

Germany in transition: immigration, racism and the extreme right

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ABSTRACT. German society is on its way to changing from a relatively homogenous population as a result of the Second World War and prior events to a more culturally, ethnically and religiously diverse society, based on its huge post-war immigration. The emergence of racism, political extremism and violence in post-unification German society points to deficits of political legitimacy, political culture and social cohesion. The strains of unification and waves of immigration from East Germany, ethnic German resettlers (*Aussiedler*), and asylum seekers have exacerbated and made visible unsolved questions of national identity, diversity, immigration and integration of foreigners. These events have affected German political culture and polarised the traditional party system along a 'New' and 'Old Politics' axis. These new realities have led to a growth of far right parties, racist violence, and an increase of neo-nationalist, anti-immigrant and welfare-chauvinist rhetoric.

Introduction

Although indicators point to an erosion of mass consensus and trust in the traditional party system, Germany's political culture and stability is not in question. Germany today is not the unstable Weimar Germany of the 1920s and early 1930s. However, to roll back racist and xenophobic tendencies and activities, a longer time perspective is needed. Success depends on continuing political discourse, public education and information as well as effective immigration and social policies. German unification was accompanied by fears in Germany and abroad that a new nationalism and right-wing extremism would overshadow the democratic project and invite new forms of German assertiveness *vis-à-vis* its European neighbours and non-German immigrant population. In the few years following unification,

anti-foreigner violence in Rostock, Solingen and elsewhere, the electoral successes of far right parties, and the poisoned debate on immigration and asylum laws seem to have confirmed these fears.

However, any perspective which tries to explain these developments largely by looking into the German past, as 'resurrected' through unification, and thereby subscribing to the theme of a German exceptionalism (*Sonderweg*), ignores structural changes that had occurred prior to the events of 1989–90 and had already affected the domestic politics and political cultures of other Western democracies, as well. Among these changes are a polarisation along a 'New' and 'Old Politics' axis, significant migration movements in the post-war period and, more recently, an increased influx of refugees and illegal immigrants in the context of a restructuring of Western economies and growing insecurities since the late 1970s. However, it is not yet clear what influence the new immigration has had on the emergence of xenophobia, racism and the extreme right. To what extent does the German case stand out as an exception? Does the revival of ethnic chauvinism and nationalism indicate an erosion of mass consensus and trust in the traditional party system? What are the origins for the rising fears that affluent welfare-state societies are endangered by worldwide migration movements?

This article rests on the assumption that nation-specific elements such as political culture, national identity, constitutional arrangements and the policy process can only be identified properly as meaningful independent variables if put into a comparative context. In a first step towards providing some answers and developing a more comprehensive approach with which to study the issues raised above, this essay addresses the following questions: is the emergence of racism and right-wing extremism a result of increasing immigration before and after unification or has the increased influx of refugees and immigrants only exacerbated trends of polarisation in Western societies and Germany in particular? How widespread is the extremist reaction? What are its sources, characteristics, and implications for political stability? What remedies are conceivable?

Overview: Germany – a country of immigration

In 1977, a Joint Commission of the Federal Government and the states (Bund-Länder-Kommission zur Fortentwicklung einer umfassenden Konzeption der Ausländerbeschäftigung) formulated some principles of the (West) German policy towards immigrants and non-Germans, the first of which stated: 'The Federal Republic of Germany is not an immigration country' (Katzenstein 1987: 218, 239f). This principle reflects a general attitude towards migrant workers in Germany since the 1950s and has been one of the pillars of the Kohl government's approach to foreigners. It is true that Germany and other European societies are not traditionally immigrant

countries like the United States, Canada or Australia. European nations were not founded on large-scale immigrations of peoples of different ethnic, racial and cultural backgrounds in the nineteenth or twentieth centuries, though migrations have occurred throughout their history. However, regardless of the repetition of the 'non-immigration' principle by (West) German politicians, Germany has become a *de facto* immigrant country despite the original intentions of the framers of the guest-worker programme, against the will of the majority of the German population, and against the liberal intentions of the asylum law of 1949 (Kurthen forthcoming). In comparison with other industrialised West European countries, immigration to the Federal Republic has occurred relatively recently. As early as the 1950s, post-colonial immigration challenged the traditional notion of ethnic homogeneity in France, Britain and the Netherlands. But a larger historical perspective reveals that the territories of the various German (nation-)states have been the target of huge in- and out-migrations. Invaders, refugees, migrants and traders have criss-crossed, settled or mixed with the indigenous populations over the last 2,000 years (Bade 1992).

After the Second World War and prior to unification, the Federal Republic underwent three distinct phases of immigration which contributed to making the Bonn Republic a 'culturally and ethnically pluralistic country of immigration' (Katzenstein 1987: 228). First, between the end of the war and the early 1960s, the Federal Republic absorbed and successfully integrated some 12 million ethnic Germans. More than 8 million had fled the Red Army in the East or were expelled by Eastern European governments from territories that they had settled centuries ago, most notably the provinces of the old Reich east of the Oder-Neisse line which were administered by Poland and the parts of Czechoslovakia traditionally populated by the Sudetendeutsche. More than 3 million Germans left the German Democratic Republic (GDR) first across the 'green border' and then, after its sealing in 1952, through the 'loophole' of Berlin until the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED) put an end to this by building the Berlin wall in August 1961.

Second, with the economic recovery of West German industry in the 1950s a strong demand developed for labour that could not be supplied sufficiently by the domestic labour force, especially after the erection of the Berlin wall had brought the flow of migration from the GDR to the Federal Republic to a complete stop. The so-called guest-worker rotation system was established by which foreign workers were supposed to stay for a limited time of one to three years and then return to their home countries.

This system did not work because it was against the long-term interests of both the workers and their employers. With the signs of a world recession at the end of 1973, the German government imposed a virtual ban on new recruitment from outside the European Community, which affected mainly

Yugoslavia and Turkey, the main non-EC suppliers of foreign labour to West Germany. This so-called *Anwerbestop* (immigration stop) had a paradoxical effect. Knowing that they might lose their work permits if they left Germany for more than three months, many migrants decided to settle and were joined by their wives and children. Despite the ban and an incentive scheme for voluntary repatriation in 1983–4, the overall foreign population continued to rise whereas the working population became stagnant.

Altogether, almost 5 million foreigners or about 8 per cent of the population lived in the Federal Republic and West Berlin before unification. Their arrival in a densely populated country with little multicultural tradition and a complete lack of public debate about the consequences of immigration (i.e. a position of ignorance and denial of immigration) did not lead to social tensions as long as West Germans were busy rebuilding their country and the economy kept growing. The economic incorporation of labour migrants into the West German economy resulted in their confinement into an ethnic sub-stratum where foreigners took jobs that were no longer attractive to German labourers (Gillmeister, Kurthen and Fijalkowski 1989).

Third, with increasing unrest in so-called Third World countries and a relaxation of relations between West Germany and its East European neighbours an increasing number of ethnic German immigrants and refugees arrived in the late 1970s and 1980s. Their numbers increased during and after German unification and the collapse of communist regimes in Eastern Europe. In addition, another wave of immigration into West Germany occurred after the opening of borders between East and West Germany. In the twenty-four months following 9 November 1989, almost 1 million East Germans moved from East to West, exacerbating the existing shortages of jobs, housing and infrastructure in West Germany. In contrast, the number of foreigners living in the East was very small. At the end of the GDR's existence, there were about 191,000 foreigners in the East (1.2 per cent of the entire population), most of whom were contract workers and students from 'socialist brother countries' such as Vietnam, Mozambique, Cuba and Poland.

Undoubtedly, the collapse of the cold war order has led to new massive migration movements across Europe. This has particularly affected Germany, which despite the absence of an immigration policy attracted increasing immigration for several reasons. First, with the fall of the Berlin wall and of the restraints imposed by the communist regimes on the mobility of East Europeans, one of its 'positive side-effects' has disappeared, too: the sheltering of the Federal Republic from a large East–West migration. Second, the reputation of (West) Germany as an economic paradise in the centre of Europe created strong 'pull factors' for migration. Third, the policy flowing from Article 116 of the Basic Law (Constitution) which defines as German, and grants German citizenship to, those belonging

to the German *Volks-gemeinschaft* has invited migration from the so-called *Aussiedler* or ethnic Germans living in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Finally, the (until recently) most liberal asylum law in Europe, based on the Basic Law's Article 16 which categorically guarantees asylum to anyone persecuted on political grounds, became increasingly a substitute for an immigration policy; the only way for non-EC foreigners legally to enter the Federal Republic without a visa.

Taken together, these factors have contributed to a significant new wave of immigration in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Since 1988, an annual 200,000 to 400,000 ethnic Germans resettled in the Federal Republic. (Since the mid-1960s these figures had averaged between 25,000 and 60,000 German resettlers per annum.) An estimated 3.5 million ethnic Germans still live in Eastern and South-eastern Europe, with the largest groups in the former Soviet Union (2 million) and Poland (1 million).¹ Equally important in terms of numbers is immigration based on the asylum law. Between 1952 and 1993, 2.1 million asylum seekers entered the Federal Republic, 186,000 of whom were given political refugee status by the courts (8.7 per cent of all applicants for that period). The acceptance rate has decreased over time from 79 per cent in 1970 to below 5 per cent since 1990 due to the largely economic reasons for migration in recent years. The number of applicants has increased dramatically with more than 100,000 applicants annually since 1988 (the peak being 438,000 asylum seekers in 1992).

Overall, between the end of the Second World War and the present, Germany (particularly the Western part), has integrated a huge number of immigrants including almost 9 million expellees and refugees from East Germany, Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union between 1945 and 1950; 4.2 million refugees from East Germany, more than 3 million East European ethnic Germans, 7 million foreigners, mostly labour migrants, and 2.1 million asylum seekers since 1950. After 1945 (1950), over 25 (14) million people have moved into Western Germany which in 1939 had only a population of some 41 million. Germany with 578 persons per square mile, i.e. sixteen times more densely populated than Canada and the USA, is on a territory fifty-four times smaller than the North American continent. Between 1989 and 1992 Germany annually received more than 1 million East European resettlers, non-German immigrants and asylum seekers, that is, more immigrants and refugees than traditional immigration countries like Canada, Australia and the USA which together received about 180,000 asylum applications in 1992 and 450,000 permanent settlers in 1990. In relation to its population size, to receive as many immigrants and asylum seekers as Germany, the USA theoretically would have to accept over 3 million immigrants and refugees annually. Germany has thus become the largest immigration country among the OECD countries and is now at the top of global immigration statistics; 60–70 per cent of all refugees coming into the European Community flock to Germany.² This massive intake occurs against the background of a political culture and political traditions,

of a constitutional and legal framework, and of government policies which continue to be based on the denial of the facts and the rejection of the idea of immigration and cultural heterogeneity.

The unprepared nation: political culture and the uncertain sense of national identity

What are the traditions which support the denial that Germany has become an immigration country? The roots of the German understanding of nation and nationality go back to the belated state-building of the German nation and the political traditions of romanticism, in particular Herder's concept that the 'cultural nation' should be the foundation of such state-building. Consequently, in the aftermath of the national awakening that occurred in German territories in the wake of the Napoleonic wars, Prussia in 1842 and later the German empire adapted the ancestral principle or *ius sanguinis*, thereby rejecting the much older territorial principle of citizenship or *ius soli*, prominent in countries born out of a political revolution or built on immigration.³ The German decision in favour of the ancestral principle – which should not be confounded with the Nazi's notorious racial Nuremberg Laws of 1935 based on the pseudo-Aryan myth of 'blood and soil' – was put into practice in the Citizenship Law of the Empire (*Reichs- und Staatsangehörigkeitsgesetz*) of 1913 which, with some modifications, until today determines German citizenship on the basis of ancestral relations (Wehler 1985: 100–37; Oberndörfer 1991: 34–48). The foundation of the *ius sanguinis* rests on the assumption of the existence of an ethnically and culturally homogenous German *Volksgemeinschaft* rather than constitutional principles or liberal political traditions. Other characteristic traits for such a *völkisch* nationalism are statism, authoritarian elitism, the concept of the unpolitical bourgeois citizen (the *Untertan*), and of legalism and formalism in public affairs. This was conducive to the concept of the *Obrigkeitsstaat* (authoritarian state) and its realisation in the regimes of the Second and Third Reich. The historic discontinuities, wars and regime changes in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries reinforced those institutions (i.e. family, bureaucracy, government authority) that helped preserve such anti-liberal and anti-democratic attitudes and cultural values (Eckstein 1988; Dahrendorf 1967: 80, 14).

There is widespread evidence that the political culture of the early years of the Federal Republic reflected the traditions of submissiveness and *Volksgemeinschaft* (Almond and Verba 1963: 312ff.). In fact, the Basic Law itself contributed to keeping alive some notion of a *völkisch* nationalism by juxtaposing universal and republican principles of human rights, civil rights and democracy with those that drew from the idea of the German *Volk*, not in terms of the demos, but in terms of the ethnos,

Table 1 Postwar immigration into West Germany (from 1990 to united Germany)

In 1000	1950	1955	1960	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
Ethnic German settlers	48	16	19	24	19	20	51	40	43	79	203	377	397	222	231	219	223
GDR Refugees ^a	129	260	208	30	18	16	13	25	26	19	40	344	395	170	110	90	80
Asylum seekers	1	2	2	4	9	10	108	74	100	57	103	121	193	256	438	323	127
Foreigner population in Germany (in percent) ^b	1.1	0.9	0.7	2.8	4.9	6.6	7.24	7.2	7.4	6.9	7.3	7.2	8.3	7.2	7.9	8.2	8.7

^a GDR Refugees since 1991 estimated as internal migrants from East to West.

^b Percentage of foreigner population decreased from 1990 to 1991 because statistical basis changed from West German population to population of united Germany

Sources: German Federal Statistical Office and OECD-SOPEMI.

thus postulating an identity between nation-state and the fiction of a homogenous German *Volk*.⁴

This ambiguity of the West German legal framework and political culture continued into the 1990s despite the profound changes which took place after unification. It is widely acknowledged that the West German public developed increasing levels of pride in its political institutions while at the same time participatory norms and other elements of a 'civic culture' took root (Conradt 1980; Dalton 1989: 105–6). In particular, generational change played a crucial role in forming new cultural patterns in the Federal Republic. A new generation raised under the conditions of economic well-being and democracy developed new, post-materialist values which, among other things, resulted in demands for more democracy and new forms of citizen involvement in public affairs (Inglehart 1990: ch. 10). This so-called New Left, organised in citizen initiative groups, parts of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), and the Green Party, challenged established political and cultural norms, including the principles of citizenship and *Volksgemeinschaft*, and, in combination with their primarily ecological and grass-roots concerns, initiated a public debate on multiculturalism in West Germany in the 1980s.⁵

This 'Westernisation', however, polarised or even provoked rather than eliminated the persisting traditional and ethno-centric patterns of German political culture. West Germans continuously expressed an uncertain sense of national identity. They displayed comparatively low levels of national chauvinism and pride throughout the life of the Bonn Republic (Weidenfeld and Korte 1991: 130; Stöss 1989: 52).

Moreover, research has shown repeatedly the persistence of a right-wing potential in the West German public that can be seen as a continuation of pre- or anti-democratic traditions. In 1981, the first comprehensive public opinion survey measuring right-wing attitudes revealed that 13 per cent of the West German public had a coherent right-wing ideology, that 6 per cent approved of right-wing violence, and that another third of the population could be categorised as authoritarian (SINUS 1981: 78, 83, 93). These far right orientations were found mostly among older respondents with lower levels of education who were rural, small town and suburban residents. At the same time, the overwhelming majority of those with far right orientations were supporters of the established democratic parties, rather than supporters of right-wing fringe parties of 'unpolitical' citizens. Moreover, in the 1970s and 1980s, 10–20 per cent of West Germans exhibited strongly anti-Semitic views while only 30,000 Jews (0.5 per cent of the population) lived in Germany. Thus one can talk of an 'anti-Semitism without Jews' among considerable portions of West Germans (Stöss 1989: 49).

In the course of the 1980s, the political spectrum of the Federal Republic underwent significant change with regard to the questions of national identity and the immigration issue. As a response to the rise of post-

materialism and the related agenda of the New Left, influential elites and a significant proportion of the German public (as well as those of other Western democracies) have become more conservative, emphasising traditional, materialist values, economic growth and law and order issues on the political agenda.

This reaction can be interpreted as the right-wing or 'neo-conservative' pole of a new value-based conflict axis – i.e. the New Politics dimension – which cuts across older cleavages between left and right based on social class and religion – i.e. the Old Politics dimension. The Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and its Bavarian sister party, the Christian Social Union (CSU) represented the right-wing in the Old Politics dimension, i.e. mostly middle-class and Catholic voters and their concerns (opposition to government regulation of the economy and towards trade unions, support for the Catholic church and its ideas, etc.). The New Politics cleavage is characterised by a polarisation between post-materialist, younger and better educated voters with predominant sympathies for the Green party or the Social Democrats on the left, and rather materialist and lower educated voters of working and middle-class backgrounds with traditionally CDU/CSU and SPD sympathies alike on the right. At the extreme end of this bipartisan 'neo-conservative alliance' are populist New Right parties such as the Republikaner or the Deutsche Volksunion (DVU) which capitalise on those parts of the old middle classes and working classes who perceive their status as particularly threatened by the ongoing social and cultural change (Minkenberg 1991: 59–70). Thus, unlike previous waves of right-wing extremism, it would be misleading to interpret the West German New Right of the 1980s as middle-class extremism or a 'radicalization of the centre' (Lipset 1981: ch. 5). Nor can the New Right be reduced to a radicalisation and mobilisation of a disgruntled CDU/CSU constituency. Rather, it is the product of both established parties losing partisan loyalty and voting support to new parties on the left (the Greens) and right (most notably the Republikaner).

The erosion of the traditional political spectrum in the Federal Republic at the mass public level was accompanied, and ultimately fostered by, elite reaction. If elite-mass interaction is a crucial determinant for the stability of democracy and the underlying political culture, then the public discourse of the 1980s in the West (and during unification in the East) sheds a particular light on shifting currents in the German political culture.

Prior to unification, in the context of new economic uncertainties and deepening class inequalities in West Germany (what has been captured by the notion of the 'two-thirds society'), neo-conservative cultural and political elites launched efforts to define German national identity by emphasising elements of the German *Kultur* and a traditional ethnically oriented *völkisch* nationalism while, in alliance with similar neo-conservative shifts in the West, praising Thatcher's and Reagan's nationalist and anti-communist policies of crusading for vaguely defined 'Western

values'. In contrast, the New Left argued for a post-national identity and a 'constitutional patriotism'.

The promises of the Kohl government following the 1982 elections to introduce a spiritual and moral turn in the country (the so-called *Wende*), the Bitburg incident⁶ and similar government actions, and the efforts to reinterpret the German past in the historians' debate about the uniqueness of the Holocaust (*Historikerstreit*) illustrate the recourse to an all-German history in order to recreate a national consciousness that was neither overshadowed by the dark sides of Germany's twentieth-century history nor confined to the short period of post-war Western Germany and its liberal constitutional principles. As Michael Stürmer, historian and advisor to the chancellor, put it bluntly: 'in a land without history, the future is won by those who supply memory, shape concepts and interpret the past' (Stürmer 1985).

These efforts of the right were accompanied by a political debate on immigration, asylum and foreigners in Germany which also served the purpose of defining a German identity by fighting the concept of multiculturalism, by denying the reality of immigration, and by raising and appealing to fears among Germans of being swamped by economic refugees and their alien cultures. This debate was seasoned with statistics on rising numbers of illegal aliens, exploding costs of immigration and asylum, housing and job shortages, and a dramatic increase in crime and violence as a result of foreigners in the country. Fear, prejudice, scapegoating and mockery of exotic appearance, customs and religious practices made foreigners visible targets of public rage and resentment long before the rise of the Republikaner party, the fall of the Berlin wall and the resulting wave of migrants and refugees. (Leiprecht 1990: 215–20; Oberndörfer 1991: 64–72). Large segments of the population resent the fact that ethnic Germans from Eastern Europe, labour migrants and asylum seekers – especially those 90–95 per cent who are rejected by the courts on the grounds that they left their countries for economic, not political, reasons – will be recipients of benefits and subsidies long before they become substantial contributors.⁷ This so-called 'welfare chauvinism' dislikes the 'exploitation' of welfare provisions and social security entitlements (unemployment, old age pensions, medical and housing subsidies), and other entitlements normally reserved to life-time, tax and premium payers and persons with citizenship.

With unification in 1989/90, coming to terms with the realities of Germany as an immigration country became more complicated. Unified Germany inherited with the GDR a modified subject culture which was derived from the authoritarian traditions of the *Obrigkeitsstaat* (Minkenberg 1993a). At the level of official regime ideology and national identity, the East German leadership provided and implemented a symbolic framework that centred on the principles of anti-fascism, democracy and socialism as well as fostered traditions of German working-class culture, such as

egalitarianism and social justice. In practice, when confronted with the needs of Soviet-style industrial mobilisation and complete cultural renewal, the SED regime extended increasingly hierarchical and authoritarian patterns of traditional German culture into all dimensions of everyday life: in family, the workplace and politics.

The anti-fascist and internationalist foundations of the ideology of the GDR's regime 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 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', rather than a truly anti-fascist education of the GDR's population (Wittich 1992: 29–36; Krahulec 1991: 104–5). As a consequence, East Germans lacked substantial information about the Nazi past while interest in this part of German history increased and mixed with sympathetic curiosity (Schubarth and Schmidt 1992: 20). Furthermore, despite the negligible number of foreigners in the GDR and the internationalist rhetoric of the regime, xenophobia, as well as ethnocentrism were composite elements of an authoritarian culture that prohibited an open and self-educating discourse on these matters (Siegler 1991; Farin and Seidel-Pielen 1992; Erb 1993).

Immigration and the New Germany: The return of the Reich?

The arguments presented above should make clear that the revival of racism and of the extreme right in German politics before and after unification cannot be reduced to a simple reaction to these most recent waves of immigration. Rather, cultural and political factors which shaped the political systems of both East and West Germany provided sources for resentment which was only mobilised in the context of the late 1980s and especially after unification. In the face of changes among West Germans over the last forty years, challenges of immigration, and the consequences of unification, a differentiated look is necessary to determine the threat of extremism to Germany's democratic future. Is the urge to attack foreigners a problem of a sick soul or a sick society? How German a phenomenon is it? Do Germans still 'shrink from any measure that smacks of assimilation, be it cultural or political'? (Katzenstein 1987: 224).

The first distinction to be made is between attitudes and behaviour, since, for example, not everybody expressing anti-foreigner sentiments is ready to act on behalf of them, and not everybody voting for an extreme right-wing party is a right-wing extremist although there are relationships between these two factors.⁸ At the attitudinal level, we must distinguish between various indicators of xenophobia and right-wing extremism. Whatever

general measurement is chosen, self-placement at the extreme right-wing pole of the left-right continuum or anti-foreigner statements, there has been no significant increase of xenophobia among the West Germans during the 1980s and among West and East Germans after unification. For example, far right self-placement (a score of ten in the 10-point left-right continuum) has continuously fluctuated around 5 per cent since measurements started in 1973, roughly coinciding with the European-wide trend (Falter 1993). When it comes to xenophobia expressed through anti-foreigner attitudes, these trends actually declined between 1980 and 1990: the proportion of those who would not allow foreigners any political voting rights declined from 39 to 27 per cent, the proportion of those who wanted to expel foreigners in times of high unemployment fell from 38 to 20 per cent, and the number of those who were against marriage between foreigners and Germans dropped from 33 to 18 per cent (Wiegand 1993: 18). Moreover, Germans clearly differentiated among various groups of foreigners in their evaluations. In 1990, 13 per cent of West Germans were strongly against an influx of labour migrants from European Union countries (thereby rejecting the official EU policy of EU-wide employment opportunities) but 34 per cent were against immigration of labourers from non-EU countries (especially Turkey and Yugoslavia) and 30 per cent rejected the settlement of asylum seekers. Those numbers decreased slightly for West German respondents in the two consecutive years whereas East Germans (polled in 1991 and 1992 only) expressed somewhat higher levels of rejection of labour migrants (about 25 per cent for EU migrants, and 38 per cent for non-EU labour migrants) but slightly lower levels of rejection for asylum seekers (Wiegand 1993: 20–2).

Overall, these trends suggest that anti-foreigner sentiments in the German public do not directly reflect changing numbers of labour migrants coming to and foreigners living in Germany, as outlined above. Moreover, in their attitudes towards foreigners, Germans do not differ markedly from other European publics with the notable exception of their willingness to accept asylum seekers (Wiegand 1993: 26). In both 1991 and 1992, West Germans, unlike their Eastern countrymen, have been more inclined than most other EU member populations to reject the intake of asylum seekers. This, however, is hardly surprising in the face of the actual distribution of asylum seekers and Yugoslav war refugees throughout Western Europe. Whereas by early August 1992, Britain, France, Spain, Belgium and Finland combined had accepted only about 6,000 Yugoslav refugees, Germany hosted over 200,000 war refugees (Steger and Wagner 1993: 69).

The trends in behaviour – actual behaviour or self-professed intentions – reveals a different story. Again, it is important to distinguish between different levels of behaviour, the most basic being those of conventional (i.e. party organisation and voting) and of unconventional (i.e. militant protests, violence, terrorism) behaviour. All indicators of behaviour directed against asylum seekers or related to foreigners in Germany increased sharply in the late 1980s. The intention to vote for a far right

party in West Germany, having been close to zero until the mid-1980s and well below the average of French, Belgian, Danish and Italian voters, rose significantly in 1989 and exceeded the European average in 1992 (Falter 1993: Table 2; Wüst 1993: 28).

However, voting intention and actual voting for far right parties must be put into proper perspective. In the West German electorate, it is the result of changing cleavage structures in the transition from Old Politics to New Politics in which the immigration issue plays a prominent role but is not the all-determining factor. Contrary to the hopes of the political establishment in the Federal Republic and the quick interpretations of some political observers in 1990, unification did not at all undo or stop the changing cleavage patterns of West German society. In the 1990 federal elections, the major New Politics parties, the Greens on the left and the Republikaner Party (plus NPD and DVU) on the right, suffered from the extraordinary circumstances in that year and failed to enter the Bundestag. But as subsequent state elections demonstrate, the Green party recovered quickly from its 1990 débâcle. More importantly for the purpose of this article, the parties of the New Right also celebrated impressive victories. The DVU entered the state parliaments in Bremen and Schleswig-Holstein while the Republikaner Party became the third largest party in the parliament of Baden-Württemberg.

The recovery of the far right parties was helped by the further restructuring of the political spectrum in the old *Länder* and process of polarisation and growing discontent with the established parties. This process predates unification and the latest wave of immigration and has benefited the Green party since the early 1980s and the far right since the late 1980s. It was the result of an accumulation of dissatisfaction with controversial government decisions (welfare and health insurance reforms), political scandals about illegal party financing and election campaign manipulations, and socio-economic crisis. In contrast to the general recession of the late 1960s, this crisis most affected groups at the lower end of the social hierarchy and took place in the context of a fundamental change in the occupational structure of all major industrial societies in which low skill occupations have diminished continually in value (Stöss 1990: 89–93). With unification, the major parties, especially the CDU/CSU, regained credibility only temporarily. The policy of unification and its consequences have only added to the perceived lack of competence as the discussion about the *Steuerlüge* (tax lie), the confusion in financing unification, and the emotional debate on immigration and the asylum law demonstrates.

Thus, the structural context of a new conflict axis and the situational context of a radicalisation process, in particular the continuing loss of confidence in the *Volksparteien* (or catch-all parties, a term coined by Otto Kirchheimer) (Roth 1993a), provide the clue for understanding the emergence of the Republikaner Party and the revival of other far right

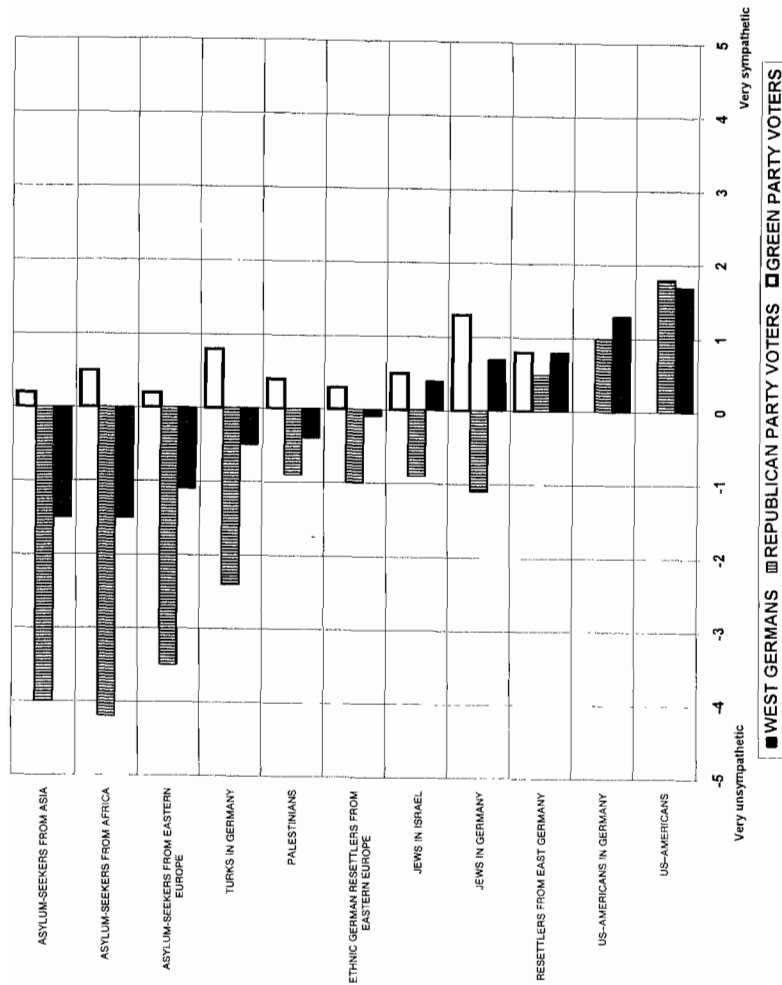


Figure 1. Sympathy scale and party affiliation, mean values (N = 2102, March 1989). Source: Der Spiegel 1989, 16: 151; 21: 43

parties. Their ideological appeal is clearly oriented to the concerns of the neo-conservative element of the West German public as defined above. They hold positions on the New Politics dimension that are in stark contrast to the New Left agenda (in particular the platform of the Green party). The socio-economic incompetence of the German New Right in solving Old Politics problems is outbalanced by its focus on morally and culturally related issues, immigration, law and order, and the call for authoritarian leadership. It offers simple solutions for various national and social problems: statism, ethno-centrism, rewriting of German history, fixation on traditional family structures and gender roles, hyper-nationalism and so on (Jasch: 1990: 90-106). The polarisation of the New Left and the New Right is highlighted by their supporters' views on foreigners, multiculturalism and related topics. For example, while the general German public in 1989 was split down the middle on the question of whether or not the foreigners' way of life could improve the German one, Green party voters overwhelmingly (four out of five) supported this view and Republikaner voters by an equally overwhelming proportion disagreed. On a sympathy or likeability scale (minus 5 to plus 5) a similar polarisation of opinions towards different groups of foreigners can be observed. It is of interest to note that the positive sympathy of Germans towards foreigners had improved in December 1991 in comparison with a March 1989 poll.

The demographic profile of Republikaner supporters stresses the notion that the party has mobilised the right-wing pole of the New Politics conflict axis which includes union and non-union working and middle-class voters alike. Instead of social class or religion, educational differences and value orientations are a major cleavage force in the New Politics dimension. The New Right draws overwhelming support from those with only elementary or primary education and those with materialist value orientations (Minkenberg 1992: 72-6). Although persons over age 50 are overrepresented, age differences do not play the role in New Right support that one might expect. Along with support from union members and Catholics, the attractiveness of the New Right to the younger generation is another structural factor not present in earlier waves of right-wing extremism in West Germany, notably the NPD successes in the late 1960s (Kühnl *et al.* 1969: 223; Hoffmann-Göttig 1989: 26).

In sum, the mobilisation of electoral support for the parties of the New Right in West Germany is a consequence of a structural change which affects Germany as well as other Western societies (Betz 1993; Minkenberg 1993b). It is continuing into the Third Republic, exacerbated by the consequences of unification and a new wave of immigration. It would be misleading to reduce the phenomenon to a mere protest movement which could be overcome by the major parties regaining their position of leadership and image of competence on the immigration issue. Moreover, it would also be misleading to interpret the electoral success of the New Right as a resurgence of German nationalism, imperialism and militarism of the

past. The analysis of electoral support for the Republikaner and other parties of the far right has shown that its voters' resentments are primarily driven by subjective problems of adaptation to modernisation, challenges of diversity and pluralism, and the fear of losing status and entitlements in a more dynamic and complex world.

Republikaner voters see even the massive financial and other needs to integrate East Germans (not to mention ethnic German immigrants from Eastern Europe) as a threat to their life-styles, level of wealth and cultural values rather than an enrichment (or even fulfilment) of national dreams. This is illustrated best by the fact that, besides Green party and PDS voters, it was and is above all Republikaner voters who look at unification and its consequences with scepticism rather than joy.⁹

Another factor that should not be overlooked are differences between East and West Germans' basic orientations (Minkenberg 1993a: 62–5). Until August 1991, unification was the most important problem for West Germans. Later it was replaced by the issue of asylum seekers and foreigners. In striking contrast, most East Germans consistently named unemployment as the most important problem over more than twenty-four months since unification (Roth 1993b: 266–9). Polls consistently show that between the summer of 1991 and early 1993 more East Germans (between 35 and 55 per cent) than West Germans (between 25 and 45 per cent) thought that there were too many foreigners in the country (Roth 1993b: 283–4), which is somewhat surprising because the actual number of foreigners in the five new *Länder* was considerably lower (212,000 or 1.3 per cent of the population) than in the old Federal Republic (6.7 million or 10.5 per cent).

Interpreted in the context of the legacy of the GDR's political culture, these trends indicate a greater right-wing potential that combines authoritarian culture patterns with deep-seated economic insecurities and xenophobic sentiments in East Germany. However, this potential seems to be less ready to be mobilised by political parties because, since 1990, party and electoral politics have become more discredited in the East than in the West. The failure of the Republikaner and other far right parties to build up effective political organisations and electoral appeal in the East is contrasted by a higher degree of right-wing violence and militant Nazi activities, as compared to the West (Minkenberg 1994). Overall, East Germany after unification provides a fertile ground for the violent release of unpolitical pent-up frustrations, racism and neo-Nazi activities in the context of continuous authoritarian culture patterns and a society deeply uncertain about its future. The acceptance of violence and creation of organisational networks among several hundred hard-core Nazi militants in the East both exceed levels in West Germany and promise even more conflict in the future.

In the Bundestag elections of 16 October 1994, the Republikaner party received 1.9 per cent of the second ballot vote, or some 875,000 votes.

Moreover, and maybe more importantly, they failed to enter parliaments in any of the other, state or European, elections of the 'super election year' 1994. While the potential for a far right vote did not change very much over the last years (Falter 1994), specific circumstances of the 'super election year' 1994 account for the renewed decline of the New Right parties.

First, the change of the asylum law in 1993 has moved the immigration issue from the minds of many people and most definitely from the media agenda. This is not only a success for the political establishment in regaining credibility but also a success of the far right by shaping the agenda and the way the problem was solved. Since late 1993, 'unemployment' has replaced 'foreigners' as the most important problem in West German public opinion polls. Moreover, the New Right suffers an increasing organisational disarray which came fully into the open during the 1994 election campaigns. Already in the 1993 Hamburg elections Republikaner and Deutsche Volksunion together received 7 per cent of the vote but neither entered the city parliament due to the 5 per cent hurdle. Schönhuber's attempt to overcome this self-defeating fragmentation of the right-wing spectrum by talking to the DVU's chief Gerhard Frey backfired within his own party. Schönhuber – a founder and leader of the right-wing populist Republikaner party – was ousted from the Republikaner leadership three weeks before the Federal elections and a new leadership quarrel ensued.

Therefore, it seems that the days of the Republikaner are indeed numbered. But the changing cleavage structures, the role of ideology in the far right vote and the ongoing disenchantment with party politics in Germany (witness the progressive decline in electoral turnout) suggests that a return of some right-wing party is as possible as was the 1992 recovery of the Republikaner. New conflicts in the current coalition government in Bonn, the return of the immigration issue and multicultural debate, and the process of European integration might serve as new catalysts (Minkenberg 1995).

Conclusion

German society is on its way to changing from a relatively homogenous population as a result of the Second World War and prior events to a more culturally, ethnically and religiously diverse society. The country has to reform and modernise itself massively to regain a new stability and identity in the future and to preserve domestic peace and the Western part of the country's democratic traditions and liberal, cosmopolitan outlook. But Germany today is not the Germany of the Weimar Republic. It does not face an extreme economic depression and its mass unemployment of a record 4 million is supported by an elaborate welfare state. Nor is it threatened by millions of anti-democratic and authoritarian *Untertanen* and armed Nazi party thugs, or the rise of racist hypernationalism led by a

militarist, revanchist elite as it was in the 1930s. Though undergoing a 'legitimacy crisis' the German political system is still characterised by a comparatively high degree of stability. Furthermore, Germany is integrated into NATO militarily, and into the EU economically, as well as politically. Therefore, Germany's Third Republic is unlikely to fail but the phase of transition will require redoubled effort of all political and democratic forces.

The emergence of racism, political extremism and violence in contemporary German society point at deficits of political legitimacy, elements of intolerance in the political culture and a break in social cohesion. These are first of all not a problem of foreigners or refugees but of the indigenous people and its society. Tendencies of cultural segregation and development of (urban) ethnic enclaves are partially a result of exclusion and refusal by the host society to offer sufficient means of integration and cultural acceptance. The greater the societal capacity of a democratic society to solve its internal divisions the greater its capacity to integrate foreigners and immigrants. Therefore, the society and some of its legal and political mechanisms, such as citizenship laws, immigration policies and the definition of nationhood needs to be overhauled, not the immigrants.

Unification has exacerbated and made visible unresolved questions of national identity, diversity, immigration and integration of foreigners. It has had a polarising effect for the German political culture and the traditional party system, as illustrated by polls taken before and after the arson murder in Mölln. For example, the percentage of those who agreed that the 'asylum right is a human right' rose from 39 per cent before November 1992 (the time of the Mölln arson attack) to 61 per cent afterwards (*Der Spiegel*, 1992: 58).

As surveys have shown, class position (occupation, education, income) alone is not sufficient to explain the differences in attitudes and behaviour towards immigrants. Generational and gender differences, social contact, subcultures and their value orientations, i.e. the role of the New Politics cleavage has clearly increased. Anxiety, xenophobic hostility and racist resentment among certain segments of the German population are multi-layered and result from unsolved social conflicts, political leadership failures, 'welfare chauvinism' and rising cultural and spatial anomie (*Überfremdungsangst*). In the East, processes of social marginalisation and the experience of deprivation, particularly of young, less educated and status insecure males foster the emergence of a new far right subculture.

Two-thirds of West Germans agreed in 1992 that Germany needs immigrants (Wiegand 1993: 9). But Germany does not have an effective policy to deal with the integration and acceptance of non-German newcomers. The existing policy is ambivalent; until 1993, Germany had a liberal asylum law, restrictive alien, naturalisation and citizenship regulations but no immigration, effective anti-discrimination, equal opportunity, or demarginalisation policy (Kurthen 1991). Germany in accordance with her neighbours has to define her integration capacity and immigration needs

and should accordingly develop a controlled immigration policy taking into account domestic interests as well as humanitarian concerns (Fijalkowski 1993: 613ff.). Consistent law enforcement against hate crimes and discrimination as well as illegal immigration can help to contain the worst outgrowth of xenophobic, racist and right-wing resentment. However, success also depends on continuing political discourse and public education, as well as effective immigration and social policies. It remains to be seen if the post-war miracles of economic prosperity and an emerging civic culture will be followed by the miracles of ethnic tolerance and cultural pluralism.

Notes

1 There is controversy as to the exact figures of ethnic Germans living in Poland since the post-war Polish governments until recently denied the existence of a German minority (Muhs 1993).

2 The main reason for Germany's attractiveness is neither a function of especially favourable social conditions for refugees, nor of a particularly refugee friendly procedure with a high approval rate. The causes are rather in the comparatively long interval between the arrival of the asylum seekers and the final ruling on their cases (currently more than twelve months) and the non-enforcement of deportation of rejected applicants (currently in two out of three cases). This leaves but a fine line between asylum and immigration (Schmidt 1993: 181).

3 It has usually been overlooked that Prussia was the first German princely state to switch from the feudal principle of *ius soli* tied to the place of birth and simple residency to *ius sanguinis*. Moreover, the existence of a third principle is often ignored, the *ius domicilii*, i.e. the naturalisation under certain conditions after a given period of residence. In Germany, the ancestral and residential principle has been in practice since 1913 (Steger and Wagner 1993: 65).

4 A shift in the public understanding of 'the people' as the democratic sovereign (demos) to the people as *ethnos* can be seen in two central slogans of the 1989/90 protest cycles in the GDR: *Wir sind das Volk* (we are the people) was followed by *Wir sind ein Volk* (we are one people or nation) (Brockman 1991: 6, note 7).

5 The term 'New Left' has various meanings, from specific revolutionary or Marxist cadre groups in the wake of 1968 to the whole array of social movements and new parties on the left in the 1970s. In this article, the term is applied to such new social movements, new parties, or wings within (old) left parties which are characterised by new middle-class instead of working-class support, post-materialist instead of materialist values and an elite-challenging rather than elite-directed political style (Markovits and Gorski 1993: 1-28; Dalton 1988: ch. 8).

6 The Kohl-Reagan gesture of post-war German-American reconciliation including, among others, the visit to a Second World War Cemetery in Bitburg that also contained, as it was learned later, the graves of forty-seven former Waffen SS members, resulted in an uproar inside and outside Germany about 'revisionist' tendencies and led to the derailment of the meeting's purpose.

7 An estimated 8 billion US dollars was spent by local and state agencies for processing asylum claimants, a process that until the reform of the Asylum Law could take up to three years. During claim verification, the applicant is housed in provisional or private quarters at government expense. Additionally, refugees receive free schooling, health care and about \$350 per month per family. Ironically, the costs seem to bear no relationship to the actual outcome of each case: less than 5 per cent of the applicants are actually granted asylum although Germany, as a co-signer of the Geneva Convention, often refrains from deporting foreigners not granted political asylum (Steger and Wagner 1993: 61).

8 It has been demonstrated repeatedly that self-placement on the extreme right-wing pole of a left-right continuum and voting intention for a far right party do only moderately correlate in

militarist, revanchist elite as it was in the 1930s. Though undergoing a 'legitimacy crisis' the German political system is still characterised by a comparatively high degree of stability. Furthermore, Germany is integrated into NATO militarily, and into the EU economically, as well as politically. Therefore, Germany's Third Republic is unlikely to fail but the phase of transition will require redoubled effort of all political and democratic forces.

The emergence of racism, political extremism and violence in contemporary German society point at deficits of political legitimacy, elements of intolerance in the political culture and a break in social cohesion. These are first of all not a problem of foreigners or refugees but of the indigenous people and its society. Tendencies of cultural segregation and development of (urban) ethnic enclaves are partially a result of exclusion and refusal by the host society to offer sufficient means of integration and cultural acceptance. The greater the societal capacity of a democratic society to solve its internal divisions the greater its capacity to integrate foreigners and immigrants. Therefore, the society and some of its legal and political mechanisms, such as citizenship laws, immigration policies and the definition of nationhood needs to be overhauled, not the immigrants.

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- 8 It has been demonstrated repeatedly that self-placement on the extreme right-wing pole of a left-right continuum and voting intention for a far right party do only moderately correlate in

West Germany, and that this correlation is significantly below the European-wide level (Falter 1993 and earlier analyses by Jürgen Falter and Siegfried Schumann).

9 A survey by Emnid from November 1992 shows that among prospective Republikaner voters 68 per cent said that they were primarily worried when thinking about the problems of unification in comparison with voters from the CDU/CSU: 49 per cent, SPD: 58 per cent, FDP: 55 per cent, Greens: 67 per cent, PDS: 75 per cent. See also Liebert 1991: 92.

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