

From Party to Movement? The German Radical Right in Transition

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1. Introduction

In international comparisons, the German radical right today seems a rather marginal force. Neither does any of the right-wing radical parties hold seats in the *Bundestag*, European Parliament or, with few and temporary exceptions, in the state parliaments. Nor is there a charismatic leader like Jean-Marie Le Pen or Jörg Haider who keeps providing a continuous national focus of attention and feeding the public discourse with his ideas. Instead, the development of the radical right in Germany fourteen years after unification is characterized by a general fragmentation along with clear-cut differences between old and new *Länder*. More precisely, it undergoes a decline of the party spectrum along with a consolidation in movement sector and subcultural milieus, particularly in the East. This article traces these changes since the "high" of electoral support and party development in the early 1990s and discusses the question to what extent differences in opportunity structures and cultural legacies between East and West contribute to these developments.

2. The Radical Right in Perspective: Conceptualizing Ideological and Organizational Variants

For a workable definition of right-wing radicalism in comparative perspective, it seems preferable to avoid the shopping list quality of most definitions and tie it to theoretical concepts of social change which underlie most analyses of the radical right.¹ Most "classical" but also modern approaches (i.e.

¹ See discussion in Cas Mudde, *The Ideology of the Extreme Right* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000); for the following see also Michael Minkenberg, "The West European Radical Right as a Collective Actor: Modeling the Impact of Cultural and Structural Variables on Party Formation and Movement

the works by W. Kornhauser, S.M. Lipset, Lipset/Raab, Scheuch/Klingemann, up until the 1960s, H.G. Betz, P. Ignazi, H. Kitschelt and others from the 1990s on) include – implicitly or explicitly – arguments derived from modernization theory and they persuasively indicate conditions for a successful mobilization of right-wing radicalism. But they tell rather little about the relationship between rapid social change and the appeal of particular variants of radical right-wing ideology and organizational forms.

It seems useful to build on modernization theory not just in terms of the societal context for mobilization but also in order to identify the core ideology of the phenomenon, not in the least because these theories might provide some conceptually grounded criteria for such analyses which help overcome the shopping list problem.² This is not the place, however, to review the vast amount of literature on modernization theory. Generally, modernization can be understood as a growing autonomy of the individual (status mobility and role flexibility) and an ongoing functional differentiation of the society (segmentation and growing autonomy of societal subsystems)³. In this light, right-wing radicalism can be defined as the radical effort to undo such social change. The counter-concept to social differentiation is the nationally defined community, the counter-concept to individualization is the return to traditional roles and status of the individual in such a community. It is this overemphasis on, or radicalization of, images of social homogeneity which characterizes radical right-wing thinking. The historical origins of right-wing radicalism are seen to lie in the interdependence of nation building, democratization, industrialization, and the growing importance of the natural sciences.

Hence, right-wing radicalism will be defined primarily by the ideological criteria of populist and romantic ultranationalism, a myth of a homogenous nation which puts the nation before the individual and his/her civil rights and which therefore is directed against liberal and pluralist democracy (though not necessarily in favor of a fascist state), its underlying values of freedom and equality and the related categories of individualism and universalism. This definition focuses explicitly on the idea of the nation as the ultimate focal point, situated somewhere between the poles

Mobilization", in: *Comparative European Politics* 1 (2003), pp. 149-170.

² For the following, see chapter 1 in Michael Minkenberg, *Die neue radikale Rechte im Vergleich. USA, Frankreich, Deutschland* (Opladen/Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1998). I am following here the seminal essay by Ernst Scheuch and Hans-Dieter Klingemann, "Theorie des Rechtsradikalismus in westlichen Industriegesellschaften", in: *Hamburger Jahrbuch für Wirtschafts- und Gesellschaftspolitik* 12 (1967), pp. 11-29.

of *demos* and *ethnos*. The nationalistic myth is characterized by the effort to construct an idea of nation and national belonging by radicalizing ethnic, religious, lingual, other cultural and political criteria of exclusion, to bring about a congruence between the state and the nation, and to condense the idea of nation into an image of extreme collective homogeneity.

Some authors insist on including anti-system attitudes or opposition to democracy as an essential definitional criterion.⁴ According to the definition used here, right-wing radicalism is not the antithesis to democracy *per se*. Instead, by focusing on ultranationalism instead of anti-democratic attitudes, the question of right-wing radicals' relationship towards democracy remains open for empirical testing. To put it differently, right-wing radicals are not necessarily in favor of doing away with democracy but they want government by the people in terms of *ethnocracy* (Griffin). Moreover, the focus on ultranationalism instead of fascism or racism allows to account for a wider range of and distinctions between varieties of right-wing radicalism according to the way ethnic, religious, cultural and other criteria of exclusion are used. It is therefore suggested here to distinguish at least three ideological types which are derived from the respective concept of nation and the exclusionary criteria: autocratic-fascist (in which violence often plays an important role), ethnocentrist, and authoritarian-populist.⁵ Special case are specifically biological-racist/anti-semitic or religious-fundamentalist versions. All versions have in common a strong anti-pluralistic quest for internal homogeneity of the nation and a populist, anti-establishment political style but the latter two of the major variants share the characteristic of a culturally defined rejection of differences which informs the ethnocratic ideology especially of the new radical right.⁶

Next to ideological variations, organizational distinctions of the radical right need to be taken

³ Dieter Rucht, *Modernisierung und neue soziale Bewegungen* (Frankfurt/M: Campus, 1994).

⁴ See Uwe Backes and Eckard Jesse, *Politischer Extremismus in Deutschland* (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 1989); Piero Ignazi, *Extreme Right Parties in Western Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

⁵ The category of populism is hard to define and rather controversial since many experts see it as matter of style rather than substance, embodying a protest rather than programmatic quality. Here, it will be used for those parties of the radical right which exhibit internal authoritarian structures built around some charismatic leader and which beyond their populist rhetoric are hard to pin down programmatically, except for some vision of exclusionary politics. In a similar vein, Hans-Georg Betz has recently reconceptualized his previous catch-all category of radical right-wing populism into "radical right" with two variants: exclusionary populism, and fascism; see his "The Growing Threat of the Radical Right", in: Peter Merkl and Leonard Weinberg (eds.), *Right-wing Extremism in the 21st Century* (London: Frank Cass, 2003), pp. 74-93; for authoritarian populism, see also Petr Kopecky and Cas Mudde, "Two Sides of Euro-Scepticism: Party Positions on European Integration in East-Central Europe", in: *European Union Politics* 3, 3 (2002), pp. 297-325.

⁶ See Michael Minkenberg, "The Renewal of the Radical Right: Between Modernity and Anti-Modernity", in

into account. In comparative analyses, the emphasis is usually on right-wing radical parties. The differences in party strength are then measured in terms of membership and electoral support, and they are explained in the party and electoral research literature by pointing both at ideological variations and the degree of fragmentation of the right-wing radical party sector and the political and electoral system, on the one hand, other parties' strategies, i.e. the "political space" for the radical right, on the other (for example in Betz or Kitschelt). These are primarily institutional or political-structural explanations which do without reference to cultural variables such as political and other traditions. Moreover, they ignore the non-party sector of right-wing radical mobilization. Already in 1988, Klaus von Beyme argued that "future studies of right-wing extremism will have to pay more attention to the whole political context of this political movement instead of being preoccupied with traditional party and electoral studies."⁷

Following this pledge, the organizational variants of the radical right will be distinguished by their approach to institutional political power and public resonance. The most obvious and most frequently studied are parties and electoral campaign organizations which participate in elections and try to win public office. Next to these are social movement organizations try to mobilize public support as well but do not run for office, rather they identify with a larger social movement (a network of networks with a distinct collective identity) and offer interpretative frames for particular problems.⁸ Finally, smaller groups and sociocultural milieus operate relatively independently from either parties and larger social movements and do not exhibit formal organizational structures but can also be characterized as networks with links to other organizations and a collective identity which tends to be more extreme than that of the parties or movement organizations (including higher levels of violence). They represent a "micro-mobilization potential" for the radical right.⁹

Based on these criteria of distinction, the current topography of the radical right in Germany can be summarized as in table 1.

Table 1: Dominant Actors in the German Right-wing Family (1990s)

Government and Opposition 35, 2 (Spring 2000), pp. 170-188.

⁷ Klaus von Beyme, "Right-wing extremism in post-war Europe," in: *West European Politics* 11, 2 (1988), p. 16.

⁸ See Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

⁹ Werner Bergmann, "Ein Versuch, die extreme Rechte als soziale Bewegung zu beschreiben", in: Werner Bergmann and Rainer Erb (eds.), *Neonazis und rechte Subkultur* (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 1994), pp. 183-207.

	Party/campaign organization	Social movement organization (SMO)	Subcultural milieu
Fascist/autocratic right	NPD/DVU	ANS/FAP, NPD	Neonazis, "Comradships" Skinheads
Racist/ethnocentrist right	NPD/DVU Republikaner	ANS/FAP East: NPD/DVU (<i>Neue Rechte</i>)	Neonazis "Comradships" skinheads
Authoritarian-populist right			
Religious-fundamentalist right			

Abbreviations/Translations:

ANS: Aktionsfront Nationale Sozialisten (Action front of National Socialists)

DVU: Deutsche Volkunion (German People's Union)

FAP: Freiheitliche Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (Free German Workers Party)

NPD: Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschland (National-democratic Party of Germany)

Table 1 illustrates that unlike in other European democracies, the German radical right is concentrated ideologically around fascist, racist and ethnocentrist variants. There is no populist right, such as the Lega Nord in Italy, or the FPÖ in Austria, neither is there a religious-fundamentalist wing such as the *Comités Chrétienité-Solidarité* in France or the League for Polish Families in Poland. Moreover, the lines of distinction between a fascist and an ethnocentrist radical right are more blurred in Germany than in other countries. The "Republikaner" can be seen as an equivalent to the French Front national, trying to disassociate themselves from blatant racist and fascist ideologies but most other groups embody both tendencies. On the other hand, the organizational field is quite varied, unlike the French or Austrian scenario where a single party has established itself as the hegemon among the radical right, thereby absorbing numerous smaller groups.¹⁰

In the following, the German radical right and its particularities and tendencies will be studied more closely.

¹⁰ See Minkenberg, *Die neue radikale Rechte im Vergleich*, chap. 7.

3. "Organized Confusion": Variants and Trends of the Contemporary German Radical Right

An earlier account of the German New Right characterized this intellectual movement as "organized confusion".¹¹ This label can be used for the entire field. For a closer look at the German scenario reveals that there is not one radical right but several and that there are some distinct East-West differences as a consequence of German unification and the ongoing process of transformation in the new *Länder*. Whether we consider trust in political institutions, party identification, the strength of new social movements and protest behavior, or the concept of democracy and the evaluation of democratic performance, almost fifteen years after the wall came down, East and West Germans still differ in many respects. Detailed analyses show that the East Germans do not simply react to the difficulties of the transformation process and act out their frustration with unfulfilled promises and expectations by withdrawing from the political system. Instead, the differences are due to the specific socialization under the old regime, a legacy of the SED leadership's effort to form a new, a socialist personality and a state socialist culture¹²

As it turned out, the anti-fascist and internationalist foundations of the GDR's regime ideology turned out to be hollow pretenses with counterproductive consequences. The consistent repression of an open discourse about Germany's Nazi past, the exclusively socio-economic interpretation of fascism as a consequence of capitalism, and the "logically" following constant denial of any continuity between the Nazi past and the GDR present, including the denial of any responsibility for the crimes of the past, amounted to the dogma of an 'anti-fascism by decree', or '*verordneter Anti-Faschismus*' (Ralph Giordano), rather than a truly anti-fascist education of the

¹¹ Wolfgang Gessenharer, *Kippt die Republik? Die Neue Rechte und ihre Unterstützung durch Politik und Medien* (München: Knaur, 1994), p. 123. For an analysis of the intellectual New Right in Germany see Minkenberg, *Die neue radikale Rechte im Vergleich*, chap. 4; Wolfgang Gessenharer and Thomas Pfeiffer (eds.), *Die Neue Rechte – eine Gefahr für die Demokratie?* (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2004).

¹² See for example the various contributions to Oscar Gabriel (ed.), *Politische Orientierungen und Verhaltensweisen im vereinigten Deutschland* (Opladen: Leske+Budrich, 1997), and to Dieter Fuchs (ed.) *Bürger und Demokratie in Ost und West* (Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag, 2002).

GDR's population.¹³ While anything smacking of fascism was rejected in the GDR's official public culture, already in the second half of the 1980s, a right-wing extremist youth culture developed in conscious demarcation from the SED regime. The East German skinheads and neo-Nazis were interpreted as a part of the growing opposition to the regime, but a closer look reveals that they primarily criticized the laxness of the regime and the lacking prospects for reunification (including the Eastern territories) while their activities, especially against foreigners, punks and other 'outsiders' were treated with rather benign neglect by police and authorities -- except for the brutal raid on 'red punks' at a rock concert in the East Berlin Zion church in October 1987.¹⁴

At the same time in West Germany, the "Republikaner" scored their first electoral successes in the state elections in Bavaria (1986: 3 per cent, plus 0.5 per cent for the NPD) and Berlin (1989: 7.5 per cent) and in the European parliamentary elections (1989: 7.1 per cent, plus 1.6 per cent for the DVU). While in the East, subcultural milieus were forming but parties and other organizations of the radical right were suppressed by the regime, West Germany seemed to catch up with other Western European democracies through the emergence of a new radical right party phenomenon.

After unification in 1990, the development of the German radical right underwent a general fragmentation along with clear-cut differences between old and new *Länder* and a consolidation of the spectrum in terms of membership and mobilization potential at three levels (see table 2). While the total number of adherents of the radical right fluctuates at a rather high level compared to pre-1989 West Germany (when total membership was around 25,000), the membership of political parties has significantly declined since its all-time high in 1993 (the year of the "asylum compromise" of the Bundestag parties CDU/CSU, FDP and SPD).¹⁵ Exact membership figures for the old and new *Länder* are not available, but a rough comparison is possible. In 1992, the "Republikaner" had 20,000 members in the West and only 3,000 in the

¹³ See Bernd Wittich, "Die dritte Schuld. Antifaschismus, Stalinismus und Rechtsextremismus," in K.H. Heinemann and W. Schubarth (eds.), *Der antifaschistische Staat entläßt seine Kinder. Jugend und Rechtsextremismus in Ostdeutschland* (Köln 1992), pp. 29-37; see also Michael Minkenberg, "German Unification and the Continuity of Discontinuities: Cultural Change and the Far Right in East and West", *German Politics* 3, 2 (Aug. 1994), pp. 169-192.

¹⁴ See Bernd Wagner, "Rechtsradikalismus in Ostdeutschland," in: *Osteuropa* 3 (2002), pp. 305-319.

¹⁵ See Michael Minkenberg, "Context and Consequence. The Impact of the New Radical Right on the Political Process in France and Germany", *German Politics and Society*, 16, 3 (Fall 1998), pp. 12f.

East, a similar distribution was found for the DVU (23,000:3,000) and NPD (4,600:700).¹⁶ This means a significant under-representation of East Germans among members of the radical right-wing parties. Elections before 1998 reflected this difference between East and West: in *Land* as well as national elections, the parties of the radical right scored higher in the West than in the East. Beginning with the elections in Saxony-Anhalt in April 1998, when the DVU entered the parliament with 12.9% of the vote, a reversal of this trend took place.

Thus, in the East all three radical right parties scored 5.0% in the Bundestag elections in Sep. 1998 (2.9% in the West), and the DVU managed to enter the state parliament of Brandenburg with 5.1% of the vote in the elections in Sept. 1999. Moreover, in the new *Länder*, the more extreme DVU clearly received more support than the "Republikaner", although both parties are West German "imports". The DVU's showing in the state elections of Sachsen-Anhalt in 1998 was rivalled only by the "Republikaner's" results in the Baden-Württemberg elections of 1992 (10.5%) and 1996 (9.1%). Organizationally, there is a clear-cut difference between these parties since the DVU is largely run by one man only, its leader Gerhard Frey, and there are no identifiable intra-party structures such as in other parties. In this respect, the DVU can be characterized as a "one-man movement organization" which relies more on extra-party resources and the wealth of its leader and his newspaper empire than the organizational resources of a regular party apparatus. This is particularly true for the DVU in the new *Länder*, thus, the party is practically non-existent as an organization in the East and can therefore be classified as a movement organization rather than a party.¹⁷

Table 2: Development of the German Radical Right in the 1990s: Groups (upper row) and Members (lower row)

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Militant Right-wing		4200	6400	4 5600	1 5400	3 6200	5 6400	3 7600	5 8200	5 9000	2 9700	1 10400

¹⁶ Richard Stöss, "Rechtsextremismus in einer geteilten politischen Kultur," in: Oskar Niedermayer and Klaus von Beyme (eds.), *Politische Kultur in Ost- und Westdeutschland* (Opladen: Leske + Budrich, 1996), p. 123.

¹⁷ See Dietrich Thränhardt, "Die DVU: eine virtuelle Partei, durch manipuliertes Wahlrecht begünstigt - ein Plädoyer für eine Wahlrechtsreform," in: *Zeitschrift für Parlamentsfragen* 29 (September 1998), pp. 441-448.

extremists, Skinheads (a)												
Neonazis	27 1400	30 2100	33 1400	27 2450	33 2940	43 1980	48 2420	40 2400	41 2400	49 2200	60 2200	65 2800
Political Parties				8 55130	4 45400	4 35900	3 33500	3 34800	3 39000	3 37000	3 36500	3 33000
DVU	22000	24000	26000	26000	20000	15000	15000	15000	18000	17000	17000	15000
NPD	7300	6700	5300	5000	4500	4000	3500	4300	6000	6000	6500	6500
REP				23000	20000	16000	15000	15500	15000	14000	13000	11500
Others	34 2900	38 3950	41 4000	40 3120	45 3830	56 3560	52 2660	63 4300	65 4500	77 4200	78 4200	72 4300
Sum total (c) (minus multiple mem- berships)	32200	9800	41900	64500	56600	96 46100	108 45300	109 48400	114 53600	134 52400	143 52600	141 50500

Notes:

a) After 1995, militants of the extreme right included manifestly violent persons and those with sufficient evidence of a tendency towards violence

b) DLVH: Deutsche Liga für Volk und Heimat.

c) Beginning with the 1994 Report (i.e. 1993 data), the "Republikaner" (REP) were included, hence the dramatic increase of total membership.

Sources: Michael Minkenberg, *Die neue radikale Rechte im Vergleich. USA, Frankreich, Deutschland* (Opladen/Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1998), 301, Table 7.19; Bundesministerium des Inneren, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 1999* (Bonn 2000), 18, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 2001* (Bonn 2002), 34.

In the more recent elections after 2000, this overall support for right-wing radical parties in elections declined dramatically on the national and state level but radical right-wing voting in East continued to surpass that in the West and to grow locally in selected areas. In the 2002 Bundestag elections, the "Republikaner" received only 0.6% (in the East: 0.7%) of the vote, the NPD 0.4% (in the East: 1%), and neither the "Republikaner" nor the DVU were reelected into the state parliaments of Baden-Württemberg (2000) and Sachsen-Anhalt (2002) respectively. In contrast to the national trend, the most extreme of the three radical right-wing parties, the NPD,

scored some significant successes in the recent European and local elections in Saxony in June 2004, reaching two-digit results in several some small towns such as Reinhardtsdorf-Schöna (25.2%) and Sebnitz (21.1%), while the "Republikaner" scored a success in the former industrial center Chemnitz (10.3%). Overall, the radical right entered 23 city councils in Saxony.¹⁸

On the other hand, among militant and violent right-wing extremists, the number of individuals has gone up rather than down since unification and reached a record-level 10,000 at the beginning of the new decade. Here, the center of gravity has always been in the East since unification. Since the early 1990s, between 40% und 50% of all Nazis and Skinheads were to be found in the East, in terms of their proportion of the entire population (a fifth of the German population lives in the East), they are clearly over-represented in the new *Länder*.¹⁹ From the beginning, party organizations were rather discredited in the East while movement-type activities and sub-cultural milieus of the extreme right flourished, especially among younger East Germans. One could observe the emergence of cliques and a "structural integration" of the extreme right-wing scene by various Neonazi organizations.²⁰ This trend was accompanied by a dramatic increase of right-wing violence in the second half of the nineties, most of which takes place in the East. When measuring officially registered right-wing violent acts in proportion to population size, all five new *Länder* have consistently topped the list until 2001 when Mecklenburg-Vorpommern went down and Schleswig-Holstein joined the top five.²¹

Finally, survey data add to the picture of East-West differences.²² Whereas a total of 13% of the German public can be characterized as adhering to a right-wing radical "world view", table 3 demonstrates that in the East, right-wing radical attitudes are significantly more

¹⁸ See DER SPIEGEL June 21, 2004, p. 30.

¹⁹ Richard Stöss, *Rechtsextremismus im vereinten Deutschland* (Bonn: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 1999), p. 100. Exact figures are not available, the estimates vary somewhat. Stöss counted 3155 right-wing extremist militants in 1997 in the new *Länder* (up from 2800 in 1992; see *ibid.*), the Federal Office of the Protection of the Constitution estimates that more than half of the roughly 8000 skinheads in Germany lives in the East (see Bundesministerium des Innern, *Verfassungsschutzbericht 1999*, Bonn 2000, p. 25).

²⁰ See Bergmann, "Ein Versuch, die extreme Rechte als soziale Bewegung zu beschreiben", p. 192f. See also Armin Pfahl-Traughber, "Die Entwicklung des Rechtsextremismus in Ost- und Westdeutschland im Vergleich", in: Thomas Grumke and Bernd Wagner (eds.), *Handbuch Rechtsradikalismus* (Opladen: Leske+Budrich, 2002), pp. 29-41.

²¹ See Minkenberg, *Die neue radikale Rechte im Vergleich*, p. 306; Bundesministerium des Innern, *Verfassungsschutzbericht*, p. 23. North German states among the old *Länder* (Hamburg, Schleswig-Holstein and others) range in the middle whereas South and West German states like Bavaria, Baden-Württemberg, Hesse and Northrhine/Westphalia appear at the bottom of the list. For 2001, see Bundesministerium des Innern (Bonn 2002), 42.

²² See Stöss, *Rechtsextremismus im vereinten Deutschland*, pp. 26-36.

widespread than in the West.²³ A decomposition of the data highlights the specific nature of East German right-wing radicalism in the general public. There are no differences regarding nationalistic, pro-Nazi and anti-Semitic attitudes between West and East Germans. However, East Germans tend to be more authoritarian and xenophobic than West Germans, and they leave the West Germans far behind when it comes to issues of "welfare chauvinism", i.e. the refusal to share the nation's wealth with "foreigners". This means that we are not dealing with a backwards-looking right-wing radical segment of the public or the return of the Nazi past but a reaction to the radical transformation of East German politics, society and economy in terms of Scheuch/Klingemann's concept of the rigidity of the "normal pathology" in fast-changing societies.

Table 3: The Right-wing Radical Attitude Potential in Germany, 1998 (in per cent)

	Germany	West	East
<i>In ideological components</i>	11	10	16
Authoritarianism	13	13	13
Nationalism	15	14	20
Xenophobia	26	23	39
Welfare chauvinism	6	6	5
Pro-Naziism	6	6	5
Antisemitism			
<i>In occupational groups</i>			
Unemployed	14	7	22
Workers	19	18	24
Employees	8	7	12
Civil Servants	2	1	11
Self-employed	12	12	15
Non-working	15	15	18
<i>Total</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>17</i>

Source: Richard Stöss, *Rechtsextremismus im vereinten Deutschland* (Bonn: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 1999), 30, 35

Nonetheless, there seems consistently more fertile ground for the radical right in the East than in

²³ This pattern has been confirmed in a recent replication of the study in the *Länder* of Berlin and Brandenburg, see *Berliner Zeitung*, Aug. 12, 2000. Compared to 1998, the overall level of right-wing extremist attitudes has

the West – although, as the debate about the new German immigration law shows, there is considerable resistance in all of Germany against immigration.²⁴ According to a survey which was conducted while the law project was discussed by the political parties, the overwhelming majority (98%) wanted a regulation of immigration to Germany; but 68 per cent of the respondents rejected an increase of the number of immigrants, and 47 per cent favoured a law which even reduces immigration to Germany.²⁵ These survey responses reflect a persistent trend in the 1990s according to which large majorities in East and West Germany favour a restriction of immigration to Germany for all groups: labour migrants from EU-countries (which have the right to immigrate under the EU treaties), labour migrants from non-EU-countries, asylum seekers and German resettlers from Eastern Europe (see table 4). But only minorities support the extreme position and want to prohibit immigration of these groups altogether, and generally, a drop in the principled rejection to immigration can be observed between 1996 and 2000. However, whereas East and West Germans hardly differ with regard to German resettlers and asylum seekers, significantly more East Germans than West Germans oppose any immigration to Germany by labour migrants. For example in 1996, about half of the East Germans favoured a complete prohibition of labour migrants from non-EU-countries – a clear sign of widespread anxieties about the labour market situation especially in the new *Länder* and an expression of ‘welfare chauvinism’.

slightly increased (from 11% to 12% in Berlin and from 19% to 21% in Brandenburg).

²⁴ See Michael Minkenberg, “The Politics of Citizenship in the New Republic”, in: *West European Politics* 26, 4 (Oct. 2003), pp. 219-240.

²⁵ Renate Köcher, ‘Die Bevölkerung fordert ein Einwanderungsgesetz’ *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, (20 Dec. 2000), p. 5.

Table 4: Attitudes towards immigration of different migrant groups to Germany (in per cent)

	<i>West</i>				<i>East</i>			
	1991	1992	1996	2000	1991	1992	1996	2000
<i>Labour migrants from EU countries</i>								
Allow immigration without constraints	34	35	33	32	13	13	11	13
Restrict immigration	56	56	55	62	62	63	51	66
Prohibit immigration completely	10	9	12	7	25	24	38	21
<i>Labour migrants from non-EU countries</i>								
Allow immigration without constraints	11	10	8	8	6	4	4	4
Restrict immigration	61	62	59	72	56	59	46	57
Prohibit immigration completely	28	28	33	20	39	36	49	40
<i>Asylum seekers</i>								
Allow immigration without constraints	13	12	13	10	16	14	12	9
Restrict immigration	65	65	66	74	69	67	67	71
Prohibit immigration completely	22	23	22	16	15	19	21	21
<i>German resettlers from Eastern Europe</i>								
Allow immigration without constraints	22	19	15	14	15	16	13	11
Restrict immigration	68	71	74	76	73	73	69	74
Prohibit immigration completely	10	10	12	11	12	11	18	15

Source: ALLBUS 1991, 1992, 1996, 2000, in Statistisches Bundesamt (ed.), *Datenreport 2002* (Bonn 2002), p. 561.

4. The Radical Right in Unified Germany: Some Hypotheses in Comparative Perspective

If radical right-wing mobilization is a reaction to intense modernization processes and resulting insecurities, then we should have expected, more than ten years after the fall of the Berlin wall and the collapse of state socialism, an active and growing scene of right-wing radical parties and movements in Eastern and Western Germany. But the data yield mixed results. As shown, the party sector in the East is not as strong as in the West – except for the more extreme NPD which, however, borders on a movement organization. On the other hand, the militancy of the movement sector and subcultural milieus is stronger in the East than in the West. A comparative

analysis of the mobilization process of the radical right in East and West Germany must take into account the several contextual factors. Among these are structural and cultural variables, such as the nature of the processes of modernization and regime change, traditions of nationalism, political culture and religion, and cleavage and opportunity structures in the party movement sector.

In the following, the trends described above shall be explained based on an analysis of these factors and some analytical models developed in earlier writings.²⁶ First of all, in Western Europe, including Germany, the mobilization of the radical right today occurs in the context of a new, post-modern cleavage of political forces. The "silent revolution" of post-materialist value change, new social movements and left-libertarian or Green parties is now followed by a "silent counter-revolution", a materialist and authoritarian reaction of right-wing parties and movements. This new radical right differs from its right-wing predecessors as well as from conservatism both in terms of its ideology and its support patterns. In terms of program and demographic characteristics of its voters, it is the polar opposite to the post-materialist New Left, new social movements and related parties or party factions. Only in the context of this structural change and accompanying political discourse, single issues like immigration which is not a new issue *per se*, gain new significance and a mobilizing function.

In contrast to Western Europe, the transformation process in Eastern Europe is more far-reaching, deeper and complex, in at least three dimensions.²⁷ With some modifications due to the particularities of the process of German unification, they also apply to the new *Länder*. First, the transformation includes the collapse not only of political regimes but also of their legitimating ideologies. While the return to communist ideas is far from imminent, groups which combine socialist with nationalist ideas can benefit from this constellation. This is what the NPD has been doing for a number of years now, with increasing success.²⁸ Second, the democratization of regimes is accompanied by an economic and social transformation which touches all aspects of

²⁶ Michael Minkenberg, "The Radical Right in Post-socialist Central and Eastern Europe: Comparative Observations and Interpretations," in *East European Politics and Society* 16, 2 (2002), pp. 335-362; Timm Beichelt and Michael Minkenberg, "Explaining the Radical Right in Transition: Theories of Right-wing Radicalism and Opportunity Structures in Post-Socialist Europe", FIT paper 3/2002 (Europa-Universität Viadrina Frankfurt/Oder); Minkenberg, "The West European Radical Right as a Collective Actor", op.cit.

²⁷ Klaus von Beyme, *Systemwechsel in Osteuropa*. (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1994), pp. 12-14.

²⁸ See Bernd Wagner, "Kulturelle Subversion von rechts in Ost- und Westdeutschland: Zu rechtsextrremen Entwicklungen und Strategien," in: Thomas Grumke and Bernd Wagner (eds.) *Handbuch Rechtsradikalismus*

life. The complexity of the transformation process produces large “transformation costs”, which can benefit the radical right. Third, the exchange of entire social systems causes high levels of social disorientation and ambivalence towards the new order. Again, political entrepreneurs who offer simple solutions and appeal to the “people” or nation rather than a particular social class or universalist vision of progress have a competitive advantage.²⁹

In sum, these transformation-induced opportunity structures which lie behind the institutional settings of liberal democracy as they are put into place in East Germany must be seen as generally favorable to the radical right. It is also clear that these processes are fundamentally different from the West German transition from industrial to post-industrial society. However, the transformation process is even more complicated by the fact that it is a multiple modernization process, i.e. the transition to a liberal democracy and market capitalism along with elements of a change from industrialism to post-industrialism, which often involves aspects of simultaneous nation- and state-building as well. As a result, the radical right in East Germany is successful when it combines post-industrial aspects such as the use of modern mass media and the decreasing role of mass (party) organizations with the ideologies of a particular past, i.e. the mix of traditional nationalism in the East and the legacy of state socialism, in particular a critical stand on capitalism, free trade, the EU and the USA. However, there are clear limits for these attempts in Germany, rooted in the political culture of anti-fascism (including the legacy of anti-fascism by decree in the East), and a legal system which imposes prohibitive costs of repression on any open revival of Nazi ideas by radical right-wing actors.³⁰

For a more systematic assessment of these factors, the article now turns to a comparative overview of right-wing radical mobilization concerning major independent (cultural and structural context) and dependent variables (party vs. and movement strength). However, difficulties of measurement and of availability of relevant data arise since as of today, there are no comprehensive and systematic comparative studies of the non-party sector of the radical right beyond Germany. As a first step, party strength – here measured in electoral strength – reveals the following pattern in the

(Opladen: Leske + Budrich, 2002), pp. 25-26.

²⁹ See Sabrina Ramet (ed.), *The Radical Right in Central and Eastern Europe* (University Park: the University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999).

³⁰ A number of such groups have been banned, mostly in the East, since unification. The most recent example of repressive reactions by the state is the failed attempt to ban the NPD, see Michael Minkenberg, “Repressionsstrategien gegen Rechtsradikalismus und Gewalt“ in: *Forschungsjournal Neue Soziale Bewegungen*

1990s. The Western European countries can be grouped rather easily into three categories, with three countries where party strength can clearly be considered strong (an average of at least 10 per cent in national elections during the 1990s): Austria, France and Italy (one might add Belgium if regional voting is taken into account), and another three, where the opposite is the case (an average of less than 5 per cent): Germany, Great Britain and Sweden (here the Netherlands might be added).

The picture – and the position of Germany - changes when looking at movement strengths in these selected countries. Due to the lack of systematic analyses or data bases, indicators for movement strength are taken from a variety of sources and include also a variety of indicators. Social movement research usually takes the quantity of protest events, the number of members in movement organizations and the support levels for movements in the public as expressed in survey data, as measures of movement strength. Here, impressionistic information on right-wing violence, organizational membership and size of skinhead milieus are used as “proxy measures”.³¹ The results of these data and the grouping of Germany, split into East and West, in the European context is depicted in table 5.

Table 5: Party Strength and Movement Strength of the Radical Right and Context Factors in Western Europe (1990s)

	Var 1a	Var1b	Var 1c	Var 2a	Var 2b	Var 2c	Var 2d	Party Strength	Movement Strength
Austria	0.5	0.5	1	1	0.5	1	1	HIGH	LOW
France	0.5	0.5	1	0	0.5	1	0.5	HIGH	LOW
Italy	0.5	0.5	1	0	0.5	1	0.5	HIGH	LOW
Belgium	(0)	0.5	1	1	0	0.5	1	HIGH-MED	MEDIUM
Denmark	1	0	0	0.5	1	0.5	1	MEDIUM	MEDIUM
Norway	1	0	0	0.5	0.5	0	1	MEDIUM	HIGH
Switzerland	0	0	0.5	1	n.d.	0.5	1	MEDIUM	MED.-HIGH
Germany (West)	0.5	0	0.5	0.5	1	0	1	LOW	MEDIUM
Germany (East)	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	LOW	HIGH
Great Britain	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	LOW	HIGH
Sweden	1	0	0	0.5	0.5	0	1	LOW	HIGH

Variables:

Var 1 Culture:

1a nation type: ethnocultural nation 1, political nation 0

1b political culture: nationalist 1, liberal-democratic 0

16, 4 (Dec. 2003), pp. 31-42.

³¹ See Ruud Koopmans, “A Burning Question: Explaining the Rise of Racist and Extreme Right Violence in Western Europe,” FS III 95-101 (Berlin: WZB, 1995); Minkenberg, *Die neue radikale Rechte im Vergleich*.

- 1c religious tradition: Catholic 1, Protestant 0
 Var 2 Structures
 2a Cleavages: convergence 1, polarization 0
 2b cleavages: strong New Politics voting, 1 weak 0
 2c pol. opport. structures: state and parties' latitude 1, exclusion/repression 0
 2d pol. opport. structures: PR elect.system 1, majority 0

Sources: see M. Minkenberg, "The West European Radical Right as a Collective Actor", in: *Comparative European Politics* 1 (2003), p. 166.

Regarding cultural context factors, nation type is conceptualized according to the dominant understanding of national identity (whether in ethnic, cultural or political terms), political cultures are classified according to the degree of the rooting of liberal-democratic values, and religious traditions according to the historically predominant confessional patterns. Furthermore, the structural variables are configured with regard to the degree of polarization or convergence between the major parties along the dominant cleavages, the level of voting along the value-based, New Politics cleavage, the states' and major parties' control response to the radical right, and the electoral system.

The first and striking result in the summary in table 5 is a rather clear pattern of countries with strong right-wing radical parties and a weak movement sector and those with weak right-wing radical parties and a strong movement sector. This seems to mirror the result of Ruud Koopmans analysis of the relationship between the rise of racist and extreme-right violence and right-wing radical parties.³² However, Koopmans approach suffers from the supposition of an all too direct link between violence and electoral success which cannot be supported by the available evidence. Supporters of right-wing radical parties are usually not overlapping or interchangeable with perpetrators of extreme right or racist violence. Racist skinheads do not perceive voting as a credible option to express their views. Therefore, it is crucial to consider first the organizational dynamism, i.e. the interrelationship between party formation and movement mobilization before inferring certain levels of right-wing violence from party strength. Furthermore, it is important to evaluate the role of certain contextual factors.

For example, table 5 clearly demonstrates the role of cultural factors such as religious traditions. All four cases in which radical right-wing parties scored high in the 1990s are Catholic

³² See previous footnote.

countries. And there are no Catholic countries where the radical right parties score low average results. On the other hand, Catholic countries exhibit comparatively low levels of movement mobilization or, as far as comparable data are available, racist violence. These seem highest in Protestant countries. In this respect, Germany with its bi-confessional population is a telling case. In the Southern regions where Catholicism is prevalent, party formation (especially the "Republikaner") has advanced and right-wing violence is rather limited whereas in the Northern, more Protestant regions and especially in the historically Protestant and nowadays de-churched East, party formation is under-developed but movement mobilization (including the spread of the NPD and their more extreme youth organization, the JN) and levels of right-wing violence have advanced during the 1990s.

Finally, the role of structural variables is rather indeterminate. Clearly, the electoral system is only marginally relevant for the level of party support, and convergence of the established parties may be more relevant for the breakthrough of right-wing radical parties than for their consolidation. But the role of other actors and the state appears to be more significant. In those cases where control response have shifted from exclusion to – partial – collaboration, radical right-wing parties seem to have benefited.³³ On the other hand, countries where parties and the state act more rigid, right-wing radical parties did not flourish, but – irrespective of the repertoire of repression by the state – the movement sector has developed. Again, this development is very pronounced within Germany.

In the West, the new radical right is situated at the right-wing pole of a New Politics cleavage which cuts across the older class- and religion-based cleavages.³⁴ In Germany, the radical right was unable to politicize the immigration issue to its own advantage, because here, neoconservative cultural and political elites themselves began the politicization of the issue during the 1980s by reviving the idea of a German *Kulturnation*, including elements of a *völkisch*, or exclusively ethnic understanding of the German nation. In particular, it was the governing CDU/CSU, which in the mid-1980s unleashed a debate on immigration, asylum, and foreigners in Germany and raised fears among Germans of being "swamped" by aliens and their cultures. In this context of elite discourse and public resonance before unification, the

³³ See Minkenberg, "The New Radical Right in the Political Process: Interaction Effects in France and Germany," op.cit.

³⁴ See Kitschelt, *The Radical Right in Western Europe*, chs. 1,2; Minkenberg, *Die neue radikale Rechte im Vergleich*, chs. 7, 8.

opportunity structures for radical right-wing mobilization narrowed rather than widened. Still today, in the face of the new politics of citizenship by the SPD/Green government, part of the CDU/CSU stands for the defense of what in France, only Le Pen wants to introduce: the ethnic concept of nationhood.³⁵

5. Conclusion

In West Germany, as in Western Europe overall, after the 1960s, a new radical right has emerged which can be identified by its ideological softening compared to earlier versions of the radical right, in particular its general acceptance of the democratic rules of the game, and by its location on the right-wing pole of a new, values- or identity-based conflict axis where the immigration issue plays a central role. The dominant forces of the radical right in the East, like in Eastern Europe overall, are ideologically and structurally different from most Western varieties. Organizationally, the East German radical right is less developed in party terms than its Western counterpart, a fate it shares with most other political parties in the region. Thus an analysis of the phenomenon must take into account both its party-type and its movement-type characteristics. Such a combined look reveals that the party sector in Germany – measured in both electoral and organizational strength – is not as strong as in most Western European democracies, in particular Austria, Belgium, or France. On the other hand, the militancy of the movement sector seem particularly strong in Germany overall but especially strong in the East.

Ideologically, the dominant type of the radical right in the East (as in Eastern Europe) is more reverse oriented than its Western counterpart, i.e. more antidemocratic and more militant. Here, the radical right reflects the intermingling of different German pasts and histories. In most countries where democracy is not yet “the only game in town” (Linz) this opens opportunities that the radical right – and this may explain the so far limited success in the Eastern *Länder*. Because here, unlike in other transition countries, the game of democracy seems more accepted, although, as all elections show, it is not as accepted as in Western Germany. It seems, therefore, that the behavior of elites and the political class, in particular the post-communist PDS, is crucial for the further development of the radical right. If in the East confidence in the rules of the

³⁵ See Minkenberg, “The Politics of Citizenship in the New Republic.”

democratic game continues to decline and the PDS fails to provide an attractive alternative to voters who are critical of capitalism and "the West", parties like the NPD which combine ultranationalist and anti-capitalist positions will benefit in the new *Länder* despite their stigmatization by the mainstream.