals were practically eradicated. The growth of *Jobbik* increased the uncertainty over what counter-measures could and should be proposed and enacted. Opponents of the radical right saw themselves as a minority in the process of being marginalised, and the April 2010 elections completely disarmed them. They do not even know whom to support and whom to fight against. Was it *Jobbik* alone? Or *Jobbik* and *Fidesz* combined?

## A national debate about the radical right

The major questions of national debate about the radical-right scene have changed significantly. The most significant elements are:

- a. **“What shall I call you?”** This debate is about whether the radical right-ists in Hungary are neo-fascists or not. It also questions whether they are consciously using a political language reminiscent of the thirties in order to boost their audience, or if they use it automatically and instinctively because of deeper, inherent traits. In the second and third phases of development, the majority of public opinion hostile to the radical right was inclined to view them as some type of neo-fascists, but by phase (d) they had too many followers, and were now seen as a misguided bunch. Many people believed that if the radical right was stigmatised as neo-fascists, its masses of supporters could no longer be easily controlled and channelled into democratic politics.

- b. The boundaries of hate speech, i.e. the limits of democracy:** In 1989, freedom of speech was modelled on the broadest interpretation of Anglo-Saxon liberalism by Hungarian legislation. Since then, an increasing number of groups have considered it far too lenient – not only in its interpretation of radicalism – and would have liked to change it. Different liberal philosophies, however, from fundamentalists to solicitous constitutional legal experts, prevented any real tightening of the law.
- c. What is the government's duty?** In the majority view, dealing with radicals is primarily the government's duty, since it is responsible for the integrity of the state structure. Civic movements may supplement this on occasion. However, despite all the hopes raised in the aftermath of 1989, civic movements have remained extremely weak in Hungary – a slight change among groups victimised by racism has been discernible only in the last 18 months. But even in these circles, change is very slight and can be traced only in secondary ranks.
- d. Can a democratic united front against extremists be set up between the centre-left and the centre-right?**<sup>3</sup> In practice the answer is clearly negative. In the left-liberal view, the extreme right is undoubtedly an inseparable part of the mainstream right that created and nurtures it. Before the 2010 general elections the right may have been a trifle scared of extremists, but nevertheless they are interrelated by innumerable underground ties. They will definitely not cut these ties and look to the centre-left for democratic elements of some mutually shared view of life. They cannot be convinced to do so, and it is not worth the effort of trying to persuade them.

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3 In Hungary this means only the extreme right, as there is no extreme left at the moment.



- e. **Can radicals be turned into a “civic” party by allowing them to participate in government?** There are no theoretical foundations for either a positive or negative answer to this question. Socialists in opposition in Parliament are primarily fighting the governing centre-right parties. Despite the fact that both parties are reluctant to admit it, at numerous points they share tactical interests with *Jobbik*, which is proving quick to learn Parliamentary ethics. Presently, the civil spheres of these two political fields are not in combat with each other.

### Is democracy in danger?

Public opinion in Hungary is dominated by two distinct views on this topic. One describes the radical right as a world of marginal movements with generally modest support, citing election statistics and the games displayed by forces in Parliament so far. These political groups are rather vocal, since radicalism and verbal extremism are related by their very nature and as a consequence of their basic mode of operation. In any case, according to this view, the majority of voters are centrist. The argument goes that proponents of extremes dissociate themselves from the majority, so there is no need to bother with them. Should the centre pick them out as its enemies, indeed, should the centre even take action against them, it would only serve to strengthen their influence and raise their self-esteem. In any case, in a country characterised by a process of individualisation, and a hunger for consumption, which has accepted the EU’s political and public law frameworks, the views formulated by extremists cannot be adopted by the majority in Parliament. Accordingly, even in the longer term these forces cannot endanger the democratic order set up after 1989. People who hold such views partially sympathise with the political right. Along with numerous others who share this way of thinking without belonging to the political right, they tend to point to recent events in Hungary and in western Europe (Austria, Switzerland, the Netherlands). A radical-right party – MIEP – was already elected to Parliament in 1998, and radical-right parties also have representatives on

municipal councils. They have never endangered democracy anywhere in those municipalities or official posts. They adapt to the rules of the game just like the above-mentioned neo-radical parties in other European political systems.

Another approach leads to a starkly different view of the same processes. People with this exception see historical parallels: they have the feeling of a return to the 1930s. What we can observe here is the formation of slightly differing opinions. Some commentators say they have a feeling that the vocabulary and frameworks used by the Hungarian radical-right show the revival of the political culture that dominated Hungary in different forms during the decades between the two world wars, and which had been prohibited in Hungary not only from 1949, but already from the spring of 1945. For these people, the undesirable changes began symbolically as far back as the early 1990s, when the then conservative prime minister decided to stage the reburial in Hungary of the remains of Miklós Horthy, the head of the political system in Hungary between 1919 and 1944, who died in exile. From then on, the most important themes of that era gradually began to reappear in the public arena. Others believe they are witnessing a repeat of the “end of Weimar” in relation to the 1930s. Finally, some believe that today’s radical-right represents the reappearance of the plebeian extreme right of the pre-1945 system. Which ever variant we consider, the radical-right parties, movements and groups are seriously endangering the new democracy by reference to historical analogies. Quite often these fears are not even rationalised; cultural patterns believed long forgotten are beginning to re-emerge, suggesting a kind of “neo-apocalypse”.

The present author does not share these new “visions of the end of Weimar”. (Incidentally, I first heard this metaphor of the end of Weimar in contemporary Hungarian political discourse in 1991 when liberals, behind the shield of a civil disobedience campaign, the so-called cabbies’ strike, wanted to take revenge on the street on the conservatives who had

won the elections.) At the same time, I do not believe that the presence of the radical right in the political system will always be proportional to its weight in Parliament.

Education for democracy, which at this point would effectively entail an ideological showdown with historical Hungarian radical-right traditions, is almost entirely lacking in the present political system in Hungary. There are no national programmes for this, the political left is timid and, moreover, as a consequence of systematic right-wing indoctrination it feels forced out of the national discourse. The popularity of anti-fascist protest demonstrations is rapidly declining. Apart from the Roma and descendants of Holocaust survivors who feel personally attacked, by 2010 the number of participants in such actions had fallen significantly. In these circumstances, the ideologically mobilised radical right has become a dominant element of the political agenda even for other parties in the system, almost independently of its current level of support. The radical right is where the questions raised in public debate come from; of course, these questions are rejected by the political left, which refuses to respond, and are further diluted by the large centre-right party, *Fidesz*, for its own use. This indirect effect is extremely strong and has not declined with the new government-opposition constellation since the 2010 elections. In this sense, without any external intervention the questions and themes determined by the radical right will distort the spaces of democratic discourse in the Hungarian political system; in fact, they are unfortunately already distorting it. It seems that Hungary's elites have no viable concept for tackling this phenomenon.



# From the margins to the mainstream? The development of the radical right in Denmark

## The Scandinavian context

The extreme right in the Scandinavian countries represents a relatively new phenomenon with no direct historical precursors since the Second World War. This is also one of the reasons why the term “extreme-right wing” is not frequently used when referring to the Scandinavian context. The “many worlds” approach in these countries is generally preferred to the “one world” approach, as Michael Minkenberg has appropriately described the attempt to postulate a generic phenomenon of the extreme/radical right in Europe.<sup>1</sup> New words and phrases often replace single definitions, signalling some dissatisfaction with traditional categories, but also suggesting that the phenomenon continues in a process of dynamic development and transformation. In the Danish scholarly literature we therefore find definitions such as: radical right wing populist parties;<sup>2</sup> anti-immigration parties;<sup>3</sup> nationalist right;<sup>4</sup> new right parties,<sup>5</sup> etc. These

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- 1 Minkenberg, M. *The Radical Right in Europe: An Overview* (Gütersloh: Verlag Bertelsmann Stiftung 2008).
  - 2 Goul Andersen, J. and Bjørklund, T. “Radical right wing populism in Scandinavia: from tax revolt to neo-liberalism and xenophobia.” *The Politics of the Extreme Right. From the margins to the Mainstream* ed. Hainsworth, P. (London and New York: Pinter, 2008), 193-223 and Rydgren, J., 2004, “Explaining the emergence of radical right wing populist parties: the case of Denmark.” *West European Politics*, (27: 3) 474-502.
  - 3 Goul Andersen, J. and Bjørklund, T., “Anti-immigration parties in Denmark and Norway: the Progress Parties and the Danish People’s Party.”, *Shadows over Europe: The Development and Impact of the Extreme Right in Western Europe* ed. Schain M. Zolberg, A. and Hossay P. (New York: Palgrave, 2002) 107-136.
  - 4 Betz, H.-G., “Culture, Identity and the Question of Islam: the Nativist Agenda of the Radical Right.”, *The Far Right in Europe. An Encyclopedia* ed. Davis P., Jackson P. (Oxford: Greenwood Press 2009); and Betz, H.-G. and Meret, S., “Revisiting Lepanto: the political mobilisation against Islam in contemporary Western Europe.” *Patterns of Prejudice* (43: 3-4) 2009.
  - 5 Andersen, J., “Højrefløjen og kritikken af de fremmede i Danmark.” *Arbejdsrapporter fra Institut for Økonomi, Politik og Forvaltning*, Aalborg Universitet 10 (1999).  
Andersen, J., “Dansk Folkeparti, demokratiet og de fremmede.” *Arbejdsrapporter fra Institut for Økonomi, Politik og Forvaltning*, Aalborg Universitet 6 (2000). Aalborg University 2009.

terms suggest a dynamic development that highlights: 1) the emphasis on anti-immigration and on ethno-nationalism<sup>6</sup> as issues giving these parties a specific content and profile; 2) the populist and anti-establishment components used to distinguish the party from the political mainstream; and 3) the relationship of the phenomenon to the recent macro-structural transformation of contemporary societies.

Although the anti-immigration nexus alone is insufficient explanation for the support gained by the extreme right in Denmark<sup>7</sup>, this issue is undoubtedly at the core of the party programmes and dominates voters' image of the Parties.

In recent years, grievances about immigration and attitudes focused on cultural factors and the question of identity have become more widespread in Europe. In this context, Islam is often perceived as a threat to the culture and identity of the host societies. Surveys report that an overwhelming majority of interviewees in Europe believes that greater interaction between the West and the Muslim world is more of a threat than a positive gain for society. This indicates "a growing fear among Europeans" partly caused by rising immigration from predominantly Muslim regions<sup>8</sup>. In Denmark a recent poll confirms these concerns, indicating that while the majority of the respondents consider immigration a positive factor for Danish society, about 55 percent sees Islam as a threat to the unity of Danish society.<sup>9</sup> In this sense, it is hardly surprising that the extreme right has increasingly focused on questions of culture and identity (and particularly on the question of Islam) rather than on economic issues. This highlights how successful extreme-right-wing populist mobilisation follows patterns defined by cultural, value and identity cleavages.

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6 Rydgren, J. *Is extreme right-wing populism contagious? Explaining the emergence of a new party family.* *European Journal of Political Research* 44 (2005) 413-437.

7 Meret, S. "The Danish People's Party, the Italian Northern League and the Austrian Freedom Party in a Comparative Perspective: Party ideology and Electoral Profile." Ph.D. dissertation, Aalborg University 2009.

8 The study was commissioned for the leaders of the World Economic Forum meeting in Davos, Switzerland, 2008.

9 "Indvandring og Islam splitter Danskerne" [Immigration and Islam divide the Danes]. *Politiken* 17.08.2010, <http://politiken.dk/indland/article1038188.ece>, accessed 25.08.2010.

The paragraphs below sketch an introductory analysis of the development of the extreme right in Denmark, starting from its emergence at the parliamentary level. This enables discussion of some of the main developments and organizational strategies of the extreme-right wing in Denmark and a brief consideration of the strategies used to achieve electoral support and political influence. In fact, this Scandinavian country has one of the most successful parties in electoral terms, the *Danish People's Party* (DPP). Since 2001 the DPP has played a crucial role as supporting partner to the Liberal and Conservative coalition government. This raises the question as to how the DPP has targeted the electorate: what is the agenda of the party and what developments have taken place over time? And has the influential role achieved since 2001 contributed to changing the position of the party? This implies also the need to look at the voter profile of the DPP supporters and at the way Danish voters relate to some of the main issues on the party agenda, in particular their attitudes towards refugees and immigrants, and Islam. Our brief analysis of the Danish case ends by considering extra-parliamentary forms of right-wing extremism in terms of sub-cultural milieus, networks and players, and finally reflects whether this manifestation of the phenomenon is affected by the developments that have taken place at the political level.

## History and background of the extreme right in Denmark

In Denmark, the wave of tax revolt at the beginning of the Seventies resulted in the emergence of an electorally significant populist and radical-right-wing party: the *Fremskridtsparti* (Danish Progress Party– FrP).<sup>10</sup>

The *Progress Party* first entered parliament after an unforeseen landslide victory in the elections of 1973, in which it received almost 16 percent of the votes (see Table 1 below). The *Danish Progress Party* profiled itself as an ultra-liberal tax-protest party with strong anti-establishment and pop-

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<sup>10</sup> von Beyme, K. "Right wing extremism in post-war Europe." *West European Politics* 11: 2 (1988) 1-17.

ulist components. The *Progress Party* managed to mobilise important segments of the Danish electorate until around the mid-1980s.<sup>11</sup>

**Electoral support and parliamentary mandates for the FrP and the DPP (1973-2007). Percentages.**

**Table 1**

	1973	1975	1977	1979	1981	1984	1987	1988	1990	1994	1998	2001	2005	2007
FrP	15.9 (28)	13.6 (24)	14.6 (26)	11 (20)	8.9 (16)	3.6 (6)	4.8 (9)	9 (16)	6.4 (12)	6.4 (11)	2.4 (4)	0.6 (0)	.	.
DPP	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	7.4 (13)	12 (22)	13.3 (24)	13.9 (25)
Tot	15.9	13.6	14.6	11	8.9	3.6	4.8	9	6.4	6.4	9.8	12.6	13.3	13.9

Source: Danish statistical yearbooks.

The electoral support lasted until the beginning of the 1980s, when the role of neo-liberal harbingers focused on tax protest started to decline. Many observers regarded the party as politically outdated, and the party leadership realised that they would have to find another political strategy if the party wanted to survive.

From the mid-1980s, voters became interested in other issues than those linked to the socio-economic area; in particular, immigration became a much-discussed and polarising issue in Danish politics. The *Progress Party* was the first political force in parliament to take up and develop a clear anti-immigration position. This gave voice to growing concerns and anti-immigration attitudes that already existed among segments of the Danish electorate.

Significantly, before the 1980s the immigration issue was basically non-existent in *Progress Party* programmes and manifestos and in the official party literature. It was only after 1986 that immigration started to occupy

11 Goul Andersen, J. and Bjørklund, T. "Scandinavia and the far right." *The Far Right in Europe. An Encyclopedia* ed. Davis P. and Jackson, P. (Oxford: Greenwood Press 2009) 1: 147-163.



a more significant place on the party's agenda.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, in electoral terms, while in attitudes towards immigration the voters for the *Progress Party* in 1979 did not differ from the electorate of the other mainstream parties, from the mid-1980s an increasing number of the party supporters started to express anti-immigration attitudes.

In the same period, Denmark experienced increasing waves of immigration. The first important influx took place in the late 1960s and 1970s and consisted of (male) manual workers, primarily from Turkey, Pakistan, former Yugoslavia and Morocco, who were employed in the industrial sector, meeting Denmark's increasing labour demand. The economic upturn was followed by a period of stagnation and growing unemployment. The Danish government responded by introducing a law enacted at the end of 1973 that closed the Danish borders to further foreign immigration.<sup>13</sup> But this did not halt immigration. Similarly to events in the other Scandinavian countries, a second immigration wave occurred from around the mid-1970s to 1985, mostly involving family reunification of spouses and children of those "guest" workers who had decided to settle permanently in the country. The third immigration wave mainly consisted of asylum seekers, who came from the 1970s onward in various waves of differing intensity and periodicity – following geopolitical patterns influenced by wars and international crises. Their number increased exponentially during the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>14</sup>

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12 See Meret, S. op. cit. 2009.

13 See Bak Jørgensen, M. and Meret, S. "Irregular migration from a comparative Scandinavian migration policy perspective." *Irregular Migration in a Scandinavian Perspective*, ed. Lund Thomsen, T., Bak Jørgensen, M., Meret, S., Hviid, K. and Stenum, H. (Maastricht: Shaker 2009) 121-152.

14 A recent fourth wave can also be distinguished, again characterised by labour migration, but this time of a different kind than in the 1970s. It is related structure created by the Danish migration regime, attracting skilled labour and service providers from the new European Union and Baltic countries and highly educated and specialised migrants from the non-Western countries (see Lund Thomsen *et. al.* 2010).

Significantly, the percentage of Danish voters mentioning immigration as one of the most important problems politicians should deal with rose from 7 percent in 1990 to 22 percent in 2001 and fell again to 17 percent in 2005.<sup>15</sup> Particularly in 2001, the electoral campaign was strongly influenced by the immigration question, which was clearly among the most important issues for many Danish voters,<sup>16</sup> regardless of their political position and attitudes on this matter.

If the *Progress Party* undoubtedly contributed to raising anti-immigration issues and giving voice to the most critical positions, it was the DPP that, from the late 1990s on, fully developed an ideology and discourse based on opposition to immigration and to the prospect of a multi-ethnic and multicultural society.

It is significant that the people who launched the DPP in 1995 came from the *Progress Party* parliamentary group; they included Pia Kjærsgaard, who is still the undisputed leader of the DPP.

## The Danish People's Party (DPP)

The DPP is now among the most successful examples in electoral terms of the extreme or radical right wing in Western Europe. Since the mid-1990s the party has gained increasing support among Danish voters (see Table 1 above) and its parliamentary influence has grown significantly. The clear electoral breakthrough occurred at the 1998 parliamentary election, where the DPP obtained 7 percent of the votes and won thirteen parliamentary seats. From the beginning, this positive electoral support gave the new party a solid parliamentary representation that required consolidation. This demanded a different party organization and leadership

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15 Van der Brugge, J. and Voss, H. "Årsager til de socialistiske partiers tilbagegang i perioden 1990-2005." *Det nye politiske landskab. Folketingsvalget 2005 i perspektiv* ed. Goul Andersen, J., Andersen, J., Borre, O., Hansen Møller K., Nielsen H. J. (Aarhus: Systime Academica 2007) 127–152.

16 Goul Andersen, J., "Vælgernes nye politiske dagsorden." *Politisk Forandring. Værdipolitik og nye skillelinjer ved folketingsvalget 2001* ed. Goul Andersen Jørgen, Borre Ole (Aarhus, Systime Academic 2003), 135-150.

than that which had characterised the *Progress Party*: a strategy of political normalisation and consolidation of the party's electoral support.

From the start, the DPP clearly asserted the party's intention of gaining influence in Danish politics. For example, the 1996 party declaration of intent already stated that the aim of the party was "to give the Danish voters a real alternative to the politics pursued by the existing political parties", but also that such an alternative "can play an active role in parliamentary life" and achieve "political results through collaboration with other parties [because] a political party must never be a goal in itself. (...) The DPP therefore sees its goal in realising the party's politics to the maximum possible."<sup>17</sup>

If we view the strategic and organizational development of the party within a dynamic time span,<sup>18</sup> we can anticipate that the stage of party formation and breakthrough would be followed by a phase of consolidation and stabilisation of the party within the Danish political system.

For the party to achieve the political reliability that could advance the "normalisation" process and achievement of political responsibility, it was necessary to pursue order and unity within the party's own ranks. To promote the DPP as a politically credible alternative, the party leadership (and in particular Pia Kjærsgaard) made it clear from the start that internal conflicts and disagreements with key party strategy would not be tolerated. In a newsletter published in the party paper, *Dansk Folkeblad*, and blatantly titled "Control from the top? Yes, of course" (*Topstyring? – Ja, naturligvis*), Pia Kjærsgaard explained that a highly centralised party leadership represented the necessary condition to prevent chaotic situations and internal political dissent that could threaten to split the party, as in the case of the *Progress Party*.

17 Dansk Folkepartis Folketingsgruppe, *Dansk Folkepartis 10-punkts program* [The Danish People's Party 10-points program] 1996,

18 For an in-depth analysis of this approach in relation to the Danish People's Party see my Ph.D. dissertation: "The Danish People's Party, the Italian Northern League and the Austrian Freedom Party in a Comparative Perspective: Party Ideology and Electoral Support", *SPIRIT* series, Aalborg University 2009.

This strategy was pursued clearly and determinedly. Contrary to the image of populist right-wing parties as unstable and inexperienced organizations, the DPP proved to be “the best example of a modern and successful top-directed market party.”<sup>19</sup> Over the years, severe sanctions have been used against party members who flouted the rules and norms set by party leadership. A large number of party members were expelled from the organization, mostly due to disagreements with the leadership, but also because of statements and standpoints considered too extreme and damaging for the party image. Control by the DPP leadership is, in fact, not limited to the parliamentary group, but extends to all levels of the party organization. This means that due democratic process and dialogue within the party is very limited and that the leadership is able to control all aspects of the party organization, including at local level. However, this has enabled the leadership to simplify and speed up the decision-making process within the party, as few members challenge the guidelines set by the leadership. The result is an image of a strongly united party which is often capable of communicating and promoting the party message very effectively, and can sustain a reputation as a reliable partner in Danish politics. The electoral success of the DPP at the subsequent elections in 2001 has thus to be considered in the context of the strategy of consolidation and development implemented by the party during that period.

At the November 2001 elections, the DPP received 13 percent of the votes and won 22 parliamentary seats, nine more than in 1998 (see Table 1, above). Most significantly, it was after these elections that the mainstream parties decided to benefit from the support of the DPP. From 2001 the party became the key supporter of the Liberal and Conservative parties in government. The newly-formed government lacked some of the necessary mandates to obtain the majority of the 90 seats in the Danish Parliament. The two parties have therefore become highly dependent on the support of a partner outside the governing coalition to enable them

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19 Knudsen, T. *Fra folkestyre til markedsdemokrati. Dansk demokratihistorie efter 1973* (København: Akademisk Forlag 2007) 140-148.

to enact government policy. From the start, the DPP was the favourite candidate, after clearly declaring its support during the election campaign for the Liberal candidate and future prime minister, Anders Fogh Rasmussen (2001–2009).

In this way, the parties in government contributed to the political legitimisation of the DPP, putting an end to a situation in which the party was treated as a pariah in Danish politics and votes for the radical right were effectively wasted.<sup>20</sup> At the same time, the government parties could benefit from some of the “vote-catching” issues that were DPP hallmarks, such as more restrictive immigration rules, tightening up law and order, and measures to prevent welfare state abuse.

The new position as supporting partner to the government achieved in 2001 implied an active, more direct engagement of the DPP in policy making and decision-making processes. This was a unique opportunity for the party to exert relevant political influence at several socio-economic levels of Danish society. At the same time, the party had to carefully weigh up the possible negative consequences of this new and influential position.<sup>21</sup>

As with many other populist variants on the extreme right, the identity of the DPP is strongly related to its ability to distinguish itself as a political alternative to mainstream politics. Different elements and features have contributed to creating this image. These include the strong national profile that the DPP has always emphasised in relation to the party’s origins and commitment. This was clearly and unmistakably ex-

20 Bale, T., “Cinderella and her ugly sisters: the mainstream and extreme right in Europe’s bipolarising party systems.” *West European Politics*23:3 (2003) 67–90.

21 However, strengthened by this experience, the Danish People’s Party leadership has recently demanded a clear statement from Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen confirming that the party will be given government responsibility after the next elections if it requests. This indicates the influence achieved by the party during the last decade. See, “Pia K.: Løkke skal sige ja til DF i regering.” [Pia K.: Løkke must say yes to the Danish People’s Party in government]. *Politiken* 05.09.2010.

pressed in the choice of the party name, which highlights both the “Danishness” and “popular” (*Folkelig*) character of the party. The name chosen for the new party (*Danish People’s Party*) accentuated this idea of ethnic identity and belonging (a Danish party for the Danish people), and the commitment to safeguard existing conditions from internal and external threats to the Danish nation.

In the ideology of the DPP, the concept of the nation and its people is inextricably linked to the threat that immigration represents for the survival of Danish identity and culture as we know it. Multiculturalism and the development of a multi-ethnic society therefore represent the worst possible scenario for the DPP. However, despite the centrality given to national identity, national belonging and culture, there are only vague assertions about what this means in practice for the party. References to the Danish nation and Danish national identity are invariably encapsulated in vague terms such as culture, Danish heritage, Danish history and the Danish community. On the contrary, the DPP leaves little doubt as to what is threatening the freedom and independence of the country: firstly, immigration and the development of a multi-ethnic society, and secondly, the European Union.

Compared to other parties, the DPP has never feared accusations of strong nationalist sentiments, nor criticism for its conservative and traditionalist views or for being old-fashioned or *kitsch* when celebrating traditional habits and commonplace aspects of Danish culture and way of life. The DPP leadership has explicitly defined the party as “a red and white party, a Danish party”,<sup>22</sup> and has striven to establish this image. The party makes extensive use of national symbols such as the Danish flag (*Dannebrog*) to emphasise its distinctiveness in relation to the other mainstream parties.

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22 Kjærsgaard, P., “Et program i rødt og hvidt.” *Dansk Folkeblad* 5:3 (1997).

Naturalisation policy quickly became a means for the DPP to emphasise an organic view of the Danish community. Belonging and identity in terms of shared values, principles, history and culture are considered embedded attributes that can be transmitted almost exclusively by birth or mother's milk, as one outstanding prominent member of the party once tried to express it.

Some scholars regard the contemporary radical-right ideology as a fusion of nationalism and populism, where the "struggle for the survival of the nation as a culturally distinct entity and against multiculturalism has become pivotal for the ideological development of radical-right-wing populist discourse."<sup>23</sup> In the case of the DPP, the ideological development towards the nationalist discourse was gradual. Particularly after 2001, the party started to focus on this kind of approach. Significantly, one of the first restrictions implemented in the Danish Aliens Act strongly demanded by the DPP, passed in spring 2002 concerned the terms and conditions for obtaining Danish citizenship. Since then, the number of foreigners becoming Danish citizens has significantly diminished; the party has frequently cited this fact to demonstrate that when given responsibility, the DPP is able to deliver concrete results.

The DPP also engaged very early on in the role of guardian of the achievements of Danish society in fields such as welfare, democratic values, individual and collective freedom, work ethic and diligence, community responsibility and so forth. Over time, this task has become increasingly and explicitly emphasised, as successive party programmes show.<sup>24</sup>

In particular, from 2001 the party increasingly started highlighting cultural issues and questions of values, interpreting immigration within a paradigm of cultural diversity and opposition. This is expressed in terms

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<sup>23</sup> See Betz, H.-G. 2009 and Betz, H.-G. and Meret 2009, op. cit.

<sup>24</sup> See Dansk Folkeparti *Fælles værdier – Fælles ansvar. Arbejdsprogram 2007* [Common values – Common responsibilities. Working program] <http://www.danskfolkeparti.dk/Arbejdsprogram.asp>, accessed 28.06.2010.

of a “clash of cultures” between the two dominant cultures in the world: modernity and Islam. From this perspective, Western Judaeo-Christian civilisation and culture is seen as fostering progressive, open and tolerant values such as democracy and freedom of speech and religion, whereas Islam is often portrayed as a “backward culture”, transmitting a medieval, rigid and intolerant view of the world.<sup>25</sup> Immigration in general is presented in a framework of “national catastrophe”,<sup>26</sup> whose consequences are directly compared to dramatic historic events that threatened Denmark’s existence in the past. Within this picture the party has framed the socio-economic and cultural threats that Denmark will face if the flow of immigration – particularly from non-Western countries – continues.

Since 2001 the party has taken an increasingly tough position against Islam, frequently catering to popular concerns about the threat posed by Muslim countries and Muslims generally. The view of Islam as a fundamental threat to Western values and culture has become a key issue for the DPP’s perspective. International events such as the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001 and the Muhammad cartoon crisis have contributed additionally to strengthening the notion that Islam and Islamist extremism are the same thing.

The DPP considers Islam to be incompatible with Western liberal democracy and Western principles and values. Assimilating to these principles entails not only the wish, but also the ability of the immigrant to absorb the values and principles that characterise the receiving society. For the DPP, Muslim immigrants lack both the basic ability and the necessary will to assimilate, for the simple reason that Islam itself is considered almost entirely incompatible with what are seen as Western principles.

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25 Dansk Folkeparti Folketingsgruppe *Danmarks Fremtid. Dit Land – Dit Valg...* (Copenhagen: Form & tryk ApS 2001).

26 Kjærsgaard, P., “Udvisning af kriminelle kernefamilier kan skabe tryghed.” *Dansk Folkeblad* 1999. [http://www.danskfolkeparti.dk/pictures\\_org/DanskFolkebladnr\\_5\\_1999.pdf](http://www.danskfolkeparti.dk/pictures_org/DanskFolkebladnr_5_1999.pdf), accessed 28.06.2010.



In recent years, and particularly since 2001, a number of concrete issues have taken centre stage in the policies and discourses of the DPP. These are issues that are generally not considered as integral to the radical-right profile and agenda – for instance, they refer to basic human rights such as gender equality, freedom of speech and the media, liberal family values, etc. This development sometimes seems difficult to reconcile with the image of a materialist, authoritarian and traditionalist view of the world often ascribed to the extreme right. In this sense, I would argue that these issues have actually been emphasised by the DPP particularly since it achieved greater political influence. Portraying minority ethnic groups in gender terms with the focus on describing Muslim women as “oppressed” victims of their culture, wearing headscarves and subjected to discriminating practices, while depicting Muslim young men as arrogant and violence-prone, can help the party to promote its image as custodian of the democratic, libertarian and egalitarian rights and principles on which Western culture is based. This approach allows the party to emphasise aspects of the supposed clash of cultures and values between the West and Islam.

In common with most other extreme-right-wing parties in Europe, in the past few years the DPP has developed a discourse in which the Muslim veil is described as the visible symbol of Islam’s refusal to accept some of the basic values and principles underlying Western societies, such as gender equality. The party stands for the prohibition of the Muslim veil in the public administration system. Like other similar parties in Europe, the DPP considers allowing to build big mosques with minarets on Danish soil as enabling a symbol of the “conquest” of the West by Islam, on fostering the creation of a parallel society that promotes the radicalisation of the Muslim community (see Fig. 1).



Danish People's Party campaign against the building of big mosques in Denmark (2009)

"No to large mosques in Danish cities!"

"(...) We give you a guarantee: the more representatives from the Danish People's Party are voted in at the municipal election on November 17<sup>th</sup>, the more opposition against Islamism's strongholds in your town. Vote Danish locally also."

## European Networks

These issues have contributed to drawing the Danish party closer to the positions on the place of Islam in society expressed by the far right in other European countries. Parties as diverse as the FPÖ in Austria, the *Legia Nord* in Italy, the SVP in Switzerland, the *Dutch Freedom Party* (PVV) – to mention only a few – have developed very similar programmes on the question of Islam. However, up until now, these similarities, and the parties' shared scepticism towards the EU, have not resulted in the formation of a larger political group at the European Parliament. At this level, the different parties' political interests are still divided and apparently influenced by tactical aspects that seem to prevent closer cooperation among the extreme right at the European level. Following the last EP elections in 2009, the DPP joined the new Europe of Freedom and Democracy group, whose members include the Italian *Legia Nord*. The Danish party had earlier expressed an interest in the group of European Conservatives and Reformists, but was resolutely refused membership. The rejection was led by the British *Conservative Party*. The Tories considered it counterproductive to cooperate with the DPP at the European Parlia-

ment. This illustrates how difficult it is to achieve a mainstream profile at the European level as well. In fact, in this case the DPP is a victim of the same strategy it applies to other parties and groups, avoiding association with “bad company” that could damage the reputation of the party.<sup>27</sup>

The political influence and the position of responsibility that the DPP has achieved in the course of the last decade have affected the party’s ideology, discourse and organizational strategies. For example, as indicated above, the party has developed a different approach to the immigration question by focusing on the position of Islam in Western European societies and by relating this approach to a specific discussion of values and principles such as gender equality, freedom of speech, solidarity and tolerance. This can be seen as a new and much less controversial approach that the Danish party can use for critical examination of the immigration question. We have also emphasised the various strategies that have characterised the different phases of the party as it worked towards normalising its position in Danish politics, highlighting how the passage from extreme to mainstream is highly dependent on internal decision-making and organizational solutions.

## DPP voters

The socio-economic profile of DPP voters shares several features with the electoral segments that support parties with similar agendas in Western Europe. The general profile of the DPP voter is: male, manual worker and with a low educational level(see Table 2).

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27 The exception is the Swedish Democrats (*Sverigedemokrater*), which the Danish People’s Party clearly supports, arguing that parliamentary representation of this party in Sweden is the only way to change the political debate about issues such as immigration and integration in this neighbouring country (see Pia Kjærsgaard’s newsletter 16.08.2010).

**Support for DPP (Danish People's Party) by gender, main occupational sectors and education.**

**Table 2**

<b>DF</b>	<b>1994<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2007</b>
<b>Gender</b>					
Male	8	9	15	15	14
Female	5	6	9	11	13
N	906	1002	983	1138	627
	862	832	894	921	694
<b>Occupation</b>					
Manual workers	8	9	<b>18</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>19</b>
Private salariat	4	5	9	9	9
Public salariat	1	5	6	6	4
Self-employed	10	13	10	7	9
Outside labour market	8	7	13	16	18
N	373	411	393	445	277
	294	319	354	398	285
	327	318	356	334	224
	128	115	124	145	84
	648	645	652	736	431
<b>Education</b>					
Low (up to 9yrs)	10	9	<b>17</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>26</b>
Middle (10-11yrs)	4	9	11	15	14
High (12+ yrs)	2	2	6	5	5
N	785	683	681	732	367
	600	611	620	632	409
	383	531	576	690	494

1 Progress Party in 1994.

N = in thousands, numbers represent percentage of total votes.

Sources: Danish election surveys 1994-2007.

Compared to other countries, where parties of the extreme right or those with similar programmes still can attract other socio-economic groups such as small entrepreneurs and the self-employed, the DPP is characterised by strong support among manual workers. The DPP is in fact the most clearly defined working-class party in Danish politics today (see Table 3 below). This development has largely occurred at the expense of the traditional working-class parties – primarily the Social Democratic Party (now Social Democrats, S) – which have lost considerable support among manual workers over the years. As shown in Table 3, from the

Share of manual workers within main Danish parties and party groups (1994-2007). Difference from the average/all in percentage points.

Table 3

	1994 <sup>1</sup>	1998	2001	2005	2007
DF	+18	+9	+20	+25	+24
Non-socialist parties	-10	-10	-7	-10	-7
S	+13	+11	+9	+12	+7
Other left-wing parties	-3	-2	-11	-2	-10
All	33	36	32	33	33
<b>N</b>					
DF	112	136	225	273	188
Non-socialist parties	842	802	898	1055	586
S	612	658	547	532	350
Other left-wing parties	185	187	165	193	208

Source: Danish election surveys (1994-2007). Political weight.

1 Progress Party in 1994.

mid-1990s the share of manual workers has continued to move away from S and the socialist parties, first towards the *Progress Party* and then to the DPP.

Interestingly, this socio-economic profile is a specific feature of electoral support for the extreme and populist right wing in Scandinavia, and can therefore also be observed in relation to the electorate of the Norwegian *Progress Party* and the Swedish Democrats. This has several explanations: at the macro-structural level, it was influenced by the emergence of a new dimension of political cleavage based on issues of values and culture, which strongly affected traditional voting patterns that had previously been driven by a class voting logic. This also applies to Denmark. Social and political transformations contributed to the emergence of new political issues that could be explored by new political players; these included immigration. The growing levels of concern among Danish voters about issues related to immigration can be seen in Table 4 below.

The view that immigrants represent a threat to the survival of the Danish nation and to its culture and identity has become increasingly significant.

**Attitudes towards immigration among the DPP (Danish People's Party) and other Danish party voters. PDI (percentage difference index: strongly agree/agree – strongly disagree/disagree). Percentages.**

Table 4

	SF	S	RV	V	K	DF <sup>1</sup>	All
Immigration a threat against national culture							
1994	-56	-1	-49	8	8	74	-2
1998	-62	-9	-70	15	-1	73	-5
2001	-66	-15	-81	9	-6	73	-5
2005	-60	-17	-66	16	-6	76	-3
2007	-55	-24	-81	20	-15	69	-9
Muslim countries a security threat							
1994	-40	-12	-9	-2	-21	35	-11
1998	-42	2	-57	18	10	65	3
2001	-64	-7	-62	17	3	64	0
2005	-48	-1	-54	32	-3	74	8
2007	-28	4	-36	53	34	81	21

1 Progress Party in 1994.

Legend: DPP= Danish People's Party; Non-socialist parties= Liberals (V), Conservatives (K), Social Liberals (RV), Centrum Democrats (CD), Christian Democrats (KrD); S= Social democrats; Other left-wing= Socialist People's Party (SF); Unity List (Enh.).

Table 4 above shows the position of the DPP voters on two questions related to immigration as a threat to Danish national culture and security.

The major concern of DPP is undoubtedly the impact of immigration on Danish culture and identity. More than 70 percent of DPP supporters since the 1990s agreed with the statement that immigration represents a threat to Danish culture. Compared to the DPP, the Social Liberals (RV) and the Socialist People's Party voters (SF) showed an opposite attitude. The position among the Liberal party (V) voters on this issue is also interesting; in 2001 about 9 percent more voters saw immigration as a threat to the national culture and those who did not; six years later this had risen to about 20 percent. A different development can be observed among the Conservatives (K), whose attitudes have moved in the opposite direction (from -6 percent in 2001 to -15 percent in 2007).

Over the past decade, another issue has gained increasing consensus among voters for the DPP and other parties: that Muslim countries represent a threat to national security. Particularly DPP supporters, but also

people who support the two government parties, expressed serious concern about this perceived national security threat. This position was undoubtedly fuelled by events such as 9/11 and its aftermath, as well as by what has come to be known as the “Muhammad cartoons crisis”; this started with twelve cartoons, most of them depicting the Islamic prophet Muhammad, published by the Danish broadsheet *Jyllands Posten* in September 2005. Their publication subsequently sparked fierce protest and serious incidents of political riots and social unrest, particularly in some Muslim countries. However, concerns about Islam had already been on the agenda of certain segments of the electorate since at least the 1990s, and they were clearly more pronounced among DPP voters.

As mentioned above, in the last decade the DPP has been able to consolidate its present, and very likely its future, position in Danish politics, largely by catering to these concerns and offering an agenda that has privileged a welfare state approach to the economic dimension – albeit limited to “those who have contributed to it over the generations”.

## Danish racism and neo-Nazism: Extreme-right movements and subcultural milieus

While the history, electoral support, transformations and development of the extreme-right wing parties at the parliamentary level are a relatively well-studied field in Denmark by now, there is still a general lack of more in-depth quantitative and qualitative research on right-wing extremist sub-cultural milieus, movements, networks, organizations and individuals. With a few exceptions,<sup>28</sup> the study of racist sub-cultural mi-

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28 Karpantschof R. *Nynazismen og dens modstandere i Danmark* (Esbjerg: Sydjysk Universitetsforlag 1999); see also, Karpantschof, R. and Mikkelsen F. *Rise and fall of the racist right-wing movement in Denmark 1982-2000* (2004). <http://www.amid.dk/ocs/viewpaper.php?id=141&cf=1>, accessed 31.08.2010. For a qualitative study, see, Lyng, J., “Højreradikale biografier – Fortællinger om fremmedgørelse, vrede og modstand.” *I samfundets sprækker - Studier i upassende sociologi II* ed. Hviid Jacobsen, M. (Aalborg: Aalborg Universitetsforlag 2007).

lieus and extreme-right-wing social movements remains a rather under-researched academic field.<sup>29</sup> This is due partly to the more marginal role of this phenomenon in Danish society, and partly to the difficulties and suspicions encountered by researchers approaching these groups.

At this level, two typologies of right-wing extremism can be distinguished: 1) xenophobic and militant extreme-right movements and networks that advocate street violence, directly use neo-Nazi symbols, ideology and music (e.g. *White Pride*, the *Danish National Front*, *Blood and Honour Denmark*), and have a fairly well-developed international network; and 2) movements and associations that rely on ethnocentric, nationalist and anti-immigration rhetoric, patriotic feelings and anti-immigration attitudes, but which are more deeply rooted in Danish political life and officially reject undemocratic practices and violence (e.g. the *Danish Association*; *Stop the Islamisation of Denmark*; *Aarhus against the Mosque*; *Verderfølner*). However, overlapping membership between the groups is not infrequent.

Both types share the harsh critique of Islam and of the Muslim minority, whose cultural background, values and principles are considered to be irreconcilable with the fundamental ideas of the Western and Christian world since the Enlightenment. In fact, the principal target of these extreme-right groups today is Islam and Muslims, rather than – as was largely the case in the 1990s – immigration, immigrants and refugees in a broader sense.<sup>30</sup>

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29 There are a few independent and non-academic organizations who study the mapping and transformation of the extreme-right wing movements and sub-cultural milieus in Denmark. See e.g. <http://redox.dk/>, accessed 31-08-2010

30 See Svensson, P. and Togeby, L., *Højrebølge?* (Århus: Politica 1991); and Karpantschov, R. and Mikkelsen, F. 2004 op. cit.



Serious incidents of racial hate characterised the 1990s in Denmark, and were fuelled by the anti-minority riots that took place in Germany. Today it is especially the clash with organized movements of the extreme and anti-racist left wing that engages the most extreme and militant right-wing groups. From 2005 there was a significant rise in violent episodes and physical attacks, particularly at the local level, for example in the major Danish cities of the Jutland peninsula. Over the past few years extremist right-wing groups such as *White Pride*, *Denmark's National Front* and *Vederfølner* have become more active here,<sup>31</sup> and can exist relatively “undisturbed” because the anti-racist networks are much weaker and less active than those in Copenhagen and its surrounding area.

It is empirically very difficult to establish how the specific political opportunity structure in Denmark and the presence of a party in parliament that played a major role in criticising immigration might have influenced the membership, organization and activities of the most extremist movements and groups in Danish society. As part of its “normalisation” strategy, the DPP leadership has clearly stated that militants from extremist and racist right-wing movements are not welcome in the party rank and file. The statement was necessary because in the period from the late 1990s until around 2007, more than thirty local party members were excluded from the DPP because of their active affiliation with the group *Danish Front*, at that time one of the largest and best organized extreme-right-wing networks in Denmark, with sections in every big Danish city. The people behind the *Danish Front* came from the active Nazi milieu of *White Pride*, but included members with considerable political and organizational experience, for example in the DPP youth section. When the *Danish Front* was disbanded in 2007, due to internal conflicts over anti-Semitic positions and the use of violence by a section of *Blood and*

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31 *Århus er de højreradikales hovedstad* [Aarhus is the capital of the extreme right]. *Information* (07.03.2010). <http://www.information.dk/226471>, accessed 31.08.2010.

*Honour Denmark*, that same year some of the remaining members founded a new association, *Vederfølnær*.<sup>32</sup> This group is presently the largest extreme-right-wing movement in Denmark. It sees its main goal as uniting all “concerned Danes who think that the Danish immigration policies approved in the last thirty years constitute an unfortunate development for Denmark and have given rise to a multicultural society that is contrary to Denmark’s democratic organization, our right of free speech, and gender equality.”<sup>33</sup> It is interesting how at this level, too, the emphasis is placed on patriotic, non-violent and democratic values and principles, perhaps signalling an effort to promote an image shift from violence, anti-Semitism and Nazi ideology towards anti-Islam and anti-Muslim positions. This political agenda is shared by several other groups such as *Stop Islamisation of Denmark* (SIAD) and *Aarhus against the Mosque*, indicating that the mobilisation of extreme-right movements and milieus today is closely related to the anti-Islam and anti-Muslim issue.

## Conclusions

The question as to whether Denmark is on the “right path” can be answered in the affirmative. In this contribution we have tried to outline how, over the years, this has been encouraged by various opportunities and by a social and political context that created some of the conditions and socio-political spaces for this development. Looking specifically at the Danish experience, one of the aspects of this “right wing turn” was the transition of the DPP from the margins to the mainstream of Danish politics. This was a dynamic process that involved different levels and phases of development of the party. In this sense, the favourable structural, societal and political conditions for the breakthrough and success-

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32 The name originates from Nordic mythology: it was the hawk sitting on the beak of the eagle on the top of the tree Yggdrasil, which looked out over the world. From this the slogan of the group: “Vederfølnær – keeps an eye on Denmark.”

33 See, Vederfølnær’s homepage, <http://www.modstand.nu>

ful mobilisation of the extreme-right wing created the preconditions for their successful mobilisation; however, this was also greatly influenced by the DPP and its strategies during the different phases of the party's development to achieve political influence and consolidate electoral support.

Other interesting factors are the transformations and developments that have occurred among the extreme-right-wing subgroups, networks and movements, where the social and political context seems to have influenced the creation of their programmes and the way these groups choose to promote themselves today.



Heléne Lööw

## The extreme right in Sweden: Growing slowly

In most European countries we find two phenomena: a racist subculture milieu which is a mixture of neo-Nazism, esoteric groups and social movements inspired by American white supremacy ideology, and ethnocentric right-wing parties that exploit anti-establishment, anti-immigration and anti-Muslim feelings (in Western and Northern Europe) or target the Roma population with even deeper animosity (for instance, in Italy or Hungary). On the one hand Sweden fits this overall picture; on the other, the Swedish extreme right has its own history and political agenda.

### The structure of the extreme right in Sweden

The following contribution will address the question of the structure of the extreme right in Sweden. First, we will deal with extreme nationalist political parties, and then with the subculture of white supremacy groups. We will also discuss the electoral performance of the extreme right.

### The extreme nationalist parties

Sweden differs from the majority of European countries in that it was not until the late 1980s that an extreme nationalist party was created on a national level and developed much later than in many other European countries. *Sverigedemokraterna* (SD), the Swedish Democrats, the largest nationalist party at present, was founded in 1988. SD started to grow significantly in 1989–90. There are a number of reasons for its initial growth aside from the referendum in the municipality of Sjöbo on re-

ception of refugees.<sup>1</sup> First, the public debate reinforced SD's arguments. In this debate refugees were seen no longer as a resource, but as a problem. More restrictive legislation on political asylum (enacted in December 1989), and changes in public opinion towards a more restrictive handling of refugees and immigrants, also contributed to legitimising SD.<sup>2</sup>

In the 1991 election SD faced competition from *Sjöbopartiet* and *Framstegspartiet*, whose anti-immigration programme strongly resembled SD's. *Framstegspartiet* and *Sjöbopartiet* contested the election as a coalition and received 27,637 votes at local level. *Framstegspartiet* gained 12 seats in local councils, all in the south of Sweden. SD received 4,889 votes at the national level and two seats on local councils. During 1991 the activities of the parliamentary anti-immigration parties declined. There were two reasons for this: firstly, part of the recruitment base for the parliamentary parties was undermined by the rise of *Ny Demokrati*, a populist party with anti-immigration tendencies. This party received 6.7 percent of the vote in the general election in 1991 and the established political parties developed more restrictive attitudes on questions concerning refugees and immigration. Secondly, younger members left the party to join revolutionary groups propagating racist ideology, which

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- 1 In 1988 the municipality of Sjöbo in the south of Sweden held a local referendum about reception of refugees. The background to the referendum was a change in official Swedish refugee policy, according to which every municipality was obliged to receive refugees. Sjöbo refused to conclude an agreement with the immigration authorities and held a local referendum instead. The 'No' faction was represented by the local branch of Centerpartiet – a branch that was expelled from the party, and formed a new party, *Sjöbopartiet*. Despite a massive campaign by the 'Yes' supporters, the 'No' faction won the referendum – 65 percent of Sjöbo's population voted 'No'. The referendum in Sjöbo was the first time that a previously hidden public opinion won a public election – against the official policy. One of the results of the referendum was that it gave some degree of legitimacy to the anti-immigration position. Another result was that it proved it was possible to win within the parliamentary system.
  - 2 For the change in public opinion see Lange, Anders und Westin, Charles. *Ungdom om invandring II; förhållningssätt till invandring och invandrare 1993* Youth on immigration II; views on immigration and immigrants (CEIFO Stockholm University 1993); Demker, Marie. "Stäng gränserna!? Svenskarnas åsikter om flyktingmottagning." *Perspektiv på krisen Close the borders!?* Swedish opinion on asylum seekers. *Perspectives on the crisis* ed. Sören Holmberg and Lennart Weibull. SOM 9 (1992).

were considered more active and militant. The above-mentioned factors contributed to internal conflicts within the parliamentary groups, paralyzing party activities. However, in 1993, when *Ny Demokrati* – also plagued by internal splits and scandals – increasingly began to lose political support, SD intensified its activities and began to gain some support among the generation born in the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>3</sup> In the 1994 election SD won five seats in local assemblies and received approximately 14,000 votes in the general election. In the 1994 election *Ny Demokrati* received only 1.2 percent of the votes and lost its seats in parliament. There were several reasons for this: the severe deep economic crisis at the beginning of the 1990s, which caused voters to return to the traditional political parties; the internal conflicts within *Ny Demokrati*; and the party's inability to find a credible position between presenting itself as an anti-establishment party and yet being part of the establishment and acting as a supporting party for the conservative government. After the collapse of *Ny Demokrati*, SD was the only remaining extreme-right-wing player on the national level. In the 1998 election SD received 20,000 votes and eight seats on local councils. However, the party was plagued by internal conflicts, and in 2001 a splinter group emerged to form *Nationaldemokraterna*, the *National Democrats* (ND). In the 2002 election SD improved its showing again, receiving 1.4 percent of the votes and winning 40 seats on local councils.<sup>4</sup>

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3 Lööw, Heléne. "Racist Violence and Criminal Behaviour in Sweden: Myths and reality." *Terror from the extreme Right*, ed. Tore Bjorgo (London: Frank Cass 1995).

4 Populism och främlingsmisstro, Sverige i Europa, Integrationsverkets skriftserie VI, Integrationsverket 2006. Populism and distrust of foreigners, Sweden in Europe, Bureau of Integration series VI, Bureau of Integration 2006.



## SD leaflet:

"Let us together work for a society built on security and tradition!" and "Stop calling us xenophobic and start listening to what we have to say."

The SD experienced a big resurgence in the 2006 election: the party received 2.9 percent of the votes in the general election, 282 seats on 144 local councils and a total of 16 seats on three regional councils.<sup>5</sup> In the opinion polls during the election campaign in September 2010, the SD received more than 4 percent of the votes. If the results of the upcoming elections follow this prognosis, SD will be able to enter the national assembly for the first time. In the election in September 2010 the SD received 5.7 percent of the votes and 20 seats in the national assembly. This meant the end of 22 years on the margins of Swedish politics for the SD – in fact, after the election the SD found itself at the heart of the political debate. Not only did the party enter the national assembly, but the election result meant that neither the blue nor the green-red coalition gained a majority of the vote. The parliamentary situation is very unclear at the moment (early October 2010). The election 2010 meant that Sweden was no longer exceptional in Europe – and the SD's electoral success triggered off large anti-racist demonstrations in many cities, as well as a wave of violence directed against SD candidates and supposed supporters. In contrast to the SD's gradual success the ND has declined over the years: in the 2002 elections ND received approximately 9000 votes, and in the 2006 elections it lost about two-thirds of its support. In the 2010 election ND lost further electoral support, but managed to keep the seats on local councils that it had gained in the 2006 election. The same pat-

5 *Sverigedemokraterna – ett parti som alla andra?* Swedish democrats – a party like all the rest? (Stockholm: ABF and EXPO 2007).



tern can be seen in the results of local elections to city councils. The distribution of votes, seats in local councils and numbers of municipalities where the SD, and to some extent ND, managed to take seats in the local councils shows that SD's strongholds are in the south and west of Sweden. These are the same regions that have historically been the strongholds for Nazis, the religious right, populists and the xenophobic right since the 1930s. These are also some of the regions that were most affected by the economic depression in the 1990s.<sup>6</sup> However, it is still too early to present a more detailed analysis of the election results of 2010.

Demonstrations  
in Stockholm  
against the SD  
during SD's  
last public rally  
before the  
2010 election



## White power: Political parties, social movements and subculture

The 1990s saw not only the beginning of parties with anti-immigration programmes but also the rise of militant underground racist movements. The development towards increasingly radical and violent groups started in the 1980s. It was at that time that a growing number of racist under-

6 Lööw, Heléne, Report on Sweden. In: *Strategies for Combating Right-wing Extremism in Europe*, ed. Bertelsmann Stiftung (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2009).

ground groups – which harbour neo-Nazis, anti-Semites, racist occult groups and religious groups, among others – started to perceive society as the main enemy and viewed themselves as “warriors in a war against the Zionist Occupied Government”. Acting on the anti-Semitic attitudes that are still the core ideology of the racist ideological movement, attacks against groups or individuals – who “controlled the world”, in the view of the racist militants – started in the 1980s. Typical hate targets were Jews, homosexuals, communists and people who the activists believed had “betrayed their race” (i.e., law enforcement officials, journalists, bureaucrats and anti-racists). In the late 1980s the underground started to find an organizational form, not as political parties in a traditional sense but as loosely knit networks of activists. In the early 1990s the underground racist groups became known to a wider audience due to increased propaganda and public activities as well as a number of criminal activities. New organizations came and went during the 1990s – however, the key figures behind them remained the same. Aside from organizations and loose networks, the 1990s were the period when the “white noise” music industry developed, as well as publishing companies, cultural associations (such as *Nordiska Förbundet*) and clothing companies marketing outfits for right-wing militants. The technological advances of the Internet and e-mail opened up a whole new communications arena for the activists. The 1990s were also a period of significant increase in violence and criminal activities by activists and sympathisers of underground racist groups.<sup>7</sup>

One of the main players of the 1990s was the *Nationalsocialistisk Front* (NSF), a classic neo-Nazi party founded in 1994. In the 2002 election NSF decided to run locally for the city council of Karlskrona, and received approximately 200 votes.<sup>8</sup> In the general election of 2006, NSF received

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7 Lööw 2000, chapter on December 1999.

8 Lipponen, Sami. “Några främlingsfientliga organisationers verksamhet under 2004.” *Rasism och främlingsfientlighet i Sverige*; “Rapporter och delstudier om rasism och främlingsfientlighet i Sverige 2004.” Integrationsverkets rapportserie 2005:02. “The activities of some xenophobic organizations in Sweden during 2004.” *Reports and studies on racism and hostility towards foreigners in Sweden 2004*, Bureau of Integration report, series 2005: 02.

1417 votes. It also contested local council elections in six municipalities – but failed to win any seats. In 2008 the party changed its name to *Folkfronten (People's Front)*. In 2009 it changed its name yet again, this time to *Svenskarnas parti, the Party of Swedes*.<sup>9</sup> During the last two years, however, the influence of Nazi ideology has gradually vanished from the party's public agenda and has been replaced by a more moderate ideology. In the September 2010 election the party stood on a national level, and in one constituency also on the regional level, as well as in a number of local municipalities.<sup>10</sup> In the 2010 election the *Party of Swedes* gained one seat on a local councils – in the municipality of Grästorps on the west coast of Sweden. This was the first time since the National Socialists lost their seats in local councils in the early 1940s that a party of Nazi origin entered a local council.

*Svenska Motståndsrörelsen (SMR)*, the Swedish resistance movement, is another key player in the racist underground. SMR is not a political party in the traditional sense; it rather resembles a social movement. SMR is not an open organization and does not contest elections. It has very few public spokesmen, and no official addresses for any local branches. The organization was founded by some of the leading figures from the racist underground of the 1990s.<sup>11</sup> It describes its goals as follows: to “defend the Swedish people”; to “fight multiculturalism”; “the establishment of a national government” (i.e., a government founded on autocratic principles based on nationalism and socialism); “repatriation of all undesirable foreigners”; rejection of the EU; the unification of the Nordic countries and the establishment of a Nordic Reich.”<sup>12</sup>

9 Folkfronten blir svenskarnas parti. <http://www.svenskarnasparti.se/2009/11/29/folkfronten-blir-svenskarnas-parti-svp/> (04.10.2010). Folkfronten became the party of Swedes.

10 <http://www.svenskarnasparti.se/2010/04/19/val-2010-svenskarnas-roster-enas-i-svenskarnas-parti/> (04.10.2010). The votes of Swedes united in the Party of Swedes.

11 Jakobsson, Johannes and Ekman, Mikael. “Med våld som vapen.” With violence as a weapon. Expo 2 (2007).

12 Våra mål i korthet, [www.patriot.nu](http://www.patriot.nu); <http://www.patriot.nu/artikel.asp?artikelID=1061> (04.10.2010).

Another important part of the subcultural milieu in Sweden is the network surrounding the Internet site *Info 14*, which started as an independent racist magazine in 1995. Since 1999, *Info 14* exists only on the Internet as an independent news agency. *Info 14* is also affiliated with Gula Korset, the *Yellow Cross*, a sympathisers' organization for imprisoned far-right activists,<sup>14</sup> and a group called *Salemfonden* that organizes the annual commemoration march in Salem, a suburb of Stockholm, in memory of a 17-year-old activist who was killed there in 2000.<sup>15</sup> The name *Info 14* refers to the so-called "14 words" of US American racist David Lane: *We must secure the existence of our people and a future for White Children.*<sup>16</sup> Under the umbrella of *Info 14*, a network called *Fria Nationalister* (*Free Nationalists*), began developing in 2007.<sup>17</sup> These developments led to a significant change in the structure of the racist underground, a shift from three main players towards independent, loosely organized local groups: the *Free Nationalists*. This shift is actually a return to the strategies of the 1990s. The network lacks a single figurehead and prefers to organize under several key protagonists who have been active in the racist underground since the early 1980s. In 2007, *Info 14* and the *Free Nationalists* mounted 88 public events – stressing the meaning of codes and their relation to Nazism (in the Swedish scene, as elsewhere, 88 stands for "Heil Hitler!" ). *Info 14* also runs an Internet radio station called *Folkbildaren*.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, leading members of the network organize lecture tours throughout Sweden.<sup>19</sup>

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13 Lööw 2000:131ff.

14 Lööw 2000:104.

15 [www.info14.com](http://www.info14.com); <http://www.salemfonden.info/> (04.10.2010).

16 Lööw 2000: 446.

17 In December 2009, free nationalist groups existed in the following locations: Dalarna, Gotland, Göteborg, Stockholm, Västerås. Nyköping, aktionsgrupp roslagen, Fagerstas fria nationalister Fria nationalister Skåne, Värmlands oberoende. Action group Roslagen, Fagersta free nationalists, free nationalists Skåne, the independents of Värmland. <http://www.frianationalister.se/> (04.10.2010).

18 Dalsbro, Anders. "Över tusen nazistiska aktiviteter under 2007." Over one thousand activities from Nazis during the year 2007. *Expo 1* (2008).

19 See e.g., Föredrag i Västerås, 2007-01-27, Lecture in Västerås.

*Nordiska Förbundet* is another player in the subcultural milieu. It runs websites and chat forums on the Internet, functions as a news agency, organizes concerts, lecture tours and cultural events,<sup>20</sup> and runs the publishing company *Nordiska Förlaget*. This publishes both Swedish and foreign literature – new works and reprints of older literature from the 1930s and 1940s – as well as music. In 2007 the organizations launched a writing competition that resulted in the anthology *Swedish Voices*. There are also a number of other companies that sell music, literature and clothing. Some are independent and some are affiliated to *Svenskarnas Parti*, *SMR* or *Info 14*.<sup>21</sup> One of the most important websites for the white supremacy groups should also be mentioned: *Nordisk.nu*. It includes blogs, games, music and chat rooms, and functions as a social network in cyberspace. The website was created by *Nordiska Förbundet*.<sup>22</sup> Another relevant website is *antikap.nu*, which is independent and propagates anti-globalisation and anti-capitalist attitudes that it claims are based on “sound socialist and biologist-nationalist principles”.<sup>23</sup>

## Topics, strategies and ideology of the extreme right

The key topic of the ethnocentric right, by contrast, is Islamophobia – which was part of the programme of these parties from the start, but has intensified since the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the US. A key element of this rhetoric is the belief that there is an ongoing “Islamic invasion” of Sweden and Europe. ND and SD frequently refer to the “Islamisation of Sweden and Europe” and the creation of a “multicultural society based on ethnic and religious violence, high crime rates and growing Islamist terrorism”. This rhetoric presents Muslims as “evil invaders” – or simply as terrorists. Parties like SD and ND are not xenophobic in the generally understood sense – for instance, a number of the party officials are from

20 <http://www.nordiskaforbundet.se/> (04.10.2010).

21 <http://www.kampboden.se/index.html> (04.10.2010).

22 <http://www.nordisk.nu/> (04.10.2010).

23 <http://www.antikap.nu/vad-ar-antikap/> (04.10.2010).

migrant backgrounds, and they have little or no objection to migrants from European countries. In fact, these parties receive some support from among older migrant groups, i.e., European migrants who came to Sweden in the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>24</sup>

Another core issue is the spread of anti-establishment positions: SD and ND present themselves as distinct from other political parties and as the “voice of the ordinary people”. One characteristic SD slogan is, “We say what you think” – against the political and cultural establishment. Another key element of the anti-establishment stance is the idea of the homeland of betrayed people. SD and ND look back at the Sweden of the 1950s and 1960s as the “dream country” with social welfare, high employment rates, progress and very few immigrants from non-European countries. The idea of the “people’s home” – the myth of the *folkhem* – is a vision that played a central role in Swedish post-war history. During the post-war era the welfare state became a crucial part of Swedish identity. The welfare state was the fundamental element of the Swedish model – the Swedish way. During the depression of the 1990s the welfare state was no longer taken for granted, as economic crises led to high unemployment and huge structural changes, with big cutbacks in industrial production. At the same time the national state and local councils dismissed tens of thousands of employees, and small businesses or family businesses went bankrupt. The crises also meant cutbacks in social benefits. The economic crises of the 1990s fuelled SD’s argument that the established parties had “sold out” the welfare state in favour of multiculturalism, and “if it had not been for the migrants and the establishment, the welfare state would have remained what it once was.” In the 2006 election, SD’s strongholds were the regions hardest hit by the economic depression. It could be argued that large groups of people working in industry and the public sector, and those running small businesses or family businesses saw their lives changing radically: they lost their jobs and/or their social status. But what happened when the economy improved? Did they regain their social status, or are they still marginalized?

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24 Lecture by Dr. Ulla Ekström from Essen at Karlstad University, February 2008.

What happened to their children? What is happening now, during yet another period of economic difficulties? In my view, some of these groups have turned, or will turn, to the SD. In the 2006 election, the SD took votes from all the political parties, but predominantly from the Social Democrats and the Centre Party. However, the largest group attracted to SD comprised people who had never voted before, or who had abstained: the people with no faith or interest in politics.<sup>25</sup>

Another key issue is the combination of the topics of crime and immigration that the ND has strongly emphasised. The main target groups of SD and ND aggression are non-European immigrants, particularly Muslims and minority groups such as Roma members and, to some extent, migrants from the Balkans.<sup>26</sup> There are, however, differences between SD and ND. The SD rhetoric does not include any anti-Semitism: on the contrary, the party criticises the anti-Semitism within the Muslim community to reinforce their argument that Muslims pose a threat to Swedish society – in this case, towards Swedish Jews. ND, on the other hand, is anti-Muslim as well as anti-Semitic and homophobic.

During the 1990s SD was politically marginalized, but the party has gradually gained acceptance among the general public since then. In the 1990s few people outside the party strongholds openly supported SD – not least for fear of becoming socially marginalized. This has changed: the social stigma seems to have evaporated since the 2006 election. In the case of ND, the social stigma still exists to some extent, mainly because ND is far more radical than SD and has links to the racist sub-culture.<sup>27</sup>

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25 Lööw 2009.

26 Lööw 2007, pp. 93ff.

27 Lööw 2009.

## Differing ideology and strategies of the white supremacy movement

The key topics for the racist underground that bind the various parties, organizations, networks and social movements together are anti-Semitism, racist ideology and homophobia. Anti-Semitism is the core ideology of the racist ideology underground – the component that binds the various sects and organizations together. It is as central for present-day activists as it once was for the Nazis of the 1930s. Holocaust denial is one important aspect of present-day anti-Semitic propaganda. Since 2006, NSF and SMR have mounted protest demonstrations on 27 January – Holocaust Remembrance Day – with the slogan, “Stop the genocide of our people.” In 2007, NSF arranged a public discussion with the French Holocaust denier Robert Faurisson.<sup>28</sup> Activists from the racist underground believe that the world is controlled by an “international Jewish world conspiracy” or “the Zionist Occupied Government” (ZOG). According to this demonology, ZOG includes the media, police, administrators, intellectuals, and others. It is ZOG, and not individual migrants, that represents the primary “enemy” of the racist counterculture. ZOG stands for the “corrupt society” which “poisons the white race through immigration of racially inferior elements, homosexuality and moral disorder”, in order to “destroy the white race”. The “members of ZOG” are referred to as “Jew lackeys” or “race traitors”. The idea of the history of mankind as a never-ending struggle between different races is as central to the ideology of the revolutionary racists as it was to the early Nazis. All the various belief systems within the racist counterculture are, in a sense, apocalyptic. Notions of the “final battle”, “the judgment day” or “Ragnarök” (the “final destiny of the gods” in Norse mythology) are to be found in the world of the Nazis and the neo-pagan world of racist Odin worship.<sup>29</sup> The common enemies of the racist underground are society as a whole and individuals from minority groups – such as Jews,

28 Lööw, Heléne, Report on Sweden. *Strategies for Combating Right-wing Extremism in Europe*, ed. Bertelsmann Stiftung (Verlag Bertelsmann Stiftung 2009).

29 Kaplan, Jeffrey. *Right Wing violence in North America*, manuscript 1994.



Leaflet of the NSF's campaign to raise support for imprisoned and charged Holocaust deniers: "What is it the politicians want to hide?", "Read the books the EU politicians want to hide.", "The books the EU politicians don't want you to read".



homosexuals, and Blacks – as well as political opponents mainly on the extreme left. The attitude towards Muslims, however, is complex. Whereas a section of the racist ideology underground is clearly anti-Muslim, another segment sympathizes with radical Islamism because it shares the ideology of anti-Semitism.<sup>30</sup>

The political strategy of the racist subculture in Sweden differs in a number of important aspects from the strategies employed by the Nazis of the interwar period in the 20th century. Firstly, the modern-day racists are not party builders. Their goal is not primarily to form strong political parties in order to gain power. Instead, they organize in loose networks of small independent groups. Secondly, the *Führer* cult – central to Nazism – is lacking in the modern groups, which are organized on the principle of leaderless resistance.<sup>31</sup>

30 Lööw, Heléne. "Islamofobi och antisemitism efter den 11 september." *arbete, kultur, politik*. En vänbok till Lennart K Persson, ed. Maria Cavallin Aijmer, Göran Malmstedt, Kenneth Nyberg, Adam Von Scheele and Monica Weikert *Skrifter från Historiska Institutionen i Göteborg 7* (Göteborg 2007). "Islamophobia and anti-Semitism after 9/11.": *Work, culture, politics. A book dedicated to Lennart K. Persson*.

31 Lööw 2000.

One important strategy of the subculture of white supremacy is to widen support by means of local and national campaigns, often around the issue of crime. Over the years, SMR has launched a number of campaigns focused on sex crimes and rape incidents. These issues are a constant theme on the websites of both SMR and Info 14.<sup>32</sup> For instance, in 2009 individuals associated with SMR launched a campaign against paedophiles.<sup>33</sup> Another phenomenon within this subculture is anti-capitalist and anti-globalisation arguments. In 2009 these groupings launched anti-capitalist and anti-globalisation campaigns, following a pattern that can be observed in other European countries as well. white supremacy groups adopt the rhetoric and symbols of the left, but from a different ideological standpoint. Another important part of their strategy is to present themselves as victims of political oppression and harassment by the state and political adversaries. A number of campaigns and demonstrations have been mounted over the years to gain support for imprisoned activists and to draw attention to violent incidents involving political opponents.<sup>34</sup>

The technological revolution triggered by the Internet and e-mail has opened up a whole new arena of communication both on the domestic and international level. The Internet has also substantially altered recruitment of new members. It has become possible for the organizations and networks to reach out to ever-greater numbers of potential members and sympathisers.

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32 See e.g., Dyrsch, Patrik. "Massmedias svenskfientliga uthängningspolitik." *Nationellt Motstånd* 4 March 2007, <http://www.patriot.nu/artikel.asp?artikelID=892> (04.10.2010), Vejdeland, Fredrik. "Aftonbladet – pedofil försörjer sig på barnpornografi." *Nationellt Motstånd* 14 February 2007; Gets his paycheck from child pornography, Pedofil dömd Aftonbladet journalist släpper bok. Paedophile convicted Journalist on Aftonbladet publishes book <http://www.info14.com/artiklar.php?id=232> (04.10.2010), Shan atci, kammar hem 60.000, Shan Atci gets 60,000 Swedish crowns <http://www.info14.com/inrikes.php?id=1552> (04.10.2010).

33 [http://www.svenskapedofiler.se/e107\\_plugins/locator/locator.php](http://www.svenskapedofiler.se/e107_plugins/locator/locator.php) (04.10.2010).

34 See, e.g., blind rättvisa i Nyköping, 2007-03-11, Blind justice in Nyköping <http://www.info14.com/inrikes.php?id=1541> (04.10.2010), Tumult i nordstan, 2007-01-16, Trouble in Nordstan; Henrik Pihlström, trakasserier inför Salemarschen, Henrik Philström harassed before the Salem demonstration *Nationellt Motstånd*, 11 December 2006, <http://www.patriot.nu/artikel.asp?artikelID=791> (04.10.2010).

In countries such as Sweden, white supremacy groups and the ethno-centric far right were banned from the mainstream media for many years. Now they have started building alternative media structures on the Internet. Today, the Internet is the most important medium for communication, propaganda and campaigns. Like-minded activists from all over the globe are just a click away on a computer. It remains to be seen what the Internet communication revolution will mean in terms of organisational, tactical and ideological changes within the far-right subculture. But one thing is clear: there has been a substantial acceleration in the ideological shift from the nationalism of the Nazi movements of the 1920s and '30s towards an internationally oriented ideology of “white power” – across borders and ideological differences between, for instance, Nazis and other white supremacy groups – that started in the 1950s.



Poster for the Nordland magazine – the Nordland group were among the first in the '90s to make full use of the new technology and ways of communication.

“The racist ideology underground is marginalised in relation to the rest of the society – but their core ideas are shared by a much larger section of the population.”

## International contacts, exchange, and cooperation

ND is a member of the alliance of European National movements, a federation within the EU that includes the subculture of white supremacy groups. In the past, ND has enjoyed extensive international cooperation with extreme nationalist parties from France, Great Britain, Hungary, Italy, Belgium, Spain, and Portugal.<sup>35</sup> ND also has close contacts with the German NPD.<sup>36</sup>

During the postwar era, the white supremacy movement transformed itself from a basically nationalistic movement (although the international aspect was present in the interwar Nazi parties), to an international white power movement. Activists and ideas transcend national borders both in cyberspace and in the real world, creating an international subculture of white supremacy. Swedish white supremacy groups and networks have had extensive international contacts for decades. For instance, members of the inner circle of *Info 14* were present at far-right events in February 2006 in Hungary, in May at an NDP rally in Rostock and in August at a veterans' meeting for former *Waffen SS* soldiers in Sinimäed in Estonia.<sup>37</sup> In 2009, activists from *Info14* took part in the "*Fest der Völker*" in Germany, a far-right festival that attracts participants from a number of European countries.<sup>38</sup> In 2007 *Info 14* also participated in a nationalist anti-globalisation demonstration in Frankfurt, Germany. In May 2010 activists from Gothenburg's *Free Nationalists* launched a solidarity campaign for an imprisoned activist from the Czech Republic.<sup>39</sup> These are just a few examples of international activities by white supremacy groups. SMR, for

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35 <http://www.nd.se/nyheter/dokument.asp?dokID=1205> (04.10.2010).

36 Christoph Anderson, *från gatan in i parlamenten: om extremhögerens väg mot politisk makt*, Nordstedts förlag, *From the streets to the parliaments; on the extreme right's road to political power* (Stockholm 2010).

37 En överblick av 2006, An overview of the year 2006. [www.info14.com](http://www.info14.com) (04.10.2010).

38 [http://www.info14.com/2009-09-19-reportage\\_fran\\_fest\\_der\\_volker\\_2009.html](http://www.info14.com/2009-09-19-reportage_fran_fest_der_volker_2009.html) (04.10.2010).

39 [http://www.info14.com/2010-05-26-tjeckiensi\\_sak\\_ar\\_var.html](http://www.info14.com/2010-05-26-tjeckiensi_sak_ar_var.html) (04.10.2010).

instance, has extensive contacts with groups in Europe and the US, and especially with so-called “brother organizations” in the Scandinavian countries.<sup>40</sup>

The modern world of white supremacy activists is a phenomenon without clearly definable borders; they travel around Europe to join in the confrontations that occur almost routinely during larger demonstrations or commemorative events staged by extreme nationalists or the militant racist ideology underground. An example is the aforementioned annual commemorative march in Salem in honour of the 17-year-old activist who was killed there in 2000.

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40 <http://www.patriot.nu/index.asp> (04.10.2010).



Tor Bjørklund

## The radical right in Norway: The development of the Progress Party

### The Norwegian Progress Party: Part of the radical right?

Right-wing extremism is usually associated with neo-Nazism and linked to racism and opposition to liberal democracy. In Norway, neo-Nazis have not been totally absent, but their numbers have been very low and the media attention they have received is disproportional to their political strength and influence. Strong opposition to small organized groups on the political fringes of the extreme right has often resulted in their being shut down after a few years and disappearing. (The group *Vigrid* is an example of this.) Other groups have re-emerged in a new guise. So far, these groups have been politically insignificant. In the 1930s a Nazi party (*Nasjonal Samling*) was established in Norway, as elsewhere, but gained very little electoral support: at its height it received just over 2 percent of the vote. After the war any organization with a history of supporting or collaborating with Nazism was suppressed. Consequently, the neo-Nazis constituted a small group of potential supporters from former adherents of the Nazi regime.

Labels such as extreme right and far right were also used to characterise a new type of party that emerged and grew during the latter half of the 1980s. Today the most common name for this type of party is “radical right”. The *Progress Party* is currently an influential party of this type in Norway. However, there is a dispute as to whether this is a correct categorisation. In an influential book by Herbert Kitschelt and Anthony McGann, the Norwegian *Progress Party* is characterized as “fairly close to the ideal type” of radical-right-wing party.<sup>1</sup> Jean-Marie Le Pen’s *Front National*

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1 Kitschelt, Herbert and Anthony McGann. *The Radical Right in Western Europe: A Comparative Analysis* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press 1995) 121.

is regarded as the archetype. Kitschelt argues that the winning formula of the new radical right is a combination of authoritarianism and neo-liberalism, a mixture of opposition to immigration with a free-market economy and socio-cultural conservatism. However, in recent years many radical-right parties have moved away from outspoken free-market positions. In Cas Mudde's book, *Populist Radical-right Parties in Europe*, the *Progress Party* is not included in the category "populist radical-right parties". Instead, it is characterized as "a neo-liberal populist party", which is closely related. The difference is in the emphasis on the free market and economic liberalism. Typical populist radical-right parties downplay neo-liberalism in the light of threats from globalisation.<sup>2</sup> Paradoxically, whereas neo-liberalism once made the *Progress Party* qualify as "fairly close to the ideal type" of the radical right, a few years later this trait had become a disqualifying factor. This shows that the radical-right political party is always in the process of transformation. At the same time it is a reminder that the "winning formula" depends on the context.

The *Progress Party* does not regard itself as a member of the radical-right spectrum. It denies any kinship with this category. The Norwegian party has endeavoured to maintain a "socially respectable" image and explicitly dissociates itself from racism, as well as from radical-right parties. In the 1997 election campaign, the mass media compared Carl I. Hagen, the long-serving leader of the Norwegian *Progress Party* (1978–2006), to Jean-Marie Le Pen. Hagen was furious and declared, "Le Pen is a disgusting and real racist of whom I completely disapprove. His ideological attitudes are very far from what the *Progress Party* stands for."<sup>3</sup> In addition, in 2002 the *Progress Party* refused an invitation from Jörg Haider to participate in a meeting of radical-right parties in Europe.<sup>4</sup> The *Progress Party* even refuses to be associated with the *Danish People's Party*. Its preferred ally is *Venstre*, the Danish liberal conservative party.

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2 Mudde, Cas. *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2007).

3 *Aftenposten* 15 Sep. 1997.

4 *Aftenposten* 6 Aug. 2002.



## From Anders Lange to Carl I. Hagen

Notwithstanding deviations from the ideal type, the *Progress Party* exhibits many similarities with radical-right parties, in terms of both voters' social and cultural profiles and party policy. The *Progress Party* may be regarded as a mild, or social democratic, version of the radical right. The party has gone through different phases. It began in 1973 as a tax revolt in the aftermath of the turbulent 1972 referendum campaign on Norwegian membership in the European Community (EC). The rejection of EC membership was a blow to the political establishment that revealed a clash between the grass roots and the elite. Many voters rejected their party leaders' advice. This weakened the bonds of loyalty between voters and their parties, which facilitated the breakthrough of new parties.

Anders Lange was the leader of one new party, an unusual political agitator on the fringe of the established right wing. Before the Second World War he had connections to a far-right organization (*Fedrelandslaget*), which had some fascist sympathies. However, during the war he clearly belonged to the anti-Nazi camp. Anders Lange was inspired by the success of Mogens Glistrup, who had not yet been elected as an MP because the *Danish Progress Party* had not campaigned in elections, but had impressive opinion poll ratings. Anders Lange's only political base was as a publisher and editor of a small newspaper that used to appear monthly. The paper expressed views affiliated with the far right. The newspaper as well as the party was connected with Lange's name. The party was called *Anders Lange's Party for a Strong Reduction in Taxes, Duties and Public Intervention*. Few people expected the party to survive for long, not even the founder, who gave the party his own name and who was 68 years old. A year after the electoral breakthrough, Lange died suddenly and his deputy, Carl I. Hagen, became an MP. At this point Hagen had left the party, which was riddled with internal conflicts, and was in the process of establishing a new party. The major conflict was whether the *Anders Lange Party* should be an ordinary party or more of a movement, with its MPs relatively free to follow their own impulses and not under direction

of a party organization. Anders Lange himself was a passionate opponent of strict party organization with party whips. He defended the concept of the free, independent politician.

### From a protest movement to a centralised party

Soon after taking up his seat in parliament, Hagen rejoined Anders Lange's party, which was renamed the *Progress Party* in 1977 after the Danish party of the same name. The party emphasised firm leadership based on a strongly hierarchical and centralised party organization. Its centralised organization has made the party similar to other radical-right parties. In the *Progress Party* disobedience has been defined as "active dropping out" and can be penalised without a formal exclusion procedure. According to the party statutes a member of the party can be expelled if he or she publicly harms the party or the party's elected representatives.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, the party can easily rid itself of disobedient members. Members who have fraternised with right wing extremism have been expelled. In Norway, MPs have been forced to leave the *Progress Party's* parliamentary group when they have overstepped the bounds of political acceptability, especially in relation to the immigration debate. Carl I. Hagen's long-term plan has been to redefine the party in preparation for a position in government. In Hagen's words, the party must be "responsible and predictable" in order to succeed. Particularly with regard to the immigration question, this strategy implies that the outspoken elements of the party must be silenced or expelled. The *Progress Party* parliamentary group has been dogged by expulsions and resignations throughout its history.<sup>6</sup>

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5 Paragraph 3 in the 2001 party statutes; see Heidar, Knut and Jo Saglie. *Hva skjer med partiene?* (Oslo: Gyldendal akademiske 2002) 62.

6 These have occurred in three out of five parliamentary sessions (1973-77, 1981-2001).

Siv Jensen of the Progress Party:  
 “We are ready to renew Norway.”



## New party leader: Siv Jensen

As Carl I. Hagen and the Norwegian *Progress Party* were regarded as synonymous, it was thought that maintaining the party would be extremely difficult for his successor. But the prognosis that Hagen’s retirement would cause the party to collapse has been proven totally wrong. With marginal differences, the two elections under the leadership of Siv Jensen (the 2007 local elections and the 2009 parliamentary elections) brought the best ever results for the party (see Table 1).

After the 2005 election Hagen gradually began to retire from the party. Following his victory in the 2005 election, it was a personal triumph for him to hand over his position as leader of the parliamentary group to the aspiring new chairman, Siv Jensen. She was elected as new chairman of the party at the 2006 party conference. Having served 28 years as chairman, Carl I. Hagen was the longest-serving political party leader in Norwegian history. He was even described as the “owner” of the party.

So far, Siv Jensen has failed in her plan to become a coalition partner in a government. But after the 2013 election, if the *Progress Party* and the *Conservative Party* together win a parliamentary majority (which is not wholly impossible from the present perspective), they may be able to secure governmental positions.

## Attracting votes: Anti-immigration positions and economic policy

Influential groups in the *Conservative Party* are clearly opposed to a coalition government with the *Progress Party*, and point to difficulties concerning immigration policy as well as economic issues. For example, the question of whether to save or spend oil revenues has become an important new conflict. One slogan in the *Progress Party's* election campaign is, "Use the oil revenues to benefit the people". Nearly all the other parties followed the advice of the most influential economists that such a policy would be irresponsible and lead to over-heating the economy. As the economy was already operating close to capacity, this policy could result in serious inflationary problems. These issues touch upon two central changes in the policy of the *Progress Party* since 1973, when it was launched. The party has moved to a pro-welfare party with oil revenues used to finance both welfare and tax cuts. Even more important, from the second half of the 1980s the party succeeded in becoming the main opponent of official immigration policy.



**Fremskrittspartiet**  
-for folk flest

The Progress Party:  
"For the ordinary people."

Until the mid-1980s there were no political divisions on the issue of immigration. As late as 1985, attitudes towards immigration among Norwegian voters did not vary much whichever party they preferred, and *Progress Party* voters did not deviate from the population at large in this respect.<sup>7</sup> The issue was not politicised. The arrival of guest workers around

7 Bjørklund, Tor and Jørgen Goul Andersen. "Anti-immigration Parties in Denmark and Norway." *Shadows over Europe. The Development and Impact of the Extreme Right in Western Europe* ed. Martin Schain, Aristide Zolberg, and Patrick Hossay (New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2002) 111.

1970 did not make immigration an issue: their numbers were modest, they were not expected to stay, and there was nearly full employment. Few people objected to guest workers taking on the low-status jobs that the indigenous population left vacant. Nor was it a political issue when the decision was made in the early 1970s to stop immigration of guest workers – even the left wing supported this. But with the arrival of large numbers of refugees from the mid-1980s onwards, the issue was redefined and became a salient question for voters. In Norway, the issue of immigration provided a second breakthrough for the *Progress Party*, whose share of the vote rose from 3.7 percent in the 1985 parliamentary election to 12.3 percent in the 1987 local elections (see Table 1). The party presented itself as the only political party opposing immigration and argued that money spent on asylum seekers should be used instead to care for the elderly and sick people of ethnic Norwegian background. This form of welfare chauvinism has been an important part of the political messages of the radical-right party ever since.

The immigration issue emerged on the political agenda in the second half of the 1980s, at a time when the number of asylum seekers increased greatly. In Norway, the figures rose from 200 in 1983 to 8,613 in 1987. This happened in the middle of the 1987 local election campaign. In the subsequent parliamentary election (1989) the *Progress Party* achieved even better results, rising to become the third largest party in the parliament and a player that could no longer be ignored.

In spite of the reorientation towards immigration as the rallying issue for the *Progress Party*, the party suffered a setback in the two subsequent elections. The main reason is that the anti-immigration line not only increased electoral support, but also led to a party split. A group of neo-liberals who adhered to ideological doctrines such as the free movement of labour had left their mark on the party's manifesto in the 1980s. According to this, the party would favour unrestricted immigration in principle, provided that immigrants could manage without public funding. The notion of unrestricted immigration temporarily disappeared

Election results for the Progress Party 1973–2009

Table 1

Year	1973*	1975*	1977	1979	1981	1983	1985
National/local	N	L	N	L	N	L	N
Share of vote (%)	5.0	1.4	1.9	2.5	4.5	6.3	3.7
Deputies	4	13	0	23	4	63	2
Mayors	-	0	-	0	-	0	-
Party leader	Anders Lange	Eivind Eckbo	Arve Lønnum	Hagen	Hagen	Hagen	Hagen

Year	1987	1989	1991	1993	1995	1997	1999
National/local	L	N	L	N	L	N	L
Share of vote (%)	12,3	13,0	7,0	6,3	12,0	15,3	13,4
Deputies	124	22	65	10	65	25	103
Mayors	0	-	0	-	0	-	1
Party leader	Hagen	Hagen	Hagen	Hagen	Hagen	Hagen	Hagen

Year	2001	2003	2005	2007	2009
National/local	N	L	N	L	N
Share of vote (%)	14,6	17,9	22,1	18,5	22,9
Deputies	26	127	38	140	41
Mayors	-	13	-	18	-
Party leader	Hagen	Hagen	Hagen	Jensen	Jensen

\* name: "Anders Lange's Party"

from the manifestos of the Norwegian party when the anti-immigration faction won out against the liberals in 1994. Four out of ten MPs left the party, along with the youth organization, which was a neo-liberal stronghold. In spite of this dramatic split, the party won a convincing victory in the subsequent local elections in 1995, when immigration emerged as a central issue once again. In the 1995 election survey, half of those who voted for the *Progress Party* mentioned immigration as the

most important issue for their choice of party.<sup>8</sup> During the 1995 election many voters saw the party as a single-issue party. About 90 percent of voters who regarded the immigration question as the most important issue voted for the *Progress Party*. This illustrates the power of the anti-immigration issue to attract voters.

The importance of the immigration issue for the *Progress Party* resembles that of other radical-right parties. A comparative study of seven successful far-right parties concluded, that “the appeal on immigration is the only issue that unites all successful populist right parties.”<sup>9</sup> However, disension on the immigration issue is not the only reason for electoral setbacks. The 1993 parliamentary election was held a year before the referendum campaign on Norwegian membership in the European Union. The *Progress Party* was divided on the question and had a rather low profile in the campaign.

### Increase in immigrants: From economic to cultural arguments

Even though the figures remain relatively low, the number of “non-Western” immigrants has increased rapidly in Norway. By 2010, “non-Western” immigrants and descendants from countries in Asia (including Turkey), Africa and Latin America constituted around 6 percent of the population. This represents an increase from a few thousand at the beginning of the 1970s to more than a quarter of a million in 2010. If we include migrants from countries in Eastern Europe outside the EU and the European Economic Area, the figure rises about one percentage point. It is also important to note that immigrants are not evenly distributed geographically. There is a large concentration in the capital, Oslo – around 20 percent of the city’s residents. Further, the age distribution is skewed, with a much higher proportion of immigrants among school children

8 Bjørklund, Tor. *Et lokalvalg i perspektiv* (Oslo: Tano-Aschehoug 1999) 183.

9 Ivarsflaten, Elisabeth. “What Unites Right-Wing Populists in Western Europe? Re-Examining Grievance Mobilisation Models in Seven Successful Cases.” *Comparative Political Studies* 41: 3 – 23 (2010) 3.

than in the population at large. Public attention has increasingly focused on social problems like ghettoisation, schooling, juvenile delinquency, language problems, unemployment, and welfare dependency – as well as prejudice and discrimination.

More generally, problems based on the contradictions between cultural demands and universal rights lead to conflicts, for example in cases of forced and arranged marriages and genital mutilation. There is an ongoing clash between feminism and multiculturalism.<sup>10</sup> Feminists have argued for human rights irrespective of culture. Multiculturalism, on the other hand, celebrates cultural diversity. New constellations have developed in the debate. Party leader Siv Jensen has attacked feminists on the left political flank for ignoring the suppression and suffering among immigrant women as a consequence of archaic sex roles.

Further, as Norway has traditionally been very homogeneous in religious and ethnic terms (with the exception of the Sami people in the far north), learning to live with cultural diversity has also proved rather difficult. This applies in particular to religion, which has become an important source of identity formation among immigrants. Within a few years Islam has become the second largest religious denomination after state Protestantism combined with Christian denominations outside the national Church. It is difficult to find reliable figures. According to official statistics, there were 84,000 Muslims in Norway in 2008.<sup>11</sup> However, not every Muslim is registered. A Norwegian expert on Muslims estimated the number to be between 120,000 and 150,000 (in 2008).<sup>12</sup> As a consequence of the concentration of immigrants in Oslo, around 10 percent of Oslo's inhabitants can be counted as Muslims.

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10 Hagelund, Anniken. "The Progress Party and the Problem of Culture: Immigration Politics and Right Wing Populism in Norway." *Movements of Exclusion: Radical Right-Wing Populism in the Western World* ed. Jens Rydgren (New York: Nova Science Publishers 2005).

11 Daugstad, Gunnlaug and Lars Østbye. "Et mangfold av tro og livssyn", *Samfunnsspeilet* 23: 14–21 (2009).

12 Vogt, Kari. *Islam på norsk. Moskeer og islamske organisasjoner i Norge* (Oslo: Cappelen Damm 2008).



In the manifestos of the *Progress Party* in the 1980s, immigration was discussed almost purely in economic terms. The party argued for supporting education in the Norwegian language, against subsidised housing, and against all sorts of affirmative action policies that were seen as favouring immigrants and discriminating against Norwegians. Thus, the party presented itself as the only party that did not discriminate according to ethnicity, religion and culture. However, its manifestos gradually began to reveal a shift from economic to cultural arguments, and was based on a critique of multiculturalism. The argument was that a multicultural society generates conflicts, whereas an ethnically homogeneous society was seen as a precondition for peace and harmony. Following on from this, by 2006 the *Progress Party* was recommending a very restrictive policy towards new immigration, proposing a quota of only 1,000 “non-Western” immigrants per year, including people seeking asylum and applying to reunite families. This proposal was strongly criticised and those who argued for excluding the party from governmental negotiations pointed to this statement, which they claimed violated international conventions such as the Geneva Human Rights Convention, to which Norway is a signatory. Finally, the party dropped the numerical specification and advocated a restrictive policy of allowing a maximum number that can be integrated.

The *Progress Party* has always argued against liberal rules for acquiring citizenship (which is granted almost automatically after seven years), and against the right of foreign citizens who can certify three years of legal residence to vote in local elections. Further, the party has demanded that the criteria for family reunification should be tightened up, and that immigrants convicted of crimes should be expelled from the country. In Denmark, these demands have been met to a large extent since 2001. For the Norwegian *Progress Party*, Denmark has been the model for integration policy. “Look at Denmark” is the catchphrase.

## The impact of anti-immigration policy on voters

When questioned about the most important issue in choosing a political party, only around 5 percent of responses in the last four Norwegian parliamentary elections (1997, 2001, 2005, 2009) have mentioned immigration (including those unable to single out any important issue).<sup>13</sup> However, a large majority of those who mention immigration as the most important issue for party choice voted for the *Progress Party*.<sup>14</sup> The *Progress Party* undoubtedly monopolises the issue of opposition to immigration. In addition, there is widespread and increasing support for the immigration policy advanced by the *Progress Party*. According to exit polls, a quarter of the voters in the 2001 parliamentary election supported the view that the *Progress Party* had the best policy on immigration and refugees. In the 2005 and 2009 parliamentary elections, this figure had risen to over one-third.

Since the second half of the 1980s, anti-immigration has probably been the most important rallying flag for the *Progress Party*. The party has endeavoured to maintain a socially respectable image. Its apparent goal is to go as far as possible in making anti-immigration statements without overstepping an invisible line. In 2009, when party leader Siv Jensen warned against a “dangerous crypto-Islamisation” of Norwegian society, many observers thought this line had been crossed.

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13 The sources are exit polls conducted by MMI (1997, 2001, 2005) and Synovate (2009).

14 In the most recent parliamentary elections the share who voted for the *Progress Party* among those who pointed to immigration as the most important issue was (according to MMI's/ Synovate 2009 exit polls): 66% (1997), 64% (2001), 80% (2005), and 85% (2009). The corresponding figures in the local elections are: 93% (1995), 76% (1999), 89% (2003) and 54% (2009). The local election surveys were conducted by Statistics Norway.

## Economic issues: Tax cuts and welfare

Even if immigration is a core issue, the *Progress Party* is not a single-issue party. In its early days as a spontaneous anti-tax movement, the “extravagance” of the welfare state was attacked to justify tax cuts. Those who allegedly abused various forms of social security, such as “irresponsible single mothers”, were criticised and sometimes stigmatised. However, the party argued that those who really needed help – without specifying exactly who – should be given better care. Today the party has become one of the most generous in terms of welfare, almost invariably protesting against proposals for welfare cuts such as raising the ceiling for prescription charges. The party has also argued for free dental care without any additional charges.<sup>15</sup> This is a more radical reform than any social democratic government has supported.

In addition, the *Progress Party* wants to reform the public sector, but one thing is clear: the government should foot the bill. The reforms include a number of policy positions such as outsourcing, partial privatisation of hospitals and budgeting according to the “taxameter” principle, i.e., allocating money in proportion to production in schools, universities, hospitals etc. Such principles have been increasingly implemented to a certain extent.

The *Progress Party* has especially emphasised the need for better care for the elderly, demanding that more money should be allocated to welfare programmes for the elderly. Indeed, the *Progress Party* has successfully created an image of being a party that promotes care for the elderly.

According to its manifestos, the *Progress Party* continues to advocate lower taxation, a policy that clearly favours wealthy people rather than

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15 2001 manifesto, cited by Skjørestad, Anne. “Et liberalistisk parti? Fremskrittspartiets politiske profil fra 1989 til 2005”, master’s thesis in history, (Bergen: University of Bergen 2008), 50.

ordinary workers. The message is that progressive taxation as well as inheritance tax should be abolished – a policy that contradicts the party's image as a defender of the common people. However, the party's anti-taxation policy does not have the same impact as it did in the early years.<sup>16</sup>

In terms of economics, the *Progress Party* has moved somewhat toward the political centre. The party still defines itself as outspokenly liberal – but not as clearly as before. According to its manifestos, up to the beginning of the 1990s the party argued fiercely against state ownership of business. At the end of the 1990s the *Progress Party* even proposed that the government should act as an investor in the market, and argued for the establishment of large government funds to ensure that Norwegian business be kept in Norwegian hands, thus preventing acquisitions by foreign investors. But the most remarkable shift is the party's new image as a pro-welfare party aiming to take up the legacy of the *Social Democrats*. The party is proposing to play the same role in the current century as the *Social Democratic Party* played in the 20th century as the defender of the common people. However, the cleavage structure is different: it is no longer the working class against the employers in alliance with capitalists. In his speech to the 30th anniversary of the launching of the party, Carl I. Hagen declared that the political goal was to unite employees and employers against the greedy state.<sup>17</sup> In addition, the party wants to decentralize negotiations by basing them in the individual workplace, thereby opposing the main strategy of the unions: centralised tariff negotiations. Thus the traditional conflict between the ordinary working class and capital apparently has no priority. In spite of this, the party enjoys considerable support among trade union members; in relative terms it is the strongest party among unskilled workers (see Table 2).

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16 Skjørestad (2008: 90).

17 Flote, Erling Andre. "Framstegsrørsla: for fagorganiserte flest? Framstegspartiet sitt syn på LO og arbeidslivspolitikkk 1973-2007," master thesis in history (Bergen: University of Bergen 2008) 95.

Social profile and attitudes of Progress Party voters relative to other political parties **Table 2**

	Socialist Left	Labour	Liberals	Centrist (CPP / C) <sup>3</sup>	Conservatives	Progress Party	Total
Attitudinal profile 2001 <sup>4</sup>							
Left-Right (0–10) <sup>1</sup>	3.43	4.27	5.60	5,60	7.26	7.16	5.52
Economic left-right (1–5) <sup>2</sup>	2.27	2.39	2.88	2,60	3.22	2.91	2.71
Value based left-right (1–5) <sup>2</sup>	2.86	3.41	2.85	3,33	3.53	4.08	3.39
Social profile 2009 <sup>5</sup>							
% men	34	45	56	42	53	62	49
% unskilled worker	7	8	3	10	5	19	9
% highest education	74	55	84	49	64	34	55

1 Self-placement from 0 (left-oriented) to 10 (right-oriented)

2 Additive index based on four statements (appendix) with an interval from 1 (left-oriented) to 5 (right-oriented).

3 CPP = Christian People's Party C = Centre Party

Sources: 4 Norwegian election survey 2001, 5 Synovates exit poll 2009

## The Progress Party: a governmental partner?

Since the 1997 parliamentary elections the *Progress Party* has emerged from every election as the third- or second-largest party in parliament. In some opinion polls the party has even been the largest. This raises the inevitable questions: How to capture power? How to enter office? The *Progress Party* has been eager to enter government, but has so far been rejected. For a period, the party was victim to the establishment's *cordon sanitaire*. All doors were closed. Paradoxically, the establishment's refusal to cooperate with the *Progress Party* in a government sustains the party's position as an anti-establishment party and gives it in an underdog image that readily attracts sympathy. This position fits well with the populist rhetoric about a split between people and elite.

Gradually, the *Progress Party* became acknowledged as a negotiation partner. Local pressure could be observed among Conservative deputies in Norwegian municipal councils to adopt a more cooperative attitude towards the *Progress Party*. The point is that the party's local platform has gradually been strengthened. After the 2007 local elections the *Progress Party* won the position of mayor in 18 municipalities. Norway has more than 400 local councils, and the *Progress Party* had been represented on the majority of them for several decades. Many local politicians have experienced the party as a reliable cooperation partner.

The *Progress Party's* long-term aim is to be a part of a non-socialist government. The leaders of two small centre parties – the *Christian People's Party* and Liberals – have flatly refused to join a government with the *Progress Party*. The *Conservative Party*, on the other hand, has changed its position (though not without internal problems and strife), and opened a window of opportunity for joint government office with the *Progress Party*. An important step towards a more conciliatory attitude to the *Progress Party* was a partial lifting of the *cordon sanitaire* after the 2001 parliamentary election, when the centre government (Bondevik I) was established with a very weak parliamentary base and support from the *Progress Party*. It did not end there: four years later a centre-right government (Bondevik II) came into office, again with parliamentary support from the *Progress Party*. However, in the long term Carl I. Hagen and the *Progress Party* were unhappy with their role as a partner without governmental positions. During the 2009 election campaign Hagen and his party surprisingly declared that they would no longer back Bondevik as prime minister unless the party could join the government.<sup>18</sup> However, the scenario of a non-socialist majority did not materialise because the opposition – the Red-Green alliance – won a majority in parliament.

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18 Hagen, Carl I. *Ærlig talt. Memoarer 1944-2007* (Oslo: Cappelen 2007) 492–502.

The *Progress Party* has still had no experience as a governmental partner. But the party is knocking on the governmental door, and under certain circumstances it may be invited in.

## New cleavages

The success of the *Progress Party* can be analysed in terms of a new, two-dimensional cleavage structure: an economic or distributional left-right axis and a value-based left-right axis. Basically, the meaning of the terms “left” and “right” has changed since they were first introduced during the French Revolution. At that time, the left-right dimension centred on a liberal fight for political rights, democracy and representative government. The meaning has always been dependent on the context.

In Norway, the economic left-right axis dominated from the early 20th century onwards. For short periods, however, the centre-periphery cleavage has challenged this dominance (as in the dispute about Norwegian membership in the European Union and the controversy in the interwar period over the ban on alcohol).<sup>19</sup> The economic left-right axis dates back to industrial society and arose from the conflict between labour and capital. This conflict crystallised into two blocs of political parties, which were called the socialist and bourgeois parties for many years. The divisive issues were questions regarding economic distribution, taxes and welfare, and state control vs. markets. Such economic conflicts over distribution will always remain relevant, even though some issues of state ownership or state control have become obsolete. In addition, broad support for the welfare state with its safety net and wide range of legal rights has softened the economic left-right dispute. Nevertheless, this cleavage remained dominant until it was challenged by a new value-based dimension.

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19 Rokkan, Stein. “Geography, religion and social class: Crosscutting cleavages in Norwegian politics.” *Party systems and voter alignment. Cross-national perspectives* ed. Seymour M. Lipset and Stein Rokkan (New York: The Free Press 1967).

With the emergence of the post-industrial society followed by globalisation, new issues such as environmentalism, gender equality and immigration came to the fore. Even though these conflicts are conceptually different, they increasingly converge empirically into a new value-based left-right dimension. We use the terms of “left” and “right” for describing both the value-based and the economic-based dimension. The value-based dimension approximates to what Ronald Inglehart has dubbed “materialism-post-materialism”.

The *Progress Party* voters are clearly located on the right flank when voters are asked to position themselves on the 0-10 left-right scale. In all election surveys run by the *Norwegian Electoral Programme* (with a sufficient number of respondents from the *Progress Party*) *Progress Party* voters have been somewhat to the left of Conservative voters, but by a rather small margin.<sup>20</sup> Self-placement is, however, a subjective measure.

An alternative to self-placement is to use more objective yardsticks. On the basis of four statements, an additive index has been constructed reflecting the economic axis. The same is applied to the value-based index (see appendix). Roughly the same statements have been used as in Danish election studies.<sup>21</sup> The empirical base is four election studies conducted by the *Norwegian Electoral Programme* (1989, 1993, 1997, 2001). The findings are quite consistent. Table 2 displays related data from the most recent election survey.

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20 As the categorization of the left-right scale differs somewhat from survey to survey the average value for the whole sample is set to 100 and the higher the figure the further to the right. The first figure refers to Conservative voters, the next to *Progress Party* voters (1981: 122/109; 1985: 132/129; 1989: 136/133; 1993: 140/137; 1997: 143/135; 2001: 131/130; 2005: 140/133).

21 In addition the same categorisation is used ending with two additive indices running from 1 to 5 with 1 as the most left-oriented standpoint and 5 as the most right-oriented. See Borre, Ole. “Issue voting i Danmark 2001-2005.” *Det nye politiske landskab. Folketingsvalget 2005 i perspektiv* ed. Jørgen Goul Andersen et al. (Viborg: Academica 2007).



The *Progress Party* voters are still on the right flank on the economic axis but clearly to the left of the Conservatives. The party is not located in an extreme position. However, on the value-based axis the *Progress Party* is at the outermost right. The self-placement position is influenced by the value-based dimension, what may explain why the difference between the Conservatives and the *Progress Party* voters are less visible on the self-placement axis than on the economic axis.

The economic and value-based left-right axes have different social compositions. The economic left-right dimension reveals a well-known pattern. At the left pole, we find lower class, people with low levels of education and people with low incomes, whereas the rich and well educated are located towards the right. Support for redistribution policies reflects social class. Education can be interpreted both as a class and as a socialisation variable. High education levels provide a better position in the class structure but also breed humanistic values that weigh towards the left on the value scale.

On the value axis, the left pole attracts people with high education and income, whereas less well-educated people tend to be attracted to the right. Consequently, the traditional working class is typically positioned on the right pole when it comes to values but to the left on economic issues. This cross-pressure, strengthened by the increasing impact of the value dimension, has alienated workers from their traditional parties. This has opened up opportunities for the *Progress Party*, as the party is closer to the average worker concerning the value-based dimension than socialist parties are in the Norway of today. The party is able to attract substantial numbers of working-class voters provided that its positions on the economic axis are not too far to the right.

As shown in Table 2, in relative terms the *Progress Party* attracts more unskilled workers than any other political party. Another characteristic is the weakness of support for it among people with high educational levels. A third feature is the party's indisputable appeal to men rather than women. All this confirms a social profile typical of parties of the radical right.

The success of the *Progress Party* is partly dependent on the impact of the value-based axis. In periods of prosperity with low unemployment and a rising living standard it can be easier to ignore distributional questions and emphasise value issues or the social-cultural cleavage. Consequently, a good economic outlook and low unemployment are beneficial to radical-right parties. The success of the *Progress Party* lends empirical support to such theses.<sup>22</sup>

## Conclusions

The *Progress Party* is currently not an extreme-right party, and cannot be described more generally as an extremist party. It has been through a process of normalisation in different phases. The party's history can be summed up by answers to the following question: where is the party office located? The first party office in 1973 was in the "Shipping Building" (Sjøfartsbygningen) in downtown Oslo. Eivind Eckbo, who succeeded Anders Lange as party leader after a short period, was one of the owners of the building. It is worth mentioning that Anders Lange himself had a special relationship to some rich ship-owners. His newspaper was funded by advertisements from shipping firms. The point is that an address at the "Shipping Building" had an aura of upper-class and right-wing politics. From the second half of the 1980s, the politicisation of the immigration issue heralded the *Progress Party's* second breakthrough. After the 1989 general election the party became the third largest party in parliament. It was time to expand the party offices. A new house was acquired at Youngstorget, the old assembly square for the traditional working class during the era of class struggle. The square has a long history of hosting the May Day celebrations. The party office of the *Progress Party* was adjacent to Labour's main office, with the labour union's headquarters just around the corner. According to the *Progress Party's* self-image, the party

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22 Bjørklund, Tor. "Unemployment and the Radical Right in Scandinavia: Beneficial or Non-Beneficial for Electoral Support?" *Comparative European Politics* 5: 245–263 (2007).

had become a successor to the old Labour Party. Old parties meant old solutions. The *Progress Party* saw itself as representing an answer to new challenges. In 2006 the *Progress Party* left its headquarters in the traditional working-class area and moved into a building in Oslo's main street (Karl Johans Gate) just opposite the parliament and with a view of the royal castle. The *Progress Party* had become a party with governmental ambitions, an anti-establishment party with the goal of conquering the establishment. The long haul from the margin to the mainstream seems to have come to an end.

The *Progress Party* has never held government office, yet the party has undoubtedly exercised an influence on Norwegian policy. One obvious political effect is a more restrictive immigration policy. This can most easily be observed at local level. The municipal councils have the authority to grant permission to refugees and asylum seekers to settle in the municipality. A study has documented that there is a direct relation between a rising share of deputies from the *Progress Party* and a more restrictive policy resulting in refusal of permission to settle.<sup>23</sup>

The *Progress Party* has been analysed in relation to a new, two-dimensional structure of political conflict: an economic-based and a value-based axis. An extreme position can be observed for the *Progress Party* only on the value-based axis, but it is extreme only in relation to the political establishment. Around one-third of voters regard the *Progress Party's* immigration policy as the best among all the political parties. In a broader perspective, the *Progress Party* has emerged as a result of the transformation from an industrial to a post-industrial society with new conflicts such as immigration and globalisation that have potential to supersede older conflicts such as labour versus capital.

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23 Steen, Anton. "Hvorfor tar kommunene imot 'de fremmede'? Eliter og lokal skepsis." *Det nære demokratiet – lokalvalg og lokal deltakelse* ed. Jos Saglie (Oslo: Abstrakt forlag 2009).

## Appendix:

### The Economic Left-Right Axis 2001

- 1 High incomes should be taxed more heavily than they are presently (disagree – agree).
- 2 What is your opinion about social security expenditures: should they (a) be reduced in future, or should we (b) maintain them at the present level, or should they (c) be extended further (reduced – extended).
- 3 We should reduce governmental control of private business (agree – disagree).
- 4 In Norway economic differences have been sufficiently reduced (agree – disagree).

### The Value-based Left-Right axis 2001

- 1 Immigration constitutes a serious threat to our national culture (agree – disagree).
- 2 Economic growth should be ensured by building up industry, even though this may be in conflict with environmental interests (agree – disagree).
- 3 Foreign aid to developing countries should (a) be cut, (b) be maintained at the present level or (c) be increased (cut – increased).
- 4 Criminal offences are better prevented through pre-emption and guidance than tougher punishment (agree – disagree).

Source: Norwegian Electoral Programme





## Strategies against the radical right and for a pluralist, forward-looking Europe

Taken as a whole, the contributions in the present volume clearly illustrate the common features and differences within the radical right in Europe. Analyses of the current phenomenon of the various radical-right movements and a differentiated analysis of their origins are fundamental for considering counter-strategies. Obviously, there is no single, generally valid strategy that guarantees an optimal way of combating the radical right. In fact, strategies can be successful only if they match up to the specific political and social context and if the maximum possible number of players from politics, the legal system, the media, educational institutions and civil society are agreed upon them.

However, we can identify general requirements for strategies against right-wing extremism and xenophobia that form a framework broad enough to allow a European perspective. For concrete work in a particular place, this framework must be filled out with individual measures and activities specific to the situation and location. But for now, we shall now proceed to take a bird's eye view and answer the basic questions as to what preconditions have to be created for maximum success in combating radical-right-wing attacks, parties and attitudes.

## 1. A comprehensive approach: Identifying and naming problems and strategically combating the radical right

**Considering the conditions of emergence of the radical right and countering them:** The important thing is to understand how the radical right arose as a phenomenon, and particularly the current success of right-wing populist parties in Europe in terms of its social origins, before we can develop meaningful counter-strategies. The introduction to the present volume includes a description of crisis situations in European societies that favour the radical right: a crisis of distribution and access, a crisis of politics (including a crisis of representation), and an identity crisis. It will not be possible to combat the radical right successfully without tackling these crises and the current problems of European residents and their societies. Real problems such as existential fears arising from social transformation must be discussed, and problematic social developments have to be countered. Issues such as “social justice” should not be left to radical-right-wingers. Political parties and people in positions of responsibility should talk about present social and economic problems and find constructive answers to them. It is also important to find up-to-date forms of political participation that reach out to groups which no longer feel represented by the political elite.

**Identifying different forms of the radical right:** Comprehensive observation of the radical right is the basis for developing any potentially successful strategy. To oppose the radical right effectively, we have to start with its present form. For example, it would be too short-sighted merely to focus on political parties or terrorist activities. The contributions in the present volume describe various manifestations of the radical right including political parties, organizations and the subcultural milieu. Another essential point is not to focus solely on (violent) perpetrators or party members, but to examine the different groups (e.g. voters, sympathisers) that support the radical right to various degrees. Varying counter-strategies are required for different groups. In all, collecting current, differentiated data, monitoring, and regular reporting are necessary for



developing a solid strategy. To achieve the most realistic picture possible, it is highly advisable to consult players from civil society as well as from government institutions.

**Establishing spheres of competence and tasks, informing and publicising:** Whether it concerns a small project, work in a locality, a supra-regional initiative or national strategy, planning and coordination are indispensable. If spheres of responsibility and tasks are not clearly negotiated and delineated, things are likely to go wrong. This also means thinking about the funding problems that frequently affect players in civil society, and finding ways to counteract them.

Another important aspect is providing information about the radical right to the general public and to persons and institutions relevant for counter-strategies, so as to create a broad base of opposition. Information on counter-strategies should also be provided, and publicity created for them. In doing this, it is more convincing to stand up and argue for one's own values and concepts (pluralism, democracy, individualism, equality, freedom, and do on).

**Firmly establishing quality und sustainability, enabling further development:** The development of quality criteria for work against right-wing radicalism, and the formulation of goals, can assist in promoting quality and developing effectiveness. In granting project funds, it is helpful to decide on the basis of clear guidelines. Sustained work against right-wing radicalism can only be achieved by players and projects working over the long term. Consequently, it is meaningful to integrate successful projects and measures into the core work of players from civil society or government organizations, as a way of establishing a firm structure (including in schools). Just as agreement on quality criteria or standards is essential for successful projects, it is useful to record new experiences or project work and make them fruitful for ongoing work. This can be done by continual evaluation and further development of quality criteria and measures based on the results.

## 2. Political involvement: Confront, don't cooperate

**Non-cooperation:** There is no easy answer to the question about how far to interact politically with the radical right. The extent of involvement with the radical right ranges from ignoring it or deliberately excluding it from political affairs to erecting a *cordon sanitaire* (as in Belgium or France), to partial cooperation (in Denmark the radical-right-wing Danish People's Party tolerates the government and demands concessions in return), right up to full cooperation (such as with the FPÖ in Austria, which is part of the government, or the radical-right-wing parties Berlusconi has integrated into the government or into his own party). None of these options for dealing with the radical right has automatically led to a decline in right-wing radicalism. On the contrary: in Denmark, the far-right party has made gains through cooperation, while cooperation in Austria failed to prevent a comeback for the radical right. Political cooperation with the radical right has contributed to undermining funding and legal means of combating racism and fostering human rights. In Denmark, for instance, the operational scope of the National Institute for Human Rights has been reduced. Even if some radical-right-wing parties leave the political arena in the short term due to internal quarrels or other failings, if no critical debate with them has taken place they leave their mark on social discourse and national legislation (in relation to immigration, for example). In this respect, the strategy of *debunking* the radical right by giving them political responsibility fails to work, and instead leads to concessions to these parties and their ideologies.

**Accepting political responsibility:** It is also not very helpful when centrist players in positions of political responsibility think that they can control the radical right's agenda by promoting a similar agenda themselves (such as tightening up on immigration or on people without legal documents). It is much more likely that this will render radical right opinions rather more acceptable to society as a whole – without overcoming really serious social problems. The democratic elites should bear the costs incurred by a genuine battle against right-wing radicalism. They should not allow themselves to be tempted by short-term gains, such as those appar-

ently offered by racist election campaigns, but should take the offensive against *Group Focused Enmity*, and publicly discuss and criticise the demands of the radical right. Debates on human rights and on attacks against specific groups (especially Roma, Jews, Muslims and homosexuals) are elementary for a sustained fight against right-wing radicalism. Politicians and citizens have a duty to prevent a “creeping spread” of radical-right-wing ideologies and the concomitant threat to our pluralist society.

**Democracy should not be restricted, but continually fought for:** The *cordon sanitaire* policy – political exclusion of radical right-wing parties –, no longer works if the parties become so big that their overwhelming size makes them impossible to ignore. In this case there is no alternative: the *cordon sanitaire* has to be lifted and the democratic parties are forced to work with radical-right-wingers. Simply ignoring the radical right and its analysis of problems can lead to strengthening it, just as cooperation can, or adopting elements of its ideology. The democratic parties have to take an arduous but ultimately successful path: they have to go on the offensive and argue openly with the radical right and its ideologies. This strategy also means preventing the radical right from posing as the only true representative of the *little man*, as the honest voice of the nation, of the people who have been excluded from the political elite for dubious reasons. Of course it is useful to expose corruption and discrepancies between the moral conduct of radical-right-wing politicians and their ideological demands. The focus of a direct debate, however, should be to expose radical-right-wing demands and take them to their absurd conclusions. Legal methods against extreme-right-wing parties – such as no-protest zones, bans on using public assembly halls, bans on demonstrations – are important means in the battle against the radical right. However, in each new case it is always important to find the right level, so as not to infringe on rights that are necessary for life in a democracy. Instead of accepting restrictions on democratic rights, it is necessary to conduct debate consciously and, at the same time, not to accept the participation of the radical right in political decision-making.

### 3. Determining the focus: Protection against discrimination, and diversity and equality

#### **Focus on protection against discrimination and protection of victims:**

The shared basis of the radical right is “group-focused enmity” (Wilhelm Heitmeyer). In radical right-wing thought, only one homogeneous ethnic group (that does not exist in reality) can form a “healthy nation” or an “intact national body”. Their ethnically defined “we-group” is constituted by demarcation from “foreign groups” (as defined by this concept). The alleged “foreigners” are supposed to be excluded, by violence if necessary. A key element of strategies against right-wing radicalism is the protection of (potential) victims. The EU has shown that it is prepared to act in this area by issuing anti-discrimination directives and recommendations against xenophobia and racism. The guidelines have been adapted on a national basis and implemented in the EU member countries so that changes could be made in national legislation. In some cases, however, there are difficulties with implementation. One possibility of improving this process would be to deploy commissioners or set up observer offices that could initiate reprimands if necessary. Aside from the European level, the national and local levels are also very important for countering discrimination and hate crime. In some countries, action at the local level may be easier than multilateral efforts. In the UK, for example, in the run-up to the 2010 general election, the three major parties were persuaded to agree not to use any racist argumentation in their campaigns. Another tactic for the sustained campaign against discrimination is to focus on developing anti-discrimination awareness among employees in government institutions (such as state administration and the executive).

Counter-measures often concentrate too heavily on perpetrators and still too little on (potential) victims. Continual monitoring of hate crimes is indispensable for gathering information on this problem and making the public and politicians more aware of it. Whereas every government condemns hate-motivated violence, there is no unified position on the topic

of hate speech. The most controversial issue is how to find the right balance between the duty to grant citizens the right to free speech and the obligation to protect citizens from discrimination.

**Focus on promoting diversity and equality:** According to the radical-right worldview, heterogeneity, particularly ethnic and religious diversity, is regarded as the main culprit for problematic social and individual situations. This makes it all the more important for effective combating of right-wing radicalism to emphasise diversity and to foster a sense of responsibility and individual participation (in the sense of one's own role in a democratic society). Not least, this includes improving political education: to explain our society (of migration), based on the principle of diversity, to take the individual and his/her needs seriously, and to strengthen his/her abilities – this is how heterogeneity can be made understandable as an individual and social statement of fact. Every individual must be able to demand equality or equal opportunity, regardless of social or cultural background.

#### **4. Allowing civil society to develop, and strengthening civic commitment**

**Create strong players in civil society and strengthen civic commitment:** These are indispensable partners in the battle against the radical right. Civic commitment in society often stems from grass-roots activity or anti-fascist or liberal-democratic groups. They keep watch on the radical-right scene in their locality, organize protest campaigns, often in the form of demonstrations and concerts, or assist victims. These players strongly influence the mobilisation of the population against right-wing radicalism. Yet civic protest “in the streets” not only helps to mobilise people and form their opinions, it also greatly assists in pushing back radical-right-wingers for example, by breaking up no-go areas and showing that radical-right-wingers and their ideas are unwelcome (in a locality, for instance).

**Civil society and state:** Whereas the state should not yield up its monopoly on violence, and acts of violence and contraventions of human rights as a whole should be punished, it is still important that state institutions open up towards civil society and do not shy away from common activities on an equal basis with citizens. An important task of civic institutions is to support governments in monitoring and evaluating data (such as information on hate crime). In this context, funding for NGOs is often a controversial issue – in some countries, civic activities against right-wing radicalism are state-funded. In particular, civic organizations operating in trouble spots and in structurally weak regions require attention and support. Basic conditions for successful work are shared communication, enabling learning processes and free scope for their implementation. Cooperation and networking are important to prevent right-wing radicalism from various perspectives and to bring the maximum number of social forces onside. To achieve this, it is essential that governmental and civic players cooperate and implement joint measures.

## 5. Education for democracy and human rights

**Develop skills for a pluralist society:** It is of fundamental importance to establish a political culture open to pluralism so as to form a shield against radical-right-wing, violent and inhuman attitudes. Education in school and in the family is vital for this. This is where we can show that foreigners or members of minorities are not to blame for social or individual problems. Aside from purely factual knowledge, experience of diversity is important for people to be able to look beyond their own front door and find their feet in a heterogeneous society.

Institutions like nursery schools and schools can contribute to the development and formation of social and emotional capacities. Emotional balance, the ability to see things through other people's eyes, an appropriate sense of one's own worth, the ability to cope with conflict, openness and curiosity are skills that arm children and young people against the radical right. Early and continuous fostering of these social and emotional skills with the maximum possible degree of individual attention is a key issue.

Children and young people can be given the skills to find their feet in a plural and diverse society and examine their environment critically.

**Transmit values and make democracy come alive:** Preventive educational concepts should be oriented towards values like tolerance, human rights and diversity; their goal should be to encourage a democratic, participatory, and motivating culture of teaching and learning. Prevention of violence and extremism are important elements in a broadly democratic school development. Programmes and coaching in schools, such as anti-racist coaching or Holocaust education, are already underway in countries such as the UK, Denmark and France. However, there is a noticeable shift (at least semantically) in the educational perspective: today, less is said about combating racism and right-wing extremism, and the emphasis is more on promoting equality or equal opportunity.

Democracy can and should come alive. It should not be reduced to parliamentarism, but requires participation beyond the ballot box. In this sense, opportunities for participation, whether in school or the community, should be fostered.<sup>1</sup>

## Conclusion

A multi-layered strategy against right-wing radicalism is the key to success. There is no single method or rapid-fire strategy that can neutralise the social and political threat posed by the radical right. These are the cornerstones of a strategy for a pluralist and forward-looking Europe: a thorough, differentiated analysis of the radical right and current social problems; a calm, consistent political struggle with the radical right; special focus on protection against discrimination, and on promoting diversity and equal opportunities; strengthening of civic commitment and players in civil society; and education for democracy and human rights.

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1 Good examples of projects that encourage participation are the project initiated in Belgium, "School without racism – with courage", and the Saxon project, "Show courage for democracy". Both projects have developed into supraregional and transnational networks.





## Seven theses to conclude with: Together against right-wing extremism in Europe

The country analyses and articles in this book illustrate in a vivid but also alarming way how right-wing extremism threatens Europe's democracies and societies. Together with the recent socio-political developments in Europe they emphasize that it is imperative to fight against right-wing extremism, xenophobia, racism, and exclusion in a common and decisive manner. Working and fighting for democracy do not only affect politics, but require a continuous commitment of all players of society: Whether entrepreneurs, scientists, church members, trade unionists, club members, teachers, people committed to socio-political issues, or ordinary citizens – everyone is called upon to stand up for human rights and democratic principles.

But what are the effective and creative ways to fight group-focused enmity and to create a coexistence based upon solidarity and democracy? Which players are needed, and which approaches have proved effective? What is being done in Europe to counter ostracism, denigration, and ideas of inequality? What roles do politics and society play, and what are the next steps to be taken?

These are the questions examined by the previous article on strategies against the radical right and for a pluralistic, sustainable Europe from an academic point of view. They also guide the debates led within the framework of the FES' work as a continuous dialogue between representatives of politics, science, and civil society. As a result of these discussions, seven core theses are briefly summarised below in order to contribute to further political debate. These theses originate from the results of working groups of about 150 international experts that met in November 2010

in Berlin at a so-called “Open Space” (a participative conference format) for democracy, to exchange ideas on European synergies in the work against the extreme right, and on further steps for democracy. The summary therefore does not claim to be complete but focuses on some core aspects as a complement to the elaborations of the previous article. It is based on socio-political recommendations for action developed by seven working groups and discussed with high-ranking representatives of European politics and central players in the work for democracy – among others, representatives of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), of the Network against Nationalism, Racism, and Fascism, of UNITED for Intercultural Action, of the European Network against Racism (ENAR), and of the European Agency for Human Rights (FRA).

**1. Efficient politics and work for democracy in Europe will succeed only through cooperation of all players in European societies.  
A European strategy against right-wing extremism is long overdue.**

The will and the commitment to overcome barriers between different levels of action and social domains, to enter into an interdisciplinary dialogue or, if necessary, to coordinate with each other are fundamental prerequisites of efficient social effort for democracy. Regarding the most necessary analysis of the extreme right scene, this particularly applies to the urgently needed exchange between science, civil society practice, state enforcement agencies and politics. National and international approaches have been heterogeneous so far and harbour a wealth of experience, but an efficient fight against the extreme right requires a coordinated and coherent procedure on a European level. Considering the respective political and social context, this is the only way to develop and implement a European strategy against right-wing extremism that is urgently required. Such a strategy should not only focus on organized right-wing extremism, i.e. on parties and extreme right party cadres, but must also aim at its manifestations in subculture and social movements. Furthermore, a successful approach must also consider extreme-right ideas

“in the center of our societies”. The work for democracy must focus on civil society initiatives on a local level, since they target anti-democratic attitudes in mainstream society, too. Institutionalised and professional civil society commitment requires continuous, long-term financial support and development in terms of content. A further prerequisite for an expedient discussion on right-wing extremism is profound and continuous observation and research of the extreme right’s different manifestations across Europe.

## **2. Using the law against the right wing – Exhaust all legal and suppressive means.**

Law and jurisdiction are crucial strategies for defending democracy. Purposefully used, law and law enforcement can significantly contribute to improving the situation in Europe. This applies first of all to suppression through recognising, documenting, and prosecuting extreme-right crimes. After all, the 100,000 racist crimes committed in the European Union in one year are only the tip of the iceberg. Too often, courts and police lack the necessary expert knowledge and fail to adequately implement or apply existing methods. Embarking on a homogenous European procedure linked to the necessary documentation options with accessibility for and cooperation with players working in victim care (see thesis 1), for instance, is long overdue.

Additionally, Europe should urgently send clear, humane signals against exclusion and discrimination by proactive policy measures for human rights, in particular in sensitive fields such as immigration, integration, and anti-discrimination. The fact that diversity is something positive for European societies should not be given only lip service but should be expressed in European legislation, too. A legal framework aiming at integration would counteract the often negative image of immigrants and would take the wind out of the extreme-right’s sails.

### **3. The (new) media play a central role in fighting right-wing extremism. Informed journalists and media competency are an imperative.**

The media are facing a central task for two reasons: First, it is the journalists and reporters who pay attention to right-wing extremism, especially to its victims by disclosing violence and alarming developments to the public. Along with this task of informing, media reporting also influences the attributions, values, and problem analyses that take root in the whole of society. Thus, when it comes to the question whether socio-political problems are considered a common challenge, and whether the extreme right will manage to exploit them for their own purposes, the media bear crucial responsibility when reporting on sensitive topics such as integration, crime, immigration, labour, or social policies.

Meanwhile, a highly professional and broad-based spectrum of extreme-right media has developed to this end. Particularly on the Internet, their presence and activities are difficult to contain or to prevent due to diverse legal positions. The most suitable protective factor for young media or Internet users when dealing with right-wing extremist webpages – often not apparent as such at first glance, like pages that present historical revisionism – is media competence. Along with the necessary information work, the Internet and the social networks, in particular, could be increasingly used as “counter-platforms” or for exchange and more effective communication in anti-racist work.

### **4. It is up to the municipalities.**

Democracy is lived especially on the municipal level, and is easily threatened there, too. Thus it is not surprising that this is the extreme right’s main level of action (see country analyses and introduction in this book) and it is at this level where – not only after cases of open violence – active and creative civil society commitment is required to defend our democratic culture. Commitment against right-wing extremism often means

conducting campaigns on the occasion of a specific event or development, which can be designed in a number of different ways. It is important to mobilise and involve as many different players and age groups as possible. Profound knowledge of local challenges and of the right-wing scene is also essential. When the action or the campaign is completed, the results should be consolidated as a continuous civil society awareness and commitment. The publication “Manual for dealing with right-wing extremism on a municipal level” by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung provides examples for municipal strategies of action (see list of FES publications in the appendix)<sup>1</sup>.

## **5. Culture and sports are important and rewarding fields for the work for democracy.**

Be it in football stadiums of professionals or in youth clubs of local sports teams, bands, music clubs, or theatre groups – inhumane symbols and slogans must be consistently revealed, banned, and prosecuted. With the help of a democratic art and fan culture, creative artists and sports clubs could assume exemplary socialisation functions here. Particularly celebrities from the sports, film, theatre, or music industries can serve as important anti-racist idols by public advocacy.

## **6. Support and involve minorities and marginalised groups: Fight anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and anti-Ziganism.**

Groups or minorities that face prejudice, exclusion, discrimination, or, in the worst case, radical violence on grounds of religion, ethnic origin, or other characteristics, must receive Europe’s support and solidarity. This is first of all to be organized by respective protection schemes for victims and enhanced minority rights and associations. However, such support also affects regulations for participation and incentive mechanisms en-

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1 “Handbuch für die kommunale Auseinandersetzung mit dem Rechtsextremismus” (available only in German).

sure that people with heterogeneous backgrounds, religions, or appearances equally participate in all spheres of society. A not only rhetorical European welcome culture for asylum-seekers or immigrants would be a good example of a democratic and humane step towards overcoming intercultural challenges, for which the extreme right has so far monopolised the prerogative of (negative) interpretation. Naturally, education and the media play a crucial role in preventing prejudices against “the other” (see theses 3 and 7).

## **7. Education is the no. 1 protective factor across Europe.**

The higher people’s education, the less likely they are to support extreme right slogans and organizations. This fact is not only a result of scientific research but has proven itself in everyday life. Education in human rights, intercultural coexistence and democracy, as well as education on the emergence and the logic of enemy stereotypes and exclusion ideologies must be part of the curricula of our society’s instances of socialisation. Children and students constitute the main target group of right-wing extremists. It is essential not only to learn democratic culture as a part of the curriculum in kindergartens and schools, but to experience it in everyday practice. It is obvious, however, that there is an enormous demand for action in out-of-school education and for adults, too. Further educational efforts and the capacity to deal with racism and discrimination are therefore urgently required in companies, employers’ associations, and for employees in justice and police authorities, administrations, universities, churches, and trade unions.



## Appendix

## About the authors

### **Suzette Bronkhorst**

Secretary-General of the International Network Against Cyber Hate (INACH), Amsterdam

Born in 1958, Suzette Bronkhorst is the Director of the Magenta Project and co-founder of the Magenta Foundation. Having worked as an editor, sound engineer and disk jockey, in 1992 she co-founded Magenta to raise public awareness and organize projects surrounding anti-racism/discrimination and human rights issues. Among many other projects, Suzette Bronkhorst started the world's first hotline for hate on the Internet and has created several awareness campaigns on extremism and hate against Muslims. As Director of the Magenta Project, she is responsible for the management of I CARE (Internet Centre Anti Racism Europe), including the organization of all projects, educational initiatives and outreach. Through I CARE, she reported live from the World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa. Suzette Bronkhorst is co-founded of the International Network Against Cyber Hate (INACH) and today serves as the INACH secretary general and its spokesperson.

### **Tor Bjørklund**

Department of Political Science, University of Oslo

Tor Bjørklund, born 1947, is a professor of political science at the University of Oslo. He earned his PhD from the same university with a dissertation about referendums. Bjørklund he served for several years as editor of *Tidsskrift for samfunnsforskning* (Journal of Social Science). In 1995 he initiated the Norwegian Local Election Program. He has written books and articles related to subjects such as elections, referendums and political parties. A series of articles about radical right in Scandinavia have been written with his Danish colleague professor Jørgen Goul Andersen. Their first publication was "Structural Changes and New Cleavages: the Progress Parties in Denmark and Norway" (Acta Sociologica 1990).



## **Frauke Büttner**

Mobile Counseling against Right-wing Extremism, Berlin

Born in 1966 in Germany, Frauke Büttner mostly grew up in Spain. After graduating from Free University of Berlin with a degree in German literature, Spanish and political science, she worked as a consultant at the Mobile Consultancy against Right-Wing Extremism in the federal state of Thuringia (MOBIT) from 2002 to 2004. Amongst many other things, she here worked on developing educational concepts to anti-racial education. From 2005 to 2006 she worked at a networking position against right-wing extremism (moskito) in Berlin. In 2007, Frauke Büttner did research on contemporary forms of right-wing extremism and effective counter-strategies in Spain and there also worked with the NGO "Movimiento contra la Intolerancia". Since 2008, she is a consultant with the Mobile Consultancy against Right-Wing Extremism in Berlin.

## **Jean-Yves Camus**

Institute for International and Strategic Relations (IRIS), Paris

Born in 1958, Jean-Yves Camus is an associate researcher at the Institute de Relations Internationales et Stratégiques (IRIS) and a professor at the Institute Universitaire d'Etudes Juives Elie Wiesel in Paris. He is a graduate of the Institut d'Etudes Politiques and graduated in contemporary history (Ecoles des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales) as well as in Political Science (Université Paris-I Sorbonne). He contributes to the annual report of the Stephen Roth Institute for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism and Racism at the University of Tel-Aviv. His fields of expertise include the extreme right, anti-Semitism and radical political movements in Europe on which he has published widely.

## **Ronald Eissens**

General Director of the NGO Magenta Foundation, Netherlands

Ronald Eissens is the General Director and co-founder of the International Human Rights and antiracism NGO Magenta Foundation based in Amsterdam. He has been responsible for national and international anti-racism and Human Rights projects since 1992. Along with Co-founder Suzette Bronkhorst, Ronald instituted the world's first Hotline for hate on the Internet, created the First Sailing Internet connection (as part of a

national anti-racism education project), co-founded the International Network Against Cyber Hate (INACH), organized food and medicine transports to the besieged city of Sarajevo, reported live through I CARE for the World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa, web-casted the name reading of all Dutch Jews murdered during the Holocaust and created awareness campaigns on extremism, anti-Semitism, Holocaust denial and hate against Muslims. Ronald has published extensively on the subject of Cyber Hate. He's an expert on Anti-Semitism, Holocaust denial & the Internet and an OSCE expert on Cyber Hate.

### **Roberto Chiarini**

University of Milano

Roberto Chiarini is professor of contemporary history at University of Milano. He is the chairman of the Centro studi e documentazione sul periodo storico della Repubblica Sociale Italiana, a historical research institute working on the Italian Social Republic (1943–1945). He has participated in many national and international conferences and is a regular contributor to Italy's most important newspapers. His areas of expertise include socialism, liberalism, neofascism and the Italian postwar extreme right.

### **Christopher T. Husbands**

London School of Economics

After graduating with a master's degree in economics from the University of Manchester, Christopher Husbands earned his PhD at the University of Chicago, USA. Since 1978, he has been working as a lecturer at the London School of Economics and teaches sociology and political science. Christopher Husbands has conducted extensive research on the extreme right for more than forty years. His early work focussed on "George Wallace's movement" in the United States while he later carried out research on the *National Front* in Great Britain and subsequently published on the extreme right in other West-European countries, including Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, The Netherlands and Switzerland. He also writes about the contemporary extreme right in Great Britain. Since 1990, he has been associate editor of the journal *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. Additionally, he has worked in related areas, including legal research on discrimination and political-asylum policies.

## **Nora Langenbacher**

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung

Nora Langenbacher, born 1981 in Heidelberg, studied political science, North American Studies as well as psychology and pedagogy at the Free University of Berlin. As Fulbright scholar, she studied peace and conflict resolution as well as US foreign policy at the American University in Washington, D.C. from 2003 to 2004. During her studies, she worked at both the German Bundestag as well as the US Congress and as an academic assistant at the Free University of Berlin and the American University. She earned her degree (state exam) in 2007 and has since been working for the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES). There, she first worked in the fields of family-, women/gender- as well as youth policy, before she became the coordinator of the FES-Project on “Combating right-wing extremism” in May 2009.

## **Heléne Lööv**

Deputy director of the Uppsala Centre for Police-related Science, Sweden

Born in 1961, associate professor at the department of History of Uppsala University and deputy director of the Uppsala Centre for Police-related Science. Lööv has served in a number of state commissions and as a Swedish representative in EU bodies and the Council of Europe. She has published three books and numerous articles on National Socialism, racism, anti-Semitism, religious and political violence, women in the radical right, and state response to political extremism. Lööv is currently working in the EU-financed project “Good practice for dialogue and communication as strategic principles for policing political manifestations in Europe” (GODIAC) run by the Swedish National Police Board.

## **Susi Meret**

Department of Culture and Global Studies, Aalborg University

Susi Meret, Ph.D, Assistant Professor at the Department of Culture and Global Studies, Aalborg University, Denmark. Her major research interests are comparative politics, radical-right parties, migration politics and voting attitudes towards ethnic minorities. Among her publications the

Ph.D. dissertation /The Danish People's Party, the Italian Northern League and the Austrian Freedom Party in a comparative perspective: Party ideology and electoral support/, SPIRIT Ph.D. series, Aalborg University 2010 and together with Hans-Georg Betz the co-authored article / Revisiting Lepanto: The political mobilisation against Islam in contemporary Europe, /in Malik M. (ed.) /Anti-Muslim Prejudice. Past and Present/, Routledge 2010. Recently she has worked at the co-edition of the anthology /Irregular Migration in a Scandinavian Perspective/, Shaker Publishing 2010.

### **Michael Minkenberg**

Max-Weber-Chair for German and European Studies,  
New York University, USA

Since 2007 Michael Minkenberg holds the Max-Weber-Chair for German and European Studies at New York University. In Germany, he holds the Chair of Comparative Politics at the European University Viadrina in Frankfurt (Oder). He has earned his M.A. in American Government from Georgetown University in 1984 and his Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of Heidelberg in 1989. Michael Minkenberg has taught comparative politics at the universities of Göttingen and Heidelberg as well as at Cornell University and Columbia University in the USA. His fields of research include the radical right in liberal democracies, immigration, nationalism and the politics of citizenship as well as the relationship between religion and politics in Western societies. Among his numerous books is *The Radical Right in Europe: An Overview* (2008).

### **Rafal Pankowski**

Never Again Association, Warsaw

Rafal Pankowski lives in Warsaw, where he works for the non-governmental organization "Never Again" Association and the East Europe Monitoring Centre. Additionally, he is the deputy editor of *Nigdy Wiecej* ("Never Again") magazine and a lecturer at the Collegium Civitas in Warsaw. Rafal Pankowski is the author of "Neo-Fascism in Western Europe" (Polish Academy of Sciences: 1998), *Racism and Popular Culture* (Trio: 2006) and "The Populist Radical Right" in Poland: The Patriots

(Routledge: 2010). He has written widely on racism, populism and nationalism for publications including “The Economist”, Index on Censorship and Searchlight.

### **Britta Schellenberg**

Geschwister-Scholl Institute for Political Sciences, University of Munich

Britta Schellenberg is a research analyst at the “Centrum für angewandte Politikforschung“ (C.A.P – Centre for Applied Policy Research) and a lecturer at the Geschwister-Scholl Institute for Political Sciences at Ludwig-Maximilians-University, Munich. After study visits in Heidelberg, Jerusalem, London, New York, and Berlin she has coordinated several projects on the extreme right at Munich University, for instance in cooperation with the Bertelsmann foundation. Her main focus of research is xenophobia, anti-Semitism, the radical right, strategies against right-wing radicalism, and migration. Britta Schellenberg is the author of a wide range of publications, among others Bertelsmann Stiftung (ed.): Strategies for Combating Right-Wing Extremism in Europe, Gütersloh 2009 (responsible with Orkan Kösemen) and Unterrichtspaket Demokratie und Rechtsextremismus. Auseinandersetzung mit Rechtsextremismus anhand rechtsextremer Musik (Schwalbach 2011).

### **Martin Schulz**

President of the Socialist group in the European Parliament

Born in 1955, Martin Schulz managed his own book-shop in Würselen between 1982 and 1994. He was also politically active in the community of Würselen which is situated close to the French, Dutch and Belgium border and was elected mayor of Würselen in 1987, a mandate he held until 1998. In 1994 he was elected to the European Parliament. Since 2004, Martin Schulz has been President of the Socialist group in the European Parliament. In 1999, he was elected a member of the party executive committee as well as the presidium of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) and still serves in both positions.

**Damir Skenderovic**

University of Fribourg, Switzerland

Damir Skenderovic is an associate professor of contemporary history at the University of Fribourg in Switzerland. He studied history, social anthropology and communication sciences and was a Visiting Scholar at the Center for European Studies at New York University, USA. From 2004 to 2007, he was co-director of the research project Radical-right-Wing Populist Parties and Politics of Migration in Switzerland funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF). Additionally, he is co-directing the SNSF-funded research project Language and Identity Politics. His research focuses on the radical right, identity politics, nationalism, migration, and 1968 in Western Europe, with a particular focus on Switzerland. Among his recent books is *The Radical Right in Switzerland: Continuity and Change, 1945–2000* (Oxford, New York: 2009).

**Pal Tamas**

Director of the Research Institute for Sociology, Academy of Sciences, Budapest

Pal Tamas is a renowned expert on the societies of Eastern Europe. Parallel to his duties as director of the Research Institute for Sociology at the Academy of Sciences in Budapest, he has been and is a visiting professor and member at various international universities and research institutions as well as of different working groups such as the EU-Expert Group on Inclusive Education in Europe. Moreover, Pal Tamas chairs the committee on multiculturalism of the UNESCO Management of Social Transformations (MOST)-Programme since 2006.

**Kristian Vigenin**

Member of the European Parliament

Born in 1975 in Sofia, Bulgaria, Kristian Vigenin studied international relations and macroeconomics in Sofia and then participated in the International Leadership and Economic Development Programme at the J. F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, USA. Since 2002, he has been the Head of the Foreign Affairs and International Relations Department of the Bulgarian Socialist Party. Since 2007 he has been Member of the European Parliament.

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## Websites: News – Reports – Publications

### English

- 1) ECPR Standing Group on Extremism & Democracy. This is the website for a group of over 600 researchers on extremism and democracy. The most notable sections are the searchable overview of the contributors and their research foci, and (the archive of) the newsletter e-Extreme. <http://www.tufts.edu/~dart01/extremismanddemocracy/>
- 2) European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI). Reports by country. [http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/library/publications\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/library/publications_en.asp)
- 3) European Network Against Racism (ENAR). National Shadow Reports. [http://www.enar-eu.org/Page\\_Generale.asp?DocID=15294&la=1&langue=EN](http://www.enar-eu.org/Page_Generale.asp?DocID=15294&la=1&langue=EN)
- 4) Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA). Publications on anti-Semitism, xenophobia, discrimination, minorities, etc. [http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/products/publications\\_reports/publications\\_reports\\_en.htm](http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/products/publications_reports/publications_reports_en.htm)
- 5) Searchlight Magazine. Well-established anti-fascist magazine, British-based but international in focus. Highly informative with a clear political position. <http://www.searchlightmagazine.com/>

- 6) Stephen Roth Institute for the Study of Contemporary Anti-Semitism and Racism. The Stephen Roth Institute for the Study of Contemporary Anti-Semitism and Racism is a resource for information, provides a forum for academic discussion, and fosters continuing research on issues related to anti-Semitic and racist theories and manifestations. The computerised database on contemporary anti-Semitism and the annual reports are very useful.  
<http://www.tau.ac.il/Anti-Semitism/database.htm>
- 7) Union of Councils for Jews in the Former Soviet Union (UCJS). The UCJS provides the best and quickest information about xenophobic actions and organizations in the territories of the former Soviet Union. Information can be searched by country or keyword.  
<http://www.fsmonitor.com/>

## German

- 1) Blick nach Rechts. Information on the right-wing scene since 1986, updated fortnightly. Focus on Germany. <http://www.bnr.de/>
- 2) Eurorex. Information on activities, strategies and networks of the far right in Europe. Independent. <http://www.eurorex.info/>
- 2) Dossier, Rechtsextremismus published by the Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, Germany. Relevant articles on specific topics.  
<http://www.bpb.de/themen/R2IRZM,O,O,Rechtsextremismus.html>
- 3) Netz gegen Rechtsextremismus. An initiative of the Amadeus Antonio Stiftung in cooperation with DIE ZEIT. This involves various co-initiators including the German Football Association (DFB), and other partners and supporters. The website includes a lexicon of right-wing extremism and covers topical issues.  
<http://www.netz-gegen-nazis.de/category/format/presseschau>
- 4) Mut gegen Rechte Gewalt. A campaign by Stern magazine. Articles on right-wing extremism and counter-campaigns, focusing on Germany. <http://www.mut-gegen-rechte-gewalt.de/ueber-uns/>

# The work of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung for democracy and against right-wing extremism

## Worldwide goals of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung

The Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung (FES) was founded in 1925 as the political heritage of Friedrich Ebert, the first democratically elected president of the German Reich. As a private, cultural non-profit institution it is committed to the ideas of social democracy. It contributes to social democracy by

- political education enforcing its basic values,
- promoting young scholars committed to it,
- public dialogues paving new political ways for it
- development cooperation serving global justice,
- research and political counselling exploring and transmitting its fundamentals, and
- bridges of international cooperation contributing to building world-wide democracy.

The main branch offices are situated in Bonn and Berlin. Furthermore, there are federal state and regional offices operating within Germany and over 100 offices worldwide. Please find more information about the FES on [www.fes.de](http://www.fes.de).

## The work of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung for democracy and against right-wing extremism

As a pressing challenge for democracy and human rights, right-wing extremism requires increasing and continuous commitment from all players in society. The work against right-wing extremism, anti-Semitism, and xenophobic and racist attitudes as well as for democracy is therefore

a core sphere of action for the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. Different working units of FES offer conferences, seminars, and exhibitions informing on the different forms of manifestation of right-wing extremism and highlighting diverse strategies for democracy and civil courage. This decentralised approach is particularly important since right-wing extremism must be dealt with mainly on a local level.

With its central Berlin project “Combating right-wing extremism”, Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung underlines the need for continuous action against the extreme right. It accompanies current socio-political debates on this topic from a federal political perspective, regularly invites representatives from politics, civil society and research to conferences and its publications contribute to the professional dialogue. Further, the project serves FES as a main contact point on the topic of right-wing extremism.

Please find an overview on FES’ activities on right-wing extremism on the internet portal [www.fes-gegen-rechstextremismus.de](http://www.fes-gegen-rechstextremismus.de). Here you can find a list of all events throughout Germany as well as all materials of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung on the topic of right-wing extremism for free download or order.

## Contact

Project “Combating right-wing extremism“

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## FES-Publications

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## Photo proofs

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FES-conference "Is Europe on the 'right' path? Right-wing Extremism in Europe", 30.11.2009, photographer: Peter Himsel

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p. 128: Internet [http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/33399706/ns/us\\_news-education/](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/33399706/ns/us_news-education/)

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- p. 281: private picture Tor Bjørklund
- p. 289: Internet Progress Party, <http://www.frp.no/>
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