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Combating the Extreme Right
with the Instruments of the Con-
stitutional State: Lessons from Ex-
periences in Western Europe

Abstract

Given that state responses are very much influenced and constrained by the particular form in which right-wing extremism occurs, I begin by presenting a six-category typology of relevant types of the phenomenon, each category being defined by a particular mix of individual, organizational, and ideological factors. I then describe three principal types of state response, discussing their content and their relevance to different forms of right-wing extremism.

A discussion follows of methods for evaluating the „success“ of particular responses and the various complications of implementation and evaluation. I end with an overview of the general effectiveness of state responses, coming to the conclusion that a liberal democratic state has the means to be effective in specific narrow respects (such as those depending on criminal sanction) but that its scope for successful action in such spheres as ideology is less impressive.

Lizenz

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Combating the Extreme Right with the Instruments of the Constitutional State: Lessons from Experiences in Western Europe

1. Introduction

Using the instruments of the constitutional state in order to combat what English-language political sociology and political science have only since the 1960s universally called "right-wing extremism" (Husbands 2001) is not a new phenomenon. This is true, even if such policies lack the much longer historical pedigree of state attempts to control or repress both moderate and radical forces of the left. Inter-war movements of the right, in France, Germany (if necessarily only in the 1920s and very early 1930s), the United Kingdom (UK), many other countries in western Europe, and also in the United States, received such attention. In the 1930s Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists (BUF) was the object of official surveillance and infiltration that has been well documented by its historians (e. g., Lebzelter 1978; Thurlow 1987). In terms of actual control or suppression, the 1930s saw legislation introduced in several countries, including the UK and France, aimed at extreme-right movements and intended to regulate public appearances (e. g., marches and demonstrations) and to prohibit the public wearing of military-style uniforms. In the USA the state was involved in harassing movements such as the Black Legion, the North-based version of the 1930s Ku Klux Klan (Janowitz 1951; Lipset and Raab, 1971 157–159). Despite the earlier history in the case of western Europe, the constitutional state's approach to the extreme right in most of the countries concerned during the post-war period was qualitatively different from that during the 1920s and 1930s. Although it was recognized by all except those offering unreconstructed 1930s-style Marxist explanations of post-war manifestations of extreme-right phenomena that their character, and the objective circumstances that produced them, had altered significantly since the 1930s, it was the ravages wrought by Nazism and the Axis powers that induced this shift in critical perspective.

However, it is the UK that is particularly significant in any account of the later post-war period in offering some of the earliest examples

of the post-fascist¹ extreme right of the sort that has become the principal form of extreme-right activity across western Europe since the mid-1980s and increasingly in eastern Europe, especially after the collapse of the Eastern Bloc.² The post-fascist extreme right has a mass appeal based emphatically on racial and ethnic hostility. This is not the specific anti-Semitism of the inter-war extreme right but instead is a mobilization against ethnically distinctive immigrant or foreign workers and, increasingly since the 1980s, Third-World asylum-seekers. Indeed, ethnic exclusionism and/or expulsionism are now the sine qua non of most extreme-right movements in western Europe; a possible exception is the Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPÖ), which though inclined to nationalism and undoubted xenophobia is a more complex phenomenon, despite the recent opprobrium heaped upon it internationally.

The fact that post-fascist right-wing extremism is uniquely identified with ethnic hostility has been so heavily emphasized in the preceding discussion because of consequential effects upon possible state strategies to counter it and upon their likely success. Countering a phenomenon that, drawing on attitudes widely disseminated throughout the population, has the potential for substantial mass support, even if in some cases (as in the UK, the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) or The Netherlands, though not in Belgium or France) a relatively evanescent and fluctuating support, presents problems that are different from those involved in fighting a relatively small group of political activists. This is true, even if the latter are on occasion inclined to actual terrorism. Indeed, an argument may be made that the problems facing the constitutional state in the former case are often more intractable than those in the latter one.

2. This article is arranged in the following sections:

Given that state responses are very much influenced and constrained by the particular form in which right-wing extremism is occurring,

¹ This term is being here used to describe types of right-wing extremism that are largely removed from the personalities and circumstances of inter-war fascism/Nazism, being less concerned with a nostalgia for that era than with resistance to the consequences of the increased globalization of immigration. The same term, however, is sometimes applied very differently to purportedly constitutional political parties that have emerged from earlier, more traditional, neo-fascist parties; the best current example is the *Alleanza Nazionale* [AN], a product of the former *Movimento Sociale Italiano* [MSI].

² There were numerous instances of right-wing extremism in the Eastern Bloc before its collapse. Only later did they receive significant publicity, however.

there is a presentation of a six-category typology of relevant types of the phenomenon, each category being defined by a relevant mix of individual, organizational or ideological factors.

There is a description of three principal types of state response, these being discussed in terms of content and with a view to their relevance to different forms of right-wing extremism.

There is a discussion of some methods whereby the "success" of particular responses may be evaluated, and of the various complications of their implementation and evaluation.

A conclusion attempts an overview of the general effectiveness of state responses, coming to the summary judgement that a liberal democratic state has the means to be effective in narrowly specific respects (such as those depending on criminal sanction) but that its scope for successful action in such spheres as that of ideology is less impressive.

3. Extreme-right Phenomena: A Typology

The phenomena that would be universally regarded, or nearly so, as examples of post-fascist right-wing extremism, as previously defined, occur in a variety of different situations. Not all are to be confronted by the same state strategy, always assuming that the state is in the first place disposed to counter them.³ From the most exclusive to the most general, such phenomena cover:

Extreme-right activism by individuals who are usually incorporated into relatively small and tightly knit political movements with memberships ranging from a few hundred into thousands, depending on location and period, but seldom justifying a label of "mass movements".

Some such movements, perhaps inclined to terrorism or paramilitarism, may be even smaller, such as the Wehrsportgruppen in the FRG during the 1980s, the most famous examples of which were broken up by proscription and imprisonment of their leaderships. Such groupings

³ In the early 1990s there were persistent accusations that the Federal German government of Chancellor Kohl was diffident about action to oppose extreme-right-inspired hostilities towards asylum-seekers because it wanted to exert pressure on the opposition *Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands* [SPD], with its determining number of needed extra votes in the Bundesrat, to accept a change in the German Basic Law restricting a general right of political asylum.

The motives behind President François Mitterrand's alteration of the voting system to the French National Assembly in the early 1980s were also called into question; he was accused, with some justice, of seeking to promote the extreme right as a tactic to weaken the mainstream right.

may, of course, participate in loose networks of similarly minded activists. The current debate in the FRG about the wisdom of proscribing the NPD exemplifies a special case: the NPD is regarded by the state as a formal political party, having fought elections under this name for more than thirty-five years, but has in recent years metamorphosed into an organization wanting to emphasise a "street presence", often by controversial and provocative marches and demonstrations and also by a threatening alltäglich physical presence by its activists.

Extreme-right-inspired hostility towards, and attacks upon, out-groups (usually ones that in practice, if not by intrinsic definition, are ethnically defined, such as immigrants and asylum-seekers, and those such as Roma who are intrinsically ethnically distinctive, but extending to non-ethnically defined groups such as gays, the physically or mentally disabled, or the homeless).

Many who engage in such activities may exist in what is on occasion loosely referred to, in German, by the sobriquet of the *rechtsextreme Szene*, individuals perhaps acquainted with but not necessarily formally attached to extreme-right political organizations, but aware of and influenced by the latter's ideology and values.

Formal political parties of the extreme right seeking to mobilize support principally on the basis of ethnic expulsionism or exclusionism, though at the same time adhering to other, traditional, right-wing concerns – i. e., depending on location and period, pro-colonialist, anti-American, aggressively nationalist (tempered in some cases by a "white Europe" identity), often "pro-family" and anti-abortion.

This category comprises those individuals who are active in, or members of, such parties, in contrast to those merely voting for them or being tempted to do so. The presumption might be that paid-up members of extreme-right parties are ideologically committed activists. In some cases for all such parties this may be true. However, many parties, though not all, have a surprisingly large penumbra of intermittent membership support.

Voters for political parties of the extreme right seeking to mobilize support principally on the basis of ethnic expulsionism or exclusionism.

This category is far from homogeneous or unambiguously definable. Voting for the extreme right in the FRG, The Netherlands, the UK and Switzerland, for example, has tended to be an evanescent phenomenon, with prodigious flows and (often) swift ebbs over time. On the other hand, the electorate of the French FN (till the split that produced Bruno Mégret's *Mouvement nationaliste républicain* (MNR) was much

more stable and committed, with an inter-election loyalty sometimes exceeding that of the mainstream left and right parties. The Belgian Vlaams Blok (VB) is also remarkable for the consistency of its support since the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Sympathizers for political parties of the extreme right seeking to mobilize support principally on the basis of ethnic expulsionism or exclusionism.

Any conception of the average national electorate comprising a minority attracted to the extreme right and a majority to whom this option would be anathema is clearly unsustainable. For a start, ambiguities in defining an extreme-right voter at a single point in time, as just discussed, demonstrate this. The fact that electorates consist of some willing to vote extreme-right in one election but not a later one further supports that view.

Sympathizers for the policies or programme of political parties of the extreme right seeking to mobilize support principally on the basis of ethnic expulsionism or exclusionism.

This group may be a very substantial minority, or even majority. Its size in the case of France was the basis of reports that have appeared in the French press over the years claiming that polling evidence showed the FN to have the potential support of around a third of the French electorate. Although it is inconceivable in most cases that this potential could be wholly realized as votes by the party concerned, its size may be an important factor in determining state policy on how to defuse the appeal of the extreme right. As will be shown, a major, if pessimistic, conclusion of this article will be that there is certainly one policy arena (viz., by using ostentatiously restrictive or repressive policy measures against immigrants or asylum-seekers) where state action against the extreme right is sometimes likely to have had some impact.

4. Extreme-right Phenomena: A Typology of State Responses

It is self-evident that, to the extent that the constitutional state is concerned to counter the various types of extreme-right phenomena listed and described in the previous section (and, as was made clear, it cannot be assumed that this will always be so), appropriate responses depend on what is being targeted and sometimes also the time-scale within which it is sought to achieve an impact.

Figure 1: Particular examples of different types of state response to six forms of right-wing extremism

	Control-based	Education-based	Social policy-based
1. Extreme-right activism by individuals who are usually incorporated into relatively small and tightly knit political movements	Proscription; Legal prohibition/criminal sanctions; Laissez-faire approach to anti-racist demonstrators	Social casework; Aussteiger-programme	—
2. Extreme-right-inspired hostility towards, and attacks upon, out-groups, usually ones de facto ethnically defined	Prohibition/criminal sanctions; Laissez-faire approach to anti-racist demonstrators	Social casework	—
3. Formal political parties of the extreme right seeking to mobilize support principally on the basis of ethnic expulsionism or exclusionism	Proscription; Legal prohibition/criminal sanctions; Ostracism of legislative representatives („outcasting”); Laissez-faire approach to anti-racist demonstrators	Alternative publicity/denigration of reputation	—
4. Voters for political parties of the extreme right seeking to mobilize support principally on the basis of ethnic expulsionism or exclusionism	—	—	Macro-economic management; Regional/urban policies

5. Sympathizers for political parties of the extreme right seeking to mobilize support principally on the basis of ethnic expulsionism or exclusionism	—	—	Macro-economic management; Regional/urban policies
6. Sympathizers for the policies or programme of political parties of the extreme right seeking to mobilize support principally on the basis of ethnic expulsionism or exclusionism	—	Multicultural/ Multireligious content in school curricula	Macro-economic management; Regional/urban policies

This section of the article logs the range of state responses. Figure 1 offers a summary cross-classification of the types of extreme-right phenomena with types of state response—giving, in the respective cells, principal relevant examples of the latter matched to the former. The major message of Figure 1 is simple: the most exclusive and activist forms of the extreme right fall into the realm of control-based strategies, whilst social policy-based ones are amenable only to the more diffuse and mass-ideological forms of the extreme right. The article now comments on complications of implementation, on respective outcomes, in terms of success or failure, and on the evidential processes and bases for making such inferences. State responses range from the legal and monitoring activities described so magisterially by van Donselaar in his book on the subject (van Donselaar 1995), through initiatives that might be regarded as part of macro-economic management, through benign or not so benign neglect.

Modelling state responses to the extreme right presupposes theoretical perspectives for its emergence in one or more of its various

forms or, complementarily, for its failure to do so.⁴ Single-factor explanations of the emergence of extreme-right politics and why they are supported are necessarily simplistic, but there are clearly certain causal factors that are amenable to being countered by state initiative, especially in the short term. Equally, others are more intractable; those (e. g., Le Bras 1995) who have explained the strength and persistence of attachment to the French FN in social, cultural and even geographical terms—once contextual issues had provided its initial founding impetus— and, as such, being rooted in historical cleavages in French society to be traced back to republican and monarchical rivalries from the French Revolution would concede that such factors are scarcely amenable to the palliative of a short-term state response. Categories of state response are being classed as of three types, respectively:

- control-based,
- education-based,
- social policy-based.

4.1 Control-based responses

These take a wide variety of forms, and examples were given in Figure 1. All modern constitutional states have some political and police strategies for countering political extremism seen likely to involve law-breaking, social disorder, or in the most extreme case overthrow of government. Most such strategies are implemented by specialist branches of the police, falling therefore under the organizational auspices of the respective interior ministry (in the UK the Home Office).⁵ Increasingly, in the light of role redefinition after the Cold War, military intelligence has been used in the monitoring of the extreme right and its violent activities, as in the UK and The Netherlands (Buijs and van Donselaar 1994). The most specifically designated monitoring organi-

⁴ The dominant focuses of the very extensive literature on the extreme right in western Europe that has appeared since the 1980s have been description and attempted explanation. This is true of almost all the studies that offer country-by-country analyses (van Donselaar (1995) is an exception). It would be otiose for the rather different purpose of the present article merely conspicuously to cite numerous examples of this literature, but a good example, also referring to much other related work, is Hainsworth (2000).

⁵ In special cases the Army may have a role in controlling political extremism. Northern Ireland has been a case in point. Although most British Army activity in the defence of civic order has been directed against Republican extremists, some has necessarily been against Loyalist paramilitaries, who—though not normally labelled formally as of the extreme right—have many of the definitional characteristics of some activist groups of the latter.

zation among west-European countries is the German BfV, a formally autonomous body within the Federal Ministry of the Interior. There are regional equivalents in each German region.

The primary role of such bodies is the monitoring of extremism, conducted by means of surveillance and infiltration (though the latter strategy can be dangerous and labour-intensive and is not often routinely done). Much of the monitoring in the FRG of, for example, Die Republikaner (REPs), has involved little more during the past ten years than compiling their literature for greater or lesser intensity of content analysis, having agents attend their public meetings, and—in recent years—monitoring their websites.

It is important to recognize that monitoring and surveillance do not of themselves equate to combating, and the BfV itself does not have a primary prosecuting responsibility, although that may not be the case with equivalent bodies in other countries. Mere empiricism, after all, is supposedly value-neutral. Indeed, such information as is available about the methodology of surveillance of the extreme right betrays the unpalatable fact that it may have features exactly analogous to those sometimes reported between the police and sections of the criminal classes, when absolute moral authenticity becomes tarnished in a world of "grasses" and informers. Over the years there has been a succession of troubling revelations about the ethically ambiguous relationships sometimes existing between BfV operatives, or their regional equivalents, and some members of the groups whom they are monitoring.

Many control-based strategies are based in dedicated legislation. Legal prohibitions on the wearing of military-style uniforms or on the use of certain political icons (e. g., in the FRG, the swastika), the requirement of permission for the holding of rallies, demonstrations and marches (with the implication that such permission may be officially withheld and so de facto banning the activity concerned), outlawing of hate publications or "hate speech", such as that regarded as being likely to stir up racial hatred, that which is anti-Semitic, that which extols the virtues of the Third Reich, that which denies the Holocaust, or that which preaches pan-Germanism. All these matters are subject to criminal sanction in one or more countries of western Europe. On the other hand, just as surveillance does not of itself equate to combating, the existence of such sanctions does not imply their enforcement. Indeed, analogous to much prescriptive anti-discrimination legislation, laws against the extreme right are often dismissed by critics because of the historical reluctance of the state, acting nationally and/or locally, to

enforce them. The debate about the merits and disadvantages of proscribing the NPD, as this has been waged in the FRG during the past two or so years, demonstrates the tension between the interventionism of proscription and the intermediacy of monitoring and selective individual prosecutions.

Proscription may appear prima facie to be the most stringent act that a state may take against an extreme-right organization, forbidding its existence as a legal entity and sending, so it is claimed, a deterrent signal to those disposed to extreme-right behaviour. However, it could well be argued that appropriate criminal prosecution and imprisonment of individual members of the leadership is more effective or may by default amount to the same thing. The successful criminal case taken in the mid-1990s by the Dutch prosecuting authorities against leading members of the Centruumpartij '86 (CP '86) was intended as a form of proscription, though its longer-term outcome may be disputed. Certainly, proscription is far from a uniquely effective solution. In the early 1990s there was some discussion in the Federal Republic whether the REPs should be banned as a political party. In France at various times, including a debate that was held in the press in late 1996, there have been similar arguments with respect to the FN. However, part of the problem with proscriptions is their impracticality in a liberal democracy, once levels of electoral support have risen above the nugatory. Banning a party whose leader, as in France, had personally exceeded 15 per cent of votes cast nationally (in the first round of the 1995 Presidential election) would risk extremely destabilizing consequences. The former regimes of Eastern Europe were in a position to stop any extreme-right mobilization, but at the expense of general civil liberties. Liberal democracies do not in normal times have such draconian powers. The recent difficulties in the UK experienced by its Home Secretary in persuading the Houses of Parliament to pass stricter anti-terrorism legislation in the light of the international situation since 11 September 2001 show that, even in exceptional circumstances, the options of the liberal democratic state are not without constraint.

Even in the case of small groupings of extremist activists, for whom there is not the embarrassment of an existing electoral base, proscription may have undesirable consequences. In the German case, for example, it was well documented by the BfV that proscription of certain groupings, using the powers of the Federal Ministry against an organization rather than the requirement of a case before the BfV for a political party, meant that other groupings not also themselves banned

became the target for infiltration and take-over by former members of the banned organization(s). The supporters of Michael Kühnen's group were famously encouraged to infiltrate and take control of the FAP, not itself at that time banned (though it was subsequently to be in 1994).

The responses of the national and local state to an extreme-right party that is electorally successful enough to achieve legislative representation have usually instead been ostracism and marginalization, or what Schikhof (1998) calls "outcasting". Thus, the wave of representatives of the extreme right swept into numerous municipal councils in The Netherlands by the country's municipal council elections in March 1994 was greeted by the unwillingness of representatives from other parties to deal with them and the refusal of municipal civil services to offer them any assistance. The German practice towards the REPs and Deutsche Volkunion (DVU) has been similar, although such parties have qualified for a measure of state financial support to fight elections on the strength of particular levels of earlier support. However, ostracism is a luxury that makes few demands on the mainstream political process when all of its political parties are agreed upon it and where extreme-right representation does not have, or is denied, the opportunity to play a power-broking role. It becomes more tenuous, or impossible, when extreme-right representation reaches a critical level, or where there is a temptation to involve it in a governing coalition. The coalition between the mainstream left and right to exclude the VB from governing the city of Antwerp, where it now routinely attracts about 30 per cent of votes cast, has been a difficult one, but it has held fast. However, the cases of the FPÖ in Austria and of the AN and Lega Nord (LN) in Italy show that the strategy of exclusion can quickly erode if political calculations or circumstances are conducive to this. In Italy it was not always thus. In 1959 an attempt by the Italian Christian Democrats to form a coalition including the MSI resulted in Communist-led riots on the streets and the quick resignation of the government concerned.

Of course, the domain of control-based strategies is not a pre-determined one. New issues emerge in response to new opportunities for the extreme right. The current hot topic in this area is extreme-right websites, especially those based in the United States. The German authorities have long known of numerous websites set up in the United States for the benefit of German extreme-right groups. The recent attempt in the French courts to force Yahoo! to limit access by

French Internet users to Nazi paraphernalia on American websites raises issues about responsibility and liability that transcend those facing the traditional press and visual media; note, however, that this case in France was in fact inaugurated by an anti-racist non-governmental organization, a type of organization to whom French law offers certain favours to encourage them to take on relevant litigation.

Some types of state response may be passive but, paradoxically, work to combat the extreme right. This point is demonstrated by the contrasting outcomes of anti-fascism/anti-racist voluntary activism between, say, the FRG and the UK on the one hand and The Netherlands on the other. Anti-fascist movements are, according to the narrow interpretation of some, the response of the concerned anti-racist anti-extremist citizen to the failings of the state to muster a sufficiently robust reaction to the extreme right. However, the matter is not so simple. It is only in the mythology of sections of the left that one finds the argument that the historical failure of the extreme right in the UK may be attributed to the strength of anti-fascism/anti-racist mobilization. The views that Oswald Mosley was defeated by the opposition of stalwart (London) East Enders in 1936 or that the British NF declined in the late 1970s specifically because of the successful opposition of the Anti-Nazi League (ANL) have been shown long ago as historically insupportable (Walker 1977, 21; Thurlow 1993). On the other hand, a good case may be made that the failure of the Dutch Centrumdemocraten (CDs) under Hans Janmaat is to be accounted for in no small measure by harassment from anti-fascist groups in The Netherlands. The crucial difference between the cases of the UK (and the FRG) and The Netherlands was the attitude to organized anti-fascism taken by the police. In the UK and Germany, compounded by suspicions of extreme-right sympathy among police ranks in the case of Germany,⁶ the police have traditionally protected extreme-right actions such as marches and demonstrations, provided that they were lawful, thus bringing themselves into conflict with those anti-fascists wanting directly to confront the extreme right. In July 2001, for example, police

⁶ Indications of disproportionate extreme-right support among the police have been reliably reported in several countries, including Belgium, France, the FRG and Italy. Even in the case of countries where such reports have not been made in any number, police attitudes to the extreme right may well be modulated through their well-attested hostility to some comprising the ranks of anti-fascist activists, seen (probably usually wrongly) as willing to engage in other activities bringing them into direct conflict with the police, such as anti-globalization or animal rights direct actions.

in Rostock and in Gotha congratulated themselves on their success in dealing with NPD demonstrations by keeping apart demonstrators and counter-demonstrators, where necessary by taking some of the latter into temporary custody (see *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, July 30th, 2001, 3).

The Dutch police, however, have not adopted a protective role to the extreme right, instead permitting organized anti-fascists to confront Dutch extreme-right activists to a degree that makes it very difficult for the latter safely now to hold any public meetings. Indeed, some years ago a building where Janmaat and his supporters were meeting was fire-bombed by anti-fascist activists, leading to an undignified escape in which there were serious injuries to some of the escapees, plus a famously iconic photograph of Janmaat himself ignominiously walking away from the smoking building behind him, spluttering from earlier smoke inhalation as he went but none the less holding on to a cigarette!

Looking at control-based strategies as a whole, it is difficult to talk up their effectiveness to anything above deterrence. Prosecuting malefactors for certain types of behaviour may deter them in the future (though the extreme right has its share of serial offenders willing to face the consequences of successive convictions) and it may deter others from similar behaviour. It is not, however, a suitable mechanism for the civic re-education of extreme right-wingers. As Edmund Burke said in the different context of his 1775 essay, "On Conciliation with America".

The use of force alone is but temporary. It may subdue for a moment; but it does not remove the necessity of subduing again; and a nation is not governed, which is perpetually to be conquered.

4.2 Education-based strategies

This term is being employed here deliberately also to cover a wide range of actions, all of which have none the less been predicated on an intention to induce attitude change or to counteract alternative influences on attitudes.

At the most general level such strategies include the insertion of multicultural or multireligious content in primary and secondary school curricula. Although this may not be done explicitly in order to discourage children from developing extreme-right sympathies, this would be one assumption behind the practice. Of course, such policies do not meet with universal approval; in a political climate that foments ethnic antagonism, by (for example) inducing moral panics about asylum-

seekers, multiculturalism is greeted by suspicion among those such as racist parents who are not congenially minded towards it in the first place.

However, it is perhaps in the FRG where, since the early 1990s, there has been a number of what are here being called education-based strategies against extreme-right activists, though they have comprised elements other than strictly educational ones. In the mid-1990s there was a programme of social casework directed towards extreme-right sympathizers; indeed, the current leader of the *Christlich-Demokratische Union (CDU)*, Angela Merkel, who grew up in the GDR and in the 1990s had the family portfolio in Chancellor Kohl's government that includes youth affairs, encouraged this programme and was personally associated with it. Some commentators, with only minimal irony, even admired her potential as a social worker!

The current version of the same programme was announced at a press conference in February 2001 by the present minister covering youth affairs, Christine Bergmann (SPD). Called "Jugend für Toleranz und Demokratie – gegen Rechtsextremismus, Fremdenfeindlichkeit und Antisemitismus" ("Youth for Tolerance and Democracy—against Right-wing Extremism, Xenophobia and Anti-Semitism"), this initiative will make available an additional DM 65 million (about \$ 30 million, and so scarcely a princely sum), including DM 40 million from the Federal German government and DM 25 million from the European Social Fund (ESF) (see *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, February 28th, 2001, 6).

Evaluating the success of such projects, at least in their intention to reduce occurrences of right-wing extremism, is difficult, as will be discussed. Certainly, there have been occasions of unfortunate publicity, as when a group of right-wingers was taken some years ago to Israel and behaved inappropriately, though such infelicities are doubtless exceptional. The fact that such programmes are now of long standing allows at least an inference that their success has been limited at best, although the alternative of simply doing nothing is politically unacceptable, both domestically and internationally. The limited take-up of the *Aussteiger* programme (discussed below) suggests that most potential targets for any programme of political education are too alienated to be retrievable through such means.

In early 2001, as part of an upgraded anti-extreme-right profile, the government of Chancellor Gerhard Schröder introduced a so-called *Aussteiger* (getting-out) programme that combined financial inducements (for job training, for example) with social casework and commu-

nity service for those wanting to escape from the rechtsextreme Szene. The mechanism for making contact with the facility was a telephone hotline to the BfV. The initiative has attracted some interest, though no formal programme evaluations have appeared so far. In 2001 the President of the BfV, Heinz Fromm, announced that about 600 callers had telephoned the hotline (over about a four-month period), of whom 120 could be described as „potenzielle Aussteiger“ (see *Süd-deutsche Zeitung*, July 30th, 2001, 6). Given that the BfV had registered a total of about 9,700 militant neo-Nazis and skinheads during the preceding year (though this will include registrations continuing from previous years), one cannot but conclude that the Aussteiger programme has far to go if it is to make any serious impact, even assuming that the 120 turn out to be genuine and to be non-recidivists.

4.3 Social policy-based strategies

These are being seen as those where a government acts, sometimes on a macro-level, to institute policies that have, or are intended to have, a depressing effect on some factor that is correlated with extreme-right sympathy or that is feared, say from the evidence of other countries, might become so correlated. This correlational perspective may be applied cross-sectionally towards individuals (say, macro-economic measures to reduce unemployment at the expense of inflation if the former is particularly feared to induce extreme-right sympathy), or diachronically if ebbs and flows of particular phenomena over time are seen as being, or likely to be, associated with corresponding over-time trajectories of extreme-right activity or support. The most obvious, if depressing, example of a phenomenon to which such a perspective may be applied is fluctuations in numbers of ethnic immigrants or asylum-seekers. The early 1990s surge in numbers seeking political asylum in many west-European countries was certainly one factor behind all but simultaneous increases in extreme-right voting in many of the same countries (Husbands 1998).

There is much research evidence of community-specific influences (defined in terms of local history and culture) that induce extreme-right support (especially voting-style support), producing the paradox in terms of any simple materialist-based determinist explanation that mutually proximate communities with many objectively similar aggregate social and economic characteristics may show different susceptibilities to extreme-right mobilization (e. g., Husbands 1994). None the less, it is the case that, all things equal, run-down urban communities—

in the British context neglected social-housing estates with predominantly white populations and often high levels of social dysfunction, or in France those banlieues that have not become predominantly areas of habitation for North African populations but remain as residences for indigenous dispossessed French⁷—often show disproportionately high levels of extreme-right mobilization when circumstances sensitize their populations to this political opportunity. Given that this is the case, there are several examples of governments using programmes purportedly intended primarily to counter urban decay as a means whereby to attempt to defuse extreme-right support in such areas, or indeed to suborn it from this attachment. The British inner cities programme of the 1974–79 Labour government was predicated in part on this intention, although it was of course not one that could be publicly acknowledged. Dutch urban policy initiatives could be cited as similarly motivated and, in the contemporary German case, it has been argued—perhaps slightly mischievously given the obvious hyperbole—that the continued level of subsidy to the regions of the former GDR is intended to repress tendencies to support the extreme right. The more conspiratorial versions of this latter view see such subsidies as a sort of post-modern Danegeld; as long as extreme-right activism persists, the subsidies from the Federal German government will continue to flow.

5. Methods for the Evaluation of Particular State Responses

At its most simple, the assessment of the effectiveness of state responses to the extreme right is merely a matter of seeing whether, perhaps considered over a particular time period, a political system shows no, or minimal, evidence of extreme-right activity. Naturally, however, inference is not so straightforward and there are a number of complications in such deductions. Some complicate the task of making inter-country cross-sectional inferences about effectiveness; others are confounding factors in over-time evaluations applied to individual countries.

Countries do not all start from the same level playing field. It would be otiose to detail the specific historical factors of twentieth-century history that make special the cases of Germany, Italy and even some of the countries that they occupied in World War Two. Looking only at

⁷ Examples of similar phenomena could be given for most countries in western Europe: Amsterdam's Bos en Lommer; Berlin's Neukölln; Brussels' Anderlecht; Paris' 20th arrondissement; or Rotterdam's Feyenoord.

the post-war period, many countries have been spared some of the social and political tensions that stimulate the extreme right, but that have been faced by others. The Netherlands and UK, for example, lack the experience of large numbers of disgruntled, right-wing-oriented, former settlers returning in embittered mood to the "host" country. True, both had some ex-colonial returnees but these were successfully integrated, in part because their numbers were too few to be able to form a political bloc. Germany, however, had to incorporate in the post-war period large numbers of disgruntled ethnic Germans from German-speaking areas of the East, especially but not exclusively the present Poland and Czech Republic. These returnees initially had their own political party until they were successfully integrated into the mainstream right. None the less, they have still been tempted by extreme-right options, especially in the 1950s and 1960s, and this group's ongoing grievances about their property losses and their demands for reparation and indemnification continue stridently to this day, thus irking the governments of both Kohl and Schröder and raising issues that still add an unwanted sensitivity to relations between the FRG and countries like Poland and the Czech Republic.

Approach to the evaluation of state responses' effectiveness requires the delineation of appropriate time frames but also an appreciation of how judgements of success may depend upon the unit of analysis being used. "Road to Damascus" conversions of individual militant right-wingers do occur (indeed, one or two have written of their experiences of this process) but these are rather rare and may in any case have little to do with actions of the state. A more realistic approach is to isolate existing extreme right-wingers within a metaphorical corral, to accept that their attitude-change is unlikely but they can be constrained by criminal sanctions, while simultaneously promoting an environment that discourages recruits from wanting or being able to join them. This intention—and an apparently implicit resort to the old and ambiguous standby of liberal social psychology, the "contact hypothesis" to reduce prejudice—are the theoretical underpinnings of German education policies intended to reduce xenophobia and extremism.

Viewed from the standpoint of the methodologist, it might seem that quasi-experimentation would be the perfect tool for evaluation of deliberate and sudden state interventions against those types of extreme-right behaviour that could be readily measured in aggregate terms over time within the same geographical area (e. g., extreme-

right-motivated violence, numbers of activists, voting for relevant parties). An interrupted time-series design, for example, might seem perfect for assessing the effect of, for example, the proscriptions of extreme-right organizations, especially as such a design would also permit the inclusion of other variables that might be confounding factors (Cook/Campbell 1979, esp. 207–293). Unfortunately, extreme-right phenomena are of the sort to respond less immediately to treatment effects than those to which such evaluations have traditionally been applied (e. g., the enforcement effects of seat-belt, or speed-restriction or drink-driving legislation, upon road fatalities or accidents). I know of no evaluation studies that have adopted this methodology towards extreme-right phenomena.

It is also a problematic fact for several countries that certain types of state response, such as a repressive legislative policy against incitement to racial hatred (as in the UK and The Netherlands), have now been present more or less invariantly for many years (although in 1999 the UK did introduce some modest amendments to its Race Relations Act 1976). However, given their general lack of significant, longer-term, over-time variation, such responses can scarcely be assessed using shorter-term quasi-experimentation.

6. Conclusions

It is hard not to make pessimistic conclusions from this analysis of how the liberal state of western Europe may use, and has used, the instruments of state and policy initiatives in order to combat right-wing extremism. Where there have been setbacks to right-wing extremism, and there have been numerous examples, the reason is seldom to be ascribed to positive anti-fascist interventions by the state. Instead, other factors have usually been at work. Any notion that the liberal democratic state may use its persuasive options and powers in order universally to produce a tolerant and open-minded citizenry comprising ideal-type "good citizens" would always be a caricature, but it is so far from contemporary reality that even caricature status is not a descriptive option.

The situation differs between countries, of course. In Austria and Italy parties of the extreme right (though one may dispute aspects of this characterization in each case) are in national and/or regional government coalitions. In Denmark the persisting high levels of opinion-poll support for the extreme-right People's Party, reaching a quarter of the electorate in some polls, pose worrying questions about longer-term

government stability. In France the extreme right has since 1988 been excluded wholly or almost so from legislative representation at the national level, but has held power in a number of municipalities and at times has been a power-broker in several regional governments. In Belgium the extreme right is a potent electoral force especially in parts of Flanders but has been excluded from municipal government by coalitions of other parties. In the FRG there is a danger from extreme-right activism at the local level, especially in the former GDR, but the political parties of the extreme right are no more than irritants. In Switzerland the support of parties of the extreme right, never sufficient to be more than a minor threat, has been almost entirely captured by a party of the mainstream right, the Schweizerische Volkspartei (SVP) (Husbands 2000). In The Netherlands and the UK the extreme right are equally little more than irritants on the body politic, despite some very local electoral strength.

However, in no country in western Europe is there any reason to fear the extreme right taking power, directly or indirectly, by non-constitutional means. It was not always so. The case of France in the early 1960s has been mentioned before and, more recently, Italy (in the 1970s) and Belgium (in the early 1980s) went through periods of domestic tension when even some mainstream observers suspected the extreme right of attempting destabilization through a strategy of tension; true, right-wing commentators in Belgium dismissed such talk as left-wing hyperbole. Even so, to the extent that such episodes are apparently in the past, west-European states have satisfactorily operated appropriate control-based strategies against the extreme right.

Where initiatives by the state have reduced the more obvious manifestations of such politics, this has often been by some form of appeasement of, rather than opposition to, the very attitudes that were the basis of that original manifestation. Successive British Home Secretaries, Conservative and Labour, have defended Britain's continuing application of strict immigration control, which has been persisted with despite original European Union opposition and was the reason why the UK remained outside the Schengen Agreement (being unwilling to trust the competence of other countries in the matter of immigration control), as a method of preventing the emergence of right-wing extremism. The then Conservative Home Secretary, Douglas Hurd, claimed in 1991 that "extremist parties had no foothold in a Britain largely free from racial strife" (unlike many other countries, it was implied) and that "we could not afford to put these achievements at risk

[by relaxing immigration control]" (see (London) Daily Mail, November 5, 1991, 12). Numerous similar examples could be cited. Such views are based on a view of human nature that most people are, at heart, ethnically intolerant or, at best, hostile to noticeable changes in the ethnic composition of their local environment. Similarly, as was seen, a more obvious restrictionism towards asylum-seekers, including amending Article 16 of the Basic Law in the FRG and a variety of new legislative provisions in countries such as The Netherlands and the UK, were responses to actual or feared resurgence of the extreme right. A strong case may be made that they were successful factors in stanching such resurgence, though the evidential complications of causal inference referred to earlier must be recalled. Even so, the suppressing effect of such measures may well be nationally contingent. They may have worked in the countries just mentioned, but the usual experience in France has been that aggressive anti-immigrant stances by parties of the mainstream right did not defuse support for the FN. As its leader, Jean-Marie Le Pen, said on a number of occasions, his supporters preferred the real thing to a copy.

Indeed, although one should not make the argument to the point of exaggeration, a plausible case may be made that the extreme right, especially in its political-party form, is sometimes its own worst enemy and that demises are in some instances as much due to its own making as they are to the interventions of the state. There are examples where unflattering revelations about the extreme right, and the propensity of some of its members to engage in criminal activity have had seemingly immediate suppressing effects upon success. In 1994 the Dutch CDs experienced a dramatic decline, perhaps losing more than half of their potential electorate, between the country's municipal council elections in March and those for the European Parliament in June. This was attributed in part to revelations in a television programme broadcast in late April 1994, where a journalist had induced a prominent member of the Dutch CDs to admit to a criminal past (fire-bombing an asylum-seekers hostel in the 1970s), having secured this admission using a concealed tape-recorder. This may be a specific reflection of some residual decency in that smallish proportion of the Dutch electorate otherwise tempted to vote for the extreme right. Unhappily, there are examples in other countries (such as Austria) where revelations of some form of unsavoury behaviour have not led to any significant proportion of an extreme-right potential electorate being deferred from that vot-

ing inclination. For many years too it seemed the case for the French FN that there could be no such thing as bad publicity.

However, continuing the "shooting-themselves-in-the-foot" theme: where the extreme right has attained legislature representation or even some share of power, it has often lost subsequent and longer-term electoral credibility through its own incompetence or a tendency to fissure. The DVU delegation in Bremen after September 1987, the REPs delegation in the West Berlin House of Deputies after January 1989, the DVU delegations in the Schleswig-Holstein and Saxony-Anhalt Regional Parliaments respectively after April 1992 and April 1998 (having 12.9 per cent of votes cast in the latter case!)—all dissolved amid acrimony and demonstrated incompetence. Even in the contemporary Austrian case, where one sees a far from peripheral phenomenon in the FPÖ, the experience of national office has been injurious rather than beneficial to its present electoral prospects. However, some extreme-right movements in western Europe (e. g., the Belgian VB) have a reputation for slickness and political skill and do not suffer, as in the FRG, from a noticeable lack of competent cadres; whether this might change if, as in Austria, the VB were to attain some degree of actual legislative power, may be debated.

The frequent tendency of different sections of the extreme right to fraternal viciousness and sometimes mutual paranoia, interspersed by incidents of wary co-operation, has been equally injurious. The extreme right in The Netherlands, the FRG and, most recently, France have in each case been seriously weakened by an inability to mount a unified electoral challenge. This has little to do with hostility from a vigilant state and often much more to do with psychopathologies within the respective leaderships. This is a depressing epitaph to the efficacy of the model of "de staat paraat". Thus, the balance of the evaluation of evidence presented in this article sides with the more agnostic views of writers such as Schikhof (1998) and Mudde and Van Holsteyn (2000) against a more optimistic assessment of the efficacy of state responses that is espoused by van Donselaar (1995).

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