

THEMES IN MODERN GERMAN HISTORY



LEE MCGOWAN

The Radical Right in Germany 1870 to the Present



ROUTLEDGE


The Radical Right in Germany

THEMES IN MODERN GERMAN HISTORY SERIES

Already published in this series:

**Social Democracy and the Working Class in Nineteenth and
Twentieth Century Germany**

STEFAN BERGER

**Ethnic Minorities in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Germany:
Jews, Gypsies, Poles, Turks and Others**

PANIKOS PANAYI

The 1848 Revolutions in German-Speaking Europe

HANS JOACHIM HAHN

The Radical Right in Germany

1870 to the Present

Lee McGowan

 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2002 by Pearson Education Limited

Published 2014 by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017, USA

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

Copyright © 2002, Taylor & Francis.

The rights of Lee McGowan to be identified as Author of this Work has been asserted by him in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

Notices

Knowledge and best practice in this field are constantly changing. As new research and experience broaden our understanding, changes in research methods, professional practices, or medical treatment may become necessary.

Practitioners and researchers must always rely on their own experience and knowledge in evaluating and using any information, methods, compounds, or experiments described herein. In using such information or methods they should be mindful of their own safety and the safety of others, including parties for whom they have a professional responsibility.

To the fullest extent of the law, neither the Publisher nor the authors, contributors, or editors, assume any liability for any injury and/or damage to persons or property as a matter of products liability, negligence or otherwise, or from any use or operation of any methods, products, instructions, or ideas contained in the material herein.

ISBN 13: 978-0-582-29193-5 (pbk)

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A CIP catalogue record for this book can be obtained from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

A CIP catalog record for this book can be obtained from the Library of Congress

Typeset in 10/13pt Sabon by Graphicraft Limited, Hong Kong

Contents

Acknowledgements	vii
Abbreviations and glossary	viii
1 The far right in German history and politics: an introduction	1
Structure of the book	4
Defining the radical right	5
Fascism	6
National Socialism	8
Right-wing radicalism and right-wing extremism	8
Neo-fascism and neo-Nazism	9
The continuity debate	10
2 Tracing the origins and rise of the radical right: the <i>Kaiserreich</i>, 1870–1918	16
The historical setting	17
Defining the right in Imperial Germany: a short chronology	20
Membership of the radical right	23
Old and new variants of anti-Semitism	25
Nationalism	29
Germany at war: the ascendant radical right	35
Conclusions	39
3 Pushing to extremes: the radical right in Weimar Germany, 1919–33	43
The conservative right in the Weimar Republic, 1919–25	45
Soldiers, revolts and putsches: an emerging militant right	48
Moving to the right: the German National Socialist Workers' Party	53
Aspiring politicians, party organization and propaganda, 1924–28	55
Competing for power: the forces of the right, 1928–33	59
Conclusions	65

Contents

4	National Socialist ideology and leadership	69
	Nazi ideology	70
	Style and leadership	77
	Conclusions	88
5	Party membership and propensity for violence	93
	Social background	96
	The role of violence	105
	The fall of Röhm	116
	Conclusions	118
6	The extreme right in power: pursuing an ever radicalizing agenda	122
	Domestic policy	124
	Foreign policy	132
	Germany at war, 1939–45	138
	Conclusions	141
7	The fall, rise and fall of organized right-wing extremism in West Germany, 1945–90	147
	Germany under occupation, 1945–49	148
	Resurgence, 1949–52	150
	Stagnation and decline, 1953–64	152
	The rise and fall of the NPD, 1964–72	155
	Fractionalization and radicalization, 1972–84	159
	The third phase, 1984–90	160
	Conclusions	168
8	Homeland and hate: right-wing extremism and neo-Nazi militancy in unified Germany, 1990–present	173
	Stagnation of organized right-wing extremism, 1990–2001	174
	Militant and aggressive extremism: the neo-Nazis	178
	Origins and rise of neo-Nazism, 1972–89	180
	The neo-Nazi resurgence: growth and aggression, 1990–2000	189
	Conclusions	201
9	A new millennium for the extreme right?	207
	Conclusions	207
	Further reading	214
	Index	222

Acknowledgements

Dedicated to the memory of Iris Wratten, 1939–2001.

The author would like to express his thanks to Professor Panikos Panayi for his continuous support and his comments on the manuscript.

The Publishers are grateful to the following for permission to reproduce copyright material:

Table 5.2 from *The Nazi Party*, published by Harvard University Press and Blackwell Publishers, reprinted by permission of Michael H. Kater (Kater, M. H. 1983); Tables 5.3 and 5.5 from *Nazism 1919–1945: A Documentary Reader, Vol. 1: The Rise to Power 1919–1934*, edited by J. Noakes and G. Pridham, revised edition 1998, ISBN: 0 85989 598 X, published and reprinted by permission of University of Exeter Press (Noakes, J. and Pridham, G. 1998); Table 7.6 from *Sind die Republikaner die fünfte Partei?* in *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, published by Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, reprinted by permission of Dieter Roth (Roth, D. 1989).

In some instances we have been unable to trace the owners of copyright material, and we would appreciate any information that would enable us to do so.

Abbreviations and glossary

<i>Alldeutscher Verband</i>	Pan-German League
ANS/NA	<i>Aktionfront Nationaler Sozialisten/Nationale Aktiviste</i> Action Front for National Socialists/ National Activists
<i>Bundesrat</i>	upper house of parliament in the Federal Republic of Germany
<i>Bundestag</i>	lower house of parliament in the Federal Republic of Germany
BVP	<i>Bayerische Volkspartei</i> Bavarian People's Party
BfV	<i>Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz</i> Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution
DA	<i>Deutsche Alternative</i> German Alternative
DAF	<i>Deutsche Arbeitsfront</i> German Labour Front
DAG	<i>Deutsche Aktionsgruppen</i> German Action Groups
DAP	<i>Deutsche Arbeiterpartei</i> German Workers' Party (forerunner of the NSDAP)
DDP	<i>Deutsche Demokratische Partei</i> German Democratic Party
DNVP	<i>Deutschnationale Volkspartei</i> German National People's Party
<i>Dolchstoßlegende</i>	stab in the back legend used after 1918
DP	<i>Deutsche Partei</i> German Party
DReP	<i>Deutsche Rechts-Partei</i> German Right Party
DRP	<i>Deutsche Reichs Partei</i> German Reich Party
DVP	<i>Deutsche Volkspartei</i> German People's Party
DVU	<i>Deutsche Volksunion</i> German People's Union
<i>Endlösung</i>	Final Solution
EU	European Union
FAP	<i>Freiheitliche Arbeiterpartei</i> Independent Workers' Party
<i>Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs</i>	Austrian Freedom Party
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany
<i>Freikorps</i>	Freecorps
<i>Führer</i>	leader

<i>Gau</i>	district (one of 35) under the Nazi regime
<i>Gauleiter</i>	highest ranking regional leader under the Nazis
<i>Gestapo</i>	<i>Geheimstaatspolizei</i> State Secret Police
<i>Gleichschaltung</i>	co-ordination
<i>Grossdeutschland</i>	Greater Germany
<i>Grundgesetz</i>	Basic Law; the constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany
<i>Historikerstreit</i>	historians' dispute
<i>Hitlerwelle</i>	wave of interest in Hitler in the mid-1970s
HJ	<i>Hitlerjugend</i> Hitler Youth
HNG	<i>Hilfsorganisation für Nationale Politische Gefangene und deren Angehörige</i> Aid Association for National Political Prisoners and their Dependants
<i>Kaiserreich</i>	German Empire of 1871–1918
KPD	<i>Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands</i> Communist Party of Germany
<i>Kristallnacht</i>	Crystal Night
<i>Kulturkampf</i>	struggle between the <i>Kaiserreich</i> and the Roman Catholic Church in the 1870s and 1880s
<i>Länder</i>	individual German states
<i>Landtag</i>	regional parliament under both Imperial and Weimar Germany
<i>Lebensraum</i>	living space (in East Germany)
<i>Luftwaffe</i>	German air force in the Second World War
<i>Machtergreifung</i>	seizure of power
<i>Mittelstand</i>	middle class
NPD	<i>Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands</i> National Democratic Party of Germany
NS	<i>Nationale Sammlung</i> National Assembly
NSBO	<i>Nationalsozialistische Betriebszelle Organisation</i> National Socialist Factory Cell Organization
NSDAP	<i>Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei</i> National Socialist German Workers' Party
OHL	<i>Oberste Heeresleitung</i> supreme command during First World War
<i>Ostpolitik</i>	policy of developing relations with the states of eastern Europe primarily under the Willy Brandt governments, 1969–74
<i>Reich</i>	empire
<i>Reichsfeinde</i>	enemies of the state

Abbreviations and glossary

<i>Reichstag</i>	lower house of parliament under the Imperial Germany and the Weimar Republic
<i>Reichswehr</i>	imperial army
REP	<i>Republikaner</i> Republicans
RM	<i>Reichsmark</i>
SA	<i>Sturmabteilung</i> Stormtroopers of the NSDAP
<i>Sammlungspolitik</i>	cohesiveness policy pursued under Imperial Germany
SD	<i>Sicherheitsdienst</i> Security Service
<i>Siegfrieden</i>	total military victory that was promised by the German leadership during the First World War to secure lasting peace and security
SPD	<i>Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands</i> Social Democratic Party of Germany
SRP	<i>Sozialistische Reichspartei</i> Socialist Party of the Reich
SS	<i>Schutzstaffel</i> Guard Squadron of the NSDAP
<i>Stahlhelm</i>	Steel Helmet (monarchist paramilitary organization)
<i>Stufenplan</i>	a plan in stages
<i>Volk</i>	people
<i>Völkisch</i>	national
<i>Volkgemeinschaft</i>	people's community
VSBD PdA	<i>Volksozialistische Bewegung Deutschlands/ Partei der Arbeit</i> German People's Socialist Movement/Workers' Party
<i>Waffen-SS</i>	military section of the SS
<i>Wehrmacht</i>	German army under the Nazis
<i>Weltanschauung</i>	worldview
<i>Weltpolitik</i>	world policy
WSG	<i>Wehrsportgruppe</i> Military Sports Group

Chapter 1

The far right in German history and politics: an introduction

The peoples of Europe at the dawn of a new millennium are arguably more at peace with themselves than at any time in the history of European civilization. In western Europe today the prospect of war after almost 60 years of rebuilding, increasing prosperity and closer European integration since 1945 seems inconceivable. The transformation in interstate relationships and the emergence of a new supranational order under the European Union (EU) is remarkable and stands in marked contrast to the ardent strands of nationalist agendas that bedevilled the continent in the first half of the twentieth century.¹ Indeed, the entire process of European integration finds its origins in the often hostile, ambitious and destructive tendencies of the most ultra-nationalist and far right forces that launched two world wars in the first half of the twentieth century. The EU is one of the major success stories of more recent times and has, since the early 1950s, helped to anchor democracy, political stability and economic progress in the west and is now aiming to replicate its success by extending membership to the states of central and eastern Europe.

Simultaneously, the economic prosperity and political stability post-1945 have significantly dampened the appeal and success of the far right which encompassed in its most aggressive forms the fascist, National Socialist and falangist movements from the 1920s to the 1940s in Italy, Germany and Spain (until 1975) respectively. The core ideological tenets that came to shape, inspire and drive such far right parties, however, are not limited to this interwar period. On the contrary, their intellectual origins can be traced back to the previous century and these same concepts and visions persist and thrive on the very fringes of acceptability in the political systems of many European states today. Marginalized examples of such far right political parties, associations and organizations can be found across western Europe in Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, Russia, Spain and, to a lesser extent, in the United Kingdom and Ireland.

Time and again across Europe parties from the far right have made spectacular (albeit limited) temporary advances onto the political stage which have given rise to extensive academic debate and engendered widespread public debate and soul searching about the appeal of such groups, their

nationalist and racist convictions, their hostility towards democratic order and their rejection of the concept of individual human rights. The activities of right-wing extremist parties and organizations have become a particular object of media interest over the last two decades. Their divergence from the norm of everyday politics provides the means for avid sensationalism as extremists threaten to shake the foundations of the established order and test the strength of old taboos. In contemporary society aspects of the far right and its ideology are evident across Europe in many spheres of political and social life. They appear in the form of slogans and graffiti on walls. They are manifest at some political gatherings and evident in election campaigns. They surface in school playgrounds, feature among certain adolescent sub-cultures and are easily accessible in print, on film and increasingly on the internet. On occasions their continued existence is displayed in acts of violence against persons and property.

The histories, durability and impact of such forces after 1945 have varied from state to state. Some general assumptions, however, can be made. First, most case studies of organized right-wing extremism have undergone a series of peaks and troughs that have reflected particular domestic circumstances, as in Germany and discussed later.² Second, until the mid-1990s few far right parties ever got close to holding the reins of power, but in more recent years a general rise (albeit modest) in the electoral appeal of the far right across Europe has seen a handful of parties entering into government as the junior coalition partner. Much here, of course, has depended on the state of domestic politics and the specific structure of the electoral system. In Italy both helped first the Italian Social Movement (*Movimento Sociale Italiano*) or MSI to form part of a short-lived coalition in 1994 and now both the Northern League and the National Alliance (which together received some 5 per cent of the vote) to participate in Silvio Berlusconi's government since 2001.³ Arguably the most visible far right force in government remains the Austrian Freedom Party (*Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs*) or FPÖ which emerged as a serious political force during the 1990s under its charismatic leader, Jörg Haider, and entered government in 2000 to widespread protests both at home and abroad and for a while transformed Austria into the role of a pariah state, even within the EU.

In short, the spectre of the far right continues to haunt practically all the nations of both western and eastern Europe. All efforts at explaining why individual extreme right-wing parties have emerged and why they have thrived have led to general agreement on a wide set of variables. These have traditionally encompassed a loss of security with the collapse of an established system of beliefs; a breakdown in law and order; humiliation and offended pride; relative deprivation; disputed borders; general feelings of frustration; and resentment at continued immigration.⁴ In practice, the

significance of each of these factors has varied and continues to fluctuate from country to country. That such feelings and prejudices are still capable of generating a significant right-wing extremist potential cannot be disputed and some far right themes such as immigration policy, an anti-EU sentiment and an ardent belief in the strengths of the nation state do clearly strike a chord with a wider public. This reality was evident in a series of elections in the spring of 2002 including the 17 per cent of the vote polled by Jean-Marie Le Pen, the leader of the National Front in his campaign for the French presidency in April 2002, the success of Pim Fortuyn's essentially anti-immigration party in the Netherlands in May 2002 and even the much smaller successes of the British National Party in the English council elections where they secured three elected representatives in Burnley in May 2002. Often the forces of the far right provide an appropriate vehicle to express public dissatisfaction about government policy or the lack of distinction between the main political parties across Europe.

This book focuses exclusively on the German experience and aims to draw out the themes and elements that have shaped the far right in Germany since unification in 1870. It is arguably, given the excesses of the Hitler years from 1933 to 1945, the most obvious choice for a country study of contemporary right-wing extremism, but it is also one that provides for an interesting examination given the widely different types and forms of political system that have existed in Germany over the course of the last 130 years. Chronologically these range from the imperial autocracy of the Second Empire (1871–1918); to an ill-fated experiment at democracy under the Weimar Republic (1919–33); to the National Socialist dictatorship from 1933 to 1945 which plunged Germany into another world war, military defeat and dismemberment; to the short interregnum of allied and Soviet occupation from 1945 to 1949; to the 'temporary' division of Germany in 1949 into two very different political systems, one (the Federal Republic of Germany) based on the free market and oriented towards western liberal and democratic values whereas the other (the German Democratic Republic) was structured on a command economy basis and looked towards Moscow for support; and, finally, to the reunification of Germany in October 1990.⁵

The unification of East and West Germany brought many challenges for the newly enlarged Federal Republic of Germany.⁶ While many of these focused on environmental concerns and the necessity of economic restructuring, one largely unanticipated consequence of a unified Germany was an upsurge in the violent activities of the far right that came to tarnish Germany's image internationally and awaken memories of a darker past. The recent spate of right-wing extremist offences in Germany is part of, and the latest stage in, a phenomenon that can be traced back through all these regimes. The existence of the far right continues to raise questions

about the nature of German society and democracy, but it is not exclusively a German preserve and is an issue that requires careful and urgent consideration across the European Union as the popularity of the far right reflects and is a response to fears among sections of society about issues such as deepening European integration and the wider process of globalization over which they feel they have no control. Degrees of alienation and insecurity among today's traditional blue-collar areas have led some to embark on a desperate search to uncover their own identity and purpose which some have found among the nationalistic and xenophobic sentiment of the far right. This mood was caught by Romano Prodi, President of the European Commission, when he argued in April 2002 that Le Pen's surprise election result was a 'necessary shock' that would fortify Europe. 'Le Pen feeds on fears. To fight him we must nourish hope . . . (EU) enlargement, for example, represents the end of nationalism and wars in Europe.' This view could be extended to all parties of the far right.

Structure of the book

At its core this book seeks to examine the history of the far right in modern Germany in the period from 1870 to the present. It is an ambitious project, but it is a necessary one if we are to understand the development of the extreme right. There already exists a substantial literature on the histories, individuals and parties of the far right for each of these distinct periods covered within this timeframe. In some cases works cover two or occasionally three of these periods.⁷ None to date has attempted to provide an account of all five.

The book is organized into nine chapters and proceeds on a chronological basis. This chapter provides the backdrop to the study and considers, albeit briefly, definitional approaches to the issue of the far right and the continuity debate in the study of German history. The second chapter focuses on the emergence and radicalization of the far right in Imperial Germany. The following four chapters will centre on the most extreme, and the most successful in electoral terms, variant of the far right in the twentieth century, namely National Socialism (Nazism): chapter 3 traces its rise to power. The succeeding chapter deals with ideology, chapter 5 examines its membership and the use of violence while chapter 6 details the radicalization of government policy in Nazi Germany. The following and final three chapters focus on the post-war world from 1945 to today: chapter 7 accounts for the various rises and falls of organized right-wing extremism after 1945. Chapter 8 explores the reality and nature of militant neo-National Socialism and its predisposition towards acts of terror, confrontations and violence and chapter 9 considers the role of extremism in the new millennium.

This book has two core objectives. First, to trace the far right's origins and development. This takes us from a series of small, vocal pressure groups materializing in the 1870s to its struggle for power in the 1920s; its seizure of government in the early 1930s before turning to chart its denouement and ongoing survival as a minor force on the fringes of politics after 1945. Second, it aims to identify and analyse the common tenets of far right 'ideology', its political objectives and to investigate to what extent it is possible to identify a theme of continuity that runs through these five political orders. How far can our knowledge of the common tenets such as its overt nationalism, degrees of militarism and desires for territorial expansion, anti-parliamentarism, authoritarianism and an aversion to, in some instances a hatred of, all foreign influences enable us to portray a degree of continuity in thinking and position despite the political turmoil and changes that have shaped and transformed modern day Germany?

Defining the radical right

Before embarking on an examination of the far right in each of these timeframes it is first of all necessary to address and identify what actually constitutes the radical right. Those engaged or interested in the study of the contemporary far right will be familiar with one definitional problem from the very outset. This relates to the variety and number of terms in usage to refer to the far right. These range from right-wing extremism and fascism to neo-fascism and neo-Nazism. Often they are mistakenly assumed to be synonyms and are used interchangeably, particularly in the media.⁸ The rise of the *Republikaner* in the late 1980s provided clear evidence of a case in point.⁹

There has been an explosion in academic material from the late 1980s analysing the nature and identity of right-wing extremism in Germany and beyond. But what is right-wing extremism? This seemingly straightforward question is difficult to answer as an agreed definition does not exist, but there are certain characteristics that could help to define right-wing extremist parties. These relevant criteria could entail an examination of party goals and objectives, organizational structure and tactics, the social composition of the respective movements and their voters and, lastly, a focus on the ideological tenets and beliefs. This final criterion is arguably the most important and is certainly the most useful, but it in turn raises a number of questions: Is it possible to distil core beliefs and objectives? How far have these remained consistent over the course of the last century by the parties on the radical right?

Today right-wing extremism is the generally accepted term and is applied to any parties, organizations and individuals whose self-knowledge and

activities are formed by the majority, if not all, of the following characteristics: nationalism; ethnocentrism; xenophobia, particularly in the guise of anti-Semitism and racism; anti-pluralism; anti-communism; anti-parliamentarism; militarism; a law and order mentality; the longing for an authoritarian state under one leader; often a sympathy for conspiracy theories; and the acceptance of violence as a suitable means of political discourse. The role and emphasis of each of these may vary from party to party and movement to movement and authors have placed different emphases on different characteristics. Some have focused on xenophobia and racism, others have concentrated on nationalism while yet others have stressed the need for 'law and order' and demands for strict immigration control. However, a general survey of 26 definitions in three distinct linguistic areas (Dutch, German and English) has revealed that the principal ingredients of right-wing extremism tend to be racism, xenophobia, nationalism, anti-democracy and a belief in the strong state.¹⁰ To what extent, however, is it possible to draw clear demarcations between the terms of radical right, fascism, neo-fascism, right-wing extremism and neo-Nazism?

The overall picture is further complicated by the reality that often different terms are *en vogue* in different timeframes. This is a salient issue when trying to look at the phenomenon over time as this study does. So, for example, the preferred current term of right-wing extremism is rarely used in the Imperial period to describe the activities of ultra-nationalist groups such as the Pan-German League, whereas contemporary movements are referred to as extremists and neo-Nazis rather than employing such terms as radicals. This section endeavours to address the definitional issues and clarify positions but, it must be emphasized, in a rather general manner as space precludes any lengthy discussion or debate on each term. The origins of the concept of right-wing extremism are found in the study of fascism. As Mudde comments: 'This field of research, which produced an enormous number of publications just after the Second World War, has provided the theoretical framework for research on post-war right-wing extremist parties.'¹¹

Fascism

In historical terms fascism was a nationalistic, authoritarian and illiberal movement that emerged in Italy under its leader Benito Mussolini in the aftermath of the First World War. Fascism was the term chosen by this political force to identify itself and its objectives. Fascism never truly possessed a developed or coherent ideology.¹² Indeed, it was largely devoid of the intellectual rigour that enabled communism to flourish long after fascism's

demise. The fascist movement came to power in Italy in 1923 and remained in office until it was overthrown in 1944.¹³ The appeal of fascism lay in its ability to draw on people's emotions and on their resentment, anger and frustration that coloured many sectors of life in the aftershocks of the First World War. This is true of the rise of all three major brands of fascism in interwar Europe in Italy, Germany and Spain respectively. The period after 1919 was marked in all three states by widespread social unrest, a general disillusionment with the political order and, in the case of both Germany and Italy, severe disappointment over territorial losses and the spoils of war.

Fascism in Italy pledged to unite all sectors and classes of Italian society into one national force. During its political rise in the early 1920s it drew its support from the military and middle-class groups that were alarmed at the rise of socialism and the social disorder and economic difficulties of the early 1920s. Nationalism lay at the very core and heart of the fascist movement. Mussolini sought not only to promote nationalism throughout the state and so create a common (in terms of language, religion and history) *ethnie*, but also set out to assimilate and often discriminate against other ethnic groups within the state. This practice was manifest in Mussolini's efforts in Alto Adige (South Tyrol).¹⁴ In addition, this classical fascism expressed a deep antipathy for communism and parliamentary politics. It placed considerable emphasis on the necessity of strong leadership and advocated a single-party state. The fascist regime glorified violence and sought to re-establish a new 'Roman Empire' with forays into North Africa. The success of fascism in several European states in the interwar period needs to be understood within its own particular timeframe.

Any studies cannot be divorced from the other political forces at this time. Parties on the left (particularly the communists) in both Italy and Germany were swift to denounce fascism as the product of a dying political capitalist order. Fascism was portrayed as the final stage in a class struggle between the working-class movement and monopoly capitalism. In much of this literature from the early 1920s onwards the latter was deemed to have deliberately supported fascism as a means of preserving its own status. Theories about fascism are, for the most part, theories about anti-fascism and ways to defeat it. By fascism Smith understands 'a militaristic movement of obedience to the state and worship of the Leader, carried by a cult of violence for its own sake and an ethic of brutality'.¹⁵ This is helpful as the term fascism is applied widely today (particularly by those on the left of the political spectrum) to cover 'similar' political and nationalist ethnic movements throughout Europe (and particularly former Yugoslavia) and the wider world. Although there are often clear parallels there are also some striking differences. Most authors apply the label of 'fascism' not only to

the Italian case, but also extend it to cover German National Socialism which is deemed a variant of the former.

National Socialism

National Socialism materialized as a distinct German model of fascism in the 1920s (and is the subject of chapters 3–6 of this book).¹⁶ The causes of National Socialism are to be located in the wake of military defeat in 1918, territorial losses, the economic difficulties of the early 1920s and the inability of the new (and by many unwanted) Weimar Republic to instil confidence among the electorate and to secure law and order. Although National Socialism shared much in common with the tenets of fascism vis à vis its position towards communism, parliamentary government and nationalism, its more distinct brand was contained within its strong promotion of racism, anti-Semitism.¹⁷ This led authors in the 1960s to review the homogeneity of fascism and to argue that ‘fascist’ movements varied in both ideological and geographical terms.¹⁸ Nazism also exhibited a fundamental belief in agrarian colonization (*Lebensraum*) in lands seized by force whose inhabitants were either to be enslaved or exterminated. Whereas Italian fascism favoured linguistic assimilation, Nazism considered assimilation as a privilege and only allowed it for certain racial minorities (such as the French). Assimilation with inferior racial groups was outlawed by the state in preference to a policy that focused first on forcible eviction and later extermination. Increasingly, National Socialism has become bound up and more associated with the role and personality of its leader, Adolf Hitler.

Right-wing radicalism and right-wing extremism

In most contemporary individual country case studies the label of right-wing extremism has been attached to all those parties on the far right and has supplanted the earlier use of radicalism that was applied to such forces as the *Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands* in West Germany (see chapter 7) and the *Union de Défense des Commerçants et Artisans* (or the Poujadists) in France by writers in the 1950s and the 1960s.¹⁹ The term extremism carries such negative connotations that most parties on the far right of the political spectrum, such as the *Republikaner*, have been swift to reject this particular label. The actual problem associated with attempting to accredit labels to particular parties as being either a ‘radical’ or an extremist force has been a longstanding one that has bedevilled authors and official bodies. The annual reports from the German *Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz* (the Office for the Protection of the Constitution) altered

the official definition of such a movement and abandoned the term of radicalism for extremism in 1974 stating that:

The term extremist takes account of the fact that political activities or organisations are not necessarily hostile to the constitution because they are in general linguistic usage 'radical' . . . They are extremist and therefore unconstitutional in the legal sense only if they are directed against the continued existence of our liberal and lawful constitution.²⁰

The definitional nature of contemporary right-wing extremism has been further clarified to regard such extremists as striving for a totalitarian or at least an authoritarian state, as rejecting the representative parliamentary democracy, finding their motivation in a brand of nationalism that severely restricts the civil liberties of the individual and is directed against international understandings as well as racism. In short, the term radical is no longer regarded as truly reflecting the nature and aims of the far right. Indeed, the connotations of the term radical arguably provide the right with the semblance of operating within the framework of the democratic consensus. Extremism, contrariwise, suggests a group standing on the very edge of the political spectrum and therefore on the verge of, or actually, possessing aims at odds with the constitutional order. This change in terminology has been reflected in most works on the far right in German which have substituted radicalism for extremism.

Neo-fascism and neo-Nazism

Neo-fascism and neo-Nazism are phenomena that have become both politically and sociologically significant in the 1980s and 1990s across Europe.²¹ As terms both neo-fascism and neo-Nazism can be deployed simply to isolate and identify those political movements that extol the political orientation and convictions of the classical fascism of the interwar period. In the Italian case it is entirely appropriate to label members of the MSI as neo-fascist. However, caution should be applied on a case-by-case basis. Indeed, many studies from the left-wing spectrum have tended to over-exaggerate the influence of right-wing extremism and have been too eager to invent conspiracy theories and hidden alliances between the extreme right and conservatives.²²

The term neo-National Socialism (or more commonly neo-Nazism) proves much more helpful and is applied to those individuals and groups which openly espouse the restoration of the Third Reich. Neo-Nazis deliberately seek a totalitarian state on the basis of the élite – or leader principle after the pattern of the NSDAP. Such a dictatorship runs contrary to all the basic fundamental principles of the German constitution (*Grundgesetz*). Admittedly, it is open to question whether only those groups which directly

support and honour National Socialism can legitimately be described as neo-Nazi. For example, many media reports and works have referred to the NPD or the *Republikaner* as blatant neo-Nazi forces. How far this is the case is the subject of intense debate and in this study only those individuals, groups and organizations which openly promote the values of National Socialism are labelled as neo-Nazis. Although the neo-Nazis represent only a small fraction of organized right-wing extremism in the Federal Republic and an even smaller fraction of the total right-wing extremist potential, their importance far exceeds their apparent numerical insignificance, particularly as they are heavily involved in acts of violence and intimidation.

The neo-Nazis, as Ginzel has expressed it, 'are right-wing extremists, but it would be wrong to classify all right-wing extremists as neo-Nazis, since neo-Nazism is a further form of right-wing extremism where loathing arises from aversion, where violence is advocated in the struggle against democracy and elected governments and where there is a longing for a dictatorship under one leader, based on *völkisch* racism'.²³ Neo-Nazism thus represents the most militant form of extremism albeit, as chapter 8 indicates, the smallest section of the far right. It aspires to a total transformation of the political system whereas right-wing extremists only go as far as seeking, at least in public, to modify the existing democratic institutions. This work will refer to the notions of right-wing extremism and neo-Nazism in its dealing with the post-1945 world and has opted for the term extremism when it handles National Socialism. Prior to 1919 it will opt instead for the terms of far and radical right to refer to the movements in Imperial Germany and in the Weimar years.

The continuity debate

The history of the far right in this book's timeframe is a complex one. It covers four distinct systems of government including the period of the most extreme and puissant variant of the radical right in the course of the twentieth century, namely National Socialism. Why this should occur in Germany, how far German culture, history and political development paved the way for the Third Reich and to what extent common strands run through all these regimes have long been hotly contested issues. In retrospect, this raises the question of whether lines of continuity can be drawn across these totally distinct political orders in terms of locating the development of ideological tenets and policy priorities.

The continuity debate in German history first became prominent during the course of the Second World War and sought to interpret the rise of Adolf Hitler as the logical outcome of the process of German historical development from the Middle Ages. Authors such as Vermeil regarded the advance

of the far right in the form of National Socialism as reflecting the logic that had come to underpin the German Reich. This was supposedly expressed in a penchant for authoritarian rule, militarism and imperialism. All were deemed to have impacted negatively on and moulded the German character. Verneil traced the German 'divine mission', which in his opinion was heading for disaster from the Teutonic invasions through to the Germanization of the Holy Roman Empire. It continued with the emergence of the Hanseatic League, the expansion of Prussia, the unification of Germany and the establishment of the Bismarckian state as a sequence of events that ultimately culminated in war.²⁴ Moreover, the Nazi party itself, according to other authors, drew on ideas and emotions that proliferated in its successor state, the Weimar Republic. These ranged from racism, anti-Semitism, imperialism, nationalism to anti-Marxism, anti-capitalism, ardent opposition to the 1919 peace settlement and a thorough dissatisfaction with the old school and form of politics.

Consequently, some have concluded that it is possible to trace the links between the various regimes and the lines of historical continuity from the end of the nineteenth century to the Third Reich. For such writers, Wilhelmine Germany merely constituted a dress rehearsal for the disaster that was to befall Germany between 1933 and 1945. It is argued that the instability and change in political systems in 1919 did not alter the course of foreign policy. This, it is argued, remained constant after 1919 and was driven by the same needs and requirements before the First World War. As such there was very little distinction between the aims of Wilhelm II and those of Adolf Hitler. For such authors, it is all too easy to isolate Germany from the activities of the other colonial powers and describe *Lebensraum* as an extension of Bismarck's colonial policy and Hitler's pursuit for world domination as another example of German aggression. Nevertheless, this was the approach favoured by the Anglo-Saxon school in the 1940s and 1950s. Its message of an unstable and aggressive race retained its sympathizers for much longer. Indeed, such remnants of anti-German prejudice and sentiments were demonstrated in the now infamous meeting at Chequers in July 1990 between the then British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, and seven distinguished academics and journalists. They had been drawn together to discuss the German psyche and characteristics of the German people in advance of impending German unification.

In contrast to seeing a progression and radicalization on the right through the course of modern history, an alternative version of events was presented by historians in the immediate post-1945 environment. Ritter argued that National Socialism appeared as a bolt from the blue and that Hitler's success came as a surprise to most Germans. Up to 1930, he argued, the vast majority of educated Germans thought Hitler's disciples constituted a group of

loud-mouthed extremists and super-patriots who were without any practical importance. In fact, it has been argued that Hitler merely duped the German people and that this regime and its crimes must be recognized as an aberration in German history. Ritter asserted that the roots of National Socialism lay no earlier than the events of November 1918 and that any concept of a Germany going off the rails prior to this date was completely and utterly unfounded. Ritter regards National Socialism as a purely twentieth-century phenomenon that to a large extent reflected similar developments in other European states. He illustrates how support for the Nazis grew rapidly over the brief period from 1929 to 1933, thus revealing how many of its supporters, even its members, did not hold strong political convictions. In other words, the Hitler regime constituted nothing more than, and should be judged as, a temporary phenomenon. From this perspective, it was possible to deny that the German experience was in any way unique. Indeed, it was only the collapse of the old authoritarian system in 1918 and the sudden transformation of the German state into a liberal democracy that were ultimately to enable Hitler and his followers to challenge successfully for power.

Whether, as Childs remarks, the Nazi seizure of power represented the culmination of long-term trends in German politics and society or whether it was the outcome of a series of avoidable accidents is an issue that will continue to excite the passions of historians for generations to come.²⁵ It is one that can have no definite conclusions. Both these earlier approaches have been rejected and refined by later research from the early 1960s. Fischer's seminal work *Griff nach der Weltmacht* utterly transformed thinking about Germany's objectives at the beginning of the twentieth century.²⁶ His assertions that, far from stumbling into war, as has often been portrayed, the outbreak of war in August 1914 has to be understood as a deliberate and intended product of German government planning. It was launched to allow Germany to initiate a major expansionary programme and thereby unite the electorate under the German national banner and, in so doing, weaken the appeal of socialism. Simultaneously, it would protect the ruling élites who were resistant to social, economic and political change. Arising from this view the new generation of the 1970s came to place greater emphasis on Germany's domestic politics arena as the reason behind expansionist policy.

An understanding of links and themes of continuity between the Imperial, Weimar and Nazi regimes may be understandable, but how do these varying interpretations feed into the post-1945 situation? As Nolte has argued, the age of fascism may have come to an end in 1945, but vestiges of National Socialism continued to persist in West Germany until 1990 and continue to resurface in reunified Germany. Party leaders may have come and gone, political parties may have sprung up and withered quickly, being either consumed

by other forces, proscribed or reconstituted under new banners,²⁷ but respective party programmes reflect the same 'traditional' values and messages of the earlier movements. Nationalism remains the core of all platforms and is followed in varying degrees by a rejection of the established political order, an intolerance towards non-Germans, openly displayed racism and a propensity towards acts of violence. The Federal Republic of Germany may never have been seriously threatened by the resurgence of any organized right-wing extremist force, although three waves of extremism, as chapter 7 illustrates, have sent minor tremors through the political system. The continued existence of the fascist phenomenon still haunts German society and cannot be readily dismissed. Indeed, to what extent right-wing extremist sentiment has been or can ever be eradicated remains doubtful.

Electoral returns do not prove highly reliable in providing an accurate means of testing the affinity towards right-wing extremism. Sympathy extends much more widely than votes would otherwise seem to indicate as evidence from opinion polls on a range of traditional right-wing issues such as nationalism and law and order repeatedly illustrates. The point at which this latent support may or even will ever emerge is difficult to determine. Support tends to develop against the backdrop of economic difficulties or a period of political uncertainty. In such scenarios the far right has proved that it has been able to tap into such disaffection and find itself being seen as a vehicle to demonstrate public protest and unease. Examples include the success of the NPD in the late 1960s and the *Republikaner* in 1989.

Can we discern a continuity of ideas and themes running through the forces of the far right in German history? How has it come to change in the course of the last 130 years? Is it possible to dissociate Germany's drive for domestic stability and foreign expansion with those of her European rivals? To what extent is the German experience unique? Was Germany to pursue a *Sonderweg* that led to the triumph of the radical right and unleash the Second World War? How far do existing far right movements look back to earlier forms and ideological tenets? Should these parties be proscribed? These are some of the highly pertinent questions that will be addressed in the following chapters.

Notes

- 1 There is a huge and constantly expanding literature on the institutions and policies of the European Union. For an introduction see Ben Rosamund, *Explaining European Integration*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1999 or Neill Nugent, *The Government and Politics of the European Union*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1999, 4th edition.
- 2 See H. G. Betz, *Radical Right-Wing Populism in Western Europe*, Basingstoke, 1994 and also Betz, *The New Politics of the Right*, Basingstoke, 1998; P. H. Merkl and L. Weinberg (eds) *The Revival of Right-Wing Extremism*, London, 1997.

The Radical Right in Germany

- 3 For an account of the Italian case after 1945 see R. Chiarini, 'The Italian far right: the search for legitimacy' in L. Cheles, R. Ferguson and M. Vaughan (eds) *The Far Right in Western and Eastern Europe*, London, 1995, 2nd edition, pp. 20–40.
- 4 Jaroslav Krejci, 'Neo-fascism – west and east' in L. Cheles, R. Ferguson and M. Vaughan, *The Far Right in Western and Eastern Europe*, p. 6.
- 5 On the one hand, the Federal Republic of Germany or (West) Germany was constructed as a liberal democracy and market economy with strong links to the United States. In contrast, the German Democratic Republic or East Germany was created by the Soviets as a satellite state with a command economy.
- 6 This 'reunified' Germany did not mirror the geographical and political boundaries of Germany in 1937 (i.e. before Hitler annexed Austria and Czechoslovakia). In 1945 Germany's eastern border was marked by the rivers Oder and Neisse. This led to one-quarter of the 1937 boundaries being transferred to Polish and Soviet administration pending a peace treaty. This decision actually pushed Poland 200 miles westward and was deemed necessary compensation for her territorial losses to the Soviet Union in the east. In 1990 the Kohl government in Germany dropped all claims to the former territories east of the Oder/Neisse line. This was greeted with some relief by the Polish government and outright hostility by all sections of the German far right.
- 7 See, for example, Panikos Panayi (ed.) *Weimar and Nazi Germany*, London, 2000.
- 8 This is particularly true for the period up until the early to mid-1980s. See, for example, P. Wilkinson, *The New Fascists*, London, 1983.
- 9 Often the terms selected reflected the political stance of any one particular author. These divergent views only help to cloud any subjective perception and to hinder the extent position of such a political party. For example, while the greens were swift to characterize the *Republikaner* as a fascist force, the Office for the Protection of the Constitution (*Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz*) identified the party as merely a radical group on the fringes of the democratic system. Further confusion was added when Franz Schönhuber, then leader of the *Republikaner*, portrayed the party as a conservative force.
- 10 C. Mudde, 'Right-wing extremism analysed', *European Journal of Political Research*, vol. 27, 1995, pp. 203–44.
- 11 *Ibid.*, p. 219.
- 12 For further consideration see M. Kitchen, *Fascism*, London, 1976 and Z. Sternhell, 'Fascist ideology' in W. Laqueur (ed.) *Fascism: A Reader's Guide*, London, 1975, pp. 325–406.
- 13 For more recent studies and interpretations of Italian fascism see R. Bosworth, *The Italian Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives in the Interpretation of Fascism*, London, 1998; M. Stone, *The Patron State: Culture and Politics in Fascist Italy*, Princeton, New Jersey 1998; P. Morgan, *Italian Fascism 1919–45*, London, 1995.
- 14 Italy was granted the South Tyrol in 1919 as a territorial reward for joining the American, British and French war effort in the Great War against the Central powers (Germany, Austro-Hungary and Turkey). The region had formerly constituted a part of German-speaking Austria. It was a predominantly German area and the decision to pass it to Rome contradicted the whole principle of self-determination. After 1923 Mussolini opted to attempt to 'Italianize' the area by promoting the use of the Italian language and culture and through a process of resettling Italian speakers into this area. Interestingly, Hitler paid no attention to Rome's efforts. His indifference stands in marked contrast to his involvement and concerns with other German minorities in

- neighbouring states. The South Tyrol has remained with Italy ever since. For a history see A. E. Alcock, *The History of the South Tyrol Question*, London, 1970.
- 15 A. D. Smith, 'The dark side of nationalism: the revival of nationalism in late twentieth-century Europe' in Cheles, Ferguson and Vaughan, *The Far Right in Western and Eastern Europe*, p. 18.
- 16 For significant works on National Socialism see, among others, early classics such as K. D. Bracher, *The German Dictatorship*, London, 1973; H. Mommsen, 'National Socialism: continuity and change' in W. Laqueur (ed.) *Fascism: A Reader's Guide*, London, 1979, pp. 151–92; M. Broszat, *The German Dictatorship*, London, 1973; and I. Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives of Interpretation*, London, 1985.
- 17 See J. Hiden, *Republican and Fascist Germany: Ideas and Variations in the History of the Weimar Republic*, London, 1996.
- 18 G. L. Mosse, 'Introduction: the genesis of fascism' in W. Laqueur and G. L. Mosse (eds), *International Fascism 1920–45*, New York, 1966.
- 19 This was a general trend towards the use of radicalism until the mid-1980s in both English and German works. See for example J. D. Nagle, *The National Democratic Party. Right Radicalism in the Federal Republic of Germany*, Berkeley, 1970 or W. Kreutzberger, *Rechtsradikalismus in der Bundesrepublik*, Frankfurt am Main, 1983. The general trend since the mid-1980s has been to opt for the term extremism. See, by means of example, Klaus von Beyme (ed.) *Right-wing Extremism in Western Europe*, London, 1988 or P. H. Merkl, *The Revival of Right-wing Extremism in the Nineties*, London, 1997. There are, of course, exceptions to this rule.
- 20 The Office for the Protection of the Constitution is based in Cologne and operates under the authority of the Federal Interior Ministry. It deals only with internal security affairs and its work encapsulates counterespionage, anti-terrorism and combating extremist political groups and individuals. The BfV is arguably Europe's most public-minded intelligence agency and produces an annual report (at federal level) that accounts for the existence and activities of terrorists and extremists (both left- and right-wing) in Germany. It comprises some 2,500 staff. Its future was initially questioned following the demise of the Warsaw Pact, but its position was temporarily safeguarded by the sudden explosion of right-wing extremist activities in the early 1990s. See its annual reports or 'Street war against the skins', *Financial Times*, 30 July 1993.
- 21 Krejci, op. cit. in Cheles, Ferguson and Vaughan, *The Far Right in Western and Eastern Europe*, p. 1.
- 22 See, for example, U. Hartman, H. P. Steffen and S. Steffen, *Rechtsextremismus bei Jugendlichen. Anregungen der wachsenden Gefahr entgegenzuwirken*, Munich, 1985; M. Koelschitzky, *Die Stimme ihrer Herren*, Cologne, 1986; K. Faller and H. Siebold, *Neo-Faschismus*, Frankfurt, 1986.
- 23 G. B. Ginzler, *Hitlers (Ur)enkel: Neo-Nazis, Ihre Ideologien und Aktionen*, Düsseldorf, 1981.
- 24 E. Vermeil, *L'Allemagne contemporaine, sociale, politique et culturelle, 1890–1950*, Paris, 1952–53 (and quoted in K. D. Bracher, *The German Dictatorship*).
- 25 D. Childs, 'The far right in Germany since 1945' in Cheles, Ferguson and Vaughan, *The Far Right in Western and Eastern Europe*, p. 290.
- 26 F. Fischer, *Germany's Aims in the First World War*, London, 1966.
- 27 E. Nolte, *The Three Faces of Fascism: Action Française, Italian Fascism, National Socialism*, New York, 1969.